The shots we didn't take

by TheFrenchWriter

Summary

It’s been ten years since the Arkadia Strikers have hoisted the Jaha Cup. Clarke Griffin knew it when she was drafted, kept it in mind as she ascended to the starting goalie position and used it to fuel her will as a key player of the team, supporting her teammates until the second round of the playoffs last season, where they faced a grueling loss to the TonDC Shockwave after only five games. The team is now in desperate need of a player that will light a spark in the offensive line, a player that will restore the long-lost identity of the team and prove that it still deserves the famous nickname “power strikers”. Alexandria Woods, first line center and hockey extraordinaire, might be just the player. The twist: anyone who has seen her play knows that Lexa Woods has an ego bigger than her head and a superstar, cocky attitude that, although did well with her previous team, has brought her quite the reputation across the league.

Notes

First of all, hello to everyone! I bid you a warm, cozy, fluffy welcome and I thank you very much for being here, figuratively of course - I know you’re probably sitting on a couch or a chair and if so I hope you are comfortable (I care for your well-being as you can see) because this will be quite a ride! What I’ve got planned for you guys is a Clexa sports AU in which a cute, kind, focused Clarke who wants nothing but to play hockey has to deal with the arrival of forward superstar Lexa Woods, who she has played against and isn’t
particularly fond of. The key is that Woods, although cocky and unpleasant, constitutes a hell of a winning asset and will most likely lead the team to victory. I know some of you (all of you, just admit it) want to see the fall of the great Lexa Woods, or in other words, see her go from arrogant asshole to little gay puppy. And I will give you just that. Prepare for angst, cool hockey games, fluff and a HAPPY ENDING (see, I am very subtly telling you that Clexa is endgame). Now, without further ado, let us begin :) 
N.B. I do not own the 100 nor the characters in it (except the ones I made up).
Clarke Griffin knows two things about hockey: one, that winning is the best thing she ever experienced in her whole life. It brings this big, toothy smile to her face, makes her jump and drop both glove and blocker at the same time at the sound of the buzzer and run to tackle her mates, not even caring if they struggle to stand on their blades as her heavily padded frame collides with them in a ferocious hug.

Losing, on the other hand, is the absolute worst, digs a hole in her guts, brings tears of fury in her eyes, and that, 

that

is the second thing she knows beyond doubt. Unfortunately, for the last ten years, losing became some sort of habit for the Strikers, Arkadia’s once famously successful professional hockey team. Water bottles were furiously thrown in lockers’ first shelves, players giving a glimpse of their anger while removing their equipment in a violent fashion, yanking hard on the laces of their skates, pulling their helmet’s chinstrap while uttering loud, crushing sighs. Clarke, as happy as she is playing for the city team, knows that she probably won’t ever get her hands on the Jaha cup, let alone admire it from a distance, as long as a contract links her to the blue and gold jersey she wears five days a week.

It doesn’t stop her from giving it her best shot at every occasion, hoping that a miracle will happen, that her players will suddenly develop unique offensive abilities, finding the bottom of the net more than one and a half times per game, which was the (sad) average last season.

And that’s how on a Monday morning, her mouth full of waffles (maple syrup dripping down her chin), she receives a surprising text from one of her teammates.

Raven, professional hockey unicorn 9:28 am

Holly shit Griffin, you won’t believe what’s happening here

Griffin the muffin 9:31 am

What

Raven, professional hockey unicorn 9:32 am

Too long to explain just get your ass here already

Griffin the muffin 9:33 am

A girl needs her breakfast. And how come Monday mornings are so important all of a sudden? Practice is at 10, no rush.

Raven, professional hockey unicorn 9:33 am

Trust me Griffin you do not want to be late today. I repeat, just get your ass here.

Clarke knows her friend well enough to know that she herself is rarely on time. At the thought, she realizes there has to be some sort of event, and a special one, for Raven Reyes to wake up at the alarm (not snooze it ten times) and successfully get out of the bed.
There is a heavy animosity in the locker room. Clarke can hear it the moment she’s around the corner, duffel bag thrown carelessly over the shoulder and water bottle in precarious balance under the arm. A head springs out of the room, casting her an annoyed yet excited glance.

“Griffin! Thank God.”

The next second, Raven is grabbing her shoulders, shaking with a strange febrility.

“Okay, so this morning Octavia texted me because she got a text from Jennings who got a text from Mitchells who was notified by the coach— “

“And it looks like you’ve turned into a babbling magpie overnight… Would you just get to the point?” Raven glances at her, both exasperated and restless, her hand brushing through her hair quickly.

“We traded Capcom! I can’t believe it!”

“What?” The response came bursting out of Clarke - fast, loud, upset. All things reconsidered, she really likes Mia Compton, their captain for the last three years, and the thought of losing her services is both panicking and unfortunate.

“Just like that? Out of the blue? After a twenty-goal season?”

“Clarke, we’re fucked. We’ve been fucked for the last five years. You can’t blame people for trying to help us.”

Clarke is about to reply when she promptly closes her mouth and decides to reflect on the matter. Raven isn’t wrong. Time after time, their coach has yelled at them, telling them that there would be changes in the roster if they didn’t start performing. Again, that’s the missing puzzle piece, that has been the missing puzzle piece for over ten years now: performing, not playing, not doing their job, but performing. It’s not a game anymore, it’s a show. Fans expect to see the red light flashing and hear the buzzer resonating in the arena, they buy tickets to see action, fights, a fire burning at the core of this team.

“Who is it? Is she good?” Clarke asks, starting to calm down, starting to see the logic in the issue.

“They say she’s some sort of hockey prodigy. Drafted by the Polis Scorpions, played for them for the last four years. Scored thirty-two goals last season. I’m thinking she might be the real deal, Griffin.”

The real deal. Truth is, the team has been waiting for this “real deal”, has signed youngsters who apparently had potential but later proved to lack the experience, has traded their worst players for poor draft picks, has trained, trained, trained until players can’t skate, can’t shoot, can barely get to the bench, and there, sigh in exhaustion as their muscles beg for mercy. Each season, new players are gradually disillusioned, as they begin to realize that their dreams will always remain just that: dreams. Unattainable, too good to be true.

And with that, both girls enter the locker-room, freeing the equipment from the bags, putting it on like it’s something mechanical, an automatism, almost. Clarke is halfway through her first skate when Octavia enters her line of sight, looking disheveled and grouchy like she’s just been dragged out of bed. She raises her hand in a pitiable salutation, the other occupied with containing the impressive yawn that tears her mouth open.

Raven raises her eyebrows, shooting a glance in Clarke’s direction. “Good morning to you too,
Blake,” they salute sarcastically and almost in unison. “Oh, hey guys”, the dark-haired girl replies semi-consciously, eyes glancing on both sides of the room like there’s something missing. “Where’s the new chick?”

Clarke can’t help the ironic smile from spreading across her face. “Are you guys obsessing over her already? Who is she, Madonna?”

“Nah, she’s the female Sydney Crosby. But younger, so Connor McDavid I guess? Or even Auston Matthews, once we’re at it—”

Charlie Langton, second line wingman who has overheard the conversation, jumps on the occasion and joins the three girls.

“Okay just to clarify real quick, she is NOT Auston Matthews, and certainly not Sydney Crosby. Blake, just face it, putting her on the rink will be just like inventing a new show called “Asshole on ice.”

At that, Clarke intervenes, perplexed. “First, I’m guessing this is a poorly delivered joke about Disney on Ice. Second, is she that bad?”

Langton quickly nods, ignoring Clarke’s comment (they’re past that, really), then licking her lips like she’s preparing for a sharp speech. “She’s just that, actually. Hey Briggs, remember when we played against them mid-season and she gave you that check?”

When named, Lauren Briggs turns around, and she seems busy with her helmet but quickly lets down the equipment to join the conversation. “Holy fuck, I still have back pain whenever I think about it.”

Clarke’s jaw drops. “That was her?”

The memory is imprecise, but she vaguely remembers seeing Briggs collide with a player she thought played defense at the time (because really, who else could check like that if not a defenseman?), and the result was spectacular and painful at once, sending Briggs on a front flip only to land flat on her back. It was completely legal and completely vicious.

“Reyes, were you there? I think you weren’t there yet, am I right?” Raven nods, curious to learn more about the subject. “I think that was the year before I joined the team.” Langton’s reaction is one of satisfaction (she guessed right) and she stands beside Octavia to exemplify the situation using reconstitution. “So, Briggs was going like that – and she had the puck, going for the net… Next thing you know, Woods (she motions in bewilderment) appears out of nowhere and she’s fierce, and she wants to taste blood, you know, like a shark—”

Octavia interrupts her. “Or a wolf. I mean, they don’t call her Big Bad Woods for nothing.”

Clarke glances at Octavia exasperatedly. “Hey I’m just saying”, she defends herself, hands in the air in a defense motion, and adding a shrug for symbolic reasons.

“Thanks, Blake, that will be all for now”, gratifies Langton. “So, back to it. Briggs is just cruising, you know, just chilling, and then Woods bends down, sliding towards her quick as a snake, and hits her, using her ass as leverage to flip the chick who’s then flying like a retarded pigeon, and it only took like two seconds. I’m telling you, Woods is a sneaky bastard.”

Always the rational, Clarke processes the information, then takes it with a grain of salt. She’s quick at finding explanations for things - for anything, really, whether it be an event, an inappropriate comment, a rude behavior. “But it was legal, wasn’t it? I mean, Briggs, you lived to
tell the tale.”

Lauren shakes her head with a crooked smile. “I didn’t actually tell the tale.” In response, Clarke shoots her an annoyed “don’t give me that shit” look.

Then there’s silence. Prolonged, complete, utterly unusual silence.

Clarke likes to think she adored what she saw when she turned her face at the door. But truly, she hated her at first – that cocky grin, confident demeanor and thick, brown, curly hair that gave the reckless, “takes no shit from anybody” vibe. Lexa Woods. A goddess surrounded by mere mortals. A statue that stood on its own little pedestal, happy with the attention, convinced that it looked grand, bigger than life. And even if it was true, it was still annoying to witness.

“Hey, team.” It’s simple, concise, to the point. And yet it holds a smugness that makes Clarke nauseous.

At this point, it seems the girls can’t get a hold of their emotions: some are overflowing with excitement, others have dark, angry eyes, and the others…? Basically, a mix of the two, really.

Then, a miracle: all noise comes to a brutal stop. “Hi, Woods”, the team says, all players seemingly part of the same entity.

Whispers are heard, some encouraging: “shit, that’s Lexa Woods”, other, less so: “oh god, not her”.

Raven bends over, murmuring to Clarke. “Look how jacked she is.”

And it’s impressive, really. She has quite large shoulders, and solid, capable arms. Suddenly, Clarke is happy to be a goalie, relieved, even, since she will never have to face any of Lexa’s famous checks.

As if on cue, Woods proudly makes her way through the crowd, dropping next to her bag on a bench, so laid back it’s almost weirdly elegant. “I like the deco”, she mutters under her breath with a half grin, resulting in a fit of giddy laughter from girls sitting next to her.

“Shit, she already has her fan club”, deplores Langton, sarcastic and frustrated altogether.

“It won’t last long”, Clarke points out, shrugging with the maximum indifference level she can manage to summon.

The sad thing is: it does. An annoying babble fills the locker-room for as much time as it takes for girls to leave for the rink. Soon, only Clarke, Raven and Octavia are left sitting on a bench, already looking tired.

Clarke sighs. “Yeah, it’ll be a long season.”

Coach Reeve calls them up in the beginning of practice, giving them a speech on the importance of kindly welcoming a new teammate, and how it can enforce good chemistry from the start. The whole time, Clarke is bouncing from one foot to the other, impatient, eager to go to her goal. She glances around mindlessly, still noticing the fact that fifty percent of the team seems already sold to the mere idea of having Lexa Woods gracing the ice with her two skates. She rolls her eyes at the thought.

The coach gives her orders. “All right girls, listen up. Skill drills for half of you, and shoot outs for
As a goalie, Clarke has the habit of manning the goal for a while, and then switching to various exercises, some involving making a precise pass from behind her net or practicing her change of stance while following the movement of the puck.

“Hey, O, come over here”, she says, motioning for her friend to join.

Octavia skates her way up to her, then turns her head, looking over Clarke’s shoulder.

“Oh my god, Griff.”

“What?”

“Lexa’s in the shootout squad. Because of fucking course… She wants to test you.”

“You think?”

“I know. Eh, probably wants to make sure she has a high caliber goalie to work with.”

Clarke is suddenly uncertain, despite it being a feeling she’s unaccustomed to - and for that reason, she’s puzzled, even surprised, for a while, and she faces the fact that Alexandria Woods is skilled and confident and threatening and she just has that effect on Clarke.

“Am I a high caliber goalie?”

“Jesus, Clarke, you’re scary, today. Am I a high caliber goalie? Where does that even come from? Of course, you are, you dummy, you’re the best goalie in the league!”

The shocked tone employed by her friend soon makes a shy smile grow on Clarke’s face. “Maybe you’re right.” Then, nearly theatrical. “Let’s see, shall we?”

She’s between the two goal posts in close to four seconds, and a line is formed in front of her. The players all look relaxed, casual, except for Lexa, obviously. There is a concentration that appears to have melted, dripped all over her rigid frame - arms crossed, chin low, jaw set (Clarke swears she sees it twitch, just once, and it’s almost scary enough to make her lose focus).

“Ready, Griff?” asks the first player: a 4th line forward, who Clarke knows is mediocre at scoring.

Calmly, she pulls down her mask, tapping her stick on the ice and pressing her two gloves together in an instinctive preparation ritual. “Sure, bring it.”

The save is easy, as Clarke predicted, for the player chooses a simple wrist shot that was meant to slip between the pads. Only, it bounces against one due to Clarke shifting swiftly to the left.

With each save, a goalie gains confidence, and Clarke becomes the living proof of that, with the smug grin that illuminates her face (though partially hidden behind the mask) until it replaces itself with a look of determination when Lexa Woods is waiting at the blue line.

Without a word, the first line center gives two powerful strides, and she’s effortlessly flying towards Clarke, who scans her like a robot would do, looking for clues, signs of the intended target. Lexa’s stick is bending, she lifts a leg slightly, and the puck is shot like a bullet. It was terribly fast, too fast to respond, but Clarke Griffin is no ordinary player, and she either found the time to react or made it out of thin air. Both are plausible, because the puck is now in Clarke’s glove, and the realization is sudden- she made the windmill save, twisting and turning and raising a
hand like clockwork, closing on the puck and pulling it away safely, all without blinking.

Which is what Lexa Woods is now doing: blinking. Looking incredulous (though trying to hide it), shaking her head in confusion, and blinking.

But then when Clarke pulls off her mask to let it rest atop her head, their gazes meet, and it’s quite the experience. It lasts a couple of seconds, after which Lexa addresses Clarke with an imperceptible nod of acknowledgement. Some sort of yeah, you’re pretty good. Some sort of yeah, you’re better than I thought.

It soon becomes a concert of cheers and gasps as some of Clarke’s teammates are coming by to offer some encouraging words and a friendly pat on the head. One of them mentions that they’ve never seen a goalie deny Lexa Woods her top corner, which she is apparently very fond of. Another one adds that the forward must now be furious, out of her mind, even, and that she’ll probably act on it later. At the indication, Clarke fails to repress the shiver that reverberates through her spinal cord. She’s both curious and worried to learn the measures Woods intends to take in such situations.

The answer comes later, when Clarke’s leaving the arena.

“Hey. Griffin, is that it?”

She turns around, standing still at the sight of Lexa Woods in all her glory, hair pulled together in a messy bun, all ripped t-shirt and baggy sweatpants and tattooed up to the wrists.

“Yeah, it’s Clarke, actually. Clarke Griffin.”

