

## The End and the Way

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# The End and the Way

by [TheStarsMyDestination](#)

## Summary

Following the events of TLJ, the Resistance is on the run, gathering support but always two steps away from ruin. Rey and her new friends find themselves hunting for lost Jedi Temples that may hold secrets to aid in their fight against the First Order. But how will she balance her new power, new friends, and the magnetic pull she feels towards the man who calls himself Kylo Ren?

## Notes

When the leaks started coming thick and fast in those pre-TROS days and things started to look bad, I banged out an outline for how I thought like the story should continue. It was supposed to be a funny little one-pager to read to someone as a Christmas gift. It's evolved since then. It's been a long, long time since I've written anything and I am beyond terrified to post this. But I want to see it through to the end, and I know that if I don't post it, I'll never finish. This is the first bit.

# Beginning

## Chapter Summary

A beginning. Rey reads a book and tries to unpack her thoughts. Finn and Rose explain why Rey's clothes got bleached. Beaumont Kin brings a message.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*“Light is the left hand of darkness  
and darkness the right hand of light.  
Two are one, life and death, lying  
together like lovers in kemmer,  
like hands joined together,  
like the end and the way.”*

*-Ursula K. LeGuin, The Left Hand of Darkness*

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Rey sat on the floor of the *Falcon* gangplank, hunched over a book, wisps of hair hanging loose around her face. Outside, the remains of the afternoon rain dripped and slipped through the leaves of the large trees stretching high on all sides. It pinged against the hull of the ship, echoing through the empty halls. She could hear Chewie inside behind her, fixing something, the spark and flare of a welder inter-spaced with the odd Wookiee curse. One of the Jedi texts lay sprawled out in front of her. The occasional gust of wind blew in droplets of rain, which splattered onto the pages. She absently wiped the moisture away.

This was an almost abandoned planet, close enough to still get a decent comms signal from orbit, but far enough away from shipping lanes and inhabited planets to provide a haven away from the First Order. The Resistance had landed in a heavy forested southern continent, setting up in clearings and between trees. What had started as a quick stopover had dragged into weeks - a long time for a fleet that depends on speed and stealth to avoid the First Order. The rumor, when anyone spoke to Rey at all, was that there was something going on with the General. Health? No one knew. Least of all Rey, whose attempts to speak to Leia had been politely declined several times. After awhile, Rey stopped asking. Trying to make friends with the rest of the Resistance hadn't gone much better. She had Finn, of course, but he was so often busy. As for everyone else, well...a solitary life on Jakku had given her many skills.

Making friends, real friends, was decidedly not one of them. Which lead her to this -- sitting alone in the chill breeze with her stolen library of Jedi texts.

This particular book, she thought -- she hoped -- was about calming the mind with the aid of the Force. It was hard to tell. She let out a breath of air, turned a page and brightened. Scratched into the margins, in a clear and meticulous hand, were notes in Basic. She didn't know who had written them and they weren't in every book. They felt like a lifeline, like a message from an old friend. And, perhaps more importantly, they were an invaluable practical help. As she had quickly learned, her knack for picking up spoken languages at speed did not extend to written text. Her fingers traced the unfamiliar symbols, willing them to twist into something recognizable and regular. They remained stubbornly static and with a little sigh she focused on the margin notes instead. *Use Force to borrow calm*, one note said. Whatever that meant. She would learn this. She had to. She had to have calm and clarity if she was going to be what the Resistance needed her to be.

"Hey-oh! Rey!!"

"Reeey!!!"

The noise made her snap up, instantly on her feet. She realized in a panic that she had no weapon. She overbalanced and stumbled forward, smacking her head hard on the entryway of the Falcon. Massaging her head, she looked down to see Finn and Rose laughing. She scowled at them, but soon she was laughing, too.

"What are you here for?" She called down. The two of them were maneuvering a large cart piled high with what looked like cloth sacks over the rough terrain.

"Official Laundry Detail, reporting for duty," Finn said, snapping out a mock salute. Rose giggled and he grinned sideways at her before turning back to Rey. "I drew the short straw this week."

"But it's not all bad. This way we get to talk to everyone!" Rose said, beaming. Finn shrugged.

"As soon as Poe gets back, I wanna see *him* on laundry duty."

"Poe's gone again?" Rey asked, settling against the doorway, crossing her arms in front of her.

"Him and all of Black Squadron," Rose said, "They needed pilots, so it's a no-go for us."

"I could be a pilot." Finn said, only a little sullen..

"Poe told him they needed pilots who could land without crashing."

"Hey, I don't crash every time, alright?" Finn said. Rose giggled and shook her head. "I'm surprised they didn't ask you," he said, looking up at Rey.

"I guess I crash too much, too." Rey said quietly. It would have been nice to have been asked.

“Anyway, we got your laundry.” Finn chuckled a bundle at her with the word “REY” printed and pinned to it. Rey caught it out of the air and opened the neck of the bag.

“Thanks, I -- wait...these...aren’t mine.” Rey said, nonplussed as she held up a very, very white piece of cloth.

“What do you mean?” Finn asked, good naturedly looking up at her. In a few quick steps he had joined her on the Falcon’s gangway. “Of course it’s yours, look: shirt, leggings, arm wraps, other um, things -- there’s a whole list, see?” He showed her the back of the card with her name on it, listing out contents.

“But they’re so...”

“Clean?” Finn deadpanned. Rey laughed.

“Ok, so, I *might* have thrown them in with the bleach.” They both turned to look at Rose, who was now blushing furiously. She bounded up the slanting gangway, nervously twisting her hands. “They looked like they needed it! Um, no offence!!”

Rey didn’t respond, but held up a shirt in front of her and tried not to make a face. “I am going to shine like a beacon in this forest,” she said in an undertone to Finn.

“Good thing Jedi don’t go for stealth,” Finn agreed.

“Well, you have your dark grey clothes, too.” Rose said. Rey felt her body freeze. Some of this must have registered on her face, because Rose then continued by way of helpful explanation: “You know, the one with the black tunic that you were wearing when you picked us up on Crait? They’re in the bag, too. You haven’t worn those lately, I forget you even had them until they showed up in the wash!”

“Yeah...” Rey said vaguely, not listening. She felt a buzzing in the back of her brain. A splinter in her mind. She found her hand digging deeper into the bag. As her fingers closed reflexively on the rough tunic, her thoughts shunted inescapably back to what had happened the last time she had wore it. She saw again the long, red room. Pain. Ben’s eyes. A word: *Please*. A few feet away, Rose was still talking animatedly; she must have said something funny because Finn was laughing. But inside the reality of her mind, Rey saw, felt -- **No**. She leaned into the Force, pulling it to her, borrowing calm. Just like the margin notes said. She could *not* do this now. Not while her friends were here. With an effort, she fought to push down the memories. To lock them away. How had these clothes even gotten into her laundry pile? She yanked her hand out of the bag. She noticed that Rose had stopped speaking and was staring at her expectantly.

Trying to appear as though she’d been listening, Rey stretched her face into a smile and nodded vaguely. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Finn studying her with a furrowed brow and worrisomely shrewd look. There would be questions from him later. But Rose, at least, seemed satisfied by her response.

“It’s too bad we’re not on a planet where we could do any shopping,” Rose continued, then laughed and leaned forward conspiratorially, “my sister Paige and I used to --”

Just then they were interrupted by Connix, who popped suddenly around the doorway below, “Hey, do you guys have my stuff too?? I know teeeeechnically” she stretched the word into at least three extra syllables, “we were supposed to have all our laundry in the basket by yesterday but I was on the night shift and I -oh. Sorry.” She stopped almost comically short, all of her usual verve draining away as she laid eyes on Rey and the pile of Jedi books on the floor. “I’m sorry,” she repeated, snapping into a sort of parade rest. “I didn’t mean to bother you. I can come back.”

Rose looked quickly from Finn to Rey, then turned back to Connix, smiling brightly.

“Don’t worry, we’ve got your covered!” Rose said, bopping back down the gangway to help.

“Back to work,” Finn said, grimacing as he too turned to leave. He was about halfway down the gangway when he turned back to look up into Rey’s face. “I’ll...see you at dinner later, right?”

“Of course,” she replied automatically, “Wouldn’t miss it.” She was still processing Connix’s sudden shift in demeanor. Why couldn’t people just treat her normally? In the same playful way they did Finn or Rose?

“I dunno,” Finn said, shrugging, “You’ve missed a lot of dinners lately.”

Rey returned his gaze but didn’t have an answer for him. Instead she hugged her bundle of clothes close to her.

“I mean, I get it.” Finn said slowly.

“You...do?”

“Yeah, of course,” he took a step closer to her and lowered his voice, “We’ve been here almost two weeks. *Two weeks*. Nothing’s happened. First thing that *does* happens, two of the best fighters in the Resistance” he motioned between the two of them, “We get left behind. What’s that about?”

“Right.” Rey said gravely. “And then General Leia won’t see me.”

“You serious??” Finn asked, eyes wide.

“I’ve been trying to speak for weeks about all of this,” she waved her hand at the Jedi texts on the ground. “But every time I try to see her, I get told she’s busy. Just *Keep studying* that’s the last reply I got. I need guidance, Finn, not empty words.”

“That isn’t right,” Finn frowned, then after some apparent thought added: “Don’t get mad, but you....you ok? Only, you seemed pretty distracted? I know there’s been a lot going on, but since you got back from –”

“I’m fine,” she cut across him, sharper than she had intended. A wave of shame crashed over her as she saw the hurt in his eyes. She pushed the feeling away. The truth was, as much as she trusted Finn it was better, simpler, for him if he didn’t know everything that was in her head just now. She cast her mind around for a kinder way to answer his question. “I haven’t

been sleeping well. I've been...it's nothing. I'm sorry I keep missing dinner. I haven't been hungry." He gave her an incredulous look and she laughed to deflect it. "Really, I haven't. But I'll be there tonight." She grinned and it felt like putting on a mask. "We've got to plan how to get back at Poe and the others for leaving us behind."

The prospect of revenge on Poe seemed to satisfy him and Finn grinned back. She envied him. Nothing seemed to bother Finn for long. Then with a wave, he was gone and she, Rey, was left standing alone on the decking. She watched her two friends vanish from sight around the corner, then turned to wander back into the ship thinking vaguely about putting away her laundry. The Jedi texts remained on the floor, temporarily forgotten.

She paced back to her quarters on the ship and laid the clothes out on the small berth in front of her. They were *so* white. Carefully, she removed the tunic and trousers she'd been wearing and began to pull on her new, clean clothes. They seemed different. Not just in color. Like they didn't quite fit the way they used to? It didn't make sense, she told herself, nothing had changed. Nothing. She pulled the wraps around her and belted them, an automatic gesture she could have done in the dark. And yet, these longer wraps, once her best friends against heat and wind felt strangely binding. And so blindingly white. There was a little mirror in her quarters, and found that she didn't recognize herself. She smoothed the fabric and frowned. *Nothing has changed*, she told herself again. But this time, she knew it was a lie.

Her eyes flitted to dark grey tunic, reflected in the mirror on the bed behind her. She felt the buzzing at the back of her head again, and this time there were no friends to distract her. Again, she saw the long, red room, felt pain ripping through her as Snoke tortured her. Felt Ben Solo's eyes on her, how they'd connected and she'd known exactly when to reach up and grab that lightsaber. That moment, looking into his eyes just before they turned back to back to fight off Snoke's guards....she had felt something she'd never felt before. A wholeness. To be seen and known and understood. She should have been paralyzed with fear, but in that moment she knew that no matter what happened, they would be able to face it, together. Except, later it was gone...she saw him walk towards the throne instead of toward her. The lightsaber between them, his hand, reaching out...but Ben Solo had chosen power over her and left her for a path she couldn't follow, just like everyone had always left her. She felt cold. It was like being back in the cave on Ahch-to again, and the darkness yawned open, stretching into infinity.

And yet. In some small rational part of her mind there was still a light. It felt far away still, but she called to it, inching towards it until the madness began to pass, her thoughts disengaged, and she could breathe again. She realized vaguely that she was on the floor and had no memory of how she got there. Trying to even out her breathing, she got to her feet and began to pull her loose hair into tight and ordered buns. She felt tears on her face and scrubbed them away with the back of her hand. It was then she remembered the Jedi books, sitting in the rain. Her heart dropped into her stomach, she thought they might be actual paper and if they got too wet --! She flew back out into the hallway, almost running down a man in a tan jacket with the Resistance symbol on the sleeve.

"Rey!" he said, dodging deftly out of the way. "I'm glad I found you."

“Yes, on **my** ship is usually a good place to find me.” Rey replied tartly. Then she stopped herself as a fresh wave of guilt crashed over her. “I’m sorry. It’s Beaumont, Beaumont Kin, right? What’s going on?” What *was* going on? First she was rude to Rose and Finn, her friends, and now this new person who was basically a stranger and --

“It’s the General...she just landed and it...” he trailed off, then seemed to steel himself to continue. “It doesn’t look good. And Rey, she’s asking for you.”

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! More to come soon.



# A kyber crystal?

## Chapter Summary

Rey gets few answers and lot of unexpected information from General Organa.

## Chapter Notes

I can't start without a disclaimer, it's the old lady fanfic writer in me: I don't own anything. Next chapter coming soon.

(Made some edits on 5/21 to fix a typo and some formating issues.)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Rey followed Beaumont out of the Falcon and along the forest paths connecting the landing areas to the main base. They walked quickly and silently through the rain, dodging between ships and under tarps. As they approached the large tents that comprised the Resistance headquarters, Beaumont stopped suddenly, wheeling around to face Rey. She almost ran into him, but stopped herself just in time. The lamps on the side of the tent were swinging in the wind, casting shadows across the his face. He stood there in silence for a moment, as though searching for what to say. Rey reached out, she could sense...fear? Of her? She bristled and was just about to ask him what he was doing when he suddenly blurted out:

"I'm glad you're here, Master Rey." This caught her completely off guard. "What? " she asked, tilting her head to the side, then shut her eyes in embarrassment, "It's Rey, just Rey."

"Right, Rey." he smiled nervously. There was a beat while Rey waited for him to elaborate. He did not. She could sense his anxiety growing, but couldn't begin to understand why. She could also feel the drizzle beginning to soak through her clothes.

"The General," Rey began carefully, "She did send for me, right?"

"Oh yeah, she definitely did." He continued to stand silently in front of her, rubbing his hands together, though whether in anxiety or because of the cold, Rey wasn't sure.

"Okay, then please take me to her." She added a small push with the Force without quite noticing she had done it. He started to move forward, but stopped himself and said: "Of course, it's just --" he shrugged and let the sentence trail off. Rey wondered vaguely if there was a Force ability to make people speak plainly for once.

"How is General Organa, really?" Rey asked, feeling her way.

Beaumont shrugged and smoothed his hand through his hair. "I don't know. No one knows. Look," he dropped his voice and she had to lean closer to hear him. "No one can figure out what's happening. Old wounds, obviously. But everyone thought we had them stabilized, that she was ok, but then she wasn't." he said in a rush. "So, we – me, well me and Connix and some of the others, we thought that....that is -- we hoped....," as he fumbled along Rey tried not to let her impatience show. "We hoped that you would be able to help her," he got out at last.

"Me." Rey repeated, uncomprehending. What could she do?

"Yes, *of course* you." He said, as if this was the most obvious thing in the world. "You're a Jedi, right? Trained by Luke Skywalker himself!" He raked his hands through his hair again. It was now standing more or less on end. "Don't Jedi know how to...I dunno, fix people?" Rey felt her stomach drop. She wanted to tell him that she wasn't a real Jedi. Not yet. She was just a fraud. A pretender. A pretender who, shame burned in her stomach as she remembered, almost walked away with their greatest enemy. Who still dreamt, regularly, about walking away with their greatest enemy. "I --" *can't*, she started to say, but stopped herself. She looked into Beaumont's anxious and expectant face, at his hair now standing on end and the deep circles of fatigue under his eyes. She couldn't do it. *Rebellions are built on hope*. Where had she heard that before? She couldn't bring herself to kill the hope in the man's eyes. "—sure" she finished instead, rapidly changing tack. "It depends on what needs to be...fixed. But I'll do what I can. I promise. Please, take me to her." She added a little nod at the end for emphasis and maybe just the smallest push from the Force, this time on purpose.

Relief cascaded across Beaumont's features.

"I knew you'd be able to help -- I told them! I've studied the history of the Jedi, actually -- well, as much as an outsider really can. It's all fascinating!" He was talking over his shoulder now, leading her onwards. Rey followed, half listening. He continued to chatter excitedly as they continued through the warren of tents. Occasionally other Resistance members stopped to nod respectfully to Beau and look questioningly at her. If it felt to Rey that they eyed her more nervously, though, she told herself she must be imagining things. In her white garb, she truly was a beacon in the gathering darkness against the tents.

There was a detail of guards outside of the General's tent. They regarded Rey with a wary reverence. She did her best not to notice as they waved her and Beaumont through.

"Rey! Come in and – oh , that outfit is a choice." Rey ducked her head in embarrassment, but Leia just laughed. This seemed to be an effort for her, as it dissolved into a coughs. Rey looked back questioningly at Beaumont, who looked grim and raised his eyebrows in a *what did I tell you?* kind of way before executing a sort of half bow and ducking back out of the tent, leaving her on her own.

Before her sat General Leia Organa, stretched out on a couch, copies of documents printed on plasti-flimsies and display readouts piled around her. A small table held a glass of water, for which she was now fumbling. "What happened," Leia asked when she'd regained herself, "did you fall into a vat of bleach?"

“Rose was...trying to be helpful,” Rey said, picking up one of the long pieces of fabric hanging from her waist and letting it drop.

“Bless Rose Tico. Well, it’s not a bad color for you. It reminds me of – hah! “ she paused and took another long drink, draining her glass, ”it reminds me of a dress I used to have, a long time ago. Please, sit.” She extended a hand towards the chair next to her. Rey perched on the edge and looked expectantly over at Leia. She was always a little in awe of the General, who seemed so put together, so centered. The opposite of how Rey felt, pulled in so many directions.

“It’s been awhile since we talked. Not since Ryloth.”

“I’m sure you’ve been busy, General. And...I’ve been busy. We took damage on the last supply run, Chewie and I’ve been working to fix it and –”

“You think I’ve been avoiding you, Rey,” Leia said shrewdly. Rey nearly fell out of her chair.

“No, General, I –” Rey began, but Leia cut her off with a smile.

“No, I have been neglecting you. There’s so much to do and not enough time to do it. It’s the way it’s always been.” Rey nodded; it seemed the correct response. “But I was thinking, that now would be a good time for us to talk.”

“What about?” Rey asked nervously.

“About your lightsaber.”

Rey felt her heart drop into her stomach. She had been dreading this coming up. “General, I’m so sorry I broke your brother’s lightsaber. I don’t even know how, it just –” she babbled, clenching her hands in her lap. Rey could almost see the image before, her and Ben’s hands outstretched as it exploded. It had taken her precious time to scoop up all of the pieces, always looking back at Ben’s prone form. Wondering what she would do if he woke up before she left. Almost hoping he would wake up, so they could talk again. She had stood there, waiting, until she could do it no longer, finally placing his lightsaber near him before leaving that awful room.

