

STAR

THE RISE OF SKYWALKER

WARS

THE TEAM DALE REWRITE

Based on characters created by

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PREFACE

We grew up adoring the Original Trilogy. We embraced the Prequels, quirks and all. We loved *The Clone Wars*, *Rebels*, and the Expanded Universe, and valued much of Disney's output. *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi* did not tell the story we would have preferred, but we enjoyed and accepted them for what they were.

So we fully expected *The Rise of Skywalker* to win us over the same way. Alas, from concept to execution, J.J. Abrams and Chris Terrio's final product turned out to be the most disappointing cinematic experience of our lives.

Resurrecting a dead villain with no real explanation, let alone groundwork? Undoing major developments of previous chapters in the most ham-fisted ways possible? Cementing the Sequel Trilogy's status as a mere repetition of the Original Trilogy's conflict, leaving the galaxy in the exact same state it was in after *Return of the Jedi*? This was what we were asked to settle for in exchange for accepting Episodes VII and VIII's most divisive choices?

That simply would not do. So we decided to try our hand at writing our own Episode IX, in hopes of giving the Saga a more logical, consequential, and fulfilling conclusion, one that better fits the spirit of the franchise as best we understand it.

Whatever happens going forward, the process of crafting this story has been an incredibly rewarding experience -- so much so that we're almost glad the official version was such a letdown that it dared us undertake this project. Almost.

We hope you enjoy it.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Team Dale is the pseudonym for two mild-mannered, early-thirty-something Americans who share a deep love of most things *Star Wars*. Neither of us works in the film, television, or literary fields.

DISCLAIMER

This project is 100% unofficial and strictly non-profit, and is not affiliated with the Walt Disney Company or Lucasfilm Ltd. in any way. *Star Wars*, *The Rise of Skywalker (2019)*, and all characters and settings therein are owned by Disney and Lucasfilm.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away....

STAR WARS

Episode IX

THE RISE OF SKYWALKER

Unrest roils the First Order. The conniving General Hux chafes under the thumb of Supreme Leader Kylo Ren, fearful the troubled warrior will lead them to ruin.

As word spreads across the galaxy of Luke Skywalker's last stand, free planets rally behind a growing Resistance, and young Rey devotes herself to learning the ways of the Jedi.

Little do they know the Supreme Leader has called upon the mysterious KNIGHTS OF REN to secure the First Order's future, and wipe out a Resistance beset by sudden loss....

Pan down to a sea of stars. A small ship flies toward the camera, and as it approaches becomes recognizable as the MILLENNIUM FALCON. As it reaches the screen the camera swings and hangs back, revealing a familiar planet: NABOO. Hanging in orbit are several star cruisers of MON CAL and CORELLIAN design, among other lines historically associated with the Rebellion.

As the descending *Falcon* trades the black of space for the glow of sunrise, it meets a pair of escorts: golden N-3 STARFIGHTERS, evolutions of the sleek vessels flown into battle against the Trade Federation decades ago, the bold colors and chromes of classical Naboo ship design now paired with a manta-like Gungan aesthetic.

FAMILIAR MALE VOICE [comm voiceover]:

[Muffled by static] Theed Airspace Authority, this is Resistance Command Delegation Alpha, requesting permission to land. Transmitting clearance code now.

HAL TAZENE (NABOO PILOT) [comm voiceover]:

Code accepted, Resistance Command. You are cleared for landing at Pad Twelve.

MUFFLED MALE VOICE [comm voiceover]:

Acknowledged.

EXT. THEED SPACEPORT - MORNING

Cut to a crowded airfield in the capital city of THEED. The *Falcon* lands, the boarding ramp descends, and one by one, a familiar crew emerges, faces grim: REY, FINN, POE DAMERON, ROSE TICO, CHEWBACCA, R2-D2, C-3PO, and BB-8. All the humans are in formal attire; Poe's is a maroon military dress uniform. Chewie wears a forest-green sash in place of his standard bandolier, and the droids are cleaned and polished impeccably. A young, female Naboo dignitary and two guards greet the party, then wordlessly lead them across the airfield, passing humans and GUNGANS working side-by-side.

INT. NABOO ROYAL PALACE

Cut to the party solemnly walking through beautiful, sun-bathed hallways. Between the massive windows are portraits of past rulers: SORUNA, DALNE, APAILANA, NEEYUTNEE, JAMILLA, and, finally, AMIDALA. The heroes view the paintings reverently as they pass; Artoo emits a soft, affectionate tone at the sight of the last one.

Eventually they enter a massive amphitheater filled with thousands of beings representing hundreds of species. From a distance, full-color holograms lining the walls appear to depict dark-haired human women of various ages. On the stage, a podium stands beside a closed casket, which is surrounded by flowers and draped in white cloth bearing gold embroidered rows of both the REBEL ALLIANCE STARBIRD...

...and the elegant CREST OF ALDERAAN.

One of the holograms comes into focus, revealing the image of an older, elegantly-dressed LEIA ORGANA, General of the Resistance.

Panning across the rest of the holograms highlights the departed leader at various stages of her life: Alderaanian princess, Rebel commander, joyful bride, Jedi Knight, expectant mother, and New Republic senator.

Pan across the crowd, in which many heroes can be seen: WEDGE ANTILLES, MAZ KANATA, TEMMIN WEXLEY, KAYDEL CONNIX, LARMA D'ACY, NIEN NUNB, ORRIMAARKO, JACEN SYNDULLA, GARAZEB ORRELIOS, ZAY VERSIO, SHRIV SUURGAV, TYCHO CELCHU, TORYN FARR, CARA DUNE, JAKE FARRELL, JAREK YEAGER, IMANEUL DOZA, and more. Delegations from numerous worlds are also in attendance, from WOOKIEES led by CHIEF TARFFUL, to BOTHANS, to MON CALAMARI including KING ECH-CHAR and AFTAB ACKBAR, son of the late Admiral. Prominently seated are Naboo's current ruler, KING BERENKO, and his children.

A woman in her late fifties with striking, pure-white hair walks to the podium: WINTER CELCHU, Leia's lifelong friend and fellow Alderaanian. After taking a few long moments to compose herself, she begins to speak.

WINTER:

Many of you know Leia Organa-Solo as the preeminent symbol of rebellion, and indeed that is how the Empire portrayed her... ultimately to their detriment. What you may not know is how early she began to rebel. While still only a girl, she was expelled for slicing our school's databases to "revise" its official history lessons about the despot Palpatine. I still remember Queen Breha's face when she found out, so proud and mortified all at once that I thought she'd burst.

Pockets of laughter escape the crowd; small smiles cross tearful faces.

WINTER:

Inheriting the fire of Padme Amidala, channeled through the principles of Bail Organa, forged Leia's spine into iron. She was not the simpering, complacent creature that many expected of a senator; even when faced with torture, slavery -- the annihilation of our homeworld -- she never once backed down.

Mourners wince at the mention of the Empire's legendary atrocity. Some bow their heads in prayer; others stare ahead, struggling to maintain composure.

WINTER:

But while she wore the rebel moniker as a cloak... I don't know if she ever really thought she was "rebellious" against anything. Can one "rebel" against those who reject equality under the law? Those with no regard for life's sanctity, no concept of freedom? Leia saw her life's work not as rebellion, but as a return to order, to

sanity, to common decency in a galaxy that had rejected it. [Pauses to compose herself again] Today, we send off one of our bravest soldiers in that fight... but not the last.

Expressions in the audience harden into determination.

WINTER:

Her example must remain our standard, if we are to prevent the First Order from marching across the galaxy and tearing down everything she and the Rebellion fought to restore. For the memory of our friend, we will grieve. By the example of our Princess, we will fight. And in the name of our General, we will win.

Scene closes on the main heroes' group, faces sad yet resolute.

EXT. THEED SPACEPORT - MIDDAY

Transition to the group gathered outside the *Falcon*, under a clear blue sky.

POE:

...soon as the general's done here, we're off to map out his next recruitment trip.

FINN:

Right away? That's too bad.

ROSE:

I don't know. I wouldn't mind spending a few more days here, but... but not under these circumstances.

POE:

Sorry none of us can take more time to decompress after... all this, but there's still a war on.

FAMILIAR VOICE [offscreen]:

Fortunately, pressing on is what Leia would've wanted anyway.

The group turns to see LANDO CALRISSIAN approach with a warm smile, decked out in characteristic refined garb and a dark pantora-silk cape. The old scoundrel's reddened eyes are the only hint that he's been mourning.

LANDO:

There's no better way to honor the princess than seeing her cause through to the end.

The party nods in agreement.

LANDO:

[Looks to Poe] Ready, Admiral?

POE:
Whenever you are, General. C'mon, BB.

BB-8:
[Affirmative warble]

LANDO:
[To the group] May the Force be with you.

Poe nods and smiles at his friends, then turns alongside Lando and BB-8 to walk toward Lando's ship, a refined-looking SOROSUUB P.L.Y. 3000 parked in the background. The rest of the party boards the *Falcon*, with Rey the last standing outside. She stares off into the distance, troubled.

REY:
[Softly] Right... Force be with us.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON

Transition to Chewie and Rose in the cockpit performing a system check. In the main hold, R2-D2 and C-3PO are bickering, as usual.

THREEPIO:
Serving aboard such an elegant starship must have been a charmed existence, especially considering the Naboo's famous kindness toward droids! To think it was all wasted on the likes of you...

ARTOO:
[Buzzes indignantly]

THREEPIO:
Well, it's not my fault I don't remember any of it. Nobody trusts protocol droids to keep a secret, although I can't imagine why. The Maker knows I've kept plenty of yours.

ARTOO:
[Offended beep, then calmer chirping, as if to de-escalate]

THREEPIO:
You're right, Artoo. I'm sorry. Mistress Leia wouldn't want us to quarrel, least of all today. Oh, how I'll miss her.

ARTOO:
[Mournful tone]

Finn has been watching the droids in amusement, but loses interest once he notices Rey sit down at the holochess table, visibly uneasy, setting one of the Jedi texts in front of her.

FINN:
[Approaching her] You all right?

REY:
[Musters a small, unconvincing smile] The past few days are just catching up to me. I'm okay, Finn.

FINN:
[Sits down] You don't have to be. Not around us. [Glances down at the book] This isn't just about losing the general, is it?

REY:
[Hesitates, then opens up slowly] I feel like I've hit a wall in my training. I'm losing focus, balance eludes me... and using the Force has actually been getting harder. [Looks down at the book] I re-read all of these, night after night, I can recite them in my sleep... but now the last person who knew what it was like to actually live any of it is gone. [Shudders in frustration] I need to be more than this, Finn. For everyone.

FINN:
You don't have to be anything by yourself, not anymore. A year ago, the whole Resistance fit in this hull; now entire systems openly oppose the First Order. Besides, Leia had faith in you. Luke, too. And rough patches are normal in every kind of study.

REY:
It's more than that. The Force seems... distant to me. Obscured. As if a door that's always been open to me keeps closing.

FINN:
Well in that case... what's closing it?

Rey doesn't answer. Camera closes in on a face that's clearly troubled -- either because she can't think of an answer, or because she already has...

SPACE — KUROST SYSTEM

A jet black XI-CLASS SHUTTLE emerges from hyperspace. Seconds later, six TIE JUSTICIARS -- which at first glance resemble wingless TIE cockpits -- follow it out of the void. The camera tracks the squadron as they approach KUROST III, a ringed planet shrouded in sickly purple clouds. Entering the ring, the squadron dodges debris on the way to a colossal asteroid.

As they reach the asteroid, a decidedly-unnatural horizontal line appears on one side and begins to open. We follow the ships inside the rock to reveal THE DOMINANCE, a long, silver SUPER STAR DESTROYER and *de facto* capital of the First Order, secured to the rock by a webwork of pylons.

Abundant white lights, massive engines, heavy couplers, and hinge-like mechanisms are embedded in the geodic interior, as are scores of hangars and other structures of unknown purpose. A small nation has been built inside this mass of celestial debris, regimented and favoring the red-and-black pattern of First Order flags. The sight is not terrifying so much as awe-inspiring, evocative of the glory the regime imagines itself to be pursuing.

INT. THE DOMINANCE

The shuttle lands in a hangar, flanked by its escorts. As the ramp descends, SUPREME LEADER KYLO REN emerges, wearing a restored helmet laced with luminous red lines, followed by a pilot. Six figures emerge from the TIEs and drop neatly to the ground, without the use of ladders. They are the KNIGHTS OF REN: AP'LEK, CARDO, KURUK, TRUDGEN, USHAR, and VICRUL. Their black garb is clean and crisp, but their black helmets are anything but; as with Kylo's mask, every gash and scorch mark is a testament to years of battle.

As Kylo approaches the hangar doors, his Knights behind him, a full platoon of STORMTROOPERS waits to greet them. At their head is ADMIRAL ENRIC PRYDE, an older man with a stern face and reserved demeanor, hardened from decades of service dating back to the reign of Palpatine.

PRYDE:

Welcome, Supreme Leader. General Hux awaits you in the war room.

Kylo cocks his head in momentary silence, his expression unreadable but his umbrage obvious.

KYLO:

...I will await the General in the throne room.

Whereas most officers dread any possibility of offending the dark warrior, Pryde seems strangely at ease. After a moment, he nods and steps aside.

PRYDE:

As you wish, sir.

Kylo leads the Knights past Pryde through the doors. As they traverse the hallway, Kylo stops at another door and waves the Knights to go on ahead.

Cut to inside Kylo's personal quarters, white and spacious yet mostly bare, as the door slides shut behind him. Slowly, as if in great pain, he removes his helmet and sinks to his knees. He stares down at the grim metal face in his hands, then squeezes his eyes shut.

KYLO:

[Almost a whisper] Mom...

After several moments of uneasy silence, Kylo opens his eyes, which settle on a pedestal bearing one of his few personal effects: the melted HELMET OF DARTH VADER. Steeling himself, Kylo dons his mask once more.

As the faceplate hisses shut, we cut to the throne room, a large chamber of gray durasteel walls, blazing crimson banners, and polished ebony floors. Pryde is flanking the throne, and three Knights of Ren line the room on each side. But as Kylo enters and angrily stalks forward, we see that the throne is already occupied -- by GENERAL ARMITAGE HUX.

KYLO:

[Menacingly] You're in my chair, General.

HUX:

[Smiles smugly] Your chair... you know, [leans forward] I think that, right there, is the crux of the problem. You see this, all of this around us, as yours. Did it ever occur to you that what we've built can never belong to any one being if it is to endure? That unlike Palpatine, unlike Snoke, unlike your traitorous husk of a grandfather, we're trying to build something that can LAST MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS?

KYLO:

[Anger simmering] You seem to have forgotten your place, General.

HUX:

[Disturbingly confident for words that should be suicide] Hardly, Ren. I've simply decided it's time to put you back in yours.

Having heard enough, Kylo thrusts a fist forward. Bulkheads shatter, ceiling wires release showers of sparks, and transparisteel viewports bow inward... but around Hux, nothing happens. The general smiles as a startled Kylo glances down at his hand, then back up at Hux.

KYLO:

...how?

At the press of a button, an armrest slides open, releasing a strange yellow lizard that crawls up Hux's arm and settles around his neck like a scarf. Kylo stares at the creature, then at his hand once more, realizing that somehow, its mere presence blocks the reach of the Force. Hux rises from the throne, exhaling with the faintest hint of relief.

HUX:

I spent months sifting through heavily-encrypted archives to find this little trick; for obvious reasons, Palpatine didn't want these creatures becoming common knowledge. An esteemed admiral of the old Empire discovered their unique gifts long ago... serving the First Order better than you ever could, "Supreme Leader."

Rather than try a direct assault again, Ren hurls a slab from the shattered floor towards Hux. But before it can reach its target, the projectile is deflected and shears into the wall. As Kylo turns his head, we cut to Vicrul lowering his hand -- apparently siding with Hux over his master. Kylo draws and ignites his crackling crimson lightsaber and dashes toward Vicrul in one swift motion. In unison, each Knight raises his right hand outward.

KYLO:
TRAITO-

Before making any real distance, Kylo finds himself frozen in place.

HUX:
[Calmly assertive] Traitors? No. Your former Knights simply share my assessment of your leadership, and have seen that we value their potential more than you ever did.

Hux walks forward just a few steps, careful to keep the lizard far enough from the Knights so as not to interfere with their telekinesis.

HUX:
As I was saying... do you even comprehend how much you've cost us? How many lives of good officers -- our officers -- that you've wasted? We lost Starkiller Base to CHILDREN thanks to you.

Hux begins pacing from side to side, hands clasped behind him.

HUX:
Our flagship obliterated, our war chest depleted, all so you and your master could pretend to be Sith Lords. [Spins to face Kylo head-on, his face a mask of rage and scorn] Now you want to play Emperor, emulating a wrinkled monster who left his kingdom in shambles, utterly bereft of lasting leadership.

Hux composes himself as Kylo trembles, chafing against the Knights' hold.

HUX:
You're a child, Ben Solo -- emotional, reckless, weak. How are you fit to lead anything more than a tantrum?

Hux draws a pistol and fires at Kylo's left leg. Kylo jerks his head forward and curls his fingers, and the crackling bolt freezes in midair, inches away.

HUX:
Today, we start making things right.

Hux fires again, and another bolt stops just before Kylo's right leg. Kylo grunts at the strain of focusing whatever telekinesis he can muster while simultaneously resisting the grip of six seasoned darksiders.

HUX:

Today, the First Order finds enlightened leadership.

Hux fires another shot, which freezes just before Kylo's lightsaber hand. Kylo's grunting grows more strained.

HUX:

Vision.

Another bolt, inches from Kylo's face. Kylo's left arm begins twitching, more strongly than the rest of his body.

HUX:

And the strength to endure for ten thousand years.

As Hux aims for Kylo's heart, Kylo manages to sweep his left arm outward, arcing intense kinetic energy forward, knocking the Knights back and sending Hux's shot to the side. The act saves Kylo, but also releases his hold on all the previous bolts. In a single moment his legs are grazed, his lightsaber detonates in his hand, and his mask shatters, revealing terrified eyes beneath. The Force blast hurls Kylo backward into the door. Cradling his mangled, smoking hand, Kylo squeezes through the now-malformed entrance and crushes it behind him with a ragged nod of his head.

An indignant Hux dusts himself off and rips a comlink from his belt.

HUX:

LOCK DOWN THE SHIP. SECURE EVERY EXIT. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.

Hux looks to the Knights, who are already back on their feet.

HUX:

FIND HIM!

Cut to Kylo. Ragged and bleeding, he stumbles through sleek hallways, ignoring confused glances from passing stormtroopers and low-level officers. Running gets harder as the adrenaline fades, and the hideous damage to his body begins to win out over the sustenance of the Force. On the verge of total collapse, he reaches a sparsely-occupied hangar and drags himself into an SF-MODEL TIE FIGHTER. Collapsing into the seat, Kylo slaps at the console until he manages to activate the communications system.

KYLO:

[Trying desperately to project authority through the pain, and not entirely succeeding] This is... your Supreme Leader. Lockdown... is suspended. Open the outer hull.

Kylo looks past the *Dominance's* hangar and watches the faintest sliver of space open in the asteroid wall. He preps the engines, then the hyperdrive.

HUX [comm voiceover]:
DISREGARD THAT ORDER. KYLO REN HAS BEEN LYING TO US ALL. HE IS BEN SOLO, THE JEDI SPAWN OF RESISTANCE CRIMINALS. OPEN FIRE ON ALL OUTGOING VESSELS.

The Knights of Ren race into the hangar, but slow down as they notice Kylo's engines powering up. Groaning from the agony that now accompanies even the simplest physical acts, Kylo pushes the throttle forward, jumping to lightspeed from inside the hangar. The blast hurls the Knights backward, along with any equipment not bolted down.

But the asteroid field is dense, and before Kylo's TIE fully enters hyperspace his left wing clips one of the rocks, shattering in a small variant of the phenomenon that destroyed Snoke's ship over Crait. Kylo's flight through hyperspace is a roiling, spinning, erratic affair that could end in atomization at any moment.

With all his remaining strength, Kylo pulls back on the throttle, and is thrown back to realspace in a wild tumble. Broken and exhausted, with his mangled right hand fused to the shattered remains of his lightsaber, Kylo falls to unconsciousness.

INT. THE DOMINANCE

A furious Hux strides into the war room. Unlike the throne room, this chamber is stark and silver, with a large round holotable in its center, the Knights of Ren seated around it.

Following the general is Pryde, who carries a wide case embossed with the First Order sigil. Hux approaches his seat and takes a moment to compose himself, but doesn't sit down.

HUX:
[Anger buoyed by cold purpose] Solo's escape puts the Shadow Fleet in jeopardy. Are we in agreement regarding our fallback location?

Every Knight nods.

VICRUL:
We are... Supreme Leader.

HUX:
[Smiles wryly] Please, Vicrul. In this room, there will be no further use for titles among us. Or masks.

As Hux speaks, Pryde silently grimaces to himself. That he recognizes the need to maintain the Knights of Ren's favor doesn't mean he has to like the extent to which the younger leader stokes their egos.

One by one, the Knights remove their helmets and set them on the table. Vicrul is human, with hard features, short dark hair, and numerous scars. Trudgen is a bald, chalk-white UMBARAN, with an empty socket where one of his colorless eyes should be. Ap'lek is a teal-skinned TWI'LEK, with deep scars in place of two missing lekku (head-tails). Kuruk is an ANZAT, near-human in appearance but for his bulbous nose and an unsettling slit in each cheek. Ushar is a horned ZABRAK, tan skin and long black ponytail identifying him as the Iridonian variety. Somehow, the last Knight to remove his helmet reveals KYLO REN beneath, uncharacteristically grinning.

Hux and Pryde raise eyebrows, but nothing more. Some Knights groan while others simply roll their eyes.

AP'LEK:

Try to take this seriously, Cardo...

"Kylo" smirks, and pale green begins to spread across his skin. His eyes enlarge and fill with yellow as Cardo's face contorts back to his natural reptilian features as a CLAWDITE, a species of shapeshifters.

HUX:

Now... I think we have enough time before launch to finish our business, and properly welcome you all to our regime.

As he speaks, Hux looks each of the Knights in the eye, one by one.

HUX:

Now that you all have mastered the lost art Snoke entrusted to you, I'm certain you will leave all who would resist us broken in your wake. In return, I will prove to you that your faith is not misplaced. Solo may have seen you as no more than blunt instruments, but I know greatness when I see it. I know you deserve true glory at the heart of battle, as partners in our work.

Each Knight nods in agreement, contempt for their former leader palpable.

HUX:

Pledge yourselves fully to the First Order, and you will receive so much more.

Hux waves two fingers, and Pryde steps forward. His section of the table retracts, giving him space to approach and set the case in the center. Pryde places a hand on the case reverently, and looks sternly at the Knights.

PRYDE:

Do you forsake the failures of the past? The rivalries and petty grievances? The half-scraps of power doled out by unworthy masters?

ALL KNIGHTS:
WE FORSAKE THEM.

PRYDE:

Do you pledge yourselves to us and to one another, in brotherhood?

ALL KNIGHTS:
WE PLEDGE IT.

PRYDE:

Do you serve the Force?

ALL KNIGHTS:
NO.

PRYDE:

Do you serve the SUPREME LEADER?

ALL KNIGHTS:
NO!

PYDE:

THEN WHAT DO YOU SERVE?

ALL KNIGHTS:
WE SERVE THE ORDER.

Pryde surveys the room, glaring intensely at everyone. Slowly, a tight smile of approval forms on his face. Pryde looks to Hux, who also smiles.

HUX:

Then, Brothers, take up the tools that befit your station.

Hux nods at Pryde, who opens the case. It contains gleaming lightsabers of First Order manufacture, each in a unique configuration.

HUX:

The old ways are no more. You, our Knights of Ren, are nothing less than the key to shaping the future of our Order. Now... go forth and do great things for the galaxy.

The Knights take up the sabers that best suit them, and begin to leave, new weapons on their belts and helmets under their arms. Each clasps hands with Hux and Pryde before departing. As Vicrul steps forward, Hux holds his arm.

HUX:

Vicrul, of all your Brothers, you are our finest tracker. Can you find him?

VICRUL:

[Smiles] There's nowhere in the galaxy the traitor could hide from me. I'll bring our prodigal Jedi back.

Cut to a wide view of the asteroid ring surrounding Kurost III. First one, then two, then thirty large asteroids flare red. Cut back to Hux, Pryde, and the Knights of Ren, standing together on the bridge.

HUX:
Proceed with the jump.

Cut back to space. In the same order they became visible, each asteroid rockets into hyperspace, vanishing from sight.

The screen goes black.

After several seconds, a voice begins to echo.

HUX:
You're a child, Ben Solo. EMOTIONAL. RECKLESS. WEAK.

In a blink, the blackness is replaced with a first-person view of Kylo's cockpit, lit by pulsing red warning lights. A blaring alarm sounds as the perspective cuts to Kylo's disoriented face. He drifts in and out of consciousness, seeing and hearing moments from his past, accompanied by a new voice repeating his name, as if trying to get his attention.

HUX:
Do you even comprehend how much you've cost us?

LUKE SKYWALKER:
Every word you just said was wrong.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:
Ben...

HUX:
Who do you think you're talking to?

SNOKE:
You're no Vader.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:
Ben...

REY:
You're a monster.

LUKE:
See you around, kid.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:
Hear me...

SNOKE:
You are unbalanced.

HUX:
You presume to command MY army?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:
Listen...

SNOKE:
The deed split your spirit to the bone.

REY:
Don't do this.

LUKE:
Ben, no!

SNOKE:
Child in a mask.

HAN SOLO:
He'll crush you.

REY:
Creature in a mask.

HAN:
You know it's true.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:
Ben!

REY:
...never be as strong as Darth Vader.

Blackness, silence.

Then, after several more seconds...

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:
Vader wasn't my end; don't let Kylo Ren be yours.

Suddenly, the black cuts to a clear blue sky. Pan down to a first-person view, from where a child's head would be, of what seems to be a street of tan and green, though everything is faded and blurry except for the child's two companions, who are crystal clear. The boy looks to his right, where the tall legs of a Wookiee are shuffling beside him, then to his left, where a man is holding his hand. He looks up to see HAN SOLO, in his late thirties, looking down at him with a comforting grin.

HAN:

So what do ya think, kid?

Before YOUNG BEN can answer, we return to adult Kylo's face, trying to focus on what's outside the cockpit. Cut to a rear exterior view of Kylo's TIE, sparking and sputtering as it approaches an unfamiliar blue-green-tan planet.

Abruptly cut to Rey's distressed face as her eyes snap open. She sits up in the bed of a simple, comfortable white room, softly illuminated by a low line of dim, motion-activated lights. Clearly shaken, she rubs her temples and gets out of bed. Dressed in simple, loose-fitting sleepwear, Rey walks to a window and looks out at a sea of moonlit clouds.

Cut to a head-on view of Rey inside the window, which gradually zooms out to reveal her location as the beautiful gas giant BESPIN, in a floating colony platform roughly a quarter the size of Cloud City, and more cylindrical.

INT. NIMBUS BASE - NIGHT

Back in the room, Rey sighs, turns around, and looks at her bed as if debating whether to try to get some more sleep. Instead, she turns to her desk.

Cut to Rey's hand lowering into view, clutching the SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER, a brace covering where it had split apart the year before. She takes a breath, thumbs the activation switch... and the weapon sputters, flares, and shorts out. As smoke drifts up from the emitter, Rey's other hand comes into view and hits the bottom of the saber. Then again, harder. To no avail.

REY:

Blast it!

Sighing, Rey places the weapon in a drawer, then turns her eyes to another object on the far corner of her workbench. The camera lingers on a NEW LIGHTSABER, the casing of which appears to have been partly constructed from the staff Rey carried on Jakku. Half of her now-dismantled staff can be seen propped against the wall in the background.

Cut to Rey poring over the Jedi texts, lingering on lightsaber designs and meditation diagrams. Cut again to early morning, and Rey (now in a variant of her standard gray-vested Resistance outfit) has assumed a ready stance, holding the remaining half of her staff like a standard lightsaber. After a quick glance at her closed door, she focuses on the task at hand.

A training remote hovers before her, and fires stun bolts. She blocks the first few shots, but the next three throw her off balance, knocking the staff from her grasp and her to the floor.

Cut again, and Rey is facing BB-8. She glances at her door again, seemingly concerned. BB-8 chimes an inquiry, which recaptures her attention.

REY:
It's nothing, BB. I'm ready.

BB-8's panels open, and cables tipped with blunt striking ends lance out at Rey. She catches the barrage on her staff, then resumes her stance.

REY:
Again, faster.

BB-8 complies. This time several get through her guard, but she's still standing at the end.

REY:
[Smiles] Not bad, buddy! Let's take a break.

BB-8 bleeps cheerfully and rolls away. As the droid gets further out of view, Rey's hand rises to one of the welts left by the cable strikes.

REY:
Ow...

Cut to Rey sitting cross-legged on the floor, the sun shining through her window. She looks to the door one more time, scowls, and attempts to focus on another exercise. She stretches a hand toward a cluster of containers arranged in a semicircle around her. She concentrates. Her breathing quickens. Gently, the containers begin to shake. The smallest one almost lifts off the ground before she lowers her hand and sags back, looking defeated. She straightens and tries again, face contorted with effort. The containers begin to shake violently and start to levitate in unison, still vibrating as they rise.

Cut to the hallway, where Poe (now more casually dressed in fatigues) approaches Rey's closed door and knocks. Cut back to inside the room.

POE:
[Muffled by the door] Rey, you decent? Lando's back with a progress report. [Pause, then annoyed] C'mon, Rey, it's noon; Jedi don't need that much sleep! [Pauses again, now concerned] Everything okay in there? BB-8 knock you out again? [Pause] I'm coming in!

As the door opens, Rey's concentration breaks and the containers launch randomly about the room with incredible speed. A large lid barely misses Poe and embeds itself into the hallway's opposite wall.

POE:
...THE HELL WAS THAT?

Rey steps into the doorway, angry more at herself than at Poe.

REY:
[Defensively] I've asked you to knock, Admiral!

POE:
I've been knocking, "Master Rey," your precog not kicked back in yet? [Winces] Sorry, that was uncalled for.

REY:
[Hurt, but trying not to show it] It's fine. What do you want?

POE:
Calrissian's back from the Core; he says he has something big.

REY:
I was just about wrapped up anyway. Lead the way?

Poe nods and starts moving. Rey follows as her door slides shut behind her. They walk in awkward silence for a bit.

POE:
So... how's the whole Jedi thing going?

REY:
Well, I almost killed the Resistance's new leader when he walked in, so... I've had better days. Better weeks.

POE:
Look, [stops and turns to face her] I don't know what's going on with all that... [waves hand in a crude approximation of a mind trick] But you'll get it back.

Rey glances away.

POE:
And, in the meantime, you're still a damn good pilot, and the best fighter we have. The rest will work itself out.

Rey responds with a nod and a halfhearted smile.

REY:
...where's Finn? We were supposed to spar this morning.

POE:
On his way to Batuu. We got a tip that one of our underworld contacts found something we'd be interested in, so he and Rose are checking it out.

REY:
They didn't tell us what it is?

POE:

Nope. He didn't wanna say over standard comms. I was gonna blow it off, but Finn had a hunch.

Rey nods and looks ahead, curious.

INT. NIMBUS BASE – CONFERENCE ROOM

Rey and Poe enter a room with a large, rectangular holotable in the center. Lando and Chewbacca are engaged in a heated discussion.

POE:

So who's winning?

LANDO:

[Irritated] 'Bout time, Admiral, let's make this quick.

POE:

[Taken a little aback] Rough flight?

LANDO:

[Sighs, trying to relax] Rough month. [Smiles ruefully] It turns out even I can get tired of sweet-talking people, eventually.

POE:

But...

LANDO:

But we have some new partners -- more than I'd feared, less than I'd hoped. [Starts ticking off fingers] Corellia, Trakesis, and the Hapans are in. Of course, those were the easy ones. The big players -- Chandrilla, Kuat, and Coruscant, those karks -- still wanna sit the fight out. They think the First Order's stretched too thin, is gonna collapse under its own weight.

POE:

[Equally angry, but trying to control it] Shoot, Lando, why didn't we think of that? I'm sure the Outer Rim will be happy to sit tight while Ren and his dogs butcher their civilians and kidnap their children, if it'll all be over in a few years anyway.

LANDO:

[Grins] That's, uh, a little more diplomatic than I ended up putting it. Must be losing my touch.

REY:

[Crestfallen] I thought Luke's sacrifice would have inspired more people than that.

LANDO:

It did. He humiliated the First Order, showed the galaxy they were vulnerable. A lot of idealists joined up after Crait. But the more... cynical worlds are a different story. They were never exactly eager to bring back the Republic, so they're content to wait and see who wins -- a calculus that's about to change. The First Order was hurting for resources after Crait, but now word's spreading that they aren't so weak after all. That they can crush any force they cross paths with, no matter how big.

POE:

So they've upped their propaganda game. I've tangled with more First Order than anyone, and they're good, but not that good.

LANDO:

I wish it was just a PR problem. Take a look at these logs.

Lando presses a few buttons on the table, which projects holographic recordings of recent starfighter engagements. Poe studies them carefully.

POE:

That's not possible. They fly unified like droids, but droids don't fight that well without some really obvious tells and flaws.

LANDO:

Exactly. These guys have machine precision, but the adaptability of organics. And that's not all. Look at the opposition.

POE:

I have been; they're awful.

LANDO:

[Cocks an eyebrow] Those are the Umbaran Shadowhawks, Squad One.

POE:

[Chuckles] No they aren't, I flew drills with those guys during my stint in the Navy. That's gotta be... [looks closer] no way.

CHEWIE:

[Yelps in surprise]

LANDO:

It's not just space engagements, either. Some of the best infantry in the galaxy are falling to troops we know for a fact are fewer in number and less experienced. On their home turf.

POE:

How?

LANDO:

[Gives Poe a long look] Your parents were close with Skywalker, Admiral. Anything come to mind?

REY:

[As Poe is about to speak] Battle Meditation.

LANDO:

[Grins] Well done, Master Rey.

REY:

[Rolls her eyes at the nickname] Poe, I've read about this, and everything Lando's describing lines up with Battle Meditation.

LANDO:

[Eying Poe] Ring a bell?

POE:

I still know most of Luke's Rogue Squadron stories by heart, but the wizard stuff went right over my head when I was a kid. The hell you guys talking about?

REY:

Some Jedi were recorded as being able to turn the tide of battle by using the Force to amplify the morale and prowess of entire armies. Sometimes they even confused and demoralized their enemies into surrender. Where these Jedi went, impossible odds were overcome; certain defeats became victories. The texts call this ability Battle Meditation.

POE:

[Whistles] Okay, I'm pretty sure I would have remembered that.

REY:

I had hoped we could eventually try it ourselves. Only... [she trails off, looking pained]

POE:

Still, we have a name for it now. Any way to counter it?

REY:

Two ways, neither of them easy. Either a mental fight I am not ready for, or somehow taking Kylo off the board -- though he'll no doubt be in the most well-protected part of their strongest ship.

POE:

[Nods] What's the range on this Mediation?

REY:

As powerful as Kylo is, he would still have to be physically present somewhere at the battle.

POE:

That's something, at least. For now, we can try to track Ren's movements, focus on targets he's nowhere near, and break off at the first sign of things getting unnatural.

REY:

Until we figure out how to neutralize the threat. [Brow furrows] Overwhelming numbers could still break through, even if the other side is using the Force.

LANDO:

Look, I'm good, but the First Order is pretty much always going to have the numerical advantage. There just aren't that many people left to schmooze.

REY:

Then we find a way to isolate Kylo, take him off the board. I don't see another solution.

POE:

Okay, if this can really make that much of a difference, it's top priority. Rey, start drawing up some plans. Whatever you need, it's yours. And Lando...

LANDO:

[Sighs] I was too old for this ten years ago... I'll need a day to resupply first. Maz had some ideas on where to find some new leads. Keep me in the loop.

Lando departs, rubbing his eyes.

POE:

[Looks to Rey] Can you do this?

REY:

[Sighs] It's not like we have much of a choice.

EXT. BLACK SPIRE - DAY

Transition to a pale blue sky, from which the camera follows snow down to the bustling, white-dusted streets of BLACK SPIRE OUTPOST, a port town of earth-tone buildings with mismatched domed roofs, the jagged rock spires of the planet BATUU adorning the skyline. The view settles on a large round diner, with yellow canopies that top wide entrances.

INT. RONTO ROASTERS DINER

Finn and Rose are sitting at a small corner table, with R2-D2 beside them. A fidgety Rose alternates between scanning the room and glaring at Finn, who can't seem to take his eyes off a datapad sitting in front of him. It projects an alternating cycle of small blue images, inches above the table, including robed figures, unfolding holocrons, and lightsaber schematics.

FINN:

[Softly] "...those who wish to study Form III are advised to practice their meditation, for Soresu is the most inward directed of all forms. You are to be the calm eye of the storm as your--"

ROSE:

Would you please put that thing away before it attracts the wrong kind of attention?

FINN:

Relax. Even if more than half the customers could read, right now they're more interested in stuffing themselves or drinking to oblivion. Besides, this stuff is fascinating.

Before Rose can respond, she's interrupted by a cheerful laugh from a tall WEEQUAY approaching them, sporting a long maroon jacket and goggles. HONDO OHNAKA'S ornate walking cane and dry skin, wrinkled even for his species, betray his age, yet there remains an unmistakable spring in his step.

HONDO:

So what do we have here, friends? A Jedi junkie? Or someone who desperately wants to impress one particular young Jedi?

A rattled Finn hastily stuffs the datapad into his pack and looks back at Hondo, without responding.

HONDO:

I kid, I kid. The Jedi were never the greatest of friends to "creative entrepreneurs" such as myself, but they were immensely preferable to the Empire or the First Order. Nevertheless, the lady is correct. Sympathy for the Jedi runs deep on Batuu, but is rarely voiced. [Leans in & theatrically whispers] *One never knows who's listening.*

ROSE:

[Already exasperated] We're not here to reminisce, Hondo. What was so important that you had to drag us all the way out here? If you're just trying to unload more merchandise, this wasn't exactly the best time.

HONDO:

Nothing so pedestrian. Thanks to the incredible fortuitousness in which I happen to specialize, I have come into possession of something far more precious than pilfered military cargo.

FINN:

What is it?

HONDO:

You would never believe me. For this prize, only your own eyes will do.

FINN:

Show us.

EXT. BLACK SPIRE STREETS - DAY

Cut to Hondo leading the heroes (now with heavy coats over their normal clothes) through a back alley, into a nondescript door, then down some dimly-lit stairs. At the end of another hallway is a heavy door flanked by two armed guards, a GRAN and a NAUTOLAN. Inside is a simple bed and facilities much like a prison cell. The walls are lined with small hanging cages.

A human male is shackled to the wall at the end of the room, head down. As the figure raises his head of long, tousled black hair, Finn and Rose's eyes widen in shock, and Artoo squeals in alarm.

The prisoner, ravaged but clearly alert and angry, is Kylo Ren.

He is dressed in simple black garments, the outer trappings of his uniform gone. Small, fresh scars are scattered across his face. His right hand has blackened stumps where fingers used to be.

Finn and Rose quickly draw their blasters: Finn's to Hondo, Rose's to Kylo.

ROSE:

[Sharply] What is this?

FINN:

Hondo, if you've sold us out it'll be the last thing you ever-

HONDO:

Easy, easy! I assure you, this man is my prisoner, and thanks to my little friends on the walls, no danger to you whatsoever.

Hondo opens one of the cages, taking out another of the strange yellow lizards, petting it as it slithers up his arm and rests across his shoulders.

HONDO:

Ysalamiri. Very rare, veeery expensive. But for any dealings with Jedi or their more... ill-mannered cousins, there's no better investment than animals that evolved specifically to repel Force-attuned predators.

The heroes glance at the cages, Rose in curiosity, Finn in apparent disgust.

HONDO:

It seems the First Order mutinied against their Supreme Leader. He crash-landed here, and my crew was the first to find the wreckage. [Chuckles] Does that sound like your "will of the Force" or what? When you've seen as much as old Hondo Ohnaka has, you develop a certain sense about these things.

Finn and Rose step towards Kylo warily. Kylo glares at them, but says nothing.

HONDO:

He's not much for conversation, but I suspect you and your friends would have better luck than we did.

ROSE:

[Raising her blaster] Or we could do the galaxy a favor right now. What would we talk about anyway, Ren? Everyone you took from us?

Kylo shrinks back for a second, about as defenseless now as he's ever been.

KYLO:

[Carefully] How about... who I can give back?

Confusion flashes on the heroes' faces as Kylo pauses, savoring the sense that he's regained a certain measure of control over the situation.

KYLO:

Skywalker's students, a few teachers. Jedi. There are survivors, and I know where.

Kylo speaks earnestly, leaning forward, but backs down as Rose pushes her blaster forward. The heroes' eyes widen with shock. Artoo beeps his surprise.

ROSE:

You can't expect us to believe this. What, you lead us to some trash heap, a million stormtroopers pop out and blow us away, and you laugh all the way back to your throne?

FINN:

[Lowers blaster] No... he's telling the truth.

ROSE:

[Looks to Finn in disbelief] How do you figure?

FINN:

Because if this was a trap, it would be the dumbest one I've ever heard of. Would you ever put your life in Hondo's hands for a scam? No offense, Hondo.

HONDO:

[Laughs boisterously] None taken! The treacherous stormtrooper is right; I am very fickle.

Rose considers for a second, then turns back to Kylo, lowering her gun.

ROSE:

Why would you want to help us?

KYLO:

Don't kid yourselves. We're not allies. But your enemies have turned against me, and they're stronger than you realize. None of you will survive what's coming without the Force... and I suspect that's something you're finding it harder to rely on these days.

Rose's face shows only confusion at the remark, but Finn clearly understands what he meant. He opens his mouth to respond, but catches himself.

FINN:

[Calms down] ...okay, Ren. Where?

KYLO:

Take me to Rey. I'll tell her.

FINN:

[Snaps] Forget it. You're never coming near her again.

KYLO:

[Casually leans back and looks away for a moment, feigning disinterest] Suit yourself. I'd prefer a Resistance firing squad to giving Hux the satisfaction. But what will Rey say when she finds out you abandoned all those Jedi? Or that you threw away her hopes of... [pauses, reconsidering his words] The point is, you need what I know. Take me to Rey, or kill me and be done with it.

FINN:

[Glares] ...fine. We'll take you and your lizard pals with us. But you so much as breathe wrong, and you're dead.

HONDO:

Normally this is where I would raise the matter of [clears throat] compensation, but I would very much like to offload this gentleman as soon as possible. My men disposed of his ship, but there's no telling where the First Order last logged his transponder signal.

FINN:

Hondo, if this pays off, you'll get ten times your usual rate.

ROSE:

Assuming he doesn't kill us all first.

The camera lingers on Kylo's glare as the scene ends.

SPACE – NABOO SYSTEM

A single Star Destroyer drops out of hyperspace, Naboo looming ahead. Cut to the THEED ROYAL HANGAR, where pilots scramble to their fighters. As the ships peel out, the camera pans up to reveal the small shape of the Destroyer hovering in the planet's upper atmosphere. No less than 300 N-3 fighters, accompanied by 6 dagger-shaped L-TYPE LIGHT CRUISERS, make their approach. Cut to the lead cruiser's bridge, and its defiant commanding officer.

LIN FARGO:

First Order vessel, this is Captain Lin Fargo of the Royal Naboo Security Forces. You are advised to depart immediately. The Naboo system is a sovereign territory. If you remain, your intrusion will be considered an act of war. Please acknowledge.

Cut to the bridge of the Star Destroyer, where Pryde stands shoulder to shoulder with a hologram of Hux.

HUX:

[Smiles grimly] Captain Fargo, this is Supreme Leader Armitage Hux. The First Order does not recognize Naboo's sovereignty, nor has it ever pretended to. You are citizens of the Order. Grant us an audience with King Berenko to discuss your peaceful surrender, or you will be made to comply.

FARGO [cut to L cruiser bridge]:

[Brief pause] I'm going to save all of us some time and tell you to go to hell, "Supreme Leader." My king wouldn't surrender against an army, let alone one ship led by his wife's murderer.

Cut to the Destroyer bridge, where a look of mild puzzlement crosses Hux's holographic face, as if trying to recall some bit of meaningless trivia.

HUX:

His wife's... ah, yes. She was in the Senate, wasn't she? I wouldn't recommend joining her, Captain, but the choice is yours. [To Pryde] You may commence the operation.

PRYDE:

Yes, Supreme Leader. Lord Kuruk?

KURUK [comm voiceover]:
I read you, Admiral.

PRYDE:
Launch fighters.

