

## The Night and the Dove

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# The Night and the Dove

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## Summary

The death of King Luke of House Sky set into motion a chain of events. Princess Rey is a head strong young woman. She's been allowed to train under her father and her father's closest friend Yoda. The death brings the neighboring kingdoms together. She finds herself face to face with Kylo, king of House Ren. He believes they are force bonded she thinks other wise. However she has to marry by her twenty-first birthday. A marriage pact is made and both will find out how much they need each other.

The story starts out as Rey a young teenager but the rest of the story will focus on her in her early twenties. This is my first work of fiction.

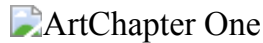
## Notes

Clear your mind must be, if you are to find the villains behind this plot. -YODA

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Photoshop art I put together. Hope you enjoy

# Chapter One: A Death



Rey wanted it to rain. She wanted the sky to break open with thunder and booms of lightening. She wanted the wind to howl and rip the trees from the ground. She needed the weather to match her pain. The clear sky and stillness of the day seemed to mock her. Her father, King Luke of House Sky, was dead, his body being prepared for burial in the chapel. No doubt the monks had started the process of coating the body in beeswax to preserve it for viewing. A stone mason would be chosen soon to construct the king's likeness on top of his mausoleum. The birds released to spread the word in Corellia, her kingdom to let the lords, and common people know.

Rey's thirteen summers couldn't have prepared her for such a devastating loss. Staring out her window she felt hopeless and alone. A child-like fear shook through her as she grappled with his unexpected death. She gave into the grief. Her body racked with sobs. She screamed once and then put her hand in her mouth to stifle more. She bit down on her closed fist drawing blood, she barely registered the pain. A part of her was grieving her father, and she knew the end of her childhood.

“Rose”

Her head snapped up. The voice was her father's. The word spoken kind and gentle, a whisper in the air. She looked around the room almost expecting to see him, a desperate hope that this was nothing but a bad dream. The stillness of the room was her only answer. Rey wasn't sure if the voice was real or imagined, but it let her know what she needed to do next. Her time to selfishly nurse her grief was over, her younger sister, Rose, needed her.

She left her room and headed the short distance to her sister's chambers. Her thoughts drifted to the fact that they now had lost both their parents. Queen Kathryn, their mother, had died giving birth to her little sister Rose. The whisper of the castle had been the queen had caught pregnant too soon after the birth of her first child Rey. The space between the two sisters was but a year. Rey never asked her father if that was true. When he talked about her mother there was always a heavy sadness in his voice.

All her information of her mother came from her father's advisor and closest friend Yoda. He was from the far country, a land across the sea. The common tongue wasn't his native tongue so his responses at times came out in a speech pattern that was as unique as he was. When she'd finally had enough of the rumors she asked him for the truth.

“Hard, the birth was. Strong, your mother was. She used the force to make sure your sister lived.”

When she questioned what he meant about the force he gave her a knowing smile.

“You feel between yourself and nature the pull. The balance between light and dark. Flex it like your mother, you can, in time maybe even control it.”

Yoda hadn't answered anymore of her questions that day. He stated that one doesn't get all the answers as some must simply be learned or discovered. Rey had set to work on finding her answers, it had been harder since she was a girl, her very gender bringing with it set expectations. Her father, however, indulged her. He allowed her to sit with him in council, read the ancient text and scripts on war and power and often would challenge her on topics of philosophy and political debate. She knew people thought her father did this because he wished her a son but she knew better, he simply loved her and accepted her wild spirit. The true court outcry came when he gifted her a sword and allowed her to learn trades no woman of noble birth would dare venture. At first no one but her father and Yoda would teach her. Time was on her side and as her skills advanced so did the acceptance of it. Her aptitude for it shown through and soon her father's military men softened to her and joined in to teach her among other things archery, horsemanship and stealth.

The mystery of the Force had only come from Yoda. Her father, had at one time wielded it but Kathryn death had changed something in him. From her talks with Yoda she understood he felt deep guilt for not being able to save her mother. Yoda's lessons often involved meditation, centering the self to nature. She was starting to learn how to quiet the noise and focus on objects close and far. She had just last week been meditating in her favorite spot in the garden under the willow tree. She had been able to see a deer off in the forest, not only see it but feel its heart beat. The doe was giving birth. Rey was there but not there, and the entire experience had left her in awe and humbled by the power of it.

The years had passed with each summer allowing her to grow more adept in her training. It almost ended the summer her father met Phasma. She was the daughter of a Lord in a small province in Corellia. Rey had taken an instant dislike to her. Lords often brought eligible daughters to meet her father. Her father was very kind to each but it was clear at the end of the visit he had no plans to remarry. Phasma, like all the rest had her eyes on the crown. She was rather plain and hid it badly behind painted make-up. She made sugary remarks to Rey and her sister bringing dolls and sweets. Rey however saw the smile as plastered, her eyes told Rey she was measuring them as either allies or threats. Rey made sure Phasma knew which side she was on.

Phasma with all her wiles should've been but a passing guest in the hall. The fortnight she'd stayed had been different. To this day whispers in the castle still persisted that the King's wine had been drugged. Rey's father had shown nothing but polite courtesy to Phasma, so it was a shock to the entire castle when Phasma's father discovered them in bed together. Being king and her being a Lord's daughter didn't entitle him to marry her, but his deep sense of honor did. By the end of the fortnight Rey had a new step-mother and by winter a new brother.

The relationship never improved between her and her new mother. She often marveled at how she could dislike Phasma so but absolutely love her little brother Poe. A beautiful baby he was born with a head full of curls and dark brown eyes. As soon as he could walk he was getting into trouble. His daring spirit and mischievous smile won her heart and to her relief

found him to possess her father's heart and chaff at his mother's attempts to control. Rey grudgingly admitted if he was given the right teaching he would make a good king one day.

Phasma may have gotten her crown but it did not make her queen. She had tried to control Rey and when that didn't work had tried to ship her off to a nunnery. Her father quashed any plans Phasma had of getting rid of her. His temper, while rare, had shown itself to Phasma when she'd all but packed Rey up for the convent. Her step-mother had lost the war on that front but had managed to win smaller battles. Her father had agreed, to Rey's disgust, that she needed to be more lady-like. She had to wear dresses unless in the yard, and her hair had to be fixed in a proper noblewoman's style. She could no longer sit cross legged with the men but had to walk and sit as befits a princess. Her father allowed her to continue her studies and training, so Rey had borne the stipulations with as much grace as she could muster. Rey tried not to think about the control Phasma would wield now that her father was gone.

Rey was at her sister's door. She knocked softly but heard no answers, she opened the door anyways. Her sister was sitting by the window. Rey was told her sister had taken all the beautiful traits of their mother. Rose had her mother's fair skin and thick black hair. She wasn't tall like Rey but had a petite figure which was already decidedly feminine. Their looks contrasted sharply as Rey had sandy brown hair that was unruly and often had to be braided to make it behave. Her figure was muscular and lean from hours of calisthenics. Fair skin she could've had and maybe even the hands of a lady but the sun had deeply tanned her skin and the sword had left permanent callouses on her fingers. Rey's most defining feature was her eyes. A soft amber brown that her father joked often changed color with her moods. *"Your eyes are honey light when you're happy, and dark as pitch when you're mad"* he'd tease. Rey wondered what color they were now.

Rose didn't turn to look at her. She was holding something in her hand. Rey realized it was her father's shirt. She went to her, sitting on the small bench next to her. She gently put her hands over Rose's. Her sister looked at her then, her soft brown eyes red rimmed from crying.

"I was hemming his shirt when they told me." Rose said in explanation, though Rey really didn't need one. "They said it was a quick death, no pain." Her voice quiet at the end.

Rey didn't know if Rose was trying to give comfort to her or rather hang on to some comfort for herself. She only knew their father had woken up unwell. He had been in the stables getting ready to mount his horse when he'd stopped. The poor squire had gone to help but had been waved off. Her father said he was feeling unwell. Those that saw him that day would later attest he had woken up looking off. His color pale and his breathing a little labored. Her father never made it out of the stables. He had gone a few steps before collapsing, his hand gripping his chest. Help had come but once Yoda arrived he only had to look at her father to sadly shake his head and have the body taken for burial preparations.

Rey reached over and pulled her sister close. Rose sobbed and she felt her eyes grow hot. A soft shuffle at the door alerted Rey that they were not alone. A little boy with sad eyes stood in the doorway. He clutched a wooden sword his father had made for him.

"Come here Poe." Rey said gently opening her arms to him.

He didn't walk but shot out to her with a fierce cry. He clung to her his head of curls underneath her chin. Rose ran her hand through his hair. Arms intertwined they held each other. Allowing themselves for a moment to be three lost little children grieving their father and what was lost forever.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

<https://queenofharts1984.tumblr.com/post/179342486364>

### Chapter Two: History

Rey was brought back to the present with the arrival of Yoda in the room. He'd entered quietly, a gentle old hand on each of their heads. No words, only his touch for comfort. It was enough. He looked Rey in the eyes and she knew she needed to follow him. She let Rose hold Poe who was no longer crying but sleeping. Rose used the shirt as a blanket. Her little sister smiled sadly as she saw him clutch the wooden sword to his chest when she repositioned him in her arms. She nodded that they would be alright to Rey as they left the room. Rose might be softer than Rey but, their parent's strong spirit lived just as much in Rose as it did her. They would survive this together.

"Time to grieve, I'm sorry child I wish there was." Yoda said as he walked. "Felt Kathryn's presence pass by but had barely a chance to understand its implications, I had when I was summoned by the servants."

Rey was almost stunned by this news as she was by her father's death. She knew Yoda was force sensitive and yet she was often caught unaware by what that meant.

"Are they here?" She couldn't keep the tremble out of her voice.

"To the Shadowlands no they've gone. Together and at peace, are they. I'm sorry Rey. Visit you though, he did" Yoda stopped at the door to look at her.

Rey's chin trembled, so it was her father's presence in the room. She only nodded to Yoda who patted her hand before opening his door. The room smelled like pine and cedar with the faint undertones of old books and manuscripts. Plants lined the windows, with each botanical used to treat or cure an ailment.

"Already turning and act you must, the wheels are." He moved books off a bench and waved her to sit down. Turning his back to her he began to rummage through his manuscripts.

"What wheels, what's changing?" Her interest piqued by Yoda's vague statement.

A ruffle of paper was her only answer. She knew better than to interrupt. So she simply waited, watching her father's old friend paw through books and unroll old scripts. Observing him she reflected that even though he must be fairly old, at least 65 summers, he seemed

ageless. He was a short small man, with large ears that stuck out from his wrinkled head, bald but for a small patch of hair, and wrinkled like an oak tree. He was stocky of build and his arms and legs seemed almost not to fit his body. He wasn't weak, his skill with a sword often kept her on her toes. His greatest weapon was his mind and it was sharper than any blade.

He seemed to finally find the parchment he was looking for. Blowing dust off of it he brought it over.

"What know you of the Battle of Jakku, hmmm? His wrinkled hand slowly unrolling it on a desk in front of her.

"Just the facts," she now sidled up beside him to look at it. "Four ruling kingdoms went to war after Anakin from House Ren killed his brother, Liam, to take the throne. My father was just twenty at the time. Our House fought alongside House Solo and House Oretaga. The war lasted two years. Anakin died in the final battle at the River of Jakku. He mortally wounded my grandfather Mark before my father killed him."

"House Ren, what became?"

Sighing Rey continued, "Anakin had taken his brother's wife, Padme, as his own. She had born a son with King Liam. The boy, Kylo, was spared and Padme bore twin sons Ben and Hux to Anakin. She died shortly after birth, of complications maybe but most believe it to be a broken heart."

"Fifteen years ago, that was. Recognized as King, Kylo was. Raised by General Snoke. The twins allowed to live but deemed bastards, they was."

Rey looked at the paper. The parchment on the table was a map of the four kingdoms.

Hands on her hips she felt her brow furrow. "Why am I getting a history lesson on the battle of Jakku? Shouldn't I be helping make plans with Phasma to bury my father?" She didn't mean it but her voice came out sharper than she meant.

"Make a spectacle of it, I'm sure Phasma will. Send it's royals to pay homage to your father, however each kingdom will. Know what you're walking into, you must." Tapping House Ren with the sigil of the wolf he continued. "Controlled by General Snoke, House Ren is. Rumored he had a hand in the darkness of Anakin, it is. There's a darkness, never left that castle, that has."

Rey bit her lip a little ashamed. All Yoda's lessons had importance. She needed to listen. Pointing to the next House, House Ortega, she urged Yoda to continue.

"Been the most loyal to our kingdom, House Ortega has. Visit with his only son Finn, I'm sure King Tyrell will. Queen Sabe rarely leaves the castle. Poor, her health is."

The last house and smallest kingdom belonged to House Solo. Yoda gave a little snort as his fingers tapped it. "Reckless bunch whose loyalties can be fickle at times, House Solo are. Come with his young daughter Princess Calista, King Hans will. A marriage alliance for Poe, no doubt. Too far with child Queen Oola is.



He was facing her now, his hands had found his walking stick and he rested on it. His eyes were studying her and she could tell he was drawing to the point of the lesson. She waited, and when silence continued she realized he was waiting for her to connect the dots. She looked at the map again. Three houses coming, for the first time in fourteen years to mourn a king. No House had traveled this great of distance since the war, and yet. It was more than that.

Her stomach sunk as realization dawned on her. House Solo would clearly seek a marriage alliance with her little brother. House Ortega and House Ren both had eligible royal brats who would be looking for a wife, a queen. Rey hated this aspect of her royal existence. As much as she tried to forget she knew the law. A royal princess must marry by her twenty-first summer or join the sisters in the convent. Once she had begged her father to let her leave and serve like the Jedi of old time. The Jedi, a long retired branch used to protect kingdoms. Sworn to the land they served the people. They did not marry and swore no oaths to kings. The stories varied, some were filled with magic and others of fighting corrupt Lords, bandits, and even a king from time to time. Rey guessed that they had been force wielders and their power mistaken for magic. The magic had disappeared and with it the Jedi, or so the legends went.

“My father is dead I will not be in any mood to talk weddings!” frustrated at all of it she turned her back to Yoda and crossed her arms. She pretended to look at the map again but, she knew it was just a ruse to cover up her emotions of a topic she loathed. Had the Jedi still existed she was pretty sure she would have taken the nearest horse and escaped to them long before the mob of royals showed up.

“Mention a wedding, no one will. In the air, the prospect will be. Eventually have to choose a royal to marry, you will. The kingdoms while prosperous and peaceful have been fertile in choices of sons not.”

“I could choose a stable boy if I wanted. I don’t have to choose some stuffy noble who would make me leave my home.” She still didn’t turn towards him. It was childish and she knew it.

“I suppose, but to accept a humble peasant instead of a prince or king would be a slap in the face, you could. Strip you of your title and banish you to keep a war from breaking out, your brother Poe would. Destitute outcast who live happily ever after with the stable boy you would be. Yes, hmmm.” His voice chuckled at the end and he poked her elbow with his stick.

Turning she faced him. His eyes were kind and a small sad smile played upon his lips. She relaxed her arms, “I’ll keep that in mind.” He nodded. She bit her lip and hoped that none of these royals wanted a tom boy for a queen. Her sister Rose would most likely have the offers. Rey sadly thought that in six short years her sister would be of age to marry. It was too much to hope that they’d never separate.

“Arrive by the time the next full moon rises, the Houses will. Your guard be on, especially around House Ren. With your eyes watch, listen, to feel the truth in statements use the force.” He stepped closer and laid his hand on hers. His eyes full of concern. “Let them find

weakness in you, do not. Princess Rey of House Sky, you are. Try to control, Queen Phasma will, power hungry and arrogant, she is. Try and destroy you if she can, she will.”

Rey felt his hand tighten on hers and she could tell he was conveying to her the seriousness of it.

“Your back around her watch, her tricks have not a moral compass. Too good a man to call her out, your father was. His weakness at times his kind heart.” Yoda’s voice was a touch gravely at the end. He turned letting her go. His hands to the table rolling up the parchment.

She could feel it than, Yoda’s grief at the loss of his friend. Walking to him she leaned over to give him a hug from behind, her arms around his neck. He patted her forearm and after a moment she released him. Looking out the window at the clear day she realized a storm was coming, just not the type she’d envisioned. If not for Yoda how unprepared she might have been. She resolved to not only survive the storm but to be a force against it. She was Rey of House Sky and she was her father’s daughter. She left the room, and the child behind

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Three: Kylo

The first to arrive was House Ortega. The banner was yellow with a silver star on it. King Tyrell rode next to his son, Prince Finn. Rey had spotted them almost a mile off for they traveled wearing their finest armor. The July sun was at its peak, reflecting off the silver, making them almost glow as they approached. The military finery was for show and it was impressive. Had it not been her father's funeral, and a potential marriage partner riding up, Rey may have taken some joy in the procession. The rolling heat did not help her mood as she waited with her family. Her hair done up in three simple braids, custom dictated black so she wore a mourning dress that had too many layers. Her tailor had tried to enhance a figure that wasn't there, making Rey look like a girl playing in her mother's dress. As the sweat dripped down her neck she wished for the event to be over so she could go inside and tear off the dress. Maybe later she could stuff it full of straw and use it for archery practice.

The King at last rode through the gate. Rey and her family stood at the top of the steps. Nobles, priest, advisors and servants all took their proper place in greeting House Ortega. Soldiers stood at attention and lined the entrance. The people of Corellia were outside the castle entrance gates. They pressed hard against the castle troops, trying to get a good look at the newcomers as they passed. Some of the old timers shouted warm greetings to King Tyrell as he approached. He acknowledged them with a nod as he rode by.

The King and son dismounted first. A towering man the king was, his son only a few hands shorter than him. Their skin a dark ebony gave a sharp contrast with the silver armor they wore. The King was bald but his beard made up for the lack of hair on his head. A snow white mountain of hair surrounded his face, the end braided with silver twine, it came almost to his stomach. His eyes were a light grey, sharp and clear. The only thing that marred his complexion was an angry scar that lay under his eye, stretching across his left cheek bone. When he turned his head to look around she saw he was also missing a large portion of his left ear. A close call that blow had been. Still for a man of fifty summers he was in top physical shape.

Her eyes fell to Prince Finn. The royal party had climbed the stairs and now she could see the son of such a formidable man up close. He possessed his father's physical attributes, but his eyes must have been his mother's. A sea green they were. For a brief moment they met hers.

"Dear Princess's, I'm very sorry for your loss." He took her hand gently and lightly kissed it.

She thought she would feel disgust but, instead she felt a deep sense of kindness from him. She didn't need the force to tell her that Finn was a good person down to his core. She smiled

at him and thanked him for his words. Finn was holding Rose's hand when their step-mother began to put on the show. At first it was a sniffle, but as King Tyrell held her hand she dramatically began to sob. Rey gritted her teeth, she'd expected it, but it made it no less easy to bear. The rest of the day was spent listening to Phasma's tearful speeches. House Ortega were a pleasant bunch and for that Rey was thankful, as it made the day bearable. Rose, the true lady of the house was able to carry a conversation on with Finn. Rey sitting next to them was able to learn of Finn's country, Talus. He was charming and witty and even made Rose laugh. Rey only wished they could've met under different circumstances. She was surprised to realize she wanted to be his friend, and her plans to be ice cold and indifferent faded as the day went on.

