
STAR WARS: SITH HUNTER

By John R. Davies

PART ONE

Rey moved with her lightsaber as if she had been using it her whole life. Finn had never seen anyone move like that. He tried to follow along with his own, but his movement seemed clunky, juvenile in comparison. "Keep practicing. You'll get it eventually," Rey said, attempting to not upset him over his lacking skills. "You know I've used a lightsaber before," Finn joked back. "I remember you losing that fight," Rey joked back, smiling. Since taking Finn on as her apprentice, she had hoped that their friendship would stay the same. "Try the movement again," she told him. Finn tried to move his feet and his lightsaber in concert, just as Rey had shown him, but just ended up tripping on himself. Rey laughed, trying not to let Finn hear her. She failed that just as Finn had failed the basics of Form III. Finn sat on the ground, hoping for more instruction from the Jedi Knight, but instead remembered something he wanted to ask her about. "You hear the rumors coming from the outer rim?" Rey refocused her attention on Finn after composing herself. "You mean about the Jedi who uses a red lightsaber? Yeah, De'Gantt told me about it." De'Gantt was the pilot who seemingly went out of his way to resupply Rey and Finn here on Dantooine. Finn didn't know if Rey was aware of this, but he suspected De'Gantt had started to fall for Rey. After all, she was young and attractive and he always seemed lonely on that freighter of his. Not that it mattered. "Maybe we should go check it out," Finn asked, hoping to get off this planet. They'd come to Dantooine because it was isolated and because it had an old Jedi temple that was abandoned shortly after the rise of the Empire. "That isn't a good idea. No Jedi uses a red lightsaber and you won't be able to fight a Force User like that," Rey explained. "I fought Kylo Ren," Finn added. "And lost. Badly. I barely won against him my first time. If I had the training back then that I have now, the fight would have gone differently." Finn frowned. "You do realize that we will have to deal with it," Finn said. "In time, Finn, we will. But first, you need to practice your Form III," Rey joked, her smile returning.

On a planet far from the reach of any Jedi, a Sith Apprentice began his descent into the temple of the Dathomir Witches. He moved with purpose and intent, even though the inhabitants of this world were all long since dead, killed by the Sith that preceded him. It mattered little, as the Hunter held little regard for cultists and witches. Moving from room to room, tunnel to tunnel, the Hunter followed the plans his Master had given to him, eventually finding the one room he needed. The room was highly decorative, with intricate symbols covering the walls. In the centre of the room was a stone table, large enough for a man to lay on flat. This was the right room, the Hunter thought. He unclipped a familiar lightsaber – that of the heretic, Kylo Ren – and placed it upon the stone table. He stepped away from it and kneeled in such a manner that many would consider praying. He chanted and muttered and sang the ritual of revival, a Sith ritual for bringing back the dead. No Sith would dare to weaken themselves to bring back another Sith, but his Master was quite insistent that the ritual be performed, and on the Heretic no less. But the Hunter did not think more of it, even as the room lit up in a sickly green. The stone table disappeared as a green fog engulfed it, but the Hunter did not care to look at it and instead chose to keep chanting. The ritual ended as suddenly as it began as the room faded back to the dull colors that often infested old temples and the hunter

now dared to look at his handy work. Looking up, he saw the unconscious body of Kylo Ren laying there. His Master had given clear commands; the Heretic would not be harmed. The Hunter knew that to disobey the Master would bring unimaginable suffering, so left a sleeping Kylo Ren be and left.