Six craft launch from the Destroyer, Kuruk leading the way in his TIE Justiciar. A pair of drone-like, articulated gun arrays release from his craft's main body and begin rapidly circling the cockpit in a tight ring, with only the faintest flicker of light denoting the energy binders keeping them connected to the body. Behind him, three standard TIEs and two TIE INTERCEPTORS take formation.

FARGO [cut to L cruiser bridge]:
Hux, you've got to be joking.

HUX [cut to Destroyer bridge]:
[Grins] Six is rather a lot, but Kuruk is something of a valuable asset, one the Order is unprepared to lose.

Cut to Kuruk's unconventional cockpit. The Knight sits cross-legged in the center of a circular array. His helmet is set in front of him, a chromed, welder-like mask reflecting his blue eyes as they close in meditation. After a few seconds, his eyes open, now sulfur yellow.

KURUK:
[Murmurs] For the Order.

N-3 starfighters peel away from formation to reach firing distance.

FARGO:
Ash Squad, Isaz Squad, engage and eliminate the intruders.

The TIEs accelerate to attack speed; the Naboo squad accelerates in kind.

DALO RAHNE (ASH FOUR) [cut to cockpit view]:
Looks like a nasty bunch.

REED TYPHO (ISAZ THREE) [cut to cockpit view]:
We've seen nastier. Drinks are on whoever bags the fewest.

Suddenly, Kuruk's craft seems to be flying in formation with not five, but twenty-five ships.

SETH DALLOWS (ASH TWO) [cut to cockpit view]:
Where did those come from?!

KURUK:
[Voice impossibly close and clear] Does that really matter now?

DALLOWS:

[Panicked, spinning wildly and looking around] How?!

KURUK:

Rebels don't get answers. But, one warrior to another, I can promise you a quick and painless death.

Over the comms come cries of alarm and fear, commands for something to get out of their head, declarations from hardened veterans that they can't let themselves be taken alive. Pilots begin to lose formation. Two N-3's crash into each other and detonate. A blaster bolt illuminates a fighter's cabin, and the fighter begins to fly in a straight line, its pilot unresponsive. Through it all, the First Order butchers carve Naboo fighters to pieces.

DALLOWS [cut to cockpit view]:

[Face drawn] Captain, I think we should surrend- [his words are cut off as fire fills the cockpit]

FARGO [cut to L cruiser bridge]:

Engage! All fighters ENGAGE!

The remaining 288 fighters close the distance and open fire. The cruisers, unable to offer supporting fire given the number of their own amid the swarm, stand by assist when an opening presents itself. Kuruk's forces now seem to be hundreds strong -- all flying with impossible precision, dodging Naboo fire that strikes their own, ripping through defensive formations, and anticipating enemy orders before they are issued.

Cut back to Fargo, agonized at the sight.

KURUK:

[Whispers as if just behind Fargo] You see it now. [Fargo spins around] This was never a battle. You were a demonstration, nothing more. A rod shaped to break the spine of your people.

Fargo looks to his crew. Some are terrified beyond reason, some look at him with undisguised hatred, others seem to have just shut down under the weight of their own despair. Looking to the monitors, he sees friendly ships disappearing in droves. Fargo desperately hits the comm button.

FARGO:

Alright Hux, you've made your point! You win, we'll stand down. Let me save my men.

INT. STAR DESTROYER - BRIDGE

HUX:

[Smiles] I'm... afraid we are no longer accepting surrenders, Captain Fargo. You had your chance. I wish you the best of luck.

FARGO [comm voiceover]:
You lunatic! We surrender! We-

Hux glances up at the display screen, nodding in satisfaction as the captain's ship becomes the latest fireball to stain Naboo's orbit.

HUX:
Admiral Pryde, I leave the rest to you.

Hux observes a swarm of TIEs descending to Naboo through the ruins of their once-impressive defense force. Kuruk enters the bridge, helmeted once more.

HUX:
Well done, Brother. Every day you prove more and more that my faith in you was well-founded.

KURUK:
[Nods] Glad you got to watch the show. I serve the Order in my own way, as do we all. The effect is still weaker the farther apart we all are, but it's getting stronger with every conquest.

HUX:
[Nods back] Don't worry, my friend. I've seen the progress you are all making; in time, I doubt distance will matter very much at all. For now, though, there's still much more to be done. Admiral?

PRYDE:
Lord Ushar is engaging the Corellians as we speak, and Lord Trudgen's forces are on their way to pacify Kashyyyk.

HUX:
Give them no quarter.

INT. NIMBUS BASE – CONFERENCE ROOM

With Lando gone, the Resistance's leadership has moved on to more routine, but no less taxing, updates on the state of the galaxy.

CONNIX:
...Naboo's defenses fell in minutes; Corellia didn't last much longer. Kashyyyk is holding on, for the moment. Seems the Wookiees can resist Ren's mind games, but they're still struggling against the enemy's new combat coordination.

POE:
[Rubs the bridge of his nose] And we've only got so many reinforcements to go around... [sighs] Okay, see who we've got in the Mytaranor sector that's able to help.

Connix nods and departs, passing C-3PO as the droid shuffles into the room.

THREEPIO:

Excuse me, Admiral, but we've just received an urgent long-range transmission from Commander Finn.

POE:

Long range? They didn't go that far. Put it through.

Threepio presses buttons on the console, opening an audio channel through which ambient noise from the away team's cockpit can be heard.

POE:

So what happened? You two detour to Malastare, take in a podrace?

FINN [cut to cockpit view]:

We, uh, picked some hot cargo. Had to make a couple silent jumps to make sure we weren't followed.

ROSE:

Too hot to take straight back home. We need to meet at a safe location to figure out what to do with him.

POE [cut back to conference room]:

[Puzzled expression] "Him"? You capture a high-value target or something? Don't tell me Hondo found Kazod or Frax.

FINN [comm voiceover]:

Higher. And we didn't exactly capture him. We were supremely lucky.

Poe blinks, certain Finn couldn't possibly have meant to suggest that. He turns to Rey, who closes her eyes and takes a breath, reaching out with the Force. After a few strained moments, her eyes snap open in shock.

POE:

...him?

Rey nods slowly.

THREEPIO:

I beg your pardon, Mistress Rey, but "him" who?

REY:

[Quietly] Not now, Threepio.

Threepio angles his head in mild offense, but silently shuffles off to the side of the room. Poe turns back to the console.

POE:

How?

FINN [cut to cockpit view]:
Seems there was a falling-out in the F.O. He crashed in the area several days ago, and our, uh, associates found him.

POE [comm voiceover]:
And he's in bad enough shape that you're able to hold him?

ROSE:
Something like that.

Cut back to the conference room. In the background, Threepio can be seen jerking his upper body in Poe's direction, startled, as if he just now figured out who they were talking about.

POE:
This... I don't believe it.

FINN [comm voiceover]:
There's more. He's already given us something big we need to investigate.

POE:
And you believe him?

FINN [cut to cockpit view]:
Close enough to at least grill him some more. We can't talk about it here; we have to meet. Only...

Finn trails off, clearly uncomfortable. Cut back to the conference room, where grim realization crosses Rey's face.

REY:
He'll only tell me. In person. [Pauses, then scowls] I'll be there.

POE:
Okay... [pauses to think] head to rendezvous point Blue Harvest. We'll meet you there as soon as we can.

ROSE [comm voiceover]:
Got it. See you soon. [Transmission ends]

Poe crosses his arms, considering the development, then turns to Rey.

POE:
If this is on the level... if the First Order doesn't have that Force-powered creep anymore... this could be the break we've been looking for. We might have just won.

Rey frowns, deep in thought. Poe looks at her warily.

REY:

...only if Kylo was the one using Battle Meditation.

POE:

What? Snoke's dead, and Ren's the only Dark Jedi or whatever-you-call-it we've tangled with since. Who else could it be?

REY:

I don't know... but whoever or whatever it is, it's apparently powerful enough to have driven Kylo Ren from the throne.

Poe frowns, his newfound optimism sinking almost as quickly as it arrived.

EXT. KEF BIR PLAINS – DAY

Transition to a flyover of the turbulent oceans of KEF BIR, a moon in the Endor system. The camera reaches and passes a rocky cliff, eventually settling on a grassy clearing where Rey, Poe, BB-8, and Chewie stand outside the *Falcon*, flanked by several heavily-armed troops. There are no signs of life or technology for miles, except a beat-up STARSPEEDER 3000 shuttle landing nearby. Poe raises a comlink to his mouth.

POE:

Be ready for anything.

CONNIX [comm voiceover]:

Copy that.

Cut to a grassy ridge overlooking the meeting spot. Connix is one of a dozen snipers lining the edge, alongside another dozen Resistance soldiers carrying missile launchers and a dozen more carrying ION LAUNCHERS, high-tech weapons loaded with vibrant blue objects similar to Gungan energy balls. Yet another dozen sit atop speeder bikes. Poe is clearly prepared for a range of scenarios: the numbers to take out Kylo alone, heavy weapons for potential First Order reinforcements, and advanced stun weapons for incapacitating the entire area without harming the friendlies on-site.

TEMMIN "SNAP" WEXLEY (BLACK LEADER) [comm voiceover]:

Standing by. All clear so far.

Cut to space, where squadrons of Resistance X-WINGS, Y-WINGS, and V-WINGS fly above the moon, patrolling for any signs of a sudden First Order presence. Poe isn't taking any chances.

Back on the surface, the shuttle's door opens. Artoo is the first to exit, a Ysalamir caged on a tray atop his dome. He's followed by a visibly unhappy Finn, who's carrying a blaster rifle and has another of the lizards resting on his shoulders. His eyes meet Rey's, and relief flashes on her face but is quickly replaced by tension as she sees who's following him: Kylo Ren. The disheveled warrior is shackled with thick binders, with a small bacta

tourniquet over his right hand and a Ysalamir in a pouch fastened to his chest. BB-8 squeals in fright. The last to descend is a grimacing Rose, her rifle trained on Kylo, also sporting a Ysalamir across her shoulders.

Rey, Poe, and Chewie start walking to meet them halfway, Rey quicker at first but slowing down as she comes within range of the lizards, appearing uneasy.

POE:

What's with the critters?

ROSE:

They block the Force, keeping the guest of honor manageable.

Rey takes a step back.

POE:

So what happened, "Supreme Leader"? All your underlings figure out what a prick you are? You decide running a wannabe Empire was too hard without Snoke there to let you screw off playing Vader?

KYLO:

[Striking a tone of detached flippancy] Death closes in on you all, and you waste time with petty gloating. Fine leadership, Admiral. Clearly you learned nothing from my mother.

CHEWIE:

[Snarls]

REY:

You're destroying everything she believed in! You don't deserve-

Poe impatiently waves his hands to preempt a shouting match. Rey complies, but glares at Kylo. Poe glances at Finn and Rose.

POE:

What was so important that you couldn't just shoot him?

FINN:

He says some of Luke Skywalker's Jedi are still alive.

Poe raises a skeptical eyebrow. Chewie angles his head in suspicion. Rey's eyes widen in shock, then narrow as she stares intently at Kylo.

REY:

Explain.

KYLO:

After the temple fell, the remaining Jedi followed me. Surviving Padawans, some Knights who had been away on missions. I... killed the first few, but Snoke ordered the rest kept alive. After ending

Skywalker, Snoke wanted to turn what was left of his legacy to the dark side, make them a new generation of Inquisitors.

POE:

Well isn't that convenient. Finn, Rose, you two bought this poodoo?

REY:

No... it's true.

Poe turns to look at her in disbelief, then shakes his head.

REY:

Where are they?

KYLO:

They're frozen in carbonite on Vjun, in an old Imperial stronghold Palpatine used for... experiments. Your people confiscated my code cylinder, which has all the information you need. My access codes will have been revoked by now, but it also has coordinates, defense details, environmental data.

Finn hands Poe the small silver cylinder.

POE:

[Sarcastically] And I'll bet you're the only one who knows about it, right? C'mon, Rey, every part of this screams "trap."

KYLO:

Of course Hux knows about it. It's heavily guarded, and you should expect the worst. It'll soon occur to someone that I would hit it, so we only have a brief window before it becomes impenetrable.

REY:

[Incredulous] "We"?

POE:

Even if we check this out, it doesn't mean you get to join up. We have enough non-psychopaths who wanna save the galaxy.

KYLO:

[Snorts] Spare me. Your Republic isn't worth salvaging, and it certainly isn't worth dying for. Circumstances have aligned our interests, nothing more. You need to even the odds against the Knights of Ren, and I need them killed -- along with Hux.

POE:

The knights of what?

KYLO:

[Sighs] The Knights of Ren. Marauders of the Unknown Regions. The brotherhood I ruled, until Hux turned them against me.

POE:

Huh. So nobody can stand you for more than five minutes.

Kylo glares, refusing to dignify the crack.

REY:

Regardless, you're insane if you think I would agree to fight with you again.

KYLO:

[Calmly assertive] And how well have you been fighting without me? Your skills have atrophied since Crait, haven't they?

Rey tenses as Kylo's gaze seems to pierce through her, straight to the fear she's so far refused to fully express.

KYLO:

Rey from Nowhere, the Jedi Prodigy. Such effortless brilliance with a lightsaber, a pure conduit of the Force... for a few weeks. Then the tap shut off. I can only imagine... it must feel like the Force itself decided it doesn't want you after all.

Rey freezes, stunned as a storm of emotions simmers beneath the surface. Still, she refuses to break from Kylo's gaze.

KYLO:

When Snoke bridged our minds on Starkiller, it did more than let us communicate. It opened you to my training, my experience, straight from my mind to yours. What I spent years honing, you picked up in days... as long as we were linked. You threw all of it away when you broke our connection.

REY:

[Reeling, she murmurs softly] ...no...

FINN:

[Angry] We should've finished you on Batuu. This is just a bunch of bull to psych us out and cover your pride for getting the crap kicked out of you.

KYLO:

[Ignoring Finn completely] Wake up, Rey. Remember how we fought as one against Snoke's guards? No power in the universe could stand against us. You can't save any of these people, or those Jedi, unless you're willing to take back what I gave you.

REY:

[Flares back to life, indignant] What you gave me?! The manipulation, the hatred? Awash in your resentment and excuses? Reflections of a horror I could have become? I looked inside your head before, and I am never doing it again.

Regretting the outburst, Rey composes herself and turns to Poe.

REY:

I'm going. Those Jedi need our help, and I- we need theirs. We can't afford not to pursue this.

POE:

[Concerned] Rey... it's too big a risk for something we don't even know is there.

REY:

[faint hint of desperation in her voice] I do know.

FINN:

We gotta do this, Poe.

CHEWIE:

[Affirmative roar]

POE:

[Glances around the group] Rose? You too?

ROSE:

I don't know... but I think these three are gonna do it anyway, so we'd better help them not get killed.

Poe considers it, sighs, then casually fires a circular blue stun blast at Kylo, who topples to the ground. The Ysalamir on his chest flops out of its carrier, also unconscious.

POE:

Fine. But in the interest of not getting killed, we need a plan.

REY:

[Thinks for a few moments] I'll need Finn with me, Rose and Chewbacca in the *Falcon*, and you to organize some support. And Kylo was right about one thing: we need to leave soon.

POE:

Okay... guess it's up to me to chaperone your stalker back to base. [Looks to Finn] You got any more of those lizard things?

FINN:

Hondo sold us plenty. You won't like the bill.

POE:

Fortunately, I like getting killed by warrior wizards even less.

Poe turns and raises a hand to signal the Resistance troops waiting in front of the *Falcon*. Several come forward; two begin dragging Kylo away, one squeamishly collects the stray Ysalamiri, and the rest proceed to the shuttle to begin unloading the other caged lizards.

POE:

You better be right about this...

Scene ends on shot of Rey, Finn, Rose, and Chewie's faces, displaying a mix of resolve and trepidation.

EXT. BLACK SPIRE OUTPOST – NIGHT

Transition to Batuu. It's no longer snowing, and the well-lit streets of Black Spire still host a fair amount of nightlife. As the camera settles on the front of OGA'S CANTINA, muffled commotion can be heard from inside -- objects breaking, then screams, then blaster bolts, then silence.

A few seconds later, a trio of FIRST ORDER PURGE TROOPERS -- elite black-armored commandos with red highlights -- emerge from the entrance. The one in the center wears the scarlet shoulder pauldron of a commander. As they stop in front of the establishment, two more troopers approach from both directions. Passing civilians shift nervously at the sight of the jackboots, either turning around or picking up their pace to avoid them.

PT-0113:

No sign of him in the east quadrant, sir.

PT-0116:

Leads in the west came up empty, too.

PT-0114:

He could be anywhere in a hive like this. Should we call reinforcements?

PURGE COMMANDER THRESH:

[Nods] Odds are he's long gone by now, but let's be thorough. [Raises a hand to the side of his helmet] Admiral, this is Razor Unit reporting in... No, sir. We still believe Solo crashed here, but his TIE is gone, and there's no trace of Solo himself.

Cut to a Star Destroyer bridge, where Admiral Pryde stands before a console with a monitor displaying star charts.

PRYDE:

He must have found help. Did you root out who he got it from?

THRESH [comm voiceover]:
Negative, sir. The local scum knows nothing of value.

PRYDE:
Are you sure?

Cut back to Razor Unit. One of the troopers flanking the commander pats the blaster holstered on his thigh.

THRESH:
Affirmative, sir. We were... persuasive. The only possible lead we have is a name, some local roach named Ohnaka. He cleared out in a hurry; we're looking into his known associates.

Cut back to Pryde, who grimaces at the mention of that nuisance Hondo's name.

PRYDE:
That... won't be necessary. Just finish your sweep for Resistance enablers to cleanse. One of your Lords is pursuing a different lead. He's confident that if Solo's still alive, he'll end up leading us to the Resistance -- or the Resistance to us.

HYPERSPACE — MILLENNIUM FALCON

Transition to the *Falcon* flying through hyperspace. Cut to interior; Chewbacca enters the main hold, where Finn is sitting at the far end of the holochess bench, his back to the game board. He's facing Rey, who is standing in the middle of the room. Rose is seated at the console on the opposite wall, leaning down to put the finishing touches on a temporary black-and-gray paint job to disguise BB-8. Chewie sits at the game board.

ROSE:
Explain to me how you two are going to infiltrate a secret Jedi prison all by yourselves and get the First Order to let you move more than a dozen slabs of carbonite all the way back to the most wanted ship in the galaxy?

REY:
We still have the disguises onboard from the Zeffo raid, and according to Kylo's code cylinder there's a utility hatch on the western side BB can slice us into. Once we're inside, I'll "persuade" anyone who takes an interest in us that we've been ordered to transfer the prisoners before Kylo comes for them.

FINN:
We play our cards right, they'll load 'em up for us.

ROSE:
Sounds great... as long as Ren's data isn't fake.

REY:
Kylo's manipulative, but he's not a liar.

ROSE:
You know that's the worst kind of manipulator, right?

REY:
Just keep out of range with the engine running for a quick exit.

ROSE:
For if things get complicated. Like they usually do.

CHEWIE:
[Snickers]

FINN:
Our resident Jedi can handle it. [Turns to Rey] Speaking of which, wanna run that reflex drill?

Rey nods. Finn pulls a thin metal rod from a sack sitting beside him. Rey unhooks a lightsaber from her belt, the second one from her workbench. She assumes a ready stance and a two-handed grip. In the background, Chewie can be seen heading back to the cockpit.

Finn tosses the rod toward Rey, who ignites a vibrant YELLOW BLADE that instantly becomes a flurry of vertical motions. The bar clangs to the ground at Rey's feet in three pieces.

ROSE:
Hey, that's pretty cool.

REY:
[Shakes head] It's supposed to be in seven. Again.

Finn tosses another rod. Four pieces.

REY:
Again.

Another toss. Four pieces.

REY:
Again.

Five pieces.

FINN:
There ya go!

REY:
Again.

Three pieces.

REY:
[Sighs] Again.

Three pieces.

REY:
[Grits teeth] Again.

In frustration, Rey lets loose her most aggressive swings yet, yielding... two pieces, flying wider than the others. One hits BB-8's dome, causing his head to spin wildly as he squeals in alarm. His head settles back into place, and he looks at Rey, whining in an accusatory tone. The impact has exposed a bit of the droid's orange plating beneath his dark camouflage.

Rey looks to BB-8, wincing in embarrassment, then looks down at the pile of sliced metal rods on the floor.

REY:
On the island, I consistently reached seven. I'm still off balance.

FINN:
Maybe you just need to change gears. How about running through some sequences?

A frustrated Rey nods, deactivates her lightsaber, and wordlessly heads out of the room in the direction opposite the cockpit. Finn follows her. Once they're gone, Rose looks at the mess of metal strewn about the floor and rolls her eyes as she crouches to start picking it up.

ROSE:
That's okay, we'll clean this up! [Sarcastic muttering] Wouldn't wanna delay the ancient Jedi meditation technique of staring into each other's eyes... [back to normal] Hey Chewie, wanna give me a-

Rose looks up, but Chewie is already gone. She sighs and looks over to BB.

ROSE:
How 'bout you, buddy?

BB-8 flips out his mini-torch in an approximation of a thumbs-up.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON – CARGO HOLD

Cut to Rey and Finn facing each other, each holding a wooden training sword. Finn assumes a centered ready stance as the camera pans past him, revealing an unconventional holdout blaster strapped across his back.

FINN:

Let's try the new sequence. Begin.

Rey advances and Finn retreats, deflecting two descending cross cuts, then stepping forward as Rey throws a horizontal cut to his right. Finn meets it with a horizontal block, then slides the saber down to rap Rey's knuckles.

REY:

Ow! Good hit. Can you really do that with a lightsaber, though?

FINN:

[Resetting his stance] You know, the records can't seem to agree on that. Find another working lightsaber, and we'll find out. [Grins] Until then, I won that round. Let's go again.

They repeat the sequence. This time, before Finn can slide the training saber down, Rey steps through, grabs Finn's wrist, raises his weapon hand, and cuts towards his leg, stopping just before making contact.

FINN:

[Nods, impressed but also annoyed] Good work. Warmed up?

REY:

Good to go if you are.

FINN:

Best of three.

Finn adopts an unconventional stance: holding the saber closer to his body with a one-handed grip, his free hand clenched in a loose fist a few inches from his chest. Rey assumes a more conventional stance.

REY:

Begin.

On the first pass, Finn takes the initiative and gets in close with a parry, using his free hand to physically shove Rey's saber hand aside and end the fight with his saber at her neck.

FINN:

That one still gets you. If you know I'm going to get that close, you need to compensate, or you need to back up. Since this is designed to pin you down, I'd recommend option one.

REY:

[Nods] First Order CQC seems tailor-made for Jedi.

FINN:

It was. Get close, shock 'em, drop 'em, bag 'em. Playing Jedi during drills was a high honor, because they wanted the best fighters in the role for the best possible simulation. But it hurt like hell, and in the end they always bagged the "Jedi."

REY:

[Resumes stance, voice confident] Not this Jedi. Again.

Finn charges again. This time, he draws the blaster as he blocks, and fires. Rey grabs his pistol hand and shoves it to the side before the weapon discharges an expanding blue stun ring into the wall. Stepping back, Rey cuts down, leaving her saber perfectly aligned with Finn's heart.

FINN:

That... that works.

REY:

Tie-breaker?

FINN:

[Mock-resentment] Only if the loser plays the new recruit on the mission.

REY:

[Playfully] I said I was sorry.

FINN:

[Mock-lecturing tone] Smacking subordinates in the back of the head is conduct unbecoming of an officer, Rey. I don't make the rules, I just watch you break them and get our cover blown.

REY:

[Slight giggle] That was one time.

FINN:

[Grins] Last time if I win.

Finn fires as he advances, forcing Rey to dodge to the side. Stowing his blaster as she rolls, he advances and throws a two-handed cut at her head as she tries to recover. She turns the blow aside, barely, and struggles to her feet, fending off another cut tracing a reverse of the first. Backing off, Rey drops her training weapon low.

FINN:

Getting tired? You've taken me out from that before.

REY:
[Frustrated] I'm fine.

FINN:
[Smiles] Or am I just getting better?

Finn throws a horizontal cut and steps in, adopting the same First Order CQC stance that won him the first pass. Rey mirrors him, and the two exchange a blistering series of blow, block, and counterblow. After a few passes, both break off the engagement and step out of range, panting. They circle each other in the ring. Finn seems confused and annoyed, exacerbated by fatigue.

FINN:
I'm not this good. There's holding back, and then there's humoring me. Take this seriously, or neither of us gets better.

REY:
[Glares] You don't want that right now, Finn. You really don't.

FINN:
[Taken aback] Oookay... sorry.

Slowly, Finn lowers his training saber to the ground, eyes not leaving Rey's.

REY:
[Calming down, embarrassed] No, I'm sorry. I know I haven't been the most bearable sparring partner lately.

FINN:
[Smiles understandingly] No, you've been great. Besides, it's totally selfish on my end. It gives me an excuse to learn about all the stuff the First Order left out of its anti-Jedi propaganda.

REY:
[Relaxing] You've really taken a fancy to it, haven't you?

FINN:
I guess it just fascinates me to contrast it with the trooper training they beat into us. Sure would've been a better way to be raised than as a cog for Snoke's war machine.

REY:
Or being "raised," if you can call it that, by beings whose only interest was what I could scavenge for them. When I finally accepted the Force, it was like... seeing for the first time. Finding a greater purpose than survival. And now...

Rey trails off and looks away, clearly not yet ready to talk about it.

FINN:

Listen: what Ren said, I don't buy it. You don't owe that sleemo a thing. You beat him your first time holding a lightsaber. Hell, you picked up a mountain after a couple days with Luke. All the amazing things I've seen you do? They come from you.

Rey looks back at Finn. Touched by his words, and sensing something more behind them, she smiles.

REY:

Well, whatever the truth of it is, I'm glad you're here.

FINN:

Me too.

After a few seconds of the two silently smiling at each other, Finn seems to notice something behind Rey, and suddenly becomes very aware that they're standing closer than when they started.

FINN:

[Fidgeting] To... to, to help. The Jedi training. For the Resistance. And, uh, the galaxy.

A puzzled Rey turns around to see Chewbacca standing in the entryway, staring nonchalantly at the pair. With a casual grunt he walks past them, straight to a large crate against the far wall. He bends over and spends 20 seconds digging through it, tossing spare parts aside to clang on the floor as Rey and Finn stand in awkward silence. Chewie rises with a seemingly random hunk of metal in his hand, then turns and walks out without acknowledging them. His distinctive Wookiee chuckling can be heard from the hallway.

FINN:

[Turns back to Rey] ...anyway... that looked like the spare buffer panel. I'd, uh, better go see what that's about.

REY:

Right. Good idea.

Rey nods and watches Finn leave the room. The moment has passed, but a small smile indicates it managed to lift her spirits and give her something more pleasant to ponder, however temporarily.

SPACE - VJUN SYSTEM

Transition to a rear view of the *Falcon* dropping out of lightspeed and approaching a noxiously-pale green planet: VJUN. Cut to a rear view of the *Falcon* in the atmosphere, flying over a desolate landscape of lifeless terrain and putrid skies. Acid rain pours down across the world's stone arches and caustic pools, sizzling as it hits the ship's deflector shields.

Cut to a ground-level view of the *Falcon* descending overhead. Cut again to the ship's main hold, where Rey and Finn are standing in stormtrooper armor, sans helmets, opposite Rose and BB-8. Rey wears an ammo harness over her suit, its black pouches perfect for concealing items that would be out of place among a stormtrooper's standard kit.

ROSE:

Any closer and we'd be in sensor range. You'll have to make it the rest of the way on foot.

REY:

[Nods] We'll make do.

Rose hands the two a pair of dark, folded bundles of a leather-like material.

ROSE:

Your armor will hold up fine against the rain, but acid marks would be a dead giveaway that you came from outside. These dura-cloaks should be acid-proof, plus shield your heat signatures.

BB-8 looks up at his friends, beeping to get their attention.

FINN:

Don't worry, BB, we didn't forget you.

Chewbacca comes to the foreground pushing a hovering black storage crate. He picks up the droid and places him inside as BB buzzes an insistent protest. Rey places two Ysalamiri in the crate.

REY:

The dark side is strong on this world, including in the wildlife. These should keep us safe along the way.

FINN:

[To Rose] We'd better get moving, and you'd better get on the scanner so you can move before you're discovered.

Rose nods. Rey and Finn don their helmets, then pull the hooded cloaks on over themselves. Rey places a hand on the crate's lid and looks to BB-8.

REY:

It's gonna be okay.

The little droid coos nervously as Rey slides the lid into place.

ROSE:

Good luck.

CHEWIE:

[Confident roar]

Rey and Finn nod and descend the boarding ramp, and the camera shifts to a long exterior view of the two disguised heroes trudging away from the *Falcon* and toward the foreboding black edifice of BAST PRISON in the distance, acid rain sizzling as it hits their cloaks.

REY:

I still don't know how you could see anything in these things.

FINN:

You get used to it.

INT. NIMBUS BASE - HALLWAY

Transition to Poe walking through a hallway, then entering a makeshift detention block, the walls lined with partitioned cells. Only one is active, with a translucent red energy field keeping a sole, seated figure at bay.

Kylo Ren's forehead is bruised from where it hit the ground on Kef Bir. Ysalamiri cages line the floor outside his cell and hang in the empty cells beside Ren's. Poe checks a wall display monitoring the lizards' vitals, then approaches the cell and crosses his arms.

KYLO:

[Smirks] ...so who talks first?

Poe doesn't answer. He just keeps staring at Kylo, sizing up his prisoner.

KYLO:

I have to admit, I'm impressed. We naturally investigated Bepin for Resistance sympathizers, given its history. But our spies never found any, and sensors never picked up a second platform. Not many smugglers could've gotten you cloaking tech that good.

POE:

[Dismissive] Yeah, we're clever like that. [Then, tauntingly] 'Course, it helps that folks actually like us.

KYLO:

[Unfazed] I assume all this [gestures to the surroundings] also means Calrissian didn't die on Pasaana after all? He always did know how to keep a low profile when he wanted to.

Poe moves on without confirming or denying, his expression betraying nothing.

POE:

Tell me about these Knights of Ren. How many are we talking?

KYLO:

Six in total. Four of them are skilled enough as duelists and tacticians, among other gifts. But the last two: prodigious.

Experts with any weapon, masterful command of the Force. Every day was a struggle to stay ahead of them as Snoke's star pupil. But that's not what makes any of them dangerous.

POE:

So they're the experts in this Battle Meditation I've heard so much about.

Kylo raises an eyebrow, again impressed.

KYLO:

It's a... potent art, to impart a vision of victory to an entire army and make it real. Shatter an enemy's will at the same time. The Jedi might not have gone extinct if they hadn't abandoned it centuries ago. Their ancestors didn't have the luxury of obsessing over politics or prophecy.

POE:

I'm hearing some big hang-ups about the Jedi here. Yet I'm supposed to believe you wanna help set a group of them free?

KYLO:

With the full weight of the First Order behind them now, it would be unwise to challenge my former Knights without bringing along some... expendable distractions. Jedi always excelled at that.

POE:

[Eyes narrow] And after?

KYLO:

[Coldly] I'm flexible... if the survivors have the good sense to retire when this is all over.

POE:

[Snorts] Is that how you see this? A temporary exile until you get back to calling the shots, threatening anyone who crosses you? 'Cause I gotta say, that's the kind of talk that gets my trigger finger all twitchy. We're just wasting time here if this ends with you trying to destroy everyone and everything that matters to us.

KYLO:

Then do it. But first, ask yourself if you really believe a single stunted Jedi will be enough to bring them back, let alone see you through what's coming. Because this is not the same war you've been limping through so far. Experience, weapons, numbers... it's all insignificant when your forces are paralyzed by fear, against an enemy that's not only striking but thinking as one.

Poe says nothing.

KYLO:

You've seen the reports. Tell me I'm wrong.

Poe still says nothing.

KYLO:

That's what I thought. [Darkly confident] So really, Admiral... what choice do you have?

Cut to Poe's face, stern yet unnerved by the question.

EXT. VJUN - DAY

Transition to a behind-the-shoulder view of Rey and Finn cautiously approaching a wall with an access panel just barely big enough for a human to crouch through. There's no sign of a keypad or opening mechanism operable by organic beings, just a SCOMP TERMINAL at the right height for a BB unit.

REY:

Okay, BB, you're up.

Finn lifts the lid on the hover-crate and hits a latch that causes one of the sides to swing down, making a makeshift ramp for BB-8 to roll down. Finn hastily moves to shield the repainted droid from the rain with the lid.

With a few beeps, BB-8 plugs in, and after a few seconds the hatch slides up. The trio hurries inside, then the humans quickly remove their cloaks and, after glancing around, toss them out the hatch. The abandoned gear outside would arouse suspicion if found by a probe droid, but there's no sign of a better place to dispose of it. The heroes take a calculated risk that they'll be gone before it becomes an issue. Just before the hatch shuts behind them, the Ysalamiri can be seen slithering out of the hover-crate and safely burrowing into the rocky terrain.

FINN:

Well, we got in and weren't immediately surrounded, so that's a good sign. Okay, BB, pull up the map and let's see-

REY:

[Pointing to the right] That way. I... I can feel them. It's very faint... but not even their present state can fully silence their will. Their strength must be incredible.

FINN:

Sounds like somebody I know. C'mon.

Finn marches ahead. Rey lingers for just a moment, looking at him as she regards the comment, then moves forward.

Cut to a succession of shots from different angles of the pair marching through gray hallways like normal stormtroopers, black-and-grey BB-8 rolling behind them. A quiet, nervous tone from the droid raises the eyebrow of a passing technician. Neither hero acknowledges him with so much as a head-turn, but Finn's body language tenses up, indicating he noticed. A few seconds later, Finn glances in both directions to make sure nobody's nearby.

FINN:

Hey BB, any chance you could, uh, beep meaner?

BB-8 looks up at Finn, then unleashes the harshest buzzing sound he can muster -- which is still far too cute to pass for a First Order droid.

REY:

You know what? Don't worry about it, little guy. Just keep quiet until we're out of here. We like the real you better anyway.

BB-8 silently wiggles in delight.

As they make their way deeper into the facility, the architecture gets darker, more akin to Darth Vader's old fortress on Mustafar. The heroes pass by empty prison cells that may have been scrubbed for blood years ago, but the blast points, scorched surfaces, and gouged walls visible through the viewports hint at the horrors they once hosted.

FINN:

[Looks around while walking] Judging by the creepy scenery, we're going the right way.

REY:

[Puts a hand to her helmeted head] So much pain... it still echoes, after all this time.

FINN:

All the more reason to get the people we came for and get out as fast as we can.

Rey shakes her head as she and Finn walk out of frame. The camera lingers on a cell in which a vertical prisoner rack and a scan grid can be seen.

INT. NIMBUS BASE -- DETAINMENT BLOCK

Transition back to Poe's confrontation with Kylo. Poe is pacing.

KYLO:

[Visibly frustrated] I don't know what you want from me, Dameron. I've given you everything I have, and neither of us has the luxury of doubting the other right now. My motives are clear, my intel is good, and I'm at your mercy. I'm sorry if the threat of our mutual enemy's total victory isn't enough for you.

POE:

[Frustration rising in return] I'm sorry, am I boring you, "Supreme Leader"? Feel helpless, just waiting around, no magic to back you up? Good. That's how I want you. Backed into a corner where I know you can't double-cross us. You already turned on two masters, and I'm not about to become the third.

KYLO:

[Realization dawns as a slow smirk crosses his face] Ah. I don't need the Force for this bit. You're not looking for assurance... [locks eyes with Poe] you're looking for permission.

Poe glares at Kylo as he slowly walks to a cable running from the ceiling and unplugs it from the wall. The room's one security camera goes dark. Kylo is still smirking, but now mixed with the barest flickers of fear and doubt.

KYLO:

Murder... isn't in your nature, Admiral.

POE:

Probably not... though I'll bet that's what Han thought about you, on that bridge... Chewie still can't talk about it, you know. Strongest being I've ever met, and it's still too much for him. Not the loss... who it came from.

Kylo looks down.

POE:

But you know what? At least he got to be there with his best friend, in the end. You ever think about how many husbands never get to hold their wives again because of Starkiller Base? The scale of the First Order's atrocities, from Tehar to Ilum? All the history obliterated because you needed a throne?

Poe's hand slides down to his holstered blaster. Kylo slightly tenses.

POE:

Besides... can a monster like you really be "murdered"? Or is it more like putting down an animal?

Poe's face and body language simmer with barely-contained fury. His grip tightens on his gun. It's obvious he's seriously tempted to end this stain on the Rebellion's legacy himself, right now.

Kylo stares back at him. He refuses to give his captor the satisfaction of displaying fear, but cannot fully hide his tension.

Several silent, agonizing seconds pass.

Finally, Poe sighs, releases his weapon, and plugs the cable back in. Kylo subtly exhales as the security camera reactivates.

POE:

[Resentfully] You would've deserved it... you know that, right?

There's a pause before Kylo answers. When he finally speaks, there's something hard to pin down in his voice -- pity? Self-loathing?

KYLO:

[Quietly] Maybe... but that isn't what the galaxy needs right now.

POE:

[Sarcastically] Oh that's right; I forgot you First Order types are all about what the galaxy "needs."

KYLO:

[Rising as he snaps] You think I liked the First Order? I hated every second I had to scrape and grovel at Snoke's feet. Every order I was given, everything I had to do to climb the ranks. But what choice did I have? The New Republic was doomed from the start, and war was inevitable. I chose the lesser evil!

POE:

[Laughs in disbelief] You're a lunatic! I have whole systems' worth of innocent people who'd say you chose a pretty damn big evil.

KYLO:

You don't get the scale of what the Republic stood to lose. Hosnian was an atrocity, but it was a necessary wakeup call, and a drop in the bucket compared to what open war would've brought. Don't believe me? Let's have a history lesson. Your incompetent, nepotistic Republic did what no one should have been able to do: you proved Palpatine right.

Kylo begins ticking off fingers on his still-bound good hand.

KYLO:

Rampant taxation to line the pockets of the Core systems. Leaving feudal worlds at the mercy of tinpot despots for the sake of "respecting tradition." Forcing planets to disarm, then refusing aid when those same planets begged to be saved from the pirates you enabled. You managed to reach the decadence of the Old Republic at its worst in less than thirty years!

Kylo's voice accelerates as he speaks; by this point he's fuming.

KYLO:

You want to know why nobody answered your distress call on Crait? Because you never answered any of theirs. How long was Gideon

allowed to go unchecked? How many children of Ryloth died listening to their parents whisper that the Republic was coming to save them? How many Wookies were starved and slaughtered on Kashyyyk as Mon Mothma played diplomat, and Han Solo scrabbled through the mud and blood to save them?

Kylo pauses, glaring. Now it's Poe's turn to look uncomfortable.

KYLO:

And let's not forget what happened when people complained. Your Senate called them warmongers! Every fighter, from planetary defense militias all the way to Rebellion veterans, was told to keep quiet, that their services were no longer needed. Rieekan, Ackbar, Syndulla, my own parents, all of them sidelined by the people they bled for, cowards desperate for peace but too lazy and greedy to keep it.

Kylo pauses briefly to close his eyes and compose himself. Poe is stewing, fingers beating a tattoo on the butt of his pistol.

KYLO:

I may be a monster, but at least the First Order looked our victims in the eye. The Republic wasn't a government, IT WAS A CANCER!

Fed up, Poe slams his hand into the wall.

POE:

I'M NOT HERE FOR THE REPUBLIC! NONE OF US ARE!

Both men stare at each other for a long moment. Then Poe sighs.

POE:

It's true. It was a mess of cowards and cronies, and was never gonna last. Most of us here got kicked out by those idiots. There's a reason we had to make do with the cast-offs of the galaxy. But we never fought for the Senate, Ren. We fought for the ideals of the Rebellion that made it possible. We fought for everyone. That never changed... you did.

A brief pause. Poe meets Kylo's gaze, his hatred and frustration gone by this point, replaced with measured conviction.

POE:

You think calling it the "lesser evil" makes you the bigger man? You think admitting you're a monster makes you any less of one? No. You haven't saved anybody, Ren... you just became what people need saving from.

Kylo doesn't answer. After staring at him a few more moments, Poe turns and leaves the room. The scene ends on Kylo's face, uncharacteristically uneasy.

INT. BAST PRISON

Transition to an angled rear view of a disguised Rey, Finn, and BB-8 approaching a large, foreboding door, guarded by two actual stormtroopers.

CF-5454:
Hold. State your business.

FINN:
Prisoner transfer. Supreme Leader Hux expects Solo to come for his Jedi brethren, and wants them moved before that happens.

AK-8819:
Where to?

FINN:
That's need-to-know.

CF-5454:
We weren't notified. Where are your orders?

REY:
[Slowly waves hand, looking from trooper to trooper] You've already seen orders to expect us. Time is of the essence.

Rey speaks slowly; with her link to Kylo broken, a simple mind trick takes more effort than she's accustomed to. Finn tilts his head toward her in concern, then to the troopers, anxious to see their reaction.

CF-5454:
[Dazed monotone] We've seen your orders. Been expecting you.

AK-8819:
[Slightly less monotone, natural fear of Kylo Ren mixed in] Time is short. Take the Jedi away.

CF-5454 plugs a code cylinder into a wall console then punches a keypad. The heavy doors lumber apart, creaking as if they haven't moved in years. Faint yellow lights flicker on, revealing a massive chamber that resembles a munition storeroom more than a prison cell, with dollies, forklifts, and other machinery lining the walls. In the center of the room, ray shields surround fourteen BLOCKS OF CARBONITE, standing tightly together. As Finn surveys the room, he notices dioxis vents along the walls.

AK-8819 presses a wall control and the ray shields dissipate. Rey approaches the front slab on the far right and places a hand on it. The dark gray impression displays a middle-aged man in a short-cropped beard, helpless fingers grasping outward. Among the others visible, two appear to hold humanoid teens, and one contains a twentysomething female RODIAN.

REY:

[Pause] Prepare for transport at once.

CF-5454 obediently walks to one of the hover dollies, activates it, and pulls it toward the center of the room. Finn does the same with a second dolly. AK-8819 flips switches on the carbonite blocks, deactivating the shields and activating repulsors that lift the blocks inches off the ground.

AK-8819:

[Dazed, with a hint of anxiety] Get 'em out. Far away.

Seven carbonite blocks are loaded on each of the two dollies. Rey takes the reins of one, Finn the other. As they push them out of the chamber, the troopers resume their stations beside the doors. Rey glances back at them.

REY:

[Waving hand] This transfer is need-to-know. It would be best if you forgot all about it.

CF-5454:

Transfer is need-to-know. It never happened.

AK-8819:

[Pauses, then totally sincere] ...what never happened?

Cut to the team pushing the dolly into a huge cargo receiving hangar. It's unoccupied, and multiple cargo speeders are parked, as are speeder bikes along the walls. The heroes head for the closest speeder.

FINN:

I don't believe it. Since when do our missions ever go this smooth?

REY:

[Stops suddenly] ...something's wrong.

Before Finn can respond, large side doors slide open, and six purge troopers enter the hangar and assume ready stances, heavy weapons drawn.

SINISTER VOICE:

You're not the Jedi I expected to find here... but you'll do.

In strides Vicrul. Rey and Finn turn to face the Knight of Ren, as BB-8 yelps and speeds to take cover inside the cargo speeder. Rey's hand lowers to one of the black pouches at her side.

VICRUL:

I assumed Solo would try to make use of his old comrades. But sending the orphan instead of coming himself? [incredulous laughter] Either he's more injured than I thought, or more of a coward than I imagined.

Without answering, Rey draws and ignites her lightsaber. She assumes a defensive stance, while Finn scans the area above their enemies.

FINN:

We can't take 'em all. But I got an idea...

With lightning speed and precision, Finn raises his blaster and fires at the ceiling. In the seconds it takes to raise his weapon, the troopers open fire, and Rey moves to deflect. None of the bolts return to the troopers, and she fails to catch glancing blows to Finn's arm and leg. He grunts in pain.

Still, they connect too late to prevent Finn's own shot, which perfectly severs a cable holding a crane arm to the ceiling. It swings down, forcing the troopers to dive out of the way and eventually slamming through a row of parked speeder bikes, causing a considerable explosion. Vicrul dodges and thrusts out his hands to telekinetically keep the fireball at bay.

FINN:

[Wincing] NOW! LET'S MOVE!

Finn limps and Rey scrambles to push the dollies onto the cargo speeder, the engines of which BB-8 has already primed. The vehicle lumbers out of the hangar and picks up speed as it moves across the desolate landscape.

Back in the hangar, none of the purge troopers are seriously harmed. Vicrul approaches one who seems to be taking a bit too long to get to his feet and harshly yanks him up by the arm.

VICRUL:

AFTER THEM!

EXT. VJUN LANDSCAPE - DAY

Cut to the speeder, where the acid rain has started peppering the heroes' white armor with tiny marks, and burning away BB-8's paint disguise. Rain sizzles against the carbonite blocks, but doesn't seem to harm them... yet. Finn frantically pulls a comlink up to his mouthplate.