“No,” Leia said firmly snapping Rey back into the present moment, “I’m talking about *your* lightsaber.”

Rey looked up again, visibly confused. “But I don’t have –”

“Shh, I know. Listen.” Leia slid a ring off of her left hand. It had a stone, long and dark set into it. She held it out to Rey. “Do you know what this is?” Rey shook her head. “Go on, take it. Tell me what you think.” Rey reached out tentatively and took the ring. It gleamed in the uneven light of the lamps, but gave no other clues.

"I don't know what I'm looking for." she said, barely masking her frustration.

"Reach out with your feelings," Leia said patiently. Rey looked up into her face, ready to snap back, but stopped. Leia's eyes, her look of concern, reminded her in that moment so much of Ben's from that night on Ahch-to that the sharp retort died on her lips. She ran her thumb across the crystal. Ben had his mother's eyes. That was something to note. She shut her own eyes, pushing thoughts of him away and reaching out the way that Luke had begrudgingly taught her. Why hadn't she thought to do that before? This time she could feel something in it... something vibrating with the Force. She focused on the feeling, letting it pass through her. "It feels like...joy." Rey said at last, "And power."

"It's called a kyber crystal. You know what something like this is for?"

"It powers a Jedi's lightsaber." Rey said automatically, still turning the stone in her hand. Then her eyes snapped open in alarm. The words had jumped into her head, but she had not known how she had known it. "I don't know that, how do I know that?" She looked up at Leia in alarm, again seeking comfort in those familiar eyes. But here, at least, there was no comfort to be had. Leia watched with her face set.

"I think," Leia said after a moment, "that there is more to you than you realize, Rey." Rey shook her head empathically, but Leia didn't seem to notice. "I wish that Luke was here. He'd be able to explain this better. Or Han, he'd be able to make it funny. But you've just got me," she said, her mouth twisting into a wry smile. "I was never a Jedi. Not a real one. Luke, he... always told me that I had some of his power, but that was never my path. Not the one I chose. But it might, I think, be yours, Rey. If you'll walk it."

"I think I might already be walking it," Rey said slowly, "Whether I want to or not." She was still clutching at the crystal, staring into Leia's calm face. I'm afraid, she wanted to say. But she didn't dare say that. Look weak in front of General Leia Organa? Never. She tried to think of something else to say, a change of subject. She looked down at the ring still in her hands. "You...you have a kyber crystal?"

"No," Leia said patiently, "You have a kyber crystal." Rey gave her a blank look and Leia sighed. "I'm giving it to *you*, Rey," Leia said, spelling it out for her with only a hint of exasperation.

"I can't...I can't accept this." Rey said, trying to thrust it back, but Leia forestalled her with a hand.

"You're gonna need it. You just said you want to see this through. I'm helping you. I can't get you to Ilum to get your own crystal, but I do have my own to give. Rey, my life...my *entire* life has been dedicated to the Rebellion, the New Republic, and now this Resistance. I have sacrificed everything else. I've made a lot of mistakes. Remembering our last conversation, when you were so kind as to bring me that tea on Ryloth, I think you know first-hand what one of them is," she said, looking shrewdly over at Rey.

"Ben." Rey said, sensing the answer hanging between them and giving it form. Then she snapped her head down, face on fire, "No, General, I didn't mean --"

"No. It was a mistake. I should never have sent him away like I did. I should have known, somehow, the pain he was in. I asked Han to bring our son back, but I see now that was

impossible.”

“There is still good in him.” Rey said adamantly.

“You have a kind heart, Rey. And I hope that you’re right. ”

“I can help him turn. I've seen it,” Rey said, nodding her head emphatically. At last. This was what she had needed: Clear direction and a vision to follow. “General Organa,” she said getting to her feet, eyes blazing with earnest purpose, “I promise I will use this crystal and forge a new lightsaber and bring Ben —”

“Rey,” Leia said, holding up a hand. The girl’s forward moment came to a crashing halt. Leia smiled, half reproachful, half indulgent. “You’re as impatient as Poe Dameron -- let me finish.” Rey felt her cheeks burning again and quietly sat back down. “You can’t undo the past and, listen to me Rey this is important, if something happens please know that it was his choice. You are not responsible for him, whatever bond you have.”

“We don’t have--”

“Rey. You may not know what a kyber crystal does. But Ben sure does.”

Rey didn’t know how to answer that. She had been so careful to hide everything. But now it seemed Leia had known all along. But it didn’t matter. She was still angry at him. Wasn’t she? She sat there, running her thumb over the crystal, feeling its latent power and trying to empty her mind to keep any further feelings from bubbling up.

“Whatever it is that has connected you, I don’t know that it will be so easily broken. We will have to meet what comes.” Leia said after a moment, then let out a long breath and shut her eyes. Rey noted with concern how the General seemed diminished, even compared to how she had been at the start of their conversation just a few moments ago. She looked old, tired and in pain. Beaumont and the others expected Rey to heal the General. How would she even do that, she wondered? Reaching out tentatively, she tried to sense the Force flowing through Leia, as she knew it wound through all things.

“Rey?” “Yes?” Rey said, startled and pulling back.

“Don’t you think you’d better go get started on that lightsaber?” Leia said, gesturing at the door. Obediently, Rey jumped to her feet and left the tent.

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As the tent door shut behind Rey, Leia opened her eyes. She looked down at one of the data pads around her. This one had a photo on it -- herself, Han, and Ben. Ben couldn’t have been more than 5 years old. The love she felt for them was as strong as ever, but they were like ghosts. They had been so young, all of them. Rey thought there was good in Ben. Leia loved her for it. She hoped it could be true. She hoped....she hoped a lot of things. She felt she could almost see a future for all of them, safe and happy. Luke would say it was a vision from the Force. Han would say it was wishful thinking. For herself, Leia just thought about the work that there was still to be done.

“General?” A soft voice said behind her. She turned her head to see Ransolm Casterfo, now standing in front of her. Though he had recovered since his time in First Order Captivity, he still seemed frail. Nothing like the young, opinionated senator she had spared with, so many years ago. And yet still dashing in a cape, she noted with a small smile. “I have the rest of the reports,” he continued, “if you have a moment?”

“Yes, I’ve been waiting for those,” she said, setting the photo of Han and Ben aside. “What have you got for me?”

## Chapter End Notes

Author’s note: At the end of TLJ, when Leia puts her hand over Rey’s and says “We have everything we need” the #1 first thing I thought was that the ring she was wearing was a kyber crystal and that they were going to forge Rey her own lightsaber. I'm pretty sure it's also the ring on the hand outstretched when she Mary Poppinses herself back into the ship. I am positive that if I went on Wookieepedia it would give me an entire rundown on the actual, canon background of Leia’s jewelry, and tell me that kyber crystals don’t work like that, but writing this is part of my TROS grieving process/now covid-19 grieving process, so I’m going to take my own creative liberties.

Thank you for reading, please leave kudos or comments if you enjoyed the story.

## Two steps forward, one step back.

### Chapter Summary

Rose tried to get Rey to open up. Finn is oblivious. Poe has great hair. Rey steals a sandwich.

### Chapter Notes

Update 5/8/20: Slight change to the last paragraph to make the action more clear. Hope you enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Rey dreams that she is lying in bed, wrapped up in blankets. But she is not, as she always is, alone. This is how she knows it's a dream. She snuggles in close to the man next to her and he wraps his arms around her, pulling her tight against his chest. He is warm, so unbelievably warm. She sighs and twists her hand in the fabric of his shirt. She can hear his heartbeat. She has never felt this safe while awake, not ever. His hand slides along her waist and all thoughts slip out of her head.

She wakes up alone. The dream fades.

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“This seat taken?”

Rey looked up to see the bright figure of Rose Tico above her. Without waiting for a response, Rose sat down.

“If Finn sent you to check on me, I’m fine. Really.” Rey said, forcing a brittle smile. Rose’s brow furrowed.

“He didn’t –”

“Rose. You’re a terrible liar.”

“I just...wanted to see if you wanted to talk. I know you like to be alone, but –”

“I don’t like to be alone.” Rey snapped. Rose flinched as though she'd been slapped.

There was a beat. Rey took a defiant bite out of her sandwich. Rose nervously toyed with her necklace, glancing at Rey, then off at something in the distance. She should apologize, of course...but she also had to admit she felt some kind of perverse glee from tormenting this poor girl. She also knew she shouldn't be feeling this way, but pushed that thought aside. There were too many thoughts in her head, all screaming for her attention. It had been five days since her conversation with General Leia. Five days since she had been charged with building a lightsaber. After that initial shot of purpose, she had languished. And she hadn't forgotten her promise to Beaumont to find a way to heal the General either. That, too, eluded her.

"All I'm saying," Rose said, her eyes on Rey, "is that we've all been going through a lot."

"I told you, I'm fine" was what Rey attempted to say, but what came out was a muffled mumble followed by a coughing fit as bread went down the wrong pipe. To her mortification, Rose had to thump her hard on the back while she struggled to swallow..

"Here's two of my favorite people."

Rey looked up through streaming eyes to see Finn standing above them, with Poe striding in behind. Inwardly she groaned. All she had wanted was to sit here, read, eat, then go and maybe train. All of these people, even caring people...it was more than she could deal with.

"Rey was just telling me about the Jedi books." Rose said, beaming up at Finn. Rey wondered fleetingly if the other girl's face ever hurt from smiling so much. Her own certainly ached as she stretched it into what she hoped was a convincing smile.

"Oh, you have one out!" Poe said, leaning down to pick up the book, instantly interested because *of course* he was. She just barely resisted the urge to roll her eyes. There wasn't anything that he didn't find that he didn't immediately think himself the master of.

"Just trying to get some reading done." Rey said, snatching up the book and holding it protectively against her.

Poe stopped short with his hand still outstretched and shot a sideways glance at Finn. Finn shot him a meaningful look, and Poe laughed nervously, redirecting the gesture into putting his hand in his pocket.

"Are you still working on deciphering that prophecy thing that you told me about back on Ryloth? With the Jedi...what are they again?" Finn asked.

"Jedi Holocrons? Yes at least that's what I think they're called. It could be translated as 'wayfinder,' this one book gets a little poetic about them..." As she spoke, Rey's expression warmed into something more genuine. She had mentioned reading about this to Finn weeks and weeks ago, when she was trying to explain everything that had happened to her since they'd been apart. Their conversation had ended abruptly when Poe had come looking for Finn. She couldn't believe he remembered.

"I've had some probl—" she started, but was cut off as Finn's attention was grabbed instead by her unattended sandwich.



“Ooh, food!” He’d settled down next to Rose now, and picked up the other half of Rey’s sandwich. She watched with baleful eyes as he finished it in three bites.

“Sorry, what were you saying?” he said, around a full mouth.

“I was saying it’s going really well, thanks,” she said coolly, shutting the book again.

“Great,” Poe said, smiling a blazing smile. He straightened back up to standing and pushed his perfect hair out of his face. Rey tried not to think about her own hair, pulled back into messy buns. “We’re meeting with Casterfo in about an hour to discuss our next moves,” Poe continued, “You’ll both be there?”

“Yeah, we were thinking that we could go with you and Chewie on the Falcon to the next rendezvous,” Finn said brightly.

“That...would be good,” Rey said, and her smile eased into something a little more genuine. She reminded herself that Finn had come back for her, always. Unlike – she pushed this thought away. There was a moment of something approaching a companionable silence, and Rey was about to tease Finn about taking her food, when Poe tapped him on the shoulder.

“Come on, buddy, we’ve got a couple more stops to make. See you ladies at the meeting.”

“Right! See you!” Finn said, struggling up to his feet to follow Poe.

Rose followed the two men with her eyes as they walked away, then turned back to Rey and said in a low voice:

“Now tell me, what does the book say? And how is it really going? Because you may say I’m the bad liar, but there is no way this,” she tapped the book with two fingers, “is going as well as you say.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about, Rose,” Rey said, sharper than she had intended. Rose, for her part, took it in stride.

“Okay, I’m not a Jedi scholar, but I’m pretty sure that you were reading it upside down.”

Rey felt her cheeks catch fire. True enough, it was upside-down. She slowly turned the book around and opened it up again.

“I’m supposed to be building a lightsaber, or learning how to heal with the force...”

“A lightsaber? Force heal??” Rose’s eyes were wide in awe.

“Yes, but I keep being drawn back to this one. Even with everything else I know I should be doing, I keep ending up back here.”

“What does it say?”

“It’s about...balance.” Rey said, hesitating for a moment before lowering the book and opening it again to the page she’d been on. She laid it out on the grass in front of them and

they both leaned over it. The page it was open to showed a picture of light and dark, swirling around each other. She traced the figure with her finger, "The light side and the dark side, meeting, embracing."

"What do you think it means?" Rose asked.

Rey kept tracing the figure, playing for time. Why did Rose have to ask so many questions?

"I don't know," she said quietly. "I know what I want it to mean." Ben coming back from the dark side. Turning. Just like she'd seen when their hands had touched. "Sometimes it seems like gibberish. Sometimes, I can read it. I can see the chains of logic in my mind. If I follow the chain, I can almost look back at the ancient Jedi, really understand them. But then the connection breaks and I'm back to just getting glimpses." She shut the book sharply. "I need more than what's in these books. But I can't really search until I can defend myself. For that, I need a lightsaber. If I just had more direction, I..." could turn Ben Solo back to the light? Heal his mother? "...I wish I knew what to do." She finished instead.

"I think we all feel like that, a little," Rose said quietly. "That's what I was trying to tell you earlier. All of us," she waved her hand to encompass the whole Resistance camp, "we're all just figuring it out. We're all looking for something. And we've all lost someone. Some of us, a lot of someones," Rose said, playing unconsciously with the charm around her neck again. "But we keep going. We stay true to each other. You're not alone, okay?" Rose then reached out and hugged Rey, oblivious to the effect of her words. Rey knew she should be hugging her back, but she was too stunned. The words had triggered something in her and she felt, as she had so much lately, a presence. It wasn't quite how it had been on Ach To, with all the sound fading out and just...just the two of them. Here, things seemed to dim a little and she felt a presence, like someone standing just behind her, about to rest a ghost of a hand on her shoulder. Rose released her at last.

"Now sit tight, I'll get you another sandwich. I can't *believe* Finn ate yours, I am *so* sorry!" Rose said, bounding up and grabbing Rey's empty plate.

"Right. Thanks." Rey said, shakily. She still felt that presence behind her. She kept her head very still. She knew what she would see if she turned around. She wouldn't do it. She couldn't. As soon as Rose was out of sight, Rey was up and walking, fast -- away from the light of the camp, into the rain and the cold and the darkness. She didn't care. She flipped her hood up over her hair, tucked the book safely into her tunic and ran and ran and ran.

She stopped, breathless, on a rise and looked over over a break in the canopy of trees. She felt that terrible pressure fade. The wind rocked the branches, sending droplets down onto the forest floor below. She gripped the book in her front pocket, feeling the edges dig into her skin. She searched her feelings, probing at the knot in her chest. She mourned...what? A life she thought she'd wanted with the Resistance? She had expected to find happiness here, but so far it had been all responsibility and solitude. A love that wouldn't quite die for Ben Solo? What even was love, what could a junker from Jakuu really know, or expect to know, about that?

She realized she had run further than she'd intended, and the rain was soaking through her hood. She needed to get under better cover. With a grunt of effort she hoisted herself up into a

nearby tree, feeling a thrill of exhilaration as she used the force to push herself just a little higher. She was wet and cold, but it was a little dryer up here beneath the tightly packed branches. Leaning against the trunk, she took the book out again. It fell open onto the same page she'd been showing Rose, the two halves, light and dark, connected and joined together. She was ashamed of how she had treated Rose just now. Was this what she was going to do forever? Push back against the darkness within her? How could she be this champion of light and good when she couldn't even resist the urge to be sharp with the people who were supposed to be her friends? *Who **are** my friend s*, she reminded herself, *Not that I deserve it*.

She felt her stomach growl and her face twisted into a grimace. There had been a time when she could have gone days without food. As chaotic as the Resistance life was, the regular meals had made her soft. Not having to think about hunger gave her the time to think about other things. Maybe that was why she'd never heard the Force call to her before than time in Maz's castle. She couldn't hear it over the sound of her empty belly. As if on cue, she felt ripple in the Force and that pressure again. She struggled to control her breathing. The sound of the rain pouring down grew distant and died. No. She would not do this. She couldn't face him. She tried to remember how she had shut him out before, kept him out all this time. But it was no use, she couldn't hold her focus. She squeezed her eyes more tightly shut, took a deep breath. Then she opened them.

He was in front of her. Ben Solo. Kylo Ren. The Supreme Leader, as he now styled himself. She expected to taste bile in her throat, feel hatred bubbling up inside her. And there was, some. But it was tempered with a rush of relief. It felt *good* to see him again. But more than this, she felt a *wholeness*, a relief. She noticed she was no longer hyperventilating. What she had dreaded had happened, and all she felt was calm and relief. She followed that feeling of stillness to its source. It seemed both within her and beyond her. Was it coming through the bond? If it was, could she trust it? Were her emotions really her own? She felt anger rising again. Out of the corner of her eye she could see his jaw working, as though he was testing words he couldn't quite bring himself to say.

"I had a dream --" he began, but she cut him off, swatting at him with the book in her hand.

"I have nothing to say to you," she snapped.

There was a beat of silence.

"Are you in the rain? Again?" he sounded part amused, part exasperated. Then continued, in a more serious tone: "Where are you?"

"Where are *you* ? Enjoying playing at being Supreme Leader?"

He didn't respond to her question, but nodded at the book in her hand.

"You have the Jedi sacred texts? Can you read them?" He sounded impressed. She hated how pleased that made her feel.

"I'm learning just fine," she said, just a little defensively.

"Are you?"

As she cast about for an appropriately acerbic response, she allowed herself to look at him properly for the first time. She could see the fatigue in the tension around his eyes and there was a shadow of a beard on his face. He looked tired. A lock of hair had fallen partially into his face and she fought the urge to reach out and tuck it back into place for him. Why did she want to do that??

It was then she noticed that he was holding something out to her. It took a moment to register what it was -- a sandwich. Her stomach growled again. Without thinking, as though watching herself from afar, she closed the distance between them and snatched it out of his hand. Then with a full body shiver she realized what she had just done and nearly dropped it. They both stared transfixed by the sandwich and the implications of what had just happened. In unison, they looked up at each other now mere inches apart. Their eyes met. *They could pass objects through this bond.* He looked fierce and alight with pride, like they had just solved a puzzle together and she found herself catching his enthusiasm. Her face broke into her first real smile of the day.