Immediately, Clarke hates the tone she used, and the answer in itself, because why say your name twice, that’s just plain awkward, and frankly, she would’ve been “mind-rambling” for another five minutes if she hadn’t seen the smile on Lexa lips, and the way she cocks her head to the side just a bit, as if studying a cute exotic animal.

“That was a tight save, back there.” The offensive player rubs her neck confidently, going for the casual, unbothered style. “I liked it”, she adds, her eyes looking like they’re smiling too, so in the end it’s like a double smile, isn’t it? And the blood is rushing to Clarke’s temples, rather dizzying, and she can’t really think of an answer, not now, not like that.

“I guess I’ll see you around then”, Lexa adds, waving slightly, then leaving.

It lasted only twenty seconds, and on paper, twenty second encounters are meaningless, just a jumble of quick words, but as Clarke walks back home, lost in thoughts of green eyes and that annoying, damned smirk, something tells her she will remember this moment for quite a long while.

Chapter End Notes

First of all, thank you so very much for reading, and I hope you enjoyed it! For the updates, I cannot guarantee anything other than I will do my very best. Right now, we’re in the middle of the summer so I don't have school, or anything to do, for that matter, but in september, when everything goes back to normal, I can't garantee constant updates.
Now that I have clarified the updates, let's move on to notes on hockey. You've probably noticed that I talk about checks when there are usually none in women's hockey. Later on, there will be fights (not particularly violent ones, they won't lose teeth or anything). For this fic, I've decided to use regular hockey rules, because I'm not familiar with the rules in women's hockey and I don't want to make any mistakes. Also, I'm a little biased on the subject because I'm used to seeing physical contact in the sport and I enjoy it, for me it's a part of hockey. I don't know if you guys are happy or mad with that (or just neutral, I don't know) but if you feel concerned with the decision, please feel free to leave a comment. And of course, you can leave a comment for any other reason!

Thanks again,

TheFrenchWriter xox
Haughty circumstances

Chapter Summary

In which Lexa's an asshole, then, a bit less so.

Chapter Notes

Alright guys, I'm posting again but don't you get all comfy and used to 2 times per week updates, I just did it this one time in case it made you happy, and also to show you a little bit more of what the fic will be about. You'll get to see the first game (yay!) against a very physical team, and Lexa will be all badass and talented and Clarke will make nice saves - awesome as usual. Hope you enjoy!

N.B I'll be using hockey terms from now on, so if you don't understand them you can either look them up or message me and I'll be more than happy to clarify! Then again, if many of you folks don't understand, I'll maybe do a quick lexicon section in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I told you, I can’t do it more than twice”, groans Raven as the puck falls back down with a sharp thud. “You do it.”

Octavia arches a brow, gesturing towards herself.

“Me? So you want me to show you the extent of my phantasmagorical talent?”

Raven seems to be holding back a fit of laughter. “I’m already surprised by the fact that you just said the word “phantasmagorical” without choking or biting off your tongue. And that you would hold such a word in your everyday vocabulary.”

“Well, to me, it looks like Octavia’s just scared of failure”, Clarke declares matter-of-factly.

To which Octavia replies violently. “I am NOT! I’ll show you right now.” She picks up the puck with the tip of her stick, looking at it strangely and shyly like she expects it to grow a pair of wings and fly away. “How do you…” She gives it a quick shake, sending it swirling awkwardly in the air, a poor six or seven inches above the stick. The move consists of circling the puck with the tip of the stick, without hitting it of course, and then catching it on the blade. It sounds easy at first, especially after seeing Raven’s successful attempt. But the trickiness is unveiled as soon as Octavia tries to catch the puck - it simply hits the edge of the blade and falls pathetically. “Awww come on! I thought it’d be heavy enough to land alright!”

It seems Raven’s laugh cannot be contained anymore. “Yeah, why don’t you tell it that, maybe it’ll listen to you! Land, you stupid puck! Land!”
Clarke, never the big laugh, lets out a feeble sneer. “Why don’t you take my stick, Octavia, maybe you’ll be luckier.”

She means to pass over her stick, obviously wider and flatter, as Octavia pulls a face. “Why don’t you try with mine, Clarke, we’ll see if you can manage.”

Charlie swings by, pointing the opposite side of the ice. “I swear, you bitches have been bickering for the last ten minutes, when Woods’ been doing this behind you the whole time.”

At once, they all turn around to watch Lexa literally juggling a puck, doing crazy flips and tricks and then shooting it, smirking as it travels from mid air to the net. Her next move is a small wave - proud, full of the knowledge that a third of the team has been watching her little circus in awe.

The sound of Charlie’s reaction brings Clarke away from her thoughts. “Oof, that was smooth, I’ll give her that,” Langton says with a fake wounded expression.

Annoyance spreads in Clarke’s entire body. “Well, it was both unnecessary and haughty.”

Raven turns to her, surprised. “Huh? Did you just say she’s a hotty?”

The remark contributes to making Clarke even more frustrated. “No! She’s not! I said she’s haughty. Haugh. Ty.”

“Sounds the exact same to me”, Octavia points out. “Have you got something to tell us, Griffin? Involving… I don’t know, checking out Woods’ ass?”

“You know what I meant!” Clarke cries out as a last resort, sighting in annoyance. “God, now you won’t leave me alone for the next five months.”

“Oh, more than that.”

“Yeah, we all have a good memory, never forget that.”

Octavia snorts in laughter. “Ha, never forget that.” Then she adds, noticing how three pair of eyes are now staring at her: “’Cause she said memory. You know…”

“O, please don’t”, Clarke strongly suggests, trying to play the exasperated card, yet unable to get rid of her small smile.

“This is getting weird”, observes Raven. “I’m out of here.” She calls a teammate for a pass and sprints away.

“I think we’ve traumatized the poor thing”, says Charlie, shrugging away the awkwardness.

Clarke notices how a gang of about six girls has constructed itself like a human wall around Lexa. “She’s playing with them. Poor Wayne, look at her face, it’s like she just found her soon-to-be wife. She has that dumb smile Octavia had when she first met Lincoln.”

The dark-haired wingman lets out a sharp cry of dismay. “Hey! For the record, he gave me Lindt chocolates on the first date. LINDT. Not the Dollar store crap, but LINDT, ladies and gentlemen.”

“If only he knew that you’d marry chocolate in the blink of an eye”, Clarke deplores. “Poor guy.”

Clarke cannot tell if the murderous glare Octavia gives her is real or counterfeit, but one thing she knows is that Charlie believes it – and looks genuinely disturbed by it.
“Christ, if you could see yourself, Blake. It’s like you’re trying to shit a sea urchin while maintaining a civilised conversation. Just chill out, okay?”

Octavia just nods, barely trying as she crosses her arms and lets out a huff. “You know what would make me like you again, Griff? If you went over to miss stick-in-the-ass and told her to stop fooling around and actually fucking practice.”

There’s a weird tingle in Clarke’s stomach as sees the scene play out in front of her eyes like a movie. “Do you think she’d hold a grudge? But I mean, even if she did, she’s in our team, now, she can’t just charge on me like a mad bull.”

The laugh that escapes from Lington’s throat is forced and, oddly, it sounds like she’s half worried (keep in mind that it takes a lot for Charlie Langton to be half worried). “Well… She could. But it’d be very entertaining to see, don’t you think?”

“It would. I’d also die, but what do I care? Anything for a good show, eh, Langton?”

“I did not say that, Griffin”, Charlie calmly asserts, fumbling with her ponytail, “but really, fuck this. You’re the boss of this team. She is not. Why don’t you just, I don’t know, set the record straight. Show her a little Griffin magic.” Accompanying the words are two thumbs up meant to encourage her, added to Langton’s signature smile. Clarke finds herself helpless against such a killer combination.

“Fine”, she surrenders, “but back me up if she decides to murder me or anything?”

Both girls shrug and share a look of goodwill. “Sure.”

When did she become so bold? It isn’t like her to be going over to Alexandriafucking Woods and put her in her place. But man, is it a thrill.

The first thing she notices about Woods is her demeanor. How she seems to take any space there is to offer, how she stands tall, shoulders straight, legs pulled apart from one another, like she’s showing that she’s up for anything, that she can take it all. Her helmet isn’t fastened. Instead, it’s slightly pulled up, resting higher atop her head, for the simple purpose of seeing better (the visor isn’t helping) and looking badass at the same time. Half of the time, she’s nodding confidently while chewing on her mouthpiece, which is nearly entirely out of her mouth – and while Clarke finds it rude, other girls seem to be delighted (go figure). Clarke’s arrival results in all the girls losing interest in Lexa and directing their attention on Clarke, smiling at her, waving and bumping her on the head with their gloves.

“What’s up, Griff?” Izzie Wayne says, and frankly, Clarke is happy to pull her away from Woods, seeing as to she might avoid putting all her hopes and dreams in a playboy (or is it playgirl?). “Not much, you? I see you’re getting acquainted with our new pal.”

She likes the way the word “pal” sounded, the strictly business vibe she gave to it, and how she made sure to say it loud enough for Lexa to hear. Who knows? Maybe she’ll be more successful than she thought. “Woods, is that it? I don’t think we’ve met.”

When named, the player’s eyes light up and she motions forward to join them. “Actually, yes. We talked on Monday- “

“Oh, yeah, about that save, yeah, I remember now.”

The effect is immediate. Wayne almost screams in excitement, patting Clarke repeatedly on the shoulder. “Oh my god, that was in-sane, Clarke. You had us all going crazy on the bench, I talked
about it to literally everyone I know. How did you do it?”

“I faced quicker shots, I guess you just get used to it.”

She can’t prevent the smirk from spreading across her face, deepening, even, at the sight of how irritated Lexa has become in a matter of instants. Soon, Wayne is called over by one of her teammates, and excuses herself from the conversation, leaving Clarke to face a sore Lexa, who shoots her an unsure glance – unsure of how mad she should be, unsure if this means war or not, unsure if Clarke even meant to get on her bad side. “What was that, Griffin?” It’s the result of the mixture of feelings painting her face, the dominant one composed of arrogance and grouchiness.

If Clarke knew better, she would back down. But she gets her fun out of testing people, sometimes, even if she’s not too proud about it, or wouldn’t brag about it at the very least.

“That was some sort of payback, I guess. Or, if you’d prefer, that was me playing this little game of yours. I believe it’s called look at me, admire me, kiss my feet?”

Lexa’s face distorts, now filled with plain annoyance. “You know, I liked you, for a second, Griffin. And now I don’t.”

“Shit, that’s scary. In fact, I might as well hide in the locker room away from your mightiness.”

“You do not want to play with me, Griffin.” She said her name with such anger, such disdain.

“Oh I’m the one playing now?”

“You’re extremely funny.” Lexa bites her tongue, darts shooting out of her eyes as she spits the mouthpiece in her glove. Uh oh. But it’s too late, now, and Woods is sliding closer, heat spilling out of her whole body, and Clarke can smell her perfume, her sweat, her minty breath. Stay calm.

“What are you trying to do, Woods? Make a fool out of yourself on your first week? Why don’t you give me a taste of that check you gave my pal Briggs over there, see how it work out for you.”

“Oh, so that’s what it’s about, then? Me doing my fucking job and preventing a goal instead of playing softie? I’m not a figure skater, Griffin.”

Clarke is offended by those words. What’s wrong with figure skaters? Lexa must be one of those who think that anything besides hockey is useless. The thought makes Clarke highly frustrated (as if she wasn’t frustrated enough).

“It’s a matter of principle”, she declares, elegant.

At that, Lexa scoffs insultingly. “It’s hockey, that’s what it is. Maybe you’re just not cut out for it.”

Then she leaves, letting Clarke alone to reflect on what she might’ve said, might’ve done differently. She finally comes to a conclusion – nothing. Lexa is one of those people who need to be smacked on the back of the head.

“So what? She’s an asshole. It’s not like it’s news to anybody.” Charlie gesture towards the entire locker-room. “And I think you were brilliant, honestly.”

“Yeah, well, she didn’t gain any respect for me. I think she hates me even more, and I don’t think I want to be on Alexandria Woods’ enemy list.”

Raven lets out a dry laugh, pats Clarke on the back. “Honestly, I’m starting to think that you’ll be
Clarke stares quizzically at her friend. “A run for her money? Mind if I ask you…” She glances at Charlie and Octavia who seem to be avoiding her gaze. “What you mean by that?”

There’s a small silence, during which the three girls share the look of “should we tell her?”

Then Charlie gestures towards herself, informing the others that she will be the one ensuring the task. “Well, Griffin, we’ve been observing her, and right now, you’re more on the “to-fuck list”, if you know what I mean…”

“What?” Clarke practically screams.

“Hey, no need to get worked up… We just think she wants to fuck you, is all.”

Clarke roughly stands, tossing her shoulder guard on the ground with impressive violence. “She does NOT. Okay? You’re just… Obsessed with these things! I’m sure Woods doesn’t even think about me in that way! About any of us, for that matter!”

Raven shifts uncomfortably on her seat, unsure how to utter the next sentence. “Clarke, why do you think she left with Wayne on Wednesday evening? To go to the fun fair and ride the Ferris wheel?”

The tirade makes Clarke drop on the bench, troubled. “But that’s risky, isn’t it?”

Charlie nods. “Well, I’m guessing it’s not new to her. She won’t get caught.”

“Poor Wayne, I hope she doesn’t expect anything out of her…” Clarke mutters under her breath, untying her laces with the hands of an expert.

Octavia winces, uncertain. “Clarke, we’re talking about Wayne. Hell, she’d try with me, and she knows I’m with Lincoln. The chick’s desperate to get laid.”

Disgust starts to paint Clarke’s features – disgust over Lexa, over the fact that she’s taking advantage of someone, over the way she strolls around, careless, happy with herself. It makes Clarke want to punch her. “She really is a shitty person…” She concedes, shaking her head in incredulity.

“Congratulations for noticing! it’s not like we told you right from the start, or anything”, snorts Langton, squirting a small jet of water in her mouth with one quick press of her Gatorade bottle. “If it makes you happy, I promise I’ll punch her in the throat if she tries to drag you in her bed.”

Clarke arches her eyebrows, falsely surprised. “Well thanks, Langton… I appreciate it, I guess.”

Noises are heard from outside the room, and they appear to be generated by a small group of people. Immediately, Woods lifts her head and collects her equipment, foraging aggressively in an attempt to find something in her bag – a wasted effort. “Coming, little man!” She exclaims, lifting the bag. She’s about to get up, only, she’s caught short by the arrival of a toddler. He must be around three, not only because of his height, but because of the small run he breaks into- he’s so fast it becomes unclear whether he’s just excited or about to fall over. The white Avengers t-shirt he’s wearing has a red stain, and Clarke’s guess is spaghetti sauce.

“Please just take him, Lexa, I’m so tired.” A woman says, entering Clarke’s line of sight. She’s definitely that – tired. There’s no way in hell that her disheveled look and pale skin is due to anything other than exhaustion.
The action is quick. Lexa scoops the boy up lovingly, planting a loud kiss on his cheek. It’s simple, really, and there’s no reason to freak out, Clarke tells herself. But then, why the sudden lightness in her stomach? And the tenderness that seems to burst out of the moment, almost unreal – because Lexa doesn’t do soft, doesn’t do gentle, yet she’s holding this boy on her lap, a protective arm wrapped around him.

Raven whispers in her ear, “well, that was unexpected.”

She wants to listen and find an answer, but it’s impossible to pry her eyes away from the astonishing scene playing out in front of her.

Lexa has seemingly left the building. The only person left is this soft, playful imitation – an impersonator, probably, a copycat, surely, because that’s not her, that couldn’t be her. Clarke watches, helpless, as Woods is whispering in the toddler’s ear, probably something funny because he’s now giggling, shaking his arms in all directions.