Back on Dantooine, Rey and Finn felt a shift in the Force. It left Finn confused as to what he was feeling, but Rey collapsed as she could no longer feel Ben as being within the Force. She could feel his presence, but the feeling came onto her as if he had not died back on Exogel. The feeling shook her to her core, as if a part of her had been taken away by some violent entity. Rey felt a mix of shame and horror as the violation continued until it finally subsided. "What was that," Finn panicked, not knowing what this painful feeling was. "Ben," Rey whispered, "It was Ben!" Finn was taken aback by the name. Ben Solo had died on Exogel saving Rey. But Finn could not forget that Ben Solo was also Kylo Ren, the monster that had put him in a Bacta-Tank and had tortured Rey and Poe, his two closest friends. His feelings were mixed, but not in a good way. "Ben is dead, Rey. He died on Exogel," Finn said, not trying to let his hatred for Kylo shine through his voice. "No, he's alive! The Force, it's telling me he's alive," Rey exclaimed with a mix of shock and a hint of delight that left Finn worried. "We need to help him," Rey begged to herself more than to Finn. "Should we really be doing that? I mean, we don't know if he is alive," Finn said unbelieving of what Rey was saying. "He's alive, Finn, and with or without your help I'm going to find him!" Rey managed to muster up every ounce of confidence she could to tell him what she intended to do. "Okay, okay, I'll come with you. I'll get on the comm and get Poe to pick us up." Rey didn't respond, immediately deciding to meditate on the future she faced.

Poe and Chewie landing the Falcon as smoothly as they could, given the age and condition of the old freighter. But Poe couldn't help but wonder how much longer the Millennium Falcon could last after all it had been through. Chewie alerted Poe to one the broken fuel indicators. "Yeah, I know Chewie. We'll have to get that replaced as soon as we can get a part," Poe told the upset Wookiee. This ship meant a lot to him. A last reminder of the brother he had lost. "Let's go see what the wizards want," Poe joked, hoping to lift his co-pilots spirits up. Rey waited by the ship as Finn gathered the few belongings he had. Rey had insisted he wouldn't need them, but Finn insisted that he wanted them. Rey was frustrated with Finn and his unwillingness to let go of his few possessions, but understood that it wasn't her place to decide what was best for him, even if she was his teacher. Chewie and Poe finally left the Falcon, expecting to help bring in some of the equipment that the two Jedi used. Chewie welcomed Rey with a hug, which she gladly accepted. "So, you want us to start loading up cargo," Poe asked, expecting Rey to confirm it. "No, we're leaving the equipment here for now. We have something more important to do," Rey explained to both Chewie and Poe. "Like what," Poe asked. "She wants us to find Kylo.... Sorry Ben," Finn rushed in, again frustrating Rey a bit more. "Bit of a problem there, considering he's dead and all," Poe said, confused by what Finn had said. Chewie couldn't help but voice his own confusion. "He was, but now I feel him through the Force. He's alive and I want to find him," Rey told the pair, seemingly refusing to acknowledge their confusion. "Are you sure about this Rey, you were the one who told everybody he was dead," Poe asked, hoping she was joking. "Yes, I'm sure. He's alive and I need to find him," she confirmed. Poe remembered the last confrontation he had with Kylo Ren, with the former Supreme Leader having tortured him. Chewie agreed to help Rey, having never been one to turn down a friend in need. "Thank you Chewie," Rey responded. "Fine, I'll help too," Poe chimed in. Rey smiled with the knowledge she would get see Ben again in the flesh and not just in her dreams.

Back in the temple, Ben Solo awoke in a haze of confusion. He tried to remember who he was and how he came to be here, but simply couldn't. He sat up and noticed the lightsaber hilt next to him. It seemed familiar, as if he had seen it before. He picked up and a flash of memory came back. The briefest image of his father came to him before quickly fading back into his lost memory. He looked around the room he found himself in and noticed a small box next to the stone table he was on. He got up and opened it, finding some simple clothes and a distress beacon. Still in a confused daze, he put on the clothes and left the beacon in the box before leaving the room. The whole temple seemed to be calling him out, as if to offer him something. It was less like a conversation and more of a feeling. Ben couldn't explain it. But deeper than that, as his confusion cleared he could feel a connection to someone. His memory faltered and he didn't know who this person was, but he remembered a name. Rey. He called it out, hoping somebody would respond. The name echoed through the Force, sending it across space to where it meant to be.