“Ben, I --” she started to say, but the words died in her throat as she saw his gaze flick to the book now tucked under the arm. Instinctively, she twisted away just as he lunged for it, but his fingers closed on the spine and pulled it deftly away. The movement caused her to overbalance and slip, falling hard onto a wide branch below. As she fell, the sounds of the forest came rushing back and Rey was once again alone. Alone...and holding a slightly squashed sandwich.

## Chapter End Notes

This was inspired in part by a piece of fanart I saw somewhere that had Rey showing off to Finn by stealing Kylo Ren's lunch. I tried to find it to link it, but wasn't successful.

Thank you for reading. Please think about leaving a comment or kudos if you enjoyed, as they really do make my life.

More to come soon.

# Interludes and Examinations

## Chapter Summary

Rose and Finn bicker -- oh, and also search for Rey. Poe spills the tea. Rey comes out of the woods at exactly the wrong moment.

## Chapter Notes

Thank you so much to the people who have commented and left kudos. Y'all are seriously my favorite people in the whole wide world, I can't articulate how much the interaction means to me.

In the original outline, this chapter didn't exist. But I kept getting sidetracked while writing the "proper" next chapter, that I felt it needed some Resistance perspective. I find in a lot of fic I read, Poe falls into being kinda the bad guy within the Resistance. I wanted to get a little more in his head to see why, perhaps, he doesn't immediately trust Rey to the level of, for example, Finn. The next chapter will be much more Reylo, as we'll spend more time in Rey's head and also check in with Ben. And these next chapters are already written, so there will be more soon.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Rey!"

"Shh, Finn, don't yell so loud! We don't know what's out here!"

"Yeah, and that's why we need to find her now. If you hadn't --"

"Hey, it's not *my* fault she left."

"You were the one who left her."

"Well, I only left her because you stole her sandwich!"

"If I'd known it was Rey's sandwich I wouldn't have taken it!"

"So it's fine to take my food??"

"Yes! I mean no, I mean -- I knew you wouldn't care."

"Why wouldn't I care? Because of what happened on Crait? I --"

"No, listen, *Rose* --"

"Hey, you two bickering? Not helping!" Poe shouted from behind them. In the semi-darkness of the forest, he'd heard them long before he saw them as, he imagined, had any lifeforms within a 3-mile radius. He trudged his way into the woods, through the mud towards Finn and Rose, a large scanner tucked under his arm

"Rose, he's sorry for stealing whoever's food; Finn, she's sorry for...I don't know what Rose is sorry for, but she is." Poe said, sliding the scanner out from under his arm and taping something into the screen. "Casterfo and the General say we've got to be off-planet in less than 2 hours. First Order scouts have been spotted in this system. We need to focus." He frowned as the scanner display faded in and out. He gave it a whack, which stabilized the readout momentarily before cutting out for good. "Rose? Can you please...? It's shorted out again," he held out the device to her and, reluctantly, she took it. He flashed her a smile and a nod of thanks.

He glanced next at Finn, who was peering out into the forest, as though he could somehow penetrate the thick dark foliage to find their friend. Poe followed his gaze but saw nothing.

"So... *did* you do to set Rey off?" Poe asked.

"I didn't do anything," Rose replied testily. She flipped open the scanner's side panel and winced as it disgorged a tangle of wire. "This is a mess! Finn, I need the light, I can't see what I'm doing." Obediently, Finn stepped closer to her and held the light at her level. "Thanks. After you two left, Rey and I were actually having a really nice conversation, then I got up to get her some more food because... well, it doesn't matter. Then she was gone."

"She didn't say anything, where she was going, or --?" asked Poe.

"I told Finn already," Rose said, reaching for a tool at her belt. "She was talking about the Force, it was all in that book she had."

"Jedi stuff," said Poe with irritation. The other two looked over at him, surprised by his tone. "What?" He asked, suddenly self-conscious. "It's all that Force stuff with her...and those books, why is she so secretive about them?"

"What'd the Force ever do to you?" Finn asked.

"Think about where and when we first met, buddy? Kylo Ren's ship? He didn't have me over for a tea party, that's for sure." Poe sighed. "I just wish she'd been at the meeting."

"Yeah, me too," Finn admitted, and Rose nodded gravely.

"The sooner we find her, the sooner we can be back in the air again," Poe said, "If that contact of Casterfo's comes through...it could make a huge difference. Supplies and ships in Exchange for a little planetary defense? It's almost too good to be true."

"We still have to get Rey to let us use the Falcon," Finn pointed out.

"This mission is vital to the Resistance. She'll come around," Rose said, nodding confidently.

"She seem weird to you at all lately?" Poe asked, trying to sound nonchalant. Rose paused in the middle of stripping a wire, glanced at Poe, then looked meaningfully at Finn. Taking the cue, Poe continued, "Finn, you know her best."

"She's fine," Finn replied immediately, then paused before adding: "I mean, I asked and she said she was fine. Sometimes I wonder, though...a lot happened while we were separated."

"Did she ever tell you exactly what did happen? Because I heard --" Poe began, then stopped himself. He would not be a gossip like Connix.

"What'd you hear?" Finn asked, looking into Poe's face with that crushing earnestness of his.

The full story, according to Poe's only slightly disreputable source, was that Snoke had been ripped in half, his elite guards reduced to slabs of cauterized meat. *But if someone is going to tell Finn that his best friend is that kind of killer*, Poe thought, *it sure as hell isn't going to be me*. It didn't count as lying if he was protecting him, right?

After a few seconds of consideration, Poe said, "Buddy, I heard that she's the one who killed Snoke."

"WHAT?" Rose exclaimed, looking up from her work.

Finn shook his head. "No way, she would've told me."

"It would explain why she suddenly became the First Order's most wanted. You're sure she didn't say anything? What about that time on Ryloth? When I came up on the two of you talking and she was crying?"

"Finn, you didn't make Rey cry??" Rose asked, indignant.

"No! Not on purpose..." he screwed up his face, remembering, "she was telling me some of what she'd learned...there's these hidden Jedi recordings and they have..secrets or something that she needs to kill Kylo Ren? I think it was killing him, anyway. What else would she want to do with him? That's when she started crying -- when she talked about him. And being on the Supremacy...I think..." he lowered his voice even though there was no one visible around. "I think they might've tortured her, Ren and Snoke."

There was a silence while all three of them digested this information. Poe felt an expected surge of sympathy for Rey. He knew first hand what it was like to be tortured by the First Order.

"So what if she killed him, good for her. He deserved it," Rose said, as though that settled it.

"I'm not arguing whether he deserved it. Obviously, he deserved it and more" Poe said, exasperation creeping into his voice. "But...what is she capable of? Somebody who could kill Snoke?"

"It's good she's on our side, then," Rose said, finishing her repairs and snapping closed the back of the scanner with a small click. "That's all I need to know." She pushed the now operational scanner back into his hands.

Poe smiled at her. "That's the kind of thing Paige would have said. You just gave her a job and got out of her way."

Rose was silent and he wondered if he'd overstepped. They'd never talked much about Paige. He started to apologize, but Rose shook her head.

"It's a Tico trait, we get things done," she said, only a slight waver in her voice. Then she nodded towards the scanner. "Why'd you grab this old thing anyway? Where's BB-8?"

"Are you kidding? I'd be cleaning the mud out of his circuits with a toothbrush. And since you two went tearing off into the woods in such a hurry, I grabbed the first scanner I could find to keep up. Hey, how do I set this up to look for --"

"If you're looking for me, I'm right here."

All three of them jumped as suddenly Rey appeared next to them in the glow of the lantern light. She looked rough, soaked through and covered in mud.

"Rey?! You scared us!" Rose said, hand to her chest. But Finn rushed forward and hugged her, mud and all.

"We didn't know where you were," Finn said, pulling back to look at her. "You're okay, right?"

"I'm fine," she replied, "and I didn't mean to scare you, Rose. I wouldn't want you to think me capable of that." Poe felt the sting of her words, but had the sense to keep his mouth shut. He felt Leia would be proud, he'd make a diplomat yet. Without elaborating she continued walking towards the camp, and the three of them fell in behind her.

"We missed you at the planning meeting," Finn said, taking a stab at conversation.

"I left to train and lost track of time," she replied. It was plausible enough, but the way she said it was mechanical, rehearsed. Poe wondered what she'd really been doing.

"We have to be off-planet in a couple of hours, but it'll be plenty of time," Finn continued. "And we can catch you up on the way to the next rendezvous. It's still ok if we ride together with you and Chewie, right?"

Rey stopped walking abruptly, causing Finn to bump into her. She turned to face him. In the glare of Finn's lamp, she looked a mess. Most of her hair was now plastered to her face. The single bun that had held on was matted and dripping and her face was covered in streaks of mud. Yet, and maybe it was just the lamplight, Poe had to admit she appeared slightly luminous despite it all. Lit from within. She stared at Finn as if studying him, and Poe wondered what she was thinking.

"If that's what you want, Finn," she said at last.

"Of course," Finn said with relief, "I told you earlier, Poe and I are going to go with you on this leg. Isn't that right, Poe?"



Poe cleared his throat. "Yeah, that's right."

"I have to work, or I'd come, too," Rose said.

"That's right, Rose got a big promotion," Finn said, beaming down at her.

"It's not that big," Rose said, cheeks coloring, "but we did get a new carrier, the Kalee Ferr, and I'm going to be the Engineering --"

"Wait," Rey said suddenly, holding up a hand. The trio stopped, staring at her. She tilted her head as though listening, then looked up at the sky. "Something's coming. I think--"

It was then a sonic boom split the air and sent each of them tumbling to the ground.

"Combat ships," Poe said, struggling to his feet. He glanced around, head ringing from the noise, looking for Finn. But Finn was already up and after Rey, who was sprinting back towards the Falcon. He held out a hand to help Rose to her feet before following them, dropping the scanner as he ran.

Their grace period on this planet was up. The First Order had found them.

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"Chewie, we need to get in the air!!" Rey shrieked as she bounded up into the Falcon. He barked something back at her, but she couldn't hear him over the sound of the engines coming to life. She turned in the doorway and scanned the ground looking for Finn, Rose and Poe. That had been just behind her. Why why why had she left them? She should have stayed behind to make sure --

There they were! Finn came sprinting out of the woods, followed closely by Poe and Rose.

"Over here!!" She shouted at the trio, waving her arms over her head. She knew she looked ridiculous, but it got their attention. From overhead, shots were being fired and trees were catching fire. "Finn! Get on weapons! The rest of you strap in!" She shouted as the three of them came careening up into the ship. She ran back to the cockpit where Chewie was spewing admonishments at her.

"I know, *I know*. We're going. I couldn't leave them." Strapping herself in, they began to lift off. Immediately she had to swerve to avoid fighters, both friendly and enemy. It was a mess. If there had been an organized withdrawal planned, it had completely fallen apart. Theirs was one of the last ships to leave. As they ascended towards the atmosphere, Rey kept them moving while Finn did his best to clear a path. As they left the ground, Rey's mind cleared. It was like a switch being turned. She focused on the here and now, weaving the ship out through the atmosphere, into space beyond. This was something familiar, *this* she could do; after all, she's been fighting her whole life. There were no moral grays to be found here, just the pure absolutism of friendlies and enemy targets. It was almost like meditation.

Finally, they were able to get out far enough to make the jump to lightspeed. Still muddy, still soaked, Rey leaned back against the pilot seat, pulling off her headset as Finn's cheers echoed in her ears. It had been such a long, long day. She closed her eyes and felt tears leak out from beneath her eyelids. Had she caused this somehow? Had Kylo Ren tracked her through the bond? No. She knew with certainty he hadn't authorized this attack. Where that certainty came from, she was too exhausted to examine. But there had been a moment, just before it started where she thought she'd heard her name, like a warning. From him? From the Force?

Watching her with concern, Chewie asked if she was okay.

"I'm fine." Every time she said it, she felt less and less fine.

"Hey, that was good flying," Poe said from his spot behind Chewie. Rey blinked. She'd genuinely forgotten he was there.

"Thank you," she said formally.

"Best team in the Resistance, that's us!" Finn said, entering the cockpit at a run and dropping into the seat behind her. BB-8 beeped happily just behind him.

"Was everyone else able to get away?" Rose, asked from her spot in the doorway. "What about our people in orbit? I'm supposed to be onboard the Kalee Ferr..."

"We won't know until we get to the rendezvous, assuming it hasn't changed. Do any of you know the codes? BB-8?"

BB-8 chirped a cheerful affirmative.

"Thank you," Rey said, affectionately straightening his antenna. BB-8 beeped again before rolling away to plug into the ship's computer.

The rest of them sat in silence. Rey pretended to study the controls in front of her. Finally, Chewie unhooked himself from the copilot seat and got up to leave, talking over his shoulder at Rey as he left.

"Right," she said, shaking her head to clear it. She forced a smile onto her face. "We're a little overloaded, but Rose you can take my room if you two," she nodded at Finn and Poe, "don't mind the bunks. Chewie says Finn and Poe's stuff was already transferred over, but Rose I'm sure I've got something you can wear if you need."

"Okay... thanks," Rose said. All three of them were staring at her now. She could sense that they wanted to talk, but she... couldn't. Not now.

She couldn't believe when she had stumbled across them, cold and wet and tired and sore, to find them talking about her. What she'd heard...she would deal with it later. She didn't know whether she was bothered more by Poe's distrust or Rose's optimism. Either way, it did nothing to alleviate the burden of expectation. At least they hadn't noticed that she had lost the book yet. Hopefully they never would. She should want to tell them the truth. That would be the good, light thing to do. But telling them about what really happened in the throne

room, what really happened between her and Ben today, would mean thinking about it. And that she could not do. Yet.

Glancing at the three of them from the corner of her eye, she made up her mind. She would just have to work harder, to prove herself to be the Jedi they needed. That thought alone exhausted her more than an entire afternoon of running through the woods.

"I'm going to take a shower," Rey said, unbuckling quickly and standing up. She suddenly felt that if she didn't get out of this very small cockpit full of people right now, she would lose it. "Finn, can you keep an eye on things here? If BB-8 can get us access to a secure channel, tell them I need to talk to General Leia."

"Of course," Finn said. "But first we --"

"Later, I need to change," she said wearily, pushing past them and out the door.

## Chapter End Notes

The Ryloth bit is a reference to the events of the [Resistance Reborn novel](#).

Thank you for reading. Please consider leaving a comment or kudos if you enjoyed.

More to come soon.

# A change in perspective

## Chapter Summary

Kylo Ren reads a book. Hux is obnoxious. A random First Order officer gets caught in the middle.

## Chapter Notes

This took a little longer to edit than anticipated. Next chapter will be a good bit longer -- Rey's got a lightsaber to build, after all, and that takes time.

Thank you so much to those who've commented and left kudos, you are the very best.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He dreams and knows that he is dreaming. No other logical explanation exists. He hears her breathing next to him, not quite asleep, but lying still, relaxed. He tries to wake himself up, to stoke the rage that sustains the persona of Kylo Ren. But anger has no place in this dream and it drains away -- to be replaced with the contentment that can only come from lying next to someone cared for. He pulls her into his arms. How long has it been since he touched another person, before her?

He wakes up alone. The dream *almost* fades. But all day he recalls, like phantom pains, the sensation of his hands tangled up in her loose, dark hair.

-----

Far, far away, Kylo Ren stood alone in a hallway holding a battered book.

He had been trying for months to get through to her, tried everything he could think of, but other than the occasional chink, the wall between them held. He had even begun to wonder if they would ever connect again. As he had pushed, he used to think about what he'd say to her. He'd developed long narratives, down to the word, of what he would say to her when he saw her again. But then, today, without warning, without time to prepare, there she was. All his practiced speeches had evaporated upon actually seeing her again. Bright and fierce and beautiful and *right there*. The connection had been so clear that he could almost sense her surroundings. He'd been jubilant as they started to realize, together, what this bond could be, how it worked.

And he'd thrown it all away by reaching for the damn book.

He stalked back towards his quarters, expression thunderous. As he moved through the ship, everyone from officers to 'droids scattered out of his way. They had seen his moods before and knew better than to be within striking distance.

The door to his quarters hissed open and he ducked through, tossing the book onto a table. Nearby, his console flashed with messages and urgent queries. He ignored them. Instead, he shrugged off his cloak and stood in front of the book, laying a hand lightly on the cover.

It was a madness, the way this book called to him. From the moment he saw it, he had to have it. It didn't occur to him to just ask her for it until he had already reached out and taken it. His fist clenched as he once again saw her falling... he had reached out with a gloved hand to try to steady her, but he was too late. She slipped through his fingers, again. If he hadn't lost his head, maybe they would have had more time to talk, to explain...

When he killed Snoke, there had been no other option. He had known for some time that he and his master's goals no longer aligned. If that realization traced back to when he had first touched Rey's mind, well...he wouldn't admit that, not even to himself. It had to be a coincidence. But when he had seen Snoke hurt her, he knew it had to end. At that moment -- and he had told himself many times, looking back, it was irrational -- but, at the moment he would have endured any pain, any terror to keep her safe. But in the end, he blew it, pushed her away. In the months since, he had re-lived those minutes over and over and over, picking apart the seconds, trying to find where he had gone wrong. He had offered her everything he had. And yet...

As his thoughts spiraled, he glanced down again at the book. He tipped the cover back, causing it to fall open onto an illustration that felt somehow familiar, the balance of light and dark. Intrigued, he removed his right glove and gently pressed his fingertips to the pages, closing his eyes. He did not possess the force ability to sense echoes of the past in objects, yet he could almost feel the residual energy of her presence here. It made him feel a longing he could not articulate.

Snoke had been a voice inside his head since he was a child. The longer he was gone, the more Kylo felt the axis of his world shift away from the darkness of his old master and towards...well, perhaps not towards the light, he was too broken for that, but towards Rey. His one constant.

Opening his eyes, he took in the writing surrounding the figure and his brow furrowed. He flipped forward a few pages, then back. The Jedi texts had all been written at different times in different dialects, the pages bound and re-bound. His uncle hadn't had much time for them, but to his younger self they had been endlessly fascinating -- it was like holding history. Beyond that, it had been like a puzzle to figure them out, a game back when he was a child. He used to copy out bits of it to practice his calligraphy. He hadn't thought about that in years. He'd thought they were gone forever, these old books.

Calling back on that knowledge, he found he could translate what was written with minimal difficulty. As he read, he felt the blood drain from his face. It was a treatise on the Dyad and

Their Temple. It was there that balance would be struck between a matched pair...a pair with a bond that very much resembled himself and--

*Fear of light and fear of dark will melt away*, he read. *The light is the left hand of darkness. Like lovers together, like the end and the way.*

Like lovers? He felt a lightness in his stomach at the idea, quickly dashed by the reality of his situation. Sure. Right. She didn't want him. She couldn't. He focused on this despair, tried to refine it, draw power from it as he had in the past. But instead, he just felt hollow. *Another failing.*

He ought to abandon all thoughts of Rey. And he would. He would conquer this. If it weren't for the dreams... Sometimes in the dark, as he struggled to sleep, he could feel her with him. It brought him peace. A sort of peace that he didn't usually allow himself. And if they could touch and pass objects through whatever this bond was, was it really out of the question that -

The flashing on his console grew urgent again. Anger, sharp and real this time, flared within him. Reaching over, he tapped a button, and the screen flared to life. It was filled with the face of a young man with curly brown hair, slightly longer than regulation, pale-faced and sweating.