Two nights later House Solo showed up. They were a loud bunch and King Hans made no secret his reason for being there. To Poe's credit he was very polite to Princess Calista. She was three years older, and towered over him. The poor little girl was over-dressed like Rey. Princess Calista's tailor had also tried to put her in a woman's dress and the result was almost comical. Half-way through the day Rey heard King Hans and Phasma shouting. The prince and princess had shed their stuffy clothes and ran off to the palace pond in their underclothes. Rey laughed despite herself and in the end the children were allowed to be children. The servants kept an eye on them to make sure they didn't get into any more trouble. Rey only wished she could've joined them.

Two more nights passed and no sight of House Ren. They lived in Naboo, the furthest province away, and a delay was expected. Rey secretly hoped House Ren had missed the message, or had resolved not to travel such distance. Yoda's warning hadn't been forgotten. She planned to be most at her guard when they arrived. She only hoped she could grimace through one more formal gathering with her step-mother.

Rey woke early the next morning to find from her maid that House Ren had arrived in the dead of the night. The late arrival did afford her the luxury of forgoing another painful royal meeting. She could make a simpler introduction at dinner. She inwardly smiled when she thought of Phasma, and how she must be seething from being denied her last show. Rey frowned, looking at her black dress hanging. She'd never worn a dress for so many days in her life. Her hand itched painfully for her sword.

Looking out the window she could see that dawn was just starting to break outside. Half the castle was sleeping, only servants would be busy waking and getting ready for the abundant guest. She had an hour or two before she would be missed. It was too tempting, she opened her closet and pulled her yard clothes out. The leather pants and blouse felt like freedom as she pulled them on. To hide her plain clothes she wrapped her black cloak around her. She knew she couldn't go to the main yard, but she could train by the willow tree in the garden.

Walking briskly, she kept her head down and was thankfully stopped by no one. It was cool outside, and she found a light mist was covering the ground. The grass had a faint dew on it, and the air was refreshingly cool on her skin. She for a moment forgot all the heartache that was stirring inside her. The first true smile in a while touched her lips when she drew her sword. Holding the weapon her father gave her she felt close to him again. Closing her eyes for a brief second she saw him, always a teacher, standing next to her telling her how to hold

the blade. She let it sing through the air a few times. Rey felt her training kick in, righting her feet she was about to start when she heard an unfamiliar male voice behind her.

“Careful girl, that’s a real sword you’re playing with.”

Rey spun to face the voice that mocked her. A tall teenage male stepped from the path in front of her. His dark hair was tied back, and his face was angular with a prominent nose and jaw. He was looking at her with sneer of a smile. His arms were muscular and bare, as he was wearing yard training clothes. She ascertained he must have come out here for the same reason she had. His clothing was too fine of thread for a servant, it was black with a red fringe, the colors of House Ren. She hoped he was one of the bastards and she could order him to leave. If this was the king she would be hard pressed to order anything. She would have to leave without barely getting a moment respite in. The thought made her cross.

“I know how to use a sword, have you come for a lesson?” Rey knew, even as she spoke that she was over-stepping her position. She was supposed to be giving the House’s the pretense that she was a proper lady, but his arrogant smile and haughty demeanor were too much.

“I’m Kylo of House Ren. If it wasn’t for the fact that you seem to be growing some excuse for breast under your tunic, I’d of thought I was meeting the late King Luke’s son.” He shot back, a smile on his lips that didn’t reach his eyes.

Rey felt her heart pound and her ears turn red. Her thoughts of grabbing her cloak and salvaging some pretense of being a lady went out the window. “Would you like to spar, or do you only talk people to death?”

He seemed taken back by her invitation, no doubt it was the first one from a girl he’d ever received. She half expected him to order her off, but after a short minute of studying her he simply shrugged. Grabbing two wooden dowel swords that were nearby him, he threw one at her.

“I’ll buy you a cute doll if you can land a blow on me.”

She caught the practice sword with ease and set her stance in position. “I’d worry less about dolls and more about how you’re going to tell your friends a girl beat you.”

He smirked before trying to take a swing at her. It was a lazy swing, without any merit. Kylo clearly didn’t consider her an equal match. She deflected it easily and swiped it aside. His inability to consider her a threat would play in her favor, arrogant opponents always made mistakes. She deflected another blow, this one a bit more serious. In responses she twisted her body to his left side and angled a blow to his ribs. She’d hoped to strike a quick hit to end the challenge but he managed to side step it in time. His feet shuffled back a few paces and she realized her move had surprised him. His eyes met hers and they narrowed.

“Daddy teach you a few tricks before he died? Quit now and I’ll let you get back to your toys, keep this up and you won’t be able to sit down for a week.”

Rey didn't answer him, he was trying to bait her into a foolish move. She instead watched his feet trying to feel his next move. She decided to play on his arrogance. She half-heartedly went after him but it was a feint and he fell for it. She dodged out of his way and used the flat of her sword to playfully slap him on the butt. She laughed in delight believing the match was over, however when he turned to look at her, her laugh froze.

Kylo's eyes told her the game was over but the fight had just begun. The play of swords had just turned personal. Before she could speak reason, Kylo came at her. The blow she stopped jarred her arm so badly she almost dropped her sword. She realized another strike like that and she'd lose what ground she'd gained. All her training came back to her while she maneuvered through his swings and hits. Minutes felt like hours as they danced around each other.

With all her experience it was clear he was the superior swordsman. She was using everything she had deflecting his blows. She had to find a weakness soon if she were to win. His next blow came fast and hard, but a little wild. She felt it whistle by as she turned just in time. It came to her then, anger. Kylo was clearly enraged, his blows were all emotion, had he been in full control of himself this match would already be over. She allowed the next swing to come closer, and the next. She was lulling him into a sense of complacency, letting him think he was winning. She feigned tired, which wasn't difficult considering how hard she was sweating. She saw that the next blow he meant to finish the match. She left herself open and knew that if she didn't time it perfectly she was going to end up with a nasty bruise. As the blow came she waited half a heart-beat and then dropped to one knee. His blow swung high missing her head by half a hair. He was not able to correct in time and she struck, hitting him as hard as she could in his right leg.

It worked, sort of. He went down, but instead of falling back he fell forward, knocking into her. Rey rolled to the side in response, trying to keep the upper hand and end the battle. He cursed loudly, and instead of swinging at her he shot his arm forward. She had barely time to register his odd move when a vice grip on her ankle pulled her back. She fell hard, the wind knocked out of her. She tasted dirt and blood in her mouth, trying to rise back up she found his knee grinding into her back.

"Get off me!" Her breathing was hard as she tasted blood in her mouth. He cheated, he was a force wielder, and he'd used it to cheat.

"I'm not so sure I'm ready to free House Skywalker's unruly little girl child. Maybe now that daddy's dead someone needs to teach you a lesson." He snarled at her.

Kylo had clearly forgotten who she was, or he was too far enraged to care. She spat, trying to get the copper taste out of her mouth, her lip clearly split open from the fall. "You wouldn't dare, you force wielding cheater!"

At the mention of the force she felt the pressure of his knee on her back lesson.

"What would you know about the force?"

"Enough to know you used to cheat."

The conversation might have progressed, Rey would never know, but the sound of nearby voices broke their exchange. Kylo had come to his senses and let up on her back. Before she could stop him he grabbed her hand, pulling her to her feet.

An energy she had never felt before pulsed through her. Kylo was looking at her. The garden by the willow tree gone. She was surrounded by cherry blossoms, they were everywhere. Kylo was looking at her, but he was much older. His face wasn't angry it was different, softer.

"I love you Rey"

It faded as quickly as it had started, and she was left looking at an equally stunned Kylo. The voices belonged to Rose and Finn, the vision (if that's what it was) causing her to be too stunned to question why they were out so early. Rose let out a little gasp upon seeing her. Rey imagined they must be quite a sight. They were both covered in dirt, ripped clothes and still holding hands. She was trying to think of something to say. Kylo looked at her than, an unreadable expression on his face. Swiftly before she could protest he kissed her hand and walked away.

"What happened?" Rose was looking her older sister over and trying to assess if she was hurt. Finn for his part was trying to figure out if he should follow Kylo or stay with the sisters. He settled on grabbed her cloak that was hanging on the tree and handing it to her.

Rey grabbed it, mumbling a thank you and wrapped it around her. She mustered up an explanation about a friendly spar and before Rose could extract the truth she turned and fled. Her mind was a racing in all different directions and she needed to be alone. She barely registered the steps to her room. She only knew relief once she shut the door and locked it. Sinking to her knees she leaned against the door.

*"I love you Rey,"* the vision, his voice. She buried her hands in her face. It wasn't the future, it was a trick. She tried to clear her mind, but all she could see was his face, and while real or imagined she smelled the faintest trace of cherry blossoms on her clothes.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Four: The River

Rey spent the afternoon walking outside the court. The realm was grieving their king, and tents had been set up to accommodate the people. The holy priest had arrived to plan the service, the nuns to offer comfort, and monks to scribe the event. Servants had set up booths, and they offered food and drink to all. The guards were present to keep any ruckus down, but for the most part, the atmosphere was somber. A beloved king had died and they all felt his loss.

Rey looked for Kylo, she couldn't help it. The vision hadn't been her first. Yoda had taught her that visions were in two categories; past and the future. The future, Yoda had warned was by no means certain. Dark and light forces could sway it, as it was ever changing. Still Rey occasionally saw things that played out. A maid who broke a leg on the stairs, a guard who was stealing wine. Yoda had been right however, on things-to-be not coming to fruition. Once she had seen Phasma holding a baby. She'd asked her step-mother if she was with child, to which, her step mother had slapped her hard. Her face had been red and ugly and she'd stormed off. A nearby laundress had seen the exchange. Clucking her tongue she simply said, *"If she be, aint a child the king will claim. The hallway between those two rooms has nary been walk'd in years."* Castle walls always talk and Rey soon learned that Phasma often sought affection elsewhere with her husband turning a blind eye. He didn't love her and the arrangement suited them both.

The visions, until this morning, had never been about her. She secretly wanted to ask Kylo if he'd seen their moment in the cherry blossoms. A small part of her was pretty sure he had, or something close to it. She was beginning to think he might be a strong force-wielder. Kylo had used it to physically grab her in their match. Yoda was guiding her carefully through her force-sensitive powers. He'd issued a strong warning about trying to hurry through training, as self-control and discipline were the only way to master the force. She'd yet to master the skill Kylo had used to pull her down. She had a thousand questions for him, who taught him, did he always know, could he telepathically pass a message, was this his first vision? Sighing she kicked the dirt. She wanted to know everything about him, but at the same time she never wanted to see him again, so there was that.

A cloaked figure moved past her, the unknown being was in a hurry and he brushed by, jarring her from her thought. Curious Rey looked for the stranger but instead she saw Poe. He was standing a few feet a head of her. A queer feeling came over her, something was off. She started towards him but the scenery blended, in a blink she was in the forest. The sound of the River was in her ears. The vision was as powerful as the one this morning. *"What's happening?"* she thought. These events were rare and often spaced months apart in frequency. After this vision she would need to find Yoda. She looked now to the source of her sight, her little brother.



Poe was standing by the river talking to someone. The cloaked figure perhaps, she couldn't tell. His visage was shadow, and try as she could, his shape wouldn't take form. Poe was pointing to their father's boat that was tied nearby. His face lit up as he talked to the stranger about the vessel. Their father, earlier this summer, had started taking Poe out on it. She knew her father had hoped to teach him how to sail it in a few short years. Why was Poe out here with this unfamiliar person? Rey felt foreboding as she watched, this individual meant harm towards her little brother, she was sure of it.

"Beautiful boat," the voice male and raspy.

"My grandfather, Mark, built it. My father is going to teach me how to sail it when I'm older, or he was." Her little brother's voice trailing off at the end. She could see him swallow and shuffle his feet. He was trying hard not to cry.

"Ah yes, only men and kings can command little fishing boat. You're much too small. Just off the tit, I suppose. No, No, when you're older Yoda might teach you, or perhaps he will be too senile by then." The figure appeared to wave his arms in mock helplessness. "Such a fine-looking boat. Hardly a wave on the river. I bet even your sister Rose could steer it, ah but what am I saying? I must go pay respects to the chapel. Easy trail back to court I suppose. I'll let your governess know you will follow shortly." The shadow patted Poe's head and walked off.

Poe had one tear running down his face and his fist was clenched in anger. He considered the boat, but this time with a determined look. The one that told Rey he was about to do something very foolish.

"Poe No," Rey tried to scream but the moment faded and she was left standing breathless amongst a group of guest who moved past her with little indifference. A hand on her shoulder caused her let out a surprised cry. Turning she saw Rose, who no doubt was trying to corner her about this morning. Rey had purposefully been trying to avoid her all day. She saw her little sister wasn't alone, Finn was there and another lanky teen male. The newcomer tried to smile and introduce himself, but Rey had no time. She grabbed Rose's hand, her face must have said it all, for her sister's words froze in her mouth.

"What's wrong? "She said instead

"Poe,"

Rose was confused, but she didn't ask questions. She blindly followed, her hands trying to keep her skirt up so she didn't trip. Rey for moment pondered calling for help, but it would lead to too many questions she wouldn't be able to answer right away. Outside the court Rey grabbed a horse that a guardsman had left to graze. Rose grabbed her hand to mount behind her, without looking back Rey kicked the horse's side. It was gave an annoyed whinny but she was having none of it, she urged it on. The sound of hooves let her know that at least one of the boys had deigned to follow. The trail to the river was a raven's walk, by foot it might have taken an hour.

She pushed the horse to its limit, praying it didn't misstep, a dangerous tumble they would take if a hoof caught a root. She felt a pang of regret in taking Rose. She shouldn't be putting

her in this type of danger. A few minutes later the river came into view. Her heart sunk as she saw the boat was gone.

Dismounting she ran to the water, looking frantically down the rapids. It gave no sign of her missing brother.

Her sister grabbed her than, turning her round. Her eyes searching for an explanation.

“Poe’s on dad’s boat” Rey pointed to the missing boat. “Alone”

Her sister expression changed from shock to fear, “Why would he do that?”

“Could someone tell me what’s going on?” The nameless teen asked.

Rey looked to see who’d followed them, as it turned out both boys did. The teen dismounted a grey gelding. Finn who’d been forced to ride with him, slid off the back. He didn’t look happy. He probably didn’t ride to often holding on to someone else. The teen walked over to face her. His clothes told her immediately he was from House Ren. She discerned quickly he was one of the bastards. His hair sandy blond and shaggy, not the dark black of his half-brother. His eyes were blue and while concerned seemed friendly enough. He was muscular like his brother and she saw his arms were marked with scars. Kylo had similar scarring and she wondered what kind of training House Ren imposed upon its young.

“You are?” She didn’t have time for this. She talked and scanned the river. Her eyes falling on the answer to finding Poe.

“Ben the Bastard.” He didn’t seem embarrassed by his title. His voice was deep and unlike his brother had no arrogance in it.

Taking a deep breath she decided to bring everyone up to speed with as few words possible.

“My brother is on a boat he has no idea how to steer. We have to rescue him before he hurts himself”

Finn opened his mouth to ask question, question she had no time to answer. He took one look at her and shut his mouth. He instead flickered his gaze to the water. “The current is moving fast. He could be half-way down it.”

She was already two steps ahead of them. Rose followed her gaze to a small two person boat. She shook her head at Rey.

No, that’s too dangerous.” She grabbed Rey’s arm as she walked towards the boat.

She broke her sister’s hold, “Dad taught me, I’ll be fine. You need to get help.” Grasping her little sister’s shoulders, “Please”.

Rose hesitated.

“I can help,” Ben started unwinding the rope that attached the boat to the shore. “Bastards are expendable, kings are not.” He moved the craft further in the water.

Finn grabbed Rose's hand and they hurried towards the horses. Ben thought he was going alone and tried to protest when she climbed in.

"Damn you, row," she snapped at him. She started to grab the oars but he stopped her. Ben mumbled something about Kylo being right, he started to propel the boat ahead. His powerful arms shot the skiff forward and she steadied herself as it hit each cap. This river wasn't made for little boys on their father's boat. *"Please, please let us not be too late."* Rey thought. She was too scared to think what they would find if they were.

**"With your eyes stop looking. Use the force."** In her mind Yoda's voice commanded her.

Rey hadn't time to question its validity. She closed her eyes and for a second everything stopped. Silence and she looked, and in that silence she found him. The boat had overturned. Poe was alive, clinging to a paddle that was lodged between two rocks. The current was strong and time was almost up.

"To the right side of the river bank." She yelled over the loud roar the river. Ben, to his credit didn't question her, straining his muscles with everything he had veered the boat to the right of the bank. Rey's eyes widened and her heart clenched when she spotted Poe. He looked at her. Only one hand now on the paddle. They weren't going to make it. She had to go to him.

She tore her black morning dress off over her head. The damn thing would drown her the moment she hit the water. As she dove in she heard Ben yell her name. *"Poor guy, hope we live,"* she thought in the split second before she hit the surface. A thousand sharp knives seemed to strike her at once. The water was like ice and her muscles threatened to tighten up. *"Breathe, breathe Rey,"* she told herself. Her head fought to stay above water, she focused and righted herself. She began to swim as best she could with the current towards Poe. Luck was on her side and she managed to beeline her body straight towards his small frame. Just as she saw his hand slip she was there.

Grabbing him she held on to the oar for dear life. The pull of the water so strong it threatened to rip him from her.

"Poe, I'm here it's okay," she tried to calm down the frightened boy.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Poe blubbered through chattering teeth.

"Rey." A deep voice yelled

Relief flooded her, it was Ben. He was coming hard and fast upon them. His long arm outstretched. One chance, that's all they'd get. Holding Poe as tight as she could she let go of the oar the split second before Ben's hand went by. Their arms locked. His grip like steel pulled her to the side of the boat. She hoisted her brother up to the side with all the strength she had left. His weight doubled by the wet clothes. His small arms were over the boat and he struggled to hang on.

"Grab him," she yelled. Ben's hand shot out and yanked Poe by the collar, over the side. He turned to grab her, their eyes locking for a split second. It was all it took. The boat took a

sudden hard dip, she felt her precarious hold slip. She tried to correct but it was too late. Her fingers lost their hold and for a sickening second she was grabbing air. The next heartbeat the river had her in its powerful current and it was dragging her down.

“Sis!” her brother’s screams were lost on the water as she tried to fight to break above the surface.

The river was nature and it didn’t care she was the daughter of a king. It was going to consume her. She was able to rise above and catch a breath but it was short lived. She was tiring fast and the currents icy fingers were winning. Her thoughts turned to her family, their faces vividly coming to her now. Her father holding her, her sister’s sweet smile, her brother’s laughter, Yoda’s kind eyes. She went under again. With all her power she used her last energy to try and send Yoda a message. “Protect Poe from the shadow man.” Tired she stopped struggling. Her body accepting her fate. Her dying brain had stopped screaming and she felt almost euphoric. Death wasn’t so bad.

“Rey, God-damn you. Wake up!” A familiar voice thundered in her ear.

So he could telepathically speak. “Go away, I don’t like you” she didn’t want him to be the last voice she heard. “I think I’ll sleep.”

No voices followed, they didn’t need to, strong arms wrapped around her. She felt a tug and then her body was thrust to the surface. Her first breath was excruciating, her lungs on fire. The grip on her held tight as Kylo fought his way to the shore. She wished she could help. As much as she didn’t like him, she didn’t want him drowning over her. They went under a few times, but he made progress. His feet struck rock bottom and she realized he’d made it to shore. Dragging her up the bank, he laid her on dry land, where she promptly started throwing up. Kylo was lying next to her breathing hard. He struggled to his feet, she was too weak to even look up.

“You’re either the bravest girl I’ve ever met or the stupidest.” His voice was livid.