“All right, let’s go now”, says the woman standing at the door, probably his mother. The boy whines and his giddy smile quickly turns into a pout.

“Just give him my helmet or something, Anya, I’m sure you don’t want him throwing a fit.”

The boy is desperately trying to reach for Lexa’s equipment, eager to try it on. “Okay, here’s the deal. We’re gonna go, now, mumma wants to go to the mall, remember? I’ll let you wear my helmet if you behave.”

“Come now, Aden. I think aunt Lexa has candies in her car.” His mom gives him an encouraging smile, holding out her hand for him to hold while glancing at Lexa, giving her a look that means “please tell me you do have candies in the car”. Grinning, Woods puts her helmet on Aden’s head as he climbs in her arms, and together, they leave, and Clarke cannot eliminate the bewildered expression that, she is sure of it, will cling to her face for the next half hour.

And just like that, there she is – Lexa Woods, giving mixed signals, both unpleasant and charming, and messing up Clarke’s head. Only then does Clarke realize that this girl is not as easy to pinpoint as she thought, and definitely, definitely not predictable.

With September comes the first game of the year. And it’d be no big deal, really, if they weren’t playing the Azgeda Frostbite. The term physical is completely redefined by the team – the main sound during Azgeda games being that of checks and bodies hitting boards, and sharp shouts of discontent often leading to gloves being dropped. Clarke has learned, over the course of her career, that Azgeda players like to charge the net, sometimes even hit the goalie in the process – and the coach mentally fist pumps when they get away with it. They’re nasty, sending goons after the opposing team’s fastest players – delivering major forechecks at the right moment, and freezing the offense with various pinching and trapping moves.

A goalie’s pregame ritual being important, Clarke ensures focus and concentration to her game by sitting alone in the corner of the locker-room, listening to rock music with over-ear headphones. One could then know, just by looking at her, that she’s the team’s number one player, that she has to be at her best every single night without exception.

At the moment, her earphones are blasting Led Zeppelin’s Heartbreaker and she’s shaking her head to the beat, losing herself to the sharp riff and Robert Plant’s moving, accented vocals while watching players going by, eager to jump on the ice. Well, it’s been ten years and maybe more since I first set eyes on you. The best years of my life gone by, here I am alone and blue.
Raven gives her a look of anticipation, some greater than life force keeping her from disrupting her ritual. Then they get called. It’s time.

The spotlights are blinding and the announcer’s voice starts presenting the players to the audience, who bursts in applause when Clarke’s name is called second to last. But the highlight of the show is clearly the way fans jump to their feet when Lexa’s name resonates in the whole arena, welcomed by the crowd. It makes Clarke both happy and vexed – the audience is excited to see a new player, yet she’s probably not their favorite anymore.

As soon as the puck drops, Clarke is scanning the rink to see if Nia’s on the ice, and when she spots her, solid and menacing, her gaze hardens, freezes into place. *There she is.* Probably the coach’s little intimidation show. But it doesn’t work like that, no, it takes more to disturb Clarke’s focus.

Nia stays on the ice for three more plays, then her line is replaced by Ontari’s – faster, younger, stealthier. The Strikers’ coach reacts quickly by giving Lexa her cue, matching her up with first line wingmen Lucy Marks and Jamie Hurd. Raven and Octavia soon jump on the ice, replacing the previous pair of defensemen.

Woods loses no time in setting the first period’s best play, feeding Jamie Hurd the perfect drop pass that leads to a splendid shot. The goaltender cleverly deviates it with her blocker, and the rebound is seized by an enemy defenseman, who then proceeds to lead the next play.

Adrenalin courses through Clarke’s veins as she makes her first save, shuffling to the left in a simple yet sharp leg block that sends the rebound against the board to be recovered by a teammate.

The next plays are slowed down by forechecking, and it appears that even their biggest defencemen cannot hope to compete against Azgeda’s giants. Most of them are at least six feet tall, towering over the Strikers and moving them away from the puck with big shoves.

During a break, Raven stops spontaneously beside Clarke, and snows her in the process – not that she’d intended too, though. “Watch out for screen shots, Griff. They like to put the small annoying ones in front of the goal.”

“Thanks. You be safe; they hit hard.”

The buzzer signals the end of the first period and locker room talk is vivid when Clarke joins her teammates on the benches.

“Got myself a nice hit, right there.” Charlie informs proudly as she points to her right shoulder. “They’re so nasty, I can’t put up with one of their goons. I think her name is Nia…? Man, this bitch is tart tongued.”

“What did she say?” asks Lexa, curious. She rarely takes part in the bickering, and it surprises Clarke to see her involved in a conversation. It’s almost like she’s genuinely interested in the topic. *Huh.*

“Erm… Something about her and her mates sandwiching me in between them, and that my bones will crush.”

“Do you want me to do something about it?” Lexa offers, like it’s an open suggestion. Clarke’s about to think, *hey, that’s nice of her,* but then she wonders if Lexa’s just looking for a reason to get into a fight.

“I didn’t know you were the fighting type, Woods”, Clarke observes.
Lexa’s shoulders tense, both eyes darting up to stun Clarke with their green, vehement intensity. “I like to defend my guys, princess. Or is that too rough for you?”

Clarke chooses to ignore the nickname but it still rings inside her head, rings, and makes her blood boil, her neurons clash and vibrate, her temples drop to their lowest temperature. “No, I just think it’d be reckless to go up against taller, stronger opponents.”

“Yeah, exactly, means they shouldn’t go up against me.” Retorts Woods, smirking like she’s impressed with her own performance – how quickly she thought of the comeback, and the perfectly arrogant snort she emitted.

Clarke is left testy by the reply, yet she almost, almost lets out a dry laugh. And she tries to convince herself, to tell herself that a dry laugh is sarcastic and fake, but she figures it’s a laugh all the same. A laugh, for fuck’s sake – and the person who caused it is none other than Lexa Woods. Lexa, who tells her she’s not cut out for hockey. Lexa, who leaves with Izzie Wayne after Wednesday’s practice to go who knows where, and probably take her backwards on a table - she doesn’t care if Izzie likes her, doesn’t care if it’s more to her than just sex, she just wants, does, takes. The thoughts finally drive some sense into Clarke, and soon, she’s warming up in anger once again. “You’re five fucking seven, Woods. Unless you want to get a black eye or lose a tooth, you might want to reconsider your plans.”

Is it the tone, the words, the delivery? Nobody knows. But something makes Lexa’s eyes darken, her smirk disappear, her jaw twitch (again, holly fuck, it’s both scary and exhilarating).

“Well you, Griffin, might want to listen to me very carefully, because I’m only saying this once.”

Clarke nods, not wanting to fuel the anger in her eyes. Her voice is calm and deadly, like a robot’s.

The forward pursues, and does not flee Clarke’s glance. Not once. “I watch my guys’ back. Alright? And I couldn’t care less, whether (she shrugs, shakes her head from side to side) there’s an eight-foot-tall asshole who’s coming at me, or if the biggest chick in the league wants to drop gloves. I’ll take the check. I’ll fight the bitch. Anything it takes, Griffin, anything for my guys. We’re family, now. You might not like it, because of my attitude, or the way I talk, or the way I think of myself, I don’t fucking care. Because on the ice, when someone does as little as rubbing my player the wrong way, I don’t joke around, I act on it. If there’s a jackass who decides to crash your net, Griffin, I’ll have your back, whether you like it or not.”

A shiver runs deep down Clarke’s spine, and she’s out of focus, now, fuck, because the way she imagines it, Woods is better than she thought, a loyal comrade, a protector. And it plays in her head, makes her feel all sorts of weird things, like tingles her in the stomach, and soon it’s everywhere – images of Lexa dragging the offending player out of her net, pushing, shoving, then asking her if she’s alright with a half smile (shit, it seems her mind is now capable of imagining smiles on Lexa Woods’ face).

As the buzzer resonates again, she has trouble averting her gaze away from Lexa and her strong legs carrying her around the ice, jumping around to backwards skating effortlessly, Lexa and her cocky smirks, Lexa barking orders and insults to players surrounding her, Lexa – never scared by the giants, and the crowd, and the pressure. It’s her, only, only her.

She scores at the eighth minute of second period, and it might just be the most exciting thing Clarke has ever witnessed. It’s an ordinary play that leads to it – the opposing team loses possession in an awkward turnover. Then Lexa has the puck and she’s almost flying away with it as all noise dies down, and Clarke only hears the crushing noise of her skates scraping against lacerated ice. Alexandria Woods on a breakaway, on her first match with the team. What a show,
she thinks, and she’s not even surprised to feel so emotional, because the moment is truly otherworldly. She barely sees anything at that point, but rather hears the crowd’s amazement, and the cheer, the *cheer*, when the red light flashes.

Later, she’ll want to see the play, the way Lexa deked the goaltender with a quick change of direction, then brought the puck up, *up*, and yanked it in the net backhandedly. A beauty.

When they get to the lockers, they still have a one nothing lead, and Clarke’s forehead is dripping with sweat, as she had to stop 27 shots to keep the opposing team off the scoreboard.

She passes behind Woods to get to her things, and she didn’t really plan on doing anything, really, but the spur of the moment can make many things happen – and she gives the forward a quick pat on the back. It isn’t very personal, considering she still has her gloves on. Still, it makes Woods turn around, and she looks pleasantly surprised.

Third period is a challenge. She faces shots that, if a tad more precise, could’ve easily gone to the net.

Then Ontari leaves the end board, and passes each and every Strikers player, dangling the puck expertly on a picture-perfect coast to coast. Her hands are quick, and Clarke’s T-push proves itself to be too feeble. The puck circles around her pad, and there, it’s in.

She knows it’s not her fault, knows the defense did a poor job, just like she knows that her movement should’ve been more accurate. And it kills her, in between plays, when she just circles around and gets a quick drink of water, noticing the scoreboard (the little “one” right under “Azgeda”) and thinking, thinking, *thinking*. What could she have done better? What can she do better the next time?

As if on cue, Octavia passes by and drops a few words of encouragement, which helps Clarke move on to a clear record.

There are four minutes remaining when a slashing penalty gets called on the Frostbite. Everybody knows it’s now or never. If they want victory, they just have to put in the effort, reach over and take it.

Coach Reeve has learned her facts about Lexa. She now knows the full extent of her talent, and she puts her on the powerplay with her regular line, along with the first pair of defensemen. The first minute is spent juggling the puck around, tightening the trap, peppering the goaltender with quick shots, and making sure to recover the rebound every time. The strategy works beautifully, and soon, a pass from Octavia to Lexa then fuels Jamie Hurd who goes for the one timer, aimed at the spot right under the blocker. The shot, a cannonball, lands in the net and fills the arena with cheers and applause as the buzzer is heard. There’s barely a minute remaining on the board.

Clarke’s lungs empty themselves in an abrupt expiration, and it’s *victory*, that’s what it is, bringing a comfortable warmth to her chest. When the game ends, the crowd stays for the three stars to be given out, presumably because they are satisfied with the team’s performance. Jamie Hurd gets the third star. It isn’t surprising, and her smile is radiant, and fun to see. The second star is awarded to Clarke, who performed very well – she made 36 saves. The moment the first star gets called, Clarke isn’t surprised, and she watches as Lexa jumps on the ice, waving and throwing pucks in the stands. She’s playing a role, obviously - she’s the superstar again, sharing a few quick words with a fan then meeting a journalist for the interview.

Clarke is about to leave for the lockers, but her curiosity prevails, and she can’t help but hear the announcer’s words as they resonate through speakers. “I’m here with the first star player tonight,
Alexandria Woods. First of all, congrats on the win.”

“Thanks a lot.”

“Tell me about your impressions on this game – one goal, one assist, that’s quite an impressive start of the season, isn’t it?”

As Clarke turns around, she catches sight of the big screen and sees Lexa nod in a professional manner. “Yeah, for sure, hum, I guess that’s what we tried to do tonight – sticking to the plan, taking the opportunities, keeping the puck in their zone as much as we can.”

“Obviously, and that must send a message when a player like you who’s known around the league, who’s played in this arena a couple of times already, scores on the first game, puts up a nice show… Do you think that can be seen as a statement to the fans and the rest of the league, to show that you’re here to work hard and deliver?”

Then of course, that’s the moment where Clarke is convinced that she will get to hear Lexa’s little charm show, her little game to win over the crowd. She could not be more wrong.

“Yeah, but I mean, there’s always the team factor that plays a big part. Since I’ve been in town, I’ve felt very welcome and appreciated, and, I mean, that’s a first-class organisation you’ve got right there. The team spirit is very present, I can identify with that and I’m here to do my best.”

“Of course, and you seemed very comfortable with the team, I think the crowd can agree with me on that.”

With that, the crowd cheers loudly, people standing on their feet, chanting her last name like it’s their new national anthem.

Lexa smiles, bowing slightly, eyes glowing with gratitude. When the cheer dies down, she answers the question coolly. “For sure, and I’m happy with what the guys did today. Gotta give them credit, you know, they made the plays, my goalie, also, she made some big saves to keep us in the game.”

“Alright, well thanks for your time, we wish you good luck for the rest of the season.”

“Thank you, I appreciate it.” Lexa replies with a quick nod, then she turns to sign the camera lens and leaves the ice with one last wave at the crowd.

Although they don’t talk in the locker room, Clarke cannot keep her glance from settling to Lexa, her words ringing in her head.

My goalie - she hears it again, and it makes her forehead heat up, her palms sweat, her chest heave deeply with each breath. The interview has made her confused, as it brought up a side of Lexa she didn’t know - a side that praises her teammates, smiles at the crowd like she’s genuinely happy to be here, happy to perform, happy to give.

Clarke watches as Lexa puts a jean coat on, pops a piece of gum in her mouth and covers her head with an old baseball cap (facing backwards, and boy does she pull it off).

“Hey Woods!”

As soon as the words leave her mouth, she regrets them.

“What?” Lexa doesn’t seem irritated, yet she looks at Clarke like she expects her to behave, especially after their last conversation.
“Nice goal, tonight. I liked it.” Clarke says, managing to keep it cool. *Nice one, Griffin.*

“What?“

There’s a small silence, and Clarke thinks, *that’s all,* but then Lexa’s gaze burns into hers, and she nods slowly. “You made some good saves.”

“Oh, thanks.” The next seconds are spent battling against her own mind as she fights the urge to say *that’s not what you said in the interview* but she drops it, knowing it’d be pushing her luck.

Instead, she says: “You didn’t fight, after all.”

To which Lexa replies: “I didn’t feel like it. Maybe next time.”

What Clarke doesn’t know is that Aden turns four in the weekend, and the reason why Lexa didn’t fight is because she doesn’t want to get her face messed up for her nephew’s birthday party (she realized it in the middle of third period). Knowing that information would’ve probably made Clarke feel weak in the knees, and for reasons unknown.

Chapter End Notes

Once again, thank you so much for reading, I really hope you enjoyed it! If you did, leave a little kudos or a comment if you want, it always makes my day when I see that you guys like what I do.

Follow me on Tumblr! https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/

TheFrenchWriter xx
It’s past eleven when they decide to go to Raven’s. The fact that there’s no practice the next day plays a big part in the decision, and frankly, Clarke just wants to have a good time. It’s been a while since they have last had a drink with Bellamy, Monty and Murphy – the whole gang together, like in the good old days.

Raven brings one of her weird board games that no one understands (as usual), and while Murphy is complaining about the rules, almost spilling his drink in anger, Clarke enjoys the game - turns out she’s not half bad at it.

“And with that… I’m the king of Tokyo, now! Insert diabolical laugh.”

“Well, Clarke, fuck you.” Says Bellamy, looking at the board with a loss of concentration.

A shit-eating grin spreads across Clarke’s face, from ear to ear. “And my cyber bunny”, she adds, pointing at the ridiculous rabbit monster she chose as her character.