"Supreme Leader!" The man on the other end said, sinking in his chair a little, relief palpable. Then he seemed to recover himself and snapped back upright. "Sir. You ordered me to alert you if General Hux uh, tried anything? I think those were your exact words? When you took me aside in the Officer's Galley today? It was right after you took my sandwich, sir -- which was fine, by the way! I am *more* than happy to give up my lunch for --"

Kylo hoped his impassive expression hid his confusion. He had a vague memory of shouting at some passing person, telling them to keep him apprised of General Hux's movements as a cover. In the moment, he'd only cared about getting the sandwich. Rey had wanted one -- the connection had been so clear that he heard echoes of someone talking to her about it. She wanted it, and he had wanted to be the one to give it to her. "Report, uhh..." he trailed off, scanning the man's uniform for rank and information.

"Lt. Carmichael, sir," the man said, helpfully supplying his name. "General Hux has authorized an attack on a suspected Resistance base."

"He found it? Where?? When is the attack?"

"It's already ordered and underway, Supreme Leader," Carmichael replied miserably. "I tried to inform you earlier, sir, but you weren't picking up, and --"

"Connect me to Hux immediately," Kylo said, cutting across him.

"Sir, I don't have the authority to --" Kylo raised an eyebrow and felt a flash of dark satisfaction as he watched the color drain from the Lieutenant's face, "uh, right away sir, stand by...."

The screen went black and Kylo sprang to his feet, seething. He stalked back and forth, giving movement to his ...anxiety? No. Rage. It had to be rage. He had expressly told Hux not to move without informing him. Yes, that was why he felt so out of control. It had nothing to do with her safety. It --

The screen flashed again and Hux's dour, scowling face filled the screen.

"Supreme Leader?"

"Hux," Kylo said, his voice low and dangerous, "Do you not recall when I ordered you to inform me of any movements against the Resistance?"

"Yes," Hux replied sourly, "and if you check your console you will find several hours' worth of attempted communications. One of our long-range scouts found a Resistance bolt hole. It was prudent to attack, and attack quickly, for the Glory of the First Order. It was no longer reasonable to wait. If, Supreme Leader, it is your intention to be involved, I suggest you start *Checking.Your.Messages*. Oh, and before you ask," Hux said silkily, his face twisting into a perversion of a smile, "we do not yet know if your... scavenger girl is among the Resistance at this base. Should we find her among the dead you will, of course, be the first to know."

There was a beat of silence as the two men glared at each other with equal fury. Kylo expected Hux to look away first, but the little man didn't budge.

"This is not the end of this, General Hux."

"No, I doubt that it is." Hux cut the communication.

Like a marionette whose strings had been cut, Kylo fell heavily back into his chair. *Rey*, he thought, trying to reach out to her. There was a brief flash...but no, nothing. Silence. Whatever had enabled him to bridge the gap between them earlier, it seemed to be gone now. His head pulsed from the effort. She was smart, she was quick, she was *Rey*; it would take more than Hux's blundering scouting parties to take her down. But he had to know if she was all right, he *deserved* to know. And how had Hux even thought about attacking without his authorization?? Kylo Ren felt himself filling with rage, felt it fill him to the crown of his head until there was no more room for fear or doubt or helplessness. The air in the room crackled. He was on his feet again. He needed to break something. He *needed* to -- his eyes fell on the Jedi text, still open in front of him. He snatched it up, ready to hurl it at the console... but something stopped him and he lowered his arm. Staring at the book he felt the rage ebb away as a new purpose took hold. *Rey* had been trying to read this book. It had been important to her. And if he was deciphering it correctly, it could be essential to both of their futures. Maybe if he read it, too, it would help him understand. If he could find the reason for this connection, then he could in turn give that answer to her. Whatever she wanted, whatever it took. Tentatively, hands trembling with unspent adrenaline, he set the book in front of him. It fell open to a new section, a new engraving, this time of a temple nestled in a mountain pass. He pulled off his left glove, letting it fall to the tabletop. Then he picked up the book and began to read.

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading. Please consider leaving a comment or kudos if you enjoyed, it means a lot to me to hear what you're thinking.

More to come soon.



# Lines of Communication

## Chapter Summary

Leia lays down the law (while Connix listens in); Finn delivers some bad news; Rey and Kylo throw things at each other.

More abstractly, it's about the invisible walls that we put around ourselves to protect from what we perceive as scary -- you have to break the walls, it's the only way to grow. Maybe it's time for Rey to start?

## Chapter Notes

Today marks 4 months in quarantine for me, so time no longer has any meaning. That being said, this took way longer than I thought it would to edit. Just the first little scene is from Kaydel Connix's point of view, then we're back to being in Rey's head, as promised.

I hope that you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Kaydel Connix surveyed the bridge, noticing everything and missing nothing. At her communications console, she flipped absently from band to band, listening out for any scrap of their Resistance code while continuing to scan the room. Without turning her head, her eyes flicked to General Casterfo, staring steadfastly out the viewport, to the half a dozen other Resistance members pretending to work, to See-Threepio, giving a treatise on protocol that no one was listening to. They'd been in tight spots before, they all knew this. But something felt different this time. Their Old Lady wasn't doing well, but trying hard to hide it. To keep up morale?

The initial adrenaline rush of their escape had given way to hours of tedium. Even the General was tired. But there was more to it. A sort of weariness that kept growing and growing as the hours stretched on and ships failed to report in. The mood had infected the bridge, squeezing out the air until each breath was a struggle against the inevitable. Casterfo came to stand next to the General, placing a hand on her shoulder, which she reached up to squeeze. *Interesting*, Kaydel thought, *I wonder if the two of them--*

She was distracted by a flashing notification in front of her. It took her a moment to register what she was seeing, then she felt a fresh jolt of excitement, her hand shaking slightly as she

patched into the signal. Listening to their hail, her face broke into a bright smile and turned to face General Leia.

"General, it's the *Millennium Falcon*. They're reporting in."

"*Finally*," the General said, sitting up in her chair.

"Oh thank the Maker!" See-Threepio sang out from behind her.

"Shhh, Threepio," Leia said, absently waving a hand at him. "Put them through, Lieutenant. Can you get them on the speaker?"

Pursing her lips, Kaydel did so, and the crackle across static filled the bridge.

"This is Poe Dameron, do you read?"

"Yes, we read you," Kaydel said, then more softly: "We thought we'd lost you."

Poe laughed with an enthusiasm that rattled her headset. "It would take more than a couple of First Order pot shots to take us down."

Kaydel bit back a sarcastic remark, remembering protocol. "Are you set for fuel? Who else is abroad?" The eyes of the entire bridge were now on her, straining to hear the transmission.

"We're good for fuel at the moment. It's me, Finn, Rose, Chewbacca and --" there was a collection of indignant beeps, "yeah, buddy, I got you -- BB-8 says hello as well, and --"

"Is Rey with you?" Leia said, cutting across him.

There was a shuffle, then Rey's voice came through: "Here!" She must have grabbed the headset from Poe. Leia's mouth twisted into a fierce smile, and Ransolm, his hand still on her shoulder, let out a barely audible breath.

"Jedi Master Rey is present and accounted for," Kaydel said, pitching her voice so that it carried across the bridge. A ripple of excitement passed through those assembled there. Some of the tension dissipated, and those who had been staring off into space straightened up at their consoles.

"Oh, how wonderful!" Threepio said cheerfully. "R2 will be so pleased. He --"

"Send them over the new coordinates," Leia said, holding up a hand to silence the droid again.

Kaydel nodded in acknowledgment, preparing to send the code. "Please keep communications to a minimum. We don't yet know how the First Order tracked us, but we aren't taking any chances. We're asking you to go radio silen --"

"General, I need to talk to you!" said Rey, suddenly, the words seeming to burst out from her, across space, to ring out through the speakers on Connix's console.

There was a beat of silence. Anyone on the bridge still pretending to work stopped, looking up in open curiosity.

"Go on?" Leia said, laconically.

"Uhh, Privately?"

"Okay...Connix, if you wouldn't mind?"

Wordlessly, Kaydel switched the signal over to a private channel as Leia picked up the headset at the closest com station. Then, after the smallest of hesitations, Kaydel patched her own headset into their channel with a surreptitious flick of a switch.

"Rey," Leia said, so quietly that Kaydel had to strain to hear, "Before you say anything, I have to ask: what were you thinking? Do you have any idea how reprehensible the stunt that you pulled was?"

"What??" Rey sounded taken aback.

"When you left like that you put everyone in danger. Rose, Finn, and Poe went after you. If they hadn't found you, if they'd been stuck on the ground..! Look, Rey, I understand that as a Jedi you want to be alone. Luke used to pull that kind of thing all time --"

"I don't want to be alone," Rey said, sharply. Kaydel, still listening in, was surprised by this response, but kept her face smooth. She was a little in awe of the Jedi if she was honest. She'd grown up with stories of the Jedi and their great deeds, who hadn't? And more than that, Rey was the person they were all counting on to help them -- not just their cause, but to heal the General as well. Kaydel let her gaze drift back over to General Leia, thin and slightly hunched. She could see, even if no one else would admit it, that without the General, the Resistance would falter. Beaumont had been so sure that Rey was the one who could help them, but --

"Rey, let me finish," Leia said, pulling Kaydel's attention back to the conversation. "You have so much potential, but you *have* to learn to work with us. What you did, endangered not just yourself, but many other people. Do you understand?"

"But in the woods, I saw --"

"Rey. Right now, we're still trying to coordinate survivors and adjust our plans. Whatever it is, can it wait?"

"But I *saw* your --"

"Later, Rey, I promise."

*What did she see?* Kaydel wondered, mind spinning. *And why doesn't the General want to hear it?* It hardly seemed like her to say no to any piece of information, no matter how small. That attention to detail was something Kaydel had always respected about their General. She tapped her fingers on her console in a nervous gesture, trying to fit this new information together in her mind, to understand how it connected to the larger context. Granted, there

were other priorities at the moment. And, of course, the General was under tremendous strain. Could that be why she was letting whatever Rey wanted to say slip away for now? *Even a mind as sharp as Leia Organa's must get overwhelmed sometimes*, she reasoned. Regardless, this was something to file away for later consideration.

Meanwhile, back in the conversation, a few seconds of silence had passed. Finally, Rey responded: "I guess it can wait." The hurt -- and was that anger? -- in her voice was unmistakable.

"Good."

There was a beat of silence.

"I'm...sorry that I missed the planning session," Rey said.

"There will be others," Leia said, kindly, "We want your input. We need our Jedi."

Kaydel was so engrossed in listening that she almost missed the notification announcing another transmission attempting to connect on the same channel. Console chirping, she cleared her throat and Leia looked up at her expectantly.

"General, there's another transmission coming in. It must be one of the other ships. "

"Rey, we need to keep the main channel open. We can talk about this later, I promise. Go with Rose to the *Kalee Ferr* and we'll talk there. I look forward to hearing about your progress."

"Right. Progress." Rey said flatly, and Connix thought she sounded very far away. "We've received the coordinates, we'll rendezvous with you in 16 hours. *Falcon* out." Rey cut the connection. Leia stared off into space for a moment, then her gaze focused in on Kaydel.

"Put the next group through. Oh, and -- Lieutenant Connix," Leia said mildly. "Next time, if you're going to listen in, please remember to mute yourself first."

"Yes, ma'am!" Connix said, ears turning pink. Behind her, she thought she heard Casterfo chuckle softly.

-----

Rey put the communications headset down. Several minutes passed, she wasn't sure how many, with Leia's admonishments ringing in her ears. In front of her, one of the Jedi texts was propped up on the control panel. Behind her, she could hear the others starting up a game of holochess. The sound of their conversation rose and fell, echoing contentment. Rey wished that she could join them. They hadn't *not* invited her, but...she didn't know how to cross over and ask to join. It was the kind of social situation that she had never learned how to deal with. Jakku had been difficult. You don't really have friends in a place like that. It wasn't safe and it wasn't smart. She had never missed it until now. Now, she ached.

"Hey, Rey I need to ask -- wait, what's wrong?" Finn stepped into the cockpit and immediately stopped upon seeing her face. He dropped to his knees so that he was level with

her, gripping the armrest of the chair behind her for support. "You look awful. What's wrong?" he repeated. "You can trust me, Rey. I, ah, I heard about General Organa chewing you out."

"You...did?"

"Yeah," he said, a little nervously, "you had the volume up kind of high. We could hear it even down the hall. Don't worry! No judgment here -- she's like that sometimes," he paused for a moment, considering, then added: "You know she slapped Poe once."

"She didn't!" Rey said, incredulous, momentarily distracted.

"She did!" Finn said, laughing.

"You saw it?"

"No, Connix told me about it. So seriously, don't worry about what Leia said."

"What Leia said," Rey repeated slowly. She appreciated what Finn was trying to do, she really did. But to be cut off and ignored like that...it had made Rey feel fury and hurt to a degree that scared her. She had wanted nothing more at that moment than to jump through the transmission, grab the General by the shoulder and shake her, violently shake her until she listened. Rey looked down at her fists clenching in her lap and willed them to relax. Slowly, her palms opened, revealing little half-moons of red fingernail marks.

"Sometimes," Rey said, struggling to put the words together, "sometimes I think about the most terrible things. I can see myself, in my head, just...lashing out. And Finn, when I think about what I might be capable of? It scares me. It's like I don't know who I am anymore."

"Hey, hey," Finn said, reaching out to clasp her shoulder. "It's ok. You don't have to worry about that. Because I know who you are."

"You do?"

"Yeah! You're Rey! You're my best friend and a great Jedi and the light of the Resistance --"

"I am not --"

"You are. All of those things. Even Poe says so."

"I didn't think Poe had anything good to say about me."

Finn shrugged a little, half conceding the point. "He's just...got a lot on his mind right now, that's all. Look, Rey, we're the good guys. The First Order, they're the bad guys. It's that simple. We're the light, they're the dark. You don't have to be afraid of what you're capable of, because you're only capable of good."

Rey wished, rather than believed this to be true. It wasn't his fault...he just didn't understand. But he was expecting his words to make her better, and she couldn't bring herself to

disappoint her friend. So she scrubbed her hands across her face and managed a weak smile. He returned the smile, squeezing her arm again.

"So listen, there's something I need to ask you," Finn said bracingly. "For the next mission, we need the *Falcon* ."

"Okay," Rey said, perking up at once. She looked forward to the distraction, for something straightforward to put her mind to. "When do we leave?"

"That's the thing..." Finn said. "We leave after we drop Rose off at the rendezvous, but..."

Now that her mental fog had cleared, Rey sensed how tense he was. This wasn't like Finn at all. She tilted her head to the side and looked, really looked at her friend for the first time in weeks. Noticed the tension around his eyes. The way he'd tried to lounge casually on the armrest, but his hands kept moving. She reached out more and could sense Poe, just beyond the bend in the hallway. Waiting. Listening. *He's afraid of how I'm going to react and he's brought backup*. That could only mean --

"I...can't go with you? You're leaving me behind?" Finn shook his head, but his silence said it all. She felt, vaguely, as though part of her heart was breaking. "Finn, you said we were a *team* ."

"We are!" Finn said quickly. "But listen, Rey, you're the First Order's most wanted. Your face is *everywhere* ."

"What about you and Rose? The First Order knows what you look like. And how many missions has Poe flown? They know all of us are --"

Finn shook his head. "Not like this. They're running your face everywhere. I don't know what you did to Kylo Ren, but he wants to find you more than anyone."

Rey only half heard him. *Left behind. They're leaving me behind*. The words repeated over and over, echoing inside her head. She felt her breathing accelerate as anger and helplessness rose within her, bubbling over.

"Hey, we'll be back before you know it. We can find you a place on the *Kalee Ferr* and you can be alone like you like --"

"I *don't* like to be alone." Rey snapped. "Why do people keep saying that??"

"...because you keep going off by yourself?" Finn replied, trying for a joke that didn't land. "But you can't come with us, it wouldn't be safe."

"Wouldn't be safe for you?" Rey challenged, voice rising, trying to drown out the sound of her own thoughts. *They're leaving me behind* .

"No! Wouldn't be safe for *you* !" he squeezed her arm, but she could barely feel it. "So...it was decided that you should stay."

“It was *decided*,” Rey repeated. She was stunned. “I’m not going to hide the rest of this fight. Why do ‘they’ get to decide for me, for what I do?”

“Well, we’re all part of the Resistance, we all gotta work together --”

“That’s what Leia said. She said I have to learn how to work with the Resistance.”

“Well, I don’t think she was wrong?” Finn said, sounding a little desperate. She was scaring him, she could tell. *Good*, she thought. *No, wait, not good*. Rey closed her eyes, willing herself to breathe normally again. She had to pull herself together, pull serenity from the Force. This was no way to treat her friend. But what right had he to treat her this way? Suddenly she felt Poe step into the cockpit, and her eyes snapped open. It was like being doused with cold water. Whatever this was, she wasn’t going to give Poe Dameron the satisfaction of seeing her upset.

“Okay,” Rey said, running the back of her hand along each of her cheeks, to cool them. “The General wanted me to go to the *Kalee Ferr* anyway. It’ll be fine. I’ll..I’ll...I’ve got the Jedi texts. I’ll look at those.”

“That’s a great idea!” Finn said with relief. “You know, you never finished telling me about the holocrons.”

“If these holocrons are something you’re looking for,” Poe said, “We could keep an eye out. Batuu has markets, you never know what you’re gonna find. What should we be on the lookout for?” Poe asked, crossing his arms and leaning against the doorway with forced casualness.

“They’re devices that house recordings, usually shaped like cubes,” she held up her hands, clasping them loosely to approximate the size she’d seen noted in the book. “They were used to store knowledge, maps, instructions. According to the book I was reading, that’s how they would pass around things like, how to get to temples or where to meet.”

“Is there something specific you’re looking for?” Poe asked. It was a benign question, but it just drove home for Rey that she had no idea what she was doing.

“At this point, I’ll take whatever I can get,” she said, trying not to sound too defensive.

“Heard and understood,” Poe said, pushing up from the doorway. “I guess we’ll leave you to it.” She must have looked confused because he added: “You’re reading, right?” Poe pointed at the Jedi text, still propped up against the controls dashboard. She had forgotten about it. Rey nodded, turning to grab the book as Finn got to his feet and the two of them disappeared down the hall.

She forced herself to look down at the book. Made herself open it and turn a page. What she was looking for *had* to be in here. These were the Jedi Sacred Texts. What could be more sacred to a Jedi than a lightsaber? If she had that, then they couldn’t stop her from going on missions. She scowled down at the page. It was gibberish, it all looked like gibberish. She squeezed her eyes tight and tried to pretend that no tears leaked through.