Kylo bent down and scooped her up. She wasn’t even cold, she wondered if that was a bad sign. She looked at his face. His eyes were angry but it wasn’t like before. This was a different kind of out mad. She could feel the emotions coming off of him. He was afraid, he was scared he was going to lose her. She furrowed her brow.

“How did you find me?” she could barely get the words out. Her body was hanging limp in his arms. Kylo was walking at a fast pace.

“I felt it, so strong it almost ripped itself from my mind. It took everything I had to get here in time.” He looked down at her, concern in his eyes. All anger gone.

They stopped, Rey saw his mount. The horse looked worse than she did. It was lying down. A dark chestnut steed, built for power and riding. The animal foamed at the mouth, sweat glistening off its body, his flank bleeding. Kylo had ridden that poor beast to its death to get to her. She felt sorry for it as it lay there. He grabbed his cloak off of it and wrapped her in it.

All this for her, why? She didn't understand. He'd risked a lot for someone he didn't know. Up until their peculiar moment in the garden they hadn't even liked each other.

"Why did you save me?"

He was silent for a moment, patting the dying horse's head he moved on, for help she supposed.

"All your bravery, still the ignorant girl-child," he finally replied, but there was no mockery to his words. "Do you not realize we are force-bonded?"

She mustered a snort. He couldn't be serious. What he was implying was what the locals would call soulmates. The Jedi, in legend, were forbidden to have a life mate, unless such a bond was proven. The connection between the two was considered unbreakable, and should one die the other was said to follow shortly, so strong was the tie. She wanted to laugh but it would hurt too much.

As if reading her mind he bent his head lower. She could hear voices in the distant, help was coming.

"It's not a myth, Rey. You're just too young to feel it." He yelled back to the voices commending them to come quickly. His face turned back to her and he gave what she thought might have been a smile. "When you're not all knees and elbows, when you pass more summers, when you become the woman I saw in the vision, I will come back. I will take you from your safe little castle, your sheltered world. I will make you my queen, we are force-bonded and you are mine." He wrapped her tighter, his voice close to her ear.

"I belong to no one." She held her head up to look at him, everything spun at the movement. The need to sleep was so strong. His heartbeat seemed to pound in her ear as she let her head lull back to his chest.

He seemed to chuckle at that. "The die has already been cast little one, our paths are set."

Kylo's voice seemed so far away. She wanted to reply but a peaceful darkness overtook her.

# Chapter 5

## Chapter Five: The Arrangement

When Rey awoke the first thing she felt was pain. Her body ached with a soreness she'd not thought possible. The need to sleep was heavy on her eyelids but she forced them open. The bed enveloped her body and she wondered how long she'd laid in it. The weakness in her limbs made her think at least a couple days. Her throat burned, it was horribly raw and swallowing hurt. She really needed water. Slowly she tried to sit up, it scared her a bit when she realized how little strength she had. Hornets buzzed in her head as she tried to maneuver herself up, "*Damn it Rey, don't pass out*", she thought. Greyness edged at her peripheral vision as she raised herself forward.

"Mother of Mercy, Rey, You're awake," came the sweet voice of her sister.

Her sister must have been sitting close for less than a second later she had her arm wrapped around her and helped her sit up. She could only muster enough strength to tilt her head at her sister and look at her. Rose's face was pale and dark circles were under her eyes. For all the sleep she'd been getting it looked like her sister had gotten none.

"Water," her voice was weak and it came out a cracked whisper.

Her sister propped her up with pillows. Rey felt like a child's rag doll as she could only lay there as her sister poured a glass of water. Her sister pressed the goblet to her lips and Rey slowly drank. The liquid cooled her throat and she for a moment forgot her pain.

"How long?" A part of her dreaded the answer.

"Three days, you gave us quite a scare. Kylo brought you to the castle, you were so pale. I..I.. wasn't sure..." Rose stopped her voice broken at the end.

"Shhh...don't cry." She wanted so bad to reach up and hold her sister. She managed to move her hand weakly and nudge her sister. "Poe?"

Her sister used her gown to quickly wipe her eyes. "He's alright. A few bruises. I'm sure he'll visit you soon."

"When's the funeral?" she imagined they wouldn't postpone it forever.

"Rey..." her sister tried to start and then looked at her hands. She twisted a ring on her finger, her hands fidgeting.

"Rose?" her sister was clearly hiding something.

“She wouldn’t wait,” her voice full of anger. “You saved her son, and she wouldn’t postpone the funeral. Yoda couldn’t promise her a speedy recovery and she refused to hold up the ceremony even a couple days.”

Rey closed her eyes, absorbing the information.

“She wanted the spot light, that vain woman. She spent most of it wailing and calling our father the love of her life” Rose cheeks were flushed now.

Rey opened her eyes when Rose let out a small laugh.

“I wish you could’ve seen her fit of rage when she learned that father was to be buried next to mother. Dad thankfully had it stated in his will.”

There was some solace that her father was buried next to his true wife. Her step mother wouldn’t be able to ruin that.

“Has everyone left?” Her thoughts pulled to Kylo.

“House Solo, left yesterday. House Ren and House Ortega should leave within a week. Rose seemed to sigh a little at House Ortega’s name. Rey knew Rose loved all the house’s visiting. Her father rarely entertained and her sister loved meeting new people.

Her sister fretted over her for the rest of the day. She allowed few visitors and shooed away any who tried to linger too long. Her little brother stopped by the room. Phasma wisely stayed at the door. Poe jumped on the bed, overcome with excitement at seeing her awake. He wrapped his chubby little arms around her neck and kissed her cheek. She weakly hugged him back and tried not wince as her sister gently pulled him away. He left but not before he dropped a handful of daisy’s in her lap and promised to visit every day. Her mentor came last. She had a million questions but he smiled and handed her some warm wine. A few sips and she could feel the medicine take effect. Closing her eyes she gave in to sleep.

Two days later she felt much better. She could get out of bed and walk a few paces around the room. Her sister mothered over her and made sure, much to Rey’s annoyance, that she didn’t overdo it. When Rose set her mind to it she could be quite bossy.

Halfway through the day they received a visitor. Finn came to say goodbye. Rose seemed to shy up around him. She went to get him a seat but he waved her off.

“I will be sitting on a horse the next several days, I think I’ll stand while I can.” He smiled at her. “You look much better. A little more color to your cheeks. You’re a brave girl Rey Sky. I know your father would be proud.”

Rey blushed at his words. He moved closer and after a moment hesitation took her hand. She wondered if he was going to lightly kiss it goodbye. His face seemed to be going through a range of emotions. He looked at her again and seemed to have made up his mind. She raised her eyebrows inquisitively.

“I hope Rey that one day we can be family.” He took a deep breath and she realized he was working up courage. From the corner of her eye she saw Rose edge closer. “I’d like to think that one day our houses might align in power.”

She felt her heart quicken. She sat up better in bed so she could better face him. “He’s going to propose,” she thought. She felt like laughing but shushed the emotion quickly. He would probably run from the room, if she burst into giggles. She almost said no, but stopped. Would she get a better offer? The thought gave her pause. If she said no to Finn, Kylo would make his proposal known. An offer of that magnitude would be hard pressed to turn down.

Marriage to Finn would be bearable, he wouldn’t try to control her. Her sword play and antics hadn’t turned him off, instead he almost seemed awed by them. He was gentle and sweet, and he would be the solution to her Kylo problem.

Finn sat on the edge of the bed. He was still holding her hand. His strong voice nervous as he tried to continue, “I’m young and these things need to be official but...”

“I accept” she blurted out. He probably had poems and stuff written but there was no need for him to fumble through it

Finn looked shocked, “You what?”

“I accept your proposal, our match would be a good one.” She heard her sister gasp. Rose probably thought Rey would wait till the last moon to choose a match. Her thoughts went to her sister as she realized she would need a match as well. King Tyrells brother had sons. Perhaps a Duke? She would talk to Finn later about a possible match. Perhaps they could live in the same kingdom together.

Finn for his part was now speechless. He probably didn’t think an acceptance would come so easily. Rey smiled and wondered if it would be rude to let go of his hand to close his jaw, the poor boy’s mouth was hanging wide open. Her thoughts drifted to Kylo. His proposal thankfully hadn’t been made public. She alone was aware of it, which was a small blessing. They could make an announcement without Kylo claiming an affront. She wondered how he’d take the news, but she didn’t have to wonder long. Unbeknownst to them Kylo had stepped into the room.

The door upon Finn’s entrance hadn’t been shut, allowing Kylo an element of surprise. His eyes narrow when he saw Finn and her holding hands in what probably seemed like a semi-intimate pose on the bed.

“What have I interrupted?” Kylo asked, a cold look in his eyes he didn’t try to hide.

Finn moved his hand under hers and stood up to face Kylo. He started to speak but she decided to cut to the chase. Finn was too nice. Kylo Ren needed to know once and for all that she wasn’t going to be his. His force bonded nonsense be damned.

“I’ve decided to accept Finn’s offer of marriage.” She crossed her arms. Her brow raised, her eyes shining with defiance.



“Is that so?” his voice had a dangerous tone to it. The door had been open behind him and he turned to shut it, and then latch it. Rey felt her skin prickle.

Kylo was in his black attire, but the clothes he had on looked finer. A pitch black cape with fur lining was draped in his arm. The cloak with its red and gold pattern and white fur was markedly feminine. An engagement gift she supposed.

Kylo’s voice broke her thoughts, “Finn asked you? How odd. I didn’t think that was his first choice.”

He walked towards her, and Finn feeling a veiled threat stepped forward to position himself in front of her and Rose.

“This matter doesn’t concern you, Kylo. I think you should leave.” His voice hard as steel.

“Oh I think it does. You see Rey will be joining House Ren. I’m sure she will make me wait till her twenty-first summer, but I’m a patient man.”

He smirked at her than and she lost her temper. “By the Maker, I am not bound to you.”

His smile was gone and she could see the anger light up in his eyes. “Do you think our bond means nothing? Did you see Finn jumping into the water to save your life?

“He was getting help with my sister.”

“Protecting Rose, Rey!” How can you be so blind?”

“Enough,” she screamed. His words were trying to confuse her, make her feel bound to him. She wouldn’t allow him to manipulate her.

“You saved my life and House Sky will not forget your bravery. However, that gives you no hold or promise over me. Leave and find some other wench to torture. I will never be yours.” She was shaking now. Guards were not far away and she considered calling them.

“You are trying my patience,” his voice tight as he tried to contain his anger.

At present he was ignoring Finn and Rose, his fury on her. His fist were clenched and she could feel his need to physically lash out at her. His anger so palpable it rolled off him like a white heat. He took a deep breath and she could tell he was trying to reign in his temper. An act, she was sure, he was not accustomed to do. Rose gave a nervous cough and his gaze flickered to her.

He seemed to take her little sister in for a moment. His body relaxing as he seemed to be contemplating something. She begin to feel uneasy. His lips that had been drawn in a hard line curved upward in a smile that was neither kind nor friendly. He set the cloak down on a nearby chair. His fingers idly tracing the beautiful white fur. His eyes met hers and they danced with dark humor.

“If I don’t marry you who do you think I’ll choose?”

Rey felt ice go down her spine. “You wouldn’t dare!?”

“Hmmm...wouldn’t I?? Who else is your little sister going to marry?” His smile showing teeth. It reminded her of a wolf who’d found his lamb. She chanced a glance at her little sister and saw her eyes were wide and her face pale with fear.

“Finn has cousins that Rose could wed. She doesn’t need you.” She didn’t know if it was true and prayed Kylo didn’t either.

Kylo snorted at her words. His eyes lit up like the devil on a hot summer day. “Tsk Tsk a Duke to a King? You must be terrible at poker. Did you think Finn was your Ace?” He laughed harshly at this.

Finn’s fist clenched and Kylo raised an eyebrow. Pausing he looked at Finn and then back to her. He tapped the hilt of his sword. His next words came out with an annoyed sigh as if he needed to explain something she should already understand.

“I suppose I must lay them out for you one by one for you to understand the game is over.” His next words were not to her but to Finn. “What say you Finn? You take Rey and I’ll take Rose. The youngest Ortega daughter is already beautiful. I’m sure in five or six years she’ll be exquisite. I may even be gentle our first time. I only hope Rey lets you pretend to be the man in bed.”

Finn let out a growl and pulled his sword. Kylo did likewise.

“I’ll spill your blood on this floor before I let you touch Rose.” Finn shouted. He angled his body in front of Rose leaving Rey exposed.

Kylo looked at her. His eyebrows arched in amusement. He was right, the cards were flipped out on the table. Finn had set down the Queen of Hearts, but it wasn’t for her to pick up. That card had been for Rose, it had always been for Rose. Kylo had made his point he sheathed his sword.

Finn looked at Rey. His face going through a painful array of emotions. “I’m sorry...”

“It’s okay, I should’ve known.”

“You mean so much to your sister. I wanted to ask her with your blessing first but...”

“Finn,” Rey shook her head giving him a faint smile. “This is better I see it now.”

He lowered his sword, glaring at Kylo. “Rey there is always a place for you at House Ortega. Our House will back whatever choice you make.”

“Better be careful what threats you make, you’re not king yet.” Kylo interjected.

“And your kingdom better remember history.” Finn shot back.

A sliver of hope dwelled in her. They were not of age and while Rose would marry at eighteen she could take the full twenty one years. Years to train and hone her skill, years to

come up with an escape plan. Once Finn and Rose were married she could leave House Sky. Royal title and riches be damned.

She could sit in the bed no longer. Throwing the covers back she did her best to get out of bed with some grace. Everyone stopped to look at her. She realized she must be a comical sight. Her hair was a haphazard mess, her night gown was too large for her lanky frame. She hardly felt regal enough to command the room but she couldn't let the boys start an all-out war.

"It's been settled. Our Houses will join. I'm sure by day's end it shall be made official. You may show up on my twenty-first summer if fate has any mercy you will catch the pox and die." It was a childish jab at the end but she didn't care.

"Is that anyway to talk to your betrothed." His voice all honey now.

Rey was having none of it. Let him have his day. She could count this a simple battle, she'd win the war. Kylo's face changed from arrogant humor to suspicion. She felt pressure in her head. "He's probing" she tried to push him out but he was stronger than her. He was in her mind, looking through her thoughts. He was looking through her memories. She willed all her might and with a power she didn't know she had thrust up a mental block. It was enough, he was out but not before he'd seen her escape plan.

He stepped close mere inches away. Suddenly it was just them. Rose and Finn forgotten observers in the room. "Train with Yoda, practice with your little sword, try and be my equal." His fingers traced her face only to settle on her jaw as he gripped her chin to tilt her head up to look at him.

Rey wanted to slap him but instead she was frozen in place. The mental probe had shaken her badly. Hot tears came unbidden down her cheeks. Why was she crying? After all her bravado he was witnessing her crack. She was a silly child, her cheeks burned with humiliation.

Instead of arrogance his next words came out almost tender, but underneath them Rey could hear the possessiveness. "My scared little dove. Do not think you can escape fate. We are bound. There is nowhere you will go that I will not find you." He wiped her tear with the back of his hand. She thought for a moment he was going to kiss her but he kissed the top of her head.

With that he was gone. As soon as the door shut, Rose burst into tears. Finn tried to comfort her. "I could challenge him." He said trying fix something she knew was already out of his control.

"Take care of my sister that will be enough." She tried to give him a reassuring smile.

"You cannot marry him, he's a monster." Rose was shaking.

"It's okay Rose, I'm sure in a few summers he'll grow bored waiting and marry some poor lord's daughter." She tried to sound convincing. No reason to burden her sister more. "Now go tell the castle the news, the sooner the better."

They were reluctant to go but Rey shooed them away. She was suddenly very tired. She crawled into bed, her head was dizzy. Tears of exhaustion and grief overcame her. She let it all out to her pillow.

“Rey,” it was Kylo. He wasn’t there but yet he was. She could feel him.

“Go away.” She sniffed.

Arm engulfed her and she could smell his scent. She didn’t know if she was dreaming or if it was real. She didn’t care, she let him hold her for a moment, closing her eyes her sobs slowed and so did her breathing. His voice soft in her ear shushed her to sleep. She didn’t know how she could hate someone and need them so badly. She didn’t want to believe they were force bonded, yet here he was, and she wasn’t pushing him away.

“I don’t like you,” her voice sleepy.

“I know,” his voice humored. “You will.”

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Six Time

Rey woke the next morning feeling a strange emptiness. She sat up in bed and listened, the castle was quiet. She had slept in for the sun was high in the sky indicating it was mid-morning. The silence was more than just sound though, he was gone. She knew it, Kylo had left. She felt an odd ache in her chest. She frowned, a part of herself thought she'd be jumping for joy. She'd wished him away since the moment she'd met him. Slipping out of bed she dressed quickly and left her room to confirm what she already felt.

As she walked down the hallway two servant ladies passed her. They stopped and seemed to gawk at her. They quickly averted their gaze when she met their eyes, walking on quickly, whispering to each other. She wondered what transpired while she slept. Her sister's room was empty, her stomach rumbled, and she decided to go to the kitchen. Hopefully she'd find Rose soon, she was sure Kylo hadn't left without announcing their betrothal.

The kitchen smelled of bread and her mouth watered. The old cook, Mykel, was kneading dough when he saw her enter. Smiling he waved her over. He brought her a fresh loaf, with a hunk of cheese, and placed a tin cup of milk in front of her.

"Eat, you look as skinny as a plucked chicken. Good seeing you up and about, princess." He smiled shoving a bowl of butter and fresh honey her way.

Rey couldn't help it she tore into it with a quick thank you. She was glad Mykel knew her and cared little for proper etiquettes.

"Lots happening in the castle, aught to give the people enough to talk bout till your weddin."

Rey paused looking at him. He winked at her. So Kylo had announced it.

"Strange times, didn't think I'd be seeing you wed til your father, may he rest in peace, drug you out of the yard, to the chapel." Putting the dough to the side to rest, he wiped his hands on his apron. "No offense m'lady but many a bets were put on whether you'd end up wed or a sister."

Rey looked down at her food, her appetite seemed to dissipate. He seemed to sense her glum mood and brought her some apple tarts. Her favorite.

"Don't blame you for not wanting to marry that one. Strange king he is. No smile, no warmth. Couple of the maids tried to catch his eye, and he hardly glanced at them. His dark past don't help him neither...still," the cook stopped and looked hard at her. "Was there the day he carried you in. Threatened everyone except God, to save you. Might be he does have a heart in there"

Rey tried to smile. She let him put the food in a basket. He loaded it way past full and she had to beg him not to make her another one.

“You haven’t seen my sister have you?”

“I bet you find her in the court yard, seems House Ortega be leavin today. She be a girl in love, bet not a moon past her eighteenth birthday she wed.”

Rey thanked him again, leaving the warmth of the room behind. She found the court empty with her sister standing by the gate. Her sister smiled at her when she saw her.

“You shouldn’t be out of bed.” Her voice trying to admonish.

“House Ortega leave?” she nodded past the gate.

“Just, they had to make an early start.” She wiped her eyes and Rey realized she was trying to hold back tears.

“House Ren?” she knew but she wanted to hear from her sister.

“He showed up at dinner, gave his condolences and then announced the engagement.” Rose paused her brows furrowed for a moment. “General Snoke seemed shocked. He tried to grab Kylo but he shook him off as he left. Seems from the gossip you were not the one the general had intended for the king to marry. They left soon after.”

Rey took her sister’s arm and they walked back. She let her sister talk about Finn and how they planned to write to each other every day. As they passed the chapel Rey realized she needed to see her father’s stone. Rose tried to go with her but she waved her off.