FINN:

ROSE! THINGS GOT COMPLICATED!

Cut to the *Falcon*, where Rose and Chewbacca are seated in the cockpit.

ROSE:

Toldja. Got your signal; just keep moving straight ahead and we'll come to you. [Flips a switch] You guys get all that up there?

SPACE – VJUN SYSTEM

Cut to squads of Resistance fighters hovering in wait, beyond a small moon orbiting Vjun.

SNAP [comm voiceover]:

We copy; cavalry is on the way. All squads, form up on me.

EXT. VJUN LANDSCAPE – DAY

Cut to an empty stretch of land. From the right, the rain seems to slow, then stop. Soon, all the rain in the foreground has frozen, quivering in the palsy of Force Stasis. In the silence, the growing roar of engines can be heard, and the rain seems to be brushed aside by a massive, invisible dome as speeder bikes carrying Vicrul and his men scream across the plain.

Cut to the Knight of Ren's point of view, from which the fleeing speeder in the distance is small, but gradually getting bigger.

VICRUL:

Futile. [Flips switch] All forces, converge on my trajectory.

LIEUTENANT MEIK SANT [comm voiceover]:

Er, my lord, we may not be able to spare all forces...

VICRUL:

Insolent fool, what do you...

Vicrul trails off as he looks up, and sees dozens of X-Wing, Y-Wing, and V-Wing starfighters enter the atmosphere, barreling almost straight down on top of him. But as the ships get bigger, they pull up, seemingly ignoring the bikes, and head straight for the base.

Behind Vicrul's shoulder, dozens of TIE Fighters scream forth to meet the attack. Proceeding on the ground are several flavors of WALKER: three lumbering AT-M6s, numerous AT-STs, and several ALL-TERRAIN TACTICAL INTIMIDATORS (evolutions of Clone Wars-era AT-TEs), six-legged machines capped with long cannons, hugging the ground as they crawl like turtles, feet occasionally splashing into acid pools with a vile hiss.

VICRUL:

[Mutters] I'll say this much, orphan -- you're not stupid.

Cut to X-Wings flying in formation, S-foils opening into attack position.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:

Gold Squad and Green Squad, go for your walkers. Black Squadron, let's take those TIEs.

CLEMITT POLUS (BLACK THREE) [cut to cockpit view]:
Our pleasure, boss.

C'AI THRENALI (GREEN LEADER) [cut to cockpit view]:
Copy, Black Leader.

ZORII BLISS (GOLD LEADER) [cut to cockpit view]:
Copy. Okay boys, light 'em up like Life Day!

The X-Wings open fire on the TIEs. The workhorse Y-Wing bombers aren't quite as fast as the other models, but whatever blaster bolts hit them seem to have little effect. The wide, angular V-Wings deploy hit-and-run tactics, dropping near ground level just long enough to release waves of CLUSTER MISSILES from belly-mounted launchers, lifting away before the projectiles find their targets. The Y-Wings weave to dodge AT-TI fire while dropping bombs. The barrage takes out numerous chicken and turtle walkers on the first pass, but the lumbering AT-M6s barely slow down.

Cut to the heroes' speeder, where chaos rages far behind them and Vicrul's speeder bikes grow closer. BB-8 remains plugged into the controls, keeping the craft in a straight line with its speed maxed out. Finn, staggering from his injuries, hastily throws tarps over the singed carbonite blocks. Rey stands at the rear of the craft with her lightsaber activated, putting herself between the blocks and the enemy. Finn limps back to her.

REY:
[Frantic] What are you doing back here? Get down!

FINN:
[Raises blaster] I'm aiming, what do you think I'm-

REY:
[Screams] FINN!

Finn turns to see that Rey has angled her lightsaber in his direction.

FINN:
[Ducking] Whoa, whoa, WHOA!

Rey thrusts her blade into the space where Finn's head had just been. It pierces the gaping maw of a large wolf-like beast, which falls to the ground.

Cut to a wide view of the speeder from behind, revealing that five more snarling GRATH HOUNDS surround them, keeping pace. Their fur is short, oily, and black, their frames lean and muscular, their flat snouts filled with teeth. Pale, bonelike spikes protrude from their spines and run all the way down their backs, coming to a point in bone tails held together by raw-looking tendons, without a hint of fur or flesh. Burning red and yellow swirl in the creatures' eyes as acid rain scars their hides, but judging from their constant snarls and frenzied movements, the pain only seems to intensify

their vicious energy -- telltale qualities of creatures attuned to the dark side of the Force.

FINN:

[Gets up and looks around] Oh, COME ON!

Finn leans forward on the rear railing and takes aim at a hound. He fires, but the target shifts its position just enough to dodge. Grunting in frustration, he takes four more shots, the last of which finally connects, and the hound goes down.

On the other side, Rey is watching a hound ascend a piece of elevated terrain to the speeder's right. With a howl it leaps straight for her. In a single motion she steps to the side and meets it with an upward slash clean through its neck. The severed head slams into a bundle of carbonite slabs and drops to the speeder floor; Rey uses a mild Force Push to send the body back to the ground, grimacing in disgust.

FINN:

[Looking down at the head] Gross...

Cut to an exterior shot of the *Falcon* flying toward the carnage, then to Chewie and Rose in the cockpit, intently working the controls.

ROSE:

We should be almost on them. Switch to visual scanni-

The cockpit lurches as the ship takes a sudden blast from its right. Cut to exterior again; the *Falcon* is being pursued by three tri-winged TIE DEFENDERS, renovated Imperial-era prototypes sporting elite red markings. The *Falcon* banks hard left and spins.

CHEWIE:

[Annoyed roar]

ROSE:

Kark! Uh, okay, just keep flying.

Rose gets up and runs down the corridor to the gunner stations.

ROSE:

[Mutters] Why do we never have enough people for the guns?

Cut back to the battle. The sky is full of fighters chasing, firing, screaming, maneuvering past each other. Most of the losses belong to the First Order, but fresh TIEs seem to replace them faster than Resistance forces can take them out. In the foreground, an X-Wing careens to the ground, black smoke billowing from its side, a pilot screaming over comms as he crashes in a blaze.

WROBIE TYCE (BLACK FIVE) [cut to cockpit view]:
Nexel! Boss, Black Four is down too!

LEGA FOSSANG (GOLD NINE) [cut to cockpit view]:
Where are they all coming from?

SNAP: [cut to cockpit view]
Keep it together. We just gotta keep 'em busy long enough to cover the ground team. How we doin' on those walkers?

The V-Wings continue to pepper the AT-M6s with cluster missiles, some soaring above the walkers and others weaving between their legs. The behemoths' sides are almost entirely black with scoring, yet still they advance.

C'AI [cut to cockpit view]:
That should've softened 'em up enough. Prepare sting cables.

A V-Wing begins to circle a walker's towering legs, firing a rear-mounted cable and flying in a tight formation to wrap it around them, at knee height. But there's no sign of the legs even slowing down. The cable stretches and strains, as if it will snap at any moment.

Cut to the cockpit of a different AT-M6, where a First Order commander is watching the display with incredulity.

COMMANDER DAVOS RHELMIM:
[Scoffs] Their tactics are decades out of date. It's a wonder the scum has lasted this long.

C'AI [cut to cockpit view]:
Okay... fire!

Crackling blue energy races down the cable, which has lodged between the leg joints, with the V-Wing detaching and flying away a moment later. The walker halts and quivers as the sound of snapping electricity rises up its structure and a blue glow flickers through its seams and viewports -- the purpose of the STING CABLES is not to trip the far stronger walkers, but to deliver an ION CHARGE beneath their armor plating, disabling them. The walker's cannons begin to smoke, and one more volley of cluster missiles to the side sends it slamming to the ground, kicking up dust and pools of acid.

Cut back to the other walker's cockpit, lingering on the color draining from the arrogant commander's face.

Cut back to Rey and Finn's speeder. Vicrul's unit draws closer. Rey cuts down another Grath hound as it tries to climb up the side, then moves back to Finn, who is wildly firing in vain at the nimblest one yet.

FINN:
Geez, what do these things eat?

REY:

Us! I'm going to try something, just be ready!

Rey reaches out, curling her fingers in a wide cupping motion, grunting in strain. For just a moment, the hound slows down and lifts off the ground. A moment is all Finn needs, and he fires. Rey drops the body a moment later.

FINN:

Thanks, we make a hell of a- AW, HELL!

Rey spins to see the final Grath hound, diving from a high outcropping to the speeder's left, yellow eyes blazing. Acting on instinct, Rey pulls her arms back then thrusts them forward, hands wide open. The hound is rapidly blasted far, forcing Vicrul's bike to shift out of the way as he slices through it with an ornate crimson-bladed lightsaber. Unfortunately, the impressive display also reveals that Vicrul's unit is almost in range.

FINN:

[Looks around frantically] Where is that blasted ship...

Cut back to the *Falcon* as it dodges most of the incoming fire in characteristic fashion. Then cut to the top-mounted gunner station, where Rose is blasting away.

CHEWIE [comm voiceover]:

[Moans in frustration]

ROSE:

I know, I know! These things are slicker than the rest, and they can take a hit. Hold on, I've almost got a lock on-

Quickly cut to a first-person view from the *Falcon's* cockpit, where a Defender is looming straight ahead, guns blazing in a deadly game of chicken. Chewie roars as he abruptly spins the ship counter-clockwise, just barely missing emerald blaster bolts that would have torn through the viewport. The sudden maneuver jerks Rose off balance.

CHEWIE [cut to cockpit view]:

[Bellows]

ROSE [cut to gunner station view]:

Oh really? You've got a bad feeling about this?

The *Falcon* quickly repositions itself to take on the TIEs, flying forward at a downward angle as one of them advances.

Cut to Rose, gritting her teeth as her targeting display mimics the Defender's movements around her reticule.

ROSE:
C'mon...

Cut to a rear angled view of the exterior, where the other remaining Defender is closing in on the *Falcon*.

In the gunner station, a target lock chimes. Rose squeezes the triggers.

In the cockpit, Chewie reaches over and quickly flips a switch, then pulls a handle beneath the console.

The Defender in Rose's sights blows apart from a direct hit, its three jagged wings thrown in different directions.

Almost at the same moment, a one-man ESCAPE POD ejects from the *Falcon*, slamming into the following fighter with perfect timing. Sparks fly and the Defender is tossed aside, slowed and disoriented but not destroyed. The *Falcon* begins to arc around.

Cut to the cockpit of a FIRST ORDER TIE PILOT slumped in his seat, shaking his head as he props himself back into position. He looks up just in time to see the *Falcon* dead-ahead, torpedoes barreling to meet him. Just as the torpedoes are about to impact from the pilot's first-person view, we cut to an exterior shot of the TIE Defender exploding.

CHEWIE [cut to cockpit view]:
[Triumphant roar]

ROSE [cut to gunner station view]:
YEAH! [pumps her fists in the air]

Cut to the cockpit, as Rose is jogging back to the copilot's seat.

ROSE:
Nice moves, Chewie! Now, as we were-

Rose stops as she glances down at the red display that's been tracking the ground team and their pursuers. The bright yellow ovals representing the enemies are almost on top of them.

ROSE:
Oh no.

Cut back to the speeder chase. Rey and Finn's pursuers are now close enough to make out the details on their armor. Vicrul is steering with one hand, holding his activated lightsaber out beside him, carrying himself with the swagger of a jousting champion. Rey brings up her own weapon, prepared to block whatever comes next.

Vicrul raises his blade to the sky then drops his arm forward. At the signal his purge troopers open fire, but they don't target the humans. They instead concentrate fire lower, on the left rear corner of the cargo speeder.

Rey reaches forward, as if to try stopping the bolts with the Force. But even if she could have done so she's too late -- the transport lurches back and forth, then swings to the left, angling harshly. The heroes are violently thrown to the ground as it crashes. The tarp over the carbonite blocks is swept away as the hover dollies slip over, spilling the slabs.

The speeder bikes slow to a halt a fair distance from the wreckage, apparently to savor their victims' anxiety as they approach. Still kept dry by a large, invisible bubble, their riders dismount and raise their rifles, but Vicrul thrusts his blade to the side, signaling for them to wait.

Rey staggers to her feet and looks around. BB-8 seems frazzled yet unharmed, but Rey is startled at the sight of Finn, who's struggling to his feet and hissing in pain as he tries using his arms to shield his now-bare head from the acid rain. His helmet is gone, lost or buried in the crash.

REY:
FINN!

Rey runs to her friend and raises a hand to the sky. She isn't able to stop the rain nearly as fully as Vicrul did, but can angle it just enough to avoid the immediate area around the pair.

REY:
Finn, are you all right?

FINN:
[Breathing heavily] I'll heal. But we've got a bigger problem.

Finn nods past Rey's shoulder. Rey turns to see Vicrul approaching alone, his blade menacingly dragging across the ground. Rey ignites her lightsaber.

VICRUL:
Poor little Jedi, so desperate for more of your kind that you came all this way to die with them. Actually, I'm glad you got the Jedi out of containment; gives me an excuse to destroy all this. I don't know why Snoke expected they would turn out any better than Vader, but Solo's betrayal will surely have convinced our new Supreme Leader to be done with that worthless religion.

REY:
That "worthless religion" has defeated far stronger than you! And so have I.

Rey charges, lightsaber angled to the side in a two-handed grip. Finn limps as fast as he can to the relative cover of the overturned cargo speeder. He

knows better than to get between two Force wielders, but raises his blaster and scans for an opportunity to provide support fire.

Their blades connect, and as they trade and dodge several strikes, they at first appear comparably matched. The two lock blades, the intense yellow and red glows bathing Rey's tarnished white armor in orange light.

VICRUL:

[Chuckles] Is that right? I have my doubts. Still, you're not a total write-off. Another time, you might've even had potential as one of us. We could've taught you all sorts of great tricks.

REY:

Like this?

Remembering her last sparring session, Rey slides her blade down Vicrul's. Realizing too late what she's doing, he pulls away to save his hand, but her blade still connects with his lightsaber's emitter plate, and his blade dissipates in a burst of sparks.

With a growl, Vicrul drops his ruined weapon and thrashes his arms outward, unleashing a Force Repulse that causes Rey to stagger back. No sooner does she regain her footing than he follows up with a precise Force Push to her face, blowing her helmet off and making her drop her lightsaber. With his other arm, he telekinetically raises her in a Force Grip. Rey instinctively claws at her throat as her feet dangle a half-meter above the ground, still within the bubble keeping the rain at bay.

FINN:

REY!

An enraged Finn starts furiously shooting. With a casual twist of his free hand, Vicrul deflects all of the bolts but one, which freezes in midair before returning to Finn's rifle, destroying it. Finn recoils and hits his head against the speeder, dropping the sparking remains of his weapon.

VICRUL:

[Dismissively] That's enough of that.

Cut back to the *Falcon's* cockpit, with Chewie at the controls and Rose leaning forward, fixated on the scanner.

ROSE:

Almost there; hope we're not too late.

CHEWIE:

[Affirmative bark]

Just then, a proximity alarm blares. Cut to a wide exterior view revealing a wave of conventional TIEs screaming behind them. The *Falcon* turns a few times, but can't shake them.

CHEWIE:
[Moans in frustration]

ROSE:
More? How quick can we lose 'em?

Chewie manipulates several switches and dials as he turns his head and barks an order to Rose, who jumps from her seat.

ROSE:
I'm going, I'm going!

Cut to a close-up of the *Falcon's* rear engines, as the blue glow begins to dull and a wide, shimmering aura thickens in a dome around the back of the ship. The *Falcon* slams to a near-stop, and two TIEs bounce against the dangerously-maxed-out rear deflector shield before plummeting to the ground. Most scatter safely, but the risky maneuver forces them to stop following and pursue the *Falcon* from different angles.

Cut to the *Falcon's* hallways, where Rose falls over with the momentum of the sudden brake.

ROSE:
YOU COULD MAYBE WARN ME NEXT TIME!

A faint Wookiee response can be heard down the hall as Rose collects her bearings and begins climbing the ladder to the gunner station.

Cut back to the precarious confrontation between Vicrul and Rey.

VICRUL:
Before you die, naturally you're going to tell me where to find Solo and the rest of your deluded compatriots.

REY:
[Struggling] I'm not... telling you anything...

VICRUL:
Bad choice.

With a gesture from the Knight of Ren, Rey begins floating backward, closer to the acid rain, slowly inching outside the safe zone. She cries out as it begins singeing the back of her head, but with great effort cuts herself off. Her breath hisses through clenched teeth as she tries to ignore the pain. Intense, defiant eyes return the faceless gaze of Vicrul's mask.

VICRUL:

Impressive fortitude, orphan. Perhaps a trial of the flesh isn't the best way to motivate you.

Vicrul pulls Rey back into the safe zone. She exhales, desperately trying not to show any sign of relief. He strides over to the crashed cargo speeder, the safe zone moving along with him as its center. Finn desperately attempts a less-than-impressive lunge, but Vicrul swats him aside with a telekinetic gesture, utterly unconcerned about the non-Jedi's presence.

Summoning Rey's lightsaber to his hand, Vicrul looks down at one of the carbonite blocks, facing upright. It bears the impression of the female RODIAN, possibly an apprentice. Relishing the moment, he ignites the yellow blade and plunges it into the dormant Jedi's chest.

REY:

[Agonized as she feels the Jedi's death] NO!

VICRUL:

That was just a taste! Do you want the rest to die the same way?

REY:

[Tears welling in her eyes] No... please...

Vicrul strides to the next slab, which holds a male human Jedi in his mid-twenties. A Padawan? A Knight? She might never know. She's desperate not to see this, but knows giving in to his demand would spill even more blood.

VICRUL:

I'll only ask once more: WHERE IS SOLO?

REY:

[Desperate, voice trembling] THIS WILL GAIN YOU NOTHING!

Switching to a reverse grip, Vicrul savagely slashes the blade clean through the second block's midsection. Rey recoils in torment. Without bothering to ask her again, he moves to a third slab.

REY:

[Face tense, voice raw, grief turning to fury] NO!

With that scream, Rey unleashes a Force Repulse of her own, breaking Vicrul's grasp and dropping to the ground as her lightsaber springs from his hand back to her own. Tears streaming down her cheeks, she grits her teeth and throws her arms forward in the largest Force Push she's ever mustered, kicking up speeder wreckage and blasting Vicrul all the way back to his purge troopers, slamming him into one of them and toppling a speeder bike.

It's clear that in her pain and desperation, Rey has touched the dark side. Breath ragged, hate in her eyes, acid curving away from her as it falls, she seems to lust for the chance to punish him. But before she can act...

FINN:
[Weakly] Rey...

Finn's exhausted call draws her back to reality, back to the light. Rey turns her head to face him, back under the speeder, and the rage seems to drain from her face, eyes widening with shame. She rushes to kneel beside him.

REY:
Finn! Oh no, Finn, I... I'm-

FINN:
I'm okay. [Cough] We both are, and at least we've got a little breathing room -- such as it is.

They turn to look back at the enemy. Vicrul is marching back toward them, this time with his purge troopers at his side. Rey and Finn look at each other, expressions grave. Rey then looks down at the face of Vicrul's human victim, the rigid carbonite impression now a death mask. She bows her head, squeezing her eyes shut in grief.

REY:
I'm sorry... I wasn't what we needed... I led us to this.

Finn places a hand on her shoulder, eyes intent and compassionate.

FINN:
You did the right thing. We both did. I've got no regrets.

Rey looks up at him, drained and unsure how to respond.

FINN:
[Calmly, his certitude reassuring] I wouldn't have done a thing different... and... if this is it, there's something I have to s-

Finn is cut off by the familiar hum of an iconic engine in the distance. He and Rey look up to see the *Millennium Falcon* approaching in the sky, two TIEs plummeting to the ground far behind it. The old freighter unloads every projectile it has straight at Vicrul's squad.

The Knight of Ren quickly raises his hands in defense, shielding himself from the resulting explosions but not from the sheer kinetic force, which launches him. The purge troopers aren't so lucky, and are consumed in the blast. When the smoke clears, a few charred, armored trooper limbs can be made out, but there's no sign of Vicrul.

The *Falcon* lands, and Rose and Chewie rush down the boarding ramp, each in heavy boots, thick gloves, and dura-cloaks. Rose rushes to her friends, Chewie to the carbonite. He growls mournfully as he sees the two dead Jedi, but quickly sets to work on the survivors. He looks at the busted hover-dollies, shakes his head, and starts activating the horizontal repulsors on the remaining carbonite slabs to hurriedly push them onto the ship. BB-8 rolls out from behind the cargo speeder, letting out a tentative, inquisitive series of tones, as if to ask if it's all over.

ROSE:

[Helping Finn to his feet] Jeez, are you guys okay?

FINN:

I think so. [Coughs] But you know how we like to call the absolute last second "perfect timing"? We should stop doing that.

Rose exhales in relief. Rey rises to her feet, still overwhelmed. Rose looks to her with concern, then to Finn, whose grave expression is enough to confirm: *yeah, it was bad.*

FINN:

[Softly] Rey, c'mon, we gotta move.

Looking back at him and slowly nodding, she turns and heads for the *Falcon's* ramp as Chewie and Rose get the last frozen Jedi onboard. Noticing that Finn is still limping, she puts an arm around him and slings his arm over her shoulders to support him. She looks back one last time, full of sorrow.

Cut to the *Falcon's* main hold, where Rey and Finn nearly collapse at the holochess table, Chewbacca heads straight for the cockpit, and Rose hits the comm unit on the wall console.

ROSE:

Snap, we've got 'em onboard; now let's get out of here!

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:

All points, pull back and prepare to jump. Squad leaders, let's give 'em a parting gift.

Cut to the battle surrounding the base, where the walkers are finished off and the First Order's aerial forces are substantially thinned out. As most of the Resistance fighters squeeze off parting shots while turning away, Snap, Zorii, and C'ai's respective ships unload their full complements of PROTON TORPEDOES and cluster missiles straight at the base. Some are intercepted by collision with TIEs, but most find their target, dealing heavy damage to the structure with blasts that leave massive plumes of black smoke.

ZORII [cut to cockpit view]:

Shame we don't have time to finish 'em off.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:

Wasn't the objective; we're not stocked for the Star Destroyer that's no doubt on its way. But that doesn't mean we can't maximize the mess the First Order has to clean up.

Cut to space, as the *Falcon* and a Resistance flight group two-thirds its original size fly toward the camera away from Vjun. Fighters start blinking out of frame as they jump to lightspeed. The camera swings to the *Falcon's* side, the ship filling the frame just before it jumps, leaving an empty starfield in its wake.

Cut back to the main hold, where an exhausted Finn is decompressing, eyes closed, his head tipped back. Rey stares forward, face haunted.

REY:

[Quietly] ...Kylo was right.

FINN:

[Opens eyes, turns head to her] What?

REY:

All my power... it was his. I felt huge before, bigger than myself. After breaking our bond, I... look what's happened. Because of me, two Jedi are dead. [Voice begins to crack] And you...

FINN:

Hey, that is all on him. You also got us out of it. And you saved the rest.

REY:

Only because I gave in. I reached for the dark side. A true Jedi wouldn't have had to, but I just felt so... small. Helpless.

FINN:

[More assertive] No, no, don't talk like that. Listen to me: if there's anything you're not, it's helpless.

Trembling, Rey silently leans into Finn for comfort, though the look on her face makes clear she doesn't believe him. He puts an arm around her shoulders and leans his head against hers. The scene closes on a wide view of the room.

EXT. VJUN LANDSCAPE - DAY

Pan across the desolate scenery, silent except for the hissing rain. The camera settles on a collapsed crater, the ground caved into chunks of varying sizes. Slowly debris begins to shake, then bursts apart in a cloud of dust.

The smoke clears, revealing Vicrul rising to his feet, ragged. He surveys his surroundings, seemingly oblivious to the acid rain burning through his tattered garments. Shaking his head and squeezing his fists, he turns around

and begins trudging back toward the ravaged facility in the distance, the rain once again beginning to curve away from him.

INT. BAST PRISON - HANGAR

Cut to the ruined hangar, now missing a section of ceiling. Stormtroopers and technicians scramble about. Officers in mismatched surplus helmets haphazardly dodge puddles of acid and leaks from the ceiling. Four troopers in the missing corner are setting up some sort of large, heavy machinery.

Suddenly Vicrul, having made a Force-assisted leap from the ground below, lands on the platform with a thud, startling the laborers around him. He impatiently strides forward, and is met by a portly older officer.

WARDEN SURGIS OZEK:

M-my lord, you're alive! I've already taken-

VICRUL:

[Not bothering to slow down] Obviously. Now away with you.

OZEK:

But, but there's so much to attend to, lord. Repairs, inventory; we're so far from resuming a minimum level of functio-

VICRUL:

Does it look like your functionality matters anymore? You manage a prison without prisoners, Warden. You can feed each other to the Grath hounds for all I care.

OZEK:

[Pauses, then blinks] I- I can appreciate that you're upset, my lord, b-but I've been responsible for this installation ever since I was personally selected by Commandant Bren-

Ozek suddenly stops in place as he's cut off mid-word, his whole body chafing against an invisible force. Vicrul stops a foot or so ahead of him, but doesn't bother to turn around.

VICRUL:

I'll assume for the late Commandant's sake your incompetence is a recent development, brought on by years of complacency. You allowed a Jedi free rein of the prison. If the term sounds familiar, that's because handling Jedi was your sole responsibility.

Ozek gasps, face turning red.

VICRUL:

Thankfully for you, I have more pressing business at the moment; otherwise I'd feed you to the hounds myself. But if you attempt to delay my hunt with further nonsense, I'll make time.

Vicrul strides away, and Ozek staggers forward, panting as the telekinetic hold is released. In the background, a trooper can be seen kicking the machine set up in the corner earlier, and it projects a temporary shield to fill in the missing ceiling. After catching his breath, Ozek looks ahead, nerves shot. He decides against pressing his luck, and turns around.

Cut to Vicrul entering a chamber with a large, round tactical table in the center. With a wave of his hand the lights dim and a blue-tinted hologram of Supreme Leader Hux's upper body sprouts from the table.

VICRUL:

Brother, I regret to inform you that Bast Prison has fallen.

HUX:

So we gathered from the distress signal. And the Jedi?

VICRUL:

Two dead. The scavenger and her friends liberated twelve.

Hux's face twitches. He's seething with anger, but clamps it down; Battle Meditation is too great an asset to risk alienating the Knights of Ren.

HUX:

...was Solo with them?

VICRUL:

No. I believe his injuries were too severe. But if he's cooperating with the Resistance, it could present a problem.

HUX:

[Snaps] Of course it's a problem! [winces in regret, then calms down] Worse, should they revive the Jedi, the Resistance could learn Battle Meditation for themselves, negating our advantage.

VICRUL:

It will take time to recover from such extreme cases of hibernation sickness. After years of carbon suspension, it may well be fatal.

HUX:

[Considering] ...either way, we must draw out the Resistance and crush it for good before they can make use of their gains. Return home, Brother. The fleet is moving to the Aquilae system.

VICRUL:

[Looks up in surprise] Aquilae? Interesting. I'm on my way.

Camera rests on Vicrul's masked face as Hux's hologram winks out of existence.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — CONFERENCE ROOM

Cut to Hux and Ap'lek watching Vicrul's hologram disappear.

HUX:
Ap'lek, you seem troubled.

AP'LEK:
[Head tilts to the side, then a long pause] I am.

HUX:
[Face souring] A vision?

AP'LEK:
[Chuckles] I trust visions no more than you do, Brother. Still... I cannot shake the feeling that events on Vjun will have consequences that we cannot fully predict. Dangerous times are ahead, for us and for them. I had hoped our victory would be a clean one, but now... [shrugs] something has changed. Everything in me says that you will see Solo again. But as a prisoner? As a conqueror? A corpse? That is beyond me.

HUX:
[Deep in thought] Are you with me?

AP'LEK:
Every Knight is. To the end, whatever that may be.

Hux nods, still distant. Slowly, his face hardens into determination.

HYPERSPACE

Transition to a view following the *Falcon* through hyperspace, as the blue dimensional field splits and stretches into white lines that condense into stars, marking the transition back to realspace. Bespin hangs ahead. To the sides, Resistance starfighters can be seen popping out of lightspeed.

EXT. NIMBUS BASE — HANGAR

Cut to a wide view of the *Falcon* landing in the foreground and fighters in the background. As the heroes descend from the boarding ramp, medics rush to help Finn (out of the white plating but still wearing the black stormtrooper bodysuit), and start carting off the carbonite blocks alongside Chewie and Rose. Poe stands waiting, arms crossed. He exchanges an inaudible greeting with Finn as the latter limps past him, patting Finn on the back. Back to his normal colors, BB-8 stops with a spin, thrilled to see his master.

Poe's face lights up as he grins down at the little droid, but the levity drains away as he looks up to see Rey, the last to descend, still standing beside the *Falcon*. She too has shed most of her damaged armor but hasn't yet

changed out of the black bodysuit. Her hair is a mess, tufts and strands having been burned off the back of her head. The two exchange grave looks.

INT. NIMBUS BASE - HALLWAY

Cut to a closeup of filthy white boots marching alone. Cut to Kylo Ren sitting in his cell, head down and apparently sulking. At the hiss of a door sliding open, he looks up and sees Rey enter. She's clearly not happy, and Kylo doesn't need the Force to know why.

KYLO:
I warned you.

Rey only glares.

KYLO:
How many dead?

REY:
...one of your butchers killed two.

KYLO:
And the rest?

REY:
They're here.

KYLO:
They'll suffice. If they ever wake up. Of course, maybe they'd all be here if you hadn't been too proud to accept that you need me.

REY:
Or if you hadn't betrayed them in the first place.

KYLO:
They betrayed me.

REY:
[Contemptuous sarcasm] That's right, everyone turns on you; it's never your fault. Surely you've noticed a pattern by now.

Kylo stares back before changing gears, refusing to acknowledge her point.

KYLO:
...why are you here?

Now it's Rey's turn to pause, reluctant to voice what she came to admit.

REY:

I... I hate this. I never asked for power, or importance. But ever since your war came to my home, I've put others first at every turn. Forego a month's worth of food to protect a stranger's droid, trek across the galaxy for a lost Jedi Master, risk my life again and again and again... only to find I'm no good to anyone unless I open myself to your madness again?

KYLO:

[Rising to his feet] I didn't choose our bond either. We were both pawns in Snoke's games. But he's gone now. You and I can forge a new path, not beholden to any of them. Break the cycle of Jedi and empires. Unlock each other's full potential.

REY:

[Incredulous] You still don't see it, do you? This "path" you're obsessed with dragging me onto is the source of all your misery. The past won't die because you won't let it. All you do is tear things down -- never building, never learning, never growing. I would never be a part of that... even if we work together now.

KYLO:

So you have accepted we need to work together.

Rey only glares.

KYLO:

Say it.

Rey glares silently, then turns and storms out of the room. Kylo is seemingly vindicated... but for some reason, it doesn't satisfy him.

EXT. AQUILAE - DAY

Transition to cloudless skies of blue, panning over pristine oceans and orangish landmasses. There are villages teeming with life, docks where fish are gathered, various species living in harmony, and little advanced technology. Most of the simple buildings appear grown from the coral-like ground rather than built, with the exception of ancient stone TEMPLES OF THE WHILLS in the planetary capital of AQ CITY. In parks, storytellers entertain huddled groups of entranced children. In a central square, locals pray around a statue resembling the mysterious PRIME JEDI of antiquity, his hands open in greeting. There's a rhythm to this place, life in perfect balance.

SPACE - AQUILAE SYSTEM

Cut to dozens upon dozens of "asteroids" emerging from hyperspace and settling into orbit around the serene blue-orange world. Several of the biggest false rocks eject thousands of smaller rocks apiece, eventually enough to fill out a convincing-looking asteroid field. The surface of the

largest one rumbles and separates into repulsor-driven shells, revealing the *Dominance* in all its intimidating glory. Almost gracefully, the shells fly to take their place in orbit.

Cut to the *Dominance's* bridge, where Hux and all six Knights of Ren are gathered, gazing at Aquilae from space.

HUX:

Long ago, Leader Snoke said this world would be his failsafe if Skywalker could not be found -- a natural beacon in the Force, which no Jedi could fail to hear, no matter how deep he chose to sink. The beings below are no warriors or mages, just priests and pilgrims. Whatever Jedi secrets it once held were stripped clean long ago. But it remains sacred to worshippers of the Force.

USHAR:

Yes... I can feel their light. Sickening.

TRUDGEN:

And how are we to spark this beacon?

HUX:

Suffering. She will hear. The Resistance will follow.

INT. NIMBUS BASE – CONFERENCE ROOM

Transition to Lando, Finn, Rose, Chewbacca, and the droids watching an argument between Rey and Poe in the middle of the room. Rey has changed into basic fatigues; Finn into comfortable white medical garments. He's sitting in a hoverchair with his injured leg propped up, his arm bandaged, trying to ignore a 2-1B MEDICAL DROID treating the scars on his head.

POE:

No. Uh-uh. Forget it. Nobata. Nope. I let you run an op based on his intel, and it panned out. But letting him out? Are you insane?

REY:

No, insane was putting my team in harm's way with me handicapped. I don't like it either, but right now we're after the same thing!

POE:

You sure about that? I had a heart-to-heart with the guy, and it sure seemed like the only thing he's after is *payback*. Besides, we have more Jedi now.

REY:

Who are still in critical! Even if they wake up, there's no telling when they would be ready to fight. We can't wait that long.

POE:

Aren't you the one who's always preaching patience? We don't even know where Hux went, and it sure isn't whatever Ren's last itinerary says. Lando, help me out here.

LANDO:

[Calmly] It's a risk, but so is taking on these Knights of Ren without him. Besides, give Ben a reminder of what it feels like to fight with the good guys, and you might be surprised what happens.

POE:

Oh, for-

ROSE:

I'm with Poe. Ren will eventually try to kill us.

POE:

Finn?

FINN:

I trust- I... stop that!

Finn pushes away the annoying distraction of the medical droid trying to apply a bacta wipe to his head wounds.

2-1B:

How rude.

Finn gives the droid a dirty look, then returns to what he was saying.

FINN:

[Looking at Poe] If Ren is the play, I'll back it. That being said... [turns head to Rey] It couldn't hurt to sleep on it for a few days. Make this decision when we're all a little less raw, maybe observe Ren a little more.

Rey looks dejected, but doesn't respond.

SPACE - AQUILAE SYSTEM

Transition back to the Shadow Fleet above Aquilae. Four long, satellite-like CLIMATE DISRUPTION ARRAYS dislodge from one of the asteroid shells and unfold as they float into position, humming ominously. Six smaller discs eject from and encircle each array's main body, and start to glow.

Cut to the *Dominance's* bridge. Hux turns to face the command crew, jaw set and eyes gleaming with terrible purpose.

HUX:

Admiral Pryde, you may fire when ready.

Cut to Aq City, where locals look to the sky, drawn at once to dark clouds forming, reddish electricity glowing within. Moments later, hell plummets down -- massive crimson thunderbolts boil the seas and decimate the city. Grim storms span as far as the eye can see, and the screams of sentient beings and wails of wildlife form a nightmarish chorus.

INT. NIMBUS BASE – CONFERENCE ROOM

Rey suddenly cringes and staggers forward, overcome with psychic feedback. Her friends call her name in concern. Chewie moans in alarm.

Cut to Kylo's cell, where he tenses and looks up. Though his reaction is much milder, not even the writhing Ysalamiri can completely block what's happened from his senses. He appears disturbed.

Cut back to Rey. Her friends are surrounding her, worried.

REY:

[Haunted] I felt a... wound in the Force... sudden, absolute terror... I've never felt death so strongly before. The First Order's just done something obscene.

FINN:

Could you tell where?

REY:

[Shakes head] I just saw water... oceans boiling...

FINN:

[Looks to Poe] Entrus? Mon Cala? Kamino?

POE:

Already occupied, too well-protected, and nothing of value left. No tactical gain to be had.

REY:

[Realization dawning] Except as a message for me. Hux wants to be found. [Eyes narrow] And he knew someone here would understand.

Cut to the heroes marching back to Kylo's cell, flanked by heavily-armed Resistance troops. Kylo is standing, his back toward the group. Before anyone can question him, he speaks.

KYLO:

[Subdued] Aquilae.

POE:

What?

KYLO:
The Aquilae system.

ROSE:
Never heard of it.

KYLO:
[Turning around] A planet of dreamers and storytellers, entirely worthless except for its resonance in the Force. It was Snoke's contingency plan for finding Skywalker. If the temple map couldn't be reconstructed, a strike there would trigger Skywalker's senses, draw him out... [voice softens] we knew he wouldn't ignore that much pain. [The admission seems to trouble him.]

POE:
So it's a massacre and a trap. Great.

REY:
Either way, we can't ignore them. We don't have a choice anymore.

POE:
[Exasperated] So we release the guy who just admitted he knew this was in the works and went along with it? Rey, I'm sorry, I get that your Jedi power-outage thing is a raw deal, but there's no way we can possibly trust-

Suddenly, the energy field holding Kylo shorts out with a twist of the darksider's hand. Every gun in the room snaps toward him; Rey's hand goes to the lightsaber on her belt. On the wall monitor, flatlines -- only now do the heroes realize the Ysalamiri surrounding Kylo are all dead.

KYLO:
[Glancing down at one of the cages by his feet] They must have caught the feedback too. Seems to have been too much for them.

Rey raises a suspicious eyebrow. Kylo looks up and meets her gaze.

KYLO:
I could have left if I wanted to, killed my way to a ship. [Carefully puts his hands forward, palms open] But I didn't. Because -- for the moment -- I want what you want.

Nobody responds. They're still sizing Kylo up, weapons still trained on him.

KYLO:
[Slowly stepping forward] And none of us will get it if we kill each other. I can't destroy an entire fleet. And you can't overcome Battle Meditation on your own. [Eyes Finn] Especially not with your men in such pathetic condition.

Kylo turns to a glaring Finn, who starts squirming in his hoverchair. Weapons chirp and hum as soldiers prepare to fire. Kylo stops, and Rey instinctively raises a hand to signal them to wait. Her face tenses, desperately hoping she isn't wrong. Finn is agitated, but something keeps him from protesting.

Slowly, Kylo kneels down, places his good hand on Finn's leg, and closes his eyes in deep concentration. Finn is confused, but the anxiety on his face gradually turns to realization. After several moments, Kylo removes his hand and steps away. Finn bends over to remove his bandage, and finds that his burn mark is gone. Carefully, he gets up and tests his leg. There's no hint of a limp or even discomfort. Finn is speechless.

Rey looks to Finn in amazement, then to Kylo, whose face hints at some confusion of his own. It's been years since he's called on the Force for a light-side purpose, and the sensation seems... not entirely unwelcome.

Poe looks at Finn and Kylo, bewildered, then turns to Rey.

POE:

...you are absolutely sure about this?

REY:

If I thought there was any other way, I would take it.

Poe considers it, then groans in frustrated resignation.

POE:

[Muttering] I don't believe this... [more loudly] Okay people, let's get to work. We've got a probable suicide mission to plan. [Scowls at Kylo] And somebody get him some fingers.

INT. NIMBUS BASE – WAR ROOM

Transition to a large briefing chamber, full of Resistance personnel. Poe stands beside a large holotable in the center. The rest of the main heroes are sitting in the front row; to prevent panic, Kylo is not among them.

POE:

Our parents fought an empire in hopes that we wouldn't have to... didn't work out that way. After the war, the New Republic went complacent. Refused to face growing threats until they beat down the door. Denial, corruption, politics... There's plenty of blame to go around for wasted opportunities and unkept promises. But none of that matters now. This is the fight before us. Today, we take that fight to the First Order. They've just committed another massacre on another innocent world. A window has opened for doing something about it -- and we're gonna take it.

Cue a montage accompany the next part of Poe's monologue -- the heroes carefully examining a holomap of Hux's Star Destroyer; a nervous medical

droid fitting Kylo with new prosthetic fingers as Rey stands guard; Lando and Chewie performing a systems check on the *Falcon*; a moody Kylo healing a still-wary Finn's arm; Resistance soldiers gearing up; Rose overseeing equipment being loaded into six stolen FIRST ORDER ASSAULT LANDERS.

POE [voiceover]:

Thanks to Rey and Finn's efforts, we now have comprehensive logistical data for the Shadow Fleet. They've still got the Battle Meditation advantage, but we've worked out a plan for that too. I know a lot of you are afraid; with all we've seen, you'd have to be insane not to be. But I'll tell you a secret: Leia was too, though she never showed it. She had doubts, but never let them control her. "Don't wait to be confident," she told me once. "Just do it, and the confidence will follow."

Camera returns to Poe.

POE:

Leia never gave up, and neither will we. The sacrifices our mothers and fathers made will not be in vain. This is where we make our stand -- for Leia... for the galaxy... for generations to come. May the Force be with us.

INT. NIMBUS BASE - HANGAR

Rey and Kylo enter the hangar, walking side-by-side, expressions grim. Rey is wearing a sleek white-and-tan combat uniform, featuring a white hooded vest, her lightsaber and NN-14 blaster pistol hanging on her belt. Her hair is newly cut short, compensating for the damage it took on Vjun.

Kylo is dressed in black pants, a black shirt, and a gray jacket, not unlike something his father would have worn, missing only a weapons belt. His right hand sports new prosthetic fingers of segmented black alloy. A spare pilot's helmet hides most of his face, to prevent alarm among the rest of the crew.

The pair walk toward Finn and Rose, both clad in commando gear, overseeing troops boarding their transport. Finn is first to turn to them; when Rose does the same, she glares at Kylo and enters the transport. Rey gestures at Kylo to wait; he crosses his arms in annoyance, but hangs back.

FINN:

I don't envy you having to share a flight with that guy. Once was enough for me -- even if he did fix me up.

REY:

I can handle him.

FINN:

I know you can; I just wish we didn't have to handle him in the middle of the craziest mission we've ever tried to pull off.

REY:

Audacious, maybe, but not crazy. We're leaving nothing to chance.

Finn tries not to show doubt. The camera briefly focuses on Kylo, visible over Rey's shoulder.

REY:

Well, almost nothing. But like I said, I can handle him. [Fidgets uncomfortably] How about you?

FINN:

We should have enough numbers and firepower for anything they throw at us. We'll clear you a path to the Knights for sure.

REY:

[Nods] Just be sure to come back in one piece. I couldn't have made it this far without you, y'know.

FINN:

[Grins] Sure you could've... but I still like hearing it.

REY:

[Smiles] I'm not just talking about the war.

Finn shifts in mild embarrassment, but it subsides; the awkwardness from their post-sparring moment on the *Falcon* is gone.

FINN:

I know what you mean... Rey, I...

Finn frowns as his eyes trail off. Rey follows his gaze to find that Kylo has impatiently begun pacing toward the *Falcon*. Rey smirks in resignation.

REY:

Guess that's my cue.

FINN:

Our timing's great as always. But we are definitely continuing this conversation.

REY:

[Nods] Promise. And Finn...

FINN:

I know. Now go save the galaxy.

It's all Rey can do to give him one last smile and pull herself away, jogging to catch up to Kylo. Finn watches her leave, his misgivings temporarily replaced with resolve. Rose emerges from the transport.

ROSE:
You all right?

FINN:
[Looking away] Yeah. [Turns to Rose] Let's go rally the troops.

ROSE:
[Smiles] Right behind you, Big Deal.

Finn nods and follows Rose into the transport.

Cut to Kylo in transit. Rey jogs to catch up, then matches pace beside him.

REY:
[Annoyed] I thought you agreed to stay close. We don't want you panicking everyone and derailing the mission before it even starts.

KYLO:
[Snorts] You think I can't control myself more than five minutes for an objective? You were wasting time, distracted by meaningless attachments.

REY:
No, you're just so used to forcing yourself into people's minds that you can't recognize healthy relationships anymore. Trust and affection make us strong; exploitation breeds resentment and-

KYLO:
[Sighs in exasperation] If you're trying to "save me" again, don't waste your breath. Right now a shared target is all we need.

Rey scowls but doesn't reply.

Cut to the pair approaching the *Falcon*. Lando, Chewbacca, Artoo, and BB-8 are standing beside the boarding ramp. Kylo removes his helmet and drops it to the floor; BB whirls at the clang, looks up at Kylo, and speeds into the ship. Chewie lets out a low growl, Artoo a wary buzz. Lando tenses at the sight of the young man, but keeps his conflicting emotions in check. Kylo meets his gaze, but refuses to show whatever feelings their reunion might have stirred. He seems to avoid looking directly at Chewie.

LANDO:
[Tentatively] Hey, Ben. Been a long time.

Kylo doesn't answer. Instead of pressing his luck, Lando turns to Rey.

LANDO:
We, ah, triple-checked everything, and she's purring like a loth-cat. Got what you need?