Truthfully, she didn't know what was or wasn't sacred to the Jedi. The only Jedi she'd ever known had been Luke; she had no real context for any of this. What she needed right now was a guide. She'd thought it could be Leia, but now it seemed she'd been wrong. She needed someone who understood how messy being able to sense the Force made things. How hard it was to have your friends fear you. Feeling herself start to spiral, she reached out to the Force for strength and stability...reached out and found Kylo Ren. The sound of the holochess game faded, Finn and Poe walking away faded, even the last reverberations of Leia's lecture were suddenly gone. Only she remained. With Kylo Ren standing next to her.

"Sometimes," Rey said, not looking up at him, "I feel like I don't know who I am. Sometimes I feel like no one really knows me." She didn't know why she said it, or where it came from. But she felt a release as she confessed this truth.

"But I do," he said.

She looked up sharply, tears pricking her eyes. She knew, in that moment, that he did. But she also knew that she didn't want to deal with that feeling. She glanced around quickly, spotted a writing stylus and chucked it at his head.

He caught it easily, then launched it back at her.

"Is this going to happen all the time now?" she replied, catching it in turn.

"I don't know. I can't control it."

"I can't either, or I'd shut you out right now." She'd had more than enough happen this evening already. And yet, she felt oddly energized as she sat opposite Kylo Ren. She rallied, ready to throw the stylus at him again, ready for the next fight. So she was very confused when instead he said:

"I'm glad you're safe."

" *You* were worried?"

"Yes," he said with utmost conviction, "I was. I didn't authorize the attack," he added, "Hux did."

"As if he's not your creature, through and through," she spat.

" *Clearly* you do not know Hux. You think I'm lying. Fine. Reach out, Rey."

She snarled in protest, but did so. Closing her eyes, reaching out with the Force, she could feel the bond between them. It was fascinating -- strong and real and almost *alive* . More than that, she could feel the truth in his words. Okay, so he wasn't lying.

"I still don't want to talk to you," she said, opening her eyes and mentally pulling away.

"Rey," he said, exasperation creeping into his voice. She could sense that he was trying to hold back. Why? "We *have* to talk. I need to tell you --"



“Tell me what? How much you want to kill me and murder all my friends?” She threw the barb out, hoping he’d jump on it, but was disappointed again as he changed tack.

“That book --”

“The one you stole?”

“Borrowed, but yes --”

“Borrowed infers asking first.”

“Would you have given it to me when I asked?” he asked, raising an eyebrow at her.

“...No,” she admitted. He raised his hands in a “well then!” gesture and she scowled back at him -- but only half meant it.

“I’ll give it back to you,” he said, unexpectedly.

“Really??”

“Yes, at the Temples of the Dyad.”

“The...what?”

“So you haven’t read it.”

Her cheeks felt hot. “I might have...skimmed it. You took it before I could finish!”

“I haven’t finished it yet either. But I will. And then, we *will* talk, Rey.” She looked up into his face. She felt the pull of his gaze, deep and somehow earnest and pleading in a way she’d hadn’t expected. It reminded her of the elevator, just before Snoke...when she could have sworn that he wanted to kiss her. And she allowed herself to realize for the first time that, had he tried it back then, she would have kissed him back. She allowed herself to think about what that would have looked like, what that would have felt like, to be so close to him...

Her cheeks flushed, she tore her gaze away. Trying to disengage from those thoughts, she focused on the stylus, still in her hand. Rather than throw it this time, she turned it over in her fingers, faster and faster.

“Rey,” he said softly after a moment. “I’ve been having these dreams, have you --”

“No, I never dream,” she lied. He knew it was a lie. The stylus spun faster in her hand. He had mentioned a dream the last time they spoke as well. Why did he keep asking her that? Rey didn’t want to think, she wanted action. If only she had a lightsaber, then --

He let out a long sigh. Then said: “It’s green.”

“What?”

"The book you're looking for. If you have the one, I assume you have the others? Green cover. One of the thicker ones. Components start three-quarters of the way through, circuit diagrams after that. I can help--"

"I don't need your help."

He flinched as though she had slapped him. Then his face hardened, like a mask snapping into place.

"Fine," he said, voice sounding like rage frozen over. "Don't listen to me. Waste your time, if that's what you want to do. I don't care."

This, she could tell, was a lie.

"I don't care either," she replied. Also, a lie. She felt shame for lying, Jedi were supposed to be truthful and caring and good, weren't they? All things she, Rey, wasn't. She was sharp and weathered and no good to anyone. As though he could hear her, Kylo shook his head, disagreeing with her. With a jolt, Rey realized that if she could feel his emotions through the bond, he could probably feel hers as well. This was the final straw, more than she could handle in one night. As she saw him open his mouth to speak again, she felt around her for something else to throw. Her hand closed on a communications headset and she chucked it at him -- but at that moment the bond snapped shut, and the headset landed with a loud clunk in the copilot chair.

-----

That night, after everyone else had gone to bed, Rey lay in her room, staring up at the ceiling. She knew what she had to do, but she was afraid of what it would mean if she did it -- what it would mean if he hadn't lied. The last time she'd allowed herself to trust him, to be vulnerable with him, it had ended so badly. Why would he be trying to help her now? The thoughts spun and feeling whirled until finally, she sat up. It was time to stop being afraid. She swung her legs over the bed, was soon out the door and down the hall, trying not to give herself time to think.

She passed the bunkroom, Finn and Poe's snores echoing across the converted hold. She crept slowly past Rose, sound asleep on the rounded couch, having refused the offer of taking Rey's bed. Further down the hall, she could hear Chewie in the cockpit, listening to something in Shyriiwook. Silently, she knelt in front of a storage drawer, pulling it carefully open. Inside was her little library. There were seven books in all, now that Kylo had taken one, some small, some tall, all their covers faded. Her hand hovered over each of them in turn, stopping at last over one unmistakably bound in green leather. She lifted it out, then shut the drawer. It made a soft *click* as it closed, and she recoiled in alarm, glazing back at the figure wrapped in blankets on the couch. But Rose slept on, oblivious.

Without bothering to get up or go back to her room, Rey opened the book and held it up to the soft strip light running along the floor. Hand trembling, she flipped through the pages. Towards the end, she found it. Circuit diagrams, components, everything she needed for a lightsaber. Right where Ben Solo had told her it would be.

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Please consider leaving a comment or kudos if you enjoyed -- I'd love to hear your thoughts!

More coming soon.

# Crysalis

## Chapter Summary

Still angry at being left behind by Finn and Poe, Rey attempts to build a lightsaber armed with nothing but a Jedi text she can only sort of read, a busted lightsaber, and a whole lot of determination. Rose holds court in engineering. Ransolom Casterfo makes an appearance.

More abstractly, it's about making and unmaking yourself and accepting the help you need to do so.

## Chapter Notes

11/15: Minor edits to clean up some paragraphs where I repeated myself. Thank you for your patience.

Whew. I think I've hit on why everyone always builds their lightsabers offscreen in the actual canon. The more I researched it, the more I realized that everyone kinda makes it up as they go, whether it's in books, movies, or tv shows. So this is my take (part 1). Would love to hear your thoughts!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Rey's first few days aboard the *Kalee Ferr* were a wash.

It was one thing to find the information, another to read it, and still another to actually grasp it. Rey had spent her whole life pulling things apart and putting them back together. But never before had it required this kind of precision. Her normal style of just figuring it out as she went wouldn't work. Not this time.

By the end of day two, she was able to get into the engineering workshop, but couldn't find what she needed. Everything was neat and tidy and locked. She hated having to sneak around, but there were still people in some of the rooms working through the night. From what she'd gathered, the main purpose of the *Kalee Ferr* was to retrofit old fighters, re-fitting and repairing whatever tech they could get their hands on. Rey would have liked to have worked down here, salvage was something she knew well. It had kept her alive and in portions all those years on Jakku. But no one had given her a job when she first came aboard, and she'd been too proud to ask. If they didn't want her there, she wasn't going to force them.

The third night her poking around yielded another smaller workspace where someone had left a door ajar. It was a long low room overlooking the hanger bay through long reinforced windows. It was small, but for her purposes it was perfect. There was a pneumatic lift on one side that led down to the hanger, which currently held a half pulled apart fighter. Of more interest to Rey were the lighted workbenches in the center of the room and the wall of storage behind them. Leaving the bundle containing Luke's old lightsaber and her book on one of the tables, she started opening drawers and searching for tools. Once she had those, she could move on to raw materials, and then from there --

"Rey?"

Rey's head whipped around and she dropped the tools she was holding in alarm. Rose was standing in the doorway, dressed in a pair of green pajamas and holding a flashlight.

"You will turn around now and leave."

The words were out of Rey's mouth before she could stop herself. Rose's eyes slid out of focus and she swayed on the spot, but didn't turn.

"This is my workshop," Rose said, a little thickly. She blinked and her eyes snapped back into focus. "This is my workshop," she repeated, hand moving to her hips. "I don't have to go anywhere. What are you doing here? Rey, it's three in the morning."

"I need..." *you to turn around now and leave* . She knew she could do it. Rose was sweet and strong, but would not be immune if she, Rey, pushed. Rey could see exactly how to do it, too, how to rewrite this whole evening for Rose. While she hesitated, Rose recovered enough of herself to reach over and flip on the lights. The glare was sudden and blinding and, more importantly, allowed Rey to get a grip on herself. *No, I can't do that to Rose*. "I need parts...please," she finished instead.

"Parts?"

"I'm making a lightsaber."

Rose let out a little squeak of excitement and rushed towards her. "And you want to do it here? Are you serious??? *Rey!!!* What do you need, I can help. Do you want me to wake up the whole crew??"

"No," said Rey quickly, "Calm down, please." She made the split-second decision to trust Rose and slid the book towards her. "Look at these diagrams, do they make any sense to you?"

"So THIS is what you've been working on!" Rose said, stepping closer and leaning over the text. "I know you mentioned it, but then we never finished talking about it and then Connix said that she heard you were working on some secret Jedi mission. That's why we never drafted you to come work here."

"No, I didn't think that at all," Rey lied. There was suddenly something in her eye and she scrubbed away at her face with the back of her hand. She could tell that Rose was about to

reach out and try to hug her or something, so she took a step back. "Can you make sense of these at all?" Rey asked again, redirecting Rose's attention to the book.

"Well, it's not the weirdest thing I've ever seen," Rose said a few minutes later, flipping between pages. "The circuit diagram itself is pretty straightforward. We don't have new versions of any of this," she tapped at the emitter matrix diagram, "but we just got a bunch of older fighters that've come in, we could probably salvage this," she pointed at a diagram out of the book, "And this...but some of it. I don't know," she looked up at Rey with concern, and a hand flew up and clutched her necklace, obscuring it from view, "some of the metals you've need to make this work...they're very specialized. I wish I could see how all this fits together in situ."

"I have an old lightsaber we can use as a baseline, but it's broken."

"Can I see it???"

Rey nodded and unrolled the bindings around the broken lightsaber. What was left of Luke Skywalker's legendary weapon tumbled out between them.

Rose reverently lifted the pieces, looking them over with an appraising eye.

"How did this happen??"

"It doesn't matter," Rey said quickly.

Rose raised an eyebrow. "It kinda does, if I'm going to help you fix it."

"There isn't any fixing it. When the kyber crystal cracked, it shot everything. Look," she pointed to the crystal, in several pieces on the cloth. "It doesn't *want* to be fixed, if that makes sense?"

"Nope, doesn't make any sense at all," Rose said cheerfully, picking up the largest shard and holding it to the light. "I don't understand your Jedi stuff, but I do understand building things. I can help you with this -- honestly, it'd be an honor to help you with this."

"Thank you."

"But if you're going to use my engineering spaces, you're going to have to follow the rules like anyone else. So no more breaking in! I'll add you to the access list so you'll be able to open the door like a normal person. And I'll see about requisitioning some tools for you."

"Thank you," Rey repeated. She was shocked by Rose's kindness.

"Don't thank me yet!" Rose replied, but she was grinning. "We've got a lot of work to do!"

-

It became a ritual, a routine. Every morning Rey would come into the workshop and work on her project. Resistance members would filter through looking for Rose, who they would talk to while glancing shyly at Rey.

Rose explained that there wasn't money to replace a lot of things. This meant it was up to their team, which now included Rey, to find a way to stretch what they did have.

Given this task, it wasn't surprising that members of the Resistance regularly filtered through. What did surprise Rey was how many people came to talk to Rose. And not just about ships or their engineering tasks -- whenever there was a problem to settle, Rose was the one people sought out. They came down when they were sad, or mad, grieving, joyous, or just needed something to talk to. Advice on everything from relationships to what to have for lunch that day, Rose always seemed to have an ear and time for everyone, no matter how busy she was. It did mean that there was sometimes a wait to meet with Rose. And while they waited, people would talk.

Rey learned about Larra D'Acy and how worried she was for her wife, who was out on missions more often than not these days. She learned about Beaumont Kin's fledgling music talents. She learned that Connix was always trying to get Rose to change her hair. She learned about so many people, where they were from, why they were here. Rose had been right when she'd said that everyone had lost someone. But in the face of all this uncertainty and tragedy, Rey found more resilience than resignation among the members of the Resistance. And slowly, slowly, she started opening up to them, joining in the conversations. For the first time, Rey became a participant, rather solely than an observer.

The days passed in a series of fits and starts. With the constant shipboard lighting, some days she would look up from a few minutes' work to find that an entire day had passed. Rey had no interest in sleeping -- or more specifically, in dreaming -- at the moment. It turned out that Rose wasn't much for sleep either, and the two of them took to staying up late in the engineering workspace together, sometimes talking, sometimes in silence. Once Rose and the others noticed that she avoided the mess and forgot to eat, there'd also be some form of food placed on the edge of the counter, just in case.

Through the rhythm of the days and the ebb and flow of people coming in and out, Rey continued to work. Exhaustion, determination, and a lot of caf gave the days a strange, almost hazy glow. Even the faint pull of the bond between herself and Ben Solo seemed somehow far away as Rey poured herself into the weapon she hoped would set her, finally, on the path to her true destiny.

--

"Heeeeey!"

Rey, blinking, looked up from her work to see Connix standing in the doorway, hands clasped awkwardly around a small box. Her hair ringed her head in thick braids today. Rey glanced around for Rose, but she was gone. A few of the engineering crew were at work three benches down, but did not look up. Connix looked Rey over appraisingly, fingers tapping on the box, but didn't immediately speak.

"Hello --" Rey realized with a jolt of panic that she didn't know the woman's first name, " -- Connix. Rose isn't here, but --"

"So I heard that you were looking for some very specific raw materials and I happened to have some, and so did a bunch of the others on the General's staff. So...we wanted to give it to you." She thrust the package at Rey. "Go on, open it," Connix said, a little impatiently, inclining her head towards the box.

Rey hesitated for another half-second, then opened it up. Inside was a pile of objects: jewelry, tiny chotskies, what looked like the inside of a solar clock -- a mishmash of objects, but all gleamed with the type of metal that they needed. And not just for the outer structure, but there was what looked like a wedding ring that Rey was certain had to be one of the more rare materials for the saber's circuit boards.

"You'll have to melt some of it down, but we got everything that was as pure as we could. I hope it helps. We *all* hope it helps."

"How...how did you know what we were doing? Did Rose tell you?" Parts and raw materials were the most difficult part of the build. Rey had her pick of any scrap and salvage that came in, and she knew that Rose had sent a list with the more complicated pieces being sent out to operatives in the field like Finn and Poe.

Connix favored her with an incredulous look. "I'm the Resistance Communications Officer," she said by way of explanation. "If something is going on and I *don't* know about it, worry."

"I can't accept this," Rey said, hand hovering over the wedding ring, the earrings. These were important. They couldn't just give them up. But she also couldn't deny that from a purely practical standpoint, they would work well for her purposes.

"Master Rey," Connix said, much more formally now. "We've all pledged our lives, our fortunes, and our blood to this fight. We'd give everything. You're our Jedi, you need a lightsaber. We are giving it to you so that you can fight for all of us."

"Thank you. And please, call me Rey."

"As you say, Master Rey."

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"I still wish you'd tell me what happened when this broke," Rose said, turning the metal of Luke's old lightsaber over in her hand.

Rey made a non-committal noise. She wasn't really listening. She was honing one small piece of metal, willing it into place. The was far more delicate than anything she had ever attempted before, and the pile of warped and shorted circuits next to her was a testament to her trial and error.

It had happened that one of the pilots passing through, Tallie Lintra had built tiny model droids as a hobby once upon a time. Under her instruction and using her donated tools, Rey had finally begun making real progress. More than that, once she was comfortable, calm, she discovered she could manipulate the metal by pulling on the connections between it and the space around it, but she had to concentrate, guide the tool with the Force. They came



together, the tool and the metal, to push the components into place. It was like a dance, almost, and if Rey could just get the steps right, she knew that when the power coursed through them, it would all be well.

"Was it when you killed Snoke?"

Rey's concentration shattered.

Her left hand twitched, botching the connection. She looked down and saw that her hand was now shaking. She placed both hands flat on the tabletop, willing them into stillness. The countertop was cold, bracing, under her palms.

"That's just what I heard!" Rose replied hastily. "We were on the Supremacy at the same time, you know. Me and Finn."

"Yes, Finn told me about everything you did together." Her hands were still before her, but she lifted one surreptitiously to test it. Steady. She exhaled. Picking up her tool again, she said to Rose: "It was very brave of you, all of it."

"Brave and a little stupid. But I had to do something, you know? I couldn't just sit there waiting for the First Order to catch up with us. Not when there was even a chance I could make a difference."

"I wish I had known you both were there. We could have escaped together."

"Yeah, but then you wouldn't have been there to save us on Crait. Sometimes things work out unexpectedly like that." Rose paused in her notes then added a little too casually: "And Finn would do anything to protect you."

"Yeah, Finn is great," Rey conceded. Then a thought occurred to her. "Um, just so you know, Finn and I, we aren't...I mean, we're close. But we're friends. I don't..."

Rose laughed, diffusing the tension.

"I know. Same. And it's probably for the best. I think anyone who wants to get to Finn would have to fight Poe. And I don't like those odds."

"I could take Poe," Rey said with confidence.

Rose giggled again. "I mean, all you'd have to do to get to Poe would be to hide his haircare products."

"That would bring him straight to his knees."

"The best pilot in the Resistance, taken out by lack of hair gel."

"He'd have to wear his helmet all the time."

The two of them dissolved into laughter to the point where one of the Engineering Interns passing by had to poke their head in to make sure they were okay.

----

“Excuse me, Master Rey?”

Rey looked up this time to see a man standing in the doorway, hands clasped loosely in front of him. He was older, but with a full head of sandy-colored hair. He was thin in the manner that Rey had been herself when she first joined the Resistance -- his face held the kind of pallor that only came from extreme deprivation.