“I need a few minutes alone.” She gave her sister the basket of food and asked her to carry it to her room. She promised to join her there shortly.

The alcove that held all the royal’s bodies was located beneath the chapel, and the steps down to it were lit by torch light. The temperature dropped drastically with each step in. “*As cold as death down here she thought.*” It wasn’t hard to find the stone and she stopped for a long minute to look at it. The image would do, but no likeness could replicate the man she loved. She placed her hand on the carved stone and wept.

Weeks passed and Rey was finally recovered enough to resume practice in the yard. At present the training area was empty and it was just her and her mentor, Yoda. She hadn’t been able to talk to him about her marriage alliance till this morning.

“Are you angry with me?” She was practicing her balance on a raised thin beam.

“Anger is a weak emotion, child.”

“I’m to marry Kylo, I’ve given my word.”

“So you have.”

Rey was frustrated she wanted Yoda to yell at her, something. His silence was angering her. She took two more steps and chanced another look at him. The glance cost her and she fell off the beam with a hard thud. Wiping dust off herself she found Yoda looking down at her.

“Focus, focus you must. Your path is most treacherous. You must not lose your step.”

“How can I defeat Kylo?”

“Defeat? Hmmm. Wrong question, you ask.” He offered his hand.

Taking it she shifted to her feet. “Snoke tried to kill Poe, how can I join such a house?” Her voice low. Her vision wasn’t proof and she didn’t want servants over hearing.

“To be looped in with General Snoke is all House Ren?” He let her ponder the question as he grabbed two long staffs.

“Kylo doesn’t want an assertive queen. He will want to dominate me.” She took one of the wooden poles from him. She was thankful for the change of pace, she needed to spar.

“Certain of Kylo are you, hmm? Your mind made up?”

“Do you think there is good in him?” They circled each other.

“Save your life, he did”

“I think he saved me because it served his best interest.” His feet moved slowly, she watched them, waiting for his move.

“Spar with you, he did”

“He’s a sore loser and he cheats.” She was getting restless waiting for his strike.

“Even practice with you, no man here for years would.”

“You’re on his side?”

“No one’s side, find a truth, helping am I.”

“He cannot love.” Her hands gripped her staff tightly. If he didn’t start this soon she would.

“Fine cloak, left you he did.”

“A gift to show off.” She was impatient. She didn’t want to talk anymore, she decided to make the first move. She thrust towards him hoping to catch him by surprise. She should’ve known better, her impatience cost her and her staff caught nothing but air. He in return used his staff to trip her. Her weapon lost from her hand fell by Yoda’s feet.

“Learn control in everything, you must. Be a slave to your emotions, do not. Make you foolish and blind, will it. Made for a child that cloak was not, but woman. Of the finest

material, it is. Seen it once before, I have.”

She was back on her feet, and took her staff back from Yoda. She’d thought about burning the cloak, but something had stopped her. It was beautiful. He couldn’t have commissioned something that fine so quickly. It had also smelled faintly, not of fur but perfume possibly. It was a floral scent. It came to her than.

“His mother’s”

Yoda nodded. “Often in plain sight but anger hides them, truths are. To her on their wedding day Liam gave it. She was I remember how beautiful. Of the ceremony I also remember Anakin left before the end.” He tapped her feet into proper position.

“I heard Padme loved Anakin.”

“The daughter of a king overseas, Padme was. No choice in her marriage to King Liam, had she. Arranged on paper, the union was. With her, ships of spices and beautiful silks arrived. Liam was the king and, promised to him, was she. Her deeply he loved, the whole kingdom did. Say nothing, second born Anakin could. Jealousy and want, his dark course set.”

They circled again, “Once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny, consume you it will.” He struck but this time she was ready.

“And Kylo?”

“Have to help him find his path, you will. Light, dark, hmm? Know I not which way his shadow will fall.”

“He told me to train, to learn the force, to try and be his equal.” She blocked another strike from him. He was testing her defense. She thought than of her humiliation. How Kylo was able to use the force against her.

“Do you think you are his equal not, hmm? He found an opening and gave her arm a hard smack.

“He’s stronger in the force than me, he used it to best me in everything.” It stung to admit it.

Yoda snorted, “That may make him stronger than you, but why do you think you are his equal not, hmm? If to believe that you begin, lost, everything is.”

She stopped. Yoda was right, but she felt a knot in her stomach. Fear? She didn’t know. Kylo was all energy and she feared she’d be consumed by him.

As if reading her mind he continued. “Your fear name, you must conquer it. Kylo, is your enemy not. Teach you everything I can child I will. The nights, long, will be, but the years short. Prepare, we must prepare.”



Yoda wasn't wrong in that. Kylo was constantly on her mind but she wouldn't see him again for another six years.

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Seven: Regent

Almost a full moon later, Rey found herself sitting at the council with her Step-mother, Poe, Yoda, the high priest, two generals, and half a dozen advisors to the crown. The mourning period was at an end. They were gathered for one reason, to hear the last will and testament of her father, King Luke. The shift of power would be revealed today. Rey's stomach was in knots, if Phasma was given control of the Regency, heaven help them all. Everyone's face grim, save the queen, as they looked towards the high priest, who was in charge of reading the will. Queen Phasma, for her part, looked like the cat who'd been given a warm bowl of milk, she was almost purring. It was clear she expected the priest to bestow her the power she'd always craved.

The high priest, started a blessing, asking for guidance in the days ahead. After a few minutes, the short prayer started becoming a sermon. Yoda gave a loud grunt, in irritation, his eyes meeting the old man's with a warning look. The High Priest stammered a quick amen, not wanting to test Yoda further. Snapping his fingers, a young monk standing behind him came forward. The brother held in his arms a small wooden chest, head bowed he gave it to his elder, retreating back a respectful distance. The priest with an extravagant flair of his arm (causing Yoda to roll his eyes) brought forth a gold key, unlocking the box.

"The late King, may his soul rest in the Shadowlands, inscribed his final will on the day of his son's birth. Wisest of Rulers, he instructed us, how to serve the kingdom, until his son came of age." The Queen rose, her face alight with anticipation. Acknowledging her, the priest looked uncertain for a moment, his eyes shifted down, avoiding further eye contact with her. Rey could feel the nervous energy coming off of him. The Queen must have sensed it too, for her face darkened. "He's elected the council, headed by Yoda his most trusted friend and advisor, as Regent, until King Poe comes of age."

The council erupted in talk. Yoda stood up, his hands waved for silence, his face reproachful. An instant hush befell the table, he nodded to the priest to continue. The Queen shot murderous hate his way, causing the old man's voice to drop several octaves as he continued. "Ahem..yes as I was saying. The council, shall address all matters of state, land, tax and war with three-fourths majority needed to pass."

The Queen could contain herself no longer. "Treasonous!" Her fist striking the table. "The Queen Mother is lawfully supposed to take the place of Regent." She pointed at the members of the table. "He cannot do this to me!" She was mottled red, and if possible, looked even more monstrous than usual.

The Priest nervously licked his lips, as he tried to conjure up his next words. "My Queen, your husband, was very specific, there can be no misunderstanding." His jeweled fingers held up the parchment, pointing. "Inscribed on this paper are the names of the appointed council;

myself, Yoda, General Hoth, General Kota, Rys the Keeper of the Treasury, Nobleman Arren, Cale, and..." He swallowed hard, his voice wavered "last his eldest daughter Princess Rey."

The Queen took the nearest thing in front of her, a wine goblet, and threw it at the table. It bounced once, narrowly missing General Kota. "I'm not even on the council." The queen, ignoring the murmurs of outrage from the table, marched to the priest and tried to rip the paper from him. Shocked, he held it away, taken aback by her aggressiveness.

"My lady, the wishes of the king have their reasons. He's bestowed upon my Queen the responsibility of being Lady of House Sky..." With his hands he gestured around him. "Running the castle as you see fit. A fine task in itself. Seasoned men will guide your son in ruling the kingdom. A stipend of 3000 crowns will be given to you yearly." When that seemed to have no effect on her mood, he quickly added. "And the council will always listen to your concerns."

"So the bratty little princess will sit on the council, and the queen mother will not. The king was not in his right mind when he wrote this rubbish. Only a fool would approve such actions."

Rey stood up. "Safeguards," the words almost a whisper.

"What did you say?" Phasma's body snapped toward her. The priest shuffled a few steps back, relieved to no longer be the object of her fury.

Rey faced her calmly, a clear contrast to her Step-mother's livid figure. Her voice clear, in the silent room. "My father placed safeguards, to protect the kingdom from you."

The Queen's eyes narrowed. "Pretentious little monster! Your father was a mad fool. He permitted too much, letting you strut around the castle, like a man. Now he's written, you... YOU, should have more say in my son's life than I. This parchment should be burned before it shames our kingdom."

A click diverted their attention from each other, the priest was locking the chest. Seeing their eyes on him he pushed it into the arms of the monk. The young man seeing the queen assessing him, clutched it closer to his chest.

She snorted in disgust. "Fools, all of you."

Rey looked down to see the queen's goblet at her feet. Phasma distracted, paid no heed when she bent down to pick it up. When her step-mother's attention returned to her, she held it out. A smile on her lips. "Perhaps, you should've served us wine, and maybe we'd wake up with a new will to read." She thought she heard a laugh, quickly covered up with a cough, by Rhys. The rest of the table seemed to hold their breath together.

Phasma's eyes widened in shock, before she screamed in anger. Closing the distance, the queen raised a hand to strike, Rey moved aside, grabbing her wrist, twisting it behind her step-mother's back. The queen tried to wrench it away, but Rey held it with an iron grip. She leaned close, to whisper in her step-mother's ear. "My father, married you despite your trickery,

because he didn't want my little brother born a bastard. You will never be, but a shadow of my mother, the crown merely metal upon your head." With that she let go of the queen's arm.

The council had risen to its feet. General Hoth stepped between them. The Priest horrified spoke next his voice shrill. "Ladies, please let us be civil. We must unite for the kingdom. For our King." Yoda went to Rey's side. He grabbed her wrist and gave her a stern look. Sighing, she turned from the queen. It needed to be said but still, it was not the way her mentor had taught her.

The queen looked around the room, her face twisting to rage, when she found no one rising to her defense, not even her son. She looked each one over in disgust till her eyes came back to Rey. "The days of the spoiled little Princess are over, enjoy your hot words. I will make you eat them later." With that she turned on her heel and strode out of the room. The guards barely able to open the door in time.

General Kota gave a whistle, "By Darth's Moon you have a way princess. I think it's time we draw to close, I will escort the young king back to his room." Poe looked like he wanted to argue, but the general was in no mood. He gave the boy such a look that her brother shut his mouth, and followed Kota out of the room.

"Meet again, we must. Alone with Princess Rey I must talk." He waved them out. They all nodded leaving. General Hoth, gave Rey a small wink as he walked passed.

She tried to work an apology but Yoda raised a hand. "Words spoken, not untrue. Poor timing as they may be."

She ran her hands through her hair, breathing deeply, feeling relieved the meeting was over. "At least Phasma has been stopped. She can't bring ruin to our home. Father saw to that."

"Run of the Castle your father gave, power in that still. Enemy for life, made you. Seek revenge, she will." He shook his head and said no more.

Phasma, wasted no time retaliating. Her new appointed position came with power, and she quickly learned her limits. For one, she had no control over the council, Rey's seat, while Princess of House Sky was untouchable. However, her step-daughters, by law were under the Queen's protection, and in that she found the heart of her vengeance. Two days later Rey woke up to the queen entering her chambers with guards.

"Empty all the closets. Take anything that she wears in the yard. Keep only gowns and dress shoes. Over there, take that sword, and those leather gloves, she will not be needing them from this day on."

Rey had jumped out of bed, intent on stopping the action. One of the guards, Jek, stopped her. "Princess I'm sorry."

Her step-mother absently twirled some pearl beads hung around her neck. Her teeth showing as she smiled, looking at her step-daughter, and then the guards getting to work. “My late husband has gifted me reign over the castle, with authority to enforce moral code and proper etiquettes. As a Princess betrothed to House Ren, a suitable royal you must become.” She looked Rey up and down, giving a sad tsk in mock dismay. “My darling princess, your days of playing dress up in men’s cloth is over. With the correct training I should be able turn you into a proper submissive wife.”

When Rey gave a laugh to this, her voice turned from sugar to ice. “Should you disobey, one of the Sisters will whip the soles of your feet. Contrition and obedience shall you practice in all things. If you fail in this, the punishment will bring you to your knees, so you may learn repentance before your able to walk again.”

Rey pushed the guard aside. “You petty woman, the council will never allow it.”

This time the Queen laughed. “Silly little, brat. The council cannot impede my ordained right to rule my House, and instruct my daughters.” She paused, to watch Jek carry Rey’s sword out. When Rey moved to follow him, Pasma grabbed her arm pulling her back sharply, her facial expression showing unmasked hatred. She leaned towards Rey, intent on the next words being for her alone. “I’m going to love melting it down. I’ll have the blacksmith forge it into jewelry. A necklace perhaps, a daily reminder of who controls your fate, lest you forget.”

Holding Rey’s wrist up, her voice became saccharine sweet. “Shall I make you matching bracelets? Perhaps the blacksmith can allow for each to have a small rung attached, a wedding gift from me. Kylo, may have to chain a disobedient wench, like yourself, up in his bedchamber on his wedding night” Letting her wrist go her she stepped back, surveying her work with unbridled glee. She turned intent on walking out of the room, but stopped whirling around she let out one last barb. “Perhaps, like your rotting dead mother, you will die giving birth to his whelp.”

Anger like she’d never felt before coursed through her body. Her whole self, vibrated with it, and for a moment she wanted to run her sword through her step mother. Next to her bed was her chamber pot, just freshly used an hour ago. As her step mother maniacally laughed, Rey used the force to fling it towards her. It shattered in her chest, knocking her to the ground. Made of fine porcelain it caused no injury, its contents staining fine satin. For a moment, the queen was too stunned to talk, shocked into silence. Rey looked at her than, as one would an insect. She saw that a lamp with oil was close, and she debated sending that her way as well, or maybe the heavy mirror on the wall.

***“Yes child, let her fear you. Let her know your true strength.”*** Satiating words echoed in her brain edging her on. Rey closed her fist feeling a surge of power. She felt almost giddy with it. She felt herself use the force to grasp the mirror. The reflection in the mirror stilled her thoughts. She didn’t know the girl looking back. The sensation dissipated, replaced by a cold chill down her spine. The Force of Darkness was calling to her, encouraging her to channel it, to accept it. She took a step back in horror, she’d almost allowed herself to be won over by it.

Her step-mother rose to her feet. Her face twisted in rage and disgust as she surveyed her dress. "I shall have you whipped" She began to tear her dress off, wanting to get away from the offending material. The guards hearing her scream came in, only to find the queen in a state of undress. The smell, the broken chamber pot and the soiled dress, left no question as to what had transpired.

Jek, strode towards Rey. "My Queen I will take her to the Sisters for punishment" Grabbing her he pulled her roughly out of the room, the others fell into line behind him averting their eyes from the queen, who screamed profanities as they exited. When they were a distance away, Jek stopped, with a sharp order, he dismissed his men. When the last footfalls were heard down the hallway he turned to her, grasping her shoulders, he shook her hard.

"Have you gone mad girl? Has grief pickled your brain? The queen has complete power over you now. She's banned any of us from so much as talking to you. Banishment to any man, woman, guard or servant who aides you in anything deemed forbidden."

"I'm sorry." Bending her head down, she slumped her shoulders. A tear trickled down her cheek.

Jek let out a snort his face softening, "Wicked may she be, that was beneath you princess." Seeing her face fall further down in shame, he patted her arm, giving her an understanding smile. "Though by Darth's Moon, I'm sure she had it coming." They walked the rest of the way in silence.

Two days passed. Rey was in her sister's room. Her feet had just been salved and wrapped again. They stung, and it would take at least a fortnight to heal. She was lucky, the head Sister didn't strike more than half a dozen times. Her blows half-hearted, left marks, but didn't break skin. It was enough to convince the Queen she'd been properly chastened for her offense. Rey tried to lighten the mood by inquiring of Finn.

"He is well, he's an excellent writer. I can almost see his homeland after reading his letters." Her eyes got a little dreamy as she talked.

A soft knock on the door brought their attention to a short woman. She had dark skin and her hair was piled high on her head. She was exotic looking and clearly not from Corelia. Rey was instantly intrigued.

"My name is Maz, I'm from the across the sea, from a village with no name. I've come to be Rey's shadow." Her voice had an accent that Rey had never heard before.

"Why does Rey need a shadow?" A crease of concern crossed Rose's brow.

"Yoda, has sent for me. He's given me instruction to teach House Sky eldest daughter's the way of being a proper lady." She looked at Rey then, her eyes had a twinkle in them.

"Very nice to meet you, Maz, have a seat please. I shall enjoy learning from you." She didn't know yet why Yoda had brought her, but her heart felt a surge of hope. Her mentor did

nothing without cause.

As the days passed, Rey learned why Maz was here. She at first sat with her, handing her fabric, with needle and thread. As she helped Rey with her needlework, she talked about the far country. She told stories of Kings and Great Wars, explaining the traits that served kings well and those that brought great men down. Her stories of battles often were detailed, telling the different strategies need to defeat the enemy. A hasty move, an ill-thought out plan had turned the tide of many wars. A favorite expression to Rey was, *“A simple loose thread can cause even the greatest tapestry to unravel.”*

Her shadow, one day begin to show her a language that could be spoken using her hands. It was intricate in its movements, but Maz was a patient teacher. Being an apt pupil Rey excelled and soon was proficient enough to flawlessly hold conversation with her friend. It proved invaluable as they could hold one conversation with their mouths, and another with their hands. The Queen, ever suspicious of Rey, had paid many a servant to spy on her. Through hand signals she learned who was in her Step-mother’s pocket.

When her feet had fully healed, Maz, took her to a room with a flat level floor. “It’s time you learned how to move with grace and dignity at court.” Giving Rey a wink she circled her. “You may find yourself paired with one partner, or many” A small pregnant pause, both understanding each other, and then for any listening ears Maz added. “On the dance floor, of course.”

That afternoon Rey learned the expected choreographed moves of court inside and out. Maz wasn’t foolish enough to think their recital wasn’t being scrutinized. Rey from time to time rehearsed with her little brother, allowing the queen to view her dancing like a lady. When Maz was satisfied she’d perfected it, she started Rey on her new lessons. She learned how to step lightly, to move without making a sound, to stand perfectly still. If Rey thought exercising in the yard was hard, Maz showed her otherwise. Her shadow, had her stretch and contour her limbs, in ways Rey had never thought possible.

The grueling work paid off, soon she could flex her body in ways that allowed her to move with agility and swiftness. She found each lesson, merely a step in Maz’s ladder. Her new friend and teacher, never let her get comfortable. After her agility had reached its peak Maz begin having family and friends ‘visit’ her. The newcomer, always came to her lessons, as a new partner for Rey to practice with. When it was deemed safe, the tempo would change and Rey soon found herself learning A’Koba’s method of defense, Raymus parry or Dorme’s strike technique. Her feet often bled, not from punishment, but from long hours on the wooden floor.

Yoda, several times a month would bring her on walks. The strolls often took her to private locations, and there he taught her how to become one with the light side. She’d told him of the voice and he’d nodded. The dark often prayed on warriors, in their weakest moments, promising more than it could give. The path of light was hard to follow, deep sacrifice it took, and a high moral code. The more power a force-wielder possessed the harder it was to stay true.

