

This is Us, and I Love Us

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/5657572) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/5657572>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Categories:	M/M , Multi
Fandoms:	Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens (2015) , Star Wars - All Media Types
Relationships:	Hux/Kylo Ren , Hux/Ben Solo Kylo Ren , Poe Dameron/Finn , Phasma/Rey
Characters:	Kylo Ren , Ben Solo , Hux (Star Wars) , Phasma (Star Wars) , Ben Solo Kylo Ren , Rey (Star Wars) , Poe Dameron , Finn (Star Wars) , Dopheld Mitaka
Additional Tags:	This started out as a joke , Developing Relationship , Implied Relationships , Alternate Universe - Coffee Shops & Cafés , Alternate Universe - Modern Setting , Fluff , there will be so much fluff just you wait , Phasma's first name is Nicole , Mutual Pining , Alternate Universe - College/University , First Kiss , Kylo Ren Has Issues , Phasma Ships It , Rey Ships It , everyone ships it honestly ., Kylo Ren and Rey Are Related , Slow Build
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Lovely Hearts
Stats:	Published: 2016-01-07 Updated: 2016-06-17 Words: 28,856 Chapters: 10/?

This is Us, and I Love Us

by [the_queenregent](#)

Summary

He comes in every day at precisely nine AM, dressed in all black more often than not and always leaving his empty coffee cup on his table. There's nothing Hux can do to stop this, but not for the reasons that Nicole thinks.

(Featuring terrible wingman Phasma, hopeless Hux, and Kylo "I don't know how to handle emotions" Ren.)

Also known as: The modern AU Kylux fic that nobody asked for, but I'm giving it anyway.

Notes

Here it is: the good ol' coffee shop AU that we all know and love, combined with the trashiest of Trash Ships. What's not to love?

Phasma and Hux's first names are courtesy of tumblr user ta2ine!

Note for the entire fic: the majority of chapters will be from Hux's point of view, but I'll change it up every now and then.

Mr. Black-Hair-and-Beanie

Chapter Notes

Update on 10 Jan 16: I made a very, very small and necessary edit that deals with when the story takes place; things start off in their freshman year of college.

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

He's standing in front of the counter, arms crossed.

He's wearing all black, he has too much hair...

And he's taking his goddamn time.

Hux makes a noise of impatience somewhere in the back of his throat. He can't help but tap his foot and mirror the other man's pose; this is getting out of hand. How long had he been standing there?

Finally, *finally*, precisely when the clock strikes 9:05 AM, the stranger orders. A *pumpkin* spice latte, at that. The man moves on as if he hadn't just been standing in front of a clearly impatient cashier for the last ten minutes. Or, that was what it felt like; it probably wasn't actually ten minutes. Even so, Hux continues to glare daggers into his back.

It's too early for this bullshit. This entire *job* is too early.

He opens Monday through Thursday at seven AM and doesn't get off work until noon. *Every single day* this man comes in, dressed in all black more often than not, at exactly nine AM. Hux doesn't know where he comes from or where he goes, but every day is almost identical.

The other customers vary, of course; you have your typical suburban soccer moms and white teenage girls wearing vests and leggings, but then you also have those extremely shading customers who lean a bit too far over the counter and put their hands a bit too close to the tip jar. Fortunately, Hux is skilled in the arts of facial expressions; he can make those shady bastards lean back and practically *cower* with his glare. That's always satisfying.

Despite the occasional interesting customer, the days were still monotonous, even when he didn't work. Work, classes, sleep, repeat. With everything going on, there isn't really any time to do anything else. Hell, he hasn't even called his parents since... Since the first month of school.

It's freshman year, second quarter, midway through November, which means double the customers in the mornings, which in turn means more suffering on Hux's part.

All he can do is attempt to be polite while trying to just get through the day. He doesn't have any classes today, but goddammit he still doesn't have the *time*.

In reality, only three minutes have passed since that weird guy ordered a pumpkin spice. He's sitting in the corner now, wearing a black beanie that's almost pulled down over his eyes. Not quite, though.

He stays there for a good hour, eventually pulling a laptop out of his (black) messenger bag and occasionally sipping his coffee. People stare (he's wearing so much black), but he either doesn't see or doesn't care. Every now and then, he slams his hands against his keyboard, typing angrily. It's very amusing to watch.

Well, until he forcefully shuts the laptop (surely that broke the screen), crams it back in the black bag, and leaves, somehow managing to slam the shop's front door.

Hux stares after him, watching the strange man force his way through the crowd of people on the sidewalk until he's out of sight.

Thankfully, the clock on the wall struck 10:15, meaning that he could finally, *finally*, go on break. He skillfully snitches a croissant from the pastry case.

As he turns, hand on the break room door, he notices something.

That bastard left his coffee cup on his table.

There's something in him that makes Hux want to throw the cup away, but he reminds himself that he's on break now.

It's not my job right now.

The break room is practically empty, as it usually is. Devoid of people, except for one, there isn't much in there to begin with. On one of those TV cabinet things (is there a name for those?) is in the center of the room, with an old TV on it, along with a VCR. There's a round table nearby, with two chairs. Apart from those, there isn't much else. A counter with a sink, some cardboard boxes, a Keurig (ironic).

Nicole Phasma is reclining back with her feet on the table. She had been staring aimlessly, but looks up when Hux enters.

She offers him a tired smile and a vague "mornin' Hux" as a greeting. There's a cup of iced coffee on the table next to her feet, and the fact that it could easily be knocked over bothers him. His fingers itch to reach out and move it. Not to mention the fact that she's the only one he knows who drinks iced coffee when the weather is this cold.

He settles down in the chair opposite of her without responding. This doesn't go unnoticed by her.

"Something wrong?" She takes a sip of her coffee.

All he does is mutter something about irritating customers while getting back put to begin the process of making coffee. Why did he sit down in the first place? Hux doesn't really look at (or care about) what he's making. What matters is that it's a way to wake up for a bit. He sits in silence while the machine does its job before he realizes something that makes him look up.

"Why are you here early? You don't start until eleven." The Keurig alerts him that his coffee is finished, so he gets back up to retrieve it, questioning the reason why he sat down in the first place. Again.

Nicole only sighs slightly, not turning her attention away from the TV. "My first two classes are cancelled. Have you seen the snow outside?"

"Yes, of course I have. Why don't you have anywhere else to go?"

She shrugs and gestures vaguely. "The library doesn't have the little Dunkin Donuts cup-things for the Keurig. Besides, it's warmer in here." Without saying another word, she stands and exits the room.

It's not strange behavior, but she didn't turn off the TV. Hux can't tell what show it is; he doesn't watch a lot of television in the first place, and he's certainly never seen whatever this is. He sips coffee in silence, forcing himself to enjoy this time off and to not think about everything else on his list of things to do. He focuses on the *here* and the *now*; the slowly warming chair, the hot coffee, the satisfaction of being indoors while it's snowing.

Nicole returns soon enough. "Mr. Black-Hair-and-Beanie is back."

Hux pushes himself up into a more comfortable sitting position, admittedly more alert. "What? Why is he back?"

"I have no idea. Was he here earlier today?"

"Of course he was here earlier! He comes in everyday at exactly nine o'clock in the morning, always takes forever ordering, and he always leaves his goddamned cup out on his table!"

She snickers. "He left another cup, you should go throw it away."

"Why don't you do it yourself?" He asks, annoyed.

"Why don't you do your job?"

Dammit. "I'm on break, Phasma. It's not my job at the moment."

"I don't care," She crosses her arms and sits back down. "He had been visiting in the around noon for a while, but he never stayed long. Always looked so disappointed before he left. He hasn't been around for a bit while I'm working, though. Do you know why? Because I certainly don't."

Hux shrugs, pushing his empty cup around the table. "Beats me. I'd never seen him before he started coming in." Now his leg is bouncing up and down under the table, where Nicole can't

see. *Keep calm, keep calm. Change the subject.*

"So," he ventures, "are you hoping for classes to be cancelled due to the snow?"

She starts talking, and the tension in his shoulders lessens. He has successfully steered the conversation away from potentially dangerous territory.

Dangerous, because this man is not just "Mr. Black-Hair-and-Beanie."

Hux absolutely *loathes* the man. Every single week day he comes in without fail, and every single day Hux spends an hour feeling like his limbs won't do what he wants them to.

Whenever this "stranger" is around, Hux always feel like his arms are too long, like his hands are thick and clumsy, like he's walking on ice with the way he slides around and misplaces his steps. His breathing gets just a tad bit faster, his face gets too warm. He hates how out of control he feels.

Never will he ever admit it to anyone, how he feels. It makes him feel weak. They're strangers, they don't know each other, what gives this man the right to make Hux feel this way?

Although, they're not really, truly strangers. Hux write's his name on a cup every day, listens to someone else call it out every day.

Neat script, black against a white cup, slightly shaky: *Kylo*.

It's ridiculous. He shouldn't be feeling this way. He shouldn't let himself feel this way.

All of his feelings can be summed up with "Ugh."

Nicole asks something about whether or not he drove to work. He answers, no of course he didn't, he can't drive in the snow, and tries not to look so spaced out.

She suspects something, he just knows it. They don't even work at the same time, but she knows that something is up. They have several classes together, and he often accompanies her for binge study sessions. (That's a bad habit that he needs to fix.)

In fact, now that he thinks about it... She really does bring up "Mr. Black-Hair-and-Beanie" a lot. Whenever there's a lull in their conversation, she always, always, mentions him, without fail.

So, Black-Hair-and-Beanie was in here the other day... That Kylo guy came in for fifteen minutes before he bought anything, what a hooligan... Remember Black-Hair-and-Beanie? He was here yesterday. Didn't stay long. Isn't he cute?

Yeah, she definitely knows that something is up.

Is he really that obvious?

Hux glances around. There's nobody else and the door is closed.

"Cameron!" Nicole snaps her fingers in front of his face. This earns an immediate reaction.

"Don't call me that!"

She only sighs and rolls her eyes. "Whatever. I asked you a question."

"I didn't hear."

"I could tell." Her words are short and clipped. "I asked you a question."

"And?"

"Do you think that Black-Hair-and-Beanie is cute?"

Had he been drinking coffee, Hux certainly would have just spit it out.

"Excuse me?!"

She shrugs, attempting to be nonchalant. Had he not known her so well, it would have been convincing. "I've been meaning to ask you for a while. No big deal."

"What--what give you the impression--*how dare you ask*--I don't--" The words falling from his mouth only vaguely resemble sentences. He sputters, trying to get what he wants to say out, but he just can't.

Could she read his thoughts? Is that why she asked?

"You blush whenever he's mentioned," she continues. "I told you, I've been meaning to ask you for a while now. He's been coming in for months. When are you going to say something to him?"

This is all so sudden. Why now? Why not, you know... never?

Definitely not avoiding the subject, he whips out his phone to check the time. "Oh, look at the time! I have to go back and, you know, do my job!" Hux practically flees the room. He's safe... for now.

"Cameron Brendol Hux! Do not think we are done discussing this!" She's shouting after him, but he's already out the door and back behind the counter.

Thank god that's over.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading, and I hope that you'll stay tuned for the next chapter!
~remember, kudos and comments are food for authors!~
(Let me know if there are any typos or anything and I'll fix them!)

Much love and see you next update,
~Bee

The Flutter

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for the positive reception! Now I feel like I have a reputation to uphold ^-^'

Warning: Kylo's actions are cringeworthy in this chapter.

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

Apparently, coming into Empire's Coffee House practically every day for a month and staying there for around an hour at a time will *not* improve anything, especially if your interactions are strictly limited to a less-than-typical conversation between a cashier and a customer.

Kylo had hoped that things would, for once, work out the way they wanted to.

Of course they couldn't.

He could still remember the first time he laid his eyes on the red-haired cashier who was, frankly, the best looking man he had ever seen. Eleven out of ten, appearance-wise.

Had Kylo been an extremely extroverted person without anxiety issues, he would have at least attempted to further their conversations, but he *wasn't*, so he *couldn't*. Every single time he approaches the counter, he began to panic. His palms get sweaty, his face turns warm, he feels like there are walls closing in around him. His brain seems to shut off completely. Surely he looks so stupid, just standing there with wide eyes, not saying anything.

Everything is fine, though, as fine as things can be when your house is on fire but your body is, for the most part, fine. You may have inhaled a little bit of smoke, but you can still breathe. Most of the time.

Ideally, their relationship (could you even call it that at it's current stage) would get better, but as long as it didn't get worse, he was (not) okay with a bit of pining.

But, as usual nothing ever works out the way he hopes.

He's late to Empire's on November fourteenth. The previous night, he had made the mistake of staying up way too late, and hadn't gone to bed until... Well, until the morning.

Waking up at one PM had been, frankly, terrifying. Thankfully he only missed one class, but it still sent him into a dizzy state of anxiety. It had been so disorientating to wake up in the afternoon, with the snow shining brightly. It usually had a blue tinge in the morning. He had

been about to contact his professor before he realized that he *absolutely should not*, especially in this state.

To put it fairly, Kylo was a mess that morning. He didn't really realize until he was halfway to his destination. He had stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, sporting pajama pants, clearly unwashed hair, and the dreaded Tee-Shirt-That-Must-Not-Be-Named. He must have been truly out of it when he woke up.

Clearly, he had been distracted.

It had been too late to turn back, so he tried not to grimace and forged on.

He's just thankful that he wore his jacket today.

Well, of course he wore his jacket, it's under thirty degrees out.

Although, it's not the best jacket to be wearing around. He had owned it since high school, and by this point had fondly nicknamed it his "hobo jacket".

Now, the bell rings as he enters Empire's, and the first thing he notices is that Cameron--that's the name, the name of the gorgeous man who works here--is not there. Almost immediately, the ball of tension in his stomach loosens.

In a way, he's glad that he doesn't have to directly deal with those feelings today.

He orders twice as fast as usual, without stammering, and he's actually able to meet the cashier's eyes. She's the very tall woman that he usually sees around this time. Her name tag reads "Nicole" in large, curvy handwriting.

Kylo thanks her before moving on, pulling out his phone while he waits for his drink to be made.

There are never really a lot of customers around this time, so things go quick. Soon enough, he's turning around and walking towards his usual table in the corner.

Unfortunately, there was a problem.

Sitting at Kylo's usual table is none other than Cameron, the red haired wonder.

It takes Kylo a moment to process this. He's not in his work uniform, which contributes to the initial shock factor. Instead, he has what might possibly be-- Yes, yes they are. He's wearing blue and black plaid pajama pants and a black v-neck under a zip-up hoodie, and Kylo is just standing there, and *oh dear god the Flutter is back*.

Ah yes. The dreadful Flutter.

Whenever he thinks about Cameron, Kylo always gets the most ridiculous fluttering sensation in his stomach. Emphasis on *ridiculous*. Now it's back, with a vengeance.

The whole situation with Cameron makes Kylo wish he had someone to talk to. He doesn't, however, so he keeps all bottled up inside him.

Maybe he should consider a diary or something.

No, no, that's not an option, he finds himself thinking, and it's utterly incredible because he's standing there gawking and Cameron hasn't noticed him.

Something, some unearthly force, makes him approach and put a hand on the table.

"Why are you sitting here?" It comes out more aggressive than he had meant for it to be.
"This is my table." *What am I doing?*

Cameron's face raises, and those captivating pale green eyes meet Kylo's.

"I don't see your name on it," he says, so calm and collected, with a voice that sends shivers down Kylo's spine.

He has attitude.

Yep, the entire situation is hopeless. Kylo's face already feels like it's being sunburned.

"I sit here every single day." *Oh no, no, no, Kylo you damn idiot that was awful--*

"So?"

He'll later curse whatever unholy power makes him sit down on the opposite side of the table.

Cameron--does he even know that Kylo knows his name?--makes a vague hm sound and looks back down at his laptop, effectively ignoring him.

Two can play at this game, Kylo thinks, so he opens his own bag and pulls out his own computer. Might as well work on that paper due later this week...

...if he can focus.

For Kylo, being this physically close to this one person (he won't admit anything to himself, not yet. Acknowledging the Flutter itself took over a week) is like being close to an open flame; any closer and he'll get burned, but if he's farther away he'll be cold.

He keeps glancing up over the top of his laptop. There are several times where Kylo would swear that when his eyes went up, Cameron's eyes flicked down. It could have just been a trick of the light, though. Probably was.

At some point he gets up, and Kylo has a very sudden flash of irrational fear that he's leaving, even though he doesn't hake his back or laptop. He disappears into the back room with the tall blonde woman.

Impulsively, Kylo jumps up to look at the screen. He only allows himself a quick glance before sitting back down.

Pulled up in an old version of Word is what looks like an essay, with large chunks highlighted as if going through revisions. But that's it; paranoid that Cameron might come back any moment, Kylo doesn't let himself linger long enough to read.

And it's a good thing, too; the ginger comes back mere seconds later, red in the face and scowling. He heavily sits back down and resumes typing.

His coworker exits right after him, also scowling. She constantly shoots furtive glances over at their table, looking as if she doesn't want them to notice.

Well, she's doing a piss-poor job at it.

Kylo tries to pay attention to his essay; he really tries, but Cameron's presence feels like he's sitting in front of a bright light.

He looks up at the wrong (right?) time and their eyes met across the table. Cameron holds eye contact, saying, particularly venomously, "Could you stop that?"

"Stop what?"

"Humming."

"I wasn't humming." He totally wasn't humming.

Wait. Was he?

"Yes, you were."

He was?

Kylo definitely isn't stupid, but he also isn't the most intelligent or logical person either. You can't blame him for saying, "No I wasn't." He was panicking. It was a very slow process, but he could feel the walls beginning to close in.

"Yes, you were," he repeats, more aggressively than before. "You were humming, don't deny it. I heard you. It's not as quiet as you think." He seems to be literally turning red from anger.