“Yes, the cyber bunny too, one must not forget the cyber bunny”, says Bellamy, smiling despite the half-serious frustration in his tone. Raven interrupts the friendly banter by scooping up six dice and shaking them vigorously with both hands, eyes closed in a prayer. “Please make me lucky, I’ll… I’ll stop swearing, I promise!”

Clarke raises an eyebrow, skeptical, knowing that there’s no way in hell that Raven will keep this promise. The dice stand still, revealing two threes, one two, two attacks and an energy cube. Raven decides to reroll her two and her energy cube, creating two more energy cubes.

“But I want a three!” she screams, and throws the two dice again. She gets a one and a heart. “Fucking shit!”

“What happened to not swearing?” asks Clarke nonchalantly, sipping from her drink (and grimacing because for a second, she forgot what Octavia put in there). “Octavia, how much of that is pure vodka?”

The brown headed demoiselle appears from the kitchen, bottle in hand. “No idea, I just went crazy in there. Let’s hope you survive.”

Clarke shrugs lazily and observes as Monty takes his turn, adding life points to his monster, the Meka Dragon. “Yeah, fingers crossed”, she mumbles, crossing her fingers and shaking them in Octavia’s direction. Then, after Bellamy attacks her monster, dealing two damage points, she grabs the dice with a smug grin. “Alright, kids, this might hurt”, she declares confidently, then drops the six dice on the table’s hardened surface. She figures it’d be profitable to throw again the two life points with an energy cube, and it gives two twos. A little gasp of excitement later, she’s dealing three points of damage to all monsters outside Tokyo, and adding a personal little victory dance to
top it off.

Murphy frowns, looking at his monster’s card, then back to the board. “That was pure luck.”

But Clarke doesn’t take the bait, smiling instead. “Is your alien dead?”

“I guess it is, yeah. I was about to get a refill anyway.” At that, he leaves the table, on his way to the kitchen.

The room erupts in laughter as the squad hears him mutter: “Jesus, guys, get a room!”; no doubt referring to Lincoln and Octavia.

It takes two more turns for Clarke to land a devastating blow on Bellamy’s monkey, effectively reducing his health to one tiny point. “I hate your game, Raven”, he sighs loudly, lifting his gaze to the ceiling to avoid Clarke’s victorious glance.

“That’s ‘cause you’re not an expert at it, like Clarke and I.” Raven finishes her moves, landing enough strikes to reduce the Cyber Bunny’s health considerably. “Looks like your bunny’s on the brink of death. You have only one option left. Yield!”

“No chance!” Clarke shouts valiantly, throwing the dice and getting shitty results - two ones, a two, a three and two energy points. She rolls again, to no avail. “Fuck. Alright, Raven, you’re the king, put you little dinosaur shit in there and let’s get this over with.”

Raven’s insulted scoff is so convincing it’s almost uncanny. “His name is Giga Zaur, and he helped me win the game!”

“Hey, guess what? I still don’t care.”

“But you gotta give him the respect he deserves! He fought a dragon, a bunny and this weird alien thing!”

Bellamy lets out an unintentional laugh, eyeing the last drop of bourbon in his glass. “I think your games are destroying friendships. Why not play beer pong or truth or shot?”

“Well I do have Never have I ever in my bag”, Raven shrugs, taking a quick sip of her drink. Excited, Bellamy literally jumps and runs for said bag, not even waiting to get Raven’s approval. “Why didn’t you tell us before making us play that weird game?”

“It’s King of the Tokyo, for your information, and it was very fun!” Counters Raven, pointing at the box then turning to face Monty. “Monty liked it!”

The boy replies, scratching his head with an uncomfortable wince. “It’s always fun for the person who wins, that’s a given. But I died after like two turns, Raven, so yeah I loved watching you guys play.”

Angered by the comment, Raven throws her hands up in the air in disinvolvement. “Fine, suit yourself.” Then, she turns around to call Octavia, Lincoln and Murphy. “Guys, we’re starting another game! Oh, and bring your drinks for this one!”

The party of three arrives, each of its members carrying a drink. Octavia drops on the couch, inviting Lincoln to do the same. A solitary fellow, Murphy settles on a cushioned chair in the corner of the room. “What’s this one about, Raven? And in what ways will it destroy our lives, this time?” Questions Murphy, flashing Raven one of his sharp glances.
Clarke steps in as well, still sore after her recent loss. “Yeah, and I’m still not over you killing my Cyber Bunny, so you better have an awesome game prepped out for us, Reyes.”

It’s Bellamy who answers, taking Raven’s defense. “Guys, chill out, it’s Never have I ever. Nothing wrong with that, right?”

There’s a whisper of general approval. The group quickly gets past the initial indecisiveness over who goes first, electing Raven as the lucky winner – she’s the one who brought the game, after all. She pulls out the first card, reading it aloud. “Never have I entered facebook while drunk.”

Everyone except Raven takes a sip, which makes Clarke laughs softly. “Raven, you liar. Like, all these times you’ve drunk texted me at three AM about the important things in life.”

“That was on messenger, okay?” Raven exclaims with a faux betrayed look. Then, hesitant. “Does that count?”

Bellamy shrugs, pulling out the next card. “Eh, it doesn’t matter.” He reads it, chuckling. “Oh, I like that one. Never have I ever stuck gum under a desk.”

The whole room reacts rather unanimously – nobody drinks except Bellamy.

“But we’ve all done it!” he protests, trying to give a valid explanation. “I mean, we’ve all been dumb snotty kids who laugh at poop jokes!”

Everybody shares an incredulous glance. “Bell, don’t worry, nobody’s judging”, assures Octavia, who already has the next card in hand. “I have an uneventful life, guys, so brace yourselves, I’ll probably be the only sober one in the end.” She reads the card and frowns. “Never have I ever lied to a friend to avoid a greater evil. What’s with these dramatic questions?”

“Oh, remember about that dress you wore at Sylvia’s cocktail-party-extravaganza?” Asks Clarke.

It takes time for the memory to resurface, but after a moment of reflection, Octavia almost screams in shock. “Yes! The one I lost the receipt for! It seemed uglier each time I tried it on!”

“Yet you couldn’t return it, so I thought, might as well convince you that it’s amazing.”

“And you almost did! You told me that it looked like an eccentric dress Lady Gaga would wear at the Grammy’s, remember?”

“No, I said Katy Perry, didn’t I?” Counters Clarke, doubtful.

Octavia’s about to reply when Bellamy pressures them into continuing the game, reminding them of the fact that they should be playing, not having girl talk.

“It’s my turn, right?” asks Lincoln, half way into pulling out the next card. For the time being, he isn’t entirely at ease with his girlfriend’s circle of friends, insofar as he’s seen them only a couple of times - and although it’s always been a fun experience, the girls usually do the talking.

“Yeah, Linc, go ahead”, invites Monty with a smile.

“Alright, here it goes. Never have I ever had sex outside.”

The group shares an exclamation of surprise – it’s a sudden change of theme, not that they don’t like it. Bellamy drinks first, seemingly unaware of his sister’s wide eyed, jaw dropped expression. But the moment worthy of an award is definitely Lincoln’s quick sip, in the hope of avoiding being
caught by Octavia. Raven points it out to her though (in between giggles), and soon, the brunette is almost reddening in anger. “What the fuck, Linc? Did you do it on a washing machine, also? Or a pickup truck, eh, how about that?”

Her sudden anger is ignored by the others, seeing as how they’re just eager to pursue the game. Clarke is the next to read a card. “Never have I kissed someone of the same sex.”

Both Raven and Octavia drink, giving each other a peculiar look as Lincoln frowns – it’s his turn to be confused over his lover’s anterior sexual activities. For her part, Clarke finds it intriguing – could this mean they’ve kissed each other? “Now, now, girls, what does that mean?” asks Murphy, straightening from his seat in an attempt to get a better understanding of the situation.

“It means that we’ve tried things”, shrugs Octavia, like it’s no big deal.

Raven, on the other hand, is not on the same page. “Don’t say it like that, O! You make it sound like we’ve had sex together!”

Clarke snorts in laughter and remains motionless to obtain better results out of her reflection (the alcohol not helping). “You kissed, though?”

“It was a practice run for future lays”, explains Raven, and she gestures towards Octavia who corroborates. “People tend to override the fact that too much tongue is worse than none.”

“Well thanks, Raven, I guess”, notifies Lincoln with an uncomfortable smile.

A moment passes, during which Raven seems to be reflecting on a thought. She then breaks the silence, casting a glance at Clarke. “What about you, Griff? One would’ve thought that you’d have kissed Woods already, by this point.”

The reaction is immediate. Clarke turns white (not red, surprisingly enough) and averts her gaze from Raven’s, buying herself some time to make work of the jumble of words currently dancing in her mind. “Raven, just because SHE wants to fuck ME, does not mean it goes the same the other way around.”

Soon, Octavia is bawling in laughter, hiding behind Lincoln’s shoulder to simulate embarrassment over Clarke’s tenuous situation. “So, you admit that she wants to fuck you?” Then, quiet, like she’s talking to herself. “This is literally pure gold.”

“Well that was extremely creepy. Stop.”

Raven peeks at Clarke from behind Monty’s shoulder, her interest for the conversation increasing by the second. “But she is hot, I mean, you can’t deny that.”

Holy fucking fuck. Clarke isn’t even sure she noticed Lexa in that way, let alone judged her looks on a scale, or even noticed anything other than her attitude and persona. The endless interrogation makes her want to dig herself a hole and stay hidden eternally.

“She is… Esthetically pleasant, I guess.”

“Oh come on, Griffin!” Raven nearly shouts. “Esthetically pleasant? You think her ass is
“Then you are most likely not straight, Reyes”, Murphy level-headedly points out.

“So what, do you have a masters degree in sexuality, Murph?” Observing his inability to reply, Raven nods contently. “Yeah, didn’t think so.”

Octavia, seeing how the situation desperately needs some damage control, reaches for Clarke and nudges her shoulder playfully. “All we’re saying, Clarke, is that Lexa is the perfect one night stand: she’s confident, she doesn’t give a single fuck about anyone – so no hard feelings the next day, and she’s probably a sex goddess, after all these chicks she’s been through…” Clarke sighs loudly, taking a big sip of her drink as if hoping the booze would suddenly make her unable to discern any words, therefore extinguishing the whole conversation. “Can’t you see I despise her?”

“Exactly, it’d make for some pretty amazing hate sex”, Raven points out, smirking seductively.

The remark doesn’t go unnoticed, and Bellamy, at last, joins the conversation - ignoring Clarke’s deadly scowl. “So, if I understood right… Clarke is about to break the unwritten rule that compels her to marrying me?”

“Oh my god, that’s true – it would break the prophecy!” exclaims Raven, burying her head in her hands like a poor soul in despair.

“The prophecy? You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.” Clarke protests vigorously. “Last year, it was Bellamy, a minute ago it was Lexa and now it’s Bellamy again?”

“She’s right, Raven, we’ve got to make a choice!” Octavia yells back, shaking her friend furiously, almost making a glass topple over in the process.

It’s suddenly too much for Clarke, and her annoyance turns into anger. “Alright, nobody gets to make a choice except ME! I don’t want to marry Bellamy, and I don’t want to marry Lexa, and-”

“Who said anything about marrying Lexa?” Questions Raven, her playful expression turning into a puzzled one in the snap of a finger.

“Geez, Griff, you’re already fantasizing over marriage?” throws Octavia, perplexed. “This is getting further than I expected.”

Clarke is left completely, utterly baffled by that last comment. “Then what in the holy fuck did you expect?”

“Alright, I kinda expected to walk in on you guys doing it in the lockers. But that’s all, I swear!” admits Octavia, like she’s confessing to a first-degree murder.

Bellamy suddenly gets up, part of him wanting to settle the issue while another part of him simply wants to get a refill. “Okay, this is turning into a police interrogation. Just quit it with the bullshit and let’s play beer pong instead!”

It’s almost as if Lincoln is automatically triggered, warming up in excitement. “Yeah! That’d be nice!” But truly, he’d play anything - from water polo to My little pony roleplay, to escape the heated exchange going on between the girls.

And yeah, they eventually let their friend off the hook (about time), but as she misses one of her shots, ignoring Octavia’s cry of despair, Clarke cannot help but think: where do these weird assumptions come from? And how far are they from reality?
The ice is just another type of floor.

Sure, it severely punishes any misstep, and rumbles with each stroke of the blade, each switch of stance.

To Lexa, though, ice is a familiar as the crackled floor of her childhood house.

She sees it cut open, then reborn, and again, lacerated by the blades – yet never does it complain. Ice is ice. Hockey is hockey.

But Lexa is not just a hockey player. She is a fighter. Each time her skates touch the ice, she is a soldier at war. Only then does she permit herself to unleash anything she’d normally hold back.

With her jersey on, her helmet fastened, her shoulder pads enlarging her frame, she is someone else – a battle hardened warrior, a leader. She will stop at nothing to win - absolutely shameless when it comes to hammering a player into the boards, or taking a hit bravely, without a single wince.

Therefore, she was not surprised when she was named captain of the Arkadia Strikers. Getting traded was a surprise (and that’s another story), but she’d be lying if she claimed she felt anything other than pure satisfaction the moment her coach tossed the “C” embroidered jersey at her, inviting her teammates to applaud their new captain.

A deep pride fills her as she makes her way to her stall on Monday morning, careful about not pitching her bag too hard next to the goalie as she appears to be concentrated on strapping her pads on. There’s a moment of uncertainty during which Lexa asks herself whether the blonde would mind her sitting next to her, but then she remembers not to care too much about these things. She’s here to play hockey, isn’t she?

As soon as she hits the rink, girls are swooning over her new captain attire, and she does her best to appear as leader-like possible to ensure the respect of her teammates (also because Wayne, her most recent conquest, appears to be turned on by the “C”).

“Alright, whatever you do though, make sure you cover that chick who’s coming up with a pass.” Lexa advises one of her younger teammates, who’s still not completely familiar with certain strategy concepts.

“I don’t think I can intercept if I’m coming from afar”, the rookie replies, leaning on her stick with a sceptical expression. Lexa crosses her arms, gently shaking her head from side to side. “It’s not about intercepting. You wanna pressure that puck, that’s all you want. Don’t even look at it, just focus on the player. You come in as close as you can, you show her that she’s gotta make a choice fast, and chances are she’ll miss.”

“Right, so I make her lose focus.”

“Yeah, exactly.”

From the corner of the eye, Lexa sees a group of players preparing for a shootout exercise, and she excuses herself, eager to get in line.

The coach, along with her assistants, sets up a number of cones in a zig-zag formation, then orders the players to circle around them in order to get to the goalie.

The instructions prove to be difficult to pay attention to, as Lexa’s gaze trails to the blonde goalie skating around her net nonchalantly - like it’s her office, her den, her property. When she pulls
down the mask, piercing blue eyes staring at the players like she’s analyzing them, it makes Lexa feel strange, maybe even intimidated, for the first time in her entire career (although she would rather die than admit it).

And suddenly, she remembers her name. Clarke Griffin. Clarke, who gives her nothing but shit, yet has this grandeur, and makes god-like saves, and strides around like she’s already proven what she’s capable of.

It makes Lexa both impressed and infuriated. She wants nothing more than to tear the focus off Clarke’s face, to expose her flaws, to make her vulnerable.

The whistle blows. Her body reacts like it’s been mechanically set off – both her legs give vigorous strides, and the cold air lashes against her face, reducing her entire world to the ice, the puck and the goalie’s sturdy, calculated features.

Boy does she want to deke her, this time – she hopes it’d make her see who’s the boss out here. There’s a warm prickle in her guts when she thinks of dominating Griffin, of showing her the extent of her superiority, of proving herself to her.

Lexa chooses to fake left, and she stirs right at the last instant, setting the table for a perfect backhand.