Rey meditated in her quarters, looking through the Force for any trace of Ben. She opened up the old connection they had shared, the one her father had opened, and heard Ben speak her name. The Force showed her images of a red planet and a temple. One she recognized. Dathomir, home to the Dark Side witches. Of course, where else to resurrect someone? Rey was familiar with the planet. Several Sith had originated from it and many more had been drawn to it. Or so her Grandfather had wrote within his Holocrons. She took them on faith, choosing to believe in the Force. Leaving both her meditative pose and her quarters, she went straight to the cockpit, passing both Finn and BB-8 along the way. "Poe, I know where Ben is," she said with both confidence and a small amount of hidden glee. "So, where do we go," Poe asked. "Dathomir. We go to Dathomir," Rey confirmed.

PART TWO

"I've got a bad feeling about this place," Finn worried out loud. The Millennium Falcon had finally reached Dathomir and was now descending towards the temple. Rey didn't want to say it, but she could feel the Dark Side surround them but the whole planet. "Get us close to the temple," Rey asked. "I'll try, but it won't be easy. The whole planet seems like its overgrown," Poe said, "Chewie, be ready for anything." Chewie simply responded with a nod. Rey left the cockpit and went up to Finn. "I want you to stay on the ship," she asked him. "What, no! You don't know what's in there," Finn argued. "Finn, please. I need to do this alone," Rey pleaded with her apprentice. "Fine, I'll stay." Finn wasn't happy about being forced to stay behind and Rey didn't need the Force to notice. "You don't need to worry, this planet hasn't had a visitor in years," Rey told him softly. It wasn't true and they both knew it, but Finn didn't call Rey out on the lie. Rey, carrying nothing but her lightsaber, left the ship in search of Ben.

The Hunter had tracked the Millennium Falcon all the way to the temple as soon as it left Hyperspace. The ship he used was cloaked and the Hunter made sure to land away from sight. He watched as the Jedi Knight left the comfort of her ship and enter the temple.

Rey could sense Ben was nearby, but the temple was making it difficult to pinpoint where. Not only was it like a maze, but the Dark Side seemed to be stronger inside the temple. It was clouding her ability to locate Ben. Despite this, she could feel where Ben was generally and moved towards his general direction, hoping luck was on her side.

Ben sensed that someone was searching for him and that they were inside the temple with him. He felt compelled to move towards them, not knowing how or why. Too many questions raced through his mind as his feet moved of their own accord – or maybe they moved for some other reason, Ben could not tell. The feeling of someone nearby got stronger and stronger until he turned a corner. At the far end of the corridor,

Rey stood with a mix of surprise and happiness. Without missing a beat, he activated the lightsaber he carried, not knowing if she was friend or foe. Rey was surprised when Ben activated the cross guard Lightsaber that was more akin of his Kylo Ren persona, but then sensed more of Ben than of Kylo. Rey didn't activate her own lightsaber, instead opting for another way. "Ben, is that you? Don't you remember me," she asked, concerned about his odd behavior. "Who's Ben? And who are you," he responded cautiously. Rey reached out in the Force and it showed her his amnesia. He was not well and she needed to help him. "I'm.... I'm a friend. I'm here to help you," Rey softened her voice to say. She slowly approached him, trying to not make herself seem too threatening. Ben turned off his lightsaber, still unsure about this person who moved towards him. As the two finally got close enough to embrace, a cold sensation overwhelmed them both followed by the familiar hum of a lightsaber. Rey turned to see the Hunter prepared to fight, with the red light swallowing the corridor. "Stay behind me, Ben," Rey commanded. She moved between him and the Hunter and activated one of her two blades. The two opposing colors of yellow and red clashed as the two force wielders clashed their blades. The Hunter would strike once, twice and then again, forcing Rey back. But then Rey would match his every strike and push him back. The Hunter said nothing, but was clearly a stronger fighter than Rey. He kept striking her blade again and again, forcing her to her knees. Seeing no other option, Rey reached out with the Force and collapsed the ceiling onto the Hunter. Keeping her lightsaber on, she made sure that he wasn't going to just get up again, eventually deciding to get Ben to safety.