"Feel free to move to another table," Kylo says gesturing around, but no, *no, you're doing it wrong!*

"There's no way in hell that I would give you the satisfaction of--" He breaks off when a large snort sounds from the counter.

The blonde coworker is standing behind the pastry counter, looking away with her hand covering her mouth. Her shoulders are shaking, and she's obviously laughing. Her laughter is almost--almost--contagious, before Kylo realizes that she's probably laughing at him.

He feels his face go pink, and the room, already too warm, becomes unbearably hot.

Cameron stares daggers at her until she finally looks at him. Apparently, she finds this even more hilarious and actually doubles over, bracing herself against the pastry case with one arm. He lets out something that might be a frustrated sigh before very pointedly turning back to his computer and continuing to aggressively type.

That glare was impressive.

The atmosphere at the table is now charged, tense. It's as if both of them are trying to avoid each other, trying to be on opposite sides of the room while sitting next to each other.

It almost becomes unbearable, and Kylo is actually considering leaving (he finished his drink long ago; he had been constantly sipping it in his nervous state) when the clock strikes two and the blonde woman saunters over from behind the counter.

"Hello Hux," she says, smirking.

Are they only on a last name basis?

"Fuck off, Nicole."

Apparently not.

She, Nicole, puts her hands on her hips. "Oh, that's no way to treat a friend. I thought you were better than that?"

"Phasma. Seriously. Fuck off."

"Ooh, breaking out the last name. I feel so threatened," she says, but she's grinning like the Cheshire cat. "Tensions running a bit high? Why could that be? You're not usually like this."

Cameron's--Hux's?--face is the same color as his hair.

Sitting right next to them while they banter is so incredibly awkward that, once more, Kylo almost gets up and leaves. It's very confusing, listening to them. He can't tell if they're good friends or sworn enemies. Or both?

An awful thought wriggles into his mind: *What if they're dating?*

The horror is almost too much to handle; it makes him feel dizzy.

"Aw, Cam, are you *blushing?*" *Nicknames?*

"I need to leave," he says abruptly, packing away his computer.

This is officially too much.

Kylo swings his bag over his shoulder and hurries towards the door, fully intent on returning to his dorm and screaming into his pillow.

Behind him, he can hear footsteps stomping off in the direction of the break room, and he thinks that they have both left with someone puts their arm around his shoulder, startling him.

"Hello, Kylo," Nicole says. "We haven't been properly introduced. My name is Nicole Phasma, and we need to have a chat."

Chapter End Notes

Oh, Kylo...

Friendly reminder that I have a tumblr: the-queenregent.tumblr.com

Much love and see you next update,
~Bee

This is Way Too Sudden

Chapter Notes

Fun fact: the detail about Hux pacing and stuff is actually canon, found in the TFA novel, if I'm not mistaken.

I hope you enjoy this chapter! It sure was a pain to write.

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

Oh, Nicole Phasma was going to get it.

How dare she? *How dare she?*

Aw, Cam, are you blushing?

That entire scenario had been an absolute disaster. The entire time, Hux had wanted to sink so low into his chair that he would never be seen again. Maybe, while he was at it, he could even slip down into the void and never be seen again. That would be nice.

She always said that when he got embarrassed, his face became as red as his hair. Surely, that's exactly what had happened.

Even thinking about the atrocity that was The Table Incident makes him want to lie down in bed and never get up again. His situation must be pointless by now. There wasn't any more hope. He would never be able to see the light of day ever again. Somehow, he would have to start his new life as a hermit; maybe Nicole could help supply him with food.

All of these thoughts are a bit depressing, considering how much it affects him.

Really, it's not Nicole's fault. It's his own. He was the hopeless one.

Hux thought about all of this in his dorm room after he had fled Empire's.

Several hours had passed. The sky outside his window was dark, but the snow made things look oddly bright.

It was still so odd, having snow this early. It wasn't even winter yet. It was November. He can't help but wonder if it will be like this all winter long.

Hux hates snow. It's wet and cold and irritating.

But that's not the point.

He lets his head fall onto his desk, abandoning his half-assed essay. Just as he does this, someone begins to pound at his door.

"Cam!" Nicole starts shouting at him. "Let me in, I know you're in there! Don't make me kick down this door!" He doesn't say anything. "Cameron Brendol Hux, you have ten seconds to open this door before I kick it down, and we both know who will have to pay for the damage!" She begins to count down, her voice getting increasingly more threatening.

With a groan, Hux drags himself to the door and opens it.

Nicole is standing there, arms crossed and looking completely pissed. She's wearing her grey track and field school sweatpants, with a dark blue tank top, and her hair is pinned back with a few bobby pins. Her dark eye makeup, which she never seems to take off, is smudged, but it makes her eyes look brighter.

"About time," she sighs, pushing past him. Without invitation, she plops down on his bed. "I totally would have knocked down that door, by the way."

"I don't doubt you," Hux mumbles, sinking back down into his office chair and bringing his knees up to his chest.

He can't see her, but he can hear genuine concern in her voice. "Cam, are you... Are you actually upset about today?"

"No!" *Yes.*

"Oh my god, you really are."

There's a rustling behind him as she gets up and moves behind him, placing a hand on top of his head. Messing up his impeccable hair, she says, "You did fine, for the most part. You just need a bit of help."

Hux lets out a groan. "As if I'll ever be able to get anywhere with you 'helping'. It doesn't matter now, we're done, it's hopeless. I might as well stay here forever and become a hermit like Professor Luke."

She gently whacks his head. "Stop being so dramatic. Let me see your hands." There isn't really anything he can do to protest, so Hux holds up his hands for her to inspect. Nicole sighs, probably shaking her head. "Cam, Cam... You really need to stop doing this." Another sigh.

One of the many weird little habits that Hux has is that, when he's anxious, he paces. However, he finds that pacing is a huge waste of energy, so instead he scrapes his fingernails against his palms. It can be painful at times, but despite this, he still finds it better. Nicole, on the other hand, does not approve.

He had been doing it practically all day, non stop, whenever his fingers weren't on his keyboard.

She gets up and begins to rummage through the first aid kit by the door, silent. It doesn't take her very long to find several large bandaids, and she kneels down in front of Hux and bandages his hands for him.

"Thank you," he says, quietly, while she works.

Raising her eyebrows, she looks up. "You shouldn't even need to thank me. You shouldn't even be *doing this anymore*."

"I know."

She sighs in a very long-suffering way. "I know that you know. But that's not the point. I don't understand why you feel the need to stress yourself out this much over *him*."

"I don't expect you to understand." Hux says, flexing his hands.

"Oh my god, Cam, seriously," she laughs and takes his hands again. "You're not supposed to be the emo one in your relationship."

He shoves her away, scowling. "Nobody is 'emo' in anything. Besides, I don't even *have* a relationship."

"You could."

"No!"

Nicole smiles very cheekily at him, standing up. "Yes, you could. He likes you. *Kylo* likes you."

The blood drains out Hux's face. "You did not."

She cocks her head a bit, her grin getting larger and larger while Hux jumps to his feet. "I didn't what?"

"Nicole you did oh my god!" He jumps up and chases her around the room, trying to grab her arms, but she dodges out from under his outstretched arms every time he gets close. Finally she stands up on his bed. She has to duck her head, though. Hux stands with his hands on his hips, glaring up at her. "What did you tell him? When did you tell him? You always come on too strong to new people!"

"Oh, I know I do, but he seemed to appreciate it. I did most of the talking. But it was right after The Table Incident. I kind of just pulled him aside. I was like 'Hey, let's go have a chat and become friends'. We walked around and talked. The topic just came up some how." Hux opens his mouth to protest, but she interrupts him. "No, I did not bring you up."

This is shocking. Hux had been about to talk over her anyway, but stopped cold when she said this. "Are you saying that *he* was the one who started talking about me?"

"Yep!"

Holy shit. "What did he say?" It's awful, so awful, but Hux is hanging on the edge of his metaphorical seat.

"Oh, we were just talking, and then he just randomly asked if you and I were dating."

Hux can't help but laugh. The idea itself is almost as absurd as the fact that Kylo might assume that this was the case.

"I told him we weren't and he seemed so relieved that I had to ask why," Nicole says, sitting down. She pats the bed next to her, inviting Hux to sit as well. When he does, she says, "We ended up talking about you."

He makes a disgruntled noise.

"Nothing bad!" she promises. "But we were talking about you, and he asked about how well we knew each other, so I told him, of course, and... then he told me. He said that he really liked you and asked if I knew how you felt. He was blushing a lot. It was really cute."

Hux buries his bright red face into his hands. "I can't believe you actually told him... How dare you... I thought we were friends."

"Oh, there's no need to be dramatic!" She cheerfully pats his back. "Now, all we need is for you two to just date already. He's interested." He looks up to see that she's raising and lowering her eye brows in an almost suggestive manner.

Hux pushes her away. "Go. This is way too much to take in at once."

"That's what she said."

"*Get out!*" He gets up and tries to shove her towards the door. It's only because she goes willingly that he manages to push her out.

"Text me!" she calls before the door closes.

Once her footsteps go silent, Hux sinks down against the door with a groan. Hearing all of this at once is not the most pleasant sensation. He wants to jump for joy, but he also wants to break something.

He actually ends up getting into bed three hours early, because everything at the moment is just too much, but too little at the same time...

...only for the information to slap him right in the face three minutes later.

"*Holy fuck,*" he breathes, eyes widening.

Now, all we need is for you two to just date already. He's interested.

Was she lying?

No, she wouldn't do that. He knew her too well to be able to tell when she was lying. There had been excitement glittering in her eyes while she spoke to him. Besides, she wouldn't lie about something so severe... Right? She wouldn't do that?

Consumed by both doubt and elation, all Hux can do just just lie there.

This is way too sudden.

He can't even be too sure of his feelings in the first place. Yes, there's that joyful flutter, but there's doubt and uncertainty, like he's about to step into water, but he doesn't know if it will be deep or shallow or warm or cold.

Best case scenario? Everything turns out alright, they're happy together. It's all okay.

Worst case scenario? Well, he doesn't want to go there.

These really aren't the types of things he should be thinking about when he's trying to sleep, but in reality? There is no way he will be able to sleep early, like he intended. So instead of dwelling on bad thoughts in the dark, he gets up and moves back to his desk, just in time for his phone to light up and play Nicole's song.

He picks up his phone and unlocks it.

---Nicole P. (8:23PM)

HEY btw i got his number 4 u :)))))))))

Following this is, apparently, Kyo's phone number.

Hux's heart skips a beat as he read the number over once, twice, three times, until he's memorized it.

This strange, strange feeling of floating is almost making him dizzy. How much water had he drank in the last twelve hours? Not enough, surely. Too much coffee, too much sugar. It's making his head hurt.

If he wasn't so preoccupied, he would go refill his water bottle at the drinking fountain out in the hall.

Although, to be fair, if he wasn't so preoccupied, he would be doing just about anything else.

He, for once, gets up and paces, cursing the band-aids on his palms but refusing to take them off.

Half of him is completely overcome by this floaty elation. That half wants him to just let go and give into these fluffy feelings.

The other half, the more logical half, tells him to stop. To end this before it begins. Before something goes terribly wrong.

"Ugh!" Hux lets himself fall face down onto his desk.

He's so tired.

Everything is just too much.

He is *so tired*.

---**Nicole P.** (8:31PM)
cam u there??

---**Nicole P.** (8:34PM)
cam???

---**Nicole P.** (8:56PM)
hello??????

---**Nicole P.** (9:17PM)
are u ignoring me?

---**Nicole P.** (9:59PM)
alrighty then. luv u cammm, goodnight!!! have good dreams abt ur new boyfriend!!! <3

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter might be a bit delayed, just warning ya. Finals are approaching faster than Sonic the Hedgehog.

Much love and see you next update,
~Bee

Time to Play Wingman

Chapter Notes

edit: Fixed a small mistake.

I'm still getting used to referring to Phasma as Nicole and Hux as Cameron, but soon both you and I should get used to it! I have many chapters planned after this, so there will be time to adjust.

it's almost midnight and i have two finals tomorrow, but kylux is, quite clearly, my priority. (You're welcome!)

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

Nicole tries. She really does. It would be helpful if Hux tried too.

Although, to be fair, it would probably be counterintuitive if he tried to help.

Cameron Hux could be so hopelessly... well, hopelessly *hopeless* at some times. Especially when it came to Kylo.

The two jumped around each other all throughout the following week. It was incredibly strange--and awkward at times--to watch. At one point, their hands accidentally touched, and it was amazing. Kylo jumped about three feet into the air and almost dropped his coffee. And Cameron? His only physical reaction was that his pupils had drastically dilated. Could Kylo tell? Probably not. Maybe.

Of course, Kylo couldn't know that later that night, Cameron had called her in a panic, shouting about how their hands had touched and *Nicole, it's over, it's all over*, because he didn't really have an external reaction.

They started hanging out in Nicole's dorm during most of their free time, whenever they weren't in class or at Empire's, because things would apparently be awkward if they did so in Cameron or Kylo's.

Right off the bat, it was evident that Kylo was different. But it was a good different. He didn't really seem like the kind of person who would hang out with their 'type', but at the same time, he fit in perfectly.

Cameron was all neat shirts and jackets, with nice shoes, clean jeans, and a haircut that your grandmother would approve of. His outfit, in the fall or winter, at least, always consisted of a tee shirt, one of his numerous sweaters--cardigans--whatever, and a heavier long grey overcoat, with dark grey jeans and black Converse. Occasionally, he might add a hat and gloves. Never a scarf, however. (There was something about him and scarves.) He wore

contacts out and about, but secretly had big black framed glasses that only Nicole knew about. He wouldn't look out of place *anywhere*, be it a rock concert or book store.

Nicole was a bit different. Her favorite combination was shorts and leggings, with tall black boots and those comfy socks that went up over the tops of the boots. She wore what one may consider to be a lot of makeup, but really, it *wasn't*. It was just dark lipstick and eye makeup, no foundation or whatever. She didn't have time for that. At any given time, she had on layers and layers of eye makeup, eyeshadow especially, since she never really bothered to take it off at night.

Very unlike Cameron, your average senior citizen would see Kylo and glare in his direction. He wore so much black, and didn't seem to own a pair of jeans that weren't practically torn to shreds. There was a certain pair of boots that he always wore; black ones, of course, that made his feet look too large compared to his skinny legs. Kylo had his own huge coat, and he wore a scarf a lot; a huge black one that almost covered his chin and shoulders. Sometimes, he even had *multiple* scarves.

The thing was, Cameron and Kylo look so *good* together.

Thankfully, she has a plan.

Nicole Phasma is nothing if not clever and crafty. She's loyal to her friends, even her new ones, and if she sees an opportunity, she will take it.

And that plan involves two movie tickets, a single drink, one large popcorn, and lots of lying. It would only work if she could pull it off flawlessly. Of course, she knew that she could.

It was the beginning of December and they had already made so much progress. Cameron and Kylo had become so much more at ease around each other, although they did have a weird "pretend to hate each other" kind of thing going on.

Cameron is sitting the floor with his back propped up against Nicole's bed, working on complicated math homework. He keeps muttering to himself and punching numbers into his calculator. There's a book resting on his lap and a pencil tucked behind his ear. He let's out a barely audible sigh before closing his book, picking up his calculator, and hurling it across the room in one fluid motion.

"I'm done," he says casually.

Kylo, draped across Nicole's desk chair with his long limbs splayed everywhere, sits up. "That was the best thing I've ever seen you do," he says, completely deadpan.

There's a vague blush on Cameron's cheeks, but not enough for Kylo to notice... But Nicole is devious.

"Look, you managed to impress him, and all it took was to destroy a hundred dollar calculator!"

He turns around to look at her.

The look on Cameron Hux's face is so amazingly incredible that she actually has to whip her phone out and take a picture of it. It could almost pass for a straight face--almost, if there wasn't a completely maniac look to his eyes, which are just a bit too wide, and if his mouth wasn't a bit too tight.

"Phasma," he says lightly, "I wouldn't mind if, right about now, you *shut the fuck up*."

This sends her into a fit of laughter that's probably way too loud, but it doesn't matter. She saw her chance and she took it, and she has no regrets whatsoever.

She snorts. "You should've seen yourself! That's a picture to save!" When she shows it to Kylo, he starts snickering, and soon that escalates until he's doubled over, clutching his stomach.

Sitting back, he rolls his eyes. "Remind me; why do I hang out with you two in the first place?"

Nicole pushes herself forward until she's hanging off the bed between him and Kylo. "Because you loooove us!" She hangs upside down, enjoying the feeling of the blood rushing to her head, until it becomes too much and she has to sit back up.

Cameron crosses his arms, making some vague noises of dissatisfaction. When he's finished with his very typical noises, he stands up. "It's late. We should get going. Can't stay here forever."

"I mean, you could, but you *shouldn't*."

"Yeah, well. C'mon, Kylo."

They exit together. She watches them leave, and, once the door shuts, doesn't hesitate to send Cameron a text--

---**CAM** (10:27PM)
KISS!!!!!! HIM!!!!!!!!!!

No regrets. This won't get anywhere without her.

His response is immediate and hilarious:

---**CAM** (10:28PM)
FUCKHT E SHUT UP

Nicole leans back, letting herself stretch out over her bed. At this moment, she envies Cameron, and how he has his entire room to himself. At this point, she has to lie awake waiting for Jess to return.

When she wakes up the next morning, Nicole doesn't remember ever falling asleep.

She's sprawled out over her bed, limbs this way and that way, and her phone is warm beneath her cheek.

It's difficult--she's so tired--to sit up, but she manages. Checking her phone, she finds that the battery is low. Too low for her liking.

The screen is too bright for the early morning, so she turns it down and checks her new texts. There are two from Kylo, and a flurry of panicked ones from Cameron.

---**CAM** (10:31PM)

Alright, I see what game you're playing. Ironing me, then.