“We haven’t been properly introduced,” he said, stepping smoothly into the room, his long cape rustling behind him. He stopped opposite her, across the workbench. “My name,” he said, “is Ransolm Casterfo.”

“I’m Rey,” she said, forcing a smile onto her face. She knew exactly who he was, of course. Nearly three weeks now and General Leia still wouldn’t see her. Had she sent Casterfo instead?

He smiled. “Yes, Jedi Master Rey, isn’t it?”

“Just Rey. I don’t care for titles.”

“As you like. But titles are important, even if you don’t believe in them...” as he trailed off, his eyes drifted down to the counter between them, at her half-assembled lightsaber still in pieces. “I came down to see how you were doing -- Leia sent me.”

“The General?? How is she?”

“There now, you do use titles,” he said, not unkindly. “She is conscious, but barely.” This was news to Rey. She looked at Casterfo questioningly. His brows knitted together and he played with the edge of his thick cape. “I don’t know how much you know, we’re trying to keep it quiet. She’s had to stay in a medically induced coma, recovering. Though she would not admit it, the escape took a lot out of her. You must have guessed that the *Kalee Ferr* became our flagship primarily for its well stocked medical labs.”

“I didn’t know...” Rey said, thinking about how angry she had been when Leia had denied her requests to talk again and again.

“She felt that it would be...distracting if you were to know how poorly she was doing. But I believe that one always works best with access to all of the facts. I’ve known Leia Organa for a long time, and she has always kept her cards close to the vest. There have been times it has saved her. But It’s also been her undoing more than once. I didn’t want it to be that way with you. And, on a lighter note, I wanted to see how you were getting along for myself. I’ve always wanted to see a lightsaber. I used to be a collector of Old Republic and Empire era artifacts, you know.”

“You collect things from the Empire?”

“Yes, I found them fascinating,” he laughed a little ruefully. “The real experience of living under a totalitarian regime turned out to be quite different than admiring the design aesthetic.

But I've never seen a real lightsaber in person, they, like the Jedi, are all but extinct. *Were* all but extinct, I should say. You're bringing something back out of the past, creating history here. I can appreciate that, and I think Leia does, too."

His hands disappeared back into the folds of his cape and he looked up, into Rey's face. "I wanted you to know that Leia Organa cares more than she lets on, and to ask you to be patient with her. Old habits die hard, and she's been fighting for a long time."

"Finn told me about how you all wanted me to stay behind. I'm not going to hide for the rest of the fight."

Casterfo ignored her accusation. Instead of answering, his attention turned to the half-built lightsaber between them on the workbench.

"May I?" he asked, hand hovering over the metal cylinder. Rey nodded warily. "This is remarkable," he said, picking it up, bringing it level to his eye as he peeked inside. "One thing about being a leader, be it a Senator or a General or even a Jedi Master -- you have to start thinking in larger terms. Thinking about how you are best served. Is it on the small missions, where we could risk losing you? Or on the more tactical ones? Or even here, helping people, as I've heard you and Rose Tico have done so well. There are other ways to fight, besides fighting."

"That's a contradiction."

"Perhaps," Casterfo agreed. He set the pieces back down. "But true nonetheless."

The silence dragged out between them. Rey set the piece she'd been working on down and rested her palm flat on the table before her, to still it. Without looking at him, she said: "They want me to heal her. Beaumont, Connix, others."

Casterfo studied her. "Can you?"

Rey shook her head. "No. Not now anyway. I could find a way to learn," she said, thinking of untold numbers of Jedi holocrons, hidden across the galaxy, "but to learn, I have to leave this ship. And I'm not going anywhere until I can defend myself, and others. So not without this," she spread her hand out over the half-built pieces in front of her.

Casterfo didn't say anything. Instead, he pushed up from the table and made to leave. "Then I won't keep you further from your work. Good luck, with everything," he said.

"Thank you," Rey said, unsure how she felt about this conversation. "When it's done, you'll have to come down and see it."

Ransolom's eyes crinkled into a smile as he inclined his head in a small bow. "I'd like that. Thank you, Master Rey."

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It was the end of another long day. The lightsaber was complete, gleaming on the counter above them. All it needed was for the kyber crystal to be installed, then the whole thing

tested. That would be for tomorrow. For tonight, she and Rose sat slumped on the floor, exhausted.

“Finn is gonna be so pissed when he comes back with everything we asked for and it ended up not being needed.”

“I still can’t believe that they gave me so much.”

“You mean a lot to the Resistance, Rey.”

“*Jedi Master* Rey means a lot to the Resistance. But I know what you mean.”

“We care about you, too, Rey. And people...I know that people were hesitant at first, but they’re coming around. And so are you. You’re less distant.”

“I guess...I was alone for a long time on Jakku. It’s made me difficult, I think.”

“It made you strong, and that’s the kind of thing we need,” Rose paused, then said: “I wish I could be strong like you.”

Rey was instantly confused. “But you are? And everyone likes *you* . How do you always know what to say to everyone?”

“Uh, I don’t. Ever,” Rey stared in disbelief and Rose laughed. “It’s true! I just go with what’s in my heart. The way I see it, if you go with what’s in your heart, then it’ll never steer you wrong.”

Rey thought about this for a moment, then said: “My heart and I don’t speak.”

Rose laughed again.

“Yeah, I noticed that. Maybe... it’s time to start? We’ve all got your back, Rey. You’re part of the Resistance now. You’re family. Come here,” Rose reached out and hugged her. Rey stiffened, but Rose held on. “You’re family now, and we’re *all* huggers.” Rey laughed, and allowed herself to relax. A family. That sounded nice.

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“The text says that the Jedi must breathe life into the kyber crystal...but how do I do that?” Rey asked, mostly rhetorically, as she squinted down at the pages. She wished, for the first time, for some of the helpful margin notes she’d come to rely on in other books.

“You could try actually blowing on it?” Beaumont offered brightly. Seemingly out of nowhere he had decided to try teaching himself to play guitar and was plucking semi-discordantly from the corner. Rey, Rose, and Connix all looked up and raised an eyebrow as one. “What? Too literal? Fine, but you know certain older technologies respond to touch --”

“Older technologies? This is Jedi tech. It’s old, but it’s advanced. There’s got to be a way to charge it?” Rose asked, looking down at the book, though she couldn’t read it. “Did you ask General Leia? If her brother built one, she must know.”

Connix stirred, then said: "The General is --"

"-- not too disturbed," Rose and Rey and Beau all finished in unison. Connix's lips thinned.

"Calm down, it was just a suggestion," Rose said, exchanging a look with Rey. "The ancient Jedi didn't make this easy. Would it have killed them to give you step by step guide?"

"The ancient Jedi likely wouldn't have needed more information," Beau said, slipping into his anthropology professor's voice. "See, they had crucial context which we lack, being thousands of years removed. That context would have enabled them to --"

"Maybe you're onto something about charging it?" Rose asked, ignoring Beau.

"Sure, we'll just plug it into the pocket socket, I'm sure *that* will work," Connix said, pushing up from her chair. "I'm headed back to the bridge. Let me know if anything interesting happens?"

Beau made a comment about Connix never wanting to listen to him play, to which she responded with a snarky remark. Rose laughed, then turned to one of her staff who had approached to ask her a question.

Rey let her eyes fall closed and the conversation wash over her. She felt the energy in the Force marking each of her friends, felt their connections to each other. Slowing her breathing, she slipped into a meditative trance, focusing on the crystal clasped loosely in her hand. As her mind expanded, she felt the weight of the entire ship. They were floating, unmoving but tethered in orbit to the planet below.

She could even feel the warmth of something familiar -- the *Falcon*, docking in the hanger just outside. She knew if she opened her eyes, she would see the old ship pulling in at last, but she kept them closed, thought instead of the people inside. Finn. Chewie. BB8. Even Poe. She had been so angry when they left. She hadn't even bothered to say goodbye. But if they hadn't left her alone here, she never would have found herself here, at the last step to finishing her lightsaber. She pulled her friends close in her mind, drew strength from them. She exhaled, and her consciousness drifted down each of these bonds.

And finally, because she could dance around it no longer -- deny it no longer -- she allowed herself to feel the pulse of the bond that linked her, somehow, to Ben. She hadn't let herself think about him in these weeks; she couldn't handle the distraction. But whatever it was, it was a part of her, too -- a bright part. A lifeline. She opened the door to him in her mind and let that light shine through. She was unprepared for the wave of relief that would crash over her upon opening that door. She took an extra moment to revel in it, then returned to the task at hand.

On an inhale, she bound these tendrils of thought and emotion and love and hope together, held them in her mind's eye like a bouquet of desert blooms. Then, she exhaled, sending all thought into the crystal. Her connections to everyone she had grown to love, even her doubts and fears for the future -- all siphoned into the crystal, granting it life. These connections were not diminished by the crystal but burned even stronger in her sight for having freely given a part of themselves.

She opened her eyes slowly and found the room staring at her. In her hand, the kyber crystal seemed to him and pulse with joy.

“Did it work?” Rose whispered.

The others had grown silent, and a few other engineers and pilots were peeking in through the door, watching. Rey's face colored as she blinked to clear her vision. She had an audience. She wondered how much time had passed.

She cleared her throat. “Yes. It feels different now.” She recalled what she had felt when Leia had first given her the kyber crystal -- that it was dormant. Now, it was *alive*. The crystal was all but singing in her hand. She closed her fingers around its warm, reassuring heat. “It feels like I’m ready.”

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The explosion happened suddenly. At least they had the sense to test it in the airlock. Rey was thrown back against the side of the far doorframe. She tried to reach out with the Force and catch herself, but not before her head slammed into the wall. There was a cut across her arm and she started losing blood, fast. She could hear, dimly, people scrambling outside the airlock, trying to cycle through so it would open up again. Vaguely, she was aware of Ransolm Casterfo’s voice shouting instructions, of Rose answering. She thought she could hear Finn, calling out for her.

She had failed. After everything. All of the hours and weeks of work, the sacrifices of the crew... still she had failed. She tried to lift her hand to press against the wound, but it slid against the blood and fell to her side. *I failed. All that effort just to bleed to death in an airlock.* For the past several weeks, hope had bloomed inside of her. Now, she felt it slipping away.

Just then, a shadow passed over her. She realized in an instant who it was. Ben. Her panic was replaced by a shaky calm: She would be alright, now he was here. *No, wait, that doesn’t make sense.* She tried to shake her head to clear it, but found she couldn’t. *Ben is Kylo Ren, the Supreme Leader of the First Order; he...*

He leaned over her and placed his hand on her arm. She winced at the pressure, but...somehow, the wound was closing. How did he know how to do this? This wasn’t a Darkside power, surely. How could he --

“Please try to stay alive until the Temples,” he said, looking into her face as she slipped out of consciousness.

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Please consider leaving a comment or kudos if you enjoyed -- any kind of interaction means so much to me and I'd love to hear your thoughts.

PS: This chapter is dedicated to the "Beef, Bacon, and Beer" Kaidan Alenko/Mass Effect discord and the kind folks there who did writing sprints with me at all hours for the past month I've been working on this chapter. The support is invaluable.

(More coming soon)

# Crack-up and Kintsukuroi

## Chapter Summary

Rose juggles the emotions of her crazy friends. Finn and Poe hatch a plan to get Rey off the ship for a good old fashioned Jedi Temple run. Rey and Ben/Kylo connect over her shattered saber -- are they finally starting to trust one another? Or are events in Ben's past too much for either of them to reconcile?

(Newly edited on 9/23/20 - there were some parts I was unhappy with, so I overhauled it)

## Chapter Notes

I have found that I get a kick out of writing interactions with Finn, Poe, and Rose, so I've brought them all back again. Don't worry, there is Reylo in this chapter as well! I upped the chapter count just a little, as this story continues to grow.

Thank you for the continued support of those who have commented here or on other platforms and also left kudos. You are wonderful, wonderful people and your interaction means so much to me.

Thanks also to postionsmaster on the Mass Effect Kaidan Alenko Discord server ("Beef, Bacon, and Beer") for helping me with the chapter title.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Well??"

"Well what?" Rose asked, pinning a smile to her lips. She was walking along the seemingly endless medical corridor looking for Rey's door. It appeared Connix had been lying in wait.

"Have you seen her?" Connix asked.

"No, not yet."

"I would have thought you would have been the first," Connix said, sizing her up. Rose held her smile in place.

"Finn and Chewie were with her, and there were too many people in the operating room. Chewie sent me up so he could get some rest."



"What I heard --"

"What have you heard, Kaydel?" Rose asked with uncharacteristic sharpness. Connix, to her credit, hesitated for half a second.

"I heard that she's not actually that hurt. That it's like she was healed somehow."

"And?" This was exactly what Chewie had said in his message, but she tried not to let it show in her face.

" *And* it makes me wonder, if she's able to heal herself, then she should be able to heal other people. If she can help other people, then why --"

Rose ran a hand over her face. "I'm sorry, but I really can't --"

"It's not for me," Connix replied testily, "It's the General. If Rey has healing powers, just like we thought, why hasn't she used them?" Rose started to protest again, but Connix pressed on. "I -- *the Resistance* needs General Leia at full strength. If Rey can --"

"Kaydel. She almost died. On a project I helped put together. We have other things to worry about right now." She pushed past Connix and continued down the corridor.

"You know I'll find out," Connix shouted after her. "I always do." Rose sighed heavily, but kept walking. She knew that Connix meant well, underneath it all.

Rose had been so afraid when the Lightsaber exploded. Seeing Rey thrown by the blast, watching as her head bounced against the wall...it made her wonder if Paige had looked like that, like a ragdoll dashed against the wall. *Rey isn't Paige*, Rose reminded herself. Rey was alive. She was okay. They were all okay.

She kept counting doors until she finally found the room number Chewie had given her. She paused a moment to gather herself before entering. Her reflection in the one-way transparisteel looked tired. She tried to smooth her hair down a little.

"Make sure you get the back, too." A voice said behind her. She looked up to see Poe Dameron lounging against the wall opposite.

"Are you going in?" he asked.

"Are you?" Rose countered, combing her fingers through the back of her hair.

Poe shrugged. "Finn's in there. I wanted to give them some time. But you should go. I'll stay here, keep prying ears away."

"Probably a good idea. I ran into Connix on the way down here."

"I'll keep Radio Free Resistance away for now, don't worry. Just...help Finn, okay?"

Rose nodded and keyed open the door.

It was a small sparse room, more of a cubby than anything, with a bunk built into the wall. Like so many rooms onboard, it had previously been used for storage. A few unmarked crates were still along the floor, making it a tight squeeze for the three of them.

Finn was standing as far as possible from Rey, hands stuffed into his pockets. She was sitting on the bed, a metal tray on her lap, containing the lightsaber they had worked so hard on and an assortment of small tools. Both of them ignored Rose as she entered, door swooshing shut again behind her.

“How....are you doing?” Finn asked.

“The damage isn’t as bad as it could have been,” Rey said without looking up. “The emitter matrix is shot, but the rest of the wiring looks okay. The power cell is still operational and --”

“Rey. My question was how are *you* doing?”

“I’m fine,” she said, in the way people did when they weren’t fine. Rose knew, she’s seen it. She’d been it. Her hand was at her necklace without her even thinking, the pad of her thumb on the sharp point of the crescent, a familiar pain.

“Rey, you should be dead,” Finn said softly. Rose reached out and ran a comforting hand along his back. Finn looked back at her and smiled gratefully, a smile that pulled at her heart.

“But I’m not dead. I’m fine. And no, I don’t know how,” Rey snapped before Finn could ask the question. As Rey stared down at the metal housing in front of her, not speaking, Rose looked pointedly at Finn, trying to get him to step forward and comfort their friend. His eyebrows knitted and he shook his head, not understanding. With a slight sigh, Rose abandoned him and sat down on the edge of the bed.

“Rey --” Rose began.

“Don’t tell me it’s okay. I should have known this would happen, I should have --”

“How?” Rose asked, “You’re a Jedi, but you’re not infallible.”

“I’m not a Jedi,” Rey said in a hollow voice. “I’m nothing. Nobody. This has been a waste of time and I’ve let everyone down.”

"No, that's not true. You--"

As Rose spoke, Rey took a sudden shuddering breath inward. The tools on the tray went flying into the wall, barely missing their heads. They crashed into the reinforced glass and steel of the walls.

“Whoa! Whoa! STOP!” Rose shouted, jumping up. The volume was enough to snap Rey out of her spiral and she looked up, breath coming fast, staring into Rose’s face. She looked so lost, it broke Rose’s heart to see it. And yet, there was something else there in Rey’s eyes...Rose had never felt the Force before, but she could almost see the energy cracking around her. She was suddenly aware, in a way she hadn’t been ever before, of how powerful

Rey could be if she wanted to. She felt a shiver of fear, like a small animal caught in a predator's line of sight.

She took a deep breath, forced herself to rally. Rey was their friend. *She won't hurt us...but she is going to lose it if one of us doesn't break the tension here.* She snuck a look back at Finn, who was standing frozen behind her. *And it looks like that someone is me. What would Paige do, if I was upset?* Rose wondered, worrying her pendant around her neck. The answer jumped into her head at once: *She'd make me laugh.*

Rose pulled a stunner from her belt and waved it in front of her. "Don't make me use this, because I will!" she said with mock-seriousness, scrunching up her face into on what Paige used to call her "mean face." Rey looked at her for a moment, nonplussed, then burst out laughing. Rose felt herself relax. The strange electric sensation in the air around them eased.

"Laugh it up, but I can be deadly with this thing. Right, Finn?" She smiled pointedly at Finn, pleading with her eyes for him to play along.

"Oh yeah," Finn said, taking the hint and breaking into the kind of grin that could light up a whole room all by itself. "That thing is nasty. She hit me with it and I had a headache for a week. Great first impression, by the way, Rose!"

Rey was laughing again, but it was bordering on mania. That was not good. Hooking her stunner back to her belt, Rose sat back down on the bed and did the next thing that Paige would have done: hugs. She knew Rey didn't like them, but she still reached out and hugged her without hesitation. She was surprised when Rey immediately hugged her back, holding on tightly. Over Rey's shoulder, she motioned for Finn to join in and he finally stepped forward, wrapping both girls under his arms.

There were a lot more things that Rose wished she could have said, or known how to say, to make Rey feel better. She tried to put it all into that hug. She felt somehow that Finn was trying to do the same. The three of them stayed that way for several heartbeats, then Rose pulled away and looked Rey in the face.

"If you need to be angry, be angry. But you are not smashing up Medical. Take that anger and put it away for the night. Tomorrow, we'll put it towards something constructive."

"You're right. I can't help anyone if I'm not at my best," Rey said, reaching up to squeeze Rose's arm.

That wasn't *exactly* what she had meant, but at least Rey seemed a little calmer.

"I'm going to get some sleep," Rose said. "I think maybe you should do the same. This will look better with fresh eyes."

----

"Thank you for handling that," Poe said as soon as they were down the hall and definitely out of earshot. He had fallen into step with them as soon as they emerged.