REY:

Yeah. Let's get a move-on.

Lando steps aside and gestures for the two to board first. Kylo ascends tentatively, Rey close behind him, watching. Artoo is next. Lando and Chewie exchange looks, then follow.

Cut to the *Falcon's* main hold, Kylo standing in the middle as the others silently watch him. There's an air of sadness as Kylo surveys the familiar surroundings. His back to the rest of the party, he runs a hand along the holochess table and shuts his eyes. Rey and Lando exchange looks, then Lando follows Chewie to the cockpit.

Cut to Lando and Chewie settling into their seats, preparing for takeoff.

CHEWIE:

[Inquisitive moan]

LANDO:

I don't know either, pal. But Leia hoped so. We owe her that much.

CHEWIE:

[Affirmative roar]

Cut to an exterior shot of the *Falcon* lifting off and flying out of the hangar, followed by six transports. Cut to the space above Bespin, where the short-range transports dock with a wedge-shaped, lightspeed-capable QUASAR EMBER-CLASS LIGHT CARRIER, a descendant of the larger *Quasar Fire*-class.

Cut to inside Finn and Rose's transport. They're heading a tightly-packed party of soldiers, faces resolute, illuminated by flickering lights.

LANDO [cut to *Falcon* cockpit]:

This is it, Chewie, the big one.

CHEWIE:

[Growl]

LANDO:

[Chuckles] Okay, okay, the latest big one. And hopefully the last.

Lando pushes a familiar control lever. Cut to a first-person view of stars stretching into bright white lines, and the ships plunging into hyperspace.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — WAR ROOM

Ap'lek and Trudgen stand in front of wide viewscreen, gazing upon the smoldering ruins of Aq City, a stain on Aquilae's vibrant orange terrain. Trudgen stands to attention, every inch a lordly warrior. Ap'lek, though

larger, seems hunched as he leans on his strange saber cane, cutting a strangely clerical figure next to his brother-in-arms.

AP'LEK:
Did you ever visit?

TRUDGEN:
The city? Of course not. You?

AP'LEK:
Once, on Snoke's order. Unmasked, of course... I tend to stand out a bit in uniform.

TRUDGEN:
With a face like yours, I wonder what would have scared them more.

Seemingly lost in thought, Ap'lek either doesn't hear the remark or chooses to ignore it.

AP'LEK:
It was... a remarkable place. It had this... energy to it, this sense of excitement and growth. Like a living work of art.

TRUDGEN:
[Understanding] And now it's gone.

AP'LEK:
And so many will never see what I saw.

TRUDGEN:
[Curious] Do you... mourn them? They were our enemies, whether they knew it or not.

AP'LEK:
Oh yes, they were our enemies. [Pause] But there is no disloyalty in lamenting the loss of beautiful things. [Turns head to Trudgen] Let this be the last art we are forced to destroy.

Trudgen ponders for a moment, then nods.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON — REY'S ROOM

Transition to Rey entering the modest cabin she uses as her quarters for away missions. She sets a small box on the workbench, the contents of which can't be seen. She stares at it, then lowers her head and sighs.

REY:
I must be out of my mind...

FAMILIAR VOICE:

Whenever Han said that, it usually meant he was on the right track.

Rey looks up to see the shimmering form of LUKE SKYWALKER, with a smile she rarely saw on Ahch-To. He appears robed as he was when they first met, his hair and beard shorter and cleaner. Both hands appear bare and human.

REY:

[Eyes wide] Master...

Rey pauses in awe, seemingly at a loss for words, then composes herself.

REY:

I'm not sure I trust myself to recognize the right track anymore. The only reason people went along with this is because they think I'm something I'm not. How am I supposed to be this... hope of the light they see me as when all this power they thought I had came from a darksider all along?

LUKE:

Your instincts haven't steered you wrong yet, Rey. You know, the Jedi of my father's time recognized the perils of attachment, but neglected its blessings. Two Jedi bound in the Force can do great things. But that bond can't benefit either side without strong individual foundations. Your power never came from Ben; just your refinement. The quickness, the ease...

REY:

...the dark side. I've... felt it recently. I was scared for Finn. For myself. And it was right there, just waiting for me to take it. So I did. [Looks down in shame] I told you once that Kylo failed you and I wouldn't, like I was stronger. What a fool I was.

LUKE:

[Tone reassuring] If fear and doubt were all it took to dominate a destiny, the Jedi never would have lasted as long as they did. It doesn't make you a fool, or a failure; it makes you human.

Rey says nothing, head still bowed. She knows the truth of Luke's words, but has a hard time reconciling them with the guilt she feels.

LUKE:

Resisting the dark's pull is a constant struggle, but there was more to my nephew's fall than the natural anxieties of Jedi life.

REY:

[Looks up] I know what happened that night, but not what led to it. Perhaps... perhaps if I knew the rest...

LUKE:

[Opens up slowly] In my travels after the war, Snoke was the first survivor of the Purge that I found. I didn't know he had turned to the dark side. He was skilled at concealing his intentions... but the truth is, I was so relieved to find another Jedi to help share the burden of rebuilding the Order, so eager to learn what he knew of the old ways, that I didn't want to doubt him.

Luke sits down on the bunk; Rey turns a chair to face him and sits as well.

LUKE:

I freely shared my family history with Snoke. It fascinated him, and set his sights on Ben, whose parents had been... less open about who his grandfather really was.

As Luke speaks, the scene flashes back to Luke's training temple, where a middle-aged Luke and an unscarred JEDI MASTER SNOKE observe a young BEN SOLO expertly performing lightsaber exercises.

LUKE [voiceover]:

Snoke became Ben's confidant, subtly stoking his disillusionment, his resentment.

Flashback moves to Ben and Snoke sitting face to face. Snoke's mouth is moving and the boy appears to be hanging on his every word.

LUKE [voiceover]:

When I realized what Snoke really wanted...

In the flashback, Luke bursts into the room, indignant.

LUKE [voiceover]:

...I drove him out.

Flashback moves to a furious lightsaber duel between Luke and Snoke, both wielding green blades, along a rain-swept mountain path. Snoke unleashes Force lightning; Luke redirects it back at him with a fluid twist of his arm. Snoke is thrown to the ground, writhing in pain as the energy scars his body. Fighting through the pain and rising to his feet, Snoke desperately tears and hurls masses of rock from the ground with the Force. Luke easily dodges them, but when the debris clears, Snoke is gone.

Flashback moves again to Luke somberly walking back to the temple, where the rest of the Jedi have rushed outside to meet him, as the clouds above are clearing up. The other adults look equally somber, most students look relieved... but the shot ends on young Ben's confused, disturbed face before the scene returns to the Falcon.

LUKE:

Between Snoke's influence, and Ben later discovering what Han and Leia had kept from him, his trust in all of us shattered. In his mind he formed his own twisted view of the galaxy... [sorrowful] a fantasy I fed the night of his fall.

Rey sits silent, digesting these revelations.

LUKE:

All of us failed in one way or another... but, failure is our greatest teacher. You can grow beyond it, Rey, learn from us... all of us. That is the greatest power of the Force: not just the energy of all living things, but the wisdom. The lessons learned in every age, the experiences of all who've become one with the Force, all flowing into a greater understanding.

Luke looks intently at Rey as he speaks, leaning in.

LUKE:

A thousand generations woven together in a singular truth -- in the Force. When you quiet your mind, you'll hear it speaking to you. Trust it. Then trust yourself.

Rey takes a breath and closes her eyes, concentrating. After several long moments, she speaks.

REY:

Kylo is as conflicted as ever. He wants the right thing for the wrong reason, so getting it could cement his path in either direction. He will help us against the First Order, but after that... his intentions are clouded. [Opens eyes]

LUKE:

Very good. This is a critical time for Ben, and who he has at his side will be equally critical. Remember, Rey: bonds flow both ways.

REY:

Then there's hope for him?

LUKE:

[Smiles] No one's ever really gone.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON – CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Cut to Kylo, standing in the middle of the room, jacket off, staring sadly at his father's golden MEDAL OF BRAVERY framed on the wall. Most of Han Solo's personal effects have long since been removed from the ship, but the medal remains, a monument to Han's often-remarked conviction that the *Falcon* deserved an equal share of the credit for his part in the Battle of Yavin.

A knock at the door snaps Kylo back to the present. He opens it, and comes face to face with Lando. The elderly con man initially seems anxious, but slowly settles into a grin.

LANDO:

Hey, kid. Okay if I come in? Or, uh... is this a bad time?

Awkwardly, Kylo waves Lando in. Lando enters, the door shutting behind him.

KYLO:

...what do you want?

LANDO:

To give you something I've had for a while. It, uh... was supposed to be a gift for when you finished your training.

From his cape, Lando pulls a pristine leather gunbelt holding a refined blaster. His smile takes on a wistful quality as he looks down at it.

LANDO:

I've held onto this since before you were born, for when you were ready for it.

KYLO:

[Carefully taking the set] I don't...

LANDO:

[Seeing where Kylo's mind is taking him] Ben, [Kylo flinches at the name] I want you to have it. You're gonna need it where you're going. I... [stops to compose himself] I miss them both like crazy. You're all that's left. I can't make things right, any more than you can. But I also can't stop seeing that little kid who called me Uncle Lando. Even now. I can't stop hoping it's not too late.

Lando starts to say something more, but can't quite bring himself to. He turns to leave.

KYLO:

[Quietly] ...but what if it is?

Lando's shoulders sag as he reaches for the door. He half turns around.

LANDO:

You're not the first Skywalker to ask that, Ben, and you wouldn't be the first to come back from such terrible things. I don't know what's gonna happen when all this is over... but if we both come out in one piece, you'll get another chance from me. Same as your dad would've done.

Lando opens the door. He turns around again, and does his best to smile.

LANDO:

If we do make it through this, let's talk.

Lando exits and the door slides shut behind him.

Kylo considers the belt in his hands for a few moments, placing a hand on the blaster. When he can't stand the memories anymore, he drops it on the bed, turns, and sits down at a small desk to focus on a more mundane distraction: testing his new prosthetic fingers. He alternates between pressing his fingertips against the cold table, against his bare left forearm, and against a desk light, trying to feel and compare the sensations. His face registers no difference. Kylo lowers his head in frustration, resting it in his hands.

ANOTHER FAMILIAR VOICE:

The sensors are fine; the neural wiring is probably shorting out.

Kylo spins around, calling the blaster from the bed to his hand, only to be greeted by the sight of ANAKIN SKYWALKER'S luminous form. Kylo's eyes widen as he recognizes the hero of so many Clone Wars holograms he studied in his youth, albeit unscarred and dressed in light Jedi robes.

ANAKIN:

For smaller synth-limbs, you need stronger connectors to maintain sensitivity. [Grins] I remember a thing or two about this stuff.

KYLO:

[Standing up and lowering the blaster, unamused] And I remember you as the man who ended both the Jedi and the Sith. Which would be impressive, except each was your own side at the time. So if you've come to tell me you're on my side now, no thanks.

ANAKIN:

[Turning serious] That's exactly why you should learn from my sins. I walked your path far longer than you have. I know every fear and every rationalization keeping you there. And I know it's made you feel like a prisoner of your own life.

KYLO:

[Returning his gun to the belt on the bed] I think there was a little more to my reasoning than an affair with a Senator.

ANAKIN:

[Unfazed] Every Jedi who ever fell though his reasons were different. "My grievance is righteous; I can take just enough from the dark side to fix it without letting the dark side take me." That's how it seduces you. But once you let it in, it decides how much it takes. It wasn't power or purpose that fueled Darth Vader for over twenty years; it was self-loathing. The knowledge that I burned away everything but the hell I'd built around me.

Anakin pauses to let his words sink in. His grandson says nothing, but fidgets uncomfortably.

ANAKIN:

Look at all you've lost already. Is Kylo Ren enough to make up for everything he's taken from Ben Solo?

KYLO:

[Snorts] Between all the lies, Ben Solo didn't have much to take.

ANAKIN:

Whatever mistakes my children made, they were trying to spare you the burden I left them, because they loved you. They still do. But I'm the one who put them in that position. I can't change that, but I want to help you through it now.

KYLO:

Now? [pauses, anger simmering] If that's true... if you care so damn much... then WHERE THE HELL WERE YOU WHEN I NEEDED YOU? WHY KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT UNTIL NOW?

ANAKIN:

For all the power of immortality, the mortal still have to be willing to hear us. Snoke made sure to keep your anger focused enough that you wouldn't be receptive. The fact that we're together now betrays the conflict within you.

KYLO:

[Calming down, but trying to be dismissive] Jedi... Sith... if you had picked either and stuck with it, you'd have saved the galaxy a lot of confusion and we wouldn't be having this conversation.

ANAKIN:

Search your feelings, Ben. Salvaging my mask, forging your own... you were trying to force yourself to buy into the myth of Vader, as if emulating it could help justify your own choices. But you never found truth in either mask; only pain.

Kylo looks down, saying nothing.

ANAKIN:

The truth is that Vader wasn't some cosmic destiny, or a divine curse. He was a choice... and was undone by another choice, one I wasn't strong enough to make until my son showed me it wasn't too late. You have that same choice, grandson: to let go of Kylo Ren, and end this destructive conflict. You know what you have to do... and you know where to find the strength to do it.

The Chosen One fades away, leaving Kylo clearly shaken. Several silent moments later, his contemplation is broken by another knock on the door. Kylo shakes his head and wearily rubs his eyes.

KYLO:
[Irritated] What?

The door slides open to reveal Rey, notably calmer than the last time they faced one another. She holds the box from earlier, and has a small pack slung over her shoulder. BB-8 is nervously peeking out from behind her legs.

REY:
I think you'll be needing this.

Rey hands Kylo the box. He looks inside and sees the two halves of the SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER, plus what few components survived from his shattered crossguard lightsaber. Separately resting in the box are the split halves of his grandfather's blue KYBER CRYSTAL.

Eyes wide, Kylo looks back to Rey, not quite sure how to respond.

REY:
Between this [sets pack on the desk] and what's left of your old one, you probably stand a better chance of fixing it than I did.

Kylo sets the box on the desk and opens the pack, finding it stuffed with tools, scrap metal, and various electronic components. He looks back at her again, with something almost resembling appreciation.

REY:
[Firmly] I'm trusting you to help us, Ben. Trust me to help you.

Kylo does not respond verbally, but returns her gaze as the wariness on his face seemingly gives way to resolve.

HYPERSPACE – RESISTANCE EMBER CARRIER

Transition to the *Ember*-class carrier flying through hyperspace. Cut to its hangar, where the Resistance commandos' six stolen transports are parked and dozens of soldiers are huddled around Finn, Rose, and a blue hologram of the *Dominance* projected by a little one-wheeled, cone-headed droid. Seven hangars are highlighted -- one in red, one in yellow, the rest in green.

ROSE:
[Pointing to the yellow] Rey's team makes their insertion here. Everybody with Finn and me enters here [points to the red], and the rest of you will take the greens, which are already plugged into your navicomputers. Each was chosen for its proximity to targets that will either keep the *Dominance* from escaping, weaken its outer defenses, or generally divide security's attention.

FINN:

Rey is going after the Knights of Ren; Red Team's job is to help her reach them by taking over the security center, from which we'll clear her a path and keep as much heat off her as we can -- seal corridors, vent barracks, blow up armories, whatever. The fleet can't move in until the Knights are dead, or at least distracted. Our combined efforts will soften the ship up, both inside and out.

CORPORAL TURK IRVAN:

So basically, we're just sowing chaos?

ROSE:

[Nods] As much as we can, in as many different locations. The First Order is smart, paranoid, and has backups for their backups, so our best bet is to simply overwhelm them.

FINN:

Any other questions?

Nobody answers. Some of the soldiers seem nervous, but most are unreadable.

FINN:

Okay then. Commanders, review your packets with your teams; Red Team, we'll be with you in a minute. May the Force be with you.

With various nods and verbal affirmations, the crowd disperses, leaving behind Finn, Rose, and the droid, who shuts off the hologram and rolls away. When it's just the two of them, Finn lets out a sigh. He and Rose trade looks, grimly contemplating the task ahead of them.

HYPERSPACE – MILLENNIUM FALCON

Transition to the *Falcon* flying through hyperspace. Cut to the cockpit, with Lando & Chewbacca seated at the controls and Rey & Kylo standing behind them.

LANDO:

Alright, kids, assuming the intel and calculations were right, we should be coming up on the target in five minutes. Guess it's too late to ask if you're sure you can do this.

REY:

We're about to find out. C'mon, Chewie.

Chewie gets up from the pilot's seat. As he passes Kylo, he glares at the young man and growls a warning. After a couple uncomfortable seconds, Kylo nods in an uncharacteristically-meek way. The Wookiee then follows Rey out of the cockpit. Kylo watches the two leave, then turns and looks tentatively at the now-empty pilot seat.

LANDO:
[Nods] Go ahead.

Slowly, Kylo takes his father's chair, and carefully runs his hands over the console. He glances up at Han's hanging dice with a melancholy longing.

LANDO:
[Softly smiles] This is what your dad would've wanted. Even now.

Kylo glances back at Lando, then clamps down his emotions as he looks forward.

Cut to shots of Rey and Chewie each settling into the gunner stations, checking the controls and donning their headsets. Chewie's seat is a tight fit for the Wookiee's lanky frame.

CHEWIE:
[Groan]

REY:
Ready.

KYLO [comm voiceover]:
You'd better be. This won't work unless we're fully in sync.

REY:
You don't need to remind me.

Anxious, Rey takes a deep breath and closes her eyes, concentrating. Cut to Kylo, who does the same. Lando watches the young man cautiously.

After lingering on shots of Rey and Kylo, the camera alternates between closeups of their faces tensing for just a moment, then opening their eyes in unison, widening them in unison, and narrowing them in unison. As Kylo settles into their newly-restored Force bond, his face seems to slightly soften, as if his surroundings feel just a little less wrong.

KYLO:
[To the console] Was that so hard?

Cut to Rey, who's not thrilled but finds it more tolerable than she feared.

REY:
Just show me what I'm shooting at.

Cut to space, where a towering, icicle-shaped FIRST ORDER SUPERTANKER jumps to lightspeed away from the camera, leaving behind a small DARIUS G-CLASS FREIGHTER flying in the opposite direction. Cut to the freighter's interior, where the camera follows a First Order officer walking through an empty hallway into a cockpit manned by two pilots.

PILOT JEREMIT PUCK:

Shadow Fleet's present coordinates confirmed, sir; making calculations for the jump to lightspeed now.

COMMANDER SIO NIVLAC:

Very good, Captain.

Cut to a head-on view from the *Falcon's* cockpit, looking out on the blue swirl of hyperspace. Kylo is leaning forward, hand on the throttle. Cut to Rey in her gunner seat, eyes closed. Cut back to the cockpit view, as Kylo quickly pulls back the throttle. Hyperspace reverts to realspace, an overhead view of the First Order freighter dead ahead. No more than a second later, a quad blast from the *Falcon's* top laser turret races overhead, precisely obliterating the top-mounted communications dish.

Cut back to the freighter cockpit, which lurches as an explosion can be heard from outside. Alarms start blaring and the officer stumbles into the wall. Before he can collect his bearings, a second impact rocks the cockpit.

NIVLAC:

What in blazes was that?

COPILOT LEIGH KRENDIG:

[Looks up from a monitor] We're under attack! Our communications array is knocked out!

NIVLAC:

[Barks] Make the jump now!

The pilot pushes forward on the throttle, but the only thing that happens is a sputtering groan from the engines.

NIVLAC:

[Furious] Why are we still here?

PUCK:

[Scanning a display] We, er, have a coaxium leak, sir. That second hit seems to have ruptured the hyperdrive. The engines vented to prevent an explosion, so we can't jump. Or call for help.

NIVLAC:

They disabled us before appearing on sensors? How many are there?

KRENDIG:

Um... just one, sir. It's as if it... timed its strikes with its exit from hyperspace.

NIVLAC:

[Reddening in frustration] That's impossible... launch fighters!

Cut to the *Falcon's* cockpit, where Kylo is now fully focused on the task at hand, watching four TIE SILENCERS scream forth. Blue sparks are billowing from the freighter's side near its rear engines.

LANDO:
Okay, I'm impressed.

KYLO:
Here they come. Angle the deflector shield.

LANDO:
Don't worry, kid, I remember the routine.

The TIEs swarm the *Falcon*, guns blazing. Kylo's hands fly across the console like a master pianist, accelerating and angling the ship to precisely the right degrees at precisely the right moments, so that most of the incoming fire misses and what few bolts connect graze the shields with only the slightest perceptible impact. Kylo glances at the TIE in the top right corner of the viewport, and almost instantaneously a blast from the *Falcon's* top gunner turret lands a direct hit -- but the fighter's shields hold up.

KYLO:
They've upgraded their escorts.

LANDO:
Please tell me that's not a problem.

KYLO:
[Snorts] Hardly.

Kylo swings the *Falcon* around. Another precise shot from Rey's turret destroys her target, as Chewie starts pelting another of the fighters from the bottom turret. Without the Force, the Wookiee has to rely purely on his natural marksmanship skills. It takes him a bit longer to connect, but eventually a second TIE explodes as Chewie roars in triumph.

Not wasting any time, the two remaining TIEs launch a quartet of missiles. With a grunt, Kylo twists the *Falcon* so that it just barely dodges the projectiles. Lando exhales in relief, but is quickly alarmed by something he notices on the monitor.

Cut to a tracking shot of the missiles -- having missed their original target, they're now on a collision course with the very freighter the heroes came to hijack.

LANDO:
Uh, guys...

REY:
Already on it!

Blasts from both of the *Falcon's* turrets destroy the missiles just in time. Cut back to the *Falcon*, where Lando's eyes widen at the sight of the two remaining TIEs, flying side by side, enlarging at an alarming rate -- saving the freighter let them get too close to line up a shot with the turrets.

LANDO:

[Nervous] Breaking off now would be good...

But Kylo does no such thing. Narrowing his eyes and gritting his teeth, he accelerates. Cut to Chewie, moaning in alarm. Cut to Rey, who says nothing but squeezes her controls, knuckles white, face a display of pure anxiety.

LANDO:

Ben!

At the last moment, Kylo spins the *Falcon* clockwise, flying between the TIEs and slamming their wings with the edges of the hull. Cut to interior shots of the *Falcon's* pilots and gunners reacting to the impact, as well as Artoo and BB-8 squealing and screeching as they slam into walls. Cut back to space, where the TIEs are spinning wildly, wings now severely mangled.

Exhaling, Kylo brings the *Falcon* back around. Lando notices a new gleam in the young man's eyes and the slightest hint of a grin. For the first time in years, he's actually enjoying something.

KYLO:

C'mon...

Cut to Rey and Chewie focusing on lining up shots, no longer anxious but still every bit as focused. Triggers squeeze, and the last two TIEs explode.

REY:

Yeah!

CHEWIE:

[Triumphant roar]

LANDO:

You got 'em! Great work, kids!

Lando turns to Kylo, whose face is relieved, almost exuberant, even. He instinctively turns to Lando as well.

KYLO:

Yeah, I-

Kylo freezes, catching himself. Any hint of delight fades to discomfort, as if the Ben Solo of ten years ago suddenly remembered where and when he really was. Lando awkwardly frowns.

LANDO:

Uh, anyway... Rey, Chewie, get back down here. Time for step two.

Cut to a hallway aboard the freighter, where two stormtroopers are marching toward the hyperdrive bay, when they stop in reaction to the muffled sound of a familiar *snap-hiss* overhead.

DH-7681:

[Nervous] What was that?

KB-5309:

[Dismissive] Who knows. With this damage, the ship's gonna be making all kinds of sounds we never heard before. Come on.

The troopers start back down the hall when a yellow lightsaber blade plunges through the ceiling and makes a quick, precise circle. The thick durasteel disc crashes to the floor in a shower of sparks and smoke, followed by Rey and Kylo dropping to the ground. Rey assumes a defensive saber stance; Kylo brandishes the blaster he received from Lando.

DH-7681:

Jedi! Blast 'em!

The troopers open fire, only to collapse as Rey deflects their shots back at them. More enemies, stormtroopers as well as armed crew members, enter the hallway from both directions, guns blazing. Rey keeps deflecting from one direction while Kylo telekinetically raises the first two troopers off the floor. The bodies briefly absorb the shots coming from the other end before Kylo launches them at their backup. Some of the troopers are knocked down while others merely stumble back, and look up just in time for a series of three-bolt bursts from Kylo's new blaster to shatter their faceplates.

Rey, having finished off her group in a more defensive manner, looks back at Kylo, mildly disturbed by his apparent aggression.

REY:

[Looks around] Clear!

Chewbacca leaps to the ground from the hole in the ceiling, then catches a falling BB-8. Artoo slowly descends on sputtering leg rockets that seem like they could fail at any moment. Finally, Lando descends on a small platform while gripping the cable suspending it from the *Falcon's* airlock.

LANDO:

[Whistles as he surveys the piles of stormtroopers] That was quick. Artoo's only reading five more life signs, in the engine room.

Cut to a dingy engine room, illuminated by ceiling lights and the sparks from the hyperdrive generator. The First Order officer alternates between

glaring at the two pilots, who are nervously covering the door with blaster pistols, and at two unhappy mechanics examining the damage.

MECHANIC BURR DORPION:

...but sir, this will take hours to fix, and the attackers will surely find us before th-

NIVLAC:

Just do it! I don't care if they're rebels, pirates, or even Je-

Suddenly the armed pilots begin levitating and slam together, crumpling to the ground. Rey's blade pierces the door, cutting a large rectangular outline. When it's done, the durasteel slab is blasted forward by an unseen force, slamming to the ground and just barely missing the unconscious pilots. Rey and Kylo step into the room, followed by Chewie and Lando.

With a glare, Kylo raises his free hand, and the officer rises off the ground, instinctively grabbing at his neck. Rey flashes Kylo a stern look.

REY:

That's enough!

Kylo pauses for a second, then scowls and allows the officer to drop. From his knees the officer looks up, eyes widening at the sight of Kylo.

NIVLAC:

You...

Kylo is about to speak when Lando steps ahead of him.

LANDO:

Sorry about the mess, fellas, but we need your ride.

NIVLAC:

You went to all this trouble just to steal a transport you yourselves made sure couldn't go anywhere? You fools.

LANDO:

Oh, don't worry about that. We brought our own spare parts, plus better mechanics. No offense, guys.

The mechanics gulp, too frightened to answer.

LANDO:

But the good news is you'll be spending the rest of the war safe in Resistance custody. We'll give Supreme Leader Hux your regards.

Before the three can answer, Lando and Chewie fire blue stun blasts, sending them tumbling to the floor. Rey deactivates her lightsaber.

REY:

Okay, let's get them secured on the *Falcon* and unload our supplies. Artoo, BB, get started on disconnecting the old hyperdrive.

The droids beep their compliance and roll toward their work.

Transition to an exterior shot of the *Falcon* pulling away from the freighter, which can be seen sporting a small replacement plate welded to the point where the heroes cut their way in.

LANDO [comm voiceover]:

We're heading back to rendezvous with the fleet. Poe will be waiting for your signal.

REY [comm voiceover]:

Understood. We're ready.

CHEWIE [comm voiceover]:

[Concerned moan]

LANDO [comm voiceover]:

May the Force be with you. Both of you.

The *Falcon* blinks away as it jumps to lightspeed. The freighter does the same moments later.

Cut to the freighter's now-empty hallway. Rey exits the cockpit and walks to the engine room. The room's sole occupant, Kylo, is sitting cross-legged on the floor, eyes closed in meditation. Behind him is an entirely-new hyperdrive generator, replacing the damaged one. Mildly fatigued, Rey sits down across from Kylo and closes her eyes to meditate as well.

KYLO:

[Eyes still closed] You can feel it already, can't you? Power returning, instincts sharpening. Your mental muscles are taxed right now, but they'll be back to full strength soon enough.

REY:

[Eyes still closed] I can also feel your conflict. You're starting to remember a better way. But you're still allowing your grievances to hold you back.

KYLO:

I let Calrissian take them alive, didn't I?

REY:

It's not about them; it's about you. Your anger has brought you nothing but misery. But it only has as much power over you as you allow it to have.

Kylo doesn't answer, but shifts uncomfortably, eyes still closed.

REY:
You don't have to feed it anymore.

KYLO:
...we'll see.

Scene ends on Rey and Kylo sitting in the same position, eyes still closed, meditating together in uneasy silence.

SPACE - RENDEZVOUS POINT

Transition to another black starfield, empty until the *Falcon* drops out of hyperspace. Cut to the cockpit, where Lando and Chewie are working the controls. Lando looks up and whistles at something he sees outside.

LANDO:
Not bad... shame she's the only one we got.

CHEWIE:
[Roars in agreement]

Cut to an exterior view of the *Falcon*, which scrolls to reveal its destination: THE ORGANA, a huge, white, Mark VI-model STARHAWK BATTLESHIP, currently serving as the flagship of the Resistance. While older *Starhawk* models of the previous generation were built from repurposed Star Destroyer parts, this modern iteration is streamlined, constructed from the ground up. The *Falcon* flies into a hangar on the side of the impressive vessel.

Cut to Lando and Chewie entering a spacious bridge, full of mostly-occupied consoles and monitors circling a large holotable. Lando surveys the Resistance personnel at work as he and Chewie make their way to the front viewport, a long transparisteel pane reaching from floor to ceiling. Staring out the window is Poe, back in his crimson uniform, flanked by C-3PO. As Lando approaches, he notices the admiral tugging uncomfortably at his collar.

LANDO:
What, no cape?

POE:
[Snorts] Best perk of trading the Republic Navy for the Resistance was the looser dress code. [Wistfully] But, Leia always said dressing authoritatively was a necessary evil of the big job, and this one is the biggest yet, so... [gazes into space]

LANDO:
[Smiles] It suits you, Poe.

CHEWIE:
[Roars in support]

Poe gives an appreciative yet melancholy smile back, nodding halfheartedly.

POE:
Rey run into any trouble?

LANDO:
Went off smooth as shimmersilk. Now we just wait for word that they've taken the Knights' focus off the battlefield.

POE:
Yeah, "just"... [Turns to C-3PO] Hey Threepio, you crunch the numbers yet on how this is all gonna shake out?

Threepio looks from Poe to Lando to Chewie and back to Poe, surprised.

THREEPIO:
Me, sir?

POE:
Sure, what the hell. You predicting failure always seems to help push us to beat the odds.

THREEPIO:
...Er, actually, Admiral... General... I'm afraid that, given certain non-quantifiable elements among the question's numerous variables, not least of which being Master Ben's rather mercurial nature and the efficacy of Jedi warfare techniques that were already esoteric centuries before my database was compiled... well... I am simply unable to calculate a projection for this mission with any degree of certainty.

Lando frowns. Poe sighs and looks back to space as Chewie moans in concern.

SPACE – AQUILAE SYSTEM

Pulsing, violent red scars the serene blue of Aquilae as the *Dominance* hangs in orbit. Rey and Kylo's hijacked freighter approaches the flagship.

Cut to the freighter landing in a massive hangar, then cut to inside the stolen ship. Rey, wearing an officer's cap and jacket over a pilot jumpsuit, stuffs her lightsaber into a rucksack. Kylo is in stormtrooper armor, holding the helmet under one arm. The pair walks toward the exit ramp, Kylo using his free arm to fiddle with some devices along the walls.

KYLO:

We'll only make it so far before Hux catches on. Your friends had better get to the security center before we're found out, or this is going to get messy.

REY:

Don't worry, they'll make it. I'm more worried about the Knights finding us out.

KYLO:

[Tweaking the last device] Just remember what you need from the flight logs. I can keep them off the scent, but you'll have to get by without doing anything too "Jedi."

REY:

[Adjusting her cap and slinging the sack over her shoulder] I lived most of my life without the Force and got by just fine.

Kylo dons his helmet as the ramp lowers.

KYLO:

[Voice now muffled] The fact that you call near-constant starvation "just fine" doesn't inspire confidence. When's the last time you had to lie convincingly without mind-tricking someone?

There's an awkward silence as the ramp continues to lower.

KYLO:

[Deadpan] Great. Well, don't worry. If you screw up it's just a hundred-fifty-thousand crew members between us and Hux. Plus six elite darksiders.

REY:

You're not helping.

As the ramp lowers and the pair walks down, they are approached by the dock master, flanked by two stormtroopers. Other than a few astromechs and mouse droids, there are no other beings in the hangar.

DOCK MASTER WYDRON GRIMM:

[Annoyed] You're an hour behind schedule, Captain. What kept you?

REY:

[Looking embarrassed] Sorry, sir. We stopped for repairs and it looks like one of the techs was careless in checking the hyperdrive. Had to make some emergency repairs, or you'd probably have been missing us for another week.

Cut to an angled long view. Rey's image becomes grainy, and the camera pulls away to show Ap'lek staring at a security hologram in the throne room.

AP'LEK:

What do you know... they're here.

CARDO:

[Cocking his head in confusion, tone doubtful] Are you sure? I can't sense anything unusual in-system, let alone on the ship.

AP'LEK:

[Rising to his feet and taking up his cane-like lightsaber] Solo might have kept a trick for himself, but I know I've seen this before. It's them.

HUX:

Indeed. [Keys comm] Admiral, we're going to be making a last-minute adjustment to the fleet. Send a platoon to Bay 17. [Pause] Yes, I said platoon. I'd advise slugthrowers.

Cut back to Kylo and Rey.

GRIMM:

[Shaking his head] I assume you have everything logged?

REY:

Of course, sir, only...

DOCK MASTER:

[Sighs] What?

REY:

Well, it looks like the engine isn't the only thing they mucked up. I can't transmit any of the receipts. They're still saved on the computer, though, if you'd like to take a look.

The dock master shakes his head in disgust, then pauses as his pad chimes. He checks it and looks up, annoyed.

GRIMM:

Later. You're lucky you got in when you did; we've been ordered to close the hangars and reposition. I need the docks cleared in case any more stragglers make it in.

He keys a few commands into his datapad, and lumbering mechanical arms extend from the wall, clamping onto the freighter to secure it. Rey and Kylo glance at each other briefly.

REY:

[Smiling] We'll get out of your way, then.

Suddenly, the sound of dull, muffled blasts can be heard, followed by distant alarms. The dock master's eyes dart around the room in confusion, then he pulls a comlink to his face.

GRIMM:
What's going on?

OFFICER NEVA OPUCH (COMLINK VOICE):
...simultaneous attack! We don't know how ma- [static]

Cut to another hangar, which is on fire, where more than a dozen heavily-armed Resistance soldiers pour out of their stolen lander, blasting stormtroopers. Cut to another, where Resistance forces engage stormtroopers, two soldiers launching rockets at an oversight deck and a parked shuttle. Cut to a third hangar, where Finn and Rose lead the charge.

Cut back to Rey and Kylo's hangar, where the flustered dock master looks around, then back to them, eyes narrowing in dawning suspicion.

REY:
[Grins] Actually, I think some "stragglers" already made it in.

Kylo aims his blaster rifle and fires at the security camera, destroying it in a shower of sparks.

The dock master begins to mouth an accusation, fumbling for a holstered blaster pistol. But before he can order the troopers to open fire, Rey hurls him across the room with a Force Push as Kylo pulls both his arms back, and the two troopers fly toward and past him, slamming into the freighter's hull on either side. All three hostiles are quickly rendered unconscious.

REY:
Well, that should have blown enough leaks to keep the fleet from jumping until Poe gets here.

KYLO:
[Pulls a detonation switch from his pocket] Just in case, here's one more. Get ready to run.

Kylo thumbs the switch. Cut to the freighter's interior, where the devices lining the walls that Kylo was fiddling with all light up for a moment, then explode. Cut back to the hangar, where the freighter erupts in flames.

KYLO:
GO!

As the pair races from the hangar, secondary explosions send shrapnel tearing through fighters, freighters, and walls.

Cut to a close-up view of a stormtrooper's head slamming to the floor. A pair of boots steps over him, and the camera pans up to Finn, marching through their ravaged-yet-pacified hangar toward the exit. Rose is working a wall console, flanked by two Resistance troopers. As he and the soldiers following him approach, Rose shoves a data spike into a scomp terminal.

ROSE:

That oughta scramble the nearest cameras on this level. I've got five more to plug into key junctures as we go. Problem is, the cameras nearest the security center will be the toughest to crack.

FINN:

Hopefully by the time we get there the F.O. will have too many fires to put out to muster a bigger reception than we can handle.

ROSE:

[Glances at her datapad] All the other teams have signaled; they're in with minimal casualties. Next move?

FINN:

[Grins] We start some fires.

INT. THE DOMINANCE - HALLWAY

Transition to Rey and Kylo pacing through a hall leading from the cargo hangar, still disguised. Kylo leads the way, blaster rifle low but ready. Rey is carrying the sack over her shoulder.

REY:

[Adjusting her cap] You know your way to the throne from here?

KYLO:

[Looking back as he prepares to look around a corner] It'd be a straight shot if the blast doors weren't in lockdown mode. Hux and I designed this ship to become a maze if enemies boarded.

REY:

I don't suppose we could just cut our way through?

KYLO:

You think I designed a custom flagship without countermeasures for Jedi? There are ray shields inside every major door and wall. We'll have to move around them as best we can until your friends get into position. [Prepares to peer around corner] Stay behind me, and don't start anything. Remember: no Force until we have to.

Kylo breathes deeply for a few seconds, then turns the corner -- and finds himself facing a ludicrous number of purge troopers, armed with high-velocity slug throwers and shock batons. He immediately ducks back around as the troopers open fire.

REY:
[Eyes wide] I think we have to!

KYLO:
[Nods tensely] No sabers! Trying to deflect those slugs never ends well. Cover me!

Rey ducks out and opens fire with her pistol as Kylo sprints to the other corner of the hallway. His armor takes some damage, but holds together long enough for him to reach cover.

REY:
Cover me!

Kylo fires as Rey digs through her pack. The Force redirects simple cover fire into precise staccato bursts that drop six troopers in half as many seconds. As troopers fall, more fill the ranks and press their numerical advantage. Rey thumbs two grenades and telekinetically flings them into the enemy ranks at eye level. Through the smoke and debris, the duo fights on, pushing their momentum and forcing the troopers to retreat. Without warning, a slug shatters half of Kylo's helmet, dropping him.

REY:
Ben!

Rey runs to his side, firing through the smoke to drop the shooter. She drags the errant darksider into an alcove.

REY:
Ben! Are you still with me?

KYLO:
[Dazed, speaking loudly] SO HOW BAD DOES IT LOOK?

REY:
[Dropping another trooper] I've seen better, but it looks like the helmet took the worst of it.

Kylo takes off the shattered remains of the helmet and shakes his head.

KYLO:
WHAT?

REY:
[Shouting, half irritated, half to be heard] YOU LOOK OKAY!

KYLO:
NOT FOR LONG IF WE DON'T FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS MESS.

REY:
IT'S YOUR SHIP AND YOUR MEN; YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO KNOW THE WAY!

KYLO:
I DO! JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE.

REY:
WE DON'T HAVE A MINUTE! [Pause] Never mind; you can show me.

Rey puts a hand on Kylo's shoulder and closes her eyes in concentration. Kylo looks at her quizzically, but closes his eyes in return, shaking his head in an effort to focus through the pain.

As the two fall deeper into their Force bond, Rey sees flashes from Kylo's past: a masked Ren locked in argument with then-General Hux, then an unmasked Ren and the general hunched over a hologram of hallway schematics, then both men standing before Supreme Leader Snoke in his old throne room, presenting him with a hologram of the Dominance's final design.

On the right track, Rey's brow furrows as she concentrates harder on a very specific subset of Kylo's memories. The vision flashes to the dark warrior striding through the hallways of the Star Destroyer as workers test ray shield generators and install wall paneling, then to Ren overseeing a nervous technician showing him a monitor flashing two words in High Galactic [the real-world Roman alphabet]: "EMERGENCY OVERRIDE."

Rey and Kylo open their eyes, calmer than they were a moment ago. They trade looks, then nod and close them again, concentrating.

Cut to the purge trooper squad, where the rear-most trooper suddenly stops advancing, looks around in a daze, and wanders to a wall console. His squadmates keep firing and moving forward, seemingly oblivious to the trooper as he enters a code and the walls surrounding them begin humming with energy. The squad stops, looking around in confusion as blast doors begin closing off their segment of the corridor. Several troopers turn around just in time to see the mind-tricked trooper shoot the console.

PT-0231:
What the hell did you do?!

PT-0239 (TRICKED TROOPER):
[Pause] I... I don't know...

PURGE COMMANDER NIX:
HURRY! BEFORE THEY ESCAPE!

Most of the troopers resume firing forward, picking up their pace as a few taking up the rear restrain their dazed comrade. Cut back to Rey and Kylo, still tensely concentrating as the corridor fills with smoke. One bold trooper makes a dash to the edge of the blast-door frame, leveling his

weapon. With a sudden scream, hiss, and sharp squelching sound, the gunfire stops, followed by a small thud. Rey and Kylo open their eyes, then look down at a severed arm in glossy black armor, still gripping a shock baton.

REY:

[Grinning] Cut it a little close there, trooper.

Kylo, who seems to have recovered, raises a suspicious eyebrow at Rey.

KYLO:

Relishing a maimed enemy isn't really your style...

Rey frowns, embarrassed and confused by her sudden lapse.

REY:

...and having a problem with it isn't really yours.

KYLO:

Must be another side effect of our bond. We're becoming more like each other already. Interesting.

REY:

[Scowls] That's not the word I would use.

KYLO:

Either way, those blast doors won't hold forever. The sooner we find a route, the better.

REY:

And the element of surprise is moot now, so...

Rey unzips the equipment sack and drops it to the ground between them, then loses her cap and begins removing her jacket.

REY:

[Working out of the garment's stiff shoulders] These things are hell to fight in, by the way.

KYLO:

Do you... always talk this much on missions?

REY:

Getting shot at makes me nervous. I talk when I'm nervous. Think I picked it up from Finn.

Rey drops the jacket, then kneels down to dig through their remaining supplies, including glowing green stim canisters, ration sticks, and blaster packs. Finally, she pulls their lightsabers out of the bag.

Cut to two pairs of stormtrooper boots, surrounded by a discarded flight jumpsuit and ravaged stormtrooper armor. The camera pans up to reveal Rey and Kylo, back in the clothes they were wearing beneath their disguises. Rey is securing her utility belt while Kylo is adjusting his jacket. Rey draws and ignites her lightsaber, then Kylo looks down at the weapon in his hand.

Cut to a closeup of the Skywalker lightsaber, its two halves now held together by salvaged plating from Kylo's old saber, with a red wire running down the hilt. Through a small gash in the middle, a soft blue light can be seen -- examining it closely would reveal the saber's blue kyber crystal, exposed.

Kylo raises the weapon and ignites a crackling blue blade. A hole near the emitter that once housed a secondary recharging port has been converted into a solitary vent for excess energy, and now emits a small blue-white flare that seems to taper like an oxygen flame.

The two Force-bound warriors trade resolute looks, and press forward.

INT. THE DOMINANCE - SKIRMISHES

Crimson blaster bolts race in both directions along a corridor. A crowd of stormtroopers is at one end and the dozen Resistance soldiers of KRAYT TEAM are at the other, the latter hugging walls and peeking out behind corners. The stormtroopers seem less concerned about cover and consequently fall quicker, but have the numbers to absorb the losses as they whittle down the unwelcome guests. One human Resistance fighter gets reckless crossing the hallway and goes down, then a second falls to a precision shot as he peeks his head around the corner.

A magenta-skinned ZELTRON soldier looks nervously from his corner to the team's commander, a hard-faced KIFFAR.

KARNO DEEKS (ZELTRON):

Karabast! This'll be over before we even started, won't it?

COMMANDER SHIGAR GEV (KIFFAR):

Stay calm, Deeks. Just need a little ingenuity.

Gev crouches to grab his fallen comrade's helmet with one arm. He drops his blaster and seems to grab something else with his other arm, though his hand remains out of frame. He takes a breath and lobs the helmet into the hallway. Several stormtroopers instinctively open fire in the direction of the sudden movement, and in the split-second since the first throw he leans into the hallway and tosses a THERMAL DETONATOR toward the enemy.

Stormtroopers who didn't fall for the trick open fire on him, but not before the explosive goes off, consuming the squad. Gev takes a few shots to his arm, but his men pop out of their cover to see a hallway of smoldering wreckage and dead hostiles. In the distance, a few reinforcements can be seen lugging a FWMB-10 REPEATING BLASTER (informally known as a MEGABLASTER)

to the scene, but they're picked off by Resistance headshots before they can set up the heavy weapon. The team looks at it with a gleam in their eyes.

VUL NORO (HUMAN):

We are definitely taking that with us.