---**CAM** (10:31PM)

**Ignoring*

Typical. Very typical.

---**CAM** (10:46PM)

HELP ME THAT WAS SO AWKWARD

---**CAM** (10:48)

NIC HELP ME, I NEED TO SAY SOMETHING

---**CAM** (10:48)

Are you sure he actually likes me?

---**CAM** (10:57)

Is he the awkward one? am I the awkward one??

She shoots back a text, asking what happened, before switching screens to read what Kylo had to say.

---**kyyyyLOW** (10:45)

Nicole i think he hates me

---**kyyyyLOW** (10:45)

He kept glaring @ me??

This makes her roll her eyes. Really, that's how he shows his affection; withering glares that, if you keep eye contact, give way to an adorable, wide smile. But only if you're close enough to him. By pure luck, Nicole is. It takes a special type of person to get used to him.

Kylo can do it. She just knows it.

She sits up and stretches, yawning. There's sunlight streaming through the room's only window, which she forgot to close last night. Unfortunately, snow, easily visible through the wide window, is still covering the parking lot, coming down in fat flakes.

It had stopped snowing, for a while; the grey clouds had suddenly parted one day, revealing a pale sky and causing the temperature to drop ten degrees.

There was even a day where Nicole had managed to convince Cameron to wear a scarf.

The three of them had taken over a table at Empire's after Kylo's job interview. Hanging out with Nicole and Cameron had somehow convinced him that working at the hipster coffee shop was cool, and they had been conveniently hiring while Kylo realized that he needed a job.

Despite the fact that they were inside, they had been freezing. Empire's heater wasn't working, so it was practically the same temperature as outside, and they couldn't go somewhere else because they were waiting for the results of Kylo's interview.

Kylo was wearing ten scarves as usual, along with his typical beanie and hobo coat. Well, he wasn't actually wearing ten scarves, but that's what it looked like. There were at least two. Maybe three. Nicole herself had a scarf (just one), a big, warm grey peacoat, and thick maroon leg warmers. Cameron always teased her for wearing leg warmers, but every time she would proclaim that they were sweaters for her calves and that he should be jealous.

While the two of them were nice and toasty, with Kylo keeping his bare fingers warm on his drink and Nicole holding her icy cup with mitten-clad hands, Cameron was freezing.

It was painfully obvious. He blatantly refuses to wear a hat indoors, ever, and seems to hold fashion over practicality. He would deny this, even if his life was at stake. So, instead of being warm and cozy, he had on dark jeans and a grey overcoat that was more decorative than anything.

(Nicole loves that coat because it reminds her of a cat with fluffed up fur; it makes him look a lot bigger than he actually is.)

He had just sat there, arms wrapped tightly around himself, not touching his drink because he would be too cold if he unfolded his arms.

"Cam," Nicole said for the nth time, "Put on a scarf. Please."

And, for the nth time, he refused.

"Cameron Hux," Kylo said, very seriously, making direct and intense eye contact. "Put on a scarf."

"No."

Kylo puffed out his cheeks. "I don't get why you have this personal vendetta against scarves." He took off one of his many scarves and leaned over, trying to put it around Cameron's neck, but he kept ducking out of the way.

Fortunately, it was a small table, so leaning didn't really do any good.

It was so cute.

Kylo emerged victorious, having successfully wrapped a scarf around Cameron's neck. He had sat back, clearly proud, with the best shit-eating grin on his face. The addition of a scarf

only furthered the whole "angry cat" look that Cameron had going on.

The memory of his blush--of both of their blushes--brought a smile to Nicole's face.

Even with today's snow, it wasn't as cold, but maybe she could get those two to share a scarf again...

This prospect made getting up and ready exciting.

Time to play wingman.

Chapter End Notes

whispers Hux's and Kylo's outfits may or may not be inspired by this amazing artwork: <http://ajgiel.tumblr.com/post/137224815923/stupid-modern-au> except for hux's scarf.

As usual, thank you for reading, and see you next update! Let me know if there are any typos or anything that I need to fix, since this was edited late at night ^^

Much love,

~Bee

Soft and Warm and Full of Life

Chapter Notes

Super long note today, sorry about that!

We'll be deviating from the norm for these next two chapters! They will be used to explain the backstory/characterization for Kylo and Hux. This one focuses on Kylo's childhood, and some of the events that happen before the main fic takes place.

This turned out way longer than I thought it would be.

Also, before we go on, I just wanted to say that I am absolutely floored by the amazing reception this fic is getting. All of your comments and kudos mean so much to me, and I just wanted to thank all of you, even if I can't respond to every single individual comments. All of your guys' comments are so encouraging, and I just want to print them out and roll around in them! ^o^ (See, look, you guys make me so happy that i use emojis.)

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

Ben is so bright and happy on the first day of Kindergarten, until he finds out that his parents can't come with him.

He holds tightly onto his father's leg in front of the bus stop. He doesn't want to go, he *doesn't*, he *can't*!

"Ben," Leia says, sternly, but not sharply. "You need to go to school."

"No, no, no, no!" He only holds on tighter, as if she will try to pry him away.

"*Ben*," Leia repeats. She crouches down next to him while Han stands and sighs, taking his face in her hands. "Benben, honey, you know that we can't be with you all the time." He sniffles and doesn't meet her eyes.

They can hear the bus coming around the corner.

Leia wipes her son's cheeks. Ben stops crying, and when his shoulders stop shaking, she takes his hands and turns him so they're facing each other. "You'll love school, I know it. You won't be away for very long. We'll be right her this afternoon, for when the bus drops you off again, okay Ben? I promise."

A pause, and then he nods. The bus pulls up to the curb as they hug quickly before Ben turns and leaves.

Ben Solo's face is turning pink from cold. He can feel it in his cheeks, his nose, his ears.

It's too cold for his liking. The frozen north was never really his thing. He liked things that were soft and warm and full of life. (Oh, how that would change.) He liked things that were constant, unchanging, always dependable and always there for when he needed to reach out to them.

He shivers, hunching his shoulder in a feeble effort to keep warm. His parents continue to forge further ahead without looking back, occasionally calling out when they see something out of the ordinary--an eagle here, a salmon that jumps out of the stream there. Ben tries to hurry foreword, to catch up.

When he reaches his mother, he tucks himself close to her. Leia wraps an arm around him.

"You cold?"

He nods numbly.

"I'm sorry, baby, I should have considered," she says, then tells Han that they need to go back inside. He agrees to head back, and she turns and takes Ben's cold ears in her hands. "You should have brought a hat!"

Ben shrugs halfheartedly, not saying anything. He's just thankful that they're turning back.

When they finally return to the warmth--the safety--of their car, he lets himself relax. When he puts in his earbuds, it's like the rest of the world melts away. He's safe and sound, and he's okay.

Pink is his favorite color.

Not just any shade, however. There's a very specific one; it's the color of his favorite sweater.

It used to be his mother's, and is now very pale, worn from years of use. The sweater is soft, so soft, always smelling like home. He wears it whenever he can, but not at school. Never at school.

School is never fun. Ben sees it as a waste of time, completely pointless. He likes to learn. Loves it, in fact, but not the way school presents it. Besides, it's not a good place. Not anymore.

The last day before spring break, he's pushed into a wall for having long hair. It's painful; later, he finds a new bruise on his shoulder. The older boys who did the pushing run right past him, slapping the books out of his hands as they go and shouting, "Be careful, Big-Ears Ben!"

Don't cry, don't cry, he tells himself, because there are people around and not a bathroom in sight.

When he gets home that day, he knows what he has to do.

~

Leia comes home from work to find her son curled up on his bedroom floor, crying, surrounded by dark locks of cut hair. She crouches next to him and wraps him up in her arms, protectively.

He's so young. He's so young, and he's so sad, and what can she do when he won't tell his own parents anything? She knows that he's being bullied. That much is obvious. It's nothing new. But she doesn't know the who, or the the what. And he won't tell her anything.

Ben doesn't turn and curl himself towards her. Instead, he only sits there with his arms wrapped around his knees, shoulders shaking. He cries quietly, almost silently but not quite. She can hear those small little gasps and heartbreaking, shaky exhales.

~

When he cries himself to sleep that night, nobody can hear.

The transition from elementary school to middle school is awful, especially after Ben's family picks up and moves somewhere new, unexpectedly. Suddenly he's stuck in this school, which is over twice the size and has three times the amount of people that his elementary school. Not to mention the growth spurts.

He was always taller than most of his friends. But if he felt too big back then, that's nothing compared to now. Is it possible for him to reach six feet before he leaves middle school? At this rate, that seems very likely.

At least the people here won't call him "Big Ears Ben".

There's still happiness. He still has that. Ben smiles often, a wide one that shows off his dimples.

He keeps a list of things that make him happy, so when he's not feeling well, he can read them all.

The blue-grey color of the ocean at their vacation house

The way the rain sounds on the roof of the car

Scarves (well, most of them is written hastily beside this)

That one video of the goat and the Taylor Swift song

Watercolor paintings

There are many more, so many more. It started out as just a piece of paper, hurriedly made and tearstained after coming home from a particularly bad day, but it turns into a journal, with pictures, papers, and other things narrow enough to be attached to the pages taped or glued in. It's his happiness journal.

There is a new contender for the Worst Day Award, Ben thinks, barely sitting in the little chair outside the office while he listens to the doctor talk to his mother.

They talk like he's not sitting right next to the open door, like he can't hear them. He was sent outside as if his young ears can't handle what they have to say. He can hear them so easily.

"We don't usually diagnose children at his age, and at the moment, there isn't anything you can do. We will have to wait for at least two years before we can officially diagnose him. But it's quite obvious. He shows nearly all of the symptoms."

Shut up, he thinks, trying to protect his thoughts onto the doctor. As if that would ever work.

"The most we can do is recommend therapy or mental health counseling."

His mother's voice: "And you're sure it's... what you think it is?"

Conformation: "Yes."

Inner denial: No, no, no, it's not okay.

He takes a deep breath as the doctor and his mother step out of the room.

"Alright," Leia says, just a tad too cheerful, "Ben, let's go!"

He has such expressive eyes. When he's happy, they glitter like entire galaxies. When he's angry, they smolder and burn. When he doesn't know what to do, they seem empty.

Eventually, his smiles stops reaching his eyes.

At some point, he stops seeing his therapist. It's some time in high school. Too soon, he's not fixed. Never will be.

Maybe he just hides everything well enough from his parents. Maybe the lack the funds for him to continue. It doesn't matter. Ben is grateful to be away from him. He, however, feels conflicted.

In the long run? It's a very good thing. How that man had ever been authorized to become a pediatric therapist is beyond him.

But at the moment, it feels like they have taken away some addictive that his life depended on. Like there's an empty section of his brain that needs to be filled.

He feels fragmented; the name 'Ben' no longer seems like a name. It's simply a word, and he doesn't look up when people say it anymore.

Ben isn't even his first name; it's his middle name--Kylo Ben Organa-Solo. Nobody calls him Kylo. Nobody, not even his own family, acknowledges that their proper last name is Organa-Solo. He is simply Ben Solo.

Rey, really, is the only one who calls him Kylo.

He's grateful.

He'd never tell her, of course, but he is.

Junior year of high school, he stops answering to 'Ben' altogether.

At least he still has fencing.

He's so angry.

His parents can afford to retire early, and they want to pick up and move to France, to be closer to Leia's parents, who are currently retired in Paris. Did they ever consider the fact that B--Kylo, that Kylo might not want this?

On a Thursday, he's fired from his job at the art store, and comes home practically simmering with rage. Anything will set him off and he just knows it.

He tries to contain it. He sits in his room, cross-legged on the floor, attempting to measure his breathing and keep his muscles loose. The silence around him seems so loud, but it shatters like glass when the front door opens.

It's so loud; the sounds of keys and shoes and shuffling fills the air, and Kylo grits his teeth.

That's it.

In a flurry of black, Kylo jumps up and storms downstairs.

His entire family arrives home at once; Rey from her fight club or whatever the fuck she does, his mother from work, his father from whatever the fuck he does. (He had probably been hanging out with that giant hairy foreign friend of his.) It's overwhelming, the sudden amount of people, and he subconsciously regrets leaving his room.

Kylo slams on his metaphorical breaks before he reaches the bottom of the stairs, but it's too late; they've already seen him.

Pushing back hair from her sweaty face, Rey drops her backpack onto the floor. It's so loud. Her footsteps sound like she's stomping, and the rustling of his parents taking off their raincoats and jackets makes him want to scream. On instinct, he wraps his arms around himself and bites his tongue.

He knows what's going on. He's always had issues with sensory overload, even when he was little.

Now is really not the time, he tries to tell himself, but that never works.

Really, he should do what he always does; go back to his room, lock himself inside, turn on some music, and wait for it to be over. But today, he can't seem to pull himself away. He's so angry; he wants to lash out and destroy everything in reach.

This isn't a new feeling.

When his parents make the official announcement over dinner, he loses it.

They won't be moving, thankfully. Kylo's grateful, deep down, but at the moment he's too angry over something (he doesn't know what) to express that gratitude.

Rey is quite clearly upset. She was so enthusiastic about the idea in the first place. Her face falls so quickly, but she perks up a bit when Leia says that they will be heading over to Paris in the winter anyway to visit her parents. There's a smile on her face, almost relieved, and she starts talking about how much she's looking forward to the trip already.

On the other hand, Kylo takes the glass he's holding and flings it across the room.

Expected: All conversation goes abruptly silent.

Not what he was planning: "Upstairs. Now." Leia says it sharply, almost like a threat but not quite.

There's a swelling of rage inside him, so sudden that it momentarily takes him off guard. "No," he says.

"Excuse me?"

Rey and Han both look down at their plates. He might be able to consider it comical if the room didn't feel like there were invisible knives floating through the air. Tread carefully.

Or don't.

Kylo puts down the fork that he had just picked up. Good thing, too, or he probably would have thrown that too. "I said no. You can't make me." It's pitiful; he almost sounds like a child.

He stands up.

Han says, "Ben, sit down."

Things only escalate from there. Later, he won't remember what happened. Everything is fragmented.

There was a fancy bottle of wine that they bought because his mother had wanted to try it. He picks that up and throws it at his father. Someone screams. Then he runs. Right up the stairs. Throws open the door to his room. There's not much time. He finds a bag and shoves a few essentials in it, and as fast as he came he's almost out the door, but then he stops.

Sitting on his desk, just where he threw it earlier, is the oversized black leather jacket that used to belong to his grandfather.

He shrugs that on and is about to leave once more, but then he sees the thing underneath the jacket.

"Ben's Happiness Journal" is written on the front.

He takes that and shoves it into the jacket before hurrying out and slamming the door as he goes.

He's almost there, he can see the front door--

Rey appears out of nowhere, and Kylo has to throw his arms out and hold onto the railing to stop himself from barreling into her. Those eyes of hers, those intense eyes that run in the family, are narrowed, furious. No, more than furious.

They stare at each other in silence, waiting for the other to make the first move.

It's Kylo; he draws back and actually swings to hit her, aiming for her face, but she's trained in hand-to-hand combat, where he is not. She blocks it easily and punches him back.

Her fist collides with his nose and Kylo staggers back, seeing stars. There was a sound, an awful sound, that lets him know that his nose is definitely broken.

He can't think about the pain. He pushes past her and flees out the front door, into the warm night.

Those hours after he leaves are some of the worst of his life. He quickly becomes cold and hungry, and there's nowhere for him to sleep. The worst panic attack he's ever had in his

entire life starts right then.

There's one place he could go, the place that nobody but him knows about. (Or, at least that's what he thinks. Even later, he still doesn't know if that place was ever found.) By the neighborhood tennis courts, there's a hole in the chain link fence, just big enough for him to squeeze through. It opens up to a small, concealed clearing surrounded by thick trees and bushes. It's the best he has.

He's crying, he's in pain, his head is spinning, and he is almost unable to force himself to walk.

Kylo makes it. He doesn't know how, but he makes it.

Waking up the next morning, he considers that things could actually be so much worse. If he hadn't already been accepted into a college, then he would be, essentially, homeless, because he can't go back. He just can't.

It's still summer, though. School won't start until September, and it's only the middle of July.

Things could be worse.

He will tell himself that a lot in the coming month.

On his first day of college Kylo 'Ren' puts on his pink sweater and curls up onto his bed. He tries to sleep, but he knows that there is no way he'll be able to, especially considering the fact that his new roommate--ugh--could walk in at any moment.

He's so lonely.

There's a very, very attractive man who works at Empire's.

Oh no.

Chapter End Notes

Reminder that this fic has a Pinterest board! To be invited, follow me here [<https://www.pinterest.com/alltheaesthetic/>] and contact me on tumblr and say that you want to be invited!

As usual, much love and see you next update,
~Bee

Don't

Chapter Notes

Be sure to leave lots of comments, because those are what fuel me! ;)

Extra long chapter today. Happy Valentines, I guess?

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

Hux is simply sitting at his desk, studying, when there's a knock on his dorm room door. Really, there's only two people it could be, so he calls "It's open" without looking up from his work. Behind him, the door opens, then closes.

"Hey." *Kylo, it's Kylo.* "Are you doing anything?"

He puts down his pencil before spinning his desk chair around to face the door. "Not really. Just looking for an excuse to stop studying."

This earns him a little chuckle.

"Ah, well, I'm afraid I didn't come here with adventure in mind." Kylo takes a seat on his bed, uninvited. By this point, they're more used to each others presence. While Hux has never been to Kylo's dorm, Kylo has been to his several times before. Once, he broke a lamp.

"I'm disappointed."

