

## Mania

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# Mania

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## Summary

If Kylo was to achieve his goals, he needed a puppet of his own. - After all, the damage was already done...

Kylo sensed exhaustion and pain, mingling with a dark undercurrent of fear and frustration born of failure, but also a brazen self-confidence and firm determination that left no room for regrets.

Here was a soldier, ready to die.

Poe Dameron's mind was familiar - and would prove as malleable to his influence now as it had been then. Like puckered scars, Kylo could trace the damage he had inflicted, as he had lashed out with the unbridled fury of a hurt child.

Oh yes, he remembered those days well: Han Solo, staring at him, wary of his own son, ever since his Force-sensitivity had come to light, and all too willing to return to the life of a smuggler. Leia Organa, her back turned, the door closing behind her, always in the company of her staff and surrounded by politicians eager to curry her favor.

They had left him to his own devices. And every time had felt like a betrayal, their love a shallow thing of empty words, broken promises, and smiles that Ben Solo had learned early not to trust. And how could he have earned that elusive thing, when never given the chance? When all he inspired was fear, to the point that he had woken to see his uncle looming over him, his lightsaber poised for a fatal blow?

*Ah, but that came later*, Kylo reminded himself, clenching one fist tight to help harness the hatred rising within him.

Only Poe had volunteered to keep him company, had tried to befriend him. And his kind efforts Ben had repaid with a monstrous act: After getting into a fight with his mother, he had taken by force the unconditional love he longed for - and in doing so nearly ripped to shreds the mind of the one person who saw him for himself, not the dreaded shade of Darth Vader.

Yet now, years later, his mistake might turn out to be his saving grace. Kylo was well aware that he commanded no loyalty, not among the First Order nor the Knights of Ren. He served Supreme Leader Snoke like a blunt tool; had been honed by him for that very purpose long before he had left his mother's womb.

If Kylo was to achieve his goals, he needed a puppet of his own. - After all, the damage was already done.

Punching in his security code, Kylo reached again for Poe's mind. There it was, lurking in the depths, that twisted obsession, that caricature of real love. It churned behind the mask of the dashing ace pilot who charmed men and women alike with his friendly demeanor and devil-may-care smile.

The door opened and there was Dameron, bound to the interrogation unit, his uniform torn, bruised and beaten, one eye swollen shut... But, as expected, still defiant, raising his chin in clear challenge as Kylo moved to stand before him.

"The best pilot in the Resistance." Kylo reached for his helmet and removed it. "I should have come for you sooner."

Poe's face turned slack as he stared, a study in wide-eyed, open-mouthed shock and surprise, whatever witty comeback he had prepared forgotten. "...Ben?"

"Yes."

"They told me you died," Poe said, voice harsh with sudden anger. "That you've been killed together with the others. That Skywalker --"

"My uncle was the one who tried to kill me," Kylo interrupted, his own temper flaring.

"What?!"

Kylo shook his head, keeping his face impassive even as he delighted in Poe's outrage on his behalf. "It doesn't matter."

"Don't say that," Poe said quietly.

Kylo watched him close his eyes, felt his inner struggle resonate within the Force before the ripples smoothed out. Done. Like flipping a switch. A monstrous act, he himself had called it, even while taking advantage of his victim. - And yet a method far more reliable than the conditioning invented by Brendol Hux, as FN-2187 had recently demonstrated.

"Why didn't you contact me? You know I would never have fought against the First Order if..." Poe chuckled without mirth. "Right. And my rebel friends would have wondered where Captain Dameron is off to in such a hurry. I would've led them straight to you."

A reasonable assumption, if far from the truth, but Kylo saw no need to correct what served him well. "But now you're here."

"You've no idea how much I've missed you, buddy," Poe said with a broad and easy smile that made his lip bleed anew.

Kylo leaned close enough to feel hot breath on his face. "Then show me."

Secured as he was, Poe could only tilt his head in invitation, offering him a mouth dry from hours of screaming in a kiss that tasted bitter like metal and sweet with memories of Kylo fucking him, back at a time when all the adults in his life had ridiculed his hopeless teenage crush.

Leaving Poe flushed and panting for air, Kylo finally pulled away. Drawing on the Force, he unlocked the shackles. "I believe you."

Poe got to his feet, unsteady at first, but recovering quickly. "So, what's the plan?"

"A pilot of your skill will be a valuable asset to the First Order," Kylo answered while putting

his helmet on. He had no doubt that General Hux would be lurking outside. "And I could use someone to watch my back. Someone I can trust."

Poe grinned. "I've always wanted to fly a TIE fighter."

"Consider yourself hired," Kylo said dryly. "Tell me, what did you do with the map?"

"I left it with my droid, BB-8. The outpost closest to the village would be Niima. He should be waiting for me there," Poe answered without hesitation. "I promised I'd come for him."

"And so we will."

Kylo left the interrogation room, Poe walking two steps behind him on blind faith, no questions asked, but they got no farther than around the corner before they ran into General Hux, who was pacing along the corridor.

"What is the meaning of this, Ren?"

"None of your concern, General. I take full responsibility for the prisoner's release," Kylo said, not breaking his long stride.

Hux seemed to swell with self-important anger as he hissed after them: "I will inform Supreme Leader Snoke."

"You do that, Red," Poe called over his shoulder.

Kylo waited until they were out of earshot to ask, "Red? Really?"

Poe shrugged. "Hey, there's a reason it's a classic."

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