Cut to a stormtrooper falling to the floor as another Resistance group, MYNOCK TEAM, advances. They stop at a nondescript door along the hall, which slides open after plugging a datapad into the access panel. Inside is a jungle of wires, power boxes, and computer terminals. After studying his pad, the team's MIRIALAN tech specialist identifies the terminal he wants and plugs in as his comrades keep watch.

KEE CHROMA (MIRIALAN):

Almost... okay. Just swap that one for that one, and we're set.

At his direction, two other soldiers -- one human and one IKTOTCHI -- unhook the ends of two thick cables from the wall and reattach them in the opposite plugs. The tech taps on his pad some more, triggering an affirmation chime.

Cut to an exterior shot of the *Dominance's* underbelly, where several VENTRAL CANNONS shudder and groan, emitting a few small sparks. Cut back to the sabotage team, where the tech is grinning.

CHROMA:

They'll be in for a surprise when they try to use those...

Cut to yet another trio of humanoid soldiers, this group from GUNDARK TEAM, huddled in an alcove. One stands watch, rifle at the ready, while another holds a datapad and the third sets a black, boxy mouse droid on the floor, next to two others; as he does so we can see some sort of explosive has been wired to its undercarriage. With a few taps of the pad, the sabotaged droids all roll off in separate directions.

PONTA MARKENE (HUMAN):

I only wish we could see the looks on their stupid faces...

Cut back to one of the mouse droids rolling past the feet of a stormtrooper exiting a weapons vault just before the door slides shut, then to one entering an otherwise-unoccupied engine room. The third enters a command deck overlooking a TIE Fighter bay, unnoticed. Cut back to the saboteurs.

MARKENE:

And... showtime.

With a tap of the datapad, the droids detonate. The first two explode conventionally, igniting all the ammunition in the first room and the fuel running through the second. Cut to the throne room, where Hux stumbles forward as the Knights keep their balance.

Cut to the TIE command deck, where the third droid emits a blue electromagnetic pulse that courses through every console, electrocuting personnel who didn't move from their stations in time. In the hangar, the invisible field protecting the interior from the vacuum of space shorts out, pulling personnel and equipment -- including a TIE that was unsecured while undergoing repairs -- helplessly into space. A heavy durasteel emergency door slides down to seal off the hangar... coming down exactly as a fuel tank is being pulled into space, causing another explosion that demolishes the TIEs in the nearest wall rack.

Cut back to Hux in the throne room, who pounds a button on his armrest, making a hologram of Pryde appear in the center of the room.

HUX:

[Furious] What was that, Admiral?

Cut to Pryde on the bridge.

PRYDE:

We've lost power in one of our engines, sir. I have a team working on rerouting power from a backup generator, but the boarding parties appear to have gotten further than we anticipated. Damage and system outages have been reported all over the ship, but that includes cameras, so we're having trouble tracking them.

HUX [hologram]:

Then ignore the sections you can see and send forces straight to the dead zones. Just find them!

INT. THE DOMINANCE — HALLWAY

Rey and Kylo move cautiously down a long hallway. A few small orange sparks issue from behind blast doors, but none open. Apart from the occasional muted hiss of plasma torches, the hall is eerily quiet.

FINN [comm voiceover]:

Should be a straight shot to the cargo trams from your position. We'll be able to tell you more when we reach the security center.

REY:

Thanks, Finn. [Looks troubled] Going silent for a bit. Call you if we run into anything you can help with. Stay safe.

FINN [comm voiceover]:

Okay. Just be careful. [Comlink clicks off]

Ever so slightly, the lights begin to dim around them as a deep hum reverberates through the corridor. Kylo angles his saber low across his body in a stance balancing readiness with energy conservation.

KYLO:
Something's wrong.

REY:
[Nods, mirroring his stance] I feel it too.

VICRUL [offscreen]:
The prodigal Knight returns...

Kylo and Rey raise their weapons in unison, looking around, unsure of the voice's source. The darkness deepens as they cautiously move forward.

VICRUL [offscreen]:
I thought that perhaps our last encounter might have tipped you off that you weren't welcome here... Master.

REY:
[Snarling] Him... [glances at Kylo] he was your apprentice?

KYLO:
[Shakes head] Rival. Before I came along, he was Snoke's star pupil. [Raises voice] But he seems to have forgotten his place.

VICRUL [offscreen]:
And you brought the scrap vulture with you. I've got to admit, I'm impressed. I guess there's more of your father in you than I thought. What lie did you tell to win her trust?

The walls seem to flex around them, bowing in and out, as if breathing.

KYLO:
He fights like a nexu playing with its food. Stay on guard, and don't trust your eyes.

REY:
[Whispers, looking around cautiously] Where is he? Can he see us?

KYLO:
[Shakes head] Not yet. I've been hiding us in the Force, but I won't be able to for much longer. We need to find him quickly.

VICRUL [offscreen]:
Did you tell her you'd seen the light? No, that's too obviously false. The Knights wear the shadow like a mantle... but you, Solo, you're stained with it to the core. What could you have... ah. A simple lie, veiled in truth. You promised her a mutual enemy, and... a chance at redeeming you? That sounds like an angle you'd play. You'd deny it, of course, sneer if she so much as hinted it, at first. But over time... [laughs, vibrating the walls] There's no saving this one, orphan. He'll turn on you like he turned on

everyone else in his life. If he thinks you have any power over him, that's a target on your back... or your heart. Just ask his master. Or his father.

At that, Rey looks at Kylo, the slightest hint of doubt evident. Kylo's face twitches, though whether from rage or remorse is hard to say.

KYLO:

We can argue my motives all you want, but if you're smart we'll wait until after Vicrul's dead.

REY:

[Steeling herself, she nods] Let's go.

Rey quickens her pace, yellow blade leading the way in the gathering dark.

Cut to Vicrul sitting cross-legged in meditation, draped in shadow. Far off in the distance, blue and yellow lights bathe a section of hallway in cyan.

VICRUL:

[Voice amplified as he summons the dark side] I wish we'd had more time to play in the rain, little Jedi. I still owe you for destroying my favorite lightsaber. The replacements our Supreme Leader provided are fine weapons, of course. Exquisite craftsmanship, powered by priceless crystals straight from the caverns of Hurikane. They just lack a certain... nostalgic quality. Ah, well. Nothing that can't be solved by making new memories with new blades.

As he speaks, the camera trails off and rushes along the hallway to Rey and Kylo, and the empty corridor suddenly echoes with the sizzling patter of Vjun's weather. Unseen and unfelt droplets ping off metal in the dark. Rey's face contorts as she hears the distant electric hiss of Vicrul's lightsaber, cutting through one after another unseen carbonite slab. Rey next hears her own cries of protests from days earlier, thrown back at her in mockery.

KYLO:

Rey. Whatever you saw on Vjun, leave it there.

Rey opens her mouth to speak, then closes it again. Closing her eyes, she centers herself mentally and in the Force. Calmly now, she nods and the pair continues down the hall.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — BRIGHT CORRIDOR

Transition to Finn and Rose's team moving forward, weapons drawn. Finn has a rifle; Rose carries a pistol in one hand and a datapad in the other.

ROSE:

[Still moving] Howler Team's really doing a number on their route. Blown up all their targets so far, sealed off Section C-27, even managed to lock a whole platoon in the freshers after training.

FINN:

[Still moving, chuckles] That's even better than Gundark Team rigging the flight simulators to seal pilots inside.

ROSE:

Debatable. But all things considered, it's going surprisingly smoothly -- which worries me.

FINN:

Yeah, we should've run into more troops by now. But we knew going in this was a trap, and all we can do right now is just cover as much ground as we can until-

Finn goes silent at the sudden appearance of a purge trooper squad pouring into the hallway ahead, weapons drawn. The Resistance team opens fire, hugging the walls as best they can and scrambling to what little cover they can find, from nearby corners to recesses in the walls. A few of their squad mates fall to enemy fire as Rose and Finn snap to opposite walls. A Resistance soldier quickly unfolds a long rod-like device and tosses it forward, getting shot himself just before it projects a meter-high SHIELD BARRICADE. More Resistance soldiers rush forward to take positions behind it and return fire.

FINN:

[While firing] You had to jinx it, didn't you?

ROSE:

[While firing] Hey, you agreed with me! Can we just focus on getting out of this?

FINN:

[Glances behind] Hey Garr, need a tech popper up here!

A crouched human soldier slings his backpack to the floor, and digs through it until he pulls out a silver, disc-shaped EMP GRENADE and lobs it to Finn.

OWEN GARR:

Here ya go, boss!

Finn catches it, thumbs a slider, and tosses it between rounds of suppressing fire from his team. It slides across the floor, aided by its own simple propulsion system, until it nears the troopers' feet in and emits a pulse. The troopers recoil as their guns spark and their red lenses flash blue.

FINN:

NOW! BEFORE THEIR GEAR REBOOTS!

The heroes abandon their cover to line up shots on the dazed enemies, pelting their sturdier armor until it wears down and the purge troopers fall. The smoke clears, and Resistance troops exhale. Garr puts his backpack back on.

FINN:
[Looking around] Everybody okay?

The surviving troopers all nod tentatively for themselves, while looking down on their fallen comrades with regret.

GARR:
Quick thinking, Commander. That was hairy for a minute, but all worked out o-

Garr's words are cut off by a blaster bolt that pierces his body, detonating all of his backpack's remaining explosives in a combined pyrotechnic-electromagnetic blaze. The blast consumes the soldiers closest to him and throws Finn, Rose, and three surviving soldiers forward.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — DARKENED HALLWAY

Cut a behind-the-shoulder view of Rey and Kylo, blades ready, cautiously approaching Vicrul, who is still seated in meditation.

VICRUL:
Ah, there you two ar-

Kylo's blaster barks three times, and Vicrul looks down at three shimmering holes in his chest that slowly close. Instead of expressing pain, however, he simply laughs.

VICRUL:
Down to business, then.

The seated Vicrul fades away, revealing his image to be a mere illusion conjured through the Force. The walls snap back to normal.

REY:
[Glancing in Kylo's direction] BEN!

Raising her saber, Rey thrusts toward Kylo, who narrowly dodges as a VIOLET LIGHTSABER BLADE seems to snap into reality and locks against her own.

VICRUL:
[Snarling] Not bad, scrapper!

The real Vicrul disengages the lock, wheeling his lightsaber back, around, and up in an underhanded cut aimed at Rey's torso. Her saber catches the blow at the last second and she shoves it aside, backing up and putting distance between herself and the Knight. Vicrul stands straight in a fencer's

stance, and seems about to speak before being forced to dodge and parry another three-round burst from Kylo's blaster.

Furious, Vicrul whirls in his former leader's direction and dodges another burst of blaster fire, only to be forced to lurch out of the way as Rey's own blaster adds another hazard to the battlefield. Vicrul backs away, parrying the duo's shots as he retreats. In desperation, he Force-repels several blaster bolts back at the pair with his saber, but parries them back to the Knight, whereas Kylo merely curves them away to slam into walls as he advances inexorably forward. Vicrul yanks his hand in the direction of a wall close to him, and a massive panel obscures him from view. Kylo and Rey pause, blasters up and sabers ready.

VICRUL:

[Laughs] I get the sense you're in a bit of a hurry, Solo!

KYLO:

[Aiming] I'm not here to play games, Vicrul. Let's wrap this up.

Kylo fires, and the panel disintegrates as his bolt flies through it. With a wave, Vicrul flicks the bolt to the side, rising to a commanding stance.

VICRUL:

[Growls] What an excellent idea.

Kylo's eyes widen and he spins around, flinging his lightsaber towards Rey's back. As she ducks, Kylo's saber bounces off of a second violet blade, soon revealed to belong to Ap'lek's lightsaber pike. Allies and enemies regard each other for a moment. With a chuckle, Vicrul deactivates his lightsaber.

REY:

[Nods in gratitude to Kylo] Which one of your friends is this?

Kylo seems distracted as the new figure deactivates his saber and stands placidly, just a few steps outside of Kylo's reach.

KYLO:

[Glaring at his former comrade, he spits out a greeting] Ap'lek.

Kylo holsters his blaster and takes a two-handed grip on his lightsaber, facing the newcomer. Rey raises her blade in a high guard, facing Vicrul.

AP'LEK:

[Nods in greeting, tone calm] Ren.

KYLO:

Hux isn't taking any chances then.

AP'LEK:

I'm afraid not, old friend.

REY:

[Shifts stance to match Vicrul's] These two work well together?

KYLO:

[Scowling, keeping eye contact with Ap'lek] Exceptionally.

Vicrul and Ap'lek charge inward from opposite angles, igniting their sabers as they strike, and violet blades screech against yellow and blue.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – SMOKE-FILLED HALLWAY

A stunned Rose and Finn look up from the ground. As the smoke clears, they see more purge troopers advancing from the direction the shot came from. The three other Resistance troopers, who were furthest from the blast, recover first, returning fire. But almost instantly they're picked off as Rose and Finn scramble to get the shield barricade back up, just barely in time.

All alone now, the two scramble away, firing blindly behind themselves, taking the nearest corner they can find. They pick up the pace as their pursuers' footsteps can be heard doing the same. In the distance, they can just barely make out the moving black shapes of another purge squad advancing from the new direction they're facing. They keep pace ahead of the closer threat, but know they need to change course somehow, and soon.

FINN:

Any ideas?

ROSE:

I got two thermals left.

FINN:

That won't be enough.

ROSE:

They will for what I've got in mind.

Rose drops one detonator behind her, then presses a switch and, without stopping, tosses the other one at the ceiling, where it attaches to piping that runs the full length of the hallway.

FINN:

Oh...

ROSE:

[Pulling goggles from her helmet to her eyes] Duck!

Finn pulls his own goggles down as they both dive, barely missing blaster bolts from the advancing squad that's finally close enough to fire. As they hit the floor, the rear purge troopers can be seen advancing just in time to meet the first exploding detonator. A moment later, the ceiling detonator

explodes in a smaller burst, from which a line of flame plumes race along the piping as the lights flicker on and off, fire suppressant foam pours from the ceiling, sparks shower along the halls, and wall panels burst apart. Lying face-down on the floor, hands over their heads, Finn and Rose tentatively look up. Cut to a first-person view from behind one pair of goggle lenses, bathing the darkened scenery in green with perfect clarity, highlighting heat signatures among the wreckage. The purge troopers have been knocked over, partially buried in foam and debris. Finn rises to his feet, and helps Rose to hers.

FINN:

Nice work. But we gotta move.

ROSE:

Yeah, before the power comes back on and those guys dig themselves out of all this.

Finn and Rose dust themselves off as they take the nearest corner and run.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – DARK CORRIDOR

Cut back to the lightsaber duel. Vicrul and Ap'lek fight almost as one, strategically targeting Kylo and Rey's weaknesses and openings. Several times, Kylo is almost skewered by the Knights, only to have Rey intercept the blows at the last possible instant. Likewise, Kylo covers for several overextensions on her part, guiding lethal strikes to near misses.

In spite of Knights' ferocious surprise assault, Kylo and Rey quickly reverse the fight's momentum, and go from simply covering each other's weaknesses to creating openings in their enemies' defenses. Vicrul thrusts at Rey's eye after a mistimed cut, only to nearly lose his arm as Kylo's saber disengages from Ap'lek's to intercept at the elbow. A concealed second violet blade erupts in a shower of burning wood fragment to replace the shaft of Ap'lek's cane, to prevent amputation by a fraction of an inch. Deactivating the second blade as soon as his ally is clear, Ap'lek sweeps his first to Kylo's face.

Vicrul leaps backwards, and is joined a second later by Ap'lek, who stumbles yet maintains his footing after a Force push from Rey. Now fully on the defensive, the Knights back further and further down the corridor into the tram terminal. Rey and Kylo circle the Knights, who stand back-to-back. Ap'lek reignites his second blade as he and Vicrul circle their prey.

VICRUL:

[Saber pointing alternately between Rey and Kylo] I won't lie, Solo, I'm impressed you were holding this much in reserve. I didn't think you had it in you.

AP'LEK:

[Cocks head to the side] He didn't. He was never this strong.

VICRUL:
But why would he...

Vicrul trails off as he views both of his enemies in turn. Realization makes him stand straighter, and as Rey steps close to the open tram door, his free hand forms a claw as he gathers the Force.

VICRUL:
Of course... Take him! I have her!

Vicrul lunges forward, Force-pushing Rey into the tram and leaping in after her, blade extended.

KYLO:
NO!

Kylo leaps toward the tram, but Ap'lek meet his charge with a saber lock. Freeing a hand from his lightsaber, Ap'lek telekinetically engages the tram and sends both Vicrul and Rey rocketing away. Ap'lek turns back to Kylo and shoves him back telekinetically.

AP'LEK:
Let's see how you fare on a level playing field.

Kylo roars and lunges toward his now-solitary enemy.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – CARGO TRAM TRACK

Rey retreats along the tram's interior, slashing racks and Force-tossing containers behind her in an effort to obstruct Vicrul's advance. But the linear space seems to favor the Knight, who advances with precise footwork and careful parries designed to wear his adversary down.

VICRUL:
I can feel you weakening the further we get from him, scrap-rat.
Without Solo's skills to leech on, how long do you expect to last?

No longer needing to retreat, Rey assumes a low guard and works to slow her breathing.

VICRUL:
[Leans forward, tone seductive] You think he had power? Come with me. Join the Knights of Ren. End this stupid conflict and help us build something magnificent.

REY:
[Taken aback] You're insane.

VICRUL:
[Sighs and deactivates lightsaber] No... I just hate waste.

Rey considers attacking, but holds her ground, unsure what Vicrul's game is.

VICRUL:

You're special. In just days, you formed a bond it's taken the Knights years to perfect. But raw power is useless without the skill to wield it, as you'll discover in a few moments. [Shakes head in wonder] This connection... it can't be more than a few hours old and already it reaches this far. Imagine what you could become in time. [Raises his arms] But where you feel Solo slipping away, I feel my brothers constantly. [Tilts helmeted face back, basking in his power, turning his back to her for a moment] And with their strength, I'm never alone. Never outnumbered. [Drops his hands as he faces Rey again] You don't have to be alone, either. Leave the little people and join us.

REY:

[Raising lightsaber] Not a chance.

VICRUL:

[Sighs] I thought not. Still... [chuckles] it held your attention long enough.

With a beckoning gesture from Vicrul, the air fills with a deep rumbling. Rey's eyes widen at the groan of tearing metal, and she spins to meet the point off a tram pole before it can impale her. Her maneuver avoided the sharp end, but the rod's side still slams into her gut with enough force to put her on her knees and leave a burn mark on her vest.

VICRUL:

[Chuckles] There it is... You're down to the embers now. We must be pretty far from Solo by now.

More debris pelts her and she struggles to regain her feet while withstanding the onslaught. Vicrul reignites his blade.

VICRUL:

I really would have let you live, you know...

Gesturing with his saber as if conducting an orchestra, Vicrul raises the debris Rey created and flings it at her in a storm of metal.

Rey drops her saber and holds her hands out. Straining against Vicrul's command of the Force, she retreats, barely turning the projectiles aside one after the other. Vicrul follows, saber leading the way as his other hand flicks debris at any gaps in Rey's defenses he can find.

VICRUL:

I CAN KEEP THIS UP ALL DAY, YOU SUN-BAKED BRAT!

Vicrul's advance continues, crossing the ground Rey abandoned, stepping over her discarded lightsaber.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — CARGO TRAM LOBBY

Kylo and Ap'lek emerge through another tram terminal door into a new hallway, dueling fiercely, with Ap'lek in retreat. The Knight leaps backward as another of Kylo's Force-augmented blows buckles the bulkheads around him. Kylo doesn't allow his former brother a second to recover, and follows Ap'lek's retreat with a flurry of cuts. Ap'lek slices down from a high guard and Kylo meets it in kind, then twists his blade to throw Ap'lek's aside and continue toward his enemy's head.

Ap'lek curses and barely blocks with his second blade, as his first cuts into the floor as it falls. Kylo answers with another Force Push that blasts Ap'lek into a roll. He beats away no less than three cuts as he struggles to his feet. Each of Kylo's blows is backed with lethal intent, every step calculated to advance inexorably through Ap'lek's defenses and force him into a wall.

Ap'lek spins his lightsaber defensively, both blades ignited and barely parrying each strike away from his body. Kylo's eyes are wide and wild, his face tense as all his will bends to the destruction of his enemy. With a roar, Kylo launches Ap'lek into a wall. The Knight's weapon deactivates from the force of the impact as Kylo strides forward and thrusts towards his pinned opponent.

Reactivating both blades at the last possible moment, Ap'lek works Kylo's saber around him, turning the thrust into a controlled cut that leaves a semi-circular slash in the wall behind him. His own blade having sliced the other half of the circle, Ap'lek braces against Kylo's next Force Push with his own and catapults himself through the crude hole. Rising in the midst of the room he was cast into -- a server bank -- Ap'lek shrugs off the flaming tatters of his cloak to reveal glimmering silver armor beneath, standing tall as he deactivates his blades. Sensing a trap, Kylo hesitates. The cold intent leaves his eyes, replaced by wariness.

AP'LEK:

[Speaking with quiet anger as his breathing calms down] If you had fought with such skill against our enemies, I'd have followed you to the ends of the galaxy. I'd have made you Emperor and served you proudly. But now, I'm just disappointed.

KYLO:

[Shrugs dismissively] I get that from a lot of people.

AP'LEK:

[Angrily] Does betrayal amuse you, Ren? Did you ever stop to think how much needless destruction your disloyalty has caused?

KYLO:

[Angry, but colder] Don't act like you're any better, traitor.

The Knight lowers his head, though whether in sorrow or in disgust is unclear.

AP'LEK:

The throne room wasn't betrayal, Ren. It was vengeance. Hux suspected what you'd done to Snoke, but I felt it. His shock, his grief. He gave you everything, and you threw it away for a girl you'd known just a few days. Even then, I held out hope for you. Hope that you would grow and fill the void you created. Subtlety paired with strength, cunning with true wisdom. A man worth following in a cause worth dying for. But as I watched what you did with that power... [shakes head] you were never more than an attack dog. Only fit to serve a master, never to become one. [Raises head, his next words dripping with venom] Both sides would have been better off if Skywalker had killed you.

Kylo's eye twitches as he struggles to maintain a stoic expression.

KYLO:

[Casually] Yeah, probably. Oh well.

AP'LEK:

[Sighs] Then, Kylo Ren, master of our order, my friend...

Ap'lek activates a single blade and offers his enemy a salute. With his other hand behind his back, Ap'lek begins to gesture.

Realizing what he's planning, Kylo sprints towards his former ally. With an exertion of the Force, Ap'lek cuts the primary power cable in the area, plunging the room into darkness, leaving only the illumination of their sabers and the hole they carved in the wall. Before Kylo can reach him, Ap'lek extinguishes his own blade, and Kylo finds himself slashing through empty air. He raises his saber defensively and glances around in all directions. More cables snap, and the last light spilling in from the hole gives way to darkness, leaving only the small, blue-white illumination of Kylo's weapon. Ap'lek's voice echoes all around him.

AP'LEK:

...my last gift to you will be a quick end to your sad, twisted story.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — CARGO TRAM TRACK

Rey continues to back away from Vicrul's assault, weaving around crates and poles to minimize line of sight and catch some of the projectiles. As she runs, the camera shifts to her lightsaber, lingering as it begins to shift slightly. Vicrul has closed more distance, and Rey is running out of tram.

Finally pinned to the back wall, Rey is lifted telekinetically up into the air and held in place as Vicrul approaches. The tram begins to slow down.

VICRUL:

It's over. Go to your death knowing you gave it a good try.

The Knight of Ren flourishes his lightsaber, ready for a coup de grâce as the tram comes to a final stop. Rey visibly strains against the crushing pressure of Vicrul's will.

REY:

[Ragged, defiant] More... than... that...

VICRUL:

[Chuckles] Fair enough. More than- GRAAH!

Vicrul wheels out of the way, dodging and barely parrying the yellow lightsaber that almost impales him. Dropping to her knees, Rey catches her weapon and swings hard into Vicrul's guard with both her blade and the Force, flinging her foe out of the tram and into the terminal as it comes into view.

Rey stands tall as the tram comes to a stop, then leaps after him, saber low. The effort has taken its toll on her, but Vicrul seems just as weary. Snarling, the Knight scrambles to his feet and backs away.

REY:

You'll have to do better than that, Knight.

Vicrul cocks his head to the side for a moment, considering his opponent. Suddenly, he laughs as he reignites his violet blade, apparently relishing the confirmation that his foe will be a worthy kill after all. He flourishes his weapon toward Rey in salute.

VICRUL:

Well met then... Jedi.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — HALLWAY

Finn and Rose run through well-lit corridors with no sign of the damage from the previous wing. Cue a succession of shots of the pair running and turning corners, occasionally blasting lone First Order hostiles before they can draw, or hastily changing direction at the sight of more than they can handle. Eventually they make a left turn and race down an empty corridor, frantically alternating between scanning the path ahead and glancing behind.

ROSE:

We need to regroup, but nobody's answering!

FINN:

[Eyeing something to their right] There! Supply vault!

They dart to a door along the wall. Rose points her rifle behind them as Finn slaps an access pad emitting a green "unlocked" light. The door slides open, and the two hurry inside a room filled with tall racks of storage crates. The door slides shut behind them.

FINN:

At least we've got a few minutes to figure out a new-

Finn freezes as he sees what's already frozen Rose: eight stormtroopers emerging from behind the racks, guns trained on the two of them. There are too many, too close, from too many directions, for any chance of escape.

Without turning back, Rose nervously pushes her hand behind her to feel for the door control, lit red -- now it's locked.

STORMTROOPER COMMANDER GREK:

Don't move.

FINN:

Oh... hey fellas. We... we just came from the salvage center.

ROSE:

Uh, yeah. Third shift won't get to work without a new caf maker.

Finn glares at Rose, annoyed by the lameness of her excuse but unable to come up with anything better. Her expression returns his anxious frustration.

GREK:

Save it. Weapons on the ground. Now.

The heroes tentatively lower their blasters, each holding their free hand outward, palms open.

FINN:

[Steeling himself] So you can gun down unarmed prisoners? Is that what you are? [Pauses, takes a breath] ...or is that all the First Order allows you to be?

GL-2577:

Hey... you're the traitor. FN-2187.

FINN:

No. The First Order are the ones who betrayed all of you. All of us. Took us from our families. Stripped our humanity away. Made us the face of innocent people's nightmares.

MX-0599:

That's not true. They made us strong.

JN-1815 [female voice]:
We're... we're bringing stability to a chaotic galaxy.

SL-6661:
Shut up. Since when do we debate with prisoners?

FINN:
[A strange calm washing over him] You know better than that. You hate what they've made you do. Hate what they've made you become. You don't want any of this.

Slowly, the three hesitant troopers lower their weapons, shaking their heads and looking around in confusion. The rest of the troopers keep their weapons drawn, but glance at their comrades in a different kind of confusion.

FINN:
I know what you're going through, because I used to be you. Listen to me. Listen past the voice, hear what you already know. You don't want to do this.

GL-2577:
I... I've always known.

MX-0599:
The things I've done... make me sick.

JN-1815:
I don't want it. Never did.

Rose watches the scene in confusion, then turns to Finn, eyes widening in realization. Finn's own face shows that he's as surprised as anyone.

SL-6661:
[Irritated] What is this?

EV-5598:
[Snorts] Guess we have a few overdue for brain-scraping.

MT-2916:
[Groans] Hate getting stuck with newbies.

FINN:
[Serene and authoritative] You have a choice. All of you.

GREK:
[Raises blaster] Enough. What you three have is a duty, and after we deal with these scum you're in for-

Just as the commanding trooper takes aim at Finn, he is shot by one of his own. The other two renegades open fire on the rest of their squad. Finn and

Rose take the opportunity to draw small holdout blasters from the backs of their belts and fire. In moments, all the hostiles are dead.

Finn and Rose survey the room, then look cautiously at their saviors, who without prompting of any kind drop their blasters to the ground.

FINN:

Thank you. You saved our lives.

GL-2577:

I'm... not sure what's going on here, but... I think it's more like you saved ours.

MX-0599:

I don't know what you did... but it's like I can think again.

JN-1815:

Me too... I don't understand.

MX-0599:

How did you do that?

FINN:

I'm not sure... but what matters is that you broke through your conditioning.

MX-0599 glances down at the bodies on the floor.

MX-0599:

[Sorrowful] Not all of us broke through...

ROSE:

[Sadly] Not everyone needs indoctrination to make them hurt people.

The troopers consider it and nod. Then, one by one, they remove their helmets, revealing two light-skinned human males, and one dark-skinned human female, all three young with cropped, military-style haircuts. MX-0599 seems even younger than Finn. Finn looks at them and smiles.

JN-1815:

What... what happens now?

FINN:

First, find actual identities for yourselves. What are your designations?

GL-2577, MX-0599, and JN-1815 answer. Finn pauses to think, then looks to each of them in turn.

FINN:

How do you feel about... Glen, Max, and Jannah?

The three look at each other and slowly recite their new names. They smile with tentative pride, but anxiety over their new situation quickly returns.

MAX:

How... how do we make sense out of all this?

JANNAH:

I don't know how we can possibly make up for all we've done.

FINN:

I've been where you are. You'll find your way.

GLEN:

How did you find yours?

FINN:

I found people worth fighting for.

The troopers digest his answer for a few moments. Then determination hardens in Jannah's face.

JANNAH:

So have we. Follow me.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — SERVER ROOM

Kylo looks around the darkened room cautiously, lightsaber in front of him. Slowly, he begins to walk backwards through the rows of server banks, his footsteps giving off a distinct clack as he moves.

Step. Step. On the third step, almost in sync with his, another tread sounds. It's lighter, as from feet wrapped in cloth. Kylo stops, tensing. He steps again after a moment's silence. Step. Step. Step.

There it is again. Kylo freezes in place, struggling to keep his breathing under control. There is the faintest sound of moving air, and Kylo's eyes widen. He dodges to the side as Ap'lek's lightsaber ignites into a thrust, the violet blade springing into existence where Kylo's spine had been milliseconds before. Glaring, Kylo faces his attacker, who adopts a low guard as the two circle each other.

AP'LEK:

I never could get a good read on you...

Ap'lek twirls his lightsaber as he moves, Kylo matching his stride.

AP'LEK:

I thought it spoke to your potential... now I wonder if it was simply because you never knew what you were doing. If I mistook the antics of a crazed animal for genius.

Ap'lek cuts up to a high guard, seemingly leaving himself open. But as Kylo advances, Ap'lek's second blade ignites, and only a last-second parry saves Kylo's life. The two exchange a few quick blows before parting.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – CARGO TRAM TRACK

With a quick gesture, Vicrul pulls Rey toward him. Her yellow blade manages to intercept his causal cut as she passes, then deactivates as she lands in a roll. But no sooner does she stop than she's caught in another Force Grip, from which Vicrul launches her further down the exit away from the tram.

Struggling to her feet, she reignites her lightsaber and adopts a high guard. Vicrul strides quickly into the white hallway after her.

REY:

I don't have time for this! Stand down!

VICRUL:

If you're in a hurry, you could make it easy on yourself and surrender. [Flourishes his saber] It would even save lives. Reach out, Jedi. Feel your friends dying all over this ship. You really think you can change that?

Without dignifying her foe's taunts, Rey advances. Vicrul raises his lightsaber to middle guard, and Rey pauses.

VICRUL:

Whatever meaning these vermin gave you ends today, along with the last gasps of their tantrum against stability. Order will overtake... erase... and forget every last one of you.

REY:

We're stronger than you think.

Vicrul moves in cautiously, stopping just out of Rey's reach. The two warriors circle each other, adjusting from guard to guard so as not to leave any openings.

VICRUL:

Then show me.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – SERVER ROOM

More familiar with his surroundings now, Kylo strides purposefully forward, weapon ready. Spinning suddenly, he parries Ap'lek's attempt to skewer him

from the side and flicks a glancing cut into the Knight's mask, leaving a luminous orange line that slowly fades.

Deactivating his primary blade, the Knight cuts in a reverse grip, deactivates the second, then delivers a flurry of blindingly randomized strikes in a forward blitz. Violet blades ignite and extinguish almost too fast to react, and multiple cuts graze Kylo as he furiously backpedals.

Kylo's eyes widen, and with a roar, he abruptly changes the tempo of the duel. In contrast to Ap'lek's complex, confusing sequences, Kylo's blows are simple and direct, striking with enough force to knock Ap'lek off-balance with almost every swing, nearly driving the Knight's own lightsaber into him many times.

Still, Ap'lek barely parries each blow, albeit with great difficulty. Snarling, he leaps backward and deactivates his weapon, vanishing from sight.

KYLO:

[Shouting angrily, glancing about wildly] Hux turned on me; what do you think he'll do when he doesn't need you anymore?

AP'LEK:

[Laughs, voice disembodied] I don't think he will, Kylo. He's nothing like you. He trusts us and we trust him. What you should really ask yourself is... what happens if you win this fight? Can the galaxy forgive its greatest monster? [Mockery turns to disgust] Can even you stoop low enough to claim that you "found the light"? Victory carries the same prize as defeat for you. They'll try you, and they'll execute you. No one will lift a finger to stop it, because you'll deserve exactly that. You might fight alongside that girl and her friends for now... but they know what you really are. Not even she will accept you.

Kylo sags slightly, weighed down by the truth behind Ap'lek's taunts.

AP'LEK:

You've spent every last scrap of trust anyone was stupid enough to give you. Burned every bridge. Lost every ally. You've run out of chances... [pauses, and the room falls silent] so GIVE UP AND DIE!

Ap'lek roars as he advances out of the darkness in front of Kylo, both blades activated and twirling so fast they almost seem to be a disc of violet light. Kylo tries to meet the aggressive flurry but is driven back. Server towers topple, dissected in the onslaught as the duelists move.

Ap'lek deactivates his blades again, sidestepping behind a standing tower and vanishing from sight. A second later, he appears at Kylo's left side, resuming his blistering offensive from the new direction. Staggering and exhausted, Kylo stumbles over part of a sliced tower and falls backward, dropping his saber. With a cry of victory, Ap'lek charges for a killing blow.

Seeing his death approaching, Kylo shouts a denial -- and FORCE LIGHTNING erupts from his hands.

The blue-white power is raw, unfocused, undisciplined... and undeniably effective. Ap'lek is sent flying back, his defenses overwhelmed.

Cut to a closeup of Kylo's right hand, mechanical fingertips charred by the lightning coursing through them from the finger stumps. Heedless of the pain, Kylo calls his lightsaber back to his hands and strides towards the Knight. His artificial fingers spasm, refusing to hold tight to the hilt, forcing him to switch to a one-handed grip.

Ap'lek struggles back to his feet, wheezing, and tries to activate his lightsaber. The second blade ignites, flickering for a moment before extinguishing, leaving him with a standard single-bladed weapon. Kylo slams down on Ap'lek's guard again and again before getting caught in a saber lock.

Kylo summons the lightning again with his free hand, firing an inelegant blast to his enemy's face. A flash of Kylo's face from Ap'lek's perspective, bathed in electric blue, reveals his eyes blazing in Sith yellow.

The bolt weakens as Kylo's strength wanes, but it serves its purpose. Ap'lek jerks away, and in that moment, Kylo slips his blade under the Knight's and severs both hand and leg in a C-shaped cut. Ap'lek topples sideways, curling into a ball and clutching the stump of his wrist. Kylo stands over his enemy, lightsaber raised, eyes golden and bloodshot.

INT. THE DOMINANCE -- CARGO TRAM TRACK

When they strike, they move in unison. Rey cuts toward the Knight's shoulder, only to turn the cut into a thrust to his throat as their blades collide. Vicrul raises his weapon up high and steps in, sending Rey's attack wide.

VICRUL:
Well done!

Stepping inside Rey's guard, he delivers a backhand that sends her reeling. Rey turns her stumble into a roll away from her opponent, narrowly evading Vicrul's blade. The violet column of plasma digs a deep gash into the floor, and Rey comes out of the roll in a low guard. Vicrul advances toward her, dragging his lightsaber across the floor, opening and closing his other hand.

VICRUL:
[Voice a mix of irritation and admiration] I wonder how many more of those you have left in you...

With his free hand, he flicks a finger and sends a small crate behind him hurtling towards her. Rey reaches out and nudges it just out of the way, but the moment one hand leaves her lightsaber Vicrul advances, slashing with his

short saber. Rey retreats, unable to punch through the Knight's barrage, which leaves glowing orange and black scars along the walls.

A mistimed thrust gives Vicrul an opening, and his free hand comes up alongside his weapon arm. With an odd scooping motion, he uses the Force to drive Rey's attack wide, then fills the space with a thrust of his own. The Jedi dodges a lethal blow to her head, parrying and forcing Vicrul back...

...but the move costs her. Rey cries out as Vicrul's blade scorches a line across her face and singes away the tip of her ear. Swiping wildly, retreating, she manages to clear some space before dropping into a low guard, breathing heavily.

VICRUL:

[Tauntingly] Look at you; you can barely keep your sword up.

REY:

[Raises blade high, defiant] I won't go down that easily, murderer.

VICRUL:

I admit, there's a frustrating durability about you. Like a roach. Which is why I'm done taking chances.

Vicrul's fingers tighten, and Rey lifts off the ground, clutching at her throat. He hurls Rey into a wall, hard enough to dent the panel and force her lightsaber from her hand. Tearing another panel free with the Force, he flings it at her, spinning like a saw blade.

With a titanic effort, Rey breaks Vicrul's hold and telekinetically seizes the panel. It slows and stops inches from her face, then she catapults it towards him, only for him to flick it aside. But the action costs Vicrul his focus, and Rey takes the opportunity to drop to the deck and reclaim her weapon.

She charges the Knight, leading the way with a Force Push that spins him around and drops him to his knees with a grunt of surprise and rage. Dashing forward, still shoving telekinetically, she suddenly halts. Vicrul is still crouching, one hand back toward Rey. Slowly, as if under a heavy load, he turns and stands, an ominous rumble rising with him, hand still outstretched.

VICRUL:

[Snarling, turning to face Rey] I win, Jedi. The Resistance dies with you!

Bulkheads crumple and crack around the pair. Cracks spread across warped transparisteel viewports. Paneling tears itself from the floor behind Rey and rockets down the corridor past Vicrul. Rey struggles to resist being pulled forward by the same force.

Looming taller and straighter, Vicrul advances as if moving through a wind tunnel, blade held forward, inching closer to Rey's heart with every step.

VICRUL:

You just weren't strong enough.

Staggering, Rey tries in vain to push him back and raise her weapon to block, but is unable to match his raw strength. As Vicrul nears, her desperation turns to despair. But when all seems lost, realization dawns, and, curiously, she turns to serenity.

Rey relaxes her free hand, deactivates her lightsaber, and she stops pushing at all... instead, she pulls.

Grunting in alarm, Vicrul rockets forward with their combined momentum, desperately swiping as he stumbles in Rey's direction. But Rey mirrors the strange curling motion he made earlier and sends his weapon hand wide. As the unarmed Knight reaches her, Rey ignites her lightsaber right into his armored chest. Vicrul lets out a choked gasp as Rey's brilliant yellow blade pierces out his back and the Force chaos he was generating dies down.

REY:

[Calmly] I didn't have to be.

Rey deactivates her weapon, allowing the Knight of Ren's body to collapse to the side before she slumps down.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – UTILITY CORRIDORS

Transition to a cramped, dimly-lit passageway walled by all manner of pipes, wires, and utility panels. Finn and Rose squeeze their way through, led by Jannah as Glen and Max cover the rear (all three helmeted once more).

JANNAH:

These utility corridors don't reach all the way to the security center, but will keep us out of sight most of the way. We only have to worry about running into anyone at a few key junctures.

FINN:

We'll take it. Anything to get there in one piece. I just hope we make it in time to help Rey.

GLEN:

[Perks up] The Jakku Jedi? She's here?

MAX:

Hey, is that how you freed us? Are you a Jedi too?

FINN:

Me? No, of course not. That was just... uh... a stormtrooper bond... thing. Probably some kind of side effect from the flash-training we all shared.

ROSE:

Seriously, Finn? How would that even work? Besides, I know you only started reading Rey's Jedi stuff to impress her-

FINN:

[Defensive] I did not-

ROSE:

[Raising her voice assertively] ...but that's not why you still take that stupid datapad everywhere.

FINN:

You're crazy! Come on; after all this time, I think I would've noticed if I could freeze lasers or levitate boxes. And don't get me started on what I would've done with Jedi mind tricks.

ROSE:

Rey couldn't do any of that stuff either until she had to, right? Maybe... maybe this was your "had to" moment.

JANNAH:

And maybe the Force is why your imprinting didn't take... maybe it's the weakness in First Order indoctrination.

Finn has no comeback. The scene closes on his face as he struggles to digest this new revelation about himself and what it means.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — HALLWAY

Rey walks down a white hallway, yellow blade ignited, Vicrul's weapon clipped to her belt. She looks tired, but outside of combat her strength is recovering quickly. She raises her comlink to her mouth.

REY:

Finn?

Silence.

REY:

[Alarmed] Finn? Come in!

Static crackles, then resolves into Finn's obviously-relieved voice.

FINN [comm voiceover]:

Th-[static]-orce, you're still alive.

REY:

[Concern gives way to relieved annoyance] Had me worried there for a moment, Trooper. How's your team doing?

FINN [cut to utility corridor]:

...not great. Rose and I are the only ones left. We're safe enough for the moment, though, and close to the security center. If it's clear, we should have visuals in a few minutes.

REY [comm voiceover]:

Good, I think I'm lost.

FINN:

How did Ren get you lost in his own ship? First Order plasters codes everywhere. Just give me whatever you see and I'll get you two in the right direction.

REY [cut to hallway]:

We got separated. I'm not seeing any markings... all the walls around me are blank.

FINN [comm voiceover]:

That's actually good; narrows down the possibilities. You must be near one of the high-end areas: diplomatic suites, admiral's quarters, that kind of thing. Try to get near a camera and stay out of its line of sight 'till we get plugged in again.

REY:

On it.

Upon opening another door, Rey finds herself in a large, circular room with a small-but-immaculate garden and fountain in the center, possibly a lounge for First Order top brass. Seven bare patches of circular duracrete circles dotting the floor catch her eyes.

REY:

Not seeing security cams, but it's going to be hard to miss this. I think I'm in some sort of meditation chamber.

The only response is static.

REY:

[Groans] Of course.

At the trample of approaching footsteps, Rey's eyes widen and she raises her lightsaber as the far door springs open for a large group of purge troopers.

REY:

[Running in the opposite direction] Of course!

INT. THE DOMINANCE — SECURITY CENTER

Finn, Rose, and the ex-stormtroopers exit the cramped corridor into a hallway. Finn cautiously peeks around the corner and sees the large red door of the security center... as well as the security cameras covering it.

FINN:

[Whispers to Rose] Three cams, two fixed, one automated. Not sure about turrets. You have any ideas?

ROSE:

[To the troopers] Can you guys... just knock?

JANNAH:

Won't work. We're well outside our assigned section of the ship. They'd scan our armor, figure something's up, and lock down. Best option I see is to blow the door and take everyone out before they can mount a defense. Do you have any shaped charges?

Rose shakes her head.

JANNAH:

We'll make do with our standard detonators, then.

FINN:

[Sighs] Let's hope the door isn't reinforced. Or nobody's home.

Rose closes her eyes as Jannah pulls a detonator from the back of her belt, primes it with a button press, and throws. The blast takes out the cams and partially caves in the door. She quickly crawls over the warped metal and out of view, followed by Glen, Max, and Rose.

As Finn makes his own way across, blaster fire sounds out. Tumbling to the floor, he springs up as a sole First Order security officer drops dead next to her companions. Rose is clutching a blaster wound to the arm, but manages a weak smile as Finn checks on her.

ROSE:

One out of two isn't bad... [hisses in pain] given the circumstances.

FINN:

[Concerned] How bad is it?

ROSE:

[Grimacing] Can't move the arm, but I can still work a datapad, so help me get hooked in. And check the medkit for painkillers.

FINN:

[Relieved] Yes ma'am!

INT. THE DOMINANCE — SERVER ROOM

Kylo steps out of the hole in the server room wall and back into the hallway leading to the trams. He takes a few steps, then looks back at the pitch-black opening, clearly troubled by his ordeal and how he ended it.

Cut to Kylo walking further down the hall, alert. His burned synth-fingers are still spasming, so he smacks them a few times to try to get them under control before giving up. With his good hand, Kylo pulls up his comlink.

KLYO:
Rey? [Pause] Rey!

FINN [comm voiceover]:
Ren? Everything went dark on your level. What's going on?

KYLO:
[Sighs] I'm here. Do you have a position on Rey? We got separated.

FINN [cut to security center]:
No, and she's not answering comms. Can you Force out her location?

KYLO [cut back to hallway]:
[Looking around, annoyed] If I wasn't worried about being shot and had time to waste, maybe, but a room code or station name would be a lot faster. I lost her at a tram station, floor 124.