He gets right to it. "My roommate has a few of his friends over. They're playing Cards Against Humanity. Nicole's already over there, she said she'd text you but I guess not. Did you... I mean..." He's shuffling his feet, and *oh good god* he's so adorable. "Did you want to join?" He starts rushing, like he's trying to apologize in advance: "I mean, well, you don't have to go, I don't know his friends, apparently they're high schoolers, but if Nicole's already there--"

"Oh, no, I'll go," Hux cuts him off completely, calm, and stands up. Really, what better did he have to do? He couldn't feel guilty about not studying. He's been doing enough of that lately and should really give himself some time to relax before Nicole starts bothering him about it. Yes, finals start tomorrow, but still. (The best part is that he'll have the entirety of winter break to relax.)

"Okay, then, let's go!" Kylo gets back up and heads back to the door. Hux follows, entire body on high alert, well aware that this walk is about to become the longest time he has ever spent alone with Kylo. Almost immediately, Kylo starts babbling, telling some story about when he started coughing in the car so he had to go inside his sister's martial arts academy place to get water. Apparently, it was embarrassing. It also wasn't a story that Hux ever

needed to hear, but for some reason he was satisfied to hear it. Together, they head through the dorm, down the hall and up the stairs.

Kylo and his roommate live on the floor above Hux--room 32C. Hux has never actually been inside, but Nicole has told him. They get to it easily with Kylo leading and Hux following. The former knocks on the door, and almost immediately Nicole comes flying out, shoving Kylo in and shutting the door. She latches onto Hux.

"Nic what the *fu--*"

"You gotta help me," she shout-whispers. "Did you not get any of my texts?" When she starts shaking her phone in Hux's face, he leans back, but still can't read what's on the screen. It's being held too close, and she's moving it too fast.

Inside, someone shouts something.

Hux pushes both her and the phone back, trying to get enough room to breathe. "What? What happened?"

Nicole takes a deep breath before saying, her cheeks red, "There's a cute girl in there. Poe's friend."

Oh. He starts laughing. It's a huge laugh, one that has him doubling over and clutching his stomach, then has him wiping tears away. Nicole shoves him.

"Oh," he says, aloud. "Oh my god, Nicole, *oh my god!* That's so cute!"

She pushes him again, her blush only darkening. "I'm helping you with Kylo, it's only fair if you help me here!"

"*Only fair,*" Hux mimics. "You're not doing much in the first place. Hell, I never *asked* for your help!"

Nicole is only a few inches taller than him, but she can still seem much larger and much more intimidating when she wants to. "I'm helping you more than you think, and trust me, you need everything you can get," she says. Her eyes lock onto his, intense and kind of scary.

Raising his hands up in a mock-defensive manor, Hux lets himself smirk. "You're still admitting that you need help."

"At least I can do so and keep my dignity."

"What dignity?"

She glares. "I've got more than you."

Hux laughs again, but it's not *at* her this time. "Fine. Let's just go in."

When Nicole's hand hesitates on the door knob, he knows that this must be a very *pretty* girl. In these few seconds, Hux wracks his brain, wondering about the possibility of Nicole having

a "type". There was that girl in freshman year, then that one in junior year... He can't dwell long, however, because she opens the door and reveals the unexpected chaos within.

Kylo is being physically restrained by his roommate, while a brown-haired girl on the other side of the room--the girl Nicole must have been talking about--is being held back by someone Hux doesn't recognize. They're shouting profanities and straining to get to each other. Kylo has his back to the door, but Hux can see that the girl has several bruises on her face--they appear new. One eye is already swollen partially closed.

With his foot, Hux shoves the door closed. His mouth is hanging open.

The door makes a soft sound as it closes, but it's apparently loud enough for Kylo to hear. He spins around.

Hux can't help it; he cringes back, bumping into Nicole. The darkest bruise is blossoming around his right eyebrow, and his nose is bleeding, so there's blood dripping down his front. His face looks pale, so all of the new colors on it stand out.

That's a *lot* of blood.

"Cameron," he says, sounding breathless. "I--" Kylo stops, then wrenches himself free from his roommate's grip.

The girl practically spits at him. Her raised fists--her knuckles are noticeably bruised--lower slowly, and she too pulls free from the person restraining her. When she stands up straight, Hux realizes that they were fighting. They were actually physically fighting each other. Blows were obviously exchanged.

He needs to sit down, so he does so, plopping right down onto one of the beds without a word.

Kylo sits next to him, also wordless. He does nothing to try and stem the flow of blood, so it's on his lips, dripping down his chin, staining his shirt. Hux feels the extremely twisted desire to kiss him.

No, no, stop, this really isn't the time, he has to think, so instead he starts scratching at his palms. He does it subtly, though, so Nicole can't notice.

The silence--only broken by multiple sets of heavy breathing--is almost shocked. It's understandable, of course, because Hux and Nicole had walked into the room to see the aftermath of a *fist fight*.

On the floor, several stacks of cards have obviously been knocked over. There's noticeable spots of blood on some of the white ones.

Hux closes his eyes, so he only hears the girl say, "I'm sorry," breaking the silence.

"No." Beside him, Kylo shifts. "No, you're not. You don't have to be. I--" His voice breaks and Hux squeezes his eyes shut even more.

Hux has always been good at reading people. He knows that Kylo is not one who can easily apologize, and that he struggles with talking about his feelings. In Hux's experience, Kylo usually just breaks nearby things.

Beside him, Kylo makes a sound of frustration. He tries again. "I--I really, well--I mean--" He makes another noise.

When Hux opens his eyes, he casts a sideways glance at Kylo, who's biting his lips, then looks around at everybody else.

Nobody's talking, and all eyes are trained on Kylo. The girl he was fighting with is leaning against the night table by the opposite bed, arms crossed, with a scowl on her face. Kylo's roommate--whose name Hux couldn't remember--is sitting next to her on the bed across the room, with an orange and white duvet. There's a boy sitting next to him, wearing an oversized leather jacket. This one keeps hurriedly glancing between Kylo and the girl. Nicole is still hovering awkwardly by the door.

"Mom and dad just want you home again," the girl says, and suddenly Hux remembers the story Kylo had told them on the way there, the one about him having to go into his sister's fight club (or whatever it was). Is this her? Is this Kylo's sister?

When she says this, Kylo's head jerks up. His eyes are wide. Hux can hear his breathing speed up, and he only talks when he manages to get it under control.

"No they don't," he shakes his head. "You're lying."

His fists are clenched in his lap.

In an instant, the girl's face changes. "Kylo--" A pause. "...Ben."

Once more, his head goes right up. "No, no, Rey, don't call me that. You never have. Please."

"After what you've done, you don't have the right to say that. Mom says practically every day how she wants her Ben back." This was *not* the response that Hux had been expecting.

Kylo's--Ben's?--breathing is uneven and heavy again. There's still blood dripping from his nose. When Hux reaches a hand out to touch his shoulder, he just hunches over even more, wrapping his arms around himself. It's as if, in his eyes, only he and Rey exist.

"Please don't."

"Oh?" Rey--is she really, truly his sister?--narrows her good eye and pushes herself off the night table, taking a few steps forward. The sudden change in her demeanor is shocking. "*Please don't*," she says, voice lowered in a horrible imitation of Kylo's.

Hux is too jumpy for his own good. All he wanted is to take Kylo and go somewhere safe. Nicole can stay with the cute girl and her friends. He just feels the need to go.

"I still can't believe that you're here. After-- after these months of worrying... I could go home right now and tell our parents where you are."

Kylo stays silent.

"After what you did? Leaving, just like that--"

"Rey--" The boy with the leather jacket tries to speak off, but she cuts across him.

"Oohhh no. You can't--" This time, she starts forward. Kylo doesn't move, and his roommate and their friend each put a hand on Rey's arms. "Poe, Finn, get off!"

It suddenly seems to be too much for Kylo, because he stands up and stomps out of the room, slamming the door and leaving silence in his wake.

Hux gets up to follow him but Nicole grabs onto his wrist.

"Let him go," she says. "Trust me. Give him some space."

"But he's hurt--"

"No. He needs his space now." Surprisingly, it's Rey who responds. She walks forward a bit and shakes Hux's hand, then Nicole's. "I'm Rey," she says. "But, you probably already knew that. This is Finn--" she gestures to the boy in the leather jacket, "--and this is Poe, but I assume you already know him, since he's Kylo's roommate."

The amount of tension in the room is incredible. It seems that Kylo's departure just made it worse. Hux is itching to jump up and run after him, but what would the point be? By this point, he's probably already too far gone. Where would he go, anyway? They *are* in his dorm, after all. Hux feels kind of bad about that.

Nicole speaks up. "What just happened?"

Rey takes a seat on what Hux assumes is Poe's bed then pats the space beside her. With an almost panicked glance at Hux, Nicole sits next to her.

"You two don't know me," she begins, looking between Hux and Nicole. "But I know all about you."

"How?" Hux blurts. (He doesn't mean to, but it makes him uncomfortable to know that a stranger has been talking about him.)

Rey smiles slightly, making her bruised eye close even more. Hux notices that she smiles more with the left side of her mouth... just like Kylo does.

"Kylo talks about you to Poe, then Poe talks to Finn and I."

"Nothing bad!" Poe promises.

"Oh." Admittedly, Hux is still taking everything in. Rey's eyes meet his, and there's something about her expression that makes it look like she's more worried for *him* than she is for herself. When she breaks eye contact, she leans back and clasps her hands together.

With a deep breath, she says, "I suppose I should explain." Almost self-consciously, Rey reaches up and touches the vibrant bruise beside her left eye. "Kylo's my brother. But really, growing up, everyone called him Ben. That's his middle name. I don't know why. He tried to stop going by 'Ben' in his junior year, I think. Maybe sophomore. I can't really remember. Doesn't matter. People kept calling him that anyway." A pause. "But... He kind of just... *left* one day. He was angry. It was kind of scary. He was--" She rubs the back of her neck, frowning. "He was throwing things. He..." Once more, she hesitates.

"What, what did he do?" Nicole is obviously concerned.

Rey addresses her, but looks at Hux while she speaks. "He did a lot. I think it would be better if you heard it from him."

"If you can find him," Poe interjects.

This doesn't do anything to reassure Hux at all. "I could go look," he says warily. "Where would he be?"

"Library, maybe. He always found libraries to be calming, especially big ones like what you have here." Rey keeps staring at him with those big expressive eyes. "Be careful," she says, and it's so genuine, as if she hadn't just met him.

"Make sure he's okay," Nicole adds.

With a nod, Hux turns and hurries out.

He can't seem to catch his breath on his way to the library. It must look so strange to the people he passes; he's not wearing the kind of clothing he usually wears, since it's Saturday and he hadn't really planned on going out and doing anything. Instead of his typical nice jeans and clean shirt and nice sweater combo, he's wearing his oldest, rattiest pair of jeans and a thin tee shirt. It's so cold out--there's snow on the ground--but he lacks his heavy overcoat, having left it in his dorm room. His main focus at the time had been Kylo. The same as it is now.

When he gets to the library, Hux slows down and makes sure that his breathing is regular before he pushes the door open and enters.

Hux loves the library. Not only is the architecture gorgeous, but it's always seems so tranquil. It's never loud, but it also isn't ever unbearably quiet. There are several parts, the older half with the high ceilings and rows upon rows of computers, and the new half with multiple floors and mazes of bookshelves. He never likes to assume, but Kylo is probably in the newer half, where it would be easier to hide.

Really, he can see why Kylo likes being here.

And so he begins searching the library, which seems to get bigger each time he visits.

After searching between a dozen shelves, ducking under flights of stairs, and subtly crouching and crawling under many desks, Hux realizes that there's no way he will get

anywhere like this. He falls back into a chair and thinks. How could he find him?

It hits him just as he's about to give up.

Phones aren't really allowed in the library. It's not exactly a spoken rule, but one certainly won't ever be on the librarian's good side if they are seen with their phone out. Hux is on particularly good terms, but he is still willing to risk it. As stealthily as possible and after much glancing around, he slips his phone out of his pocket, checks to make sure that it is on silent, then opens his contact list. He scrolls down until he finds the name he wants, but something is a bit off.

Just the other day, Nicole had used his phone to call her mother after she had broken her own phone beyond repair. Evidently, she had changed both Kylo's and her own contact names. Kylo's phone number is labeled "**THIS IS MY BOYFRIEND**" followed by several heart emojis, and Nicole's is "**MOTHERFUCKING RIPPED BFF**", also complete with emojis. Despite the circumstances, he smiles.

(He doesn't find out until Nicole tells him, but she also left a comment in the notes section of his phone, reading, *Sorry for the lack of creativity with the contact names!! love you!!!* <3<3<3)

Holding the phone out of sight, he selects Kylo's contact name and listens.

It's faint, but he hears it: coming from the upper right section of the library, he hears "Shut up and Dance" playing. (There's actually a story behind that: the song was selected after Nicole, who had been playing loud music in her dorm, insisted that a dance party be held. Hux, on the other hand, had claimed that he most certainly does not dance. Kylo found it funny.) The song is silenced quickly enough for Kylo to surely think that Hux hadn't heard it. But it's too late, because Hux is already on the move, making a beeline towards where he heard the music from.

When he reaches the top of the stairs, he slows down and calls Kylo again.

The song plays again, closer this time, coming from between two shelves in the vast history section. Once more, it's quickly silenced. Once more, it's also too late, because Hux has already found him.

Kylo hears him approaching and swings his head around to look over his shoulder, then immediately turns away. He's sitting on the floor at the end of the aisle, facing the shelf against the wall, curled up into a not-so-little black ball. Now that he's here, Hux doesn't really know what to do.

Thankfully (although that's a questionable term), Kylo speaks first: "Go away." It's mumbled, like his face is tucked against his knees.

"I can't go away without knowing that you're okay first."

For one entire minute, neither of them move or even say anything at all, until Kylo scoots to the side, giving Hux room to sit down next to him. He does, leaning forward to see Kylo's

face once he's sitting. There's still stains of blood on his face. Even so, at least his nose isn't actively bleeding anymore. But among the blood and bruises, there are tears on his cheeks. It triggers something inside him.

"Why do you do this?" *No wait, stop, nobody wants to be asked that!* It's terribly *rude*, and he knows it, but everything keeps slipping out. "You go from a guy who wants to have fun and play a card game to beating someone up to crying on the library floor in no time flat. Why?"

Before, he had been gently rocking himself, but now he goes completely still. The sudden absence of the soft sounds of his breathing is unsettling.

Kylo makes an obviously attempt at discretely wiping his eyes before turning slightly to look at Hux. "Why are you asking? Why do you even care?" He asks, quiet but forceful, and Hux feels compelled to answer honestly.

"You're so different," he says, trying to explain, to take the plain sting away from his words. (Even though he knows it's too late.) "I mean yeah, ha ha, I've never met anyone like you and all, but really. You have... You have such a range of emotions. It's almost like... I mean, I hate to say it this way, but it's like really dramatic mood swings. All the time."

"B.P.D.," Kylo says, so fast and muttered that Hux almost doesn't catch it. He pushes a few of the bloody tissues away. Hux is, however, very much caught off guard.

"What?" He can't help the tone of surprise in his voice.

This time, Kylo turns his entire body to face Hux, backing up against the opposite shelf.

"Borderline personality disorder," he says, lifting his chin almost defiantly but not making eye contact. Hux feels his mouth open, ever so slightly, so he shuts it. This certainly isn't what he was expecting. He can't respond immediately. Kylo confirms Hux's fears of taking his silence the wrong way.

"Go on," he prompts. He still isn't meeting Hux's eyes; instead, he focuses on the floor, watching his fingers rub at the carpet. "Cringe. Laugh. Walk away. Do what they all do."

Hux is pretty sure that this response physically hurts him.

"Kylo," he begins.

"No. If you're going to go, go now while you've got the chance."

I'm not having any of this nonsense. "Well, it's good that you have Nicole and I, then," Hux says briskly. He would never admit that he is trying not to cry. When Kylo doesn't respond, Hux takes a steadying breath then reaches out and tucks a loose strand of hair behind his ears. Almost immediately Kylo reaches up as if to cover his ear or untuck the hair. But Hux can see his face now; his expression is almost shocked. "Nicole and I, we... We love you. A lot. I thought you would know this."

There's a little sound that Kylo makes in the back of his throat before he curls over completely, pushing his head down on top of his knees. His shoulders start shaking.

"No, no, really, we do," Hux insists. Awkwardness is the last thing in his mind, so he puts a hand on Kylo's shoulder.

It must be an odd sight for someone who is walking by to see; there's Kylo, curled up in a ball, and Hux, on his knees with his hand stretched out and placed on Kylo's shoulder.

They sit together like that until Kylo's silent sobs dissolve into little hiccups. It's then that he looks up, wiping the tears off his bruised cheeks, and smiles at Hux. The smile is small, almost sad, but it's there. Even that tiny gesture has Hux flushing and looking away.

"We should go," he says, standing up and stretching his hand down to help Kylo up. He takes his hand gratefully.

"Do you think... Well, do you think... everyone... is out of my dorm? I mean, except Poe." Kylo's voice is little more than a mumble as he pushes his hands into his pockets. He watches Hux crouch back down and gather up the bloody tissues, which he dumps into a trash can on their way out.

"Probably," Hux shrugs, but he takes out his phone and let's Nicole know that Kylo wants his dorm empty. "Do you want me to walk you there?"

"Yes." He's so quiet.

So, together, they head back.

Much more time has passed since Kylo first came to Hux's dorm than what Hux originally thought. The sky--cloudless today--is completely dark, which makes it even colder outside. They exit the library and immediately he's assaulted by the cold. Beside him, Kylo starts shivering too; he isn't wearing a jacket either.

"Let's hurry," Hux says, and Kylo nods in agreement.

They don't run, but they do speed up a bit, shoulders hunched against the breeze.

There's a point where Hux realizes that keeping his hands in the pockets of his jeans doesn't really help; if anything, the texture of the fabric makes things worse. He just lets his arms dangle at his sides until--

Kylo reaches out and takes his hand.

A million butterflies take flight in Hux's stomach.

Well, it's not really proper hand-holding. He kind of just intertwines their fingers.