The winter came and went, the castle at times feeling colder inside than out. Rey adapted to her role in the family, walking the thin ice, to circumvent her step-mother. Her life hinged

on her ability to wear two faces, until Kylo came for her. She often wondered if she'd have to wear two faces for him. The letters from Finn to Rose came at a steady pace, however from Naboo there was none. It made Rey wonder if Kylo was going to ignore her till her twenty-first summer.

Spring came and so did her fourteenth birth day. A servant from Naboo arrived that morning bearing a gift for Rey. It was wrapped in soft white rabbit fur. When she opened it she found a beautiful silver looking-glass mirror. She frowned, contemplating the meaning of it. Looking in the reflection she scowled. Her cheeks were fuller, her face, her neck, and her hips, by the River-Mother, even her breast were changing. The lanky girl was fading fast. She was probably the only maiden in Corelia who was angry about this. She threw herself on her bed, face in her pillow, letting the feathered cloth hide her scream. She could picture Kylo watching her, and laughing. He'd promised to come back when she was a woman He left no note, he needed none. His gift was its own message.



## Chapter 8

### Chapter Eight: The Sword

The summers came and went, her step mother stretched her power as far as she could, pushing back at the council at every turn. From time to time Rey was caught “breaking a rule” and her feet paid the price. She thankfully never caused a banishment and found in the castle more friends than spies. The years made Phasma even more unpopular if that was possible. Her lack of regard for her people, and extravagant parties cost her what little favor the people may have given her widow status. They loved their young king, who soon quickly becoming a young teen. Still ever the mischief maker, he often kept the nobles on their toes, his pranks legendary. When it came to matters of the state, the child was gone, he came to council to listen, learn and grow into the king Corelia needed him to be.

Rose, became even more lovely, the letters and gifts ever the talk of the kingdom. Little girls played dress-up, acting out the wedding that they could only dream about. The waiting woman often braided Rose’s hair with flowers and pinched her cheeks, chattering about love, marriage and babies. They didn’t try that with Rey, no little girl was playing dress up for that wedding. The gossip centered on the strange kingdom and lack of communication between the lovebirds. If not for the single birthday gift he sent her every year, the kingdom like Rey, would’ve thought he forgot about her.

On her eighteenth birthday, the annual gift from Kylo arrived, this time Yoda intercepted it. Asking that the servant from Naboo present it to the princess, in front of everyone at her party. The castle, erupted like a beehive, all wondering what exceptional gift warranted such secrecy. Rey, was also kept in the dark, and arrived at the banquet table, as clueless as the rest. Her step-mother eyed her suspiciously, she was not one for surprises, especially from Yoda. The room was filled by nobles, and servants alike, everyone found an excuse to be there.

The secret was kept in anticipation, food and drink served, the guest restless. When the buzz of talk reached a crescendo and it seemed the crowd could wait no longer, her mentor stood up. He waited a minute or two and finally all talk died down, as everyone waited with baited breath for the revealing. Yoda smiled at Rey, giving her a wink he summoned the servant.

The servant wasn’t a servant at all but Ben. He’d aged well. His blondish brown hair, tied back. He wore his House’s finest, the years had taken the awkward teen boy away, replacing him with the young man before them. He held in his arms a gift hidden by pellets of white and black wolf fur. His blue eyes found Rey’s and he grinned. Rey couldn’t help but return the smile, she stood up and gave a curt bow.

“My dearest Princess, your betrothed has requested I give this gift to you, in person.”

Rey walked towards Ben, her eyebrow arched in curiosity. Grabbing the wolf skins, she carefully uncovered the present. She gasped, her heart in her throat. In his arms was the most

intricate sword she'd ever seen. The metal fine, it was a blade like no other. The only jewel in it was a blue stone under the hilt. She grasped it, her hands feeling its weight. The sword seemed to hum to life, the stone lighting up, she felt it connect to her, to her force. She looked up, to see Kylo not Ben in front of her. He was dressed in his finest, smiling at her. In his hand he held a matching blade, his stone red at the hilt. "You haven't forgotten, how to use it, have you?" his voice finding her shock, humorous.

"Get that away from her!" The shrill screech of her step-mother, called out. With her voice, the vision gone, replaced by a confused looking Ben. "Guards, GUARDS!!" she was livid, spit flying from her mouth as she screamed.

Yoda went to step forward, but he was beat by her brother. "What is the meaning of this mother?" Her little brother's voice raised in admonishment.

The queen looked around, coming to her senses. A murmur echoing around her as the court whispered their disapproval.

"My sweet boy, your sister is a lady now. Swords do not become such delicate flowers, Kylo surely meant it for decoration only."

Ben stepped forward, he faced the Queen, giving her a respectful bow. "My queen, forgive me for contradicting you, but my King would never give such a gift as decoration. He was under the impression, his soon to be wife, was an experienced swordsman. Princess Rey is very dear to him for her many...unique talents." He struggled to find the right words, to which Rey wanted to hug him for. "Naboo is a tough land, a hard place for any princess to leave her home, and live in. Delicate flowers, would not survive in our soil..."

A silence followed, Ben looked around not sure what else to say. He looked to Rey and shrugged, no guards stepped forward to take it. In the end it was Poe who broke the silence. He laughed loudly.

"By Darth's Moon, Kylo is going to make a great Brother-in-Law. Only he could get my sister the perfect gift." He whistled as he looked at the sword in Rey's hand. "By Unkars teeth, that's a fine sword. I'll have to ask him to send me one like it, on my coronation." Slapping Bens back he escorted him to his table. Ignoring his mother who tried to convey that a bastard shouldn't be sitting so high up. "Mother if you wish to retire to your chamber, you may. It wasn't so long ago this man was saving my life." At those words Phasma shut up, sulking she drank her wine.

The tension gone, Rey held the sword as one would a newborn child. How long had it been? Her arms ached painfully to swing it around. Maz walked with her, to her room. When the door was shut she gave a laugh and squeezed Rey's hand.

"Yoda has played his hand well, the whole castle knows your betrothed gave you that sword. Now your Step-mother cannot take it away or deny you practice. King Kylo has all but ordered you to use it."

"It came alive when I touched it" Rey whispered holding the sword to Maz.

Maz didn't take it, her brow wrinkling, she looked long and hard at it. She slowly reached over, her hand hovering over the blade, her eyes widened.

"By the Serpent's tail, I thought such things myth. It's a force-blade. Powerful, the blade will meld to its holder. She paused, her eyes searching it, her fingers closer, but they didn't touch. "He has its sister blade. Melded from the same forge these two are. "It's true, you both must be force bonded."

Rey put the blade on her bed, a part of her afraid to leave it anywhere but by her side, lest her step-mother take it. "That's a myth, made up by addle headed villagers."

Maz raised an eyebrow smirking, "And so was this sword, but here we are."

Rey opened her mouth and shut it. No argument would come out. Her friend patted her head and wished her a goodnight. Leaving her with her sword and her thoughts.

Two days later, Ben readied his horse to leave. Rey and Rose were both there to see him off.

"Sure, you can't stay longer? A fortnight perhaps. You are going to break a few maidens' hearts leaving so soon." Rose teased. In her hand she had food wrapped up for his journey.

He laughed taking the provisions from her. "Ah the prettiest ones are already taken." She playfully punched his shoulder and giggled.

"When you see Kylo, can you thank him for me? Give him this." She held out a doll. Ben seemed unsure if he should take it but Rey pushed it in his hand. "He'll understand."

He shoved it in a satchel and smiled, "If you say so." Turning to her his expression turned serious. "Is the queen treating you fairly? Being a bastard and everything, the servants talk more. I cannot do much in myself but a visit from Kylo."

Rose's breath hitched and she seemed about to say something but Rey shushed her. "I'm fine, it's better now. She has to let me in the yard now, the gift all but mandated it." She gave him a reassuring smile.

He was on his horse now. Surveying her he frowned. "Your eighteen summers, come now. Kylo can be a hot-head, but he cares about you. He'll give you, your freedom. He can protect you"

It was there, fear, she tried not to show it. "Thank you Ben, I'll consider it." Like hell, she would. She still had a sliver of hope that there was a way out of all this. She just had to wait, her sister was almost of age.

For a second he paused. Looking at her and Rose he seemed to contemplate something. The moment passed and he didn't press it. Waving to them, he kicked the horse and a few minutes later he was gone.

The Queen had to concede that Rey was allowed back in the yard. For two weeks, Rey was blissfully happy. Believing for once, that she'd won some ground, and for two weeks she had. Her step-mother seethed and plotted, she'd won her spot by treachery, and she'd no problem using such techniques again.

The Queen complained loudly at breakfast, one day that her favorite gown was missing. She sent all her servants to scour the castle for it. Rey paid her no mind, eating quickly, as she might leave early for archery practice. Maz was absent, she'd complained of a stomach ache and had retired to bed. Bad milk she surmised, before leaving.

Rey wandered alone down to the archery field, bow in hand. Her arrows missing, she guessed Yoda or Maz must've moved them. Perhaps she'd find them in the yard. Sighing, she'd have to ask one of the guards for some if she couldn't find them. As she walked the field she became aware of something peculiar ahead. It looked as if a woman was bowed down at the end of the field. Running towards it, she quickly saw that it wasn't a woman, but a dress full of straw and arrows. Kneeling down she surveyed the dress of straw. The fabric, was fine, it looked like the one her step-mother was missing, and the arrows....

"There she is, look.....Look what she did to my dress!" The queen approached with Jek, the head of the guards, and two other soldiers.

Rey knew a trap when she saw one. Rising up she turned towards her step-mother. No witness's. A well planned scene. She was pretty sure Maz's morning meal had been tampered with. She still denied it, but the evidence was overwhelming, and Rey found herself at the sister's waiting punishment.

When Rey lay on the bench to receive her lashes she found a new sister approach her with a willow stick. When she saw her confused look, she shook her head sadly. "Our dear head sister took ill this morning I've been asked by the queen to take her place." Her eyes flashed, and Rey recognized that same cold look, she'd seen it often enough in her step-mothers eyes.

Closing her eyes she braced herself. She managed to not scream for the first half. By the time the sister was done, her feet were bleeding, and she was pretty sure a toe or two was broken. Jek had come into the room, unable to listen to her screams any longer. He took one look at her feet and cursed loudly, gathering her up in his arms. He gave the sister such a death stare she'd blanched and mumbled something about the queen's will. Rey was crying, her feet on fire. Jek was beyond angry. He took her to her room, yelling for Yoda, he kept mumbling apologies like the whole thing was his fault.

Rose came in first and gave a small cry. Yoda behind her. She'd rarely seen him mad, but as he surveyed her feet his face hardened. "Phasma, hand in this, there is." Turning to Rose, he sternly asked for supplies. She seemed frozen, until he said her name loudly again, which broke the spell. With tears in her eyes she scampered off to fetch them.

Her mentor sat by the bed and held her hand. She'd stopped crying, she felt her body shake, as she tried to breathe normally. Yoda turned to Jek and ordered him to get some strong wine. The head guard left, mumbling under his tongue about retribution.

"It was a trap, Phasma, planned it all." Her voice quavering.

"Evil woman, Dark her path. End of her, will it be." He spoke quietly brushing her hair back with his hand.

"How bad is it?" She could only feel blind pain below her ankles.

"Heal for months it will" he grimaced when he looked at her feet again.

"This is her payback for the sword. If I can't walk, I can't go to the yard." Bitterness crept in her voice. She turned her head away.

"Stay true young princess, even in the darkness, hope keep you must." His voice held all the courage she lacked, she loved him for it. Rose entered and they set to work, setting her toes and wrapping her feet. Jek arrived with wine, and after Yoda added some herbs, she drank it down greedily. Sleep over took her and for that she was thankful.

## Chapter 9

### Chapter Nine: The Wedding Clause

The Sister was removed from her position, her little brother though irate, found he could not place blame on his mother. The Queen stating the sister had done her job, but must have gotten carried away. As frustrating as it was Rey could only watch as her step-mother feigned pity, for her eldest daughter's plight. Her feet healed slowly, and it was almost a full moon before Rey could put all her weight on them. Maz worked wonders on them, and while it was painful she broke scar tissue, making them heal right, using salves to keep infection at bay..

Her sister once again mothered over her. Keeping her sister entertained with stories of Talus. She was a chitter of words and excitement. Rose was all talk about the wedding, she couldn't help it she was glowing. Her dress was at present being created by the very best seamstresses in Corelia, along with a huge wardrobe. She would giggle while reading Finn's letters, and get red hiding away any notes that were deemed too romantic. Her little sister loved the way Finn called her swan, and they both smiled at his attempts to write poetry. The following summer, she would leave, maiden no more, she'd be a married woman. Rey felt great joy and sadness in that.

Rey was finally able to hobble around. Her feet had healed enough that walking was possible. She was hungry and she wanted to head down to the kitchen, Rose was usually up and perhaps she'd want to join. The cook had been spoiling them rotten, making them pretty much anything they could ask for. She didn't even knock, opening her sister's door she expected to find Rose getting ready for the day. Instead she was greeted by the sight of her sister sitting by the window. Her head was down, shoulders shuddering with each new sob. Phasma was standing over her, a hand on Rose's shoulder trying to comfort her.

Phasma's pale eyes looked up at her when she entered. Her gaze seemed to linger on her face, for a second, dropping to Rey's feet. She smiled for half a heartbeat, letting her step-daughter know where she stood. Rey decided to take the high ground, ignoring her step-mother she brushed past her to attend to Rose.

"Did you receive some ill news? Is Finn well?" She sat next to her sister, hand on her back she circled it in a comforting motion.

"Oh yes, he's fine. It's nothing Rey, I'll be okay. Phasma was only telling me we'd have to wait a bit. I'm being silly that's all. Her chin quivered, she was trying to reign in the tears unsuccessfully.

Rey turned to Phasma, who tried her best to look upset, however her eyes shone with delight. Whatever this news was, her step-mother was reveling in it.

"What information, did you bring my sister?" She started to stand up, but Rose pulled her down. Her eyes pleading with her.

“No Rey, it’s just an old law. We can wait. It’s okay.”

Now she was confused, what was her little sister talking about. “What law, what’s going on?”

The Queen clapped her hands together in exclamation. Rose glowered at Pasma, but she paid her no heed. “The law states that Rose cannot marry next summer.”

“Rose will be eighteen, she will be of age.”

“That would be the case, but sadly because of you she can’t.”

“I don’t understand.” she could feel her step-mother drawing this out, she was about ready to scour her mind for the truth.

“Rose cannot marry Finn, until you marry Kylo.”

“What?” She felt the air knocked of her.

“I’m afraid unwed daughters must be married off according to birth standing. The eldest must marry or join the sisters, before the youngest can enter into matrimony.” Pasma patted a large book on the table, one of House Sky law records.

“If you don’t believe me ask your dear mentor, Yoda. He could only state it was an old law, one that needed to be changed. Sadly only kings can change such things, regents cannot change cannon laws.”

She pulled from her dress pocket a letter out. “Your beloved, Kylo, sent a lovely letter informing us of our custom.” She handed the letter to her. “So good of him to let us know. Yoda, in his old must be growing senile to miss such a huge blunder. A pity he’s leading my son in court. He should retire before he embarrasses the House further, I think.”

Rey couldn’t hold back her anger any longer. “The reason Yoda advices the king, is because no one cares what you think.”

Pasma’s face turned purple with rage. “I can only hope Kylo beats some submission in to you. Maybe he can quiet your willful tongue”

Her sister rose, grasping her wrist, she managed a small smile. “It’s okay, only three more summers. Hardly worth these tears.”

She turned her back completely to her step-mother. Looking at her sister she tried to focus. Her heart was pounding, she struggled to keep her breathing steady. A net Rey had been trying to avoid seemed to suddenly appear and engulf her. She hadn’t completely thrown out the idea of running away. She knew she couldn’t do that till Rose was safe under House Ortega’s roof. Kylo had not forgotten her thoughts on escape, this was a calculated move.

“Oh I’m sure Finn won’t mind waiting. Poor boy, may have to cut down a tree, but that’s a small matter. However, his poor mother. Her health, I hear is failing fast.” She smiled when they both turned to look at her. “So sad, she may never see her only son wed.”

Rose shot Phasma a derisive look. "I will not make Rey marry Kylo, before she's ready. Finn's mother's health may survive a few more summers."

"Perhaps, it's only her one child's wedding. What else must the poor woman look forward to? Grandchildren? I hardly think the physicians will give her that long. Well, you wouldn't understand, with your mother dying so early." Phasma looked smugly at both of them. Having accomplished her mission, she gathered her skirt, leaving with a sharp slam of the door.

Rey looked out the window. Her teeth pressed hard together, as she tried to quail her anger. Her sister wrapped her arms around her, her head pressed to her back. Rey reached up to grab her arms in a reassuring grip that she didn't feel. They stood like that, embraced as sisters. Cotton floated in the air, giving the impression of falling snow. A soft wind blew, making it swirl snowflake like around their window. For all the spring warmth Rey felt cold, she could almost imagine it was winter.

'Damn him', she thought. She would miss this, she would miss her little sister the most. Turning she hugged Rose tightly. Wiping the tears from her sister's face, she kissed her forehead and ruffled her hair. "It looks to be a beautiful summer for a wedding."

Rose looked at her, eyes shining. "Rey....you don't have to do this."

She shrugged, "I have to marry him anyways, what's a few less summers."

Her little sister grabbed her hands, "Thank you." They rested their foreheads together for a minute, each understanding the sacrifice. "I love him so much, Rey, it hurts. I want the same for you. I..."

"Shhh...dad survived Phasma, I'm sure I can manage Kylo. Plus he may find I'm too wild for his taste, and marry Phasma." They both laughed at that.

Rey left her than and went glumly to her room. Shutting the door she sat on her bed in silence. She had the letter in her hand, the seal broken, marked by the sigil of House Ren. Laying back completely she started reading it.

Dear Queen Phasma,

I hope this letter finds your family in good health. I'm writing to inform you that your House will breach custom and law of the Four Kingdom, with the upcoming nuptial of Princess Rose and Prince Finn. The Four Kingdom laws dictate younger daughters may not marry before their elder sisters are wed (or have chosen to live with the sisters.) To marry Princess Rose with such laws in place, could challenge the validity of such a marriage. I would never wish such a union tarnished, and would be willing to marry my betrothed, Princess Rey, as quickly as time allows.

I shall await your response, as I am sure Princess Rey will be thankful to know I have saved House Sky from a very embarrassing predicament.

Your humble servant,



## *Kylo of House Ren*

She crumpled up the letter and threw it. It landed near the fireplace. She was tempted to light some kindling, just to burn it. How she hated him, he always seemed a step ahead. Her eyes drifted to her open wardrobe. Hanging was the cloak Kylo had given her. She scooted off the bed, drawn to it. Reaching for it, she drew it close. It had hid in her closet for years, a reminder she'd tried to forget, about a future she didn't want. After a slight deliberation she put it on. It fit her well, Padme must have been of similar build. She wondered what she must've thought on her wedding day.

Rey walked over to her mirror. Her eyes looking at the woman who reflected back. Queen Rey of House Ren? She thought with a disquiet sigh. Closing her eyes she rubbed her temple between the bridge of her nose. Could she do this?

When she opened her eyes again the room looked different. She stepped back confused. The mirror was gone, and a beautiful pale woman with dark eyes, hair black as night cascading down her shoulder in ringlets, looked back. Around her the cloak, her face full of fear, terror. Rey heard noises, sounds of men yelling and swords. A small boy with dark hair ran to the woman.

"Mom, where's father?" he was crying.

Rey knew right away who the boy was, the woman was Padme. Shouting, louder this time caused her to act. Padme took off her cloak and wrapped a very young Kylo in it. She kissed his head and pushed him far into her closet, shutting the door. "Stay quiet love, please."