FINN [comm voiceover]:
That helps. [Pause] Uh-oh.

Cut back to Finn and Rose, looking down at security camera footage of Rey racing down a corridor alone, fleeing a squad of purge troopers.

FINN:
Found her, but it looks like a fresh squad just did the same. I see flamethrowers.

Cut back to Kylo, who starts running.

KYLO:
Can you get me a path?

FINN [comm voiceover]:
Rose, can you- yes! We can do one better.

Cut to Kylo approaching the tram station. As he arrives, he hears a loud screech as the same tram car Rey departed in returns, obviously ravaged.

ROSE [comm voiceover]:

What coward programmed your safety regs? These things can go way faster than they do.

KYLO:

[Getting on board] Probably worried about what sonic booms could do to passengers. [Pause] So don't get any funny ideas. At least not until after I reach Rey.

INT. THE DOMINANCE - HANGAR

Krayt Team stands along a walkway overlooking a hangar full of TIE BOMBERS. They set up the stolen megablaster, folding the legs into clamp mode so the heavy weapon can be mounted along the railing. First Order personnel scurry like ants down below, preparing for hostilities but unaware of what's already above them. Noro angles the heavy weapon downward, while the rest flank him, most with sniper rifles, two with rocket launchers.

COMMANDER GEV:

[Whispers] Just remember that if any of you miss, we're all dead.

NORO:

[Grins] Not a problem, sir.

GEV:

And... now!

The snipers nail several targets at once: door controls, communication panels, the support cables for the walkway at the far end, and individual stormtroopers, prioritizing anyone near an exit. At the same moment, the megablaster opens fire on the bombers. In an instant, the floor erupts into pyrotechnic chaos, and before the enemy realizes where it all came from, most of the Resistance soldiers drop their sniper rifles in favor of blaster rifles, covered by the megablaster and the rockets.

Some stormtroopers manage to quickly recover, however, and begin returning fire. Krayt Team scatters along the walkway, taking cover and returning fire as best they can while the megablaster slides back and forth, its user seemingly oblivious to the bolts that come dangerously close to his head.

NORO:

NOT SO GREAT WHEN YOU'RE ON THAT END, IS IT BUCKETS?

A GAND soldier ducks to avoid First Order fire, then glances at a DUROS squadmate doing the same.

VEL QRYGG (GAND):

[Voice processed through a vocoder] Noro kind of scares me sometimes, y'know that?

DOLETH STAZ (DUROS):
Hey, the man enjoys his work.

NORO:
[Laughs] DAMN RIGHT!

At ground level, the explosions continue, often tossing or rattling a stormtrooper just as he's about to fire. On the whole, they seem unable to find enough of a reprieve to mount an effective counterattack. Back on the walkway, a crouched human soldier glances around.

KERSH TANITH (HUMAN):
Hey, where's Tobin?

Cut to a clean, quiet hallway. A door slides open, and out steps Cardo, the Clawdite Knight of Ren, dressed in Resistance fatigues and finishing the jacket's last button. Behind his feet, a dead human male in white shirt and shorts can briefly be seen slumped against a shelf, just before the door slides shut. Cardo's features quiver as his hands change color and his face takes on the appearance of the dead man's. He grins.

Cut back to the hangar, which has quieted down. Krayt Team looks down on smoke billowing from the comprehensive wreckage they created. Miraculously, only two of their own seem to have fallen in the firefight.

NORO:
I do enjoy my work.

GEV:
That's good, because we've got more of it. Let's move to the next target before backup arrives at this one.

Another soldier is about to respond, but his attention is captured by something behind the commander. Puzzled, the Kiffar and several other soldiers turn to see what appears to be their missing comrade approaching.

GEV:
Tobin? Where the hell have you been?

"MIRT TOBIN":
[Casually] Dead in a closet, "sir."

Before the squad leader can respond to the unnerving remark, the violet blade of Cardo's lightsaber pierces out his back.

Cardo's style is refined and precise, but his appetite for violence is nothing short of depraved. Igniting the shorter blade of his second saber, a shoto, he delivers a series of tight flurrying cuts that don't execute his first victim so much as dissect him. The first impaling saber flicks up and out through the commander's left shoulder as the second slices from hip to

right shoulder. Both blades drop to sever the captain's arms and legs in another cross cut. Cardo crouches, animalistically, as the other Resistance soldiers panic. Flicking two fingers and calling on the Force, Cardo deactivates the lights in the room at the same moment his lightsabers extinguish. Left in the dark, the Resistance members fumble for glow rods.

STAZI:

Oh kriff, what happened?!

NORO:

Stay calm and get a light on him. Weapons hot!

Another click breaks the silence.

QRYGG:

Glow rods are dead?! How? How is he doing th-

A violet hue lights the room as two blades carve through the darkness horizontally, bisecting the Gand. As quickly as Cardo appears, he vanishes with another strategic deactivation. His last position is hammered by blaster fire, but the Knight is nowhere to be seen. For a moment, there is silence.

STAZI:

Noro... comms are out. I... I don't think we're making it out of this one. I'm sor-

The Duros's head snaps to the side with an audible pop. Trembling in his death throes, the alien's red eyes dim.

NORO:

NO!

In the dark, two more Resistance soldiers are flung towards each other from across the room. Screaming as they fly, they meet their ends on Cardo's lightsabers. He rips the blades violently out of his victims and brandishes his weapons in the center of the room, facing Noro. Smiling, the Clawdite begins to walk forward... then deactivates his sabers again, disappearing.

NORO:

[Firing wildly] No! NOOO!

Every shot reveals the Clawdite a little closer, each bolt just missing him. Every new illumination reveals a new face from the butchered squad, each one smiling knowingly.

After the last scream, silence. A few moments later, the lights flicker back on. Only when Cardo stands alone over an assortment of corpses does he revert to his natural form. He grunts with satisfaction in his work, then pulls a First Order comlink from his belt and raises it to his chin.

CARDO:

The last invasion team has been finished, Admiral. I sense an unusually bright signature elsewhere, most likely a survivor from the encounter in Hall 1138. I shall-

PRYDE [voiceover]:

That will have to wait, Lord Cardo. The Supreme Leader needs you back in the throne room. Two of your Brothers have fallen, and the Jedi are closing in on the rest.

CARDO:

[Seething] ...understood. Those victories will be their last.

INT. THE DOMINANCE - HALLWAY

Rey sprints back down the blank corridor, opens a blast door, and comes face-to-face with another squad of black-armored purge troopers. She stumbles back, dodging blaster fire and telekinetically wrenching slug throwers aside all the while, occasionally tripping up flame troopers with well-aimed Force Pushes. Despite her expert crowd control, the troopers are gaining on her from both sides, and every blaster bolt strikes a little closer to home.

Getting tired, and aware there are too many troopers and not enough cover, she plants her back to a wall against both squads and stands firm. Her lightsaber weaves a cage around her as she deflects shot after shot. No time to reflect the bolts, only barely enough to block them. Smoke fills the air as they close in, and desperation crosses her face.

Suddenly, Vicrul's lightsaber hanging on her belt starts tugging to the right. Rey's surprise turns to realization, then renewed confidence. The weapon is tugged again, harder, then flies away. The troopers closing in stop and turn their heads to the sound of a lightsaber ignition offscreen.

Cut to a silhouetted figure striding through the smoke toward the group, an electric blue lightsaber humming in one hand. In the other, held out to the side, Vicrul's violet blade ignites, then is hurled toward the troopers, whirling down the hallway, cutting through a line of troopers before plunging into a flametrooper bringing up the rear. He detonates, engulfing the hallway behind the troopers in fire.

As flames fill the corridor, Kylo draws his pistol in his now-free hand and advances, shielding himself with his lightsaber as he lays into the squad with bursts of blaster fire.

Moving behind Kylo and deactivating her own saber, Rey switches to her own blaster and starts targeting the slugthrower troopers. Between the two of them, the squad is quickly dispatched.

REY:

[Relieved] Thanks for the back-up.

KYLO:

Thanks for the distraction. Good thing your friends pointed me in the right direction before they overran you. [Awkward pause] Sorry I cut it that close.

Relief washes across Rey's face, both for her own survival and confirmation of Finn's. She then looks back at Kylo, surprised to hear him actually apologize for something.

REY:

I'll admit, the second squad was a bit much, but the important thing is you got where you needed to be eventually.

Kylo frowns slightly, and Rey does her best attempt at an innocent smile. She starts rooting through the downed trooper's kit for medical supplies, detonators, and stims.

KYLO:

At least the throne room's just one level up. Hux won't waste more troops on us when they're better served fighting infantry.

Kylo walks over and examines Vicrul's mangled saber.

KYLO:

He won't be coming back for this?

Finding it inoperable, he tosses it away in disgust.

REY:

[Confidently] No, he won't. And his friend?

Kylo shakes his head, clearly uncomfortable. Rey notices, but decides now's not the time to push it. She hands Kylo the kit, from which he pulls a small, wand-like device. He waves it over his prosthetic fingers a few times, and they finally stop twitching.

KYLO:

Their two best fighters are out of the picture, but we're facing the remaining four all at once. [Looks intently at Rey] If we're not focused, they'll kill us and everyone you've ever cared about. Are you ready for this?

Rey breathes in slowly, holds it, then breathes out. She meets Kylo's gaze and raises her comlink.

REY:

Finn? Two Knights are down, and we're about to face the other four. Signal Poe. It's time.

FINN [comm voiceover]:
...are you sure?

REY:
[Determined gaze still locked on Kylo] Let's end the war.

SPACE – AQUILAE SYSTEM

The Resistance fleet drops out of lightspeed, starting with the *Organa* and the *Millennium Falcon*. Mere moments after the dozens of star cruisers, frigates, and corvettes seemingly blink into existence, waves of X-Wing and Y-Wing starfighters scream out of their hangars.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:
Black Squadron accounted for; Gold Group, report in.

KANE MARTOK (GRAY LEADER) [cut to cockpit view]:
Gray Squadron, standing by.

ZORII [cut to cockpit view]:
Gold Squadron, standing by.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
Falcon here, good to go.

CHEWIE:
[Affirmative roar]

LANDO:
How you two doin' back there?

Cut to shots of the *Falcon's* gunner stations, which have been adjusted to accommodate R2-D2 and BB-8. The chair has been removed from Artoo's station, replaced with clamps securing his feet to the floor; the smaller BB-8 is tightly strapped into his chair with a special harness. Wired directly into the guns to control them electronically, the droids beep and chirp excitedly.

Cut back to space. As the fighters fly toward the asteroid field, the camera pans over to the currently-inactive disruption arrays.

LORNE "BREAKER" TULL (BLACK TWO) [comm voiceover]:
Haven't seen one of those awful things in years.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:
They're our first priority. We gotta take 'em out while they're in cooldown, before they start back up and finish off the population. Black and Gold Groups, with me. Everyone else follow the general, keep enemy backup busy.

ZORII [cut to cockpit view]:
Copy, Snap.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
You heard the man.

The Y-Wings and half the X-Wings turn in the direction of the four disruption arrays, while the remaining X-Wings follow the *Falcon* in the direction of the *Dominance*. As expected, the former group meets a contingent of TIEs protecting the superweapons and engages them in a furious dogfight.

As the encounter around the disruption arrays rages, the vicinity of the Star Destroyer seems strangely lifeless.

OPO BRACK (GRAY TWO) [comm voiceover]:
Anybody home?

ZARA KASDO (GRAY THREE) [comm voiceover]:
Why aren't they attacking?

LANI AMSELL (GRAY LEADER) [cut to cockpit view]:
Maybe the sabotage teams managed to seal off all the hangars?

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
Doubt it. Poe, my scope's negative. Can you guys pick anything up?

Cut to the *Organa's* bridge, where Poe is standing over an officer at a radar console who shakes her head. Poe looks up and moves back toward the viewport, scanning the battlespace intently.

POE:
Not a thing. But they're out there; stay sharp.

AMSEL [cut to cockpit view]:
Brack, Kasdo, and I can get a closer look.

LANDO [comm voiceover]:
Negative. That's a lot of big rocks to hide between.

AMSEL:
Scans say it's clear, sir. Besides, it's either that or we wait for them to unload on us.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
I don't like it, but we'll try it your way. Everyone else, Net Formation. Eyes peeled and fingers on triggers.

The rest of the force spreads out, keeping their distance from the asteroid field while positioning themselves to fire from multiple angles if necessary. Amsel and his two wingmen mildly accelerate and enter the field.

At first, nothing seems to happen. The camera cycles through shots of Lando, Poe, and Chewbacca, watching and listening.

AMSEL [cut to cockpit view]:

I don't know, General, the only hangars I can make out from here are either dark or on fire. If they could launch, I don't see why-

Suddenly, all three X-Wings are torn apart by bright green flashes of turbolaser fire from extremely close range. Poe and Lando's eyes widen. Several shocked "no" cries and a Wookiee roar can be heard over comms. As the debris clears and the asteroids drift, twin turbolaser barrels can be seen protruding from the rocky exteriors on two of them.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:

Evasive action! They're not between the rocks, they're inside 'em!

Suddenly, dozens more asteroids rotate in a much more artificial manner, positioning themselves to aim their own turbolasers straight at the Resistance forces. At the same time, dozens of TIEs swarm out of the *Dominance*, all from the hangars on the side of the ship facing the planet.

Most of the Resistance fighters evade the turbolaser fire, but several are caught off guard and destroyed instantly by the first volley.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:

Yep, they're home...

CHEWIE:

[Aggravated moan]

INT. THE DOMINANCE — THRONE ROOM

With twin Force Pushes that hit like jackhammers, Rey and Kylo blast through the heavy doors of the throne room in a shower of sparks, revealing the oddly-hazy sight of Hux seated at the far end of the room. Kylo's eyes narrow in contempt, while Rey's brow furrows in concern. She senses something is off, but Kylo just angrily stalks forward.

REY:

No, Ben, wait!

Rey reaches for Kylo's shoulder to stop him, but is pulled forward by a Force gesture from one of the Knights of Ren inside. As they stumble through the entrance they collide with a shield barrier, nearly invisible but for a slight hazy shimmer, as a shielded blast door slams down behind them. Kylo instinctively thrusts a hand forward, but nothing happens. They look to their sides and see two white pedestals flanking the doorway on the wall behind them, each holding a Ysalamir within an energy shield.

The four remaining Knights of Ren -- Cardo, Kuruk, Trudgen, and Ushar -- flank the throne, two on each side. Three are seated cross-legged in meditation, heads bowed in concentration. Cardo stands nearest to Hux's right, once more helmeted and uniformed in black, right arm outstretched.

HUX:

Welcome, Jedi. [Turns to Cardo] Thank you, Cardo. You may return to the battle...

With a satisfied grunt, Cardo lowers himself to the floor and joins his brothers in meditation. Cut back to Hux's smirking face.

HUX:

...such as it is.

SPACE - AQUILAE SYSTEM

Cut back to the battle around the disruption arrays. The Resistance is taking a smattering of casualties, but seems to be holding strong overall.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:

Our ticket should be the thermal power cores on their underbellies. Give 'em everything you've got.

BREAKER [voiceover]:

Copy that. I'm going in.

Three X-Wings speed toward the nearest array, spinning to dodge enemy fire.

BREAKER [cut to cockpit view]:

Readings suggest the cores' shielding can't take much punishment. [Snorts] It's like the First Order didn't upgrade these things at all after pulling 'em out of mothballs. Klix, what do you th-

As Breaker glances to his left, he is shocked to see a TIE Fighter where Black Seven's X-Wing should be, inexplicably flying sideways so its viewport is facing him. Turning his head to his right, he sees Black Six has suddenly been replaced with another TIE, also facing him. The blaster cannons on both TIEs power up with pulsing green lights.

BREAKER:

WHAT THE-? KLIX, DONNIE, WHERE ARE YOU?

As Breaker pulls down in a loop to evade the apparent ambush, the widening shot shows his two companions as X-Wings, flying straight ahead like they should be, with no sign of the mysterious TIEs.

KLIX DAVIL (BLACK SIX) [cut to cockpit view]:

Your cockpit fogged, Breaker? We're right he-

Klix is cut off as a fireball consumes his cockpit. Cut to Breaker's fighter flying through the debris, arcing around to get a bead on his other wingman.

ZORII [cut to cockpit view]:
What was that?

DONNIE BURROD (BLACK SEVEN) [cut to cockpit view]:
BREAKER, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

BREAKER [cut to cockpit view]:
Donnie? D-don't worry, I'm coming! I'll f-figure out where they've got you...

A first-person view from Breaker's cockpit reveals that he sees Donnie's X-Wing as a TIE Fighter. He opens fire, but Donnie evades.

DONNIE [cut to cockpit view]:
Have you flipped? I'm right here! You just killed Klix! What's-

Distracted by Breaker's apparent breakdown, Donnie fails to notice the TIE that blows him apart.

Cut to Breaker's cockpit. He blinks, and the TIE wreckage is now X-Wing parts. His eyes widen as horror contorts his face.

BREAKER:
No, no, no... gods, no... I swear h-he was...

USHAR'S VOICE:
[Crystal clear, as if coming from inside the cockpit] ...right there? Not anymore, thanks to you.

Breaker looks back and forth, terrified, scanning for the source of the voice. He begins flying erratically, no longer focused on his surroundings.

BREAKER:
N-no... Admiral warned us about your tricks... not real...

USHAR:
If I wasn't real, you wouldn't have just killed your friends. Then again, maybe I'm not real. Maybe you're going mad. Or maybe you just wanted to kill them.

BREAKER:
[Squeezing eyes shut, trembling in his seat] No, no, NOOOOO!

As the anguished pilot pulls away from the battle, he too is shot down.

Cut to a wide view of the carnage -- Resistance fighters fly erratically to evade TIE Fighters that pick them off with impossible precision, like

predators swatting hapless insects. Amid the chaos, assorted cries and moans of "no," "out of my head," "hopeless," and the like can be heard over the comms of Resistance pilots.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:
[Strained] It's just mind games... w-we can fight it...

ZORII [cut to cockpit view]:
[Strained] Power through it, people... we've... whipped these guys a th-thousand times...

Cut to the *Organa's* bridge, where Poe is fuming.

POE:
All wings, fall back! Anyone still in control, fall back to point-two-seven! The *Organa* has been unaffected; we're out of range. Pull out and let the capital ships lay down suppressing fire.

Poe glances anxiously at Connix, who is looking down at a computer monitor. She looks up at him, concerned.

CONNIX:
A few are coming, but most won't even respond. It's like they're just... lost.

POE:
[Growls in frustration] Something must have gone wrong on Rey's end; those Knights are still focused on us. Signal all astromechs to take over manual control.

Cut back to the space battle, where R2 and BB units beep affirmations from the sockets of their X-Wings and Y-Wings. The last droid, a yellow R2 unit, rotates his head forward. Cut to a first-person view from its perspective, from which we see the X-Wing's stream of blaster bolts stop just before it would have taken out a Y-Wing. The fighter then pulls away.

POE [cut to bridge view]:
Lando? How you doing, buddy?

Cut to the *Falcon's* cockpit, where Chewie is leaning forward working the controls, grunting in frustration, and Lando is leaning back, wincing.

LANDO:
...got the mother of all migraines, but I'm not seeing things... at least I don't think I am. Chewie's... holding up well enough to pilot... the droids have the weapons.

POE [comm voiceover]:
Chewie, fall back with the rest. I don't care how well you can still fly; I don't want you out there without support.

CHEWIE:
[Pained but affirmative roar]

Cut to an exterior shot of the *Falcon* turning around, its turrets nailing a few TIEs in the process. Cut again back to the *Organa's* bridge, where Poe is watching a huge wave of TIEs follow disoriented Resistance forces back to the vulnerable fleet.

POE:
[Anxious] Rey, where are you...

INT. THE DOMINANCE – THRONE ROOM

An alarmed Rey waves her hand in futile attempts to work her telekinesis, and an angry Kylo probes the barrier with his lightsaber, equally unsuccessful. After a few strikes, he deactivates his weapon.

HUX:
I can't say I'm surprised that your wounded ego brought you back here, Solo... though I wonder what made you think this would end differently, considering you were at the height of your powers when you were forced to flee this room like a frightened dog. And now, you're... [glances down] considerably less.

Without breaking his glare, Kylo reflexively clenches the prosthetic fingers of his right hand. Hux rises from his seat.

HUX:
Surely you didn't think bringing a makeshift Jedi, who you assured me yourself was weakening by the day, would be enough to change the outcome? [Looks to Rey] I don't believe we've ever been properly introduced. "Rey," is it? Rey... ah, that's right. No surname. No family. Just a child the Skywalkers had to settle for because they didn't have any real Jedi left.

Rey glares, subtly stewing but keeping it in check.

HUX:
Credit where credit's due, however. Your attack was well conceived; you simply lacked the ability or the resources to match the First Order. As a result, your fleet is being decimated, your friends slaughtered.

Rey and Kylo look to each other, expressions grave. Hux smiles.

HUX:
All you've done is lead the Resistance to its final defeat.

INT. THE ORGANA - BRIDGE

Cut to Poe watching waves of Resistance fighters being chased back to the fleet by swarms of TIEs, with the *Falcon* weaving through the crowd to distract and pick off the pursuing craft as best it can.

POE:

Chewie, Lando, talk to me fellas...

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:

I'm still not a hundred percent, but my head's definitely getting clearer. I think we're far enough from those damn wizards.

CHEWIE:

[Aggravated roar]

LANDO:

I was getting to that! We can only take out so many of these guys, Admiral. So unless you want all of 'em on top of the fleet...

POE:

[Cut to bridge] Help's already on the way, General.

SPACE - AQUILAE SYSTEM

Cut to outside the *Organa* as its hangars launch waves of Resistance A-WING and B-WING starfighters (which, lacking the insurance of droid copilots, had been held in reserve). The B-Wings unfold into wide cross shapes as they fan out, while the small and nimble A-Wings effortlessly weave between the returning X-Wings and Y-Wings to intercept their pursuers.

STOMERONI STARCK (BLUE LEADER) [cut to cockpit view]:

Blue Group, weapons hot!

URCOS FURDAM (BLUE TWO) [comm voiceover]:

Copy that!

NIEN NUNB (RED LEADER) [cut to cockpit view]:

Red Group, concentrate on the pursuers. Let Blue handle the rest until our people are inside. [Spoken in Sullustan, translated by on-screen captions. A quick shot of another pilot's console shows the words displayed in Aurebesh.]

SEFTIN VANIK (RED THREE) [comm voiceover]:

We're on it!

Beyond Battle Meditation's range, the Resistance fares far better against the now-ordinary opposition, although the sheer number of TIEs still threatens to overwhelm them. A BLOCKADE RUNNER bursts apart in a fireball as a pair of TIE Silencers soars through the debris, looping to reposition

themselves to chase a pair of B-Wings. The *Organa's* mounted turbolaser batteries obliterate bogeys with every shot, but new ones fill gaps almost instantly, and begin strafing runs on the cruisers, including the *Organa*.

Cut to the bridge, where personnel are scrambling to check flashing red monitors and barking orders to repair crews and support staff over comms. The bridge of the heavily-armored flagship shows only the slightest hint of lurching from impact, but those impacts grow more and more frequent. Through the viewport, a NEBULON-C ESCORT FRIGATE can be seen exploding.

CONNIX:

[Looking up] That was the *Dodonna!* *Organa's* shields are holding for now, but they won't outlast an entire fleet being thrown at us. Maybe we should-

POE:

No! Not yet! We tip our hand too early, and those Knights hop in their own ships and tear all of us apart. Our only chance is holding out long enough for Rey to come through.

CONNIX:

What if... she didn't make it?

Poe looks out the viewport in silence, the question too grave to answer.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – THRONE ROOM

Cut to Hux casually pacing about two feet in front of his throne. Rey and Kylo look forward, frustrated.

HUX:

Do you understand why your incursion failed?

Hux lets his taunting question linger in the air for a few moments, but Rey stares past him, not listening. Seconds later, her eyes seem to light up in epiphany.

HUX:

[Oblivious to Rey's change] Because unlike Palpatine, who raised an Empire solely for the glory of an ancient cult, or Snoke, whose obsession with a dysfunctional bloodline [briefly glares at Kylo] left him bisected at the foot of his own throne...

As Hux resumes talking, Rey and Kylo look to each other, faces shifting between intense and inquisitive, as if carrying on a conversation mentally. Realization flashes in their eyes, then resolve. Rey shoots Kylo one last, questioning look, and Kylo nods. They take a breath, then turn to face Hux again, bowing their heads in concentration and closing their eyes. From Hux's position, it looks as if they're hanging their heads in defeat.

HUX:

...ours is the first regime to take a truly enlightened view of the Force [gestures to the Knights] ... and the first to put it in its place [gestures to the Ysalamiri].

Rey and Kylo scowl, offended by Hux's words, though neither opens their eyes. As Hux goes on, cut to closeups of Kylo's left hand then Rey's right, subtly moving their fingers.

HUX [voiceover]:

Don't misunderstand; I respect the Force. It truly is a fascinating phenomenon. But that's all it is: an energy field.

Kylo's hand is open and palm-up, as if in supplication; Rey's is palm-down, as if placating. Cut to the Ysalamiri, who briefly look first to Kylo in alarm, then to Rey in interest... then relax and fall asleep.

HUX [voiceover]:

It has no will, no spirit, no "sides." Like gravity or hyperspace, it's simply the last great aspect of nature to be mastered. [Camera returns to Hux] And the First Order is doing it.

REY:

[Opens eyes] You're wrong, Supreme Leader. The Force isn't a tool.

KYLO:

[Opens eyes] Or a slave.

REY:

It's life. And truth. And connection. The Force is an ally.

KYLO:

A powerful ally.

REY:

Our ally.

Kylo thrusts his hands forward at a downward angle, and sparks erupt from the floor as the shield generator built into it shorts out. The barrier dissipates as he and Rey draw their lightsabers. An alarmed Hux rises to his feet as a ray shield envelops the area around his throne.

In response, the four Knights of Ren instantly spring to their feet. Ushar ignites a LIGHTAXE, a long staff with a hooked tip, from which a thick plasma blade extends downward, ending just past his dominant hand. Kuruk uses a short saber and Mandalorian energy shield with which he covers Trudgen, who advances with a standard lightsaber. Behind the three, Cardo ignites his paired blades and waits patiently. All blades burn with violet light.

HUX:
[Enraged] HOW?

REY:
As I said, connection. If you see everything as an object to exploit, you tend to neglect some basic questions -- like why simple creatures would block the Force. We simply reached out to calm their fear.

KYLO:
[Defiant] You don't understand the Force as well as you think, Hux. Or what two Jedi can do acting as one.

Camera briefly cuts to Rey's face, heartened to hear Kylo -- whether deliberately or accidentally -- refer to himself as a Jedi.

HUX:
[Composing himself] Clever. But you're still outnumbered by your betters. When innovation fails, there's always the conventional method. Brothers... kill them.

Rey and Kylo assume ready stances as the Knights of Ren charge forward.

INT. THE DOMINANCE -- SECURITY CENTER

Finn suddenly freezes, his eyes widening. A strange, conflicted look comes over him -- a flash of newfound hope, laced with a twinge of dread.

ROSE:
What is it?

FINN:
Rey's fighting the Knights! Their full focus is on her and Ren.

ROSE:
Are you sure?

FINN:
I can feel it.

ROSE:
[Raises comlink] Poe! Rey's distracted the Knights of Ren. It's now or never.

Cut to the *Organa's* bridge, where Poe's face lights up with renewed energy.

POE:
That's our cue! Signal the rest!

SPACE – AQUILAE SYSTEM

The ACKBAR, a MON CAL STAR CRUISER, is under heavy assault from a group of TIE Bombers. Cut to the ship's lurching, chaotic bridge, where the crew is stumbling from station to station as a young human makes his way to the ITHORIAN captain seated in a command chair.

FIRST OFFICER KAYOS MARG:

Reactor's leaking and shields are almost gone, sir. We could fix it, given time, but...

CAPTAIN DOOL MULGA:

[Quietly] ...but we don't have any. Give the evacuation order.

As the officer leaves, the captain's eyes remain glued to the viewport, through which a trio of TIE Bombers can be seen screaming forth, dead ahead.

MULGA:

[Activates comm system from chair controls] I'm sorry it came to this, my friends. But it has been my greatest honor to...

The captain trails off as he sees laser fire from an unseen savior destroy all three TIEs in short order.

GRUFF MALE VOICE [comm voiceover]:

Specter Four to *Ackbar*; we heard there was good target practice 'round these parts?

The captain and first officer exhale in relief. Cut to a wide view of the frigate, over which soars a VCX-100 FREIGHTER, the GHOST. Cut to its cockpit, helmed by a thirtysomething man with green hair and eyes. A stumpy, orange-headed astromech droid is plugged into the console beside him.

JACEN SYNDULLA:

Yeah, yeah, you still got it. Now can we quit showboating, please?

Cut to one of the *Ghost's* domed gunner stations, where a broad-shouldered, lavender-furred LASAT is hunched over the controls. Though his beard and wrinkles suggest old age, his large green eyes retain a mischievous gleam.

GARZEB "ZEB" ORRELIOS:

[Gruff chuckle] C'mon, kid, savoring the moments is half the fun!

The *Ghost* flies out of frame, revealing a wide view of new ships dropping out of hyperspace every second -- more Mon Cal cruisers unleashing waves of fresh starfighters, more Corellian corvettes, more Nebulon frigates. In a matter of moments, there are hundreds of Resistance capital ships, thousands of fighters, and a countless variety of midsize starships.

Amid it all, we see a sleek, customized YT-2400 FREIGHTER, the OUTRIDER; an intimidating RAIDER II-CLASS CORVETTE, the CORVUS; a squadron of MANDALORIAN FANG STARFIGHTERS; a rugged, angular HWK-290 FREIGHTER, the MOLDY CROW; a stocky, rust-colored ACTION VI TRANSPORT, the WILD KARRDE; the six mismatched, customized racing fighters of ACE SQUADRON; and a saucer-shaped CORONA-CLASS FRIGATE, the ACUSHNET.

Cut to the *Organa's* bridge. Poe and Connix seem overwhelmed by the sight.

CONNIX:

Never seen 'em all in one place before...

POE:

Report in. Did everyone make it?

WEDGE ANTILLES [cut to cockpit view]:
Phantom Squadron, standing by.

ZAY VERSIO [cut to cockpit view]:
Inferno Squad, standing by.

C'AI [cut to cockpit view]:
Green Squadron, standing by.

KAZUDA XIONO [cut to cockpit view]:
Aces, standing by.

JORG ELDAR (MANDALORIAN PILOT) [cut to cockpit view]:
Mudhorn Flight, standing by.

Cut to the *Corona* frigate's bridge, where HONDO OHNAKA is standing in the center, surrounded by annoyed crew members trying to work around a ludicrous number of Ysalamiri slithering along the floors and resting on consoles.

HONDO:

The Ohnaka Gang is at your service, as well!

CREW MEMBER TACKSON FROD [offscreen]:
Under protest!

HONDO:

[Dismissively] Ignore him; the young ones fail to appreciate just how bad for business empires can be.

Cut to the *Organa's* bridge, where Poe seems to be getting his second wind.

POE:

Black Squadron, Phantoms, *Ghost*, take another run at those disruption arrays. *Falcon*, Green Group, Blue Group, finish off the

flagship's engines; make sure Hux can't escape. Everyone else...
tear that fleet apart.

Cut back to space, and the awe-inspiring sight of the full ALLIED RESISTANCE FLEET powering forward to engage the First Order's forces with renewed vigor.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – THRONE ROOM

Chaos engulfs the chamber as the four Knights of Ren swarm Rey and Kylo, like a whirlwind of violet light crashing against yellow and blue, with four living shadows filling the spaces between. Hux watches the battle from his protected seat, as if taking in a night at the opera. The Knights' rapid strikes come from all directions, wordlessly coordinated so that one moves the victim's saber out of the way just in time for another to fill the space with a killing blow.

...that's the intention, at least. Now fully giving themselves over to their bond in the Force, Rey and Kylo manage to keep up, twisting blades and bodies in just the right ways at just the right moments to save themselves, with each partner blocking death strikes meant for the other throughout. Impressive though the display is, it's a purely defensive posture. It can't last, and judging by the looks on their faces, they know it.

Well-placed Force Pushes put some momentary breathing room between the duo and the Knights. The first to recover is Trudgen, but as soon as he starts moving he finds himself telekinetically pulled forward by his foes, acting jointly. The Umbaran Knight slashes wildly at both of them, rolls, and comes up in a guard position -- only to be Force Pushed into one of the Ysalamir's pedestals, snapping the creature awake.

Having dropped his lightsaber on impact, Trudgen reaches to summon it back to his hand, but finds his proximity to the awakened creature is blocking his use of the Force... a realization that comes too late, as a trio of shots from Kylo's blaster peppers his chest and he drops to the floor.

The Knights cry out in outrage at the loss of their brother as they rise to their feet. Hux winces, dismayed to lose another Knight so quickly, but maintains his composure.

With an animalistic, anguished roar, Cardo telekinetically rips up two deck plates and whips them at Rey and Kylo. Both easily dive out of the way, but the makeshift projectiles find their true targets, killing both Ysalamiri and removing their influence from the fight.

SPACE – AQUILAE SYSTEM

Cut to a furious display of a countless variety of spacecraft weaving, firing, and exploding against a black starfield. While the battle's first phase was a bloodbath for the Resistance, it's now a full-on battle royale, with both sides fighting at the height of their abilities.

Though no longer bolstered by Battle Meditation, the TIEs are still helmed by ruthlessly skilled pilots, utterly unconstrained by any sense of self-preservation. Resistance forces vary in talent and experience, from New Republic veterans to foolhardy smugglers and reckless ex-racers. But what the less professional flyers lack in polish, they make up for in creativity, often tripping up elite First Order fighter jockeys with unorthodox tactics.

As the camera pans across the chaos, it settles on the *Outrider*. Trying in vain to shake a quartet of TIE Interceptors, the ship weaves above and below First Order cruisers, coming dangerously close to colliding with their hulls.

Cut to the cockpit, where a bearded man in his sixties is working the controls, carrying himself with the swagger of someone much younger.

DASH RENDAR:

Guns would really come in handy right now, Leebo!

Cut to a single-seat gunner station, where a spindly repair droid lies on the floor, tearing off a wall panel and cutting cables behind it.

LE-B02D9 ("LEEBO"):

They usually do. Which is why I advised against buying second-rate power couplings from a mentally-disturbed Devaronian who's tried to kill you six times.

DASH [cut to cockpit view]:

Five times! Besides, there wasn't another dealer for parsecs. I wasn't gonna fly all the way here without spares.

LEEBO [comm voiceover]:

Good thinking, sir. They're certainly proving their value now.

DASH:

[Grumbles] Never mind. I'll take care of this.

The *Outrider* ascends, flying straight toward a LANCER-CLASS FRIGATE and firing a pair of proton torpedoes. Neither connects with the First Order ship, but they get its attention, causing mounted turbolasers to snap in the *Outrider's* direction. Cut to the cockpit, where Dash grins. Cut back outside as he turns the ship hard to the right, just before the bright green blaster bolts can connect, and the bolts tear apart the pursuing TIEs.

DASH [comm voiceover]:

HA! I keep tellin' ya, Leebo, you worry too much.

LEEBO [comm voiceover]:

[Deadpan] Clearly, sir.

Cut to the *Ghost* and a dozen X-Wings flying toward the disruption arrays, which have resumed bombarding the planet and are swarming with TIEs. The fighters' S-foils split open into attack position.

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
Look alive, people. What these things lack in shielding they make up for in tenacious defenders, and lots of 'em. I'll take point on the nearest one, to the right.

JACEN [cut to cockpit view]:
Looking to add a few more superweapons to your fuselage today, Captain Antilles?

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:
Don't get him started.

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
[Chuckles] Oh no, just surviving the Death Stars was more than enough for me, kid.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:
Black Squadron, follow Phantom Leader on this one. We're taking one array at a time, to maximize support against those defenses.

Over comms, several pilots respond simultaneously with "we copy," "roger," "copy that," and similar acknowledgments. A wall of TIEs hurtles forward to meet them, unleashing barrages of green blaster bolts. The Resistance forces dodge the assault and return fire, forming a swarm of steel and plasma.

Wedge and the *Ghost* weave through the chaos, faster than the rest, focusing on the nearest disruption array. Wedge clears the path in front of him with precise kill shots on every TIE in his way, while the *Ghost's* turrets make short work of hostiles on the pair's sides. Soon the target is dead ahead.

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
Okay, Zeb, lock onto the thermal power core. And ignore the beam emitters; it's all controlled by the main body.

ZEB [cut to gunner view]:
Piece a' cake, as long as the kid doesn't fly us into the beams.

JACEN [cut to cockpit view]:
Haven't lost a ship yet, and I'm not about to start now. You get all that, Chop?

C1-10P ("CHOPPER"):
[Grumpy warble]

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
We're starting our attack run. Phantoms, cover us!

Cut back to an exterior view. With Wedge in the lead and the *Ghost* close behind, the two ships sharply dive, then pull up to get an angle on the array's underbelly, as red blaster bolts from other Resistance fighters pick off any TIE that tries to stop them. Wedge pelts the core with plasma until the last second, then breaks off to avoid colliding with the array, at which point the *Ghost* takes over and does the same.

Cut to the array's opposite side, and the *Ghost* flying out from underneath the still-intact superweapon.

ZEB [comm voiceover]:
Uh, Wedge? Shouldn't it be more blown-up by now?

CHOPPER [cut to cockpit view]:
[Anxious warble]

JACEN:
Captain, readings show it was close to critical, but shields are back up and it's already cooling back down.

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
Then they did upgrade those things. Okay, let's take another pass, Jacen, this time with you in the lead. I'm gonna try something after you soften it up.

The duo arcs around and repeats the maneuver with their order reversed. This time, just before the *Ghost* finishes its run, Wedge fires a pair of proton torpedoes -- which sizzle barely a meter above Zeb's descending gunner pod.

ZEB [cut to cockpit view]:
KARABAST! You tryin' to kill me, Wedge?

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
Sorry, Zeb, but waiting any longer would have given the shield's refresh rate time to catch up.

As Wedge is speaking, cut to an exterior shot of the array's main body exploding in a yellow flash that consumes the firing discs circling it.

WEDGE [comm voiceover]:
Besides, I knew the kid would get you clear in time.

JACEN [cut to cockpit view]:
What, you mean because I've got the-

WEDGE [comm voiceover]:
-the reflexes, that's right. The reflexes. Which better not fail on us now, because we've got three more to go. You fellas ready?

JACEN:
[Grins] Lead the way.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — THRONE ROOM

Cut to Trudgen's smoking body. Pan up to two Jedi standing before three Knights, the latter group's stances taut with barely-contained fury. Ushar steps forward, flourishing his lightaxe.

USHAR:
You'll die for that, traitor!

KYLO:
[Flashes a defiant grin] What do you think the odds of that are?

Ushar charges ahead, barreling towards Kylo. The former Supreme Leader fires a trio of bolts, but his opponent deflects them with ease and keeps coming. Ushar knocks Kylo's blade to the side with his lightaxe and raises his weapon to finish him off.

As the amethyst weapon falls, Rey's amber blade blocks the hit. Snarling, Ushar breaks free of the blade lock and launches three descending blows, left, right, and left, to knock Rey's weapon aside. The first two force her to stumble back and give ground. But as the third comes crashing down, Rey regains her footing, steps in, and strikes the back of the axe blade as it passes.

As Ushar tries to recover, Rey severs his closest arm with a downward cut, steps forward, and takes his other arm with a returning upper. The Zabrak Knight howls in pain, but before he can retreat, Rey whips her saber around in an arc -- right through his neck. As Kylo watches, satisfaction registers on his face just for a moment, but quickly turns to alarm.

KYLO:
[Eyes wide] Watch out!

Kylo rushes up next to Rey and slices toward the headless body -- just in time to bash aside the violet blade that sprouts from Ushar's chest, which would have impaled a clearly-surprised Rey.

REY:
[Exhales] Thanks, Ben.

KYLO:
[Eyes dead ahead] Don't thank me yet.

As Ushar's body falls to the side, the blade's owner is revealed to be Kuruk. He and Cardo launch themselves at the pair in a flurry of cuts and thrusts.

SPACE – AQUILAE SYSTEM

Cut back to the space battle raging outside, another disruption array exploding in the background. Cut to the *Corvus*, swarmed by TIEs but holding its own thanks to its abundant turbolaser batteries, plus a few X-Wings with matching markings. Cut to the wedge-shaped corvette's bridge, where a red-eyed DUROS is leaning over a holotable displaying the situation.

SHRIV SUURGAV:

Watch your six, Inferno Leader. Those bogeys are coming back around, and I'm not sure our shields can take another pounding.

ZAY VERSIO [cut to cockpit view]:
I got 'em.

Zay pulls up into a U-turn, putting her X-Wing directly in the flight path of a pair of TIE Bombers. She nails one with a direct hit and clips a wing of the second, causing it to spin just as it's about to release a glowing blue PROTON BOMB, sending it sideways -- straight into the fighter bay of a passing First Order warship, which explodes. Zay spins and dives to avoid the debris, some of which pelts the *Corvus*.

ZAY [cut to cockpit view]:
See? No sweat.

Cut to the shuddering bridge, where Shriv wipes his large forehead as he tries to regain his footing between impacts.

SHRIV:

Great, only several dozen more near-death experiences to go.

Cut to the *Falcon* leading squads of B-Wings and V-Wings toward the rear of the *Dominance*, dodging and returning fire along the way. Cut to inside the *Falcon*, where Artoo and BB are blasting away, beeping almost nonstop, apparently having the time of their inorganic lives.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
[Speaking into the console] That's fine, fellas, just don't get too enthusiastic. Wouldn't wanna hit any of our own. [Looks up] Blue and Green Leaders, we're coming up on the target.

STARCK (BLUE LEADER) [cut to cockpit view]:
You sure we're gonna have enough firepower to take out even one of those things?

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
We should if the infiltration teams did their part. Their backup fuel lines should be a mess by now.

Cut to the *Dominance's* bridge, where a technician looks up from a console.

CORPORAL DRAV KESTREL:

Sir! The *Millennium Falcon* has been spotted within firing range. Priming ventral cannons now.

PRYDE:

Concentrate all cannons within range and fire when ready. I want that scrap heap finally put down!

Cut to the Star Destroyer's underbelly, where six of the deadly mounted weapons swing into position. Cut to a bank of seated gunners, every monitor showing the *Falcon* centered in its sights. Cut to Pryde, watching in anticipation of the legendary freighter's demise.

In the *Falcon*, Chewie moans in alarm and the droids squeal in fright.

LANDO:

[Leaning forward, tense] I see 'em! This could be close...

Cut to the gunners, who fire in unison. Cut to the six ventral cannons, which emit a mechanical churning sound just before exploding. Cut to a wide view of the Resistance group flying safely past the destruction.

PRYDE [cut to bridge]:

What... was... that?

KESTREL:

[Nervously] I'm... I'm not quite sure, sir. A critical failure of some kind, possibly sabotage.

PRYDE:

How many do we have left?

KESTREL:

Most remaining ventral canons still appear functional... but they're out of range of the target.

Pryde's face makes clear he's too furious to respond.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:

That answer your question, Commander?

STARCK [cut to cockpit view]:

Looks like our boys did it.

The Resistance group swings around as the *Dominance's* massive engines come into view.

LANDO [comm voiceover]:

Forward units, give the closest engine everything you've got!

The barrage begins -- the frontmost B-Wings fire quad composite-laser arrays that merge into powerful crimson energy beams, their V-Wing counterparts unleash waves of cluster missiles, and the *Falcon* adds proton torpedoes for good measure. The fighters taking up the rear split off to protect their comrades from incoming TIEs.

Sparks billow from the engine as the assault continues, and just as the attackers have to break off, flame bursts through the blue glow of the engine's ion emission, then the engine goes dead.

INT. THE DOMINANCE -- THRONE ROOM

The furious two-on-two duel continues. Having lost half of the remaining warriors who were both his personal protection and the key to the First Order's military superiority, it seems Hux can do nothing but keep watching, his anxiety building.

KYLO:

[Yelling to be heard, but mocking tone still clear] You don't look so good, Hux! What's wrong? Things not going the way you planned?

REY:

[Also yelling, but more earnest] Surrender! This doesn't have to end with more bloodshed!

CARDO:

Oh, but it does, whelp.

Struggling to keep up with the combined assault of Cardo's acrobatics and Kuruk's unfamiliar style, Rey is caught off guard by a Force Push that knocks her into the wall. The two Knights turn their focus to their former brother. Kylo fares better against his former comrades, but remains thoroughly on the defensive, unable to land a killing blow.

A frenzied barrage from Cardo forces Kylo to stumble back. Seeing an opening, Kuruk lunges in for the kill, but stops, distracted by something coming from another angle.