“There was nothing to handle. She’s our friend and she’s upset. You would have done the same.” Rose said, running a little to match their long strides.

Finn shook his head. “I was there and I didn’t do anything, I feel awful.”

“Give yourself more credit, you were working up to it,” she said, taking his hand and squeezing reassuringly. He smiled back at her and her stomach fluttered a little bit. Dropping his hand, she turned to Poe. “Please tell me you guys found something interesting out on Batuu?”

“Actually, we did -- Finn, you want to tell her?”

“Yeah!” Finn said, he glanced around at the hallway. It was mostly empty, but he put a finger to his lips and pulled on a nearby door. It was locked. Both men turned and looked expectantly at Rose, who, with a small sigh, pulled out her passcard and unlocked the door.

It was a long storage room, built into the bulkhead and filled with more crates of medical supplies. As soon as the door shut behind them, Finn turned towards her, buzzing with anticipation.

“So there’s this place on Batuu, Dok-Ondar’s Den of Antiquities. And the place has an entire *wall* of holocrons.”

“A wall of -- wait, aren't those supposed to be a secret Jedi thing???”

“Most of them are fakes, of course. But Finn was able to find the one real one,” Poe said, beaming with pride. He reached into the bag around his shoulder and pulled out a small emerald box inlaid with gold.

“But wait until you hear what it says --” Finn said, taking the box and holding it out for Rose to see. He made a show of pushing a button on the side, but she noticed that the area he pressed didn’t appear to be a real button at all. Her brow furrowed and she opened her mouth to ask what he thought he was doing, but then the cube shuddered in his hand. The corners turned inward, then sprang apart as a blue light filled the small room. The light resolved into a hologram of an old man in robes rising from the center of the cube.

“My friends,” the man said, “my name is Eno Cordova. In my travels, I have come across many wonders of the ancient Jedi. I have dedicated my life to the study of the ancient Zeffo. I have found something new, incongruous to my current study, yet it pulls me forward as though with an invisible string. They call to me, these The Temples of Light and Dark, where the Right Hand and the Left Hand will meet. My task lies with the Zeffo, and I have only the location of the first of these supposed Temples, but I leave them here for you, so that those who come after me may follow the trail -- so that this Left Hand and the Right may find the path to their destiny. The coordinates are encrypted in this transmission,” a wall of text flashed by too quickly for Rose to track, then flashed back to the old man. “Goodbye, my friends, and good luck in your journey.”

“How about *that* !” Finn said, obviously proud of himself. The light winked out and the cube dropped slowly back into Finn’s open palm. But Rose’s eyes were back on Poe, standing

against the wall with his arms crossed and an unreadable expression on his face.

"So what's going to happen? We tell the General and Casterfo and they're going to do the same thing -- make Rey stay behind," she pointed out.

"Nope. Not happening," said Finn immediately. "I'm not leaving her behind again." Rose caught his eye and nodded in agreement. They turned as one and looked expectantly at Poe.

"Buddy --" Poe began, addressing Finn.

Finn shook his head. "I can't. Last time we talked she was so mad and I didn't even realize it until she didn't even say goodbye. And what if she'd died here? And the last conversation we ever had was me telling her we were taking her ship and leaving her behind? No. Not again."

"And Poe," Rose began delicately, "I think you really hurt her feelings, with what you said last time we were planetside."

Poe rounded on her, hand on his chest. "I hurt her feelings? You both were having the same conversation I was!"

"Can you just try a little more with her? For me?" Finn reached out and gripped Poe's forearm.

"Alright, I'll try. For you! Look, I know we can get the clearance to run this mission--"

"--But what about Rey?"

"I have an idea for that, too, but she may not like it."

----

Rey waited until Rose and Finn left before standing up. She stepped to the far wall and gripped the handle of the screwdriver embedded there, trying to pry it out. She was so full of shame that there seemed to be no room for any other emotion. She had lost control. Pure and simple. She had lost control and what would have happened if Rose hadn't been there?

She bent and picked up the other tools that had been scattered to the floor. The doctors who had examined her agreed with Finn: she should be dead. But the burns that should have crippled her looked like old scars. The same was true for the cut along her upper arm. What should have been a concussion was a headache, easily treated. Her right hand ached as the new scars stretched, almost healed, but still too stiff to move easily. She didn't know how she was going to keep working, especially without the crucial emitter matrix, but she couldn't give up, not now.

As her thoughts raced, she felt a now-familiar shift in the air behind her. She pivoted and threw a tiny hammer at him.

"Why do you always want to fight?" He caught it easily and threw it back to her.

"I don't have time for this right now, Ben." She used his name without even thinking about it.

"No?"

"No."

He stepped closer to her and she forgot how to breathe. He held out his hand. She looked up. It wasn't a sandwich this time, she noted with bizarre disappointment. But in the palm of his left hand was an emitter matrix.

"I realized you'd need one. You put it in backward, that's what caused the explosion. It's a common mistake."

"You're giving this to me?"

"You need it." He said it as though it explained everything.

"You know I'll make a weapon out of it. A weapon I'll use to kill you."

"We'll see."

She kept her eyes on his hands. They were pale in the blue light of the medical bay. Pale and large, much larger than her own. They made the emitter matrix seem small as a pearl.

"Take it," he said, with a note of command in his voice that caused her to look up and raise an eyebrow at him. His jaw tightened, as though he was holding back words.

She continued to stare at him, trying to read his face. She had hated him, she should still hate him. But the airlock had marked the second time he'd saved her life. Giving her this part was that second time he'd helped her with the lightsaber. *Why is he doing this*, she wondered. *And what does he expect in return?*

"I still can't see your surroundings. If you want it, you have to take it. Please."

Slowly, she walked towards him. Just like all the times before, her thoughts reeled when she was near him. She looked at him, drinking him in. She reached out and took the emitter matrix. Their hands touched, skin on skin. She had expected a shock, something like the pulse that had rocked the hut on Ahch To. But this was different, still electric but not destructive. No, it was a jolt of warmth that hit her somewhere south of her stomach.

"Thank you," she said, "not just for this, but for...helping me earlier." There. Now he was free to name the price for his generosity. She waited, bracing herself, but he didn't say anything.

"This is where a normal person would say, 'you're welcome,'" Rey offered.

He swallowed hard, closed his eyes. "You're welcome. And this is usually where you fade away," he said, "But you're still here."

"I guess I am. I can't control it, we've been over this."

"Right."

Rey was at a loss for what to do. Surely the Force would act any time now, cut them off. He seemed amused by her uncertainty, which only made her feel more awkward. She started to turn away, the emitter matrix still cradled in her hand.

"You could try throwing something at me again, that always seems to help you."

She glared, but then a thought occurred to her...help.

"Do you...want to help? Help me fix this, I mean."

He went very still. Any mark or affectation of aloofness dropped and he was just a man in front of her, no different from Finn or Poe or anyone else she knew; for all his power he was just a person. He studied her but didn't speak.

She sighed. She had opened this can of worms, she was going to have to see it through. "Alright, come on." At this point, she rationalized, she couldn't afford to turn away help. That was *definitely* her reasoning, and not that she wanted to spend more time with him. But then he grinned and she was taken aback, heart racing. The expression changed the entire composition of his face. The corners of his eyes crinkled when he smiled. She hadn't known that.

"You...you said you can't see my surroundings, but you can see things when I pick them up?" she said, fighting for composure. She reached down and grabbed a tool, waved it around. *I must look like an idiot*, she thought, but he nodded gravely, looking at her as though this was the most important thing in the galaxy. It made her shiver. "Okay...." she picked up the entire cloth that the project was laid out on, "Can you see this?"

He nodded again and looked into her face, meeting her eyes. His gaze was so still intense. Part of her wanted to break it, to look away. He looked at her as though she was the most important thing in the Galaxy and it terrified her. It stirred something in her. She wanted to demand he tell her what he wanted from her? Why did he keep helping her? But she said instead:

"Okay. Let's get to work."

The two of them bent over the cloth-covered tray, piecing together her lightsaber. Working on the saber before with Rose and the others had been fun, but not like this. She could anticipate what he would need before he needed it, hand it to him through the bond. They communicated without speaking at first. The iciness between them cooled into something more lucid. As they moved together, some of her hair slipped in front of her face, obscuring her vision. He reached out and tucked it back behind her ear, without seeming to think about or realize what he was doing. Rey tried to remember how to breathe. She had a strange desire to cup his face in her hands, to put the lightsaber, the Resistance, her duty, all of it aside and discover what it would feel like to run her hands through his hair, to see how his lips might feel against hers. It would have frightened her if she stopped to think about it, so she just didn't. She accepted the thoughts and did not examine them, but they seemed to build, bearing her on a strange tide to a destination she could not name.

And then, as if coming out of a daze, she noticed that there was a newly repaired saber between them on the cloth. The cracked had been soldered and sealed together. It would never be as perfect as she has had imagined it or as flawless and it had once been...but it still held all of the pieces that the Resistance had given her, the hours of time, the hope. And now it had a new piece, from Ben. It was broken, but still good.

“Are you going to try it?” He asked quietly.

A new thought suddenly occurred to her. “What if this is a trick?” she asked, “What if you’ve done something to sabotage it. It blows up in my face.”

“You already did that all on your own -- ow!” she smacked him in the shoulder. He closed his mouth obediently.

“Ok, just breathe,” she said to herself, drawing her focusing away from Ben and back to the task at hand.

"Breathing is a good first start," he agreed. She shot him a Look. He immediately schooled his features back to blandness, but she thought she saw the ghost of a smile play along his lips. She felt herself grin. These moments of humor from him, they were like the sun coming out from behind the clouds.

She flicked the power switch and with a whoosh, the lightsaber ignited. She cried out and turned to Ben, whose expression mirrored her own; joy illuminated in the pale golden glow of her saber. The solder lines of the handle shone through with gold as well, the cracks not hidden, but proudly displayed. It was beautiful. This weight that had been crushing her for weeks was suddenly lifted, and she felt an unparalleled lightness. They had done this, together, her and Ben. She laughed, and without considering, without thinking, she reached for him, pulling him towards her.

If she had been aware before of how close they had been, now she was lost in it. He had come back for her and somehow healed her. He had helped her. That had to mean a change. And she wanted to mark that change. Her heart was beating so fast. His hand was at her back, holding her. She tilted her head up. She was going to do it. She had never kissed anyone in her life before, but right here, right now, she was going to kiss Ben Solo. It didn't matter what he wanted in return, this was a gift she could give freely.

As she looked up into his eyes, she expected to see her own feelings mirrored there again. But his eyebrows pulled together as...was it panic that crossed his face? He shook his head and pulled away, face red. Too many emotions for her to parse flashed across his face and along their bond.

“Ben, what’s wrong?” *This isn't the way it's supposed to be.*

He shook his head again and she felt him pull on their bond, snapping it shut. She was again alone. She shut off the lightsaber and placed it carefully back onto the tray, hands shaking. The room seemed suddenly empty and dark. Unspent adrenaline still hummed through her body and her breath came fast and sudden. She wanted to run, but she also wanted to hide. *What* had just happened?



----

Hours passed as Rey lay in the bed, staring at the ceiling, the events of the day playing on a loop in her head.

She had a lightsaber, the thing she'd wanted for so long. The thing that was supposed to make her a Jedi. But she felt just as confused and unsure as she ever had. And how would she explain it to the others? She doubted that even Finn would believe her that it had just fixed itself.

And more than that, when she had reached for Ben, he had pulled away. He had rejected her.

She shouldn't be surprised. He'd made it very clear on the Supremacy that he wanted her on his terms only. She couldn't join him in the First Order. All the banter in the world couldn't change that. Despite her struggles on the path of Jedi calm and goodness, to turn wholly to the dark like that felt antithesis to all her being. That was fine. Clearly, she'd been wrong when she'd felt something between them. It wasn't surprising. Who would ever love someone as rough as she was? He probably had a whole harem back in the First Order. Plenty of nice, pretty girls who wouldn't throw things at him or have complicated Force bonds. Good for him.

It was fine. She had a lightsaber now. She would find her path. She didn't need Ben -- Kylo Ren, that is. She'd made her decision. It was fine.

Her self pity was interrupted as the door flew open. She sat up immediately, heart pounding, staring into the open doorway.

"Get up," Poe said, bursting into the room. "You know how to fly an X-wing?"

"No?"

"Well, you're about to learn."

"The doctor said --"

"I'm busting you out," he tossed her a helmet, then a folded orange flight suit. "Finn found a Holocron, we got the coordinates --"

"*What?*" Rey said, dumbfounded.

"--but to get there, we're going to have to fly in on an X-wing."

She was still sitting, dumbfounded, clutching the flight suit.

"Hey, if you don't think you can handle it --"

"I can handle it," Rey said sharply.

Poe smirked. "That's what I thought. Come on."

“But --”

“Look, the leader on this mission isn’t sure you can make it. You prove to me you can handle this, I’ll put in a good word for you. Deal?”

“Deal.”

Rey pulled the flight suit over her clothes. Without hesitating, she clipped her lightsaber to the belt and darted out the door after Poe.

She followed him down and out of the medical bay. By some miracle, everyone seemed to be looking the other way. She lowered her head as they passed by the Engineering corridor and into the hanger. Daring to look up, she saw what had been her workroom, looking for Rose. There was no sign of her friend, but there were half a dozen other workers she recognized swarming in and out.

"Ok, this is where it gets tricky," Poe whispered out of the corner of his mouth. "Just act natural."

“What? I have no idea what that means," she hissed at him.

“Maybe...don’t look like a vengeful Jedi??" he hissed back. "Put the helmet on. And take your hair down, there’s no way you’re getting it in the helmet like that.”

Scowling at him, she pulled her hair out of its buns. It hung loose and heavy around her shoulders. Her head felt strange without the familiar pull. She shoved the helmet over her head.

"Better?" she asked, scowling up at him through the faceplate.

"It'll have to do. Come on, follow my lead."

Poe led her down through the main hanger, past rows of ships. His destination was a raised stand where a plump blonde woman was flipping through notes on a clipboard. She ignored them as they approached.

“Hi there,” Poe said, “I don't think we've met before. I'm Commander Dameron."

"Ivy Vaness," the woman said carefully.

"Ivy, good to meet you. I have two X-wings on the schedule for today?"

She checked her clipboard. “I have you down here, but what’s the name on the second X-wing?"

“This is Kira Solana,” Poe said without hesitation. “New recruit. I’ve got to take her on some training runs. All standard procedures.”

She frowned and consulted her notes again. “I don’t have any notes about newbies getting to go out today. They’re all in the simulations. And weren’t you supposed to be part of the

group that left an hour ago? Let me call it in.”

Poe beamed up at her with the kind of smile calculated to melt hearts. However, this woman continued to frown back and reached for her communicator. Rey could see where this was going. This Ivy would report them, and whatever scheme Poe and the others were trying to pull would come to a full stop. Rey would be back in a hospital room or -- and she glanced over at the windows to Engineering with a pang -- some other place, hidden away until the end of this fight while the others explored the Jedi Temple without her. Everything she was striving for, the lightsaber, her time with Ben, it would be worthless. She could hang back and let that happen. Or...

“You’re going to let us check out two X-wings,” Rey said, wrenching off her helmet. She took care to make her words crisp and clear, punctuating each syllable with a push from the Force.

The flight officer’s face went slack and she smiled placidly. “I’m going to let you check out two X-wings”

“Then you’re going to forget this happened.”

“Then I’m going to forget this happened.”

Rey felt guilty for doing this, but she also felt resolve. She would not be left behind again.

“Thank you.”

“Thank *you* .” the girl handed them two sets of passes and turned to a nearby terminal to begin keying in the launch codes.

Poe stared at Rey with an expression of horror mixed with admiration.

“That was the opposite of acting natural, but...quick thinking,” he said. “How did you --”

“Don’t worry about it. Are we flying or what?”

Rey pulled on her helmet again and barreled over towards where two X-wings stood prepped and ready. BB-8 beeped happily at her from one of them. She moved to go to the other ship.

“You stick with Beebee-Ate, he’ll take care of you,” Poe said.

“But Beebee-Ate flies with you.”

“Yeah, but today he’s going with you. Look, don’t read into it too much -- the little guy will take care of you if things go sideways. If you crash into an asteroid or something Finn would never let me hear the end of it.”

“I know enough not to crash into an asteroid,” Rey said, bristling.

Poe just smiled sweetly. “Ok, fly-girl, get out there and prove it to me.”

----

Piloting a single man craft was exhilarating. She loved the *Falcon* , would always love the *Falcon* , but this kind of speed -- it was intoxicating. Poe helped her put the craft through its paces, running her through a few quick training flights. He was a more patient teacher than she had expected.

“How did you learn to fly?” Poe asked.

“Trial and error? I’d seen enough downed freighters and starships to know what not to do. I built a speeder once. I had to. I didn’t have anything else.”

“I’m sorry,” Poe said, sounding surprisingly sincere.

Rey shrugged, suddenly uncomfortable. She didn’t need his pity. “It’s just how it was.” She didn’t understand why Poe was being so nice to her. Taking her out so she could learn to fly an X-wing -- the thing he had held over her head for so long. “And now I realize part of it must have been the Force. I never noticed because I was trying to survive, but I was using it all the time. The Force was guiding me.”

There was a stretch of silence. Rey wondered if she'd said something wrong.

“Are you still there?”

“Yeah, I'm here.” Poe let out a long breath. ‘Hey, I’m not good around the Force. Y’know. Um. I don’t talk about this a lot, but when I was first on that planet getting the map to Skywalker, I got taken by the First Order.”

“I know, that’s how you met Finn.”

“Yeah, yeah” he laughed nervously. He was coming up on her left now, and Rey studied him out of the corner of her eye. She had spent a lot of time with Poe during their many supply runs and other missions on the *Falcon* , but she realized that this may be the first time she was ever alone with him. She knew that there were many women (and men, and probably droids) who would give anything for a few intimate moments with *The Poe Dameron*, even over a headset. He was very much the kind of dashing pilot Rebellion pilot she'd have dreamed about on lonely Jakku nights. That all felt a long, long time ago. Things had changed somewhere along the line, because she looked at Poe and didn't feel anything. She half wished she did. It would have been easier.

“Go ahead and accelerate to point 117 on the map, then pivot 38 degrees, I want to see if you can do it without burning out,” he paused, then continued: “It wasn’t just the first order who took me. It was Kylo Ren. ”

“Oh?” Rey’s hand slipped on the controls and her heart rate accelerated. She quickly adjusted, following the instructions and speeding away. Poe followed, flying in close formation.

“Yeah, lucky me, I got the cut-rate Vader himself – I...I’m sorry. I make jokes, it’s how I -- anyway. He took me back to his ship, he put me in that chair and --”

“-- He ripped into your mind,” Rey finished for him, comprehension dawning. She glanced down as a short message from BB-8 came up on her screen. Two words: Be Nice.

“Sometimes,” he said slowly, “I wake up at night, remembering that pain. There are still days I think I have holes in my mind.”