Splitting wood, and the door flew open. A man with blond hair stepped in. His sword drawn, his clothes ripped. Blood was on his blade, smeared on his face, and splattered on his clothes. He looked to Padme.

"What have you done?" she was crying now.

"For you, all for you. We can be together now." He went to embrace her.

"Liam?" she pushed him back.

"I didn't stab him in the back, if that's what you think. It was a fair fight. He wouldn't back down, he wouldn't give up. He left me no choice." He grabbed her fiercely.

Anakin looked at her then, his eyes angry, hurt and also she must've sensed it, dangerous. The point to walk away was gone, darkness was in his soul. A sound came from the closet. He turned towards it, he knew who was hidden there. She grabbed him, knowing her young son's life was at stake, the decision made.

"Shhhhh...my love. He sleeps, let us be together now." She kissed him gently, pressing her body to his. Slowly his physique relaxed, the sword dropping from his hand. When Padme

looked at Anakin, a shadow of emotion crossed her face. Love, hate, Rey felt them all, but mostly sadness. She took his hand, leading him out of the room. She turned once, to briefly look at the closet, a tear going down her cheek. Then she was gone, and the room faded back into her own chamber.

Rey sank to her knees overcome with the vision. She took the cloak off, feeling more than just its physical weight on her shoulders. She supposed it had acted as a talisman, the memory deeply tied to the article. Kylo, so little, had witnessed the brutal end of his childhood. His uncle covered in the blood of his father, his mother unable to leave, to marry her husband's murderer. It explained much about Kylo, his lack of empathy, his coldness.

She was so sure how she felt about Kylo, maybe she was wrong. She carried the cloak to the bed. Wrapping herself in it she breathed the smells deeply. Finding the floral scent but also, hidden deep, his scent. The cloak was the one thing he'd left of his father and mother, it had been used to protect him. Was he conveying the same message to her, that he'd protect her? It was becoming complicated, her black and whites blending together.

She slept, and she dreamed. A wolf howled, she was surrounded by thick forest. Each howl coming closer and closer. She stood her ground. "I'm not afraid of you." She called to the night. It began to rain, and with it lightening. A flash in front of her, revealed a snarling wolf. It flashed again, and it was Kylo. "This isn't who you are, I saw what happened." When she turned he was gone. Searching the storm she tried to find him. Another crackle, and he was in front of her, she tried to step back, but he grabbed her throat pulling her close.

"Expecting a gentleman? That's nothing more than a patient wolf." She grabbed his hands, but he laughed, throwing her from him. She was covered in mud and dirt, she tried to stand up, but her feet bloody again, kept slipping. Looking up, he was there watching her, "So weak, you make this so easy." Another flash and he was the wolf. He snarled once, lunging for her throat. She woke screaming, her hands stretched out in defense.

Quieting her heart she lay in bed. The cloak felt heavy and she pushed it aside. Looking at it she wondered if the dream had been nothing more than a reflection of her fears, or a warning. Telling her that Kylo would never be anything more than his cruel nature. She shivered, closing her eyes, but she slept no more.

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Ten: The Kiss

Announcements were made and letters sent off. Her mentor and her shadow said little, their faces grim as they took in the news. Kylo, accepted the terms for a summer wedding, conceding (Rey was sure with smug happiness) it was in the best interest of both kingdoms. He requested the wedding take place in Naboo, not an outlandish request, as most brides married on their husband's soil. The bride was after all, leaving the protection of her House forever, her husband now her shelter. In the eyes of the law she would be fully his, and her rights as a daughter of House Sky gone.

In two months she would leave her home and travel with a small party, Kylo would meet her at the outskirts of his kingdom to escort her over the threshold. The wedding would take place shortly after they arrived at his home. By fall she would be Queen of House Ren. Alone in a kingdom she knew little about. Married to a man, who would control her fate, her freedom, her life. Rey had always known this day would come, all princesses were expected to marry, but as the days in her home drew to a close she couldn't help feeling bitter resentment. For all her training she was still a woman, and she would be treated as such, property.

The hardest blow, came when she realized that she wouldn't be able to attend Rose's wedding, nor her sister hers. With the weddings so close, and travel between the two kingdoms long and arduous, it was deemed impractical to even consider. Rey cared little if Rose saw her wedding, or anyone for that matter, but she was heartbroken to miss her little sister's day. A painful thought crossed her mind as she readied to leave. Once her feet touched Naboo soil, would she ever be allowed to leave?

The morning of her departure, she woke with Rose beside her. The two sisters had stayed up late, talking, laughing, and shedding a few tears, as they cherished their last hours together. Rose had gifted her that night with a beautiful dress, the colors of House Sky. She'd also presented her a chest filled with night gowns, made of fine silk. Rey had picked up a dark green one, flustering when she realized how sheer and revealing it was. Her sister gave her a wink.

"He may be cold and domineering, but all men become boys when they are presented with such beauty. Walk around in this, and he will forget everything but your name."

Rey's ears grew red and she shoved the lingerie, back into the chest. Her sister laughed and said no more. She apparently was looking forward to her wedding night, more than Rey was. She knew what was expected, and she hoped he wasn't anticipating anything more than duty from her, in that regard. He could find a mistress if he wanted warmth in the bed.

The castle was somber, as everyone prepared to say goodbye to her. The servants teared up as they helped her dress, and the chef had prepared a banquet of food she loved. Her little

brother gave her a hug and a chest filled with gold. His voice quaked at the end, as he bid her goodbye. For moment, when she embraced him, his head of curls under her chin, she almost could see the little boy, he had been. She whispered in his ear how much she loved him, and that father would be proud of the king he'd become.

Her sister was already puffy eyed from crying, she fretted and fussed over Rey, as servants loaded everything into carts. They promised to write each other weekly, and Rose would expect a visit once they were married and settled. Rey smiled, trying to look strong, her sister didn't need to worry about her. She didn't want her to know how much she didn't want to leave.

Yoda came last. He was walking slower, and Rey gathered that his joints must be bothering him. For a moment she pondered if she'd ever see him again. A man of seventy summers, he was aging fast, any winter could be his last. In his hand was a small silver box. He held it out to her. Opening it Rey found a necklace with a locket. When she unclasped it, she saw that each circle contained a painting. A portrait of her father and her mother. Rey slipped it around her neck, kissing Yoda's cheek she prepared to say goodbye.

"I'm not sure I can do this. I don't know if I'm ready." There it was her fear, she closed her eyes. Her hand holding the locket tightly.

"Ready, are you. Strong with the force. Proud am I. Fear you must not, Take strength from your family, alone are you not. Always with you, they will be. Remember the teaching, keep close to your heart the light. Anger, fear, of the dark these things. Goodbye, my padawan, miss you I will."

Her family, save Phasma (who wisely observed from a window) watched as she mounted her horse, and left the palace court. Her people came to see her off, and all along the road she heard farmers, woman, and children call her name. Some threw flowers and others called blessings. Rey tried to smile, she didn't want their last vision of her, a dour princess. Still, by nightfall she was glad for the silence. Maz rode next to her, the silver lining, that she wouldn't be completely alone at the castle. The trip was expected with good weather to take a fortnight. The last few days of it, she would spend with Kylo, when he met them at the border.

A few nightfall's later Rey woke up drenched in sweat. She'd been having the wolf dream again. Feeling restless, she left the tent her and Maz shared, needing air. A guard gave her a look, but she let him know she wouldn't stray far. She had her cloak on, and had grabbed her sword. She needed to let loose some nervous energy. The moon was full, it streamed through the trees giving the forest an ethereal feel. She held the blade in front of her, the moonlight giving it a soft silver glow.

As she held it, she begin to feel strongly that she was being watched. Instinct and training caused her to shift into a defensive poise, as she surveyed the woods. Using the force she closed her eyes, searching for the source, extending her energy out, she felt it spark against a familiar pulse. Her eyes snapped open, and there he was.

"Kylo"

He was inside, his shirt off. An exercise room-possibly. His body shown with sweat as he held his sword in his hand. He smiled at her when their eyes locked.

“There’s no mistaking your gender now.” He smirked. His eyes taking her in. His appearance had also changed. The man in the vision with the cherry blossoms, was before her now.

“Nor yours.” She retorted. He laughed and seemed to naturally accept their weird conversation.

He put down his weapon. He pointed to hers. “Practicing with the sword I made you, I’m sorry I’m not there to teach you a lesson.” He stepped forward, closing the distance between them.

“You will not find me the same girl at the willow tree. If there are lessons to be learned, I will teach them.” Her eyes flashed, he was so close. She kept her stance, vowing to show no fear.

“I’m sure we’ll fight, in the yard, in the court, maybe even in bed.” He grinned wider, when he saw her cheeks flush. “I look forward to all of them.

She looked up at him, her sword still raised.

“Does the thought of bedding with me scare you?” His hand slowly moved towards her face, her eyes widening when she felt his touch, not understanding how it was possible.

“A force bond is powerful, my scared little dove.” Answering her unspoken question. His eyes had changed, they looked at her now with raw hunger. It made her stomach flutter, and she could feel an emotion from him she’d never felt before. An ache, a want. His eyes searched hers, was he looking for the same in her? He seemed lost for a minute, but then he bent down, and Rey realized he was going to kiss her. She raised her sword, but he grabbed her wrist forcing it down, his other arm encircling her waist. His lips found hers.

She had never been kissed before, and now Kylo’s mouth pressed hard against hers. Her emotions swirled, as she processed it.

“Let go, Rey.” He kissed her again, but softer. “I can show you so much.” His lips now nudged hers open. His hand in her hair. “God you are so sweet.” His voice a harsh whisper.

She felt heady by it all, her body relaxing, her mouth opening and allowing him to kiss her fully. She felt herself respond. Her sword dropping to the ground she clung to him.

He chuckled at her. “So receptive, to think you fought so hard against me.” He trailed kisses down her jaw her neck. She looked at him in wonder, feeling a strange heat between them. He sensed it too in her, and pulled her closer. “You belong to me now.”

His words, commanding broke the spell. She pushed him away, breathless and shaking. He tried to hold on, but she was stronger now. He couldn’t mentally keep the connection without her permission.

“I am Princess Rey of House Sky, daughter of a great king, force-wielder and I’m your equal. I may be soon by your wife, but I belong to no one.” Energy buzzed around her as he pushed, trying to keep the control. “You should stay home Kylo, if you think you can tame me.”

Before she broke the connection she could see his face. He was angry with her, the veins in his neck throbbed. He’d lost control, and it enraged him. She heard him shout her name, but she refused to engage. Let him stew on that till they met, in person. Picking up her sword she felt a new sense of peace. After a short practice (as she didn’t want guards looking for her) she returned to her tent. Laying down, Maz gave her an inquisitive look. She wasn’t sure if she’d tell her everything later, but for right now she wanted to sleep. For the first time in many moons, she slept soundly.

# Chapter 11

## Chapter Eleven: Crossing the Threshold

Naboo was a land like no other. It was located in the mountains, the forest as much a barrier as the mountains themselves. The open woods seemed to close in, and the road felt ominous as they drew closer to the border. Rey's spirit darkened with it. The reality of her impending wedding, growing heavy on her shoulders with each step. She could feel her connection to Kylo grow stronger as she approached. Once he'd reached out to her, but she'd brushed him aside. She wasn't ready to talk to him, their last visit fresh in her mind. She was hoping that she could keep the upper hand. He was strong, but she'd been a busy bee. The knowledge she had, rivaled his, and he no longer would find an easy prey to bully into submission.

Two days later they reached the border. The road breaking open into a wide area, as they approached she saw him, or should she say, she saw him and his army. "*Good Grief*" she thought, "*Did he bring every soldier he could find.*" Before her was Kylo, General Snoke, the twins, and lining the road a mass of armed guards in their full armor. She could tell he was trying to show off. Her mouth twitched into a smirk, she quickly hid. Was it a wedding or a war he was preparing for? Probably both, no doubt. .

When she was only a few feet away she stopped. The game of chess had begun. Her first move was the very clothes she was wearing. She had thought long and hard on her outfit. For once in her life she'd studied her wardrobe with purpose and thought. Maz had watched her. She pulled her sister's blue dress out, it was beautiful even if she hated wearing such frills. Maz helped her step into it. When the laces were tied and the dress adjusted, Maz held out the cloak. Rey had hesitated, but her shadow pushed it forward.

"Don't be stubborn, child. This will remind him of his mother, his father, his future he needs to fight for."

After she'd put it on, Maz surveyed her. "A Queen already. Your soon to be husband needs you, never forget that. He has many subjects, but no true friends. You must find a common ground, together you can make a kingdom that no man can tear down."

Rey thought of Maz's words as she watched Kylo dismount. He was dressed in black, his hair hanging freely. A black cloak around him made him seem even larger in person. His eyes looked her over, his face stern. When he saw the cloak she saw something change in his visage, the hardness softening just a little. Walking to the side of her horse, he gave her a little nod.

"Welcome to Naboo, Princess. Are you ready to cross the border with me? To give up your mantle as daughter of House Sky and join my House. To be my Queen?"

He held out his hand to her, his eyes never breaking from hers. A feeling of wanting to turn the horse around, to kick its side, and flee came on so strongly she could visually see herself doing it. Shaking off the thought, she vowed to not look back, not once. The wolves were watching for weakness. She gave him a smile, nodded her head and took his hand. With a graceful swoop he pulled her from her horse. She expected him to put her down, but he held her in his arms. Smiling at her when she arched an eyebrow at him.

“The only dirt I want on your clothes, should be from your new homeland.”

She sighed, letting him walk her over to his men. He yelled a command at his guards. She noticed they were carrying torches and upon his words, each one was lit. The road became illuminated.

“To light the road to your new home, I wouldn’t want you to get lost.”

He met her glare, his eyes dancing with humor. Setting her down, he led her to his party. General Snoke, bowed a little, his eyes sharp as they looked at her. The twins were not identical, Ben was the only one who looked happy, his smile wide as she approached. His twin brother was a red head with short hair. He gave a tight smile, his eyes showed not an ounce of warmth. He stood close to General Snoke and seemed to exchange a look with the old man as they passed by them. A warning tingled up her spine, as she took mental note to keep a careful eye on him.

Kylo held her arm as they walked. It was a way to the castle, several miles in fact. She suspected he wanted to talk to her. This was confirmed when he looked over his shoulder, ordering his family to not follow. They were quiet for a few minutes. His jaw tightened a few time and he opened closed his mouth. Apparently he was trying to articulate something to her.

“Why did you break our connection?” his voice more of a question than an accusation.

“I thought I was pretty clear.”

“You can’t run away every time we fight.” His voice was controlled, he was trying to keep his temper in check.

“I may be your wife, but you don’t own me.” Stepping over a log, she struggled to free her dress that caught in its branches. He paused to help her. His hands carefully separating the soft fabric from the bramble.

“If I was a crueller man, I could point out by law, I do. However if I wanted a bleating sheep, I’d of picked one of the nobles Snoke wanted me to marry. I will give you all the freedom you want, everything you want, everything you could ever need.”

“How generous of you, what does this liberty cost me?” She was free now and she turned to look at him.

“In a dance only one can lead, I won’t use it against you, but I cannot spend our years wrestling for control of it.”



Reaching out he, took her hands. The way he held them, felt almost as personal as the kiss they shared earlier. A part of her wanted to yank her hands away, to give a sharp retort to his offer. The flutter in her chest, and the fact that his hands felt warm, protective, changed something in her. She didn't want him to let go, the emotion surprising her. Maz's words came back to her, she needed to find common ground. Kylo was trying (maybe not exactly to her liking) to get off his high horse, and compromise with her. It was a start, and maybe she needed to get off her high horse too.

"I will try, but I must warn you, I'm a terrible dancer." She gave him a half-hearted smile. His face softened, and she thought she saw relief in it too. Lifting her hands to his mouth he kissed them both. A touching move that seemed out of character for him.

"That's not what I heard." He winked at her. Then his face became serious again. "I will protect you, no one will ever hurt you again. A kingdom will fall before a hair on your head is hurt."

Rey inwardly sighed, men. Always wanting to protect. He said he didn't want a sheep, and yet here he was trying to make her a lamb again. She wanted to scream, for all the good it would do her.

"My king, I thank you for your protection. However, rest assured that I also will not allow anyone to harm a hair on your head." She gave him her sweetest smile, before continuing. "Perhaps, if such a foe comes to our door, might we fight them together?"

Kylo studied her for a moment, then much to her relief this time, took the olive branch.

"I fear for our enemies, with a queen such as yourself by my side. Shall we proceed to our home?" He led her back to his horse. She looked for hers, and found a soldier holding its reigns.

"Ride with me." She knew he meant it as an order, but his voice made it sound more like a request. Nodding she let him lift her up. He swung behind her, his body enveloping her as he nudged the horse back on course, his arm wrapping around her waist. Clearly a physical way for him to show her, and others she was under his mantle of protection. For a while she was stiff under his embrace, but as the trip wore on she became accustomed to his touch. Without realizing it she relaxed, leaning against him, her head resting close to his heart. Her thoughts drifting to the memory of him, saving her from the river, where she'd heard his heart beat so clear.

She felt him probe her mind then, it wasn't forceful, and she let him. The river scene playing before him, in her mind. She closed it off before he could see Snoke. There would be time for that, but right now they needed to learn to trust each other first. When he felt the wall, he bristled against her.

*"What are you hiding? Have I not promised to take care of you?"* Using the force he whispered in her mind.

Pursing her lips, she didn't know what to say. It wasn't that easy. Secrets, like this couldn't be revealed till the time was right.

*“Trust me, please. I cannot show you now.”* Her voice imploring him to understand. He gave a grunt, clearly dissatisfied but, probed no further. They had a long ways to go. Laying her head back on his chest, she closed her eyes, willing her thoughts away, letting Kylo lead her home.

# Chapter 12

## Chapter Summary

Wrote this in an hour. I may revise it a bit later.

## Chapter 12: A Change

They arrived at the castle shortly after nightfall. Rey had slept off and on, during the trip. The pace felt hurried with rest breaks few. She realized the guards weren't just for show, there was an undercurrent of tension as they journeyed. She'd tried to ask about it, but it became clear it wasn't something Kylo wanted to discuss. Reaching out using the force she lightly probed a few guards' minds, mostly curious. An image of dead bodies, a burnt grain house flashed back at her. Her attempts to investigate further were shut down, angrily by Kylo, who gave her a sharp admonishment for prying. They exchanged a flurry of words, using their force bond, both exasperated by the others refusal to see their point of view.

In the end they both left the conversation at a stand-still. Kylo, feeling indignation from earlier stated that, if she wasn't ready to reveal her secrets, she needed to stay out of his. His only answer he'd give her was, he was dealing with some vagrants and outlaws. It was nothing, she need concern herself with. Frustrated she stopped leaning against him, unable to do more to put distance between them. He still held her, his grip tightening, as she leaned forward. Ignoring it she tried her best to watch the road ahead, she didn't need to cause a scene in front of his men. Her inner voice, telling her, it was much more serious than he was letting on.

Rey's first impression of House Ren was how unfriendly it looked. The walls rose sharply and it was carved into the mountain. This was a smart tactical move as it made it impossible for anyone to enter, but through the front gate. As she entered through the main gate, she couldn't shake the feeling it was more a prison than a home. The only soft touch she found was the cherry blossom trees planted around, and inside the castle walls. They felt out of place against such a backdrop, still she was glad for some warmth as she accustomed herself to her new home.