Rey rushed Ben onto the Millennium Falcon and told Poe to take off. "What happened," Finn asked worried. "We were attacked," Rey said, more concerned about Ben than Finn. "By who? REY! What happened," Finn forced Rey to listen. "A Force user with a red lightsaber came after us. But I managed to beat him and escape with Ben," she rushed the explanation, not sparing any concern for how her apprentice had felt. Rejected, Finn slinked back into his seat as Rey checked over Ben. "Get the Hyperdrive ready," Poe said. The Millennium Falcon lifted into the air and proceeded to escape the planet.

Unnoticed by the Jedi and their companions, the Hunter observed from the entrance of the tunnel. Darth Caedus would be pleased.

PART THREE

Darth Caedus inspected the Holocron given to him by his Master. The Sith Order had risen to power only to end due to the arrogance of one, but Caedus had survived the betrayal of his Master and had gone into hiding. But this gave him the chance to rebuild the Order, to redeem the Sith and truly follow the Rule of Two Darth Bane had originally set out. He would make sure the mistakes of Darth Sidious would not be repeated. The Hunter silently walked up to Caedus and kneeled before his master. "Is it done? Has the Heretic been revived," Caedus asked of his apprentice. "It is done. The Dyad has been reformed," the Hunter confirmed. "Good. Now for the next stage in our plan."

Coruscant was not the first choice for Poe, but it was better than nothing. Rey for some reason had insisted, claiming that she had friends there. Neither Poe nor Chewie knew what she meant, but decided to amuse her anyway. It could be the chance to find some of the spare parts they needed to keep the Falcon running. Rey had taken Ben to a nearby hospital and was busy arguing with Senator Arbo over whether or not to turn Ben over to the Galactic Senate. "If he is who you say he is, then he is responsible for numerous crimes – including war crimes of all things!" "He doesn't remember anything. You want to sentence him without him remembering what he even did," Rey argued. "That doesn't matter. He still killed billions, whether he remembers it or not," Arbo argued back. Rey was annoyed by the whole conversation. "I'll discuss it with the senate, but don't expect the results you want," he finished. Arbo had an agenda, but Rey could care less.

Poe and Chewie had split up to look for the parts they needed. Good thing too as Poe quickly discovered that the parts they needed were incredibly scarce. That also meant expensive, but Poe didn't much care if it meant keeping the Falcon in the sky. But Poe became more and more concerned as he kept hearing rumors of

someone wielding a red blade assassinating people all over the galaxy. He wouldn't have paid it much heed had Rey not explained what had happened to her and Ben back on Dathomir. A name kept being repeated – Lian Vos. Lian Vos was a bounty hunter and smuggler who had a reputation for being somewhat honest, even for a smuggler. While Poe had not met her personally, he was aware that she liked to operate out of Tatooine. Maybe it would be worth following up, even if it came to nothing.

"Hey Ben. How are you doing," Rey asked. "Better. The medical droid said I have amnesia, but I'm otherwise fine." Rey smiled at him. "What do you remember?" "Not much. I remember Exogel. We were there. But I don't know why. I remember dad. I remember killing him," Ben looked down as he said this, with more regret than Rey had ever seen. "But you redeemed yourself. And you will do so again," Rey said hopeful. "What do you mean," Ben asked. "You'll find out soon enough." Ben and Rey grew awkward in the silence, struggling to find the words to express themselves. "What did it feel like, becoming one with the Force," Rey asked, hoping to avoid the obvious topic. "I don't really remember," Ben explained, "It's like being surrounded by pure light. But there's something more. But I can't remember what." A few more glances passed between the love struck pair. "I do suppose we should talk about it," Ben spoke up. The usually confident Rey blushed and started to shy away and Ben smiled. Clearly the feeling is mutual, Ben thought. "Yeah, I suppose we should," Rey said, wanting to get it off her chest.