Then all of a sudden there’s a stick poking at her puck, and her instinct takes over, breaking the movement, recovering that fucking puck, but it’s too late – she’s heading for the board. She settles at the back of the goal, pausing to recollect her thoughts. What in the hell…?

Griffin turns her head, peeks at her through the meshes of the net. And that’s what sets her off – this half grin, this I beat you. That’s what makes her go for a furious wrap around, stuffing the puck past the pads then leaving without a second though. She hears Clarke cursing, players reacting confusedly, and sees the coach’s frown, yet she can’t repress the burning in her chest, the helpless passion in her guts. She notices, before getting to the bench, her inability to point out any other event that has angered her to that point.

She is as surprised to see Clarke waiting for her outside after practice as she is to have been named captain. What does surprise her is the look of confusion on the goalie’s face, and the fact that she seems more perplexed than mad.

“What the fuck did you eat for breakfast?” asks Clarke, arms crossed, leaning against the brick wall of the arena.

For a moment, Lexa almost feels like laughing (laughing? Really?), as the question was not at all what she expected. Instead, she quirks a brow, gaging her opponent.

“I don’t like being poke checked, Griffin, that’s something about me.”

“Yeah, and I don’t like your attitude, I guess we can’t have it both ways.”

There’s something about Clarke’s calm, collected expression that makes Lexa feel off balance.

“It’s simple enough to me, at least: you don’t humiliate me, Griffin, and I won’t play asshole with you.”

“Hold on, what?” the blonde snaps at her, frowning. “Humiliate you?” She merely looks disgusted at that point, and Lexa fails to grasp the reason behind such a demonstration of sentiment. Clarke
seems to notice her teammate’s misunderstanding, and she squints her eyes indignantly.

“You don’t see it, do you? You come here like you own the place, like you’re king shit, and then you expect me to bow down and join the club of your worshippers? What do you want me to say, Woods? Wow, you’re so much better than me, wow, you’re better than everyone else! Would that rub your ego the right way?”

“That’s just twisting my words-“

“But standing my ground is humiliating to you?”

It’s upsetting to Lexa – seeing how Clarke is right, how she has no right to step on her, yet she’s used to being the best player in a team, and having to compete for the title is both scary and exhilarating.

“Oh, for god’s sake, Griffin, you’re telling me that while making that poke check you’ve never, not even for a single second, did it to make me look bad?” There’s a silence.

Clarke pauses, pondering over the issue. Then she slowly nods, cooperative. “So, we’re both jerks.”

“I guess”, Lexa agrees, shrugging.

As silence seems to settle down again, Clarke darts her gaze upward, finding Lexa’s, and she seems passive, willing, even. “I’ll cut the crap, Woods, I’ll be honest with you– I think you’re the best forward the Strike has had in years. With that being said, you’re an ass. But you’re also part of this team, you said it yourself. Now, I’m sick of this thing we’ve got going on, so I’m willing to make a truce - on the ice, no hard feelings. You do your job, I do mine, and we have each other’s back.”

“Well congrats, Griffin, I gotta admit I’m surprised! It’s the first time you’ve been reasonable since I met you. But jokes aside - yeah, sure. Should we shake hands or do you wanna… I don’t know, fist bump or something?”

She can see that Clarke is scanning her face, unsure if she’s serious or sarcastic.

“How about a big, friendly hug?” She asks, grinning.

And Lexa knows she’s not serious. However, she can’t supress the remarkable amount of embarrassing thoughts swarming right past her mental barriers. Thoughts of Clarke’s shadow of a smile, thoughts of the warmth radiating from her skin, and the intrepid glow of her blue eyes – holy fuck, why is she thinking about this? No need to panic, she’s definitely felt this before (no she hasn’t). It’s physical attraction. It’s need. She craves Clarke, like one would crave chocolate or a nice piece of strawberry shortcake.

“Eh, don’t push your luck, Griffin.”

God, those lips.

“I thought you wanted to give me a fist bump?” the goalie asks sneakily, accompanying the remark with a singular smirk.

“You drive a hard bargain; you know that?”

It’s absolutely fucked up – how Lexa loses track of her emotions, how she catches herself smiling fully, for the first time in months.
“Well what do you say, Woods? At least it’d be less stuck up than a handshake.” Clarke solicits her again, presenting her with a shy fist.

Lexa wants to refuse, but she suddenly thinks, *fuck it*, and she fist bumps Clarke, *there, it’s no big deal*. The feeling is unusually pleasant, leaves a burning sensation on her knuckles (*right where they touched with Clarke’s*).

She was doing just fine, really, before this blue-eyed goaltending prodigy jumped with both feet into her mind, only to test her, to force her out of her comfort zone and into an abyss where she hasn’t proven herself yet, isn’t the boss anymore – she’s just plain old Lexa, and it’s scary as hell.

Later, in the parking lot, both hands deep into her bag in a mad search for keys, she’s filled with something rare and unfamiliar.

Doubt.

And all through the drive back home, even her favorite songs blasting through the speakers cannot drown out the voice in her head, repeating one dizzying question: *what if it’s not lust?*

Chapter End Notes

As always, thanks for reading and I hope you liked it! As for the comments, please keep them coming, it’s always a pleasure to read you guys!

Follow me on Tumblr! https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/

TheFrenchWriter xx
Sunset decay (no second chances)

Chapter Summary

Still some angst, please don't kill me I promise it's for a reason!

Chapter Notes

Hello to you guys! This week was a pretty busy one, but I still managed to write a bit everyday so yay! I’ve decided to try something you might like – I’m always listening to music when I write, and I thought I’d introduce one of the songs that were playing in the background during this chapter. It’s called K. by Cigarettes after sex – ambient rock, has an euphoric feel to it, very interesting creation. I find that there is something personal and emotional about this song, an urgency mixed with despair and nostalgia. If you give it a try, you can tell me your impressions in the comments section. Now, without further ado…

There’s only one practice remaining before their first away game, and coach Reeve seems to want to use it in its entirety.

Between various speed drills, puck control exercises and stick handling manoeuvres, players are working their ass off to improve their game and perfectionate their technique.

Reeve has also summoned the goaltending coach, Luna Rivers – a three-time championship winner and former member of the Floukr Typhoons. It feels nice to be counselled by such a patient trainer, always listening and giving out relevant advice.

Luna has brought performance equipment – a new type of blocker that’s just been released by CCM, and Clarke is happy to, as Luna would say: try it out, see if it fits.

They work on the goalie’s close game, Luna exemplifying various situations in which a player might stop, might make her wait, or might bypass her. Then they bring in the puck shooting machine, orienting the shot on Clarke’s blocker for Luna has told her many times that although her catcher is a force to be reckoned with, her blocker is her biggest weakness.

Goaltending against a machine has its perks – there is something robotic, mechanical about the shots, and the disk is always perfectly flat, and the angle is mediocre if not non-existent. The whole experience is rewarding, as Clarke’s reflexes have been improving over each of the sessions, but there is a lack of genuineness in the machine – and soon, Luna literally grabs Lexa (who was just passing by, really) by the sleeve.

“Well, would you look at that - a new captain already? That’s really fast, and I know Reeve, she ain’t fast with these things. It means you’re good, right?” Luna asks, in a voice that leaves no room for refusal nor argument (her everyday tone, really).
Clarke is delighted with the sight of an intimidated Lexa – wide eyed, jaw dropped, desperately looking for an answer. “Hum, sure, ma’am”, she allows with a quick, polite nod.

It’s weird, seeing her like that – it’s almost as if she’s 12 and meeting somebody’s mom. She’s dropped both her stick and her shoulders, crossing her arms behind her back, waiting for orders and hoping she’ll make a good impression.

“Could you do me a favor and shoot a couple of pucks on miss Griffin over there?” the coach requests, pointing at Clarke who acknowledges her with a nod.

“Of course”, Lexa immediately agrees with so much class that it becomes evident to Clarke that the forward’s very responsive to authority.

Pucks come flowing towards Lexa’s feet, tossed by Luna who then tells her to aim at the blocker. She executes the task nicely, and most of the time, the shots prove to be hard yet casual.

Eventually, Clarke notices how Lexa’s jaw is unwound, how the aggressiveness she has once seen in her green eyes is now missing – she’s merely carrying the task of training her goalie. And with that change of climate, it’s not a competition anymore.

It’s teamwork.

Clarke is comforted by that thought, and her muscles ultimately get rid of their stiffness.

A whistle of appreciation is produced by Luna when Clarke manages to stop a deviating puck by trapping it between her shoulder and the post. A nice move, really, but what’s most impressive to Clarke is the fact that Lexa is now smiling at her. At first, her brain has trouble registering it, but she sees the way the forward is circling around, examining the result of such a feat (the puck is fully stuck against the post), and there is no mistaking the glint in Lexa’s eyes for anything other than awe.

Later during practice, while stretching on the ice, Clarke notices Lexa coming towards her. It looks as though the move has made an effect on her, for she still has that baffled, taken aback expression (she tried to hide it, but Clarke is quick at reading faces).

“So… How the fuck did you do that?” Is the first thing Lexa says, while trying to maintain a calm, even voice (and failing).

To which Clarke answers almost confidently: “Dunno, I guess I just scootched it.”

“You scootched it?” Lexa repeats, frowning a bit.

“Yes.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I have no idea.”

“Oh, you usually do that?”

Clarke pauses, struggling to comprehend. “Do what? Scootch pucks against the post or- “

“Make up words, I mean. ‘Cause that might be a special talent you have right there.”

“Well I clearly need many talents, you know, being “not cut out for hockey”.”
Clarke meant it as a joke, but Lexa looks away, stifling an embarrassed laugh, then gives her one of her signature looks – confident grin, left brow arched defiantly, green eyes gleaming with unsaid thoughts. “That was just me trying to be witty, I guess.”

“Yeah, like when you call me princess like I’m six years old and obsessed with Cinderella.”

“Oh you don’t like when I call you princess, princess?”

“No I don’t… I’m trying to find a nickname for you. Preferably one you wouldn’t like.”

A shit eating grin spreads across Lexa’s face. “Well the Polis guys had a nickname for me.”

“What’s that?” Asks Clarke, playing along.

“Commander”, Lexa replies, like it’s not that big of a deal.

It brings mixed feelings to Clarke - equally apprehensive and exasperated. “Are you making this up?”

“No, I’m not.”

“People actually called you Commander?”

“Polis was kinda all over me, if you know what I mean”, Lexa explains, rubbing her neck – Clarke figures that it’s what she does when she’s uncomfortable.

“No shit? Hell, if people were calling me Commander I think my head would inflate until it’d be impossible to fit through a door.”

“Well calling me Commander would certainly reduce it to its normal size, even smaller, the way I see it”, the forward brags, squaring her shoulders almost involuntarily.

At that, Clarke simply scoffs and rolls her eyes. “Oh do shut up, Commander of assholes.”

“That looks a lot like surrendering, princess”, Lexa replies in a sing song voice.

The remark leaves a tart feeling in the back of Clarke’s mouth, but she knows it’s more annoyance than anger. “Oh yeah?” She gets up, invading Lexa’s personal space. The brunette doesn’t wince, doesn’t give an inch – she must be used to face offs. “That’s cute. You’re a fine goalie, Griffin, but we both know you’re not a goon”, Lexa declares confidently, dominating her with all her height and large shoulders. It only takes one of Clarke’s amused lip bites to make Lexa’s brain derail out of control (she does a great job hiding it, however).

“I once hit a chick who ran into my net”, Clarke calmly asserts, cocking her head to the side just slightly.

“If you’re trying to turn me on, Griffin, you’re doing well”, snarls the brunette, lifting an eyebrow suggestively.

Clarke’s smile gradually disappears, and her gaze turns into a deadly stare. “Oh, we’re not going there.”

Lexa can only observe as she coldly picks up her stick and helmet. “Come on, Griffin, you’re exaggerating. Loosen up a bit, will you?”

The goalie’s sarcastic nod is what generates Lexa’s eye roll. “Yeah, loosen up my pants, would you
like that? Sounds good to me.”

“Jesus, can’t a girl joke around a bit?” Huff’s Lexa, and she’s still got that cocky smile on her face, which contributes to bringing a heat of anger to Clarke’s cheeks.

“Ha. And here I was thinking you weren’t that much of a jerk after all.”

It’s Clarke’s turn to leave Lexa hanging, and the blonde can feel her staring at her back until she leaves the ice, both satisfied and furious. How the fuck did they manage to take a step forward and then regain it immediately in just about five minutes?

Her last thought before getting to the locker room is one of soreness over Lexa’s disinterested glances. She tries to determine which is worse: the way Lexa is so nonchalant about displeasing her, or the fact that she didn’t try to stop her from leaving.

She hits the board with her stick before jumping off the ice, and finds the action all too revealing of her present state of mind.

_Fuck this shit._ The totality of her equipment finds itself brutally hurled into her duffle bag as she battles the whirlwind of feelings assailing her.

Getting a chick should be easy for her, not frustrating, and _definitely_ not emotional. She cannot seem to wrap her head around the fact that she was not only rejected but also put in her place by Clarke Griffin, and man does it suck - the ridiculousness of the whole situation brings a nasty pang to her chest. _Calm down._ As if it wasn’t enough, she knows deep down that she shouldn’t be making that much a fuss about it, but it’s almost like she lost sight of her identity – Alexandria Woods should _not_ care about such things. And besides, she’s already got plenty of girls to choose from, doesn’t she?

“Hey, it’s me”, she salutes as she opens the mahogany door of the century-old house she shares with her sister.

“Oh hey, Lex. How was it?”

A mumble of intelligible words comes tumbling out of Lexa’s mouth, and Anya cannot help but ask her to reformulate.

“It was okay, nothing special”, repeats Lexa, disposing of her sticks quite sharply, and Anya’s head pops in once again, her kid held up against her shoulder in an attempt to keep him from escaping to who knows where.

“Did you get into a fight or something?” the older woman asks, travelling to the kitchen to stir a pot absentmindedly. She then tastes its content, which appears to be soup or broth, and nods with a content smile. “It’s weird though, you told me you liked your team not too long ago-“ she continues, but gets interrupted by a short tempered Lexa who rubs at her forehead frustratingly. “I didn’t get into a fight, and the team is fine. Alright?”

“Jesus, someone shove a broom up your ass?” Anya inquires, sprinkling some spice into the pot.

“What, did you expect me to start chit chatting about unimportant stuff? You know I don’t like talking about it.”
And Lexa seems on her way to the second floor, but Anya is not nearly done. She strokes Aden’s head, who starts babbling incoherent sentences. “Listen, I’m finishing this up, then it’s time for his nap (she points at the toddler who’s dozing off in her arms). That means you can put on your big girl pants and spit it out around a nice glass of Chianti.”

Lexa tries to stay mad and fails miserably – her sister appears to always know what to say to appease her hot temper. A smile creeps up shyly on her face, and she surrenders, nodding and making her way back down to the living room to turn the TV on.

As soon as Anya comes back from her son’s bedroom, fist pumping victoriously (he rarely falls asleep right away), they uncork a bottle of red and drop down to each extremity of the couch.

“So. What’s up, baby sis?” Anya asks, taking a first sip of wine and turning the TV on mute.

Before replying, Lexa makes sure to serve her one of her best “seriously?” looks, arched eyebrow and all, for she hates the pet name.

“I guess it’s an addition of dumb things, is all”, Lexa replies, then shrugs.

“Is it the away game?”

“Unlikely.”

“Being named captain, then?” Anya suggest, running out of ideas.

“No, that I’m used to”, the hockey player explains with small hand gestures. “It’s just… I guess the team doesn’t know me enough. And with the amount of shit they’ve heard about me, I’m guessing they all hate me. But it doesn’t bother me.”

“Then what does?”