The contact is certainly shocking. He hopes that his sudden intake of breath isn't audible. Hux continues to stare forward, but he doesn't let go. He can't. Kylo's long fingers, ungloved for once, are cold, but it feels nice--nicer than what Hux had imagined. (Not that he had imagined what hold hands with Kylo would be like.)

When they get to the dorm, Kylo doesn't drop Hux's hand to open the door.

His heart is beating in his throat.

Hux is hyperaware of everything the entire time; how Kylo has taken his hand properly now, and how his nose is still red from the cold, and the way that he occasionally meets Kylo's eyes when he glances sideways. (He looks away when their eyes meet.)

They maintain contact all the way up the stairs until their standing together outside Kylo's dorm.

Kylo turns fully to face Hux for the first time in--well, in a while, and takes both of his hands. Hux's eyes roam all over his face, taking in everything. They're face to face, staring right at each other, so why not?

He takes in everything; the colorful bruises (it's almost some morbid artwork), the slight post-crying redness of his eyes, the collection of little spots on his face.

Even beaten up like this, he's beautiful.

Ever so slightly, Kylo leans in and Hux starts panicking. He's pretty sure that his eyes go wide.

"Thank you," Kylo says, softly, with a small smile, before drawing back and disappearing into his room.

The door shuts.

Hux can't tell if he's relieved or disappointed.

He stands outside the dorm room for a full three minutes--he counts--trying to digest everything that just happened. He's never liked it when there's a jumble of emotions inside him, when his stomach is all knotted up, when it feels like there's something taking up too much space in his throat.

Even when he's able to move again, his business for the day is still not over.

When he arrives at his own dorm, Hux researches borderline personality disorder until he falls asleep at his desk, drooling onto his keyboard.

Chapter End Notes

So... when should they kiss?

Much love and see you next update,
~Bee

For a While Now

Chapter Notes

I couldn't decide on a clever name for their college so I just called it the same thing that one of the colleges in my area is called. oops.
also, the movie is completely made up.

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

It's so much easier to just pretend that Nicole never told him that Kylo liked him. That they never held hands. Pretending that there isn't that extra added layer makes everything so much easier to deal with, especially when finals hit.

Now that Hux isn't terrified of the very concept of someone like Kylo, he's so much more comfortable. Nicole, Kylo, and him have transcended the typical level of friendship. By the time finals start, they do practically everything together. They don't just hang out in Nicole's dorm; now, Hux's room is the best place, since he doesn't have a roommate.

Not only is Hux more comfortable, but it seems like Kylo is too. Ever since their talk in the library, they both seem so much more at ease with each other. It's like an invisible wall between them has been removed. Kylo has gained a joking, almost flirty demeanor around Hux (who denies the latter to himself, although Nicole insists on it), while Hux doesn't stutter making comebacks anymore.

Hux would be lying if he didn't recognize the fact that it is so *nice*.

Really, he has to thank Nicole, because she's always the one who suggests that they hang out. She knows that it's difficult for both Hux and Kylo to propose the idea, so she takes it upon herself.

She's the reason that the three of them are currently "studying" in Hux's dorm.

Thankfully, Hux only has one final left. Of course, with his luck, this last one will be the hardest, but he feels prepared enough.

The way his classes line up make it so that he is completely bombarded during finals week. Nothing Monday, nothing Tuesday, then he had three on Wednesday, and three again today, Thursday, and one was left for Friday. It was just about Tuesday night that he had *really* regretted taking so many classes. At least most of them are done, and he doesn't have to worry about them anymore.

He can see Nicole out of the corner of his eye, sprawled across the empty bed that would have belonged to Hux's roommate (it was never removed, for some reason), wearing her favorite shiny silver crop top and black leggings. She's on her back, head resting against

against the textbook that she had been using before she got to distracted like a pillow. She keeps blabbing on about some movie that she wants to go see over break. Her voice is nice to listen to, and it breaks the silence in a pleasant way.

Even so, Hux is still bored out of his mind. He leans back in his chair and stretches, letting his back arch and his arms extend towards the ceiling. Almost sneakily, he turns to see Kylo behind him. Kylo is the luckiest one here, since all his finals are already done. His last one was this morning, so he can afford to relax. Now, he's laying face down on the floor, clearly asleep. Hux can't help but chuckle to himself; it's so amazingly typical to see a college student just passed out on the floor.

"Cam," Nicole snaps her fingers. "Cam, are you listening?"

"What?"

She sighs, plainly irritated. "I *said*, we should go see *In Real Life* over break. The three of us. Honestly, have you been listening to me?"

"Oh. Yeah." He glances back at Kylo. "Yeah, sounds like a good movie."

Nicole let's out a laugh--she saw the quick flick of his eyes. For the first time in half an hour, she sits up and pushes the textbook away before yanking off one of her shoes.

When she throws it, she doesn't just throw it *towards* Kylo; she throws it *at* him.

It hits its mark, colliding with the back of his head. He wakes up instantly, flailing and rolling over and shouting curses. By the time he manages to flounder into an upright position, he's run out of *expressive words* to use.

Hux should be used to it by now, but he's not; the dark bruise that Rey gave him the other day is still there, violent as ever, and it shocks him every time he sees it.

Unfazed, Nicole jumps right to the point she wants to make: "Are you doing anything over break? Because we're going to go see a movie."

His mouth drops open and a look of confusion overtakes his face. "...What?" It's obvious that he still isn't completely awake.

"You. Me. Cam. Go see a movie."

"Oh," Kylo frowns and rubs his head. "Sure, I guess. Depends on the movie."

"*In Real Life*, of course!" Nicole sounds proud of herself.

He shrugs. "Sure, I've heard it's good."

At his words, Nicole lays back down, content. "Alright, good! Now we just need to figure out when. I'm going out of state to visit family from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-sixth, so that's out of the question."

"I've got nothing to do," Hux says. "So any time, really."

"Same here," Kylo agrees. "Really, my only plans were to practice fencing. Oh, and I guess I need to work on that project thing for Drama 205."

At this, Hux fully spins his chair around to look at Kylo. Nicole has sat back up. "What?" When he just looks confused, Hux reiterates. "You're taking a sophomore level drama class?"

"Oh," he laughs and sits up properly. "Yeah, that's why I came here. To major in theatre, drama, you know. The drama program is really good."

"You came to the *U-Dub* for *drama*?"

"Yep." Kylo says it like it's the most obvious thing in the world. "What are you here for?"

"Polisci, mainly."

"Oh. Of course."

Silence fills the room as Hux digests this. Kylo was here for *drama*? He doesn't seem like the kind of person who would enjoy acting. Then again, wasn't acting not the only type of art that theatre and drama cover, right? There was stuff that went on backstage. Hux doesn't know the details; he's not really an artsy guy. Maybe Kylo came here for some of the behind-the-scenes stuff. Yeah, that would make more sense.

"Kylo, you're into acting? That's so cool!" Nicole gushes.

His laugh is almost more of a giggle; it's terribly adorable. "I am. I've even won awards before."

Or not.

Hux's look of shock and confusion must be evident, because when he sees him, Kylo's face falls slightly. "Is that... Is that bad?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" He hurries to try and amend his mistake. "No, it's just not what I expected," is what he says aloud, but mentally, Hux is thinking, *He's cute and talented. Be still my beating heart.*

Kylo's grin returns. "What, do I not look like the actor type?"

"I would have guessed--"

"Literature!" Nicole interrupts. She's moved forward and is now dangling off the bed. "You look like the kind of guy who was top of his AP Lit class in high school."

"I was."

Hux is pretty sure that he's actually blushing. All of this new information just makes his--well, whatever it was, he was not going to call it a crush--on Kylo even worse. *Cute and*

talented and smart. Nicole, take the wheel.

Triumphant, Nicole does a little fist pump. "I knew it! You have that cute, kind of nerdy look to you, like you've memorized half the monologues from *Macbeth*."

The grin turns into a smirk. "Cute, hm?" While he is managing to maintain a cocky exterior, there is a blush--worsening by the second--covering his cheeks. It's almost causing Hux secondhand embarrassment, until he sees Nicole looking between the two of them like she's a predator and they're her prey, and he realizes what she's doing.

Neither Kylo nor Hux himself is very good at communicating things like this to each other, or at making plans. It's obvious now that Nicole is doing her best to help them, and has succeeded. For once, Hux makes a mental note to thank her later.

This was good; this was all very good. He was going to go to the movies with Kylo. Everything would be fine. Nicole would be there, ready to swoop in if things became sour, or awkward, like some super hero. She could restart conversations, relieve any uncomfortable silences, and diffuse any tensions.

It would be almost like a date, just... Not.

Then, very suddenly, Hux gets a thought. It's an awful thought, rivaling that of Kylo already dating someone. It's the *worst thought*. One he should have considered much earlier.

What if he's straight?

Sure, Nicole had said the Kylo liked him, but maybe that had changed. Maybe she lied? He had already ruled that out, though, right? At the same time, maybe Hux had mistaken Kylo's flirtatious remarks for mere banter. It was often that Hux's... Well, Nicole has a name for it: she calls it a gay-dar, and they both supposedly have it. It was, has always been, a common occurrence that Hux confuses his 'gay-dar' with his overwhelming 'please-be-gay-dar'. After that night when the two of them had met Kylo's roommate and his friends, Nicole had texted him and told him that her own 'gay-dar' had been going wild around Rey. (Hopefully, she was right.)

Very, very carefully, he makes a sly attempt at glancing over at Kylo. Realistically, you can't tell someone's sexuality just by looking at them. It's just not possible. But he tries anyway.

Kylo has very nice eyes. And good hair. And lips that look like they would be very nice to kiss.

Has anyone ever kissed those lips before?

Ah, yes, because this is the kind of thing you need to be thinking about right now, Hux tells himself, sarcastic even in his mind. Certainly not your final tomorrow. He has to shake his head a little bit to return to the present. Unfortunately, that intrusive thought is still bouncing around in his brain. Go away, he snaps at it. It doesn't obey.

He is stricken, however, when Nicole calls him out. That certainly helps distract him.

"We would love to see you act, wouldn't we, Cameron?"

"What?" Hux looks up, alert. "Oh, yeah," He's stuttering and he knows it.

Kylo rubs at the back of his neck--a habit of his, Hux has noticed--and looks away from the two of them. He's blushing again. "No more performances until much later," he says, his voice surprisingly steady.

"Ah, boo-hoo. We can wait," Nicole raises her eyebrows suggestively at Hux. "We would love to wait."

In an effort to change the conversation topic, Hux suddenly asks, "What time is it?"

Nicole shoots him a suspicious glare, like she suspects, but she checks her watch regardless. "It's just after four."

Kylo makes a soft sound of surprise. His face looks like it's been wiped completely blank. "Just after four?"

"Just after four," Nicole repeats.

Panic rapidly takes over his face. "Shit!" Faster than Hux would have thought possibly for such a lanky guy like him, Kylo springs up and scrambles around, gathering the study materials he brought. "Shit shit shit shit fuck--"

Hux's eyebrows raise as he watches the hurricane of black fly around the room. "Forgetting something?" he asks.

"Drama! I forgot I have drama today!" When he has everything he needs, Kylo practically throws himself out the door, yelling back, "I'll text you!"

The door shuts and Nicole lets out a very frustrated sigh. "That boy..." She shakes her head, then looks up at Hux. "Can you believe him?"

She doesn't stay much longer, after that. There isn't really anything else to do.

After Nicole leaves, Hux puts his studying materials away, then settles back down into his desk chair. He's really in the mood to put on his big headphones--the ones he never, ever, wear out in public--and listen to melancholy music. At least some sort of music that will make him feel something after such a draining day. (It's so strange, he thinks, how even doing next to nothing can be exhausting.)

He puts them on and lets himself forget everything, getting lost in the music.

Time slips out of his grip; at some point, he fell asleep.

When he wakes up, he doesn't do so slowly but all at once. Very suddenly, there's music filling into his ears; it's not loud, just overwhelmingly there--

--waiting on this for a while now, paying my dues to the dirt--

--and he jerks his head up, but then lets it fall back. He hits the desk, hard, and it startles him. If he wasn't fully awake before, he is now.

He sits up and turns to look at the time. The clock on his nightstand reads 8:34. His eyes hurt, so it makes sense when he sees this; he had fallen asleep with his contacts on, which was never a good idea. Without bothering to go through proper protocol, he takes them out and tosses them into the garbage can.

Standing up and taking off his headphones, Hux begins to slowly comb the room, fumbling around for his glasses. He would never admit it--Nicole is the only one who knows--but his vision is worse than what he lets on. Kylo, too, knows that he wears contacts, but he still doesn't know just how bad it is. The entire room, even the shelf he searches that is a mere foot from his face, is blurry. Just where had he put them this morning? He moves in to look closer, but he hears a knock at the door.

When Hux crosses the small room and opens it, Kylo is standing there, shifting from foot to foot and holding his phone in both hands. There's a nervous air about him, and Hux lets him in without question.

Kylo sits right down on Hux's bed and stares at the floor. He's taking deep breaths, like he's trying to calm himself.

"What is it?" Hux asks, and sits down on the bed. His glasses can wait, even if he has to squint. "Is something wrong?" When Kylo doesn't immediately react, he starts worrying. It's not quite panic; it's the spiders that start as a tickle in his chest, then work their way down into his stomach. He doesn't like using 'anxiety', because that always makes it sound more dramatic.

"I need to--" Kylo starts, but stops when looks up. "What are you doing?"

"What?"

"Why are you squinting?"

Hux can't actually see Kylo's full expression, but he can at least tell that it's confusion. "Oh, well..." He hadn't really planned on this. "I lost my glasses." The room has surely increased in temperature by several degrees.

If he could see properly, he would see Kylo's eyebrows raise. "You wear glasses?"

"I... I wear contacts most of the time. But I really need my glasses. I can't have contacts in forever."

"You're eyes are kind of red," Kylo points out.

"Yeah, I fell asleep with my contacts on, soon after you left for drama." It's weird to say that out loud. Kylo, in drama of all things.

Momentarily forgetting why he came here in the first place, Kylo leans in a few inches. "Can you see me?"

Hux huffs and rolls his eyes. "Of course I can see you. I'm not blind. You're just..."

"Fuzzy?"

"Blurry."

"Oh," he says, leaning in a little bit more. "Am I still blurry?"

The gap between their noses is too small for Hux's comfort, so he leans back. "Yes, you are. Now, tell me what you're here for, or help me find my glasses, or both."

He can't see Kylo's slight look of disappointment and Hux stand up and begins his search once more. What he doesn't know is that he's looking in all the wrong areas. Kylo opens the drawer in the night table by the bed and finds them in there. He holds them out, and as Hux puts them on, says, "I need to call Rey."

Admittedly, Hux is both shocked and a bit flustered. It wasn't what he expected. The fact that Kylo came to him for such personal help--well, honestly, it makes him feel good. Trusted. Worth something more. "Okay."

"And I can't do it by myself."

Taking his seat on the bed again, he turns to fully face Kylo. "So you want backup?"

Kylo rubs the back of his neck, embarrassed. "Yeah."

"Well, good." A little softer, Hux says, "I'm glad you can trust me." He watches Kylo take out his phone, hands shaking ever so slightly, and he dials her number and puts it on speaker.

Hux doesn't know what to expect. Really, he hadn't even been sure about whether or not she would pick up. But she does, with not a hello, but a, "Yeah?"

"Rey," is his greeting.

"Oh, Kylo," she says. "Hi." Her voice is hesitant. There's noise in the background, loud music and dozens of people talking.

"Are you in a spot where we can talk?"

A pause. "No. But I can get there." Quickly, the noise becomes muffled, her voice a tad bit echoey. "What is it?" There's a sound in the background, like a door opening; music swells, and the door closes, cutting most of the sound off, save for a low bass that pounds even through the phone.

Kylo frowns. "Wait, where are you?"

"Oh, um, never mind that. I just--" The door in the background opens and closes once more.

"Rey," Kylo's voice has taken on a tone that just screams protective older brother. It's strange, like he's doing it on instinct, remembering a time that he has half-forgotten. Hux

can't help but laugh.

On the other end of the line, Rey huffs out a long-suffering sigh. "Fine. I'm at a school dance, happy?"

"Is all of your homework done?"

"Jesus, Kylo! We haven't spoken seriously in months and the first thing you do is nag me for being at a dance?"

Kylo makes a move to respond, his mouth opening, then he stops. His face becomes much more composed, almost somber. "That's why I'm talking to you now. To change that. Rey, I--" He has to break off. When he looks up from the phone, he meets Hux's eyes. Hux gives him what he hopes is an encouraging smile.

"I'm really sorry," It's Rey who says this, not Kylo. Hux can't help it; his eyebrows shoot up. "I've never wanted to hurt you. I thought I did. I didn't. I don't." Now she is the one who has to stop. "I miss you, Kylo."

When Kylo laughs, it's a teary laugh that makes Hux reach out and put his hand on his shoulder. "Yeah. I miss you too."

They can hear a voice in the background call Rey's name. She shouts something back, covering the phone's mouthpiece, then says, "I have to go. Can we... I mean, can we meet somewhere? Talk this out in person? Maybe, you know, without coming to blows this time."

"Oh, yeah, yes, of course." Kylo looks up at Hux, at a loss. He can tell that Kylo hadn't planned on this.

Empire's, he mouths.

Hux prides himself on how good his idea is. "Yeah, yeah," Kylo says. "We could meet at Empire's. Do you remember where it is?"

"Puh-lease. It's been a while but it hasn't been that long."

"Point taken. How does three sound? That's right when I get off work. And, you're out of school by then, right? Do you have any after school activities?"

"No, nothing. Three is good."

"Okay."

"Okay."

Silence follows, during which Hux carefully watches Kylo's face. He doesn't look nearly as stressed out as when he came in, so that's good. At the same time, however, he looks conflicted, with his eyes scrunched up, his brows drawn together, and he's biting his lip.