Kuruk dodges to the side as Trudgen's body catapults through where he was standing, propelled by a Force Throw from a recovered Rey. The corpse collides with Cardo, knocking the Clawdite Knight to the ground. No longer forced to fight on two fronts, Kylo reaches toward Kuruk and slams the Anzat Knight into a bulkhead so hard that it dents. Kuruk slides limply to the ground, and his head lolls unnaturally to one side.

Rey rejoins Kylo, who nods appreciatively at her.

REY:

Don't thank me yet, either.

Both Jedi turn their attention to the last remaining players: Cardo rising to his feet, and Hux in his protective ray-shield bubble.

SPACE – AQUILAE SYSTEM

Cut back to the space battle, where Black Squadron and Phantom Squadron are making simultaneous runs on the last two disruption arrays, with the *Ghost* and several additional X-Wings focusing on the surrounding TIEs. After twin barrages identical to the first one, both explode at almost the same time. The airwaves fill with pilots' celebratory whooping.

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
Admiral, the climate disruption arrays are down! I just hope we weren't too late.

POE [cut to bridge]:
Great work, Captain Antilles! We'll check on the damage below when we can; for now, Phantom Leader and Black Leader, focus on enemy targets at your discretion.

WEDGE [cut to cockpit view]:
We copy.

SNAP [cut to cockpit view]:
You got it, boss.

Cut to a trio of mismatched starfighters that almost look more like custom racing ships than combat craft: the wide, rust-covered FIREBALL; flanked by the smooth teal-and-orange BLUE ACE; and the bright, angular YELLOW ACE. The three members of ACE SQUADRON are flying away from a FIRST ORDER LIGHT CRUISER, which has just launched a trio of TIE Defenders to pursue them.

TORRA DOZA (BLUE) [cut to cockpit view]:
I thought you said you knew how to disable that thing!

KAZUDA "KAZ" XIONO (FIREBALL) [cut to cockpit view]:
I do! What I didn't know is that my torpedo launcher was gonna pick now to kark out on me!

BO KEEVIL (YELLOW) [cut to cockpit view]:
Blame game later. Right now let's just put enough distance behind us to regr-

The KEL DOR pilot is interrupted by blaster fire rocking his ship. The Defenders have closed an alarming portion of the distance between them. The Aces take evasive action to dodge a volley of shots that come frightfully close to lethal hits.

TORRA [cut to cockpit view]:
Where did the First Order get those?

KAZ [cut to cockpit view]:
I've heard of these things. I think we're -- aah! [Rocked by another glancing blow] -- We're in trouble!

TORRA [cut to cockpit view]:
Kaz, if we don't make it... I want you to know... I blame you.

Cut to a head-on view of the Aces, with the Defenders closing in. Suddenly, the outer two TIEs are ripped apart by bright yellow blaster bolts. The last TIE, right behind Kaz's *Fireball*, shatters as a MANDALORIAN FANG STARFIGHTER flies straight through it, taking advantage of its reinforced beskar hull.

JORG ELDAR [cut to cockpit view]:
Mudhorns Seven and Eight, finish off that cruiser. Anything else we can help with, Ace Leader?

Cut to the Aces flying off as two Fang fighters pepper the cruiser with well-placed shots in the background, and it breaks apart moments later.

KAZ [comm voiceover]:
Um, t-thank you. No, I think we're good now. Sir.

Cut back to the rear of the *Dominance*. The *Falcon* and Blue and Green Squadrons are circling around for another pass at the Star Destroyer's next engine.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
Okay fellas, one more pass should do it. Lock on to the- wait a minute. What's that?

Suddenly, the remaining engines go dark on their own. Massive plates lock into place within them, and the thick white shimmer of deflector shields forms around them. The attackers launch a volley of firepower, to no effect.

C'AI [cut to cockpit view]:
That's some of the heaviest shielding I've ever seen. No way we're punching through that.

LANDO [cut to cockpit view]:
And no way they're taking off with it in place. The First Order is betting it all on winning this thing right here. [Flips switch] Poe, good-news/bad-news time. That flagship isn't going anywhere, but I don't think we're taking it down from the outside.

POE [cut to *Organa's* bridge]:
We see it. The threat to the surface is taken care of, so pull back and focus on the support ships. [Looks up intensely, jaw set] The rest is up to our people on board.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — THRONE ROOM

The Jedi move forward as Cardo raises his lightsabers, ready to guard against the blaster Kylo has aimed squarely at his chest. Rey raises her lightsaber to a middle guard.

REY:

You couldn't beat us with your friends. I don't like your chances now. Drop your weapons.

KYLO:

[Glares at her for a moment] You're kidding me.

Cardo pauses and looks uncertainly at Rey, Kylo, and Hux in turn.

CARDO:

You'd... honestly let me surrender? Now? After everything?

Cardo lowers his lightsabers, but doesn't deactivate them.

REY:

[Considers, then nods] We're Jedi. We give you our word.

Rey deactivates her lightsaber, and Kylo looks at her like she's insane. But after another moment, he sighs, deactivates his own lightsaber, and holsters his blaster.

CARDO:

[Chuckles] Incredible. I... you know, I actually believe you? Well... as you wish. Down they go.

As he speaks, Cardo looks to Hux, whose face is suspiciously impassive, then deactivate his weapons and holds them in front of him.

But as his lightsabers drop to the floor, Kuruk and Ushar's weapons rise, ignite, and fly toward Kylo and Rey. The Jedi spin as one and cut them from the air, clattering their sparking remains on the floor. They turn back around to find Cardo has summoned his own sabers back to his hands and is engaging both of them in a maelstrom of violet fire.

In response, Rey and Kylo act as one, parrying away from his mad rush. Cardo thrusts at them, but his strikes are parried inward, crossing his arms. The Knight launches into a spinning somersault between them, thrashing his blades outward in an attempt to decapitate both foes at once, but the Jedi duck just in time.

Rolling as he lands, Cardo comes to his feet, and turns...

...only for blue and yellow blades to cross his chest in perfect sequence, before he can raise his own to protect himself.

Smoke pouring from the wounds, Cardo drops to his knees, and dies as his lightsabers clatter on the deck.

The Jedi glance down at their vanquished foe, Kylo just for a moment before returning his attention to Hux, Rey a few moments longer, reverent for the gravity of taking life. She then looks to Hux as well.

REY:

"Outnumbered by your betters," you said?

Hux glares, seething.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — SECURITY CENTER

Finn is on his wrist comlink, Rose is looking down at a monitor, and the rogue stormtrooper trio is huddled together on the other side of the room.

FINN:

Still no signal from Rey. But the *Organa* says the battle's turning, so whatever she's doing must be working.

Rose looks up from the monitor to Finn, concerned.

ROSE:

Great, but we have another problem. The First Order must've figured out what we've been doing, because a lot of purge units are heading straight for us. From all directions. We're cut off.

FINN:

[Glances at monitor] And we're totally outnumbered and outgunned.

Finn swallows as he looks at Rose apologetically, resigning himself to the seeming reality that he put the two of them on a suicide mission. In spite of everything, Rose musters a small, brave smile.

ROSE:

We knew it might end this way... at least we made it count, right? Paige always said that's the most you can ask of any life.

FINN:

[Softly smiles] Your sister would be proud of you.

Before Rose can respond, the troopers approach to break the silence.

JANNAH:

Too early for that kind of talk, mates. You're getting out of here.

Glen taps on the data pad a few times and hands it to Rose. She looks at it, and sees that a new route has been mapped through the utility corridors.

GLEN:

If you leave now, you should reach this utility juncture before they arrive. From there, just keep following the path 'till you reach the nearest escape pod bay.

JANNAH:

Glen thinks he can overload the main reactor from here, but we'll hold them off as long as we can first. Give you two and your friend as much time as possible to get away.

Finn and Rose look at their new friends, stunned at what they're offering.

ROSE:

No, no you gotta come with us.

GLEN:

[Shakes head] If this place is empty when those purges arrive, they'll figure out where you went in no time.

MAX:

We talked it over. This is what we want. It's the only way to make up for... for all we've done.

All three troopers nod resolutely.

FINN:

We can't ask you to-

JANNAH:

You're not asking. Besides, we need you to make it out so you can free more of our brothers and sisters. Don't let the First Order's poison be the only thing they know.

FINN:

[Overwhelmed] ...I will. I promise.

JANNAH:

[Smiles] That's good enough for us. Now go!

FINN:

...thank you.

The three rogue troopers nod their appreciation as Finn and Rose reluctantly leave the room.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — THRONE ROOM

Rey and Kylo stand victorious before Hux, lightsabers still drawn, the bodies of four Knights of Ren strewn about the room. From behind his ray shield the Supreme Leader surveys the scene, angry but strangely unafraid.

HUX:

[Composing himself] It... would seem I've underestimated the two of you again.

REY:

Your fleet is broken without your Knights, and we've as good as taken the ship. You might as well surrender.

KYLO:

[Flourishing his blade] About that...

REY:

[Firmly] Don't even think about it. We're Jedi, not executioners.

HUX:

[Tauntingly] Really? Didn't you come to us because your uncle tried to do just that to you?

REY:

That's not what happ-

HUX:

Please. Are you going to let a scavenger who wasn't even there rewrite your own memory? Is that how weak this girl has made you?

REY:

[Trying to ignore Hux] Killing him won't heal anything, Ben. It'll just leave you wanting more blood.

HUX:

That's how she really sees you, you know. A murderer. That's how all the Resistance sees you. Did you expect them to give you a hero's welcome after this? Recognize you as a Jedi again?

Kylo stews silently, conflicted.

REY:

[Glares at Hux] You're not helping yourself. [turns back to Kylo] Ben, whatever happens with the Resistance, I promise I'll help you through it. But killing him now would only make things worse. We have him, Ben. He's just playing us.

HUX:

[Chuckles] My dear, you have no idea.

With that, Hux rises to his feet. The ray shield surrounding his throne dissipates, but Hux himself remains hazy -- a hologram. Rey's eyes widen and Kylo's narrow as they realize he was never in the room, the absence of his Force signature masked by one more Ysalamir still coiled on the seat.

KYLO:
[Seething in disbelief] No... NO!

With a howl, Kylo hurls his lightsaber forward, piercing straight through the hologram of Hux's face and burying the blade in the throne, just before the image disappears. No longer held aloft by the Force, the blade falls free and bifurcates the Ysalamir just before Kylo calls it back to his hand.

Hux's final trick seems to have snapped something in Kylo, bringing to the surface all the anger he's managed to suppress throughout most of the mission. An alarmed Rey braces for things to turn very ugly.

REY:
[Struggling to keep calm] He- he must still be on the ship. We can regroup with Finn and Rose, lock down the exits, get a fix on-

KYLO:
No need. I know this ship; I know where he'd go. [Resentfully] We tried it your way, now I'm finishing it mine.

REY:
Dammit, Ben, think! Hux wants us fighting with each other instead of reaching him in time!

KYLO:
Then don't fight me.

Kylo raises his lightsaber with one hand, not fully on guard, but ready to strike at a moment's notice.

REY:
[Pained] Ben. Don't do this.

KYLO:
I told you that you were wasting your breath on me. We needed each other to get this far, but it ends here.

The declaration clearly saddens Rey, not for her own sake but for Kylo's. Reluctantly, she raises her lightsaber in a defensive stance. The fury in Kylo's face dies, replaced by cold, deliberate purpose.

KYLO:
I'm done letting you hold me back.

With his free, good hand, Kylo unleashes a torrent of Force lightning while the other hand returns his weapon to his belt. As Rey instinctively blocks it with her blade, a gesture of Kylo's prosthetic fingers raises a toppled Ysalamir pedestal and pulls it toward Rey's back. She spins, trying to guard from both sides, but a glancing blow from the debris knocks her down.

Before she can recover, Kylo leaps over her and sprints through the mangled doorway. Cut to a head-on view of Kylo racing down the hall, vengeful purpose in his eyes. Cut to Rey getting back on her feet. She scowls, takes a breath to recenter herself, then starts running after him.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – UTILITY CORRIDORS

Cut to Finn and Rose, hurriedly traversing a cramped tunnel nearly identical to the previous one. Rose is looking down at the map on her datapad; Finn frantically taps on his wrist comlink, which spits out static in response.

FINN:

No good. I can't reach Rey. Either she can't respond, or-

ROSE:

-or she's still on the command level, which probably has a full blackout on unauthorized comm signals. Even if everything goes perfectly, she won't be able to let us know until it's over.

FINN:

That's not what I'm worried about. She doesn't know this whole Destroyer could be atomized any minute. We gotta warn her.

ROSE:

You sensed her before. Can't you reach out to her or something?

FINN:

[Shakes head] I just get these... flashes that come when they come. I don't know how to make it go the other way, beyond just thinking really hard, and even then I have no idea if she's picking it up.

ROSE:

Then that's all you can do right now. We're no good to her or to anyone else dead, and even if we had the time, which we don't, I don't have anything left that'll slice into the network.

FINN:

When we reach the escape pods, there should be a turbolift nearby. You take the pod, and I'll-

ROSE:

-and you'll take the pod too. End of discussion.

FINN:
But I can't just-

ROSE:
No buts. I don't care how invincible touching the Force made you feel, there's no way you could even get halfway there in time.

Finn grunts in frustration as he keeps moving, unwilling to dignify Rose's argument with anything more. Rose scowls.

ROSE:
And even if you did, how do you know you wouldn't end up being the distraction that throws her off-guard at the worst possible moment?

At that, Finn stops. Rose barely stops in time to avoid running into him.

FINN:
[Turns to Rose] I... but she needs...

ROSE:
[Calmly] I get it. You're not a runner. And Rey's important to you. But she's also tough, smart, and a Jedi. She doesn't need your life right now. She needs your trust.

Rose looks intently at Finn, equal parts understanding and assertive.

ROSE:
[Firmly] Trust her to make it.

Finn stands silent for a moment, face conflicted until he sighs in resignation.

FINN:
...you're right. Let's get out of here.

The duo shares a look of resolve, then resumes moving as fast as they can through the tunnel.

INT. THE DOMINANCE – SECURITY CENTER

Cut to Glen working intently at the console, as Jannah and Max stand guard. After a few last keystrokes, he looks up to his squadmates.

GLEN:
There. Just hit the confirmation, and it'll start a feedback loop that'll overload the main reactor... guess all that time on power maintenance duty paid off.

JANNAH:
How long until it goes critical?

GLEN:

Hard to say. Maybe ten minutes, maybe more. Either way, once it starts it won't be nearly enough time for them to stop it even if they discovered it.

JANNAH:

Good work. Okay, helmets on. [Grabs helmet sitting on console top] Maybe we can bluff our way into a few extra minutes.

MAX:

[Grabs helmet] Or into not having to use it at all.

All three troopers exchange grave looks. None of them really believe that.

MAX:

Didn't think so. [Looks down] Too bad, though. [Puts helmet on]

GLEN:

Yeah. [Grabs helmet] We just started living. [Puts helmet on]

JANNAH:

[Grabs helmet] Look at it this way: we were gonna die as cannon fodder sooner or later anyway. Better to go out doing something good than as grist for a pack of tyrants. [Puts helmet on]

All three nod resolutely.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — HALLWAY

Cut to a dark reinforced hatch in the wall of a hallway. It slides open with a hiss, and Finn and Rose step out. Finn scans both directions for hostiles as Rose shuts the hatch behind them, then looks down at her datapad. She points to the right, and they start running accordingly.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — SECURITY CENTER

Jannah and Max stand with their weapons held at attention, as if nothing is out of the ordinary. Glen stands facing the console, ready to trigger their last act at any moment. They shift nervously on their feet as they wait. After several agonizing moments, a squad of purge troopers swarms through the mangled entrance, weapons raised.

PURGE COMMANDER DREX:

Step away from that console.

JANNAH:

Glad you're here, sir. We responded to the alert, but the saboteurs were already gone. [Gestures to Glen] He has some training in data forensics, and is looking to see what they might have gotten into.

DREX:
I said step away.

JANNAH:
With respect, sir, untangling all these corrupted pathways is a delicate process, and interrupting him now could have severe-

As Jannah is speaking, another purge trooper nods and lowers his hand from the side of his helmet, after which he interrupts her.

PT-0211:
Sir, security has managed to restore camera access to J Deck. In what they've reviewed so far... they found three troopers turning on their squad to save two Resistance agents.

The tension in the air is palpable as the commander stares at the trio.

DREX:
...what are your designations?

Another pause. The three troopers seem frozen in place, gripping their blasters tightly. They know what's about to happen.

JANNAH:
[Defiantly] No more numbers. Just rebels.

She and Max move their blasters to shoot, but the elite troopers are faster, cutting all three down in a hail of laser fire. Jannah and Max fall to the floor; Glen slumps over the console -- all dead.

INT. THE DOMINANCE - HALLWAY

Finn and Rose run through an empty corridor, weapons drawn. Finn stops and winces, then he sags in grief and gratitude as he senses the deaths of their three saviors. Rose stops and looks at him, concerned. He nods slowly, and she flashes a look of sympathy.

INT. THE DOMINANCE - SECURITY CENTER

As purge troopers step over the renegades' smoking bodies to examine the console, one shoves Glen aside... revealing a screen with a schematic of the *Dominance*, its main reactor and power lines throughout the ship pulsing red.

Cut to the *Dominance's* cavernous main reactor room, where technicians at circular monitor stations begin to panic as sparks issue from their consoles and the towering MAIN REACTOR starts to groan ominously.

Cut back to the security center, where the purge commander's head jerks in response to a series of accelerating beeps. He turns Glen's body over to see the thermal detonator on his belt flashing red.

DREX:
GET OU-

Before he can finish the warning, the center is consumed in a violent blast.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — STANDARD ESCAPE POD BAY

Finn and Rose enter a large room with docks for eight pods lining one wall. Rose and Finn exchange looks; the latter cannot deny Rose's logic, but clearly still hates the feeling he's abandoning Rey.

Cut to an exterior shot of the *Dominance*, as a tiny escape pod ejects. Cut to the pod's cramped interior, where Finn peers out of the viewport at the battle while Rose raises her comlink. Cut back outside, where an X-Wing swoops in to pick off some TIEs that were getting too close to the pod.

INT. THE DOMINANCE — HIGH COMMAND ESCAPE POD BAY

Cut to a behind-the-shoulder view of Kylo, stalking through a hallway as he enters another, smaller escape pod bay. Just three pods line the wall; Hux is hunched over a control panel, frantically pressing it. Just when the malfunctioning pod finally slides open, Hux finds himself frozen in place.

Kylo raises his left arm, and Hux is tossed into the far wall. Hux gets back to his feet just in time for his eyes to widen at the sight of Kylo and raise a pistol in a futile act of self-defense. He gets off two shots, which Kylo effortlessly freezes in midair, then redirects into Hux's biceps. The Supreme Leader cries out in pain, dropping his weapon as he slumps to his knees.

KYLO:

[Voice dripping with venom] No lizards to hide behind. No darksiders to bribe. No fleet between us. No strength of any kind to protect yourself without the things you surround yourself with.

HUX:

[Ragged] You... you never knew what strength was...

KYLO:

And yet here we are. Does any of this still feel like yours?

HUX:

You scum. You don't deserve it.

The color drains from Hux's face as Kylo steps closer. Cut to Kylo's furious visage as he raises his lightsaber. As the blue blade passes his face, his eyes flash Sith yellow once more.

KYLO:

Neither do you.

REY [offscreen]:
STOP!

Kylo freezes. The camera pans over his shoulder to reveal Rey standing in the entryway, lightsaber drawn.

KYLO:
Go away, Rey. This doesn't concern you.

REY:
If that were true, you never would have stalked me across space.

KYLO:
[Turns around] You need him dead anyway. Why else did we come here?

REY:
To stop him! But we did it; he's not a threat anymore. Slaying him out of revenge will only plunge you back into the dark side.

KYLO:
Maybe that's what I want.

REY:
No, it isn't! I've seen the conflict in you, the guilt. Today, I've even started to see light again. Please, don't blot it out.

With a grunt, Kylo turns back to Hux. Rey makes a quick gesture that tosses Kylo into the right-hand wall, then lunges to place herself between him and Hux. The Supreme Leader glares up at her, less than appreciative. With another handwave, Rey lightly knocks his head back into the wall, rendering him safely unconscious as he crumples to the ground.

Rey looks up to see that Kylo has recovered quickly and is lunging toward her. She raises her lightsaber to meet his, locking glares and blades in the center of the room. The tension is palpable.

Kylo cuts to Rey's left; she blocks him. He darts to the right; she blocks again. It soon becomes clear that Kylo isn't trying to hurt her, but probing for an opening to maneuver her out of the way and clear a path to Hux. He swings in frustration again, and their blades are locked once more.

KYLO:
[Almost pleading] Rey, please. Just leave. You can take your stormtrooper, and your new Jedi friends, and all run off together. You always wanted belonging, right? There it is. Take it.

REY:
I'm exactly where I belong right now, Ben. I can help you. You've seen my own fears; now look past them. Find the things that helped me overcome them. Compassion, trust...

KYLO:
I... I don't...

Kylo's brow furrows as a storm of conflicting emotions brews in his face. Anger seems to get the upper hand momentarily as he pushes his blade against Rey's. But he's getting sloppy now, and Rey uses a quick Force Push to put distance between them again. Kylo stumbles back, but never loses his footing. He looks at her, angry but also weary.

Rey meets his gaze, composing herself like the calm within a storm. She lowers her lightsaber, deactivates it, and returns it to her belt. Kylo lowers his saber tentatively to his side, his eyes brown once more.

KYLO:
[Sorrowfully] It's too late for me. The dark side is all I deserve.

REY:
So work your way back to deserving more. I know you can.

Kylo doesn't respond, hopelessness written on his face.

REY:
I know that because it was the last thing Leia taught me.

Kylo winces at the mention of his mother.

REY:
After Crait, I did give up on you. But your mother didn't. She never stopped grieving, never stopped wanting you back, never lost faith that the light was still there. I thought she was just in denial... but today I saw that she was right.

Kylo blinks. Cut to his first-person view of Rey. He blinks again, and Rey is seemingly gone, replaced by a figure standing still, robed in white, smiling warmly -- LEIA ORGANA in spirit form.

LEIA:
Nothing is impossible, Ben.

KYLO:
[Eyes widening] M-mom...?

LEIA:
Don't be afraid. Come home.

Kylo blinks again, and Leia is gone. Rey stands before him once more, staring at him quizzically, apparently unaware of what he just saw.

REY:
Ben?

KYLO:

[Quivering] I just... I want to be free of this pain...

REY:

You can be, if you let us help you.

Kylo looks back up at her, longing in his eyes. His demeanor slightly softens, as if he's actually considering it.

KYLO:

I just... m-maybe if... I-I... Rey...

For a moment, hope washes over Rey's face. But then Kylo turns away from her, wincing in pain. He clutches his head in both hands, seemingly indifferent to the heat of the blade centimeters from his face.

KYLO:

[Pained] No... no... everything's torn apart...

REY:

[Stepping forward] Ben...

KYLO:

[Turning back with an anguished scream] JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!

Kylo thrashes out, and the kinetic power of a Force Repulse races outward from his body, causing the room to burst into sparks as walls buckle, ceiling lights flicker, equipment shatters, and Rey slams into the wall, hitting her head. She falls to the floor, and Kylo's dark, blurring shape is the last thing she sees as her vision sinks into darkness.

INT. THE ORGANA – BRIDGE

Cut to a Resistance comm station as it begins crackling with static.

ROSE [comm voiceover]:

Organa, do you copy? This is Tico and Finn. Be advised, the *Dominance* is self-destructing in minutes. We're in an escape pod and have activated our homing beacon. Please respond.

Poe's head jerks to the direction of Rose's voice, and he rushes to the technician receiving the message.

POE:

[To the tech] Get a lock on that beacon now! [to the console] Rose! Finn! You blew it up?!

FINN [comm voiceover]:

We'll explain later; the main reactor could go at any moment. Rey's still aboard, and we can't reach her. You need to try and-

POE:

We're on it! Just sit tight 'till we pick you up. [To the tech]
Start scanning for Rey's homing beacon. [Steps back and speaks up]
All forces, move away from the flagship! Self-destruction is
imminent; brace for some very big fireworks.

Cut to a wide view of the battlespace. The *Dominance* shows no obvious signs of critical failure yet, but Resistance ships begin turning away from it, continuing to pick off TIEs on their way back to the fleet.

As a passing X-Wing fills the frame, the screen goes black. And silent.

After several seconds, a comlink chimes.

FINN [comm voiceover]:
Rey? Rey! Can you hear me?

A first-person view of the escape pod bay comes into focus, seen from the ground. Wall panels are missing, exposed wiring is still sparking, and debris is strewn about. A large durasteel beam hangs from the ceiling.

Cut to Rey groggily pushing herself off the floor. Her white uniform is tarnished with dust and small tears, and her head is now bleeding, but the wound seems superficial. As Rey rises to her feet, she notices the comlink blinking on her wrist.

FINN [comm voiceover]:
C'mon, don't do this to me...

REY:
[Quickly raising wrist to face] Finn! I'm here!

Cut to Finn, back on the bridge of the *Organa*. Just for a moment, he closes his eyes and exhales in relief, then resumes his urgent tone.

FINN:
We've been trying to raise you! Where are you?

REY [comm voiceover]:
Still on the flagship. I'm okay.

FINN:
Not for long if you don't get out of there! It's gonna blow!

REY [comm voiceover]:
I'll make it. I promise.

The line goes dead. Scared, Finn closes his eyes and mouths: *you'd better.*

Cut back to Rey, who has collected her bearings and is surveying the room. Against the wall she sees Hux slumped over, motionless, eyes closed. She rushes to him, and finds that he's still breathing -- Kylo left him alive.

Rey looks up, concerned by Kylo's absence, and sees the furthest-left escape pod has launched. But something lower catches her attention, a glint of silver on the floor. Cut to a closeup of the SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER, abandoned.

Rey smiles. Wherever Kylo Ren -- or perhaps Ben Solo now -- may have gone, there's hope for him.

The ominous groan of something breaking snaps Rey back to the problem at hand. She calls the stray saber to her free hand and clips it to her belt beside her own. She waves her hand again, and the middle pod -- the only one that still appears functional -- opens as she goes to Hux and drags him into it, still unconscious.

Cut to an exterior view of the small pod launching from the *Dominance*. The camera stays with the pod as the failing Star Destroyer comes into view in the background, lurching as electricity arcs across its surface and flames erupt from its engines.

Cut to the pod's interior, where Rey peers through the viewport, face illuminated by flashes of orange flame. Hux briefly stirs.

Cut to the *Dominance's* bridge, where Pryde stands amid raining sparks, billowing smoke, and officers scrambling as they're torn between duty and self-preservation. Though he maintains a stoic posture, a twitch in Pryde's face betrays his disbelief that his half-century of serving one empire and trying to build another is going to end like this.

He doesn't have long to reflect, however; moments later the bridge is consumed in a blinding flash. Cut to the hallway outside the server room, where flames erupt from the hole in the wall then fill the hallway. Then to a flaming, destabilized hangar, where personnel scramble in vain to evade devastation. Then to the throne room, three black-garbed bodies visible in frame, all similarly consumed.

Cut back to space. As Rey's escape pod races toward the foreground and disappears beyond the camera, deep growls emanate from within the *Dominance*. Then, a MASSIVE EXPLOSION tears the ship apart, launching flaming durasteel debris in all directions.

The debris collides with the clusters of Shadow Fleet asteroids, igniting the turbolaser batteries, hangars, and fuel stores within the rocks in a spectacular chain reaction, like a WEB OF FLAME spreading high above the planet. Comm channels fill with the cheers of Resistance pilots.

Cut to the *Organa's* bridge, where a technician seated at a console looks up from his screen.

CORPORAL BAO SOREN:
Admiral, we have her signal. She's clear.

Relief nearly overwhelms Finn.

POE:
Let me know the moment you get a tractor lock on her.

The tech nods and returns focus to his display, which shows a blinking dot representing the escape pod nearing a flat representation of the *Organa*.

INT. THE ORGANA - HANGAR

Dozens of Resistance personnel, led by Poe, Finn, and Rose, rush to meet Rey's pod as it settles to the floor. Celebration breaks out and Finn's face lights up as Rey emerges, finally back and safe. He takes a step forward, but stops himself as Rey pulls a groggy Hux out behind her, his hands bound with wire. Several Resistance soldiers train their rifles on him, but an approaching Poe doesn't seem worried. Hux composes himself and surveys his surroundings, despondent.

POE:
[Smirks] Well, well, well... two Supreme Leaders in one week? Bet your Knights didn't see that coming. In the name of the Resistance, and of free worlds across the galaxy, I accept your surrender.

Hux's only reply is his glare.

POE:
Not feeling chatty, huh? That's okay; for now you can just listen. You're gonna publicly declare the First Order disbanded. You're gonna help us track down all of its holdouts. Cooperate, and you'll spend a long life in a cell instead of a short one at a firing range. The Empire's gonna stay dead this time.

Hux still refuses to dignify his captors with any verbal response, but defeat is written on his face.

POE:
Lieutenant, show the Supreme Leader to his new accommodations.

CONNIX:
[Smirking] With pleasure.

Connix grabs one of Hux's arms as Rey releases the other; Hux winces at the touch of his blaster wound. She and two soldiers escort him away.

Unable to contain himself any longer, Finn sprints toward Rey and hugs her tightly. Rey returns his embrace with equal enthusiasm.

FINN:

[Almost a whisper] I couldn't have made it without you, either.

OFFICER LIANA HENTZ:

[Approaching Poe] Sir, General Calrissian reports they've picked up life signs on the surface. He's checking it out.

POE:

Put medics on every transport we can spare and send them to help.

The officer nods and departs. Poe and Rose approach Rey and Finn, grinning.

POE:

Hell of a job, Master Rey.

Rey laughs and rolls her eyes in mock annoyance, smiling all the while.

REY:

The explosion wasn't me. We all won this.

POE:

Yeah, but I already congratulated these two. Besides, you brought home the big guy. [Face gets serious] ...What about Ren?

REY:

He disappeared. It was... close, for a moment, but he stayed true to his word. I don't think he'll trouble us again.

Poe looks skeptical, but isn't interested in pressing the matter right now.

POE:

Lando will be glad to hear that, at least. I guess you can say "I told you so" now.

REY:

Oh no, I'm just glad he came through.

POE:

In any case, meet us on the bridge when you're ready. We've got some major cleanup ahead of us.

ROSE:

Take your time, though; you two have a lot to talk about.

Poe looks at Rose quizzically; Rose responds simply by jerking her head and eyes to gesture away from the group. Poe shrugs and they walk away.

Rey turns again to face Finn, blushing.

FINN:

We got into a tough spot back there. Some stormtroopers got the drop on us. In getting us out of it, I... discovered something about myself.

REY:

[Smiles] I know.

FINN:

Huh? Oh, y-you and me? No, not that. Well, uh, I mean yes that, but not that then.

REY:

[Laughs] I know that, too.

FINN:

But the other thing... how could you? When I had no idea?

REY:

Call it a feeling.

Finn smiles.

Cut to Rose approaching C-3PO, who is holding a comlink that emits a series of familiar beeps.

THREEPIO:

Artoo? Artoo! I'm so relieved that you're still functional! I don't know what I'd do with myself if you hadn't made it.

ARTOO [comm voiceover]:

[Beeps appreciatively]

THREEPIO:

I suppose after all we've been through, all this time, I've grown accustomed to you taxing my circuits to the limit.

ARTOO [comm voiceover]:

[Chimes and whirrs]

THREEPIO:

What do you mean you got to use the turrets? What do you know about marksmanship?

ARTOO [comm voiceover]:

[Indignant whine]

THREEPIO:

Sixty years of starfighter experience? Sixty years of fixing stabilizers and rerouting shield power, is more like it.

ARTOO [comm voiceover]:
[Buzzes]

THREEPIO:

No, I will not switch off! Anyway, it was hardly an oil bath here on the command deck, either. We had plenty of close calls ourselves, and made for a much larger target, after all...

Rose laughs as Threepio drones on and Artoo tries to get a beep in edgewise.

Cut back to Rey and Finn.

FINN:

And what about you? Are you alright with everything?

REY:

I will be. I was afraid everyone else would suffer if I didn't get back to full strength immediately. That fear nearly finished us. But now, I know I'll find my way back... with patience.

FINN:

So I guess we both have a lot to figure out, huh?

REY:

There's time now. We'll figure it out together.

FINN:

I like the sound of that.

Rey hesitates for a few moments, then leans in and kisses Finn. His eyes widen in surprise, and after a few seconds he pulls back and stares at her, stunned. Rey blushes and looks back at him nervously. But Finn's shocked expression soon relaxes into a grin, and he enthusiastically returns the kiss as they wrap their arms around each other.

EXT. AQUILAE RUINS - DAY

Transition to Resistance soldiers patrolling the ruined streets of the ravaged Aq City, with the *Falcon* parked in the distance and Resistance transports soaring overhead. Chewbacca and ASP-40 LABOR DROIDS lift debris off of civilians and medics tend to the wounded. Lando oversees survivors being helped into transports as R2-D2 and BB-8 roll about with their sensors extended above their domes, scanning for life signs.

EXT. NABOO STREETS - DAY

At the tone of a Gungan battle horn, stormtroopers are ambushed by a motley assemblage of humans and Gungans, each outfitted with a hodgepodge of garments and weapons from both cultures. They overwhelm the troopers as explosions roar throughout the city. Theed is dotted with uprisings as a new

type of Resistance soldier -- ex-stormtroopers decked out in partial suits of repainted armor -- join locals in the battle. Scout walkers collapse in the streets as liberated N-3 fighters cast familiar shadows on the ground.

EXT. CORONET CITY SHIPYARDS - DAY

A grungy human mechanic thumbs a switch on a handheld device, detonating the suspended hull of a small *DYNAMIC-CLASS FREIGHTER*, collapsing it on a party of First Order inspectors and stormtroopers with perfect timing. Workers of multiple species cheer, pulling blasters from toolboxes, engines, and various other hiding places. X-Wings engage TIE Fighters in the skies of CORELLIA as fighting breaks out in the streets, from shootouts between ground forces to weaponized LANDSPEEDERS squaring off against AT-STs. Here too, liberated stormtroopers join ordinary Resistance soldiers.

EXT. KASHYYYK JUNGLES - DAY

More former stormtroopers help free Wookiee prisoners, who in turn overpower the First Order occupation with brute force and swing onto walkers for hijacking and sabotage. Coming to their aid are MANDALORIAN WARRIORS, soaring between the trees as they chase after First Order JET TROOPERS and shoot down TIE Fighters with rockets. The fighting pans to the beaches, from which TIES can be seen crashing into the water as Fang starfighters soar victoriously overhead.

INT. BLACK SPIRE DOCKING BAY - SUNSET

Transition to golden skies, panning down to a round, open-air docking bay holding the *Millennium Falcon*. It's now summer on Batuu, and over the past several months the ship's hull has been modified -- its cleaner, now-matching plates resemble it when it was first owned by Lando, albeit with the colors, guns, and radar dish favored by Han. (The ship retains its classic profile; an auxiliary craft has not been restored to its forward mandibles.) Finn, Chewbacca, and Lando stand outside the *Falcon*, near the boarding ramp.

LANDO:

You've never been to Coruscant? You sure you don't wanna stick with us a while longer, see the sights?

FINN:

Thanks, but you'll be too busy with the planning council to be my tour guide. And sorry Chewie, but I'm still not fluent in Wookiee.

CHEWIE:

[Friendly yelp]

FINN:

Besides, I have a promise to keep, to my best friend. It's funny... growing up as a number in the First Order, I always knew what had been denied me. A life, a family. When I deserted, I didn't dare

hope to find anything more than a place to keep my head down. Then the Resistance offered me a home, a cause... but still, I never imagined it was leading to this.

LANDO:

You deserve it, Finn. I know a thing or two about rocky starts leading to great things [glances warmly at Chewie]. You've got a lot more to offer this galaxy. Helping us old-timers make sure the new Senate is less of a mess than the last one being near the top of the list, of course.

FINN:

From what I hear, you're off to a good start.

LANDO:

Fingers crossed. The New Republic left plenty of the old member worlds so jaded they'd rather go it alone than try again, but enough came to the table that we should be able to get something off the ground. Not another Republic, exactly, but more of a galactic alliance. Something that leaves systems more independent while working out agreements for mutual defense. If we prove we can protect weaker planets without taking power that could eventually be turned against them, skeptics will come around.

CHEWIE:

[Affirmative roar]

FINN:

[Nods] Hey... I want both of you to know, I'm sorry about Ky- about Ben. I get what he meant to you two.

CHEWIE:

[Melancholy moan]

LANDO:

[Relaxed smile] Oh, let's not mourn just yet...

Transition to a lush jungle divided by clearings holding small settlements.

LANDO [voiceover]:

...both sides of that boy's family have a history of dramatic comebacks, after all.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

As the camera pans across the scenery, ancient temples in the distance and a red gas giant looming in the blue sky identify the world as YAVIN 4.

A hooded figure in simple tan garments and wearing an ornate blaster on one hip enters a small boxy ship sitting in a clearing. The door of the unassuming

vessel is sitting flush with the ground, as if the ship lacks landing gear and is being used primarily as a dwelling. Translating Aurebesh lettering painted on the door's keypad would reveal a name: DEAK ANTILLES.

Inside are modest living quarters, where "Deak" sets down a sack of fruit and pulls his hood down, revealing himself to be BEN SOLO, now with even longer hair and a thick beard. He wearily lies down on the bed, apparently resigning himself to the drudgery of self-imposed exile. With a sigh, he sits up and reaches for a small handheld holoprojector on the nightstand. Cut to Ben's face as the device casts a soft blue glow on his sad features.

Cut to a head-on view of the hologram: the smiling faces of a middle-aged Han and Leia. After a few seconds, however, a third face appears above and behind the couple, similarly tinted but ethereal rather than processed -- it's Luke's. The trio lingers a few seconds before Ben lowers the projector, and as his parents' faces drop away his uncle's remains, confirming the Jedi Master is really there, in spirit form.

LUKE:

They're proud of you, you know. So am I.

BEN:

For what?

LUKE:

For turning back. For taking steps into a better world.

BEN:

[Doubtful] Just like that? I do one thing right and it's supposed to make up for... for everything else?

LUKE:

No. But a Jedi's path isn't a singular choice. It's an endless test against our pasts, our fears, and our worst natures. You will face challenges. But you're ready for them.

BEN:

What makes you so sure?

LUKE:

You convinced me. In time, you'll convince yourself. [Smiles] See you around, kid. And remember: The Force will be with you, always.

Luke fades away. Ben raises the holoprojector again to take a long look at his parents. He sheds a tear, but this time has the faintest hint of a smile.

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

Transition to the *Falcon* soaring over a rocky, reddish landscape adorned with massive overturned, half-buried statues of hooded figures, all basked in the glow of sunrise. The *Falcon* lands just beyond a cluster of campsites.

After shaking Lando's hand and hugging Chewie, Finn departs, wearing a large backpack over a new jacket resembling the one Poe gave him almost two years ago. The camera follows behind him as he treks through the bustling streets of JEDHA, passing makeshift merchant stands and homes under construction, as if settlers are building a new community or restoring an old one.

Eventually he makes his way to a large stone structure beyond a clearing, unassuming with the exception of two magnificent STATUES OF LUKE SKYWALKER flanking the entrance, reminiscent of those that once adorned the Jedi Temple on Coruscant. One depicts the young Jedi Knight who took mercy on his father and defied the seduction of Darth Sidious; the other the near-mythic Jedi Master who gave his life to stare down an entire First Order invasion force.

Rey, now clad in Jedi robes and wearing her regrown hair down, emerges from the entrance and smiles. Without a word, she and Finn embrace and, in a clear break from the errors of the old Jedi Order, openly share a tender kiss. Rey then eagerly leads him by the hand inside.

INT. SKYWALKER TEMPLE - MAIN HALL

The couple enters a grand chamber adorned with beautiful green plants, banners bearing a Jedi crest hanging from the ceiling. Standing on the floor are two dozen beings of varying ages and species, dressed in a variety of styles. Among them we see the green-haired *Ghost* pilot from the Battle of Aquilae; a gray-eyed, brown-goateed human male in his twenties; a youthful-looking Wookiee, short for his species at only six feet tall; a one-armed teen redhead in emerald scale armor; a young boy with dark curly hair and large brown eyes; and a small green being with long, pointed ears.

Standing on the stage are three older Jedi: a bearded, fortysomething human male with a scoundrel's grin; a towering, gray-furred WHIPHID with piercing eyes; and an elderly, orange-skinned TOGRUTA woman, smiling warmly. Between the teachers and students, it's clear the Jedi rescued from Vjun are now fully healed, and in the months since have already added to their ranks.

Rey takes her place beside the other teachers as Finn sets his pack along the side of the room, next to R2-D2 and C-3PO. From the pack he pulls a lightsaber of his own (its hilt crafted from an F-11D barrel shroud), then joins the other students.

Rey surveys the room, then looks past the crowd to the back wall. There, the spirits of LEIA ORGANA, LUKE SKYWALKER, ANAKIN SKYWALKER, YODA, OBI-WAN KENOBI, and QUI-GON JINN materialize, all beaming with approval.

Rey smiles back at the Jedi spirits, nods, and draws her lightsaber. She and the other three teachers ignite their blades -- yellow, blue, green, and purple, respectively -- and raise them to the sky. The students respond by saluting with their own lightsabers, flashing blades of blue, green, purple, pink, and yellow, with Finn's igniting orange.

The camera cycles through the faces of Rey, Finn, the droids, the spirits, the teachers, and the students, before settling on a wide view of the room -- rescued by Rey and her new family, Luke Skywalker's NEW JEDI ORDER endures, ready to learn, grow, and reclaim their place as guardians of peace and justice in the galaxy.

THE END

NOTES & TRIVIA

1) Before starting this project, one of the ground rules we set for ourselves was that we would accept Episodes VII, VIII, and all preceding Disney-era canon as binding, but not stories that were specifically influenced by the official Episode IX, such as tie-ins or preludes. That said, there are countless plot points both from the previous films and the broader Disney canon that we did not mention -- most simply because there was no reason to, but a few were deliberately omitted -- so our version should be compatible with various fan edits and, for the most part, shouldn't force readers to recognize supplemental stories they dislike.

2) Our story clocks in at 189 pages -- longer than a real film script would be, but shorter than a novelization. We opted to write something in-between -- a script with additional novel-like detail, basically -- to make up for the lack of a movie to go along with it.

3) The opening shot of this Episode IX is meant to mirror the opening shot of Episode I, simply with the *Millennium Falcon* in place of the *Radiant VII*, and Naboo orbited by visiting allied ships instead of the Trade Federation blockade.

4) Speaking of Episode I, both the early scene on the Theed airfield and the uprising near the end highlight how close Naboo's human and Gungan populations have grown in the decades since *The Phantom Menace*.

5) The hallway of portraits in the Theed Royal Palace displays all of the previous Naboo queens to have been identified in canon since Padme, listed in reverse-chronological order.

6) We assume that Luke and Leia learned more about their parentage in the months following the Battle of Endor. Naboo was chosen for the site of Leia's funeral because, with Alderaan gone, it's the closest thing to a homeworld she had.

7) We decided to begin the film with Leia having already died for several reasons: to start on an emotional note; to have a scene tying all three trilogies together; to hold ourselves to the same constraints as the real filmmakers, including not having access to new Carrie Fisher footage (plus not knowing what unused material is in Lucasfilm's archives); and because we feel that making her absence part of the story was a better way to honor Carrie than cobbling together a large role from leftover footage. That said, we do believe there is enough leftover material to construct the two brief lines we've given Leia in the climax.

8) Leia's funeral is the first major showcase for cameos spanning the entire saga, including characters of previous trilogies (and surviving Original Trilogy actors), the live-action debuts of various characters from both Expanded Universe and Disney-canon stories, and what would be the first proper live-action depiction of Bothans, the species of the Rebel spies mentioned in *Return of the Jedi*.

9) Naboo's current monarch, King Berenko, is an original character, though not the first native of the planet to bear that name. In our telling, he is the husband of Thadlé Berenko, Naboo's Senator in the New Republic, who was canonically killed when Starkiller Base destroyed Hosnian Prime in *The Force Awakens*.

10) Winter Celchu is a recurring character from the old EU, whose role as one of Leia's closest childhood friends was partially filled by *The Last Jedi's* Vice Admiral Holdo. Her anecdote about a young Leia slicing their school's database is a fun detail we also pulled from the old EU. (Winter's husband, X-Wing pilot Tycho Celchu, also cameos among the mourners.)

11) The SoroSuub Personal Luxury Yacht 3000 on which Lando and Poe leave Naboo is the *Lady Luck*, Lando's personal ship. It was originally created for the EU, and re-canonized in the Disney-era novel *Last Shot*.