“I don’t know, I can’t really point it out.” Lexa tries, and it was a convincing attempt until she lowers her eyes, and the tension in her shoulders doesn’t lie, doesn’t escape her sister’s knowing stare.

“That’s bullshit. Is it the chick you brought home while we were away to the parade?” Shoots Anya, crossing her arms intimidatingly.

Lexa’s reaction is priceless. Her eyes widen to the maximum size humanly sustainable and she bucks backwards in surprise – so hard she hits her head in the process, and winces in pain.

“I didn’t…” She starts, then trails off, knowing she’s got no chance of convincing Anya. “How did you know?”

“Lex, I know what sex smells like. You could’ve at least opened the windows in your room or something.”

“Fuck, I thought I’d been subtle”, she mutters under her breath.

Anya pauses, smiling softly. Truth is, she’s always been torn between tolerating and respecting her sister’s life choices, or knocking some sense into her and bringing up the fact that one night stands are not a sensible way of life. Then again, she figures it’s only her opinion and if that’s what fits Lexa best, she won’t judge (although she doubts it can bring her true happiness or fulfilment).

“So, is she giving you any trouble?” Anya asks gently, not wanting to rush but starting to be
genuinely interested in the topic.

“No.”

The answer is clear and undoubtedly true judging by Lexa’s assertive, convinced expression.

“Wow, hell of a change from the last one”, remarks Anya, accompanying the sentence with an eyebrow raise and a sip of her glass.

“Who, the funny Tennessee one?”

“Yeah, the one who asked you to choose her over hockey. Man, that was ridiculous.”

“I think it took me less than a quarter of a second to make the choice”, affirms Woods, nodding calmly as if remembering the event.

There’s a small silence, and Anya suddenly imagines her sister being single at forty – she can’t help it, and can’t cope with it either. She blinks away the small wave of emotion and settles her attention on her glass, opening the wine with a few quick spins. “That’s good then. If she’s not too hard on you, I mean.”

“Yeah, but she’s way too into me, the poor thing. I’ll have to end it soon, you know, pull off the band aid… I should make them sign a contract of some kind, just to make sure they don’t expect anything.”

Anya decides to risk it all – it’s now or never. “Or you just find the right one”, she suggests, shrugging like it’s no big deal, except it is, it is a big deal. Especially to Lexa, who now stares at her quizzically. “What do you mean?” She asks, knowing exactly what her sister means, yet hoping she’ll reformulate, change her mind, retreat.

“I’m just saying - you’re twenty-two. Maybe it’d be nice, to, you know…” She stops herself at that, unsure if it’s safe to continue.

“I’m not interested in that anymore”, Lexa coldly snaps, her intense glare piercing through Anya’s defences.

“But that was four years ago!” Anya exclaims a bit too loudly, and she suddenly remembers that her son is sleeping two doors away from them, so she repeats it again, still managing to make her whisper sound harsh. “That was four years ago!”

“Time won’t change anything”, states Lexa, her tone even, her jaw tightly wound. “Besides, you know I’m not that type of girl – all lovey dovey and shit…”

“Oh my god, Lexa, do you have any idea how big and fat that lie is? I could literally see it a mile away, smell it, even, like a hound dog-”

“Shut up”, complains Lexa, rubbing the bridge of her nose with her index and thumb.

“Do you remember the valentine’s day you spent with her?” the older sister points out, shoving her finger in Lexa’s direction accusingly.

“I’d rather not”, replies the hockey forward with a grimace.

“You were all like, this is love, blah blah blah, I’m walking on sunshine, shit, everything was rainbows and unicorns and you were like a lost puppy whenever she wasn’t there…”
“Okay, I wasn’t that bad, you’re just amplifying the whole thing”, Lexa counters frustratingly, emptying her glass and setting it down on the table in a rapid, inconsiderate movement.

“You used to say you were gonna marry her!” retorts Anya.

Memories come flowing back to Lexa, and it’s the worst thing she could ever ask for at the moment. She relives everything – the star gazing, the bonfires with their friends, the wild, unbridled sex in parking lots that always ended with them collapsing, both out of breath, both blinded by lust and ecstasy and all the crazy, messed up things you feel coursing through your veins when you’re young and in love. “I was eighteen, Anya! We all say dumb things when we’re eighteen!”

“Go ahead, try anything you want. It doesn’t change the way you felt about her.”

“It wasn’t love, Anya. Love goes both ways. This was all in my head, some hallucination, some obsession…”

“And it made you feel happy, Lex, you silly thing! can’t you see you’ve never been as happy ever since? As happy, as content, as well…”

It hits her hard in the chest - like a gunshot, in a way.

It’s been four years since she last felt giddy, lightheaded, since she’s last seen the world with bright colors, since she’s last woken up with a dumb, lovely smile on her face. She misses it – not necessarily the person who brought it, but instead, this feeling that could last forever, if well preserved, this feeling that heats up from your chest to the depths of your guts, that makes you feel whole, grand, invincible.

“I’m not like that, An. I don’t think any of it is for me.”

Then, a cannonball. “Who is she?”

“What?” Lexa asks, deeply distraught.

“It’s a girl, isn’t it? The reason why you’re so pissed off. I figured it couldn’t be that, but then I’ve seen you pissed off before, Lex, and you wouldn’t talk about it like you’re doing right now. So, who is she?”

“Wow, that would be an impressive deduction if it were true”, Lexa speaks calmly, with detached words.

“You are actually blind, huh?” Anya inquires, getting up to plant a loving kiss on her sister’s cheek.

Not allowing her the time to think of a reply, she gestures towards Aden’s room. “I’m gonna go check on him. You think about what I just told you.”

And Lexa does just that – think, until she realizes it’ll bring her nothing but self doubt.

Chapter End Notes

That’s it for now, I hope you liked it! I’m currently writing the next chapter and I’ll
update it as soon as possible so stay tuned!

Here's my tumblr: https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/
"Guys, I’m starting it this time, alright?” Yells Charlie, kneeling on the bench and turning around to face the rest of the team.

Then she adds, getting into the beat: “I need y’all to clap for me!” Which they do enthusiastically. Someone in the backseats counts to three, and the whole bus comes alive, singing along.

“Hit the road Jack, and don’t you come back-“ Charlie starts, pointing to the rest of the girls.

“No more no more no more no more!” They reply, equally as loud.

The whole sing-along, bus ride experience has been going on for the last hour. At this point, Clarke is torn between singing along passionately and sinking into madness. Isolated from the show thanks to her noise cancelling Sennheiser headphones, Octavia is reading a book while humming a song Clarke fails to identify.

“They’re pretty into it, this year, aren’t they?” Clarke mutters distractedly, eyes fixed on the landscape shuffling past them at extreme speed.

It seems Octavia has actually been attentive to her surroundings, for she frees an ear from her headphones with one quick flick of the hand. “Huh?”

“I just said they’re pretty intense this year”, Clarke reformulates, glancing at the group of enthused amateur singers currently yelling, while cupping an ear, the famous Ray Charles line – “what you say?”, after which they repeat the chorus once again.

“Well congrats, Griff, you’ve just been awarded the “biggest understatement of the year” prize”, Octavia chuckles, pulling her headset around her neck to pursue the conversation. “Still was pretty big last year also, remember?”

The remark awakens a distinct set of memories, and Clarke finds herself reliving the team’s road
trip to face the Sankru Dune Demons, a team known for its spectacular offense. The girls had been singing their personal version of *Life is a highway*, and by “personal version”, we mean that they only invented (or rather massacred) 75% of the lyrics – the remaining 25% being the chorus. “I remember it perfectly, unfortunately”, grunts the goalie with an exasperated look that says it all.

“Oh, don’t be such a party pooper and let them have their fun, would you?” Suggests Octavia with her usual happy-go-lucky shrug.

“I just find that on the road time is a time to concentrate and relax before the game, not sing your lungs out.” Clarke calmly affirms, leaning her head against the window, closing her eyes for a moment in an attempt to drown out the noise surrounding her.

“Funny thing is, Woods seems to be thinking the exact same way”, Octavia assures, pointing to one of the last seats behind them, where Lexa can be seen, sitting through one of Wayne’s impassioned yet uninteresting babbles– the only proof of her frustration being the violent way she chews her gum.

The thing with Lexa is she’s one of these unpredictable, reckless beings who never cease to both chock and displease the general population. Like a carnivorous plant, one would observe her from a safe distance, knowing that it’s unsafe to approach yet wanting to do so, *wanting* with every limb and every cell of their body.

Lexa’s got a way of sitting through life, cruising with both feet on the car dash, cigarette in hand, giving the impression of watching it go by like a movie - just being, just existing, and taking the hits when things go wrong.

Clarke stresses about everything. She stresses about the game, the saves she’ll have to make, the boos of the crowd, the amount of underwear she’s brought along with her, the size of her hotel room and how she does not want to lose the key card (firstly because it’d be no fun waiting outside not knowing what to do, secondly because it’d definitely be humiliating).

Then there’s Lexa, *chewing gum*. And she doesn’t give a single fuck whether she’s packed well, nor does she worry about the performance she’ll have to give to impress the crowd. She’s just chewing gum, putting on a cap, zipping the official Strikers’ jacket she’s proudly sporting, all that without the hint of a doubt in her green sharp eyes.

Clarke envies her, hates her, admires her, is so *fucking* confused about the amount of different emotions she feels rising fiercely in her chest whenever her brain brings up the name Alexandria Woods.

Around 4 PM, the bus stops beside the entry of the stadium and the driver opens the compartments to empty them of their contents – duffel bags, clothes and equipment for the most part.

The first thing Clarke notices as she steps outside the bus is the height of the stadium – she needs to bend the neck and arch her back to get a glimpse of the top. Many of her teammates let their excitement emerge, and the hubbub of laughter and shouting follows the group as they make their way through the impressive network of paths and corridors that constitutes the Mount Weather Stadium.

Practice is scheduled at five thirty – this way, they have plenty of time to check in at the hotel and, for some of them, meet with their sports therapist.

Albeit not being injured or sore, Clarke has an appointment for a quick checkup to make sure that she is fresh and fit for duty. It only lasts a half hour, and she then takes the team shuttle, along with
the very enthusiastic Raven and Charlie, who are still on the adrenalin high of their hectic bus ride.

“I’m so hyped to kick their ass! God, it’s even better when it’s in front of their fans!” says Langton, her eagerness almost greater than life.

Then she adds, nudging a focused and not very chatty Clarke: “So what’s up with you, Griffy? Anything on your mind?”

Shaken out of her thoughts, Clarke reflects on the question for a while. “Hum, not really”, she replies.

The answer, quite vague, does not satisfy Charlie who lets out a little sigh. “Already on game mode, with those rituals of yours?”

“No, the rituals start two and a half hours before the game”, the goalie explains, as if it were obvious.

Charlie’s relaxed expression turns into a comically disturbed one. “I’ll tell you, buddy, if you weren’t so damn good, I’d be really creeped out.”

It takes close to no time at the check-in, for the staff of the hotel is used to accommodating big groups such as hockey teams. The lobby’s chic ornamentation, combining contemporary and deluxe furniture, is like the best of both worlds, and Clarke almost feels at home when she unlocks the door of her room – to be immediately greeted by the neat smell of clean bed sheets and fresh leather. The organisation hasn’t gone halfway in terms of expenses (especially for their star players), and it certainly shows – the room is equipped with a flat screen tv, a spa bath, a generously packed minibar and a four-poster bed, its canopy enriched by silky fabrics. A small voice in the back of Clarke’s head tells her that she does not deserve such luxurious manners, that she would be content with a simple room, and, despite all odds (apparently), does not need a jacuzzi. Besides, she wouldn’t have the time to use it even if she wanted to.

Raven joins her in the elevator, and of course, she is wearing her lucky striker fever jacket – it’s a typical custom of hers, one to show proudly her allegiance and assert herself all at once.

As they make their way towards the main entrance, they see Lexa entering the lobby, fumbling for her ID and reservation sheet. Her oversized coat’s hood is pulled over her head (a faded baseball cap acting as further coverage), and she’s wearing sunglasses indoors, all of which is perceived by Clarke as an attempt to go low profile and escape the media and fans.

She suddenly realizes that she herself has never been recognized all that much, and she assumes that Lexa, for her part, must be regularly intercepted by the public seeing as how she’s so desperately trying to fly under the radar.

“They weren’t kidding when they said she was famous”, Raven points out as she takes a bite of the granola bar she’s just pulled out of her bag.

“It’s a bit excessive, don’t you think?”

“What? The cap and the shades?” Asks the defenseman, watching as Lexa smiles and waves at a young boy who’s obviously recognized her, judging by the way he peers at her shyly from the other side of the room.

“Yeah. They don’t mean her any harm, they’re just big fans, is all”, Clarke calmly notes.

Raven gives her a look of uncertainty. “You don’t get it, do you?”
“What?” Asks Clarke, unsure of what she’s missed.

“She’s all some sort of character, this one – anything she does as Woods, she’d do differently as Lexa. Get it? Woods doesn’t mind meeting fans, she acts like this cocky jackass when she’s under the spotlight, but when it’s all over, she’s actually pretty chill – still a bit of an ass, but tolerable.”

Clarke is impressed by Raven’s deduction skills. “And how exactly did you find out about all this?”

“Oh, let’s say she’s pretty vocal on the ice”, explains Raven with a shrug.

When Clarke invites her friend to speak further, she is fairly quick to obey. “Well, it’s pretty obvious that she’s the boss. She calls the plays, she gives an example. She can be pretty fucking tough, if you ask me – like, if she doesn’t approve, trust me, you’ll know. But when you do something good, she’ll make sure to tell you as well.”

“Have you spoken with her much?”

“We’ve had locker room talk. It’s crazy, the amount of pressure she puts on herself.”

Clarke sees herself stunned by that last comment. “Pressure?” She repeats, encouraging Raven to specify.

“Well, when I went to the restroom before the first game of the season, I could hear someone throwing up in the stall next to me. I’m guessing it was her, since she was drinking water from the sink when I got out. “

It’s hard to imagine – Lexa vomiting of stress, alone in a small bathroom stall. It appears Clarke had been wrong when she thought that Lexa is always confident, always unwavering, never anxious, never vulnerable.

Each moment, each second, reveals a new detail about Lexa.

There’s a strange mystery surrounding her, an aura of things unknown, and Clarke (despite herself) is itching to find out more.

The pre-game, courtesy of the Mt. Weather Sports Network

Description provided by Mt. Weather Radio Central’s sports commentators Matt Botts and Terrance Ripley

“It’s a perfect night for hockey, isn’t it Matt?”

“Absolutely, and we’ve got two offensive formations competing tonight, the first one led by this recently acquired center, I’m sure people watching know who I’m talking about – some like to call her the Grounder Kid, but we’ll stick to her name, won’t we?”

The older man nods with a smile. “We sure will, her name is Alexandria Woods, aged 22, she is a Polis native and she has played for their team, the Scorpions – for how many years, Matt?”

“For four years - she was their first pick at the 2013 annual draft, and since then, she’s put on quite a show for the fans – seventy-three points on her first season donning the Scorpions’ uniform, twenty-six goals, forty-seven assists, that is something, isn’t it Terry?”
“It’s outstanding, and it was a surprise for the whole league when she was traded for Mia Compton at the start of the season, Polis coach Titus Trikru said that they were looking for a fresh start after missing the playoffs last year. It seems it’s for the best, as both teams are on the winning end of this trade – Compton is a veteran player with maturity and experience while Woods will serve to fill the gap in Arkadia’s offensive line.”

“Exactly, now let’s take a closer look –“

On the screen behind them appears a compilation of Lexa’s highlights.

“We’ve talked about Arkadia’s need of someone to fill the net, but they also needed a hitter, Terry?”

“Correct, and believe me, Lexa Woods is just that – she is strong and very physical, always solid in the forecheck. I believe we’ve had a player, here in the studio, who once told us she didn’t like playing against Polis because their captain was, quote on quote, a scary fella.”