“‘ I can take whatever I want’...” she mused into the static.

“Hmm?”

“That’s what he said. To me. When I was in the chair. He said, ‘You know I can take whatever I want’”

“Then it *did* happen to you,” Poe said. They were next to each other now and he actually turned in his seat to face her across space. “Hey, hey -- you’re not alone. I know how hard it was. I’m probably one of the few in the Resistance who gets it. So when you went back to the *Supremacy* -- Oh, and I know you killed Snoke. Sorry, Connix told me.”

“She seems to know everything, somehow,” Rey observed wryly.

“They don’t call her Radio Free Resistance for nothing,” Poe agreed, humor creeping back into his voice. Then he sobered up and added: “Thing is, I can’t imagine going *back* to that kind of torture. I, uh, I honestly don’t know if I would have the guts to do that.”

Rey made a non-committal noise. She remembered what she’d felt climbing into that pod: almost giddy with anticipation, hope and expectation tucked into every fold of her immaculately pressed outfit, her freshly styled hair. And beyond anything, she had been filled with a great and terrible Purpose. She was going to bring back Ben Solo and together they were going to Save The Galaxy. She had been so foolish. “Everything seemed much simpler then. I wish I could be that girl again. It all went so wrong.”

“Maybe. But Snoke is dead. That means something.”

“And his death put *Kylo Ren* on the throne.” She said it with an intensity that surprised even herself. She looked up and realized he was still staring across at her, as though trying to reach her expression through her helmet.

“Sorry, it’s just... I don’t know I’ve ever heard someone say his name with such...feeling.”

“Are you saying that I’m letting my feelings about... *him* cloud my judgment?”

“No, of course not. What I meant to say, Rey is...I understand. And for me, what keeps me going, keeps the the...memories away -- it’s moving forward. It’s us all together. Fighting. You stuck a blow. Together we’re gonna finish it. I know what it’s like to get carried away by wanting to make things right. After everything that happened, all of the mistakes that I made. I don’t want you to make my mistakes. I’m not the enemy, Rey. Kylo Ren is.”

Rey placed a hand over the slice down her right arm, the still-healing scar that marked where she should have bled out. Was he the enemy, still? He had given her the knowledge she needed to build a lightsaber. He had saved her when it had gone wrong. Then come back again to help make it right. Had he made it go wrong on purpose? Withheld something from her? She couldn't Ben Solo doing that. But, as she had just learned, the darkness of Kylo Ren's went even deeper than she knew. And, she reminded herself, he didn't want her. So she just needed to cast him out of her mind. Take the gifts he had given and move on.

"Poe? I'm sorry," she said. "For what he did to you. None of us deserve that. Don't worry," she said, determined. "I'll find a way to make it right."

Poe didn't say anything. She glanced down to see another message from BB8: Don't push him, he's trying.

Rey took a deep breath and cast her mind around for another topic.

"Tell me more about this mission, you and Finn really found a Jedi Temple?" *Why didn't Finn say anything?*

"Looks like it. It's on Ashas Ree. Up in the Mountains. That's why we need the X-wings, you'd never be able to land something like the *Falcon* there."

"You said the person coordinating the mission didn't think I could fly. Who are they? Do you really think you'll be able to convince them?"

"Easy. It's me."

"*What?*"

"I'm lead on this mission. And you've passed. With flying colors. Which means we're about to jump to lightspeed."

"But what about --"

"You said you wanted to fight. So we're going. Now. If you think you can keep up. Rose and Finn are already en route. I pretended I had to go back for something so I could spring you out. Now you can either go back and stay in your hospital room or you can come with me now."

Rey didn't say anything. She still needed to talk to General Leia, more now than ever she needed her input to help make sense of what was had happened. And then she had barely said anything to Chewie since he got back. Both of these bonds pulled at her. And yet...there was only one option for her.

"I'm done with waiting, I'm done being left behind. Let's go."

Thank you for reading! I really appreciate it. Please consider leaving a kudos or comment if you enjoyed -- I'd love to hear your thoughts on the story so far! The scene with Rey and Poe is one of the first things I wrote for this story, so it was nice to finally be able to use it.

Canon/EU References:

[Eno Cordova](#) is a character from the excellent video game Jedi Fallen Order.

[Dok Ondar's Den of Antiquities](#) is a shop on Batuu at Disney's Galaxy's Edge. And yes, if you ask the cast member they will give you the in-universe explanation for why they have a wall full of super-secret Jedi and Sith holocrons, but I have already forgotten it. Side note, I finally rode Rise of the Resistance at Galaxy's Edge and it was amazing.

(More to come soon)

# A Morning on Ashas Ree

## Chapter Summary

Finn and Rey each struggle with expressing their truths. A strange new force used appears.

## Chapter Notes

I took a big break to think about this one, but I'm back now. As this story has progressed, it's turned into something that's not just Reylo, but also extends to the other characters. I felt bad about this at first, like I was doing something wrong. No one wants to read about the Resistance characters, I reasoned. It's certain not something I see a lot. So I told myself I needed to stop including them in order to write a "good" story. But at the same time, I love writing them. I love Rose and Finn and Poe and how I've characterized folks like Connix and Beau and everybody that we were robbed of in TROS. So their perspectives will stay in, though this will always always be Rey and Ben's story.

Anyway, I appreciate you reading and hope you enjoy this update.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Finn?"

Sitting on the hard ground of the planet Ashas Ree, a part of Finn recognized that Rose was talking to him. He could see her, out of the corner of his eye, sitting next to him on the ground. Behind them was the small, two-man craft that had brought them there, ensconced in a color-shifting tarp to keep it away from prying eyes. Above him was a canopy of trees full of rustling birds and the occasional falling leaves. But beyond that, he was also aware of something else, something *other*. He could feel *something*, in this place. He couldn't quite give it a name.

It was like a pulsing at the back of his mind. The kind of thing he'd have ignored, back before he joined the Resistance. Back before he learned that the Force was real. Part of him wanted to explore this further. Part of him wanted to close up and forget it ever happened.

"Can I see it? The Holocron?"

He felt like he was standing in an airlock. Go out or stay in, either way, he had to make up his mind. He didn't know what to do. *Focus on something else*, he told himself. It was an old



trick, and one that had seen him through a lot: Pick something else to think about, cross your eyes, and it confuses the pain. You could distract yourself from anything if you tried hard enough. He glanced around for something to latch onto. He settled on Rose's furrowed eyebrows, but why --

"Finn!"

This time, Rose punctuated his name with a punch to the shoulder. He jumped, brought back by the impact.

"Ow! What was that for?" He genuinely winched, rubbing his shoulder; the girl could throw a punch.

"For you not listening."

"I *was* listening."

"Okaaaay, then what was I saying?"

"The...holocron?" he ventured. Rose nodded pointedly at him. "Yeah, sure, hold on..." He swung his bag around and pulled it out. He'd wrapped it in a towel, to protect it, which he pulled away as he handed it to her. Rose's fingers were light as they moved across the Holocron housing. She twisted the emerald cube until the knob on the side, the one he had pretended to push to make it work, was on the top. She pressed down, but, of course, nothing happened. Rose raised a questioning eyebrow. He tried to smile, pull a nonchalant shrug, but she shook her head, eyebrows climbing higher. He sighed. She saw right through him, of course she did. She *always* did.

"How'd you know?" he asked, a little sheepish, a little afraid.

"Rey told me." his shock must have shown on his face because Rose shook her head and quickly added: "not about...you know, you. But about the holocrons and how they work."

"*Promise* you won't tell?"

Rose looked incredulous. "Why not?" she asked. He just shook his head. "Why does it matter? Finn. If you can use the For--"

"Shh!" He shook his head again and held up his hands as though to clamp them over her mouth. "Don't say it!"

"Why not?" Rose gently moved his hands away from her face. "Rey would be ecstatic, honestly, and Poe --"

"Right, I'm going to tell Poe: hey, buddy, remember that thing that got used to torture you? I have it, too. That'll go over *real* well." Finn pushed to his feet, craving movement to clear his thoughts. He began to pace around the clearing. Since the moment they met, Poe had made him feel like a person. He'd made him feel whole. He'd given him a *name*. Admitting that he could use that power -- he couldn't name it even in his head -- it felt like a betrayal. Something tainted, leftover from when, however reluctantly, he'd served the First Order. And

Finn couldn't betray the man who gave him a name. And as for Rey... "Rey needs everything to be easy, right now. You saw her in medical, she fragile right now. I can't spring this on her. Not when she's got so much to worry about."

"Rey's stronger than you think." Rose observed. She had clambered to her own feet now and matched him stride for stride across the little grove. "If anything, she lonely, it's like she thinks she has to carry this burden alone --"

"Why would she think that?" Finn asked, genuinely puzzled. "She has all of us."

"And as for Poe," Rose continued "...he'll come around. You're still *you* , you've just got this power that means --."

"No," Finn said, rounding on her. He looked down at her, gripping her shoulders, trying to will her to understand. "Rose, listen to me: I spent my whole life being told what to do and how to feel because of...because of some stormtrooper conditioning. I finally break out of it and now it's the Force pulling me around? No way. *I* make my future. That's what the Resistance is all about, right? Doing what's right. Finding our own path."

Rose looked up at him, chewing on her bottom lip. Finally, she said softly: "If I can figure it out, they will, too. You're not going to be able to--"

"But you're not gonna say anything?"

Rose sighed. "No, I won't say anything --"

Finn cut her off with a crushing hug. "Thank you." He rested his chin on top of her head. "I knew I could count on you." He felt her laugh against his chest and he smiled. She felt solid and real and it grounded him.

"I won't say anything for now," she spoke into his shoulder. "But you have to promise me that we'll talk about Rey, I'm worried she --"

Whatever she was going to make him promise was lost in a sudden sonic boom -- ships entering the atmosphere. They both looked up as a flock of green-blue birds fled the trees in a sudden squawking storm.

"That'll be them, right on schedule!" Finn said, scanning the skies for the familiar outline of Poe's X-wing. Poe was here. Rey, too. And like Rose, they were solid and real. He'd stake his future on that foundation over any half-feelings at the back of his head any day.

Rose slipped out from under his arms and headed back towards the ship.

Behind him, unnoticed, Rose scooped the Holocron up from where it lay abandoned in the tree litter and slipped it into the bag at her side.

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Rey came bounding out of her X-wing, bright and feeling more alive than she had in months. She actually laughed out loud as she returned Rose's frantic wave.

“I can’t believe you found a holocron and didn’t tell me!” Rey shouted down to Finn, tossing her helmet aside as the canopy hissed open. Behind her, BB-8 dropped onto the ground and rolled into the clearing.

“Call it payback for building a lightsaber without me!” Finn called back, laughing as he jogged over to where Poe’s ship was landing nearby.

Rey’s smile faltered. Her hand closed on the weapon at her side, fixed and whole. What would she tell Finn, when he asked?

*See, Finn, everything's fine: Kylo Ren came to visit me after you left through a hole in the Force and helped me fix everything. Also, I might have wanted to kiss him -- No. No . Better to keep silent for now.*

It was a problem, but one for later. For now, she had to get out of this fighter. Pushing herself forward, she zipped out of her flight suit. She clipped the lightsaber to her side, wishing desperately for the fabric of her usual gauzy wraps to hide in. She swung herself over the side of the ship, landing lightly. However, as soon as her boots touched down on the leaf-strewn ground, she felt it: a strange background hum in the Force. It resonated within her bones and set her teeth on edge. In a nervous, instinctive gesture, she tried to sweep her hair up and off of her neck -- but halfway through the motion, she realized she didn’t have anything to tie it back with. She let her hair fall again, loose and heavy to her shoulders.

She closed her eyes and tried to reach out with her feelings. What was this?

A string of small beeps made her look down. BB8 was bobbing back and forth in front of her. She blinked, translating the beeps in her head, then frowned.

“I *am* going with them, they’re right --”

She looked up and realized that Finn, Rose, and Poe were now several yards ahead, up the winding mountain trail. Finn had turned to wave at her, beckoning her to follow.

“Go on then, let’s catch up!” Rey said, pulling a smile onto her face and breaking into a run. BB-8 chirped happily and sped along after her.

Ahead of them, Rose had stopped to wait for Rey and the little droid. “What are we going to do if he hits something he can’t climb?” Rose wondered aloud.

“He’ll figure it out, he always does. Don’t you, buddy?” Poe said, winking down at his little droid. BB-8 chirped an affirmative. Finn laughed, but Rose’s eyes were on Rey’s face.

“You okay?” Rose asked. “You look...tired?”

“This place,” she responded slowly, “it’s...does anything feel strange to any of you?”

“Not to me. Finn?” Rose asked, looking pointedly over at him.

“Feels like a forest?” Finn asked, looking innocently back at Rose, who scoffed and shook her head. Rey was about to ask what that was about when Poe cut them all off.

“Feels like we’ve got a lot of ground to cover and not a lot of time before nightfall. Come on, keep up, we gotta go.” Poe said.

“Fine,” Rey said, schooling her face into what she hoped was a Jedi’s nonchalance, that flat expression Luke used to wear. “It’s probably nothing.”

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On they trekked along the winding mountain pathway. The trail narrowed, with a sheer drop passing down to a rushing river below. Rey was wary of the edge. The water below was swift and white-capped, much angrier than the beaches of Athch To.

As they traveled, Finn filled her in on everything she’d missed: the trip to Batuu, the various scrapes they’d gotten into finding the Holocron, how they had decoded its message -- the story accompanied at every turn with colorful commentary from Poe. They made quite a double act, tossing the conversation back and forth. No matter how bad things got, Finn always found a way to laugh at it. Not for the first time, Rey envied his lightness.

But as fascinating as the stories were, eventually Rey struggled to pay attention. The pulsing of the Force continued to press in on her, until her steps, her breaths, even the beating of her heart seemed to match its rhythm. Sometimes it was a vibration. Sometimes it felt like voices. She half imagined it was trying to tell her something, like there was an answer there waiting, tantalizingly out of reach. If only she could just strain a little more...

The trail became rocky and sparse the further up they traveled. The edges on one side yawned down into nothingness, the dizzying descent back to where they had landed the ships. On the ledges beside them were ruins, half collapsed structures and gates of stone. Rey rested a hand on one of the moss covered columns in passing; it pulsed with the same energy that pushed against her senses.

Eventually they were stopped by a rockfall which had blocked the path. Rose knelt next by the rubble while Poe and Finn glanced around. “Rey, can you help?” She asked.

Rey nodded, stepping forward. Finally, something she could handle. She closed her eyes, hand outstretched, focusing on the Force moving through her. “You know, Luke was angry with me when I told him that the Force was for making things float, but this is the second time I’ve --”

"And what do you think you're doing?" rang out a sudden strange voice.

Rey’s eyes snapped open, her concentration shattered. The rocks she had been moving fell hard and fast to the ground, some tumbling into the ravine below. She glanced around for the source of the voice and found that a figure had appeared beside them, quite literally from nowhere.

Where once had stood a patch of scrubby trees and empty air now stood a slender woman wrapped in a black and white cloak. Her face was a ghostly white with red markings across her cheekbones. She raised a hand and smoothed a lock of equally pale white hair behind her ear, her gaze fixed and haughty.

Rey was frozen, unsure of what to do. She looked sideways at Rose and Finn, but they seemed as confused as she. It was Poe who took a step towards her, smiling confidently, hands up in a placating gesture. "We're looking for the land of the noonday sun."

Rey tilted her head at him quizzically, then glanced back at the others. Finn caught her eye and mouthed: *Resistance passphrase* . Rey nodded.

"Hmm," the woman said, jumping lightly onto the path, continuing to survey them. Rey thought Poe's smile slipped just a fraction.

"I wasn't talking to you, boy," the woman said scathingly. She nodded at Rey. "I was talking to your Force user. I'll say it again: Who are you?"

"I'm Rey." She tried to say it defiantly, a complete sentence.

"Rey? Rey who?" the woman asked, tilting her head to the side.

Rey's shoulders tensed and she fought to keep her face smooth. She hated his question, had always hated it. Even here, surrounded by her friends, it made her feel like the sad little girl she'd been on Jakku. She was thinking up a suitably acerbic response when they were both surprised by Rose pushing her way up from the back, placing herself between the stranger and her friends.

"Tico. Her name's Rey Tico."

Rey stared down at Rose, utterly dumbstruck. This was the nicest thing anyone had ever done for her. She tried to open her mouth, to say something, but Rose ignored her, still focused on the newcomer, and continued: "I'm Rose Tico, he's Poe Dameron, and," she jerked her thumb backward, "that's Finn."

The stranger raised an eyebrow and inclined her head towards Finn. "Let me guess, Finn Tico?"

"Yes," Rose said without hesitation. "They're my siblings, or anyway...as good as."

"She gonna want our blood types next?" Poe asked *sotto voce* to Finn, who grimaced back.

"You're a sharp little one," the woman said to Rose, ignoring Poe.

"Can you help us, or not?" Rose pressed.

The woman opened her mouth to speak, but she was cut off by a new voice from behind them.

"Pahn, sweetheart, please stop interrogating our guests."

Shockingly, the woman groaned aloud. Her lips thinned and she turned, hand at her hip. "*Father, I have this under control.*"

An old man stepped out of the dark forest ruins. He moved carefully with the aid of a stick, but with a grace that belayed his age. Something caught Rey's eye, a glint of metal at his waist, half-hidden by the folds of his robe. Beyond that, the pulsing that had flooded her senses had diminished, as though someone had pushed it away. Realization dawned in a rush and Rey's mouth fell open as she realized what he was -- a Force user, perhaps even a Jedi Master?

"You're -- are you a *Jedi*?" The words were out of her mouth before she could stop herself. She felt her face flush. She had been ashamed, later, about how starstruck she'd felt upon first meeting Luke Skywalker. Yet here she was, doing it again. She was disappointed in herself.

But unlike Luke, this man grinned at her, sunburned face crinkling at the eyes in well-worn laugh lines. "A Jedi, me? No. I'm Cal Kestis. I see you've already met my youngest, Pahn-Chosin," The woman in question let out a long-suffering sigh, all her hauteur replaced by abject embarrassment. Ignoring her, he swung an arm around, encompassing the half-collapsed structure around him. "Welcome, travelers, to the Nantahala Temple -- what's left of it anyway."

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! Please consider leaving a comment or kudos if you enjoyed. I love to hear folks' thoughts and reactions, honestly any interaction is more precious to me than gold.

### Notes/References:

-I love Jedi Fallen Order and my goal in life is to get Cal and the gang into every story ever. If you're a Cal/Merrin fan, too, I'll direct you to my "A Very Star Wars Fictober" where I believe they are Day 3.

-I wanted to try to figure out a reason why Finn would be reluctant to tell Rey he was force sensitive. I think it's an interesting look at hiding something intrinsic about yourself in an attempt to keep things smooth for your friends. It's different to truth someone with your life vs trusting them with the core of who you are. That takes vulnerability and I don't think Finn (or Rey about her connection to Ben) are there yet.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!