12) R2-D2 and C-3PO's conversation aboard the *Falcon* is a cheeky reference to the fact that Threepio's memory of the prequel trilogy's events was erased but Artoo's was not, as sensitive information (such as the Skywalker twins' birth) is much more secure in the military-grade memory banks of R2 units than in civilian protocol droids. In our story, Threepio's friends seem to have filled in some of the blanks for him.

13) The Kurost sector has been referenced in both pre- and post-Disney canons. Little is known about the region except that construction supplies for the first Death Star passed through it. It was chosen for our story as an homage to its apparent namesake, legendary director Akira Kurosawa, a key influence for George Lucas.

14) We make use of a few characters and settings from the official Episode IX, albeit in modified form, such as First Order officer Pryde (our version an Admiral rather than Allegiant General), Poe's old flame Zorii Bliss (here a Resistance fighter squad leader rather than a mercenary), renegade stormtrooper Jannah, and the ocean moon Kef Bir (this time without Death Star wreckage).

15) Battle Meditation is a powerful Force ability that was first depicted in *Heir to the Empire*, and given its name in the video

game *Knights of the Old Republic*. It appeared in numerous EU stories, but has yet to appear in Disney canon.

16) The TIE Justiciars are our original design. Inspired by the Sith meditation spheres introduced in the EU *Tales of the Jedi* comics, these craft are custom-built for the Knights of Ren, allowing them to focus their deadly Force abilities in the heat of battle. The name comes from royal justice ministers of medieval England.

17) Our versions of the Knights of Ren use their names from the official canon, but feature new species, personalities, and weapons. One is human, two represent races from the original trilogy, and three represent the prequels. In our canon, they sat out Episodes VII and VIII because Snoke had tasked them with intensive training to master Battle Meditation before rejoining Kylo Ren in the field.

18) This element further recontextualizes the First Order as a smaller entity than the Empire, which couldn't have conquered the galaxy through traditional means. But with it in place, a trilogy-wide plan emerges: (1) Get the Jedi out of the way and (2) use Starkiller Base for a decapitation strike against the New Republic, softening the enemy up while (3) the First Order's true advantage is prepared. While it is true that Rey says "the First Order will control all the major systems within weeks" in *The Last Jedi* (which easily could have been an erroneous or fearful appraisal on her part), it's also clear from *The Force Awakens* that the First Order hadn't intended to destroy the Senate & Republic fleet when they did, and the Resistance getting close to finding Luke moved up their timetable. Once they did that, they had to go on offense before free systems had time to organize a response.

19) We chose not to make the Knights of Ren's new, First Order-issued lightsabers red as a sign that, while they use the dark side, they aren't following a specific dark-side ideology like the Sith. We've only seen one violet lightsaber in the entire Saga, suggesting that violet kyber crystals are rare, perhaps even a status symbol. Vicrul says they come from Hurikane, which the EU comic *Star Wars Tales* identifies as the planet where a young Mace Windu obtained his crystal.

20) Throughout the script we made it a point to feature a mix of aliens from both the original and prequel trilogies, to compensate for the relative lack of legacy aliens in *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi*.

21) Ysalamiri were first introduced in the 1991 novel *Heir to the Empire*, one of the earliest and most acclaimed stories of what became the Expanded Universe, as was the "esteemed admiral of the

Old Empire" who discovered them, Grand Admiral Thrawn. Disney restored Thrawn to the canon starting with the animated series *Star Wars: Rebels*, but Ysalamiri have yet to be re-canonized in any meaningful way.

22) Early tie-in material for *The Force Awakens* established that Poe Dameron's parents were Rebels who fought at the Battle of Endor. When they retired to raise a family, Luke Skywalker gifted them a recovered tree the Empire had stolen from the Jedi Temple (as seen in the 2015 comic *Shattered Empire*). Abrams ignored this backstory when devising Poe's criminal past for the official Episode IX, but we opted to allude to a more lasting friendship between Luke and the Dameron family.

23) Batuu is, of course, the planet created for Disney's *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* theme park. We used the world and some of its locales here because we found it simply baffling that such a clear tie-in opportunity wasn't in the official movie.

24) The line Finn reads about the lightsaber fighting style Soresu (Form III) is a quote from *The Jedi's Path*, a 2010 EU book written as an in-universe Jedi reference text.

25) Hondo Ohnaka is a fan-favorite scoundrel and "frenemy" first created for the animated series *The Clone Wars*. He returned in *Rebels*, and was most recently realized as an animatronic for *Galaxy's Edge*, set during the sequel era.

26) Hondo's line about Jedi sympathy on Batuu is a sly nod to the faux-hidden nature of the lightsaber building activity at *Galaxy's Edge*, which is presented as a clandestine service offered only to the faithful in the back of Savi's Workshop.

27) Kylo Ren losing his fingers on one hand continues the Skywalker family tradition of limb loss, and fits the pattern of each male Skywalker losing less than the last one: Anakin lost his forearm, Luke a hand, and Kylo some fingers. If Ben Solo ever has a son, perhaps he'll manage to go an entire lifespan with all of his appendages intact.

28) All the names of Naboo pilots are original, but connect to existing characters. Reed Typho is a descendant of Padme's security chief Gregar Typho from the prequels. Seth Dallows is a descendant of the EU prequel-era pilot Rhys Dallows, the protagonist of the 2001 video game *Star Wars: Starfighter*.

29) "Blue Harvest," the code name Poe uses for Kef Bir, was the fake working title used by the production crew of *Return of the Jedi* to throw the press and passersby off the scent of what they were really filming. The full title for the phony film, which

adorned everything from call sheets to T-shirts, was *Blue Harvest: Horror Beyond Imagination*.

30) The StarSpeeder 3000 in which Finn and Rose fly to Kef Bir is the model of the ship from the classic Disney ride *Star Tours*.

31) Kylo's reference to killing a few Jedi who followed him after Luke's temple fell fits with the events of 2019's *The Rise of Kylo Ren* comic book, for those who liked that version of Kylo's backstory. For those who didn't, the details are left vague enough to substitute your own headcanon.

32) The Force bond (not a "dyad") through which Rey acquired Kylo's Jedi skills was an idea suggested by Rian Johnson in interviews for *The Last Jedi*. Though not originally fans of the concept, we came to appreciate its potential as a source of conflict for Rey, not just a post-hoc justification for her untrained ability. This challenge, we feel, flows more naturally from the previous films than retconning her parentage. *The Last Jedi* sees Rey confronting and ultimately accepting the fact that her parents will never provide the belonging she sought. Instead, she has embraced the Resistance as where she belongs... but what happens when the quick and easy Jedi progress that made her such an asset to the Resistance is not only taken away, but revealed to have been dependent on the dark side -- which, Yoda told us, is all about quick and easy?

33) We would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge the can of worms opened by the ability to mentally share Jedi skills. Doesn't that upend the whole master-apprentice relationship by negating the need for training? In our view, no. First, our version of this phenomenon -- or at least, the form of it that benefitted Rey -- seems to be of the dark side (again, "quick and easy path"), and as such the Jedi would frown upon it. Second, bonded Force users only have access to one another's knowledge while the bond is active, and no serious training program (light or dark) would want its students' abilities to be entirely dependent on others. Third, we hint later on that there are downsides to a bond like this, such as each partner's personality bleeding into the other. Fourth, it seems these bonds take a Force user as powerful as Snoke to create, and that Jedi (at least not Jedi at Rey or Kylo's levels) can't just make a new bond themselves.

34) "The Zeffo raid" is a reference to one of the planets players explore in the 2019 video game *Jedi: Fallen Order*. Home to a mysterious lost race with a unique view of the Force, Zeffo was occupied by the Empire in hopes of digging up its secrets... but it seems the world still had mysteries to unravel well into the sequel era.

35) The rod-slicing exercise Rey performs comes from a deleted scene of *The Empire Strikes Back*, which made it into the film's novelization. It concludes with Yoda telling an unsuccessful Luke, "It would be in seven pieces, were you a Jedi."

36) BB-8 being repainted to disguise him as a First Order droid is an idea repurposed from *Duel of the Fates*, Colin Trevorrow's unused script for Episode IX.

37) The question of whether lightsaber blades "lock" against each other or can be slid is a cheeky reference to inconsistent depictions of the phenomenon throughout the franchise. For those who take offense to Rey and Vicrul's blades not locking on Vjun, we think it makes sense to assume that any number of variables can affect how a specific lightsaber operates and interacts with others, from power settings to the type of crystal used. Yellow blades & crystals are new to the films, so the fact that Rey's trick worked with her new lightsaber doesn't necessarily contradict what we see across the Saga.

38) The "spare buffer panel" Chewie takes from the *Falcon's* cargo hold is a small shout-out to *Serenity*, the cinematic epilogue to the short-lived TV show *Firefly*. It's the part that falls off the titular ship during the movie's title sequence.

39) Vjun is an EU planet created for the 1995 comic book *Dark Empire II*. It was home to Bast Castle, a private fortress owned by Darth Vader. Disney canon gave Vader a castle on Mustafar instead, so we turned the Vjun site into Bast Prison, a facility once used by Emperor Palpatine to carry out various projects he wanted to keep hidden from his apprentice (perhaps including his continuation of Darth Plagueis's experiments on cheating death). Our version of the fortress uses the sixth design Vader considered but ultimately rejected for his Mustafar castle, as seen in the 2017 comic book *Darth Vader: Dark Lord of the Sith*.

40) Having the heroes disguise themselves as stormtroopers to infiltrate an enemy base may be an obvious callback to *A New Hope*, but on top of it making sense for the story, we feel that if there's any occasion to indulge in a few nostalgic callbacks, it's in the grand finale to a nine-part saga.

41) Kylo mentions the Resistance's Beshpin headquarters, Nimbus Base, being hidden from First Order scans by advanced cloaking technology they must have gotten from an especially talented smuggler. Though not explored in the script, we imagine that smuggler was none other than Talon Karrde, who also hails from *Heir to the Empire* and has yet to appear in Disney canon.

42) Purge troopers also debuted in the *Vader* comic, and were featured in *Jedi: Fallen Order*. These elite Imperial soldiers were primarily tasked with hunting surviving Jedi, but also guarded high-value facilities of the Empire. We think it makes sense for the First Order to have its own version, tasked with hunting down and guarding against Rey and Kylo Ren.

43) V-Wings originated in the 1991 comic *Dark Empire* and were popularized in the 1998 video game *Rogue Squadron*, which introduced their trademark cluster missiles. The EU versions were technically airspeeders, but we've taken the liberty of upgrading the "canon" versions into full space-capable starfighters.

44) During the Battle of Vjun, Zorii references Life Day... yes, from the infamous *Star Wars Holiday Special*. While that atrocity has long been exiled from any version of canon, Life Day is one of a handful of *Holiday Special* elements canonized by both the EU and Disney, albeit in modified form.

45) Grath hounds are an original creation of ours, although they were inspired by the EU creatures vornskr, which were also canine predators attuned to the Force.

46) "Kark" and "kriff" are curse words found in various Star Wars stories. We will leave their real-world analogues to readers' imaginations.

47) TIE Defenders were first introduced in the 1994 video game *Star Wars: TIE Fighter*. They were established in Disney canon via the 2014 mobile game *Star Wars: Commander*, then featured in *Star Wars: Rebels*. Though they ultimately weren't mass-produced during the Galactic Civil War, we presume some of these elite, experimental craft found their way to comparably-elite Imperial facilities.

48) The inept Warden Ozek of Bast Prison is original, but he almost mentions Commandant Brendol Hux, the father of the sequel trilogy's General Armitage Hux. The elder Hux was created for the 2015 novel *Servants of the Empire: The Secret Academy*, and was used in later stories to fill some gaps between the original and sequel trilogies.

49) The planet Aquilae is our creation, though its name (which we pronounce as Ah-KWEE-lay) is an unused name from George Lucas's early (and radically different) drafts for the original *Star Wars*. It seemed fitting to end the saga by reaching back to the very beginning.

50) Climate disruption arrays first appeared in *Shattered Empire*, and were featured in the story campaign for the 2017 video game

Battlefront II. Both stories highlight the weapons' usage in Operation: Cinder, a posthumous order left by Emperor Palpatine to take revenge on various worlds and cull the weakest parts of the Empire, in hopes that something stronger would eventually rise from their ashes.

51) Kylo's explanation of Snoke's contingency plan for drawing Luke out of hiding serves a secondary purpose of clarifying the controversial "map to Luke" plot point from *The Force Awakens*. That film's MacGuffin is often misunderstood as a literal map to Luke's location; in reality, it's a map of known Jedi Temples throughout the galaxy, identified by age. It simply *functions as* a "map to Luke" based on the (correct) assumption that Luke had gone to whichever one was the oldest.

52) Did the Force feedback of Aquilae's devastation kill the Ysalamiri that were holding Kylo prisoner, or did the devastation distract them, giving Kylo an opening to kill them? We chose to leave that ambiguous. (If the former, then how would Hux have kept his own Ysalamiri alive? With access to Thrawn's research, the First Order would know more about keeping them properly nourished than the Resistance.)

53) Force Healing was a controversial element of the official Episode IX, but the ability has a long history in the EU. We believe any arguable flaw with the movie's depiction rests not with its existence, but its extent: undoing fatal wounds in seconds and even raising the dead. We see no problem with using it in a more modest way, to heal simple injuries.

54) In his speech to the Resistance just before the Battle of Aquilae, Poe quotes words of wisdom from Leia about confidence. That's a slightly-abridged version of a real-life Carrie Fisher quote, offering advice to young people about pursuing their dreams while struggling with mental illness, from a 2013 interview with *Herald-Tribune Health*.

55) Rey's combat uniform for the final battles was inspired by unused concept art for Episode IX (part of which actually made it to the costume test stage). We think it's a great look, but we also really wanted Episode IX to not lazily remix the same basic costume design a third time.

56) We envision the *Quasar Ember*-class transport as related to the larger *Quasar Fire*-class cruiser-carrier, which was introduced in the 1994 EU novel *The Truce at Bakura*, and featured in Disney canon via *Star Wars: Rebels*.

57) The shot of Finn and Rose heading a crowd of Resistance soldiers' faces in a flickering troop transport is meant to

parallel the iconic Episode VII shot of Finn's stormtrooper unit packed into one of those same transports.

58) We used the Jedi spirit conversations as an opportunity to create and fill in a Snoke backstory we never got in Episodes VII and VIII, and which is hopefully more logical and compelling than being a puppet vaguely controlled by a somehow-alive Palpatine, not to mention more consistent with all the pre-*TROS* information Lucasfilm released about him. The scene conveys the essentials, but we actually fleshed out a fair bit beyond that:

A nonconformist Jedi Master refused to serve as a general during the Clone Wars. Because he was nowhere near Republic forces when Order 66 was issued, he survived the first wave and was able to flee to the Outer Rim. While in hiding, and after embracing the self-interest and material pleasures he had so long denied himself, he fell to the dark side, and adopted the alias "Snoke."

In the years that followed, Snoke used his powers of influence and manipulation to amass a personal fortune from the wealth and resources of various criminals, travelers, and untapped worlds, and establish a home beyond the Outer Rim, in the Unknown Regions. He became something akin to a crime lord, albeit with little interest in territory or reputation. He instead used money and connections primarily to acquire information sources and quietly monitor galactic events.

During this period, Snoke also encountered the Knights of Ren, a small band of dark-side marauders, and won their loyalty after besting them in combat and offering them power under his leadership -- once the Force presented them with the opportunity to make their move.

When the Imperial survivors of the Emperor's Contingency retreated to the Unknown Regions following the Galactic Civil War, Snoke noticed. He used his wealth to buy an audience with them, his knowledge of the Unknown Regions to aid their struggling navigators, and his command of the dark side to present himself as an associate of Palpatine (whom, in the wake of Order 66, he had deduced was the Sith Master the Jedi had been hunting during the Clone Wars). Awed by skill none but the Sith had displayed for generations, and desperate for leaders other than a handful of secular military commanders, Palpatine's remaining acolytes surmised that Snoke must be a reborn Darth Plagueis... an error Snoke exploited to further legitimize himself in their eyes.

Whereas Palpatine had originally conceived of his Contingency as a much more patient endeavor, which would rebuild the Empire over centuries while monitoring opportunities to manipulate galactic events in its favor (much like the original Sith long game that brought Palpatine to power in the first place), Snoke co-opted it and transformed it into the First Order, using his wealth to build its military much more rapidly, speeding up the timetable in preparation for a simpler campaign of terror and brute force.

When Snoke learned that Luke Skywalker was rebuilding the Jedi Order, he went out into the galaxy to assume his former Jedi identity to get close to him, leaving behind the Sith acolytes and the Knights of Ren to ensure the throne of "Darth Plagueis" remained uncontested. Masking his heart, Snoke befriended Luke and helped him find students and begin a training temple. Snoke took a backseat role, playing the part of a humble old man who wanted to be helpful but recognized the young galactic hero as a better leader than a relic from a generation whose mistakes had led the galaxy to ruin.

Luke told Snoke the full story of his family history. Snoke, who knew of both Anakin and Vader but previously had no idea they were the same person, saw an opportunity to repeat history with Luke's nephew, Ben Solo. Snoke became young Ben's confidant, subtly stoking in him disillusionment with the galaxy his heroic family had built, and planting seeds of resentment toward his parents for sending him away to live with his Uncle Luke.

Luke eventually learned the truth and drove Snoke out, horribly scarring him in the process... but Snoke had already hooked Ben, whose issues only intensified over the next several years, leading to his fall to the dark side and him joining the First Order as Kylo Ren.

Snoke was a powerful darksider and skillful manipulator, but his real gift was his knack for recognizing and exploiting opportunities. Alas, he lacked the foresight to truly be another Palpatine, accounting for the relative simplicity of the First Order's methodology and his failure to anticipate Ren's betrayal.

59) Luke mentions the fact that Leia and Han never told Ben his grandfather's identity. This was a plot point from the 2016 novel *Bloodline*, which details how Leia's political opponents outed her as Darth Vader's daughter, leading to Leia's ouster from the New

Republic Senate. However, the novel does not explore Ben's discovery of or reaction to this revelation.

60) We present Anakin as his younger self portrayed by Hayden Christensen. Replacing Sebastian Shaw with Christensen in *Return of the Jedi* was one of the most controversial changes to the Original Trilogy, and wasn't helped by George Lucas's official explanation that a redeemed Jedi's "inner person would go back to where we left it off." But we've hopefully hinted at simpler one: Force spirits appear in whatever form the living would recognize. For instance, in a conversation between Luke, Rey, and Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke would see the Old Ben he knew personally (Alec Guinness) whereas Rey, whose only visual frame of reference would likely be holo-records from the Clone Wars, would see the Jedi General she studied (Ewan McGregor).

61) First Order supertankers and *Darius G*-class freighters were introduced in the 2018 animated series *Star Wars: Resistance*.

62) The Resistance flagship *Organa* is another original ship. The *Starhawk*-class battleships from which it's descended first appeared in the 2017 Disney-canon novel *Aftermath: Life Debt*.

63) Slugthrowers are the Star Wars equivalent of real-world firearms, which fire solid metal bullets rather than energy bolts. Though at first they may seem out of place in the galaxy far, far, away, this class of weapon has actually appeared in the films, wielded by Tusken Raiders (carried in *A New Hope*, and fired at podracers in *The Phantom Menace*). Bullets disintegrate upon contact with lightsabers, so they cannot be deflected back at their users, and the rapid-fire models used in our script fire at a rate too fast for even the most skilled Jedi to keep up with.

64) In our story, Kylo is capable of summoning Force lightning and sending it through his mechanical fingers, but it damages them in the process. Hopefully this clarifies why the powerful Darth Vader, whose forearms were entirely mechanical, either couldn't use the ability or chose not to risk it.

65) Admittedly, having R2-D2 & BB-8 operate the *Falcon's* guns was simply born out of a desire to do something fun and new with the droids. It was only later that we happily realized it served a tactical purpose as well, to compensate for a human crew that could have been incapacitated by Battle Meditation.

66) The general idea to have Finn instigate some sort of "stormtrooper rebellion" has been popular for years among the fandom, even appearing in Trevororrow's *Duel of the Fates* script. We hope our version of the concept satisfies readers in the context of the story we're telling.

67) Many in the fandom dislike the casualness with which Finn kills stormtroopers in the official films, given his own history and understanding that their free will has been compromised. For the most part, we believe this can be understood as Finn accepting the necessity of doing unpleasant things in war, and perhaps being aware that a lot of stormtroopers are acting of their own free will. Beyond that, however, we have further alleviated the issue by pitting Finn mostly against purge troopers, who can be inferred to be the worst of the worst, picked for their natural ruthlessness and/or subject to the harshest conditioning.

68) The First Order designations of the three "awakened" stormtroopers are all Easter eggs. "GL-2577" refers to both George Lucas and *A New Hope's* release date on May 25th, 1977; "MX-0599" to *The Phantom Menace's* release on May 19th 1999, and "JN-1815" to *The Force Awakens* on December 18th, 2015.

69) After slaughtering the Resistance unit Krayt Team, Cardo mentions Finn and Rose's skirmish in Hall 1138. The number continues the longtime Star Wars tradition of referencing George Lucas's first film, *THX-1138*.

70) Between Hux's lecture to Kylo early in the script, his subsequent conference with the Knights of Ren, and his speech just before the climactic lightsaber brawl, we hope the more technocratic, utilitarian spin we've put on the First Order's governing philosophy further distinguishes it and the Knights from the Empire and the Sith, and, when paired with our recontextualization of the First Order's scale and strategy, makes the Sequel Trilogy's conflict feel like less of a retread of the previous trilogy's war.

71) The way Rey & Kylo neutralize the Ysalamiri effect was inspired by the recurring theme in *Star Wars: Rebels* of Ezra Bridger learning to defuse conflicts with dangerous creatures by connecting with them rather than fighting -- a manifestation of the Jedi philosophy of harmony with the natural world.

72) The Resistance starships *Dodonna* and *Ackbar* are named after Rebellion officers from the original trilogy: *A New Hope's* General Jan Dodonna, and *Return of the Jedi's* Admiral Ackbar.

73) The space battle is full of cameos showcasing characters and ships from the full gamut of Star Wars novels, comics, gaming, and animation, across both the Lucas and Disney eras, ending the Saga with a celebration of its entire history.

74) We like to imagine that Dash Rendar would have been played by Kurt Russell. On top of Russell's roguish charm, he actually

auditioned for the role of Han Solo, and Rendar was originally created as a sort of Han Solo substitute for the 1996 *Shadows of the Empire* multimedia project, so he's a perfect fit.

75) Especially-observant readers may notice that the deaths of two Knights of Ren, Ap'lek and Kuruk, are not fully spelled out "onscreen." While we wanted Episode IX to end the war, that's not to say it can't leave one or two secondary loose ends open for future stories. At the same time, those who want the Saga to end here can easily infer all six died here.

76) The Dynamic-class freighter seen on Corellia during the uprising montage is the ship model of the Ebon Hawk, the main ship of the classic video game *Knights of the Old Republic*.

77) "Galactic Alliance" is the name of the government that came after the New Republic in the EU novel series *New Jedi Order*. We would have very much preferred that the New Republic not have been destroyed in the first place, but we played the hand this trilogy dealt us. Hopefully we've at least balanced the trilogy's repetition with some sense of progression, that this generation is learning from past failures instead of just repeating them.

78) Yavin 4 was selected as the place of Ben Solo's exile for several reasons: to revisit another classic world, because canon has shown the planet hosting civilian settlements while still apparently being far from galactic government, and because thriving nature is conducive to the rehabilitation of Force-sensitives struggling to recover from the dark side.

79) Both parts of Ben's "Deak Antilles" alias are Easter eggs. "Deak" is the name of one of the characters from George Lucas's early drafts who eventually evolved into Luke Skywalker, and various EU stories have implied that "Antilles" is the Star Wars equivalent of "Smith" or "Jones," i.e., a very common name often used for false identities.

80) We wanted Ben's fate to be clearly different from Anakin's, and to leave him at a point that could function as an ending, but didn't lock him in place (i.e., maybe he spends the rest of his days in exile, or maybe he'll eventually return to the galaxy to answer for his crimes, or to aid the Jedi against a new threat). And while we have no intentions to actually write such a thing, we like to imagine that this ending could have been followed by making Adam Driver the focus of one more film, a smaller, more character-driven story... *Redemption: A Star Wars Epilogue*.

81) The final spoken dialogue in our script, and by extension the last words said by any character in the Saga: "the Force will be with you, always."

82) For the ending sequence, we originally wanted to put Finn in the jacket he got from Poe during *The Force Awakens*, but realized it was probably lost after he disguised himself on a Star Destroyer that blew up in *The Last Jedi*. So we decided that Poe gave him a replacement, as a parting gift when Finn left to begin his Jedi training.

83) In the end, Rey and Finn was the only romantic pairing that made sense. Besides Finn's obvious feelings for her in Episodes VII & VIII, their relationship serves a key narrative purpose: demonstrating that the New Jedi Order has learned from the mistakes of the prequel-era Jedi, and is adopting a healthier, more balanced view of attachment. Anything else would have been a contrived exercise in shipping for shipping's sake. (As for Rose kissing Finn at the end of *The Last Jedi*, we simply dismiss it as a heat-of-the-moment act brought on by thinking they were about to die.)

84) The lack of details in prior films about Luke's nascent Jedi class actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because it let us decide that the truth wasn't as bleak as it seemed, and correct what we believe to be the single greatest failing of the sequel trilogy: Luke Skywalker not restoring the Jedi Order. This change preserves Luke's impact and makes the Skywalkers a net positive for the galaxy, without detracting from Rey's impact as the hero who saved the Jedi.

85) Many of the Jedi described in the closing scene are meant to be cameos from EU characters who have not yet made it into Disney canon: Kyle Katarn (from the *Dark Forces/Jedi Knight* video games), Jaden Korr (from the video game *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy*), K'Kruhk (from the *Republic* and *Legacy* comics), and Tenel Ka (from the *Young Jedi Knights* novels).

86) Several Disney-era characters also appear: Jacen Syndulla (a *Rebels* character who is the son of Jedi Knight Kanan Jarrus and Alliance pilot Hera Syndulla), Temiri Blagg (better known as "Broom Boy" from the final scene of *The Last Jedi*), and, of course, Grogu (a.k.a. *The Mandalorian's* "Baby Yoda").

87) There's also a (relatively) young Wookiee Jedi, who could either be the EU character Lowbacca (from *Young Jedi Knights*) or the canon character Gungi (from *The Clone Wars*); as well as Ahsoka Tano (Anakin Skywalker's former apprentice seen in *The Clone Wars*, *Rebels*, and *The Mandalorian*), who was created by George Lucas and remains prominent in Disney canon.

88) Each Jedi teacher represents an era/medium of Star Wars storytelling: Kyle the early 90s EU by way of LucasArts gaming, K'Kruhk the prequel-era EU led by Dark Horse Comics, Ahsoka the

final George Lucas canon additions via animation, and Rey, obviously, the future realized by Disney in film.

89) K'Kruhk's original lightsaber was canonically green, not purple, but we wanted each teacher to have a different color, and think it's reasonable to assume Jedi who lived through the Purge were likely to have lost and replaced lightsabers along the way (maybe he found Mace Windu's?). Speaking of the fan-favorite Jedi Master, the fact that he was active during the Clone Wars, and might have known what Snoke was really like back then, means K'Kruhk could have potentially been a thorn in Snoke's plans if they had been at Luke's temple at the same time. Sounds like an interesting story hook...

90) Some may take issue with our decision to make Rey one of four Jedi teachers, rather than the sole head of the New Jedi Order. But even in Disney canon, it's been suggested that Luke himself didn't begin teaching others until roughly a decade after Episode VI, and especially given how condensed the Sequel Trilogy's story was, we simply didn't think it was plausible to make Rey a full Jedi Master less than a year after the First Order's defeat. Any number of changes by Lucasfilm could have justified it – putting years instead of minutes between Episodes VII and VIII, for instance, or giving Rey a different backstory (like maybe an apprentice who survived Luke's temple) – but again, we played the hand we were dealt. In any event, we believe the achievements we have given Rey – among them rescuing the nascent NJO, helping redeem the last Skywalker, becoming a Jedi teacher at her young age – are still more than impressive enough for her to stand alongside the leads of the other trilogies.

91) Way back when Lucasfilm announced *The Rise of Skywalker* as the title for Episode IX, it naturally sparked endless speculation as to what it might mean. For us, the unusual construction (as opposed to something like *Rise of the Skywalkers* or *The Legacy of Skywalker*) pointed to "Skywalker" being the name of a place (maybe a new Jedi Temple, a Force sanctuary, or the capital of a Newer New Republic). Then the film came out, and we learned that the Internet put way more thought into the title than the screenwriters ever did. With this rewrite, we had the chance to make our original theory a reality and give the title a clear, satisfying meaning.

DELETED SCENES

ALTERNATE MEETING WITH HONDO: An earlier draft had Hondo's discovery of Kylo on Batuu coincide with a routine supply run Finn and Rose were making to the same planet, which we changed to remove such a convenient coincidence. The changes to accommodate the final draft were minor, but it did require sacrificing one fun interaction between Hondo and R2-D2:

HONDO:

I kid, I kid. The Jedi were never the greatest of friends to "creative entrepreneurs" such as myself, but they were immensely preferable to the Empire or the First Order. Nevertheless, the lady is correct.

Sympathy for the Jedi runs deep on Batuu, but is rarely voiced. [Leans in & theatrically whispers] *One never knows who's listening.*

ROSE:

[already exasperated] We're here for supplies, Hondo, not to reminisce.

HONDO:

Patience, patience. I have an inventory of all the usual goodies for you right here.

Without warning, Hondo casually shoves a data card into Artoo's front data slot. The offended astromech whines and buzzes, rocking angrily from side to side as if he's about to teach Hondo a lesson. An annoyed Rose places a hand on Artoo's dome and shoots him a pleading look that seems to say: *I know, just stay cool.* With a resentful tone, Artoo calms down.

HONDO:

[unfazed] But that list does not include the one item that really matters. Thanks to the incredible fortuitousness in which I happen to specialize, I have come into possession of something far more precious than pilfered military cargo.

FINN:

What is it?

HONDO VS. THE PURGE TROOPERS: Though not refined to final-draft caliber, this scene stayed in the script for quite a while, as a way to highlight Hondo more and get a bit more humor into the story. We ultimately decided to replace it with something a bit shorter, both for length and because official Star Wars films tend

not to spend so long on side characters. It was great fun to write, however:

Transition to a close-up side view of Hondo Ohnaka's face, passed out on the bar of a cantina, mouth hanging open. A shadow falls over it.

STERN VOICE:
Ohnaka.

Hondo mildly stirs, but doesn't open his eyes.

HONDO:
[mumbling] Like I said, you're the one who raised the bet... not my fault you couldn't tell a Rhylet from a bantha's-

A black-armored hand grabs the collar of Hondo's jacket and yanks.

STERN VOICE:
Get up, scum.

Hondo is jerked to his feet and blinks at his visitor. Cut to a dark, blurry figure, which sharpens into a FIRST ORDER PURGE TROOPER, armor black with red highlights, wearing a commander's scarlet shoulder pauldron. He's flanked by two others, lacking pauldrons but otherwise identical. Each carries a vicious-looking blaster rifle. Hondo's eyes widen and he dramatically straightens to attention.

HONDO:
[clears his throat] Oh, er, uh, hello there! You, you have my undivided attention, of course. To what does Hondo Ohnaka owe the First Order's visit?

COMMANDER:
A TIE Fighter crashed nine clicks south of Black Spire. We have reason to believe the wreckage has been moved.

HONDO:
[fidgets slightly] Reeceally. A mystery, to be sure, but I'm afraid I've heard nothing about it. If you're looking for men to help search the woods, I can provide-

COMMANDER:

Enough. We know that no contraband moves through this port without passing your hands. And you know that failure to turn in recovered First Order property is punishable by relocation to a labor camp.

HONDO: Ho ho, that won't be necessary. Let me ask around; perhaps one of my men stopped for a bite before completing a salvage run. I know none of my dedicated staff would knowingly defy an official decree from the regional jackboo-

COMMANDER:

What did you say?

HONDO:

Er, shaak boots! I said shaak boots! It's a local compliment. Softest lining this side of the Rozzum Cluster. Not that soft is a priority for military men such as yourselves, but if you're interested in a pair I could-

TROOPER:

Enough. We're going to personally escort you back to whatever hole you call an office, where we'll have a talk about every womp rat on your payroll and every storehouse you can account for. Then we'll talk about the ones you "forgot" to account for.

HONDO:

[gulps] ...certainly. Let me just pay for my drink, and we'll be on our way.

Hondo turns to the bar. Unwilling to indulge another delay, the troopers reach for him. But before they can grab him, Hondo pretends to trip and fall to the floor, in the process swinging his arm and spilling his glass in the direction of a short male ALEENA seated another seat down. The big-eyed, pale blue patron jumps off of his stool with a yelp, backing into a towering, broad-shouldered figure. The figure turns around, revealing a rust-colored, black-horned DEVARONIAN.

With a snarl, the Devaronian impulsively grabs the Aleena with one hand and hurls him forward-toward the troopers. The distraction captures their attention, which Hondo uses to begin scrambling through the crowd to a rear exit. On his way out, he makes a point of knocking over drinks, shoving drinkers into each other,

and shouting epithets in every direction to stir as much chaos as possible.

HONDO [speaking Huttese]:
[to the left] PEEDUNKEY! [to the right] TONTA TONKA,
STOOPA! [back to the left] KAVA CHE WHIRLEE?

TRANSLATION [ON-SCREEN CAPTIONS]:
Punk! Tentacles up, stupid! How much for the dancers?

Behind him, all the physical and verbal commotion stirs some of the largest, surliest beings in Oga's Cantina to their feet, glancing around in anger and confusion—GAMORREANS, BESALISKS, and CROLUTES among them. It's enough to spark a full-on bar brawl.

Cut to the rear exterior. It's night on Batuu, and no longer snowing. Hondo is frantically running through a back alley. Muffled screams and blaster bolts can be heard from inside the cantina. Hondo makes his way to the street, which is well-illuminated by building lights and passing speeders. He nervously glances from side to side, then darts off-screen.

Cut to an exterior shot of the Oga's Cantina entrance. The commotion stops after another few blaster bolts. The purge trooper commander exits, lowering his hand from his helmet in the process; his two men meet him from each side of the screen, having swept from the rear entrance in both directions.

TROOPER 1:
No sign of him, sir.

TROOPER 2:
He could be anywhere in a hive like this. Shall I call reinforcements?

COMMANDER:
[nods] Odds are the Resistance is gone by now, but let's be thorough. In the meantime, I've just received word that Lord Vicrul is pursuing a different lead. He's confident that if Solo's still alive, he'll end up leading us right to the Resistance—or the Resistance to us.

FALCON SPARRING SESSION, ALTERNATE OPENING: We cut this moment between Rey and Finn because it reveals Finn's Force-sensitivity too overtly and too early:

Rey adopts a high guard, blade back, and closes her eyes.
Finn adopts a low guard and does the same.

REY:

Now, reach out. What do you feel? No peeking.

FINN:

[deadpan] Like you're going to hit me in the face while my eyes are closed. You are going to keep in mind that I don't Force, right? This is just reflex testing for me.

REY:

[scowling, eyes still closed] Focus, or I really will hit you in the face.

FINN:

[chuckles] Give me a second. [Breathes in] Okay, I think I'm ready.

REY:

Are you sure?

FINN:

You know, honestly I'd really rather- whoa!

Rey steps forward and cuts at Finn's face, but a fraction of a second before impact, Finn's training saber is up and in place. Still operating on instinct, he returns the cut. Rey blocks it, eyes closed, and steps back.

REY:

[opens eyes] Look at that! You did it! [Face gets serious] Did you peek?

FINN:

[rattled, eyes now open] Uh... no? I don't think so?

REY:

Then you did it!

FINN:

Oh. Um. That's great!

REY:

So did this time feel any different? Want to try again-

FINN:

Absolutely not. That was kinda freaky, and if any part of it was concentration, mine's shot.

REY:

[a little disappointed] Fair enough. Spar?

FINN:

[Nods, looking a bit more comfortable now that he can keep his eyes open like a sensible person] Best of three.

SECRET OF THE NEW REPUBLIC: This Kylo Ren monologue was floated early in a brainstorming session for Kylo's argument with Poe. It never made it into the script, as we quickly decided both that we didn't want to make the New Republic quite *that* bad, and that it was simply too big a bombshell to drop this late in the trilogy. But it's still interesting to imagine:

You want to know the best part of what the Republic made?
The real lynchpin?

Star. Killer. Base.

The ultimate weapon of terror. Of "evil." The greatest war crime of the First Order. Only... it wasn't. Do you know what your precious, peace-loving Senate was doing with all that material from their decommissioned ships, all those funds left over from military appropriations? They certainly didn't evaporate. They were used. For military application, no less. For the purpose of "peace in our time." A peace that would not, *could* not, be broken.

They didn't get far by the time Snoke relieved them of it, of course. They were far too disorganized, too many imprisoned engineers doing everything in their power to stall its construction, too many black budgets passed through the web of unelected committees who kept the wheels slowly turning. It took some time to get it moved, but less than you might think. Then it was just a matter of applying a *real* galactic power's resources to the groundwork laid by your just, benevolent, and democratic New Republic.

Both of them wanted peace in our time, dear Admiral. And no matter how you deny it, ignore it, or refuse it, in the end they both took the same path to achieve it. We just got there first.

VICRUL DEPARTS VJUN: The following moment was briefly considered, but ultimately rejected. We wanted to portray Hux's First Order as evil, but not so impractically spiteful as to obliterate its own facilities just to punish failure:

Cut to Vicrul's TIE Justiciar ascending, flying away indifferently as a massive crimson beam from a FIRST ORDER SIEGE DREADNOUGHT blasts the now-useless Bast Prison into oblivion.

OTHER REJECTED IDEAS

Early on we considered bringing back Captain Phasma one more time, sporting an array of cybernetics from her fall in *The Last Jedi*. But while we enjoyed the idea of Phasma as the *Star Wars* equivalent of *South Park's* Kenny, we realized that any role she might play would feel meaningless without a climactic face-off with Finn... which already happened (which, again, wouldn't be an issue had the trilogy been better planned from the start, but we digress).

We originally considered simply transplanting the EU species vornskr to Vjun from their homeworld of Myrkr, but ultimately decided against changing the details of a preestablished species if we didn't have to. And so the Grath hounds were born.

Early in the brainstorming phase, infiltrating the *Dominance* was going to be much more stealth-focused, which we ditched for full-on action after we fleshed out the Vjun sequence. But before that decision was made, we briefly toyed with the idea of disguising Kylo as a First Order radar technician, in a nod to Adam Driver's classic *Star Wars* Undercover Boss skit on *Saturday Night Live* (alas, the idea amused us, but it almost certainly would have been too meta anyway).

Speaking of Hux's Star Destroyer, until relatively late in production we called it the *Inevitable*. But we renamed it the *Dominance* to avoid needless comparisons to *Avengers: Endgame*, especially in light of the official Episode IX clumsily paralleling other aspects of that much better film.

We never wrote it, but we briefly considered showing more of Aquilae's surface during the final battle, including a new character who would have been revealed to be the wife of Lor San Tekka, the "old ally" briefly seen in the beginning of *The Force Awakens*. But as intriguing as the prospect of fleshing out Max von Sydow's criminally-tiny part was, we decided that yet another subplot for an already-multifaceted sequence would be too much for too little return.

It was settled on right away that Rey and Kyle Katarn would be two of the New Jedi Order's four teachers, but the remaining slots changed several times before settling on K'Kruhk and Ahsoka, the latter of whom we went back and forth on for fear of potentially conflicting with whatever happens in her upcoming Disney+ series. We also considered Corran Horn (hailing from the *X-Wing* novels), but rejected him for not being visually recognizable enough for an unnamed, non-speaking cameo; and Mara Jade Skywalker, rejected because she simply would've been too big a narrative and canonical can of worms to drop for the sake of such a brief appearance.

VISUALS & CONCEPT ART

The following is a selection of images from various sources, intended to give a general sense of some of the imagery intended for our story.

The heroes' standard looks would be largely the same as the below costumes from the official films, albeit with slight tweaks, such as giving Rey full-length pants, proper boots, and a better utility belt with a lightsaber clip & other gear (Disney/Lucasfilm promotional photos & art):



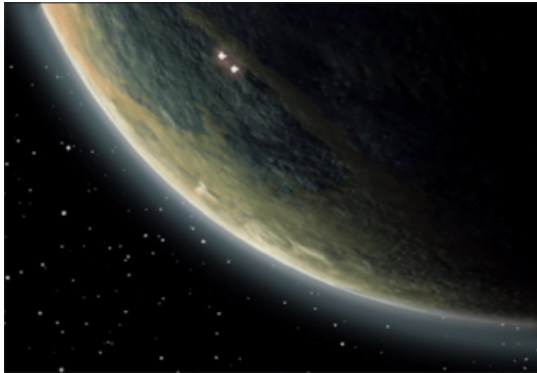
Kylo Ren's Supreme Leader look is unchanged from the official film. The Knights of Ren's helmets are also unchanged, but the rest of their garb is essentially cleaner versions of their official costumes, and their weapons are replaced with unique lightsabers (Disney/Lucasfilm promotional photos):



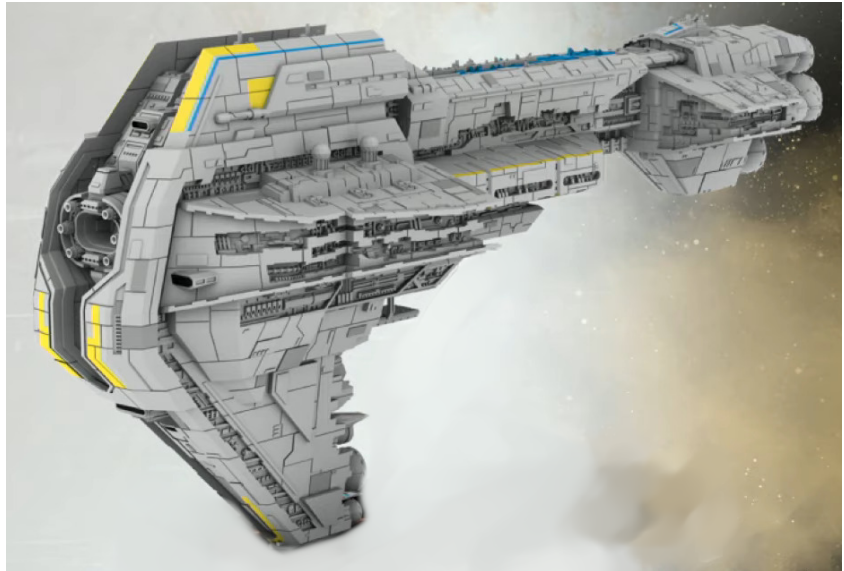
Below are rough approximations of Kylo's appearance as a Resistance prisoner, albeit without the injuries he sustains in the opening sequence (Glyn Dillon's concept art for official Episode IX), Kylo/Ben's look for the Battle of Aquilae, & the repaired Skywalker lightsaber (edited by Team Dale from official Disney/Lucasfilm promotional art & photos; head from Marvel *The Rise of Kylo Ren* #1 variant cover by John Tyler Christopher):



Our vision of Vjun is largely the same as its Legends depictions, albeit greener. Bast Prison uses one of Lord Momin's rejected designs for Vader's Mustafar castle. For Grath hounds, we've used Ralph from the 2018 film *Rampage* just as a starting reference. V-Wings & TIE Defenders resemble their official counterparts. (images from *Jedi Academy* video game; Disney/Lucasfilm promotional art; Marvel *Darth Vader* 2017 #23 art by Giuseppe Camuncoli; Warner Bros. *Rampage* promotional art):



Below is an approximation of Poe's military uniform (edited by Team Dale from Colin Heck's art of General Iroh II from *The Legend of Korra*; head from Marvel *Poe Dameron* #13 comic cover by Phil Noto), and an example of the *Starhawk*-class battleships from which the Resistance flagship *Organa* is descended (image of miniature from Fantasy Flight Games' *Star Wars: Armada*):



Finally, an approximation of Rey's combat suit for the Battle of Aquilae (edited by Team Dale from Glyn Dillon's concept art for official Episode IX), and a logo for the New Jedi Order, incorporating the twin suns of Tatooine to symbolize its founder, Luke Skywalker (edited by Team Dale):



We would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all who have taken the time to read our story, offer feedback, and share it with their fellow fans; to the friends and loved ones who encouraged us to see this project through to the end – and, of course, to George Lucas, the Maker of this wonderful galaxy far, far away.

For video, updates, commentary, reviews, and more, or to contact the authors, please visit: **TeamDaleTROS.wordpress.com**

STAR WARS EPISODE IX: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER
THE TEAM DALE REWRITE

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