Darth Caedus mediated on his next move, just as his master had taught him to do. There were so many possibilities, so many options, that only the Dark Side could offer. All he had to do was reach out and grab them. "Master," the Hunter asked, "What should our next move be?" Darth Caedus thought on it for a moment. The plan had no room for error. "First, we strike down the weakest of the Jedi. Make them resent us, while sending them a message. The war will be ours," he commanded to his apprentice. The Hunter said nothing as he left, but instead felt the excitement the hunt would give to him.

"Let's hurry up and get back to Coruscant," Poe told Chewie, "I'd rather not stay here." Clearly the Wookiee didn't share the same sentiment. Mos Espa was a backwater on a backwater and had fallen quick and hard after Jabba the Hutt died many years prior. The infamous Pod Races no longer ran and many of the traders and mechanics that once called it home and moved on to better grounds. The pair walked past empty homes and storefronts, occasionally drawing unwanted attention from those too poor to leave, until they got to what passed as the local cantina. "Doesn't look like much now, does it," Poe quipped. Chewie let out a low growl, indicating that he'd been in worse places. "I don't doubt it, but keep an eye open anyway." If the town was bad, the cantina was even worse. A lone droid and its owner serviced the bar, though it seemed that both had seen better days. Poe looked around and saw Lian Voss in the corner and moved to join her. "Lian Voss," Poe asked. "Depends on who's asking," she asked. "We came about the information," Poe said coldly. "You got my credits?" Poe pulled out a credit chip and slid it across the table. "That's double what you asked for," Poe told her. "Someone's eager," Voss mused, "You're looking for the Hunter." Poe and Chewie braced themselves. They both wished it wasn't true, but deep down they knew it was. "Who is he," Poe asked. "Nobody knows. Just that he comes and goes from Korriban." "Wait, he came from Korriban?" Voss didn't bother commenting or replying to a stupid question like that. "I know he comes from Korriban, that he wields a red lightsaber and that he's been killing people all over," she explained, sliding over a data chip as she did so. "What's this?" "The only known record of him, seeing as how you're being so generous in payment." Poe and Chewie looked at each other, confirming their shared worry about what they were hearing. "Thanks, this will help a lot," Poe thanked her before leaving.

Back on Coruscant, Rey was waiting for Argo to tell her what the senate had decided. She and Ben had spoken a while about all sorts of things before he finally fell asleep. To be able to speak with him again without trying to kill each other was refreshing and Rey couldn't be happier. She wanted to keep thinking about him, but her train of thought was interrupted by Argo grabbing her attention. "Rey, I have word on the Senate," he said to her. "What did they have to say," she pushed for an answer. "This is, um, rather complicated," Argo tried

explaining, "The Senate is rather uncomfortable with him being back in the picture. Now, they are familiar with his condition and have decided that they would rather trust you to keep him from creating issues where none need arise." Rey sensed a lot of hesitation coming from the senator. "What are you not telling me," she asked. "Well, truthfully this is a rather complicated situation. One the Senate refuses to even acknowledge. They don't want anything to do with him." Rey wasn't surprised by any of this. While his family were known heroes, Ben wasn't as highly considered by many. "Okay, I'll take him in," she told him, "I'll take him back to Dantooine with me. I'll guarantee he won't be a problem." "I certainly hope so, Rey. For his sake." Rey didn't have to ask Argo what he meant by that, he already knew. The Senate was prepared to do anything to ensure the First Order stayed dead.

Finn wasn't at his best and he knew it. That's why he wasn't able to learn any of the lightsaber forms that Rey had been trying to teach him. It was made even worse when Ben came back from the dead. Rey definitely had preferences, even though Finn was supposed to be her friend. It didn't help that she spent most of her time with him instead of training Finn. He tried to let go of his resentment, but it was proving to be difficult. Now back on Dantooine, Finn was growing restless with what he perceived as his friend and master abandoning him for a monster. These feelings of being discarded, the rage that came with them clouded his ability to sense the very real threat that now approached him. The hunter approached from behind, honor of no concern to the Sith apprentice. Too late did Finn realize the presence of the Dark Side. Too late did he realize the red blade move towards him, penetrating from behind before he could react. And as he lay dying, he again failed to realize that his feelings for Rey had finally betrayed him.