“Well, frankly, I don’t blame her, Matt, I think the only Mt Weather player who can really compete with her on a physical scale is Pam Reed, am I right?”

“I agree, she as well is absolutely ruthless on the checks, and I can’t wait to see their rivalry come to life on the ice.”

The screen turns back to an image of the players warming up on each side of the ice.

“Now, about the goalies – the Arkadia coach has decided to play their starter, Clarke Griffin, who, my goodness, is quite the goalie. Couple of facts about her - she is 21, very young but already a mature player, she has made the leap from the American League to the national league at age 19, after playing two years for the Arkadia Dropships and Matt, how would you qualify her career at this point?”

“I would say she is a very successful player, just by taking a look at her stats – last year for example, she coupled a .933 save percentage with an average of 2.07 goals allowed per game, that is outstanding work. This year also, she seems confident as ever and ready to play her best hockey.”

“Alright, well, Matt, we will be looking at these players very closely, and we are now right on time for the national anthems, let’s go have a look.”

The game (with commentary)

The noise is almost deafening as Clarke sets foot on the ice third to last, the only people behind her being Langton and Woods. She feels the pressure on her shoulders, knowing that the crowd is far from appreciative, and their singing and shouting is not by any means comforting.

The Mt. Weather X-Ray is competent. Their players are, for the most part, lean and swift individuals who never fail to impress. Strategy is key in their game, and their first line athletes are experts of the tic-tac-toe and the funnel – all of which will serve in making Clarke stand on the edge of her toes for the whole game.

Reeve pits Lexa against Pam Reed in the first face off, and Clarke immediately sees that the two have a deep hatred for one another, their murderous glares alone serving as proof.
Mt. Weather wins the face-off, brings it back to Callaghan. Callaghan, looking for options, offers it to Jameson who was passing by, and they're organising their first attack.

Clarke can see Octavia pointing at her teammates to lead them towards the pair of wingmen marching towards the enclave.

Raven is quick at checking Callaghan into the board in an effort to curb the play, but the enemy wingman saw it coming and drops the puck which then slides to the back of the net, recovered by Jameson.

Jameson, behind the net, waits for her team to join her, but here comes Woods to pressure her into leaving the spot. Jameson, trapped by Blake and Reyes, they battle for the puck.

Clarke settles against her post, watching as the enemy regains possession and hurls the puck to their defenseman at the blue line.

Yermakov has it, fakes a slap shot, passes it to Reed – here she goes, oh! Beautiful feint, Blake never saw it coming, Reed, still, dangling the puck, fires!

For half a second, Clarke thinks, *blocker*, and when her brain registers the command there seems to be a stop in the space time vortex, and then it’s just Clarke, alone, propelling herself and extending the arm at just the right spot. She feels and hears everything as the puck rams against the cushioned surface of her blocker, and there, it’s deviated, already far away from the meshes of the net.

*Griffin with a gorgeous save!* One might’ve thought that she was too far on this one but this is no ordinary player, ladies and gentlemen, this is Clarke Griffin – rain or shine, she will make the save!

First period proves itself to be a hell of a job, and Clarke makes 16 saves – one of which made with just the tip of her pad.

She sprays a generous amount of water at her face through the grid of her mask as the siren signals the start of second period.

Arkadia’s first line is on the ice, led by Alexandria Woods. Jaime Hurd, making her way into enemy territory, and she’s cornered by the defense. Hurd does a great job conserving the disk, then leaves it to Marks. Marks, moves to the center, joined by her defense. Lucy Marks still with it, then with a pass for Woods. Woods makes good use of the board, sets the rebound for herself, then ascends to the left, stops in the enclave. Woods, finding options.

Clarke gets a glimpse of Lexa’s hard working frame, shoving ferociously at enemy players to keep them at bay. A feeling puddles at the bottom of Clarke’s stomach, one that strangely resembles excitement, and she cannot help but skull forward to get a better view of the play.

*Woods with a quick pass for Hurd, Hurd moves around to set the play. Woods has the angle, she’s ready, Hurd serves her the puck and here she goes, splits de D, still has it, she feints to the left, beautiful toe drag and shoots! SHE SCORES!*

Clarke almost jumps and thrill shoots through her veins as she sees the replay, witnesses the extent of Lexa Woods’ jaw dropping skill, and Clarke even wonders, almost mad with bliss, if there is a limit to her talent.

*Oh, my stars! Alexandria Woods goes top shelf, where mama hides the cookies! And Arkadia is bringing in the big guns, they have a one-nothing lead!*
Using their momentum with renewed confidence, the Strikers press against the defense for the next half of the period, and soon, Charlie scores a beautiful backhanded goal, the crowd quickly losing their dynamism.

*Charlie Langton, with a marvellous goal! She is on a mission tonight, folks, first goal of the season, what do you say to that? Strikers make it two-nothing!*

For the most part of the break, Charlie rambles about what a cool night this is, and Woods is sitting alone on a bench, patted on the head by her teammates from time to time but mostly serious and focused.

It makes Clarke rethink what Raven told her in the hotel lobby – it’s impressive how Lexa celebrated the goal while on the ice, jumping on the board and letting out a mighty roar of triumph, and how she is now cold, distant, detached.

Clarke thinks about her own rituals, the “puck chasing” she does, when she’s shifting her gaze from left to right at extreme speed, or the way she tosses a rubber ball against a wall, mechanically catching the rebound to practice her reflexes. They’re not so different, aren’t they? Both obsessed with their sport, both addicted to performance...

But then, if Lexa is so detached about it all, that would explain why she doesn’t care about anything, doesn’t care if she’s rude to Clarke – she just wants to use people, just wants to take without giving back.

Keeping that last thought in mind, Clarke jumps back on the ice with a mix of anger and perplexity as she sees Lexa transform into *Woods* again, sees her taunt the opponents with her usual superior attitude and cocky smile, sees her square her shoulders and hammer players in the board, some sort of wild, feral glint animating her eyes.

*The X-Ray coming up fast, Redmond headmans it to Reed who skates into it, nicely done. Reed, setting up the play, sees Callaghan rising up, patient as usual. Reed circling the net, protects the puck, leaves it to Callaghan as she’s roughly checked by Woods coming from behind. Callaghan cutting straight to the middle, good idea - Reyes thought she was coming down instead.*

Clarke wakes up her entire body, both mind and limbs, she takes a deep breath, her eyes lock on the 6 foot-tall giant rushing towards her but she sees nothing but the puck, dangling on the blade of the stick. Her mind registers the shot automatically – like a machine, her leg unfolds right away, kicks the puck to the side then settles again, waiting for the next shot, but the rebound reaches Reed who already has her stick in the air, ready to fire at the opposite side – she has an open net. Clarke jumps.

*Leg save! Rebound! Seized by Reed, FIRES the one timer and HOLY MOTHER OF GOD! Griffin flashes the leather! Someone call the police because Pam Reed has been ROBBED and boy de we share her look of disbelief right now! She thought she had an open net but Griffin says no and look at the replay – that desperate jump, grabs it mid air, game saver!*

As she sits down and lets out a controlled breath, Clarke feels gloves patting her head and looks up to see Raven and Octavia’s shocked expression. Then, when she gets up and stretches her legs, she notices Woods’ composed expression break as she lets out a fierce, victorious shout. *Yeah, you’re lucky I’m here to save your ass*, she thinks as a small smile appears on her lips without being invited.

*The intensity of the game steps up a notch – many Mt Weather players are eager to make the plays happen and will go to extremes doing it.*
Pam Reed has started to make a veil in front of Clarke to create the opportunity for a screenshot. Annoyance spreads in the pit of Clarke’s guts, and when she feels Reed’s back pressed up against her, she gives her a little shove – to no avail, for she then skulls back again and confines her to the depth of her net.

The hostilities hit their highest point when Reed provokes a turnover and hurries towards the goal on a breakaway.

*Pam Reed is gaining speed and Griffin comes out of the net to meet her halfway!*

For a second or two, she drowns out all noise and sees Reed’s tall frame accelerating, and she goes for the poke check, her paddle connecting with the puck as she realizes that Reed is *not stopping*. Everything fades to black and next thing she knows, her head is hitting the ice, helmet thudding against the hard surface with a plastic noise.

Sounds come crashing past her ears, and soon, she’s conscious again – and the reality of it all hits her. *The fucking bitch.* Clarke sees red.

*Both players have just collided violently, and Reed is gesturing towards the ref, saying it’s not her fault. But Griffin does not agree and she is losing her cool, here she comes, shoves Reed who loses her balance.*

Pam Reed’s gaze is set on fire, burning hard with fury as she starts talking shit at Clarke and gives her a vigorous push. *Oh fuck.* This woman is 6 feet tall, could snap her in two like a twig if she set her mind to it.

“You scared, Griffin? Why don’t you come over, we’ll have a little talk?”

There’s something unbelievably aggressive crossing Pam Reed’s face, and Clarke has no doubt that if she doesn’t initiate the fight right away, Reed will chase her and attack like a hound. She choses to come forward and that means war to Reed – she grabs her jersey with an iron grip and players of both teams come rushing towards them, eager to either join the hassle of put an end to it.

Just as she feels Reed shoving her face backwards, strong hands *yank* the attacker off her and she lets out a shuddering breath.

“Get the fuck away from her!” A voice barks at Reed, who turns around and recognizes her nemesis – Lexa Woods, her jaw tense and gaze deadly.

“Yeah? What you gon’ do?” Pam Reed slurs with an arrogant smirk.

Lexa is set off like a wild animal, both of her gloves cast away with great vigor – Reed immediately answers back replicating the action.

*This is turning into a free-for-all, and captain Lexa Woods has had enough! She is standing up for her goalie and gloves are dropped!*

As soon as Reed takes a step forward, Woods pounces on her, swinging a fist to her jaw. The violence of the hit is stirring, and its sole effect seems to be infuriating Reed even more. She grabs Lexa by the front of the jersey and they go blow for blow, taking each hit courageously. Lexa’s lip is slit by a punch and her nose is bleeding badly, but she’s reciprocating until Reed slips under her, and she falls on top, still pummeling on her face, then the referee arrives to separate them.

*And the crowd is booing Woods, but she couldn’t care less, since she got exactly what she came for. That’s what you expect from someone like Lexa Woods who’s always so protective of her*
Once the brawl is over, both fighters instinctively make their way to the penalty box and there is little time left – only two minutes.

The X-rays pull their goalie and Clarke spends the remaining seconds stacking the pads and stopping the puck from entering the goal as if her life depends on it.

As the buzzer sounds one last time and the crowd starts leaving before the interviews (most of them are pissed off X-ray fans), a wave of relief washes over Clarke.

The game comes to an end and the Arkadia Strikers are slipping away with a two-nothing win, their goalie Clarke Griffin really stood on her head, tonight, and with that she clutches her first shutout of the season!

The coach insists on having her checked for a potential concussion, and after she obtains her leave and waits through all the post-game interviews, the visitors section of the arena is almost empty.

The first things she notices when entering the locker room is Lexa’s head bent upwards, Kleenex in hand and fingers pinching her nose. She looks a bit smaller without the equipment on, and Clarke realizes suddenly the severity of the whole situation. Lexa has fought off a giant of a player - her hands are bruised, a dark blue color spreads across one of her cheekbones and her jersey is stained with red.

“That was so fucking dumb”, Clarke hears herself blurt out, and she’s surprised with the anger in her tone. Why is she so mad about this? Maybe she just doesn’t like the sight of a battle bruised Lexa. Yeah, all this reconsidered, she doesn’t like it at all.

“A thank you would’ve sufficed”, grunts Lexa, still pinching her nose and wincing with the pain that creeps through the side of her face.

“I was fine.” The words taste wrong as she says them, but she doesn’t care, just wants to make sure that Lexa never does this again, never stains the ice with red, never hurts herself like this.

Lexa is shaken with a humorless laugh, and she turns to face her goalie. “That’s a nice try, but again, you should just thank me.”

“And you should thank me for saving your sorry ass on multiple occasions tonight”, Clarke bites back, reaching for the ice pack sitting close by.

“Yeah, well it goes without saying”, the forward mumbles so softly, like a part of her doesn’t want Clarke to hear.

Clarke gasps comically and sits next to Lexa, sideways - a leg on each side of the bench. “Oh, shit, you’re nice to me now? Will you say it again so I can record the whole thing?” Clarke teases with an arched brow.

Lexa looks away, oh yes, you’ve heard us right – the great Alexandria Woods looks away when her goalie puts her in a corner with her witty remarks and unmoving behavior.

“Have you got no idea of who I am, Griffin?” She meant it as a warning, but Clarke sees past that and boldly presses the ice pack against Lexa’s strong jaw, and the forward shudders (both from the cold and the soft fingers grazing her skin).
“Uh huh, you’re an idiot and an asshole, that I know.”

“Yes, well this idiot stood up for you against the meanest chick in the whole league, and she doesn’t need you to play doctor with her.” Lexa roughly affirms, grabbing the ice pack from Clarke’s hand.

“That came out so wrong”, Clarke snaps at her indignant.

At that, Lexa just smirks and wonders. “That’s exactly why I said it”, she retorts, delivering Clarke her best charming smile.

“Oh, way to go, your fuckboyness just leveled up!” Clarke snorts, getting up to replace the tissue with a new one.

“Geez, what level am I at now?” Lexa plays along with fake excitement coating her voice.

“Probably a hundred”, throws Clarke. “And stop smiling, it’s not a good thing!” She adds, seeing Lexa’s proud self resurface.

“So you’ve got a level 100 fuckboy saving you from the perils of life and you’re complaining about it?” Lexa asks, bewildered by the thought.

“Oh my god, Woods, do you actually think you’ve got a chance at this?” Clarke whines, switching the ice pack to the other side of Lexa’s face, who, surprisingly enough, stays motionless like an obedient dog.

“I’m always giving these things a try, Griffin, that’s just how it is”, replies the cocky piece of shit with a wink (as if it wasn’t enough).

Clarke is left shocked, wordless, and sits back on the next bench, behind, satisfaction washing over her as she notices the smallest hint of disappointment germinating behind Lexa’s confident manners. “Oh, you poor thing, so you really do think you’re my type?”, the blonde questions bluntly, then pierces Lexa’s barriers with her sharp blue eyes.

“I’m everybody’s type”, Lexa retaliates, never losing her composure.

Clarke loses her cool, and gives Lexa the “look at me” motion. She’s had enough. “Alright, I don’t care who you are, I don’t care if you’re good at hockey, or if you get into people’s pants recreationally, but somebody needs to yank you off this fucking high horse you’re sitting on, and show you that sane chicks like me will not drool all over you like you’re a fucking gift from heaven. I’m the boss of this team, believe it or not – I’ve been here two years, and I would be captain, not you, if it wasn’t for hockey rules. So you’re gonna turn your little cunt radar off very kindly and treat me like the talented goaltender I am, not try to prey on me like a teenage frat boy and his boner. Have I made myself clear?”

“Ouch. Apply cold water to the burn”, Lexa mumbles, but she can joke around all she want, she has clearly understood the message – Clarke sees it with the way she lays low, avoiding her stare, and she’s proud of herself, proud of the way she’s taken the first step in taming Lexa’s monster of an ego.

“Alright, Woods, step one of your redemption – promise me you’ll never get into dumb fights ever again.”

“It wasn’t dumb, I was just doing my job-“ Lexa starts, but is cut off mid sentence by an unyielding Clarke.
“Protecting me is not your job”, she explains firmly.

There’s a second of uncertainty during which Lexa is at a loss of words – she opens and closes her mouth, until finally she finds an explanation. “Griffin, she charged at you. For a second, I thought you were passed out, so yeah, how silly of me to just fucking act on it.”

“Act on what?”