Once safely inside, the gates shut, and they dismounted. When he took her arm this time, she felt none of the kindness as before, what ground they'd gained earlier lost. She walked the halls, towards her new quarters, in silence. Maz was behind them, along with two of her waiting woman, and two from House Ren. The travel had taken its toll, and the prospect of a real bed was her only silver lining to this day.

He opened her door, releasing her arm, watching her as she stepped inside.

“I hope these quarters, are to my ladies likings. Should you wish for anything, you have only to ask. When you need me, I shall be in my room. This door..” he pointed to a red door in the adjacent corner of her room. “..leads to a small connecting hallway to my room.” He smiled when he saw her mouth open. “However, I think using it would be unwise until we are married.”

She couldn't help it she rolled her eyes. She wondered if she could fit her door with a lock. Kings and Queens usually had rooms on far sides of the castles, something Rey realized she'd been expecting. Her husband apparently wanted his wife close. She hoped he wasn't asking her to be happy about it.

He took her hand, meeting her eyes, he kissed her hand. “Goodnight Princess, in three nights, we shall meet in our house chapel to be joined in union. I shall leave you to rest and prepare.”

He opened the adjoining room door to leave, revealing a sister in cloth sitting behind it. She quickly rose, making room for him to pass as she gave him a small bow.

“Oh yes, on the advice of my council, one of our sisters will be keeping watch between our rooms. To save us from any temptations.” His face showing that cocky grin, she hated.

Walking to the door, she grasped the handle. “Should you feel tempted, perhaps the sister will let you embrace her, for I will not.” She didn't know who looked more shocked, the nun or her fiancé. She smiled, and with that, shut the door, hoping he would take the hint and go to bed. She certainly would.

Rey spent the next three days exploring. True to his word, Kylo stayed away. Apparently, it was tradition for the men in his house to leave on a hunt before the wedding. The wild boar, and game they killed to be served at the wedding feast. She would've loved to join, perhaps after the wedding, they could ride together. Hunting was something she hadn't done, since her father was alive. Perhaps, they could share their love of the outdoors together. She found herself going to the garden the most. It was larger than the one at home, wild flowers and knarled trees made it feel like she was in the woods, instead of a garden. Solace that she missed so much, from her willow tree, she found here. Like at home, she'd brought her sword with her, finding a private place, hidden away from eyes to practice.

On the eve of her wedding, Rey found herself hiding under one of the trees. She hadn't brought her sword, she just felt like escaping from everything. She felt alone, and not for the first time wondered if she was making a mistake. Tomorrow she would be queen, married in all ways to a man she was trying to understand. It was daunting, to say the least. She absently grabbed flowers, and wove a crown with them, something she hadn't done since a child. The flower crown something only her sister wanted to wear. A tear came unbidden down her cheek, she rubbed it away, angry at herself for letting emotions get the better of her.

“Can I join you?”

She looked up to see Kylo, his face concerned as he approached her.

She nodded, letting him sit down next to her in the grass. He saw her crown of wild flowers, smiling he picked it up.

“This suits you.” He placed it on her head, his hands adjusting her hair to better place it. “I’d marry you now if I could, here in the garden, without all the ceremony if I could.”

She was quiet, not sure what to say. He studied her for a minute, his hand reaching for hers. “If it makes you feel better, I also dreaded this aspect of my life. I assumed I would get sidled with some mindless noblewoman. She’d give me a son, and we’d tolerate each other, end of story. It was never a part of my life I felt would matter.”

Rey felt that spark, the one she always tried to ignore as he touched her. “I never wanted to marry, to be property of some man. My whole life to be made a shadow whose sole purpose was to serve and bear children. It’s not who I am. I wish sometimes I would’ve been born a man. I wasn’t made for this role.”

Another tear, but this time Kylo stopped it. “You will never get a poem from me, or a sonnet. I will never bring flowers to you, or whisper sweet nothings in your ear. I don’t like being disobeyed, I cannot stand the talk of fools, or the idleness of the rich. Until that day by the willow tree, I never thought I’d love a woman. You challenged me, in ways no man has ever even dared.” He tilted her chin so she was looking at him. “I will never let you become that woman. I want the girl under the willow tree, nothing less than her.”

She kissed him, at first it was just spontaneous. His words, making her feel for the first time that she could love him. He responding, the feeling she tried to ignore, she finally didn’t. He laid her down in the grass, his hands exploring her body. The smell of earth, flowers, and nature surrounding them. He stopped once, his eyes searching hers. “We should probably stop” his voice husky.

She smiled, her cheeks warm. “I think, this is the way I want it to be, our first time, here.” She pulled him close, and for once in her life, stopped thinking about anything.

# Chapter 13

## Chapter Summary

The vows are Irish vows. I don't know who originally wrote them, but I thought them fitting for our couple.

## Chapter Thirteen: A Wedding, A Murder

Most girls, remember their weddings with fondness. The dress, the limelight, the leaving of their families to join their husbands. Rey would remember hers as the day she almost died. It had started off well enough. The weather, allowing for an outdoor ceremony in the garden. A few people hadn't been too happy about the change, but no one says no to the King. It was small, service, with only nobles attending. While Kylo had downplayed it, she had noticed that guards were posted everywhere. He tried to assure her it was because of the event, *standard precautions* he'd stated. The look on the guard's faces told her otherwise, there was something he wasn't telling her. With everything going so well, she didn't want to fight about it. There would be time, she assumed to broach the subject later.

The nervousness she felt about the wedding, seemed to be gone. A calmness she'd not thought possible, filled her as she was fitted in her gown. The dress, was her mother's, Rose who wanted to design her own gown, had thought it would be fitting for Rey to wear it. It fit well, the seamstress was able to fix a few subtle things, but overall the fabric was perfect. She wondered if she would find the same happiness as her mother, a week ago she'd of not thought it possible, but now... So much had changed, she blushed thinking how he'd been so gentle. She actually wanted to marry him. She just wished she could do without all the rites.

Walking with Maz to the garden, they were accompanied by a circle of guards. Her friend gave her a look, with her hands, she talked. "All is not well in Naboo." When Rey signaled back what she knew, Maz gave a quick look around, before she made a short gesture. "Attacks" When Rey tried to engage more, her shadow gave a short shake of her head. "Not now" was all she said.

He was waiting for her under the tree. He was dressed in fine armor, sword behind him. Objected as it was, Rey, had also elected to wear her sword, it was fitted across her back, an easy grab, should she need it. Everyone but Kylo had objected, and that was all that mattered. He smiled at her as she approached, their eyes sharing a secret. The entire castle would be in an uproar if they'd known this is where they'd said their promises earlier, with only the autumn breeze between them.

The high priest said some words, and then clasped their hands together. Looking at them both, he asked if they'd prepared to say some words. They both nodded. Rey, had thought long and hard about what to say, her words, were not her own, but an old Corelia poem. Looking at her small hands under his, she took a deep breath, trying to conjure up the words, hoping he would understand it meaning.

“You are Blood of my Blood, and Bone of my Bone.  
I give you my Body, that we Two might be One.  
I give you my Spirit, `til our Life shall be Done.  
You cannot possess me for I belong to myself  
But while we both wish it, I give you that which is mine to give  
You cannot command me, for I am a free person  
But I shall serve you in those ways you require  
and the honeycomb will taste sweeter coming from my hand.”

A few of the nobles shuffled, giving each other a nervous glance. She didn't care, the only person who needed to understand was before her. His dark eyes studied her, nodding he kissed her hand.

The priest turned to him.

“My lady, in my land, knights often kneel when taking oaths.. I do so now as I say my next words to you.” With that he knelt to one knee holding her hand. “I vow you the first cut of my meat, the first sip of my wine, from this day it shall only your name I cry out in the night, and into your eyes that I smile each morning; I shall be a shield for your back as you are for mine,  
never shall a grievous word be spoken about us, for our marriage is sacred between us and no stranger shall hear my grievance. Above and beyond this, I will cherish and honor you through this life and into the next

She looked down at him, understanding the force bond between them. He rose, taking her face in his hands he kissed her. It wasn't the chaste peck often seen at weddings, but passionate. For a minute she was sure, he'd forgotten where he was, for a moment so did she. The priest cleared his throat, bringing them back to reality. Breaking away, she blushed, he smiled at her, his look promising more later. The priest bound their wrist with a strip of white ribbon, declaring them joined in holy union. As they walked to the banquet hall to have the wedding feast, the nobles, tossed flower pedals and called blessings to the couple.

If the day had ended there, Rey would've had the perfect wedding. The feast was festive, a few musicians had been commissioned to play. The long tables had been spread out for guest, and servants darted back and forth to serve the crowd. Rey sat with Kylo at the wedding table. Maz was next to her, Kylo flanked by General Snoke. The twins, were not allowed at the table, in the eyes of the law, bastards had no legitimacy to the family, and thus they were seated at a table close by. Ben seemed to be having a grand time, smiling at her, he lifted his cup. Hux for his part, sat rigid, his eyes looking at his table with contempt.

Wine was poured, Rey held her first glass preparing to drink. Maz stopped her, with a look she took the cup, pressing it to her lips before handing it back to Rey. It was done discreetly, but Rey looked at her friend concerned. She felt Maz was also holding something back, from

her. Frustrated she tried to ask, but again Maz signaled for talk later. She watched the people around her, the room hummed with voices, the sound when she tried to listen a jumble of words.

General Snoke stood up, everyone's eyes directed his way. He snapped at a servant who brought forth a bottle of wine.

"The sweetest wine, from your mother's country, my king." His voice loud for the people to hear.

Maz stood up. It was abrupt. Snoke looked over at her annoyed. She gave him a look, then with a smile to the guest, she left the table to walk to the servant carrying the wine.

"If I may, I would be honored to serve the newlyweds." She took the silver platter holding the jeweled bottle out of the servant's hand.

General Snoke's face arranged itself in a tight smile. "I had hoped to pour the wine, my lady."

She smiled the sweetest smile, she could give. "General Snoke shall have to forgive me, I shall pour my queen's glass, and then allow him the honor to serve his king." She was at Rey's side. General Snoke opened his mouth to protest, but Maz with a graceful movement took Rey's glass and filled it. Her hands steady, but at the end she ran her finger across the top. Handing the bottle to Snoke, she took her seat.

He smiled, but his eyes were cold. With a flourish of his hand, he grabbed Kylo's cup. "My King."

While he poured, Rey saw Maz, put her finger that she'd swiped to her lips. She furrowed her brow, this was getting ridiculous. She held her goblet, waiting for Kylo to take his. General Snoke poured his as well, and raised his glass to them.

"May your kingdom live forever. May the rightful ruler always sit on the throne."

Rey felt a warning, she tried to use the force to feel the truth in Snoke's word, but it was met with a block. Try as she might, she couldn't see inside, if she pressed too hard he would know she was trying to investigate. Kylo took her hand, smiling he raised his glass towards Snoke acknowledging the toast. She pressed the cup to her lip, when someone violently shoved her.

The cup flew from her hand. Kylo dropped his to grab her, as she was pushed his way. Looking over to see what in Darth's Moon was going on she saw Maz. Her shadow, her best friend, stood holding the table, foam coming out of her mouth, she coughed once. Rey grabbed her, her friend looked at her once, her mouth trying to form words, but only froth coming out. She closed her eyes, her body beginning to violently shake.

"Maz Maz..." She was screaming now.

General Snoke moved forward. "The servant, carrying the wine. Find him!"



Kylo shouted for the physician, but Rey knew her friend was dying. Crying she cradled her in her arms. Her friend's body stilling, the chest giving one final rise.

Kylo, knelt down next to her. "I will find, who did this." His voice like ice.

"You lied to me. My life has been endanger ever since, I arrived here. Now my friend is dead."

He tried to grab her hand, but she pulled away. Turning her head, she looked at Snoke who was standing by the entrance doors. Using their bond she spoke to him so only he could hear. "The wolf is in your castle, among your sheep, can you not see it?"

His eyes narrowed. He answered her in kind. "General Snoke, is my most trusted man. Why would he try and kill me?"

"Maybe he's lost control of you, and seeks a new ruler." She said, feeling the truth in the words.

"Impossible, the twins are bastards. They could never rule." He stood up, clearly ready to be done with this conversation.

"Has history taught you nothing, they were born in blood, they could rule in such." How could he be so blind? General Snoke all, but threatened them in his toast. It was veiled, but it was there.

"Enough, the death of your friend has clouded your judgment. I know my men."

"Clearly you do not, or Maz wouldn't be dead. Your mantle of protection means nothing if you cannot even see the enemy before you."

Shouting, broke their connection. They turned to see guards entering, carrying a body. The servant, his throat clearly cut was laid on one of the tables. Hux walked behind them, his tunic covered in blood.

"I cornered him, trying to grab a horse in the stable. He cut his throat before I could apprehend him for questioning." His voice apologetic.

"He couldn't have done this alone. Find out everything you can on him. I will search his quarters myself." He looked at the body with disgust. "I will root them all out."

"Let me go with you." He needed her.

"No, go with your friend. My guards will lead you to the sisters." She opened her mouth to argue. "The sisters have knowledge of poisons. Perhaps they may find a clue to lead us to the killer."

She nodded, she allowed a guard to take her friend's body from her. Kylo went to her. Holding her hands, he kissed her cheek. Speaking again only to her, "Snoke raised me like a son, when I had no family."

Letting go he left her to follow the guards. She felt alone, as she walked passed Hux he turned to her.

“Such a pity, your friend. I shall do my best to make sure next time, there’s a better outcome, my Queen.”

She paused, her face checking her emotions in. “I find traitors always make mistakes, arrogance their downfall. Sooner or later, the rat comes up thinking he is safe, only to find the cat knew where he was all along.”

She gave him a small nod, excusing herself. He bowed to her.

“As you say my Queen.”

She left him standing at the doorway, well aware he was watching her. She was also aware that the blood spatter on his clothes, was hardly indicative of a man who was just an observer. One rat found, it was time to root out the nest.

## Chapter 14

After placing the body of her dear friend on a table, a very old sister pulled Rey aside. Taking her to a secluded room, she shut the door, locking it behind them. She went to a small desk and pulled out a small pouch. “You’re very lucky to be alive. Nightshade, was laced in your drink, very potent, works quickly and without mercy. I’m sorry about your friend, truly.” She held the pouch out to her, Rey took it, looking inside she found a white powder. “Put this in your drinks, from now on. I will give some to the King as well. If it fizzes, it’s been tainted.”

“Thank you” She didn’t know this woman, a house full of strangers, but she sensed she could trust her. “Is this the first attempt on my husband’s life?”

The Sister frowned, her eyes narrowed and she seemed to be assessing her intent, at last she gave a small huff. “Directly, yes” She turned towards the hearth in the room, a small fire was lit. A kettle hung over it, and using a metal stick, took it from the spit. With hands, that had done the act thousands of times, she deftly poured the boiling water into two cups. Opening another drawer she took out a small bag of tea and placed some in both cups. Handing one to her she bade her sit in one of the rooms two chairs. When Rey went to sip, the sister sharply rebuked her.

“Test it, even I do not know who is an enemy anymore.”

Rey sprinkled powder in it, and found it safe. Unnerved she took a small sip. The old woman, leaned back, but only held her cup. “A year ago, it started out with small attacks, villagers on the road being killed, their carts untouched, than farms, families found, no motive, only their strange death as a clue.”

“Strange, how?” She leaned forward. She’d seen something like this in the soldier’s mind, when she’d looked.

“No wounds, no poisons, eyes open. The moment of death struck quickly, they died without even knowing what hit them.” Her face grimaced as she recollected the memory. “The King, increased the guards along the roads, had them patrol towns, check on rural farms, but...”

“Things, have gotten worse.” The old lady nodded, taking a sip of her tea.

“A patrol found massacred, bodies broken, horrific looks of pain on their faces. Death hadn’t been merciful for them. Than houses started to catch on fire, the families often escaping, spreading the news to others. They never saw anyone, but the fire seemed, unnatural.”

Rey felt a prickle up her spine, “A dark force user?”

The old lady nodded. “The people of Naboo, are fearful, some have left, believing the rumor to be true.”

“What rumor is that?”

Her mouth twisted in an ugly smile, “That the ghost of Anakin has come back to claim his throne.”

Rey felt her mouth go dry. “And what do you believe?”

“That your husband has a powerful enemy, one who like Anakin will use the force to try and take it.” She rose, and Rey did likewise. “I am not from Naboo, I came on a boat many years ago, with a beautiful princess. One who loved two men, but could not keep the dark from smothering her flame. I hope you are stronger.” She took Rey’s cup of tea, setting them on the table. She pulled a key from around her neck, and opened a drawer on the desk. After a moment, her hand came out with a sealed letter. “From Maz, she gave this to me for safe-keeping. Should anything happen to her, I was to give you this.”

Rey held the letter, looking at the Sister again, “She was trying to tell me something, she just never had the chance.”

“Along time ago, we lived in the same village, Maz’s family was well known to me. You have friends in the castle. If you are ever in danger, come to me, ask for Sister Shmi. If I’m not there, or I’m dead, Sister Beru and Jyn can be trusted. Do not trust Snoke, or the bastard Hux. I know not what, but I feel their hands in this darkness. Everywhere General Snoke goes, dark things follow. Hux is his new prodigy, and I fear....” She paused looking at Rey, but said no more on the subject. “The Bastard Ben has his mother’s heart, and he will protect you.” She went to the door unlocking it.

“We will talk more, later. Not all of my sisters have the King’s loyalty, and even now, are movements are watched. You are force sensitive?” She looked to Rey who nodded. “Good, you will need it. Be patient with Kylo, the war has started, and you cannot be at each other’s throats, if you are to win.” With that she opened the door and escorted her out.

Rey’s steps felt heavy as she went to her room. Setting the letter on the bed, she undressed, after a moment hesitation, put on one of the slips Rose had given her, it was her wedding night after all. Sitting cross-legged on the bed, she turned the letter over, breaking the seal. Her eyes stung a little as she read the last letter from her shadow.

“Dearest Rey,

If you are reading this, I have journeyed to the Shadowlands. My time serving you over, and for that I’m sorry. I have enjoyed watching you, as one would a daughter. Yoda, wrote to me years ago, and asked me help you for the trials ahead. I was sworn to protect not only you but Kylo as well. For Kylo, you see, is the son of our kingdom’s lost Princess, Padme, and I was honored to serve. I only hope my words, teaching, and instruction have prepared you for the days coming. Force bonds are rare, legends are made of couples who shared them, the force’s strength without equal when together.

The General is behind this, make no mistake. You must find the evidence and make Kylo believe. Snoke, has treated the king like a son, but he is displeased that Kylo has not fully embraced the Dark Side. He almost succeeded with Anakin, but your father was able to stop

his rise to power in time. Snoke knows you are powerful, and that unlike Padme, will sway Kylo away from him. His newest prodigy has been in the shadows, biding his time. He has his father's tainted blood and hate, he wants what he believes was taken from him.

You are the rightful Queen of Naboo, and it has always been your destiny to rule. I'm not a strong force-wielder, but I have seen the possible future. Your children will be force-wielders, powerful in their own right. Together, you and Kylo, will protect their kingdom, their people, and destroy the Malevolent Energy that seeks to tear down your house. Your father defeated it once, and now the burden has been passed to you. I know you are strong, brave and above all selfless and pure. Remember always, all the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle. The path of Good, is harder to follow, seductive is the Dark one, and easy. Which makes your power stronger, and those that wield the dark know that, and that is why they fear you, hate you, and will try and kill you.

Goodbye my Friend, I leave you knowing I have done all I can to protect you. I have died with no regrets. May the Force be with you.