"I guess I'll leave you to your dance, then."

A laugh from the other end of the line. "Good."

Rey hangs up first, then Kylo does, and he just stares at his phone before saying, "God, that was so awkward."

"Well, don't worry. You can fix that tom--" Kylo does the unexpected just then. He drops his phone and leans forward, enveloping Hux into a tight hug.

Now, Hux has never been one for hugs. In the past, he has only ever accepted them from Nicole. She had a habit, in high school, of greeting all of her friends with a hug. But this is something different, something possibly better.

It may be terribly cliché but being tucked up against Kylo's chest--which is broad and warm and soft and not what he expected--with his heartbeat in his ear, feels more like home than anywhere else ever has.

"Thank you," he mumbles it into Hux's hair before he draws back, slightly flustered.

Hux is still in a state of shock. "Yeah," he says, trying to keep his voice steady. It's hard to hear himself, what with the sound of his own heart pounding in his ears. "Sure, but, I didn't really do anything."

Kylo's smile is something to behold. He still has that conflicted expression, but it's lessened by that smile. "You were here. That's really what mattered. I haven't really ever had people to do things like that."

There's a pang in Hux's chest, and he swears, silently, to himself, that he will always try to be there for Kylo.

They both stand up at the same time, Kylo smiling and Hux thoroughly flustered.

"You should go to bed soon," Kylo suggests. "You still have a final tomorrow. Then we're free."

"You're right."

That smirk that grows on his face is infuriating. "Of course I am." Hux hits his shoulder, and Kylo just raises his eyebrows. He goes to leave, but unlike hours earlier, he pauses and turns back. "Tomorrow, you can come, if you want."

Hux smiles. "I wouldn't miss it."

Chapter End Notes

would you guys want to listen to a playlist for this story? let me know. if enough people want one, i'll make one. or, make one yourself! i'll definitely listen to it.

Much love and see you next update,
~Bee

December Nineteenth

Chapter Notes

we're deviating from the norm today with a chapter narrated by... Rey!

fun fact: both the town and the college are based off actual places in my hometown!

let me know if there's any mistakes (typos, etc). i'm my own editor, so i often miss things!

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

Rey is thinking of many things as she leaves the house just after seven to take the bus on the morning of Friday, December nineteenth.

The breeze is a bitter cold as she walks to her bus stop, cutting right through her clothing, and the snow--by now, it's more like dirty slush--wets her boots. The first thing on her mind is to keep her boots as dry and clean as possible, because she's going to have to wear them all day.

When she gets to the bus and sits down in her usual seat, her mind shifts to everything else. She actually has to stop, close her eyes, and try to organize her thoughts in a way that will at least make some sense. To do this, she goes through each one and decides when to think about it.

AP Biology test: second period, when she actually has it. There's no use worrying about it now.

The math test she definitely failed the other day: never. What's the point? It's over with, and there will be plenty of opportunities for her to get her grade back up.

The approaching trip to Paris, to visit her grandparents: whenever she has time. Now that is something she has been looking forward to since summer, since... Since before Kylo left.

And, of course, the one weighing heaviest: meeting Kylo after school. That, she decides to think about later. No point in stressing out now.

Instead of thinking too much, Rey puts in her earbuds, turns up the music, and stares out the window until the bus arrives at school, pulling around the circle and down the bus lane. Since she sits in the first seat, she's the first one to disembark, thankfully. The bus is always terribly stuffy, and for once the cold, fresh air is welcome. It shocks her lungs, but it is welcome nonetheless.

She heads through the door at the side of the building, the one that opens up to the hall connecting the stage and band room. Instead of immediately turning right at the end of the

hall, she pushes the band room door open and drops off the bag she carries her drumsticks. She has her own timpani mallets, so her bag is a bit bigger than that of the other percussionists. Then she leaves, walking quickly in the general direction of the library.

Usually, Finn is waiting for her, on the bench outside the library, but today, he's nowhere to be found. The benches are empty. Instead, the majority of the school is gathered in the cafeteria, just past the library. It's only when the music swells and reaches her ears that she remembers: The senior members of the jazz band are performing before school. So, of course, Finn would be there.

Finn, that lucky boy, was already senior, so he would be graduating this school year. It's his goal, she knows, to see if he can room with Poe for his freshman year of college.

Rey elbows her way through the crowd until she reaches the front. Finally, she can see the band; it's not its usual size, since it's only the seniors, but that makes it easier to spot Finn. There he is, in the front row, rocking out on his tenor saxophone.

The performance is over impossibly fast, because the ten-minute bell rings. Rey catches Finn on his way over and walks back to the band room with him while he goes to put away his instrument.

"New pants?" They're past the point of traditional greetings.

Rey dodges a couple freshmen and glances down at herself. "Hm? Oh, yeah." She's wearing an unusually spotless pair of khakis, courtesy of her mother. "Mom wanted an excuse to spend money on me, and all my other pants have holes in them, so, yeah."

"They look nice."

"Thanks."

Finn stores the case into the cubby, then they both head out to their first period, chatting until they have to part ways. They hug, then Rey turns right while Finn continues forward.

First up for Rey is AP U.S. History with her least favorite teacher in the entire school.

With her brain so distracted, time flies. During History, she worries about the Biology test. After the Biology test, she worries about the math test while they review it during class. After that, thankfully, is lunch, and it lets her take her mind off things.

Rey doesn't have to walk very far before she reaches the bench her and Finn sit on. They have recently moved inside, since it got too cold to sit outside without their noses and ears freezing off. She gets there first and takes out her lunch while she waits.

Soon enough, fresh from P.E., Finn drops his backpack onto the bench. He pulls out his phone and leans over to her.

"Hey, look at this," he says. On the screen is an image from Jess. "She sent this to me a few minutes ago. Isn't that the girl from the other day? Your cousin's friend?"

"Oh." The picture is mainly Jess, laying on her bed with a wink and a smile, but with the camera angle, she's off to the side. The other half of the picture is of the girl--Nicole--sitting on the opposite bed, looking over the top of her book with her eyebrows raised. The most distracting part, however, is that Nicole is wearing a tank top and has clearly visible arms. Rey thinks, Her biceps are bigger than my thighs, but says, "This picture has a nice filter." It really is pleasant, very sepia-esque.

Finn shoots her a sideways glance. "Yeah, I guess you could say that. But that is her, right? Nicole?"

"I... Yeah, it is." Rey busies herself with unwrapping her sandwich--today, it's corned beef. Using it as an excuse not to speak, she takes a big bite, but Finn uses it as an opportunity.

"The same one you called 'hella cute'?"

Mouth full, she glares at her friend. "And?"

"Oh, nothing."

Finn changes the subject. Rey is pretty sure that she is off scot free for now, so she thankfully goes along with it. This is one of the many reasons she loves him.

When lunch is over, they go to band together. Today is a pep band day, and those are, in her opinion, the best days. She immediately grabs her pep folder and heads for the drum set.

Band is always a welcome distraction. It makes her feel good, like she could fly if she wanted to.

The rest of her day passes by without much incident: English is good, and French 4 after that is better. They had a little pre-Winter Break celebration, so everybody had brought in all sorts of food. Rey herself brought little pineapple upside-down cakes that she had baked.

When school is finally out, and Winter Break is officially upon them, it feels odd not to run straight for the bus. Instead, she heads out along the back of the school and through the closest neighborhood. Empire's isn't too far of a walk away, but it is in the more city-like part of the town. Closer to the lake, things get a bit busier. The area is rather cute, if she does say so herself. The "downtown" area is mainly a collection of smaller storefronts and local businesses crammed together with a network of streets. Empire's is down closer to the beach, and just across the street and a couple blocks up from the boardwalk, between Rocket Fizz, a soda shop, and Old Harbor Books.

Pretty much everything is on the college campus. The buildings are nearby; she can see them over the tops of everything else.

Rey arrives a bit early, to take the time to crouch in front of the pastry case and look at all the brightly colored treats. Empire's sells everything from croissants to macaroons to little squares of tiramisu. Rey knows for a fact that crème brûlée is always just a tad burnt, that you can get extra mascarpone if you ask the right person, that there are (or, used to be) certain baristas who will, if you ask, give you a whole cup full of whipped cream for free.

She knows this because she used to come here with Kylo all the time.

(Not to mention that Finn also worked here for a while, before he quit. Something about an awful manager.)

It's funny that Kylo works here now; back at home, he couldn't make coffee worth shit.

Has that changed? Maybe she's about to find out.

She feels a pang inside her chest that proves just how much she misses him; the very idea that she doesn't know whether his coffee-making skills have improved or not is quite...

Saddening. That's the word.

Very suddenly she finds herself blinking back actual tears as she remembers sitting at the water's edge with Kylo, eating ice cream and laughing in the last warm rays of the summer sun.

Rey gives her head a quick shake and stands up, glancing this way and that to make sure nobody saw. There are only a few people present apart from herself; two idle baristas and three customers, none of which are watching her.

To not look suspicious, she purchases a few macaroons. This may be a mistake, she realizes, considering the fact that they might make her nostalgia worse.

(Images cross her mind; sun shining on the lake, snow beneath her boots on the sidewalk, cherry trees in full bloom, Kylo's beaming face, and their parents, too.)

She crosses over to a table in the corner, sits, and waits. A few minutes pass. Too anxious to check her phone for the time, she simply sits with her hands folded, looking around the room, occasionally munching on her macaroons. Nothing happens until the door opens and the pleasant chiming of a bell fills the room. She looks up.

He's tall and lean, with red hair, and utterly recognizable.

Cameron doesn't notice her sitting in the corner; he marches straight to the back room, unquestioned by the employees.

Kylo must be back there, Rey realizes.

The door opens again and Cameron returns, this time with Kylo, whose eyes sweep the room from right to left until he sees her, and makes eye contact. He squares his shoulders and walks toward her, from out behind the counter.

"Hello," Rey says as the two sit down at the opposite side of the table. Kylo slides a cup of coffee over at her, wrapping his hands around his own.

They sit close, she notices. Close, but not touching. If Cameron were to lean slightly to the right or Kylo slightly to the left, their shoulders would touch.

"Hey," Kylo's voice is terse. He looks sideways at his companion, who give him a reassuring but barely noticeable smile. "Rey, can I say something first?"

She nods.

"I'm so, so sorry." Kylo leans forward, making an attempt at steady eye contact. His broad shoulders are raised slightly, but other than that, he seems sincere enough. "I let everything sweep me up. I wasn't thinking." He sips his coffee and glances sideways at Cameron. "I couldn't really control what I was feeling."

"Kylo, you can't blame yourself for this," she says, taking a tentative sip of her coffee. Immediately, she drops it, almost spitting it out; it's *way* too hot. "I hit you. I mean, if you had only stayed, though... I don't know. You ran off so fast... Maybe if you had just stayed and talked things out--"

He huffs. "As if. I--" another sideways glance at Cameron, "--I threw a fucking *glass bottle* at my father. I never--" Kylo cuts himself off completely, his face going blank. "What happened? After, I mean."

A little chill goes through Rey. "A... a lot happened. Mom took him to the hospital. She cried. I stayed home."

Kylo's shoulders slump. He puts his face in his hands, and Cameron immediately reaches out to touch his shoulder. Rey takes note of this.

"God," he groans. "I am *so fucking sorry*."

Rey leans closer. There's so much going through her head; so many questions, comments, even accusations. "What matters is that we're here now." But she would throw all those accusations right into the dumpster if it meant reuniting with Kylo.

He tilts his head up and opens his mouth as if to say something, but then closes it. He tries again, "I don't--", before breaking off.

"Come here." Rey stands up, and Kylo immediately rushes into his sister's open arms. He starts crying, which makes *her* start crying, and suddenly it's this sob-fest in *Empire's*, with Cameron sitting awkwardly at the table.

Kylo tries to stifle his sobs at first, but after a few seconds of failure he just lets it go. He has hunched over to lower his head on top of her shoulder, while she has her head titled to the side, nose by his ear. He smells like coffee and something else, too; familiarity. Like childhood.

"I'm so sorry," he says, shoulders shaking.

"I know. I am too."

He leans back and wipes his eyes. "Are we okay now?"

"Better," Rey promises. Not yet completely fine, but much, much better.

Kylo laughs a happy yet teary laugh. "Good."

They stand in silence for a moment, letting everything soak in and settle, until Cameron stands up.

"I'm going to pop next door for a minute," he says, motioning to the door. "Anybody want anything?"

"We'll be right out," Rey promises.

He turns to exit, but before he leaves, he gives a little wave back.

Kylo, who waves in response, is so obviously head-over-heels.

"Ask him out," she suggests once the door closes. Kylo looks affronted at the very idea. "No, really! Go somewhere cute, share a smoothie, I don't care. Just make something happen. Don't wait for it."

"I..." He frowns and bites his lip. "You know I'm not like that."

Gently, Rey reaches up and puts her hands on his shoulders. "Kylo," she says, looking him right in the eye. "If you could see each other, you would be as desperate as I am to shove your faces together."

A brilliant flush overtakes his entire face, and even the tips of his ears, poking out from underneath his hair.

"No!" A feeble protest. He turns, as if trying to head to the door, but Rey stops him with a "Wait." When he turns back, there's a quizzical, almost nervous look on his face.

"You should come to Paris with us over break."

Kylo's face drains of color. "Why?"

"I mean," she hesitates. She can't regret this. "Mom and dad miss you and want you back. They do, they really do. You could come with us when we leave. It's not too late." Almost teasingly, she adds, "You already know all the French you could need."

He shakes his head. "No. No, not yet. I can't do that just yet."

Rey is admittedly disappointed, but not surprised. Of course he wouldn't want to go across the world just yet. Why would he? Those defensive walls are back up around him, she can practically sense it.

She can't understand, not exactly, but she can at least see where he's coming from. "I get it." A lie, but a very small one. Rey gets it, she just doesn't *understand*. She wants to. "Shall we go?"

It might be just her imagination, but Kylo lets out a barely audible sigh of what seems to be relief. Her heart pangs at the sound of it, at the sight of his face relaxing and his shoulders

visibly slumping. Without further questioning, he heads for the doors.

As they exit, Cameron simultaneously emerges from next door, holding three sodas.

"Cheers," he says, passing two of them over.

Rey takes her cold bottle. "What... is this? Peep soda? Like, the little marshmallow things? What the heck?"

"Watch your fucking mouth," Kylo shoots back.

Rey smiles. That's the Kylo she knows and loves.

Chapter End Notes

I have two big things to talk about for this update: the first is that this fic now has an official playlist! you can listen to it here: <http://8tracks.com/thewildcard/lovely-hearts> the second, which i'd like for you to address in the comments if possible, is what you want kylo and hux's first kiss to be like. i have so so so many ideas, and i can't decide on one! or maybe you have a better idea?

As usual, love you lots and see you next update!

~Bee

Bonfire Heart

Chapter Notes

*Days like these lead to
Nights like this leads to
Love like ours
You light the spark in my bonfire heart
(James Blunt, "Bonfire Heart")*

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

Really, it wasn't that the air in *Empire's* was to awkward or anything. It was the fact that there were actual tears stinging Hux's eyes as Kylo and Rey hugged, so he had to quickly excuse himself.

Oh well. He had been meaning to visit *Rocket Fizz* anyway. Last time he was there, he couldn't find the sour watermelon soda he likes, and now happens to be the perfect time to exit. Besides, they should have some closure in private. He doesn't want to intrude. It's not something that he feels he has any right to see.

So admittedly, the easy way out is to peace out and head next door.

The soda shop is so brightly colored, practically assaulting his eyes. But he can handle that, because "Sour Watermelon Blast" is right there on the first shelf he sees. Feeling particularly generous (or perhaps pitiful), he selects two others that he thinks Kylo and Rey will like. Peanut butter and jelly for Kylo and marshmallow Peeps for Rey.

By the time he's done making his purchase and exiting, Kylo and Rey are coming out of *Empire's*. "Cheers," Hux says, somewhat sarcastically, handing them each their soda.

As she takes it, Rey inspects her bottle. "What... is this? Peep soda? Like, the little marshmallow things? What the heck?"

"Watch your fucking mouth," Kylo snaps, but he does so with a smirk and a gleam in his eyes. It makes Hux laugh, just a little tiny bit, but enough so that he raises his hand up to his mouth to stifle it. Kylo catches it and shoots him a sly grin. For a moment, he struggles to open his own soda. When he finally manages, he takes a sip, then immediately spits it out. His arm jerks back and he stares, wide-eyed, at the label. "What the fuck is this?"

"Peanut butter and jelly!" Hux says proudly.

"*What?* I get PB&J while you get--while you get-- What the actual fuck did you get anyway?"

"Kylo!" Rey says, mocking his tone. "Watch your language!"

Now, *this* sets the three of them off; they're doubling over with laughter, white clouds of warm breath billowing out of their mouths into the cold air, attracting stares from older passerby's.

After what seems to be either a lifetime or a heartbeat, Rey gets her giggles under control and straightens up. "I should probably go home," she says, managing to put on a serious demeanor. "I haven't started packing yet. Mum's been harping on me all week, I swear." Hux takes note of the use of "mum" instead of "mom".

They walk together to the end of the block; before she turns down the street, Rey stops. "You guys coming this way?"

Kylo glances sideways at Hux, and they exchange a strange little look. "No, not quite yet," he says, and Hux feels a thrill in his chest.

So when Rey heads down the road to the right with a shrug and a wave, Hux follows Kylo to the left, out towards the lake.

Although it's admittedly not as cold as it has been in past weeks, Hux's nose still feels like it's being slowly frozen off. He wants to rub at it, maybe try to warm it up a bit, but there are anxious sparkles in his stomach. Instead, he clasps his hands behind his back and follows Kylo. Only when he has to unclasp his hands--when Kylo sits down on the boardwalk, feet dangling off the edge--does he recognize the pain, and that he can feel little droplets of blood sliding down his fingers.

Idiot, Hux tells himself as he takes a seat. *What would Nicole think?* He tries to be discreet by wiping his palms on a section of his jeans that, when standing, would be covered by his coat. Kylo doesn't notice anything--or, if he does, he doesn't show it.

Of course, today would be the day he leaves his gloves at work.

His hands are stinging, but he keeps them pressed to the wood, leaning back in an attempt to be casual.

Once they're both settled, Kylo speaks: "I've probably got a lot to explain." He rubs the back of his neck, glancing around almost sheepishly.

The conversation hovers somewhere on the edge of Kylo's last sentence and the beginning of his new one, but no words come out of his mouth. It's like if a sun were setting, touching the horizon, and you're waiting for it to sink down, but it never does.

So Hux waits for him to speak.

"I feel bad," he says, finally. "You've been getting all wrapped up in this family stuff. I don't have the right to expect you to be there for every twist and turn."

This is, admittedly, a bit shocking. "Kylo, I wouldn't have come today if I didn't want to."

He hunches his shoulders forward. "You don't know that. I don't know that. Maybe you're just tagging along because--because--"

"Kylo," Hux feels like he wants to do something brave, or possibly very stupid. "You know it's not like that."

"No," he blurts, "I don't know that! I just--ugh, I just with this wasn't so difficult!" Clearly frustrated, Kylo runs a hand through his hair. The gesture is absentminded, as if he doesn't realize he's doing it. "Maybe if I could explain better..."

"It's okay if you can't," Hux says, "You don't have to. No rush."

"Thanks, I... I guess. You know it means a lot." Kylo is leaning forward, almost so slowly that Hux doesn't notice.

Hux starts leaning in as well, on instinct. "No, you don't... you don't need to thank me. It's..." It's not 'nothing,' or 'not a big deal.' That's a lie.

Kylo's lips part, as if to say something, but the words never come out. His eyes are closing on their own accord, he can feel Kylo's breath--warm--on his nose, and then--

"Ren!"

Hux's eyes snap open and he jumps backward, seeing Kylo doing the same thing out of the corner of his eyes. A fierce blush has sprung up on Kylo's face and ears already, darkening his skin, which is already flushed from the cold.

He knows the voice, vaguely, but has never heard the name. The latter, especially, is why he is surprised when Kylo responds.

He lets out a long-suffering sigh, shoulders slumping and rolling his eyes. "Not this again," he mutters under his breath. Slowly, he turns around. "Goddammit, Dop, what do you want?"

Marching towards them is none other than Dopheld Mitaka, in all his five-foot-two glory. Only when he notices Hux does he stop and hesitate, coming to a pause a few feet away, and resting his hands on his hips.

Hux can't help but think to himself, *This guy*. They share a political science class; Mitaka, as he's known to Hux, sits several seats in front of him and always wears sweaters that look like they were made by his grandmother. They don't speak often, but when they do it's always very professional and related strictly to class. The Hux and Mitaka families know each other--something about their fathers going to the same military school--so it makes things a bit awkward between them.

While Hux's eyes swivel from him to Kylo and back, Kylo shifts a bit more. He has the advantage of being over a foot taller, so he's intimidating even sitting down, but Dopheld doesn't back down. In fact, he gives a little half-smile. It's... annoying. "So you *are* here." He lifts a single eyebrow. "Rey said you would be."

Now Hux is confused, in addition to the anger currently flaring in his chest. Dopheld and Kylo know each other? Dopheld and *Rey* know each other?

Kylo, however, isn't surprised. "You passed her while she was on her way out?"

"Oh, no, she texted me saying you were be here."

There it is again, that little spark of jealousy in Hux's stomach. He has spoken to this tiny *kid* probably a dozen in his life, but the conversation between him and Kylo seems so easy. Almost carefree.

Kylo glances at Hux, then back again. "So, what is it?"

Dopheld shifts, crossing his arms. "There's an emergency rehearsal in half an hour. I would have texted you, but I was right at *Old Harbor* when Jess texted me, told me to pass it on to you. I realized that I didn't have your number, so I asked Rey, but she just told me to go talk to you in person, since you were here."

Now Kylo looks alarmed. "What? What do you mean?" He sits straight up, bringing one foot up to rest on the dock. "Half an hour? Why?"

In response, Dopheld makes a few vague arm gestures. "A role has been replaced. Mabel's."

Kylo lets out a disgruntled sigh. "Of-fucking-course. Do you know who it is?"

"Yeah, it's Jess, that's why she texted me."

Another sigh. "Well, goddamn. Wish I'd known earlier." A pause, during which Kylo briefly turns back to look at Hux. "Thanks, I guess. I'll be there."

With a little nod, Dopheld turns and walks away, with strides that could almost be considered brisk.

There's a pause, before Kylo turns back like nothing happened. When he sees Hux staring at him, evidently confused with his mouth hanging open, he waves back at the road and says, "Oh, that's Dop. He's in drama with me, has been since high school. He's got a huge crush on Rey, poor kid. Doesn't know she's about as gay as a Pride parade."

Kylo says it so casually, as casually as one would talk about the weather, but for Hux, it hangs in the air. He can't see how something like that can be said so easily by anyone. Growing up, any sexuality other than heterosexual was a strictly taboo subject in the Hux household.

They're not even talking about him, but somewhere in his subconscious, he can hear the whisper of his father's voice, having a one sided discussion about his horrible political views.

Perhaps he lets the silence stretch on a bit too long, because Kylo looks quizzically at him. "Sorry, were you not expecting that?" He sounds defensive. "She is. If you have a pro--"

"No, no, I don't have a problem," Hux has to interrupt before things get out of hand. He doesn't quite have the courage to say what he wants to, so he goes with an alternative: "I just don't get how you can say it so... freely. Easily."

Kylo had leaned forward, but now he leans back. "Oh. Good." He looks thoughtfully at the distant horizon. "I guess I can say it easily because Rey herself is okay with it. She's pretty free about who she is," he says. "Not ashamed, you know. Doesn't have any reason to be."

"Well, that's good," Hux says, before he can stop himself. When Kylo raises his eyebrows, he has to continue: "For Nicole, I mean."

"Oh," Kylo starts laughing. "Oh! I hadn't thought about that! I don't think she knows. Oh, my god, I don't think she knows!"

Hux pulls his feet up onto the dock and crosses his legs. He doesn't respond; he doesn't need to. Because they lapse into silence and end up watching the lake's gentle waves. He has a lot on his mind. Today has given him many things to think about, but he has a strange feeling in his stomach that tells him it's not quite over yet.

Really, there isn't anything at all to say, and Kylo must sense this, because he too brings his feet up onto the dock, like he means to stand up. "We should probably head back," he says. Hux agrees. They both rise at the same time, Hux pulling down the sleeves of his sweater while Kylo wrings his hands together. Like the way he tousles his hair, he doesn't seem to realize that he's doing it.

They walk together back to the buildings, all the way to the dining hall, until they have to split.

"Drama's that way," Kylo says, gesturing over his shoulder, down the street.

"Yeah." Hux still isn't quite sure what to say. "Dorms are that way." Really, he doesn't have to point it out; they both know, so the added gesture is beyond useless.

A pause.

"I'll see you later," More than anything, it sounds like a promise.

"Okay."

When Kylo turns and leaves, Hux can't help but feel disappointed. Then he makes a mental correction: He is most certainly not disappointed, since he certainly was not hoping for anything in the first place.

It doesn't matter. He returns to the dorm building, deciding to take the stairs instead of the elevator this time. There are many things that he could do in the hours before bed, but his mind is so full of everything that has happened that it would be difficult to focus on anything. He could go see Nicole, and decides to, until he's halfway to her room and realizes that it's Friday, so she's probably out with the football team.

That doesn't leave him with anything real to do, so he decides to let himself waste a few hours on the computer. It's not something he does often, but it's better than the alternatives. But before this, he carefully washes and bandages his hands. When that's done, Hux puts on his big headphones and opens his laptop.

Wasting time: the key words here. He checks his email, but there isn't anything new. Since winter break has started and finals are over, there isn't any homework or studying he can do. So, he ends up scrolling through social media while listening to his pitifully small collection of music.

A knock on his door some hours later signals Kylo's return. Hux hadn't actually expected him to follow through with the whole, "I'll see you later" promise, but it's a pleasant surprise. He sleeps his computer before getting up to open the door.

As expected, Kylo stands there in the hall, looking tired but satisfied. He's invited in wordlessly.

Hux takes a seat at the edge of his bed and Kylo sits next to him, crossing his legs. It's something he does on instinct anyway, but Hux shakes the sleeves of his sweater down over his now bandaged hands, hoping that Kylo hasn't seen anything.

It's something that definitely has to be discussed at some time, but that time is not now.

Kylo runs a hand through his hair. "You wouldn't believe how crazy that rehearsal was," he says. His voice is scratchy, like he has been yelling a lot. "One of the biggest parts was replaced with someone new. The girl who had been previously playing the part had some sort of problem with her throat. I forget. Whatever it is, she won't be able to sing for a while, especially not the part she's got. The play isn't for a while yet, but it's a big part, you know."

Hux makes a little "hm" noise, as if he knows all the other details. If Kylo is being vague, it's on purpose and for a reason. There isn't any reason to question this.

"You can come to the play, if you want," Kylo continues, hesitantly. "I mean, it's not for a while, you know, but it'll probably get here soon enough. We've got a lot of great actors, really talented, you know, and--"

"I'd love to," Hux says, honestly.

Kylo breaks off with a satisfied--albeit slightly embarrassed--smile. Sometime during their conversation, he had shifted closer. Not very far, maybe a few inches at the most, but it's noticeable. Hux finds himself looking away from his eyes and down to his lips.

Stop that! some part of his brain says. *You're better than that!* He keeps doing it regardless. "I would really... really like to see..." He trails off completely, watching Kylo wet his lips.

"What?"

"Kiss me."

The words slip out; it's more of a knee-jerk reaction than anything, completely unplanned. Hux only says it because he's tired of having nothing to say, because they're already leaning so close together, because his heart feels like it's reaching out, but can't quite get all the way. (Because at this point, he's desperate.)

Kylo's brows furrow and Hux feels like his stomach is sinking. *Stupid, stupid*, he tells himself. His hands clench into fists. *Stupid, you even thought that he might do something*. He feels like he's shaking. *Just because he leaned forward a bit earlier doesn't mean anything. He probably forgot*.

But no, it does mean something, because Kylo leans in all the way and kisses him.

It's a shock, like cold water, but in a good way, and Hux leans into it. *Finally*, he can't help but think, *finally!* There are fireworks going off in his brain as he grabs a handful of the leather jacket Kylo is wearing. It's everything he's been waiting for and more.

Kylo reaches out one careful hand to touch his face, then laces his fingers through Hux's bright hair. He dislodges the perfect strands, but it doesn't matter, not at all. In fact, it's welcome.

Only when they absolutely *have* to breathe do they pull away from each other.

Hux has to put more effort than usual into fully opening his eyes, but when he does, it's worth it. Kylo is breathless and grinning, his face flushed and beautiful, even in the yellow dorm room light.

He isn't the only one. Hux, too, finds himself struggling to breathe, just a little bit.

Every feeling blossoming in his chest is so beautiful.

Out of the corner of his eye, Hux can see the time on his clock flash 11:00PM, so he leans back a little bit.

"Curfew," he manages, finally. "You should probably head back to your dor--"

"We don't have a curfew."

"Yes, we do, it's eleven and you should probably--"

Instead of getting up to leave, Kylo pulls him forward and kisses him again. This time, it isn't as soft and tentative; his lips are searching, looking for something that wasn't there last time. Hux gives it willingly. And it's so easy, too, when Kylo lifts his big hands up to encircle Hux's small waist.

Kylo is so gentle, holding him lightly with trembling hands. He parts the kiss to whisper, "Is this okay?"

As an answer, Hux sits up and swings one leg over his hips. "More than okay," he mumbles, before ducking down for another kiss.

They end up falling back onto the pillows, a heap of soft affection. Somewhere in the back of his mind, the same part that protests to every positive thing--the part that sounds a bit like his father--complains that they're ruining the perfectly made bed. Hux turns that part off. Instead of listening to it, he tilts his head and pays sharp attention to the way Kylo's breath stutters.

Time passes. It's so late. "Please stay." Hux murmurs against Kylo's lips during their--well, he lost track of how many times they've kissed. He wants to explain, to give a logical reason--*It's late, it's past curfew, if you're caught roaming around you'll be in trouble, you're so warm, please keep holding me, I think I love you*--but he can't get any words out.

Kylo's eyes open and search around for a moment, before he nods in agreement.

So they fall asleep together in Hux's bed, on top of the thin comforter. They aren't quite twined together, but Kylo has Hux's small frame wrapped up in his big arms, holding him close. His shirt is soft, but his jeans are scratchy against Hux's feet. That doesn't really matter, though, because he's warm and sleepy and safe and happy.

Kylo smells like fresh paint and fabric softener.

(Like safety and comfort.)

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you enjoyed reading this chapter as much as I did writing it!!

Oh, and don't forget about this fix's 8tracks mix (<http://8tracks.com/thewildcard/lovely-hearts>) and pinterest board! (details in my profile)

Much love and see you next update,
~Bee

Love is Love is Love is Love

Chapter Notes

Sorry for such the delay between chapters! May and June have been SUPER busy for me, what with all sorts of end-of-year exams and finals. School is over, so chapters should start coming out faster!! I love you guys so much, thank you for being so patient

<3

edit: please read the note at the end!

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

Hux is cold.

It's always the small things that wake him up, and this morning is no exception. Today, he shivers himself awake, hands briefly groping for blankets before he realizes that he must have kicked them off sometime in the night. The fresh, cold air he breathes in makes him remember that he forgot to shut the window before going to bed last night.

He opens his eyes, just a little bit, to see the blank white wall of his dorm mere inches from his face. While it's bright enough in the room to see, his alarm hasn't gone off yet, so that's a relief. Or maybe he slept in? It doesn't matter; it's Saturday, after finals, the first day of winter break, so there isn't anything urgent he needs to do.

Hux rolls over, migrating toward the warm mass of blankets at the edge of the bed. Something about his bed feels cold. Colder than usual, at least. Like he fell asleep at the height of summer and woke up in the dead of winter. He knows that isn't true. Barely opening his eyes, Hux halfheartedly pulls at the tight roll of blankets. They don't come free of the bundle, so after a few tugs, he gives up, sighing. Instead, he curls up and listens to the early--although that's questionable--morning quiet of his dorm.

Except, it isn't quiet. Something on the other side of the room is shuffling around.

On instinct, Hux freezes completely. His eyes squeeze shut.

But when the humming starts, everything that happened the previous night hits him all at once.

It's not a bad feeling, not at all. There's a warmth that starts in his stomach and spreads outward into his chest, and out more to the point where he's smiling, and opening his eyes just a little bit. Through his eyelashes, he can see Kylo standing over by the other bed, just finishing pulling on a grey t-shirt. A shirt he hadn't been wearing last night. He's looking at something on Hux's desk.

Hux props himself up onto one elbow. The noise alerts Kylo, who drops his hands and turns around, a smile already creeping onto his face.

"Good morning," he says. There's sunlight filtering through the window, hitting his face at just the right angle. "Sleep well?"

"Well enough." Hux's eyes flick down to what Kylo had been staring at on his desk. When he realizes what it is, his heart falls. For a moment, he stops breathing, freezing up, skin prickling, going cold.

Kylo notices him staring, then glances back down. His smile falters, as if realizing that something is wrong, like he can sense Hux's sudden discomfort. "If you don't mind me asking, who is that woman?" He gestures to the picture, holding it up so Hux can see.

It's a polaroid, taken with an old camera that was lost a decade ago.

Hux himself can remember the moment, or maybe it's just the picture giving him memories. The moment is quiet and colorful; his mother is laughing, throwing back her head, sitting on a stool and wearing a summer dress. The dress is lilac, he remembers, his mother's favorite color, but in the photo it has faded almost completely to white. Even in this discolored photo, many years old, Hux's mother is a thing of beauty.

His father took two pictures that day. Hux hears the snap of the camera, his mother's laughter like bells, then his father says, *Leanne, look here!* and takes another photo of her brilliant smile, this time while she's looking into the camera with her eyes open. They were blue, Hux recalls. Brendol Hux had kept the second photo, had ripped it in half two years later. The pieces were left behind during their second move.

Hux can hear ocean waves in his ears. It's nothing but white noise. There is a long, full pause before he can summon up a response. "That's... She's my mother." He shouldn't have left the picture out.

"She's lovely."

"She's... gone. She's gone." He doesn't say what he should. Hux sits up, swinging his legs out of bed.

At his words, Kylo stops dead in his tracks. He had been putting on a red flannel over his other shirt, but now he freezes, smile completely dropping away. "Oh. I... I'm..."

"Don't be sorry." He rubs at one eye. It's too early for this emotional turmoil. All he wants is to push it back, away--he's been dealing with this fine for years now--but it's proving to be difficult. Everything with Kylo is proving to be difficult. He's bringing something back that Hux had buried years ago, but... It's not painful. It's more like someone has shaken up part of his world. (Okay, maybe there's a tinge of pain as well.) But that's what Kylo is; difficult, a wild card, the pawn that will take down the king, a beautiful, beautiful mess.

Kylo fidgets with his shirt. "I didn't mean to--"

Hux reaches over to his desk and picks up his phone. "It's okay." *Liar*. "It was a long time ago. It's been years." Shut up and stop over-sharing. The screen displays two missed calls and a half dozen texts from Nicole.