Maz

Rey put down the note crying. Wiping her eyes, she folded the letter reverently. Tucking it away in a hidden bottom, of one of her trunks. She heard a small knock, it was from the adjoining door. She opened it to find her husband. He looked tired, and his wedding clothes, were smeared with dirt. When he saw her, in her slip he paused, not coming in. He looked at his clothes, and his feet, the mud tracked behind him. "My lady, I will not bother you more, I only wished to see that you were safe and well."

He made to leave, but she stopped him. "I have lost a friend, murdered on my wedding day. I'm in a kingdom that is strange to me, with faces, I must now decide if they are friends, or enemies."

"For that I'm sorry, I..." He meant to speak more but she placed her hand on his mouth shushing his words.

"I know one face, and that is yours, and I trust you with my life. You must trust me with yours. Tonight is our wedding night, and I will not let those who seek to destroy us, tear us apart." She took his hand pulling him into her room. Breaking away from him she stood by the fire, her hands smoothing over her silk nightgown. "Rose told me in this gown, you'd forget everything, but my name. How about we see if it's true."

He came to her then, his mouth hungry on hers. She ran her hands through his hair and slowly started peeling his clothes off, till he was bare chest in front of her. Grabbing her hips, he lifted her up, her arms around his neck, her eyes reflecting the same desire in his. Long into the night, they found each other, and by morning she concluded Rose had been right, except she too had forgotten everything but his name.



## Chapter 15

Two days later they were awakened in the middle of night by a knock on the door. Snuggled in his arms, they were laying in his bed when the messenger came. Kylo had bid her wait as he'd slid out of bed, dressing quickly to open the door. A guard with one of the high priest greeted them, their expression grim.

"There's been another attack."

A muscle in Kylo's jaw twitched. "Where?"

"A farm outside of the village of Dabar. Only two survivors, but...."the priest seemed to hold back.

"What of them?"

"A child of three and his mother. I fear the mother may not last much longer...she wishes to speak with you. Left for dead, she appears to have seen something."

Rey scooted to the end of the bed, hugging the blankets close to keep her modesty. Her husband glanced back at her. "I will see her immediately." Shutting the door he turned to her. Already out of bed, she found her dress.

"Rey, I think it best you stay here."

Finding it she slipped it over her head, tugging it down. "Like hell you will. Whoever is doing this, is trying to destroy both of us. Plus, you're kind of imposing to talk to. I may be able to communicate with her better."

In response he picked up her doe skin slippers. "We haven't much time, let us hope she can tell us much."

A boy with copper skin, and black hair looked at them with wide eyes as they entered the room. A sister in cloth held the boy's hand. The mother lay on the table, blankets underneath her for comfort, with the castle physician nearby. The blood on her clothes, and the paleness of her skin, let everyone know time was short.

The victim, not more than twenty summers, looked up at her when she approached.

"My Queen...it's an honor." Rey grasped her hand. Watching as the young mother, seemed to struggle through a wave of pain.

"Shh....the honor is all mine. Tell me who did this to you?" Kylo stepped close, his hands on the table next to her.

Taking a sponge out of the bowl of water nearby, she pressed it to the dying woman's lips. White lips, caked with blood opened, allowing for a trickle of it to pass in. Every movement a struggle, a small voice worked hard to get the message out.

“The smoke is what woke us. My husband ran out of the room. I heard him confront someone, and then nothing. I went to my find my son, he sleeps by the hearth at night. The smoke was thick, but I found him hiding by the wood pile. As I was carrying him out, I saw him.”

“Who my lady?” It was Kylo asking this time.

“I couldn’t see his face, he wore a black robe with a hood obscuring his identity. Behind him there were others, all dressed like him. I tried to run, but he struck me down. He only used his hands to do it, no weapon, no words. I didn’t move for fear he would kill me and my son.” Her face turned towards the boy it was full of love, and grief. “Please. My king take care of Yane. I have a sister in Talus.”

“The boy shall be safe in my protection. Do not fear for him anymore.” His words caused her to visibly relax.

Rey pressed her hand to the woman’s forehead, for comfort but also to see if she could discover more. With no resistance, her mind was able to grasp the woman’s memories. The fire, her son, and then the stranger. True to her word, his face was lost in the shadow of the hood. However, his hands and forearms were outside the cloth. The murderer, was young, what she could see told her that. Her age, or a little older. Looking beyond him, his followers hung in the background. Possibly a dozen, none participating, they stood by as silent watchers. Rey saw no more of them, for at that point, the mother had turned to flee and been struck down. Her body protecting her son....and something else.

“You’re with child.”

Tears trickled down the mother’s face....”I had hoped soon...” Another spasm and her body jerked.

Rey turned to the physician. “Can you save the babe at least?”

“Her injuries, I hardly think it will survive it. Let it rest with the mother.”

She placed her hands of the woman’s abdomen. Feeling the life force of the mother fading, but the baby...the baby was still alive. “You must take it now. There isn’t much time.” In response to her words, the mother gave another spasm, consciousness gone, her body shutting down. The doctor turned to Kylo, clearly expecting him to explain the futility of it to her.

With a pained expression he looked at her.

“The babe still lives. If he doesn’t make the cut, I will.” Hoping it didn’t come to that, Rose would know what to do, but her education in the healing arts was rudimentary at best. Her hand reaching for the knife he stopped her.

“You heard my queen, save the infant if you can.”



The doctor gave an exasperated look, but didn't argue. Mumbling under his breath about desecration he reached for his scalpel. The boy started screaming at the first cut, the sister picking him up and taking him out of the room. Rey gave him a heart-wrenching look, she knew that pain. Turning back to the dead mother, she watched her belly slice open, and the physician place his hands in, working the child's body out. It was a bloody mess to say the least.

At first a purple silent body was all she saw, and she wondered if it was dead. For reasons she didn't understand, she took the lifeless child from the doctor shocking them all.

"It is dead my lady, the sister's should wash it and bury it with the mother."

Ignoring them she grabbed a soft cloth nearby rubbing the baby vigorously with it. Kylo placed a hand on her back. "Love let it go, you tried. We cannot save what has crossed over."

What she couldn't tell them was what she felt. The heart was beating, but slowly. She'd never tried to heal before, yet she knew it was possible. Yoda had taught her that the force could be used to aid the body, when it was weakened. Feeling the heart's slow contractions, she concentrated, letting the baby feel her life-force, letting its heart beat mimic hers. A small movement, and then the baby gave a whimper. The color turning from purple to a normal hue of pink. Wiping its nose of secretion she bade it breathe, smiling as it begin to open its eyes. I'm sorry she thought...I'm not your mother. A small promise to this newborn that she would bring to justice the ones that had robbed it of its mother's comfort.

"That child was dead...It's dark magic." The doctor looking at them both horrified.

One minute the man was standing there looking at her like she was a monster, the next he was up against the wall feet dangling a foot off the ground. Kylo had him by the neck. "I do not care for your accusation. Should you repeat that rubbish to anyone, I will put you in the darkest cell I have."

One last look of disgust, he released him, letting him drop to the floor. The man clearly taking the warning, struggled to his feet. Rubbing his throat, he bowed to the king. "I misspoke your highness, let me find the child a wet-nurse." Kylo gave him a nod, turning his back to him. The doctor grabbed his tools, wanting to distance himself from the king's anger.

His face looked towards the still form of the mother, silently reigning his anger in. "She saw him, but not his face. When I find him I will cut him down, and all the cowards that follow him. Every last one."

The baby nuzzled her, looking for something Rey could not give it. Looking the baby over, she found it to be a girl. Kylo came to her, stroking the chubby chin of the baby's face. "Such words should not be spoken in front of the innocent. I must meet with my council."

"Is Snoke on that?"

His eyes narrowed. "Not the time, Rey. I know how you feel, but it's without warrant. Join us if you will, but I will not have you speak ill of him."

Biting her bottom lip, her throat choking back any further words, not wanting to get kicked off the council. The baby grasped Kylo's thumb, trying to bring it to her mouth, her husband smiled.

"You should give her a name. A child cannot be anointed in the chapel without one."

A knock on the door letting her know the wet-nurse had arrived. A large woman, with flaming red hair, she smelled of flour and milk. Reluctantly she gave the small bundle to the woman, feeling its loss in her arms. "Yes, I suppose." A smile on her lips bittersweet, she traced the baby's face with her finger. The name on her tongue, the name of another woman who'd given her life to save her daughter. "Kathryn, name her Kathryn"

The nurse nodded, giving a small bow she left them. Kylo pulled a blanket, covering the dead woman, before taking her elbow leading her out of the room. "When you looked in her mind, what did you see?"

At first she wanted to tell him everything, but then he would tell Snoke. Revealing that she knew the dark force user was accumulating a large following. The next step needed was to find one of the accomplices, not Hux. He was too protected. If Snoke got wind of her plan those involved would surely be removed from the castle or nearby encampment. Looking at him, hating the lie, hoping one day he would forgive her. "I saw the stranger, but she was mistaken. The smoke caused her to see shadows where she thought people stood. It was only him."

Accepting her story they walked in silence. The meeting, was mostly telling of the same story. General Snoke was quiet. Rey tried not to look at him, but she could feel his eyes on her. Once she felt him try to probe, but her shields protected him from seeing anything. Turning to him, she gave him a look of contempt. He raised an eyebrow and smiled. Almost seeming to say, I had to try. Turning back to Kylo, he rose. "Let me form a party, I and Hux will search the farm and see if we can find anything." She rose too, causing everyone to stand.

"I.."

Kylo interjected. "I cannot let you go, the danger you would be in."

Men and their chauvinism ...letting her go was impossible. Leaving the castle was another problem she would have to fix, but that plan wasn't something she was going to let Kylo in on.

"Oh coarse, I would never suggest that. I had thought the party should be led by Ben. He knows the area well, and General Snoke could stay close in case there was another attack."

Snoke moved to talk, but Kylo waved him down. "So be it, send for Ben. I will fill him in." The council at an end, Snoke left, but not before giving her a withering look.

One day he'd be giving her that look on the execution block, she hoped. Feigning sleepiness she took her leave. Holding her close for a minute, he kissed her lips, promising to

join her after he talked to his half-brother. With a bit of regret she left him, but not for her room.

A few minutes later she knocked softly on the door in front of her. When it opened the face of Sister Shmi.

“I know the hour late Sister, but I need your help.”

The old lady, looked around her, nodding she ushered her into the room, closing the door behind them.

## Chapter 16

Rey had one hour, two tops. Dressed in the cloth of the sisters she snuck out of the castle. It was evening, and her husband was attending a meeting with General Snoke. They both would be preoccupied, and even better, together. She needed to leave the castle grounds, to seek answers she couldn't find, while under the mantle of queen. Closing her eyes for a brief moment, she prayed that her disguise would work, and that she would go unrecognized in the crowd. If she were to be discovered and brought back home, it would break the fragile trust they had developed in each other.

Sister Shmi had elected not to go with her. A younger companion was needed. One who could move swiftly with Rey, and also make a hasty exit if need be. Sister Jyn had been the one to volunteer. She was four summers older than Rey, and had a slightly taller build. Riding together, they remained silent, not wanting to cause any unwanted attention. The guards, used to the sisters coming and going paid them no mind.

The gates behind them they entered the town square, Rey breathed a sigh of relief the first obstacle gone. Jyn had asked little questions while Sister Shmi had brought her into confidences. Stating only once, that she was to serve the crown and would keep the queen safe. Now alone and past the stronghold of the castle she looked at her with concern.

“What are we looking for?”

Rey bit her lip looking round. “I don't quite know. I'm force sensitive..” Jyn nodded, letting her know she didn't need further explanation. “and I'm hoping to listen. Do you know where the soldiers go? You know drink, um woman.” She stammered a little. She wasn't sure as a sister, Jyn, would be willing to go to such an establishment. Still, it was the best place to find info, wine and woman usually loosened lips and thoughts.

“Mos Eisley is the tavern at east end of the city. Soldiers frequently visit, higher class... ladies there. Less chance of disease. It's a bit wild.” Jyn turned the horse heading towards the direction. “Sister's often go to check on woman, I brought herbs and salves for a cover story.”

Impressed by her forward thinking she nodded. The tavern was twenty minutes away and they could hear it before her eyes found it. A very tall lady stood outside, her hair drawn up and her dress hiding nothing. It made Rey freeze for a second. The woman seeing her look at her gave a smirk. “Haven't seen this one before? Than with a lascivious smile. “Is this your first time?”

“Knock it off Monet, this is Sister Daisy. I've brought salves and teas for you and your friends.” Jyn slid off the horse, taking the satchel off to sling over her shoulder.

“I hope you brought extra moon tea, all the ladies here seem to be on the rag. By Darth's Moon I've never heard so much...” A sharp look from Jyn made Monet stop. She rolled her eyes. “My apologies, I wouldn't want you to have to confess extra on my behalf. I must warn you though, the men here are restless and in a bad mood I wouldn't stay long.”

She opened the door, letting them in. Rey kept her head down, she didn't want to take the oft chance one of the king's guard might catch a glimpse and recognize her. True to Monet's word the place was packed. Women in silk walked around, some with wine and ale, others to scoot on the laps of the men sitting by the long tables. The smell of human bodies was pungent in the air. She couldn't help it she crinkled her nose in disgust. Monet saw and she laughed. "A little ripe for your taste? Perhaps this one's too green to be on such an errand."

Rey ignored her, Jyn spoke up. "My sister does look a little peaked. Can you get her a glass of wine, while I attend the ladies?" When Monet seemed to pause, Jyn gave her a cross look. "I would hate to report to Sister Shmi that we were treated without hospitality."

Monet put her hands on her hip, clearly not happy about being ordered by Jyn, but after a moment she turned heading to the bar. "There better be peppermint tea this time, the things I have to do." Her grumblings faded as she walked away.

Rey looked to Jyn with appreciation. Taking a seat at the end of one of the tables near the fire she tried to settle herself in to listen. The noise around her swelled as she tried to concentrate. The voices seeming to hum into one loud roar. Closing her eyes she focused deeply, letting her mind lightly touch the minds of the locals around her. Some were mundane, a whore named Brynna worried she was late, Jarta the inn's guard worried that his wife was unfaithful. Moving past the servants, and whores she brushed the minds of the guards saving them for last. A few to her amusement mused that, Kylo, seemed to be in a better mood since he'd finally wed. There was the lewd thoughts towards the girls, and a few who were cheating at dice. Sure the night was a bust, she flickered on a new guardsman who entered the bar, obviously looking for someone.

At first she thought, he was searching for a favorite harlot, or group of men to join with. His mind came back with a frantic feeling. "Where is he...I can't do this...I kept my end of the deal." Rapid thoughts bursting off in succession. The wine plopped in front of her breaking her concentration. She looked up to see Monet with a bemused look on her face.

"Someone seems interested in that soldier over there? Take the cloth a little too soon?"

Rey tried to look again, but he was gone. "Who is he?"

Hands on her hip she smiled down at her, thinking Rey had a carnal interest in the man. "New one here, names Slowan, does my lady want a private meeting?" Rey scowled. Monet took no offense instead she seemed to laugh at Rey's indignation. "You wouldn't be the first sister to stray. Just last week I swore I saw that stuck up Sister Numa in here with a certain Red headed bastard."

Seeing Jyn returning she gave a wink. "Just bring some of that dark chocolate from the islands, and I will keep any secret you want." With that she left her, moving on to a table of men playing dice.

Looking around, Jyn, watched a bit worried. "Monet is right, the house is restless. If you're feeling well, I think we should go."

Rey nodded, she had learned enough, and she needed to find out about a certain Sister. It could be her best lead. Leaving the establishment, Rey narrowly missed a patron leaning over to throw up near her shoes. He had the grace to look apologetic as he made his way outside.

Jyn and her quickly mounted, turning their horse back home. A few minutes later, when they were not within earshot of anyone, Jyn spoke. “The who-lost woman...have been reporting more violence of late. The guards are anxious, scared even. The soldiers come in, and talk about the attacks.”

Rey pursed her lip, she had felt that tension when she’d rode passed them on her first day in Naboo. “What do you know about a Sister Numa?”

A look flickered across Jyn’s face, quickly conveying it wasn’t amenable. After a pregnant pause she looked towards the castle that was fast approaching. “We should not speak ill of our own, but Numa, has never fully accepted her role in our convent. Often she has broken rules, and can at times be disrespectful to her elders.”

“Why did she join if she hates it so much?”

“I shouldn’t gossip, but I imagine you have your reasons for asking. Fine I will tell you what I’ve heard. Numa came from a merchant family. She was to marry into wealth, an older man. She disobeyed her family and was found in the company of a man from the shipping yard. Foolish girl, sailors are notorious for making promises they do not intend to keep. The man departed, and she was left a woman with a spoiled reputation. A moderate sum was passed to the convent, allowing her to join.”

Rey felt pity for the girl, surely she shouldn’t be punished her whole life for falling in love. She told Jyn as much. Jyn simply shrugged. “We are woman. Virgin or Whores it’s the only two things a man wants, and only one he will marry.”

The entrance was a few feet before them. The castle guards had increased because of the recent attacks. Rey kept her face down as the horse moved by them. One guard gave Jyn a smile, patting her horse as she acknowledge him. Instantly Rey felt the connection.

“Brother?”

“Yes, Cassian, he’s been in the guard since his sixteenth summer.” Her smile seemed bittersweet.

“I promise, I’ll do all I can to keep him safe.” Dismounting and heading to Sister Shmi’s chamber, Rey was relieved to find no one seemed to pay them mind. The uniform almost acting as an invisibility cloak, as they moved passed servants, and dwellers a like. It could prove invaluable later, as being queen limited her scope of investigation.

Sister Shmi took one look at her and ordered a bath. “I can smell those pleasure ladies, and tavern grime all over you.” The hottest bath that she could stand was drawn, without caring about modesty the elder sister scrubbed her skin raw. Putting oils in her hair after she bathed to hide the stench. Finally satisfied she allowed Rey to dress, making her take a secret exit out to the main doors, to escape detection.

Once she was safely escorted out, Rey was left alone. She debated going to her chambers, but decided, Kylo, after his meetings would probably want to change and retire in his. She could slip in bed and wait for him. Tired as he was of late, he probably would ask few questions of her day.

Entering the room, she gave a small start when she realized someone was sitting in a chair by the fire. Her eyes narrowed when his visage turned towards her. General Snoke.

He rose giving her a small bow. "My Queen, what a pleasant surprise."

She looked around, not seeing Kylo.

"Oh he left a few minutes ago, I believe he was going to search for you. Apparently the guards were mistaken on your location." He raised an eyebrow giving her an amused smile.

"I'm sure it was a misunderstanding, the castle is big, and it would be easy for someone who is unfamiliar to get lost." He beckoned for the seat by him, but she didn't budge.

"Thank you, General Snoke, I wasn't lost. In fact I knew exactly where I was going." He gave her contempt look a small smirk.

"Sit by me, I think we should have a talk." He patted the chair, his voice pleasant, but his eyes were cold.

"I think I shall find my husband. Good day general." She turned to leave, when the door behind her slammed shut. When she tried the knob, it held fast.

Turning back to the General, his expression the same. "I'm sorry my Queen, but I really must insist." She looked back contemplating yelling.

With exaggerated patience as if he was indulging a small child. "There's no need for dramatics, the guards outside belong to me."

Crossing her arms, she stepped forward a little, sorry that she had left her sword in her chambers. "What do you want?"

His smile turned sinister, he walked towards her breaching the distance she refused to cross. She went to move, but he raised a hand and she felt her body locked in a force hold.

"Now how about we start at the beginning. What does my old friend Yoda's young prodigy know?"

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