---MOTHERFUCKING RIPPED BFF (7:01AM)

cam pls pick up i need u to cover 4 me @ work today

---MOTHERFUCKING RIPPED BFF (7:02AM)

@ 7:45am. kilos working then too

---MOTHERFUCKING RIPPED BFF (7:02AM)

******kylos*

---MOTHERFUCKING RIPPED BFF (7:03AM)

srry 2 bail, vacation was rescheduled. bout to board the plane. sorry 4 the last minute change

---MOTHERFUCKING RIPPED BFF (7:05AM)

oh & i guess we won't be able to see the movie. i already got r tics, u & kyle can go if u want

---MOTHERFUCKING RIPPED BFF (7:07AM)

have 2 go, luv u <3 <3 <3 <3

Hux lets out a little sigh. It's not even eight AM, and he's already feeling drained. He can tell that it will be a low day.

No matter. "Nicole needs me to cover for her. Apparently her vacation was moved."

Kylo huffs. "Of course it was. Did she say how long she would be there? We were supposed to go to the movies." He seems to be grabbing at the chance to conversation topic.

"No, she didn't say." Hux sets his phone back down on his desk and crosses his arms, trying to remain casual. "But, I guess now I have to go to work on a Saturday."

With a laugh, Kylo says, "Yeah. Wonder what that's like."

When Hux laughs, it's sarcastic, although without a sting behind it. Or so he hopes. But the morning lethargy is jolted out of him when he realizes that he needs to be at work at 7:45, and it's already 7:38.

Hux rubs at his eyes. Of course. No rest for the wicked. Today would be the day of all days that he would need to work last minute.

"I need to..." Hux trails off, watching Kylo pull his hair back. Kylo freezes when he hears him.

"Oh, right... Sorry, should I..?" They both do the awkward little shuffle around; Kylo towards the door, Hux to his dresser.

"Er, I... Maybe you..?" Hux gestures vaguely to the door.

"Oh, yeah, of course!" A bit too enthusiastically, Kylo flourishes his hands. "I'm gonna run up to my dorm and... and grab my apron. And coats and stuff. It's cold." His eyes flick up and down over Hux. And then he's out the door.

When he's gone, Hux lets out a breath he hadn't realized he had been holding. Everything had been fine. Everything *is* fine.

Everything is fine, he repeats again to himself. What's wrong? Nothing.

Sure, he's running late. That's okay. It's not his fault, and it's something that happens to everybody once and a while. Unavoidable. Sure, he'll be awkward as hell. That's okay. It's just what he does. Besides, Kylo should be able to talk enough for both of them. 7:40.

Quickly, he pulls a green long sleeved tee shirt and pair of grey jeans out of his dresser and changes into them. When that's done, he leans over to the mirror to check his reflecting. His hair is a mess, there are dark shadows under his eyes, and there's a definite slump in his shoulders, but it's alright. If today will be low, that's that. If today will be good, it will be good. He tugs on the first pair of shoes he sees; low black boots next to his desk. 7:41.

There's no time for a shower, no time to put in contacts, no time to change the bandages on his hands. Instead, he just puts on a pair of gloves. He can wash his hands later at work. Hux grabs his phone, apron, and jacket before he hurries out the door.

Kylo is waiting for him, black apron draped over on arm. He hops from foot to foot while Hux locks the dorm door behind him. Together, they hurry down the flights of stairs, always jumping the last few steps. They're out the front doors by 7:43, and they still have a ways to walk.

As they speed past the cherry trees that bloom in the spring, Kylo holds out an arm and slows down. A lot. Very suddenly.

Of course Hux bumps into him. "What are you doing?"

"Are we okay?"

"What?" The question is so out of the blue, catching Hux off guard.

"Are we... You know, are we okay."

"I'm okay if you are." He tugs his coat into a more comfortable position, trying to walk forward.

Kylo lets out a little laugh, more of a huff. He closes the few paces between them and takes Hux's gloved hands.

"Kylo, we're going to be late--" He's interrupted when Kylo ducks down and kisses his cold nose. "Oh?" Half of Hux is shocked, while the other half is jumping up and down, screaming, *YES, we're okay, please kiss me again!*

Another little almost-giggle. "Oh?' That's all?" The smile adjusts to become more serious. "But, really. You're okay? We're okay?"

Hux can't help but sigh a little bit. Even so, there's a small smile seen through that sigh, through the puff of warm breath in cold air. "Yes, I'm okay." *Aside from major commitment issues, few even remotely stable relationships, and general mental and emotional instability.* "Now, kiss me again." It's a demand.

Kylo looks shocked at the request, but his face breaks out into a big grin. "That I can do." He pulls Hux's hands up to his chest to rest on the front of his down jacket, and leans to kiss him properly this time.

As much as he doesn't want to, it's actually Hux who parts them, eyebrows lowering and mouth twisting into a frown. "We really need to get going."

"Why? I've changed my mind. I don't even want to go." Kylo keeps his eyes closed and rubs their frozen noses together. "It doesn't even matter if we're late, it's not like there's anybody there taking attendance. Besides, we can always write down the right time on the little sheet thing."

Hux's chest feels like it's overflowing. He takes the feeling and holds onto it. "It's *work*. We won't get paid if we don't go."

"I guess. Sure, yeah, you're right," Kylo says, sighing.

"Say that again."

Kylo has to kiss him again. "Yes, you are right, for once."

Hux snorts, and they begin to walk again. "*For once*," he mimics Kylo's voice. "Alright."

The rest of the walk is just idle conversation and kicking chunks of melty snow into the street. They hold hands; Hux's hands itch, but he just holds tighter onto Kylo.

Empire's is nearly empty when they enter. The only people present are Thanisson, working the register, Unamo, filling syrup bottles, and some old customer sitting in the corner. They wave to their fellow workers, but only receive tense stares in return, coupled with the slightest of nods. Unamo shoots them a sideways glare as they step behind the counter.

Once safely in the break room, they pull off their coats and put on their black aprons.

"Unamo seems to be in a particularly foul mood today," Hux notes.

Kylo scoffs. "She's had a stick up her ass since day one."

Hux's eyes dart towards the door, as if she could walk in any second. He isn't the kind of person to talk shit about someone behind their back, but Kylo isn't wrong. "Maybe."

They write the time their shift started on the check in/out paper, then Kylo heads back out behind the counter. Hux stays behind to wash his hands.

As soon as the door shuts, Hux stuffs his gloves into his pocket and unravels the wrappings from his hands, then discards those into the trash can in the corner of the room. He tries not to look at his palms and wrists as he washes his hands. He takes care to use the gentler soap of the two available.

He has learned to wash and dry his hands carefully over the years, so by now he has developed a near perfect technique. Every now and then his fingers will slip, but that's usually avoidable by patting them dry first. His fingers are fine, after all.

Hux tosses the paper towels into the trash, smooths out his hair, then exits the break room. A few more customers have come in, and that old man in the corner is still there. Kylo replaces Thanisson at the register, while Hux waits by the machines for Kylo to give him the new orders.

Business picks up within the next fifteen minutes, so soon enough the four workers are busy. Thanisson returns to the other register while Hux and Unamo work the bar. He keeps bumping into her without really meaning to, and in return she shoots him glare after withering glare.

"I have a tall café au lait for--" Hux has to squint at the name Kylo scrawled on the cup. "Kaydel." He hopes that's right.

He sets the cup down on the counter so the person can come get it, then heads over to the shelves behind the pastry case to get more coffee beans. He opens the cupboard and stretches up to get a bag. Even for Hux, at a fairly impressive six foot one, it's just too high. His fingers brush the front of the bag, but he can't quite reach it.

Ridiculous, he huffs, frowning. This time, he leans forward onto the tips of his toes, extending his arm as far as he can--

Someone--as in, someone he definitely knows--steps up right behind him, and he rocks back onto his heels on instinct, right into their broad chest. He turns his head sideways, scowling at Kylo over his shoulder.

"Are you going to help me or not?"

Kylo just laughs. Instead of reaching up himself and making use of the several inch height advantage he has, he wraps his hands around Hux's waist and lifts him up off the ground. Soon enough his eyes are level with the bag he had been trying to reach. He snatches it, holding it close while Kylo lowers him. This all happens quite quickly, but for Hux, it feels like more than a handful of seconds.

He turns around. Kylo's hands still circle his waist. "We have a job," he says, trying to remain serious.

Kylo's grin is something wonderful. "Yes, we do. I don't know about you, but I'm just doing *my* job, helping out a coworker." He offers Hux something that may or may not have been a wink before walking back to the cash register.

Well, somebody's having a good day, Hux can't help but think. It feels like there's a huge balloon in his stomach. Maybe he should be used to this feeling, but he isn't. Besides, it's not like it's a bad feeling.

He quickly refills the coffee grinder with the bag he got from the shelf, before returning back to the bar and taking the order that Kylo hands him. It's a simple one, a short espresso con panna with extra whip.

As quickly as customers had flooded in, they soon die down. It becomes a bit easier to breathe, to try and calm the thoughts racing circles around his head. It isn't easy to function in a bad head space, but after all the years he has become used to it; the emotions he has felt this morning are many, but there's no way in hell he is going to let that interfere with his job. He needs the money too badly.

The room is almost awkwardly quiet, so he tries to make idle conversation. "Thanisson, has your school had finals yet?" Hux starts the machine to heat up the milk.

"I've had one. The rest are after break." His words are short and clipped.

"Oh... We've already had ours," Hux says vaguely. He reaches behind him to take the cup for a new order that Kylo is offering him. It may just be his imagination, but Kylo's fingers linger a little longer than they should. "What are you majoring in, again?"

"Art education major and history teaching minor." He glances around the shop.

Hux gives what he hopes is an interested noise. He *is* interested, it's just that there's a lot on his mind. A lot that isn't the coffee he's supposed to be making.

Everyone else seems to be enjoying college. They all have such *interesting* fields of study. There's Kylo and his passion for the performing arts, Nicole and her music, even Thanisson and his teaching. Hux feels like he's sitting in a corner, studying for a major he might not even want anymore.

Maybe it's the threat of his father constantly hanging over his head that prevents him from seeing any other path he could take.

My father, he thinks with a huff. He starts to pour the milk into one of the nice porcelain cups Empire's has, the ones for customers who wish to drink their coffee in the shop. *My father can't get me here*. The thought sends a pang to his heart, followed by a dozen confused emotions. His hands are shaking.

In retrospect, it was probably a bad idea to try and pour milk with such shaky hands. He pours too much, and the scalding milk floods out of the cup onto his right hand.

"Fuck!" The shock of the heat--so hot it's cold--causes his hands to jerk wildly on their own accord; he drops the milk and sends the porcelain cup flying off the counter.

Everyone goes silent and all eyes are immediately drawn to him.

"Cam?" Kylo turns around from his spot at the counter. Hux's mind is completely blank, but he's pulled out of it when Kylo worriedly tugs at his shoulder. "Cam, Cameron, we have to put your hand under water!"

Hux lets himself be pulled into the break room, away from prying eyes. Kylo practically throws his hand under the faucet. It's the blast of cold water that brings him back.

"Hey! Cool water, not the Arctic Ocean!" he snaps, pulling his arm away. It's hard to keep a still face through the pain, but he lets his nose scrunch up. He can't help but let a few tears of pain slip out of the corner of his eyes.

"Right, sorry, sorry!" Kylo hurries to change the temperature of the water.

On the good side of things, the pain fades away after about twenty minutes of cooled water. On the bad side of things, that's twenty minutes wasted. Nobody, not even Thanisson, comes in to check on them.

When Hux mentions how the burn has stopped hurting, Kylo immediately perks up. He had sat down only on Hux's request, when he had used the logic that this may take a while.

"Kylo," Hux should have cleared his throat before speaking. "Could you grab the first aid kit?"

"Oh, yes!" Kylo grabs at the chance to jump up and move around. He had just been sitting at the table, idly playing with the bracelet around his right wrist for the entire time. He hurries to the back of the room and returns with the red and white kit, placing it next to Hux on the counter.

"Can you look up how to treat a burn?" Hux holds his dripping hand awkwardly over the sink, glancing back and forth between Kylo and the red, blistered skin.

Kylo opens the kit and starts rummaging around. "No need," he says proudly. He nudges Hux gently to the side while he washes his hands. "One of the few high school classes I actually learned something in was Health. There was an entire mini-unit on burns. We--" Hux takes note of the word 'we' instead of 'you', "have to wash it gently with soap and water, then pat it dry with a clean cloth. Shouldn't hurt."

Hux can't help the *humph* sound he makes. "Okay."

While Kylo dries his hands quick as he can, Hux tries to flick water off his fingers. Kylo retrieves some mild soap from the first aid kit--"Much better quality than the one we have here,"--and gets right to work.

When he goes to touch Hux's hand, Hux flinches away. He doesn't mean to, it just happens. Kylo tilts his head and gives him a little look, but he doesn't question it. He washes the burned hand oh so gently, taking care of the affected area.

The entire time, Hux is on edge, worried that Kylo will notice the small, self-inflicted shallow wounds and scars on his palm and the scratches on his wrist. But he doesn't.

They're leaning in so close together over the small sink, so, in a very daring move, Hux steals the opportunity to plant a quick kiss on Kylo's cheek. Maybe it's to distract him, to ensure that he doesn't notice, but Hux can't quite be sure.

Kylo turns slightly, surprised, and their noses brush. "What was that for?"

"You don't have to be back here with me," Hux says. There's a blush rising to his cheeks and a small smile on his face. "So, thanks."

Kylo grins. "Rather me than Thanisson, yeah?" This earns him a laugh. "Alright, here..." Kylo lets go of Hux's hand and carefully pats it dry with some of the--thankfully good quality--paper towels. While he searches for suitable bandages in the first aid kit, Hux can't help but watch him.

Today has been strange. Hux's heart has been everywhere across the board today, with all these strange emotions that have happened all before nine AM. And now he's stuck in the break room while his mind, screaming at him, is on 'work' mode, with a burned hand, but his heart is all aflutter. It's all very conflicting. His feeling about the day keeps changing, but strangely, his gut feeling stays the same. An odd feeling, he notes, watching Kylo unwrap loose fitting, breathable bandages.

Hux really likes him. As in, really likes him. Maybe it's love. Maybe he's just naïve. Not something he would admit even to himself in the daylight, just in the safe comfort of Kylo's arms very late at night.

"There you go!" Kylo secures the bandage into place. Hux pulls his eyes away from Kylo's face and looks down at his hand, now safely--albeit a tad uncomfortably--sheltered and wrapped away.

He flexes his hand. "Thank you."

"Oh, it's no problem at all." When Hux lifts an eyebrow at him, Kylo puts up his hands in defense. "No, really!" He smiles. "I've been being paid for the last half hour for helping you, and I'd do that any day." The tone of his voice is almost... flirty?

Hux narrows his eyes. "Oh?" *Well done, very smooth.*

"Yeah, of course," Kylo says, inching closer. His fingers reach forward, tentatively brushing over the belt loops at the waistband of his pants.

Hux's heart is beating in his throat, but he manages a smile. "Well, I guess I'm lucky."

Kylo, Hux notes, probably from the thousandth time, has a very beautiful smile. No not just his smile, but really his entire face. "I've been meaning to ask you something all morning," Kylo says. He leans in a little bit to touch noses; their lips are so, so close. "Cam, I--"

The break room door bursts open and Thanisson storms in, glaring something fierce. Kylo and Hux jump apart; Hux back into the counter, clutching his burned hand close to his chest, and Kylo away toward the table.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Kylo's voice is probably louder than it should be.

Thanisson's eyes could cut through a solid chunk of ice. "You two need to stop being so immature! Don't you understand? Our jobs are at stake!" He points accusingly between Kylo and Hux. "I don't know what you two are up to, it's like you're actually trying to get us fired!"

Kylo appears to be just as confused as Hux feels. "What are you talking about?"

"First you arrived late, then you have to get all PDA, both of you are obviously distracted, then Cameron drops an entire cup of coffee and breaks one of our good cups at the same time--"

"Hey, hey, whoa," Kylo interrupts Thanisson, scowling. "You can't blame him for that. Besides, why are you so mad about this?"

Thanisson runs his hands through his pristine hair. "*The CEO is here!* There have been complaints that our store isn't up to par with the rest of the chain, so he came in personally to check up on things!"

Everything clicks, and Hux speaks up. "The bald man in the corner?"

"Yes!" Thanisson is pacing now. "We're all going to lose our jobs if you two keep this up!"

Kylo frowns. "I hadn't even noticed anybody out of the ordinary."

"Yes, yes, well, you're still fairly new here." It's clear that Thanisson is long done with the conversation, itching to get back out. "We're wasting our time back here, it's just Unamo running the front!" Observation confirmed.

Kylo sends Hux a sideways glance. "Okay, you're right, but Cam, I don't think you should continue working today. You should probably go--" He stops himself. "Go back to your dorm. I'll stay, or..." This time, his eyes move briefly to Thanisson. "I could come with you if you want. There's still... um..." Kylo trails off when he sees Thanisson's expression. "I mean..."

It looks like Thanisson is trying to glare his way through Kylo's skull, but he manages to say, "No. You're probably right. You've been injured on the job. You need to go home." He closes his eyes briefly. "I can't believe I'm saying this, but Kylo, you can go home with him."

Two pairs of eyebrows shoot up. "Really?" Kylo sounds much too hopeful.

"Yes, but go quickly." Thanisson pinches the bridge of his nose. "And out the back. You can't let Mr. Snoke see you leave. Unamo and I can try to cover for you."

Kylo frowns, but doesn't say anything.

"Thank you, Thanisson." Hux tries to sound as sincere as he can. He has never particularly liked Thanisson, and they often butt heads over trivial things, but really, he has nothing personal against the guy. And now Hux owes him a favor; perhaps a big one.

In response, Thanisson just snorts. "Get going."

Chapter End Notes

Hello all! As you probably know by now (Dec. 2016) this fic is on hiatus. For how long, I don't know. I may return sometimes soon, sometime later, who knows. BUT I still appreciate all the love, and am thankful for everyone bearing with me!

Much love and I hope to see you in the future, as this is not goodbye.

~Bee

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