“Act on my need to beat her up.”

“You have got to control this temper of yours”, warns Clarke with a cautionary stare.

“Yeah, so what? It’s not like you’d have a say.”

Clarke sighs quite loudly, and she thinks about Lexa’s baseball cap and shades in the hotel lobby, thinks about her smiling at the little boy hiding behind his mom in shyness, thinks about what she told the interviewer on her first game – I’m happy with what the guys did today. And surely this is not fake, surely someone else is hiding underneath the helmet and jersey and shoulder pads.

“Quit the show, Woods, we both know this is all part of your little character.”

“What, so I have a character now?” And Lexa tries to look intimidating, tries real hard, paints sturdiness and blazing confidence on her features - but Clarke is not falling for this anymore.

“Oh, so you’ll play the unaware card till the end, that’s interesting.” States Clarke, assertive. This must be new to Lexa - being challenged, defied, opposed, to say the least.

Clarke notices the small twitch in her bicep when she clenches her fist, and how much does she fucking bench press? She thinks of players battling for the puck, of shoulders clashing against one another, and her brain suddenly conjures an image of Lexa cuddling her nephew, hand cradling his small, fragile head.

What is wrong with her?

“I think you’re imagining things, Griffin”, is Lexa’s attempt at protecting herself.

Clarke is eager to seize the occasion, to jump through the opening. “What am I imagining?”

“Things I am not.” Her voice is sturdy yet jagged, like a stone that’s been tossed down a cliff one too many times.

In a collected manner, Clarke sits back down in front of Lexa and enjoys the unexpected look of bafflement that passes so very quickly across her face – like a car on a main highway, foggy December night weather urging its driver to rush back home. “So you’re not a good person?”

“You think I’m a good person?”

Green eyes jerk upwards, meeting Clarke’s, and for a little while, she sees weird things – softness, vulnerability, things that are not Woods, things that could be Lexa?

“I don’t know you”, says Clarke, means it – no, she does not know Lexa, no she has not seen many things other than arrogance emanating from her. Yet she has also seen good things - ferocious hugs to her teammates, positive smiles, shouts of encouragement.

“I’m not that nice a person, Griffin, you’ll find out pretty soon.”

Something bursts inside of Clarke. “Thanks for having my back”, she says, but what she means to
say is you’re okay. Because right now, Lexa looks unsure, looks doubting, and probably needs reassurance – despite it being odd, atypical, unlike her.

The locker room is calm and silent.

Lexa looks at her, nodding almost imperceptibly. “It’s part of our truce.” It almost sounds like an explanation, an apology.

“The truce didn’t say anything about fighting people”, affirms Clarke, then eyes Lexa defiantly.

“I added my own personal twist”, Lexa casually shrugs.

Clarke laughs at that, and the sound of it, the fluctuating vibrations scaling summits then sinking down like water drops, it makes Lexa chuckle too, and the atmosphere lightens.

“Alright, give me props you rowdy thing”, Clarke teases, and she is surprised to see that Lexa accepts the peace offering, their hands clap together initially, then fists collide. It feels nice for the both of them.

A minute or so passes without words being said. Then, Lexa steps up quite brazenly. “Do you have a concussion?”

“I don’t think so”, Clarke replies, but there’s no way to be sure.

Feelings of unknown nature leave their mark on Lexa’s features, each succeeding to the previous one at extreme speed. “Good. But don’t over do it, just in case. And sleep a lot.”

“You sound like my mom, it’s cute”, teases Clarke, but a part of her is intrigued at Lexa’s demonstration of care.

“On this very pleasant note, Griffin, I’ll be heading out”, the brunette announces awkwardly, reaching for her bag.

It’s almost funny, just as these glimpses of humanity are curious, like Lexa carelessly lets them protrude out of her otherwise perfectly stoic character.

“Well at least take your ice pack with you or you’ll be looking like you’ve just been stung repeatedly at the same spot”, Clarke orders with a hand automatically closing around the ice pack and attempting to throw it at Lexa.

“Nah, I’m fine”, she declines, turning towards the door.

“Don’t go all “big baby” on me, it’s an ice pack, Lexa, for fuck’s sake.”

When she turns around again, Clarke’s breath shockingly catches, and something dazed and puzzled spreads on her face. Lexa. Clarke has called her Lexa.

“We do that now? Or was it an accident?” Asks Lexa with mixed emotions of confusion and irritation that make Clarke even more stunned.

“Kind of, I guess”, Clarke offers almost miserably, and she’s trying pretty hard to back away, but something tells her that you can’t go around calling someone by their last name all their life. Can you?

“So it’s an accident, but only kind of...” Lexa trails off, losing progressively the bitterness in her tone.
“My bad”, apologizes Clarke. “It’ll be Woods, then?”

“I don’t know, how would you feel if I didn’t call you Griffin anymore? It’d be weird, wouldn’t it?”

“Just try it, we’ll see.”

Lexa rubs at her neck – she’s uncomfortable. “Well it’d be fucked up.”

“Shut up and try instead.”

“Clarke.”

"See?"

“See what?”

“Do you like it?”

“I don’t know, it’s not about me, it’s your name-“

“Oh my god, you overthink more than me! That must be some kind of world record! Shit, should we call Guinness or something?”

“Clarke”, Lexa warns with a tired glance.

“Yeah, I told you you’d get used to it!” The blonde exclaims with a smirk.

“That wasn’t me trying out your name, that was me saying it to make you stop babbling.”

“I wasn’t babbling, you were babbling!” She complains, pointing accusatively at Lexa who lets out an exasperated sigh.

“Okay, let’s just not”, Lexa tries with an almost comical eyeroll.

“Don’t you eyeroll me, Rowdy Woody”, Clarke complains, and it wins her one of Lexa’s signature death stares.

It’s truly amazing, seeing Lexa in this desperate agitation she adopts when she’s pissed off and just about to burst, but curiously, Clarke knows that Lexa is incapable of hurting her with either words or fists, just like she knows that Lexa normally does not control herself. But that’s what she’s doing, right now – Lexa who is merciless on the ice, batters, rams, smashes, Lexa whose stare has now regressed to one of pure annoyance, like a small puppy who bares its teeth to no avail.

“That is by far THE worst nickname I have ever heard”, Lexa snaps quite coldly, and Clarke replies with a shit eating grin.

“Then I guarantee you will hear it on a daily basis”, Clarke affirms, smile still gigantic.

“Go fuck yourself”, the now furious hockey forward mumbles, teeth clenched.

At that, Clarke prepares to watch Lexa leave the room, but some unknown force drives her near the door, then unravels her fingers to press the ice pack against the other woman’s jaw. And she likes to think that the second hand coming up to rest on the opposite side of Lexa’s face was simply for leverage, but Clarke does not know, just like she does not know if the shiver she feels reverberating through her limbs comes from her fingers or the surface they’re touching.
“Oh bloody hell, can’t you just leave it?” Lexa sighs but not as loudly, not as angrily as expected.

“Hold it there”, Clarke instructs with her doctor voice – she learned it from her mom.

Time stops and everything is dizzying when Lexa comes forward a bit, only slightly, she tells herself, it’s probably only to get to the door, but her extrasensory perception detects all sorts of distracting things. She smells Lexa’s perfume, and under that, Lexa’s sweat, and under that, Lexa’s odor. Something loamy, fresh pine and wildflowers, like running through the forest and stopping at a clearing, and sleeping there, so that when you wake up, the first thing you see is the blue sky filtered through tree tops. She wonders if it smells differently when your nose is pressed up against it, or how it tastes like, then stops herself so quick, for this is forbidden territory.

“Alright, alright”, Lexa backs away, obedient, driving her hand upwards to hold the ice pack, except Clarke’s fingers are still there, so they touch, very briefly. Fuck. It almost burned her skin, shot electricity and stop, stop, stop. For the love of god.

Her skin is warm. She’s got callous fingers, but she wasn’t rough, not on purpose, and she didn’t linger, and Clarke suddenly wonders if she wanted her to linger – it gets too much, too fucking much, this should be cold and stiff, yet it is not.

“Goodnight, Clarke.”

The door closes.

Why is it that the room seems darker now?

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much again!

Next chapter is coming as soon as possible!

Follow me on tumblr : https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/
Still-life paintings gave us closure

Chapter Summary

Viewing, endurance drills, Clarke and Lexa are still competitive idiots, little bit of backstory and as always, their fights turn into cute bickering!

Chapter Notes

It's update time! I want to thank you all for your awesome reviews, you guys are the best! Thanks to you I'm feeling so motivated!

Happy reading, folks!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“See, that was a good try, but the push was too strong. You drifted – right there.”

Luna is holding the remote, so that with one quick press of a button, she can stop and either fast forward of rewind the tape.

“You anticipated it, but look, as soon as she circles you follow her right down and you don’t wanna cover - you should’ve covered the post, even if you go VH and lose the rebound, that saves you a goal, you know what I mean?”

Lexa sees Clarke nod, taking a sip of coffee. She’s pulled her hair up in a messy bun, opted for a long sleeve compression shirt, and wears her goalie pants to save some time dressing up for practice right after the tape viewing.

“Show me the reaction delay when I missed the high shot”, Clarke offers, shuffling through the notepad. “You have it, right? Third period, I think.”

“Sure”, replies Luna with a couple of clicks on the touchpad of her PC. “There.”

It was an extremely quick shot, but through their first couple of months, one thing Lexa has learned is that Clarke takes a lot of pride in her glove. Therefore, she hates giving a goal on a missed catch.

“Erm, maybe you should’ve just started lower to anticipate. It’s usually a personal choice, but I’ve noticed that you have more mobility going up or on windmills then bringing your hand downwards”, Luna suggests her goalie, pointing at the screen with a red laser to give better explanation.

Lexa doesn’t say it, but she thinks that since Clarke does good 95 percent of the time, she could do less tape and more practicing for now, especially when there’s no game coming up. But on their way to the viewing, Clarke has told her that she requested the meeting. Just like Lexa did. Now look at them go, two little obsessive things sitting in a dark room, pointing out each and every
small mistake they did. The good part is, Luna doesn’t judge, and sometimes brings up one of
t heir highlights to counterbalance the whole experience. Like she says: it’s good to recognize your
mistakes, but it’s toxic to bring yourself down.

“Oh, big one there”, Clarke exclaims, pointing hurriedly at the screen.

“You weren’t totally off position, Clarke, you were only a couple of degrees off. See, you just
squared too quick”, says Luna, forgiving.

Clarke doesn’t agree, she shakes her head and scribbles something on the pad. “I’d still redo it if I
could, you know, to optimize the play.”

“You still made the save”, intervenes Lexa, crossing her legs and shrugging.

But it seems Griffin will never be satisfied, being so thorough. She’s a perfectionist. “You’d say
the same thing if you had to fumble to receive a pass. Even if you scored in the end, the execution
wasn’t perfect, so that would-”

“No. A goal is a goal, just like a save is a save. You made the best out of it, ‘cause if you were off
position and still made the save, that means you worked harder for it, versus making a save when
you’re perfectly ready.”

Lexa wonders if she’s been too laudatory, but then she sees Clarke’s ghost of a smile and suddenly,
she’s happy with what she said.

“So, Griffin, we’ve been through the whole game, but you might wanna see Robin Eriksen play?”
Offers Luna, ready to press the “ok” button of the remote.

“I know who she is”, informs Clarke, shrugging, and it makes Lexa confused because Clarke
rarely refuses to watch her opponents’ tapes. She even detects a coldness in her tone, not to be
mistaken for carelessness – for Clarke does care, yet she doesn’t want to watch this tape. Why?

“Her stats have risen even more - she’s hit nine thirty last week when they played DC”, declares
the goaltending coach, referring to the save percentage.

Suddenly, a spark illuminates Clarke’s gaze and she changes her mind right away. “Show me.”

The screen shows a breakaway, camera focused on the Polis goalie – whom Lexa knows, has
played with.

Eriksen is a talent.

She was offered a contract on Lexa’s second year with the Scorpions, and from then, she’s only
been climbing the ranks at fulgurant speed.

“That’s particularly good”, remarks Clarke when the video shows Eriksen stretching the pad to
make an absolute beauty of a save. “I wonder if I would’ve made it.”

“You’ve made saves like this”, Luna assures with a convinced expression.

“I know, what I’m saying is I wonder if I would’ve made it \textit{that time}”, the blonde specifies, and
her jaw starts to clench.

“Bullshit”, Lexa blurts out, ignoring Luna’s disapproving stare.

“Hey, it’s funny, I don’t recall asking for your opinion”, retorts Clarke stonily.
Here we go again. Griffin, always jumping to conclusions. “I hate where this is going, ‘cause it’s supposed to be a viewing - and right now all you’ve been doing is merrily pointing out each of your smallest mistakes and comparing yourself to this still wet being the ears rookie going about, doing saves you do every fucking day. She’s got a good team, Griffin, of course she has good stats!” And when Lexa hears her tone, hears the frustration and haste behind each of her words, she wonders why the fuck is this important? If Clarke wants to put herself down, then who can stop her? Me, she thinks, and her brain burns in an effort to punish her for even having this thought.

“She’s got my stats, Woods”, Clarke answers and Lexa feels the smallest twinge when she hears the cold her surname now brings when Clarke uses it – and this shouldn’t be like this, get a fucking grip.

“Numbers don’t belong to anyone”, Lexa states, and she grabs her bag. “Ladies”, she salutes sarcastically, sees the look of bewilderment on Clarke’s face and savors it. But as she leaves the room, she hears steps, and as she hears those steps, she thinks fuck, and finds out that she knew Clarke would follow her, for that’s what they do these days – bicker, then follow each other around like fucking puppies.

“What was that, Woody?”

She’s lost that tone of anger, like she does when she figures out that Lexa doesn’t always mean harm, perhaps she should, but she doesn’t, and that’s how it is now.

“Maybe I’ll tell you if you stop calling me that”, Lexa snaps, and makes her way to her stall to tie her skates (angrily, one might add).

“You’d like it if I called you commander instead, right? Do you make your chicks call you that in bed?”

“Okay, I didn’t bring this up.”

“You’re right, I did.”

It’s either the comment or Clarke’s amused reaction to her heavy sigh that makes Lexa freeze.

“Then I’ll answer your question with another one – why do you wanna know, Buzz Lightyear?”

“Oh, fuck you”, Clarke snarls, but her eyes aren’t mad, they aren’t, and Lexa’s heart skips a beat.

“Goddamn, I didn’t know you wanted it that bad!”

Lexa acts on instinct and ducks, but it’s too late – Clarke’s glove hits her right on the head. Quite hard, to be frank.

“You better get your ass out ‘cause the next thing I’m throwing is the stick!”

Lexa laughs. No big deal, alright? “Huh. She always brings up my ass, maybe I should take it as a sign- “she starts mumbling, as if to herself.

Clarke was apparently coming up behind her because she feels a push, and turns around as she loses her balance a tad. “Do you not understand the concept of me wearing skates?” Lexa complains, and she accelerates towards the entry of the rink.

“On the contrary, cowboy, I just used it to my advantage.”
“You have watched Toy Story way too many times.”

“Well, you are so lucky I didn’t choose to call you Mrs. Potato Head instead. You got fucking Woody, that’s like first pick or something, so be grateful.”

At that, Lexa scoffs and gives her best baffled look. “Woody is not first pick, he’s wobbly as fuck and I’m way tougher than him.”

As she feels Clarke’s paddle whip her flush on the ass, she wonders if she should be upset, because how the fuck have they gotten there? It’s November, isn’t it? Have they not known each other for not even three months? Granted, they’re fighting nine times out of ten, but still, holy shit.

“Oh, you’re kidding me, right? Are you gonna flex and show off, Lexa, is that what you’re gonna do?” Asks Clarke, and it stings Lexa’s ego just a bit.

“No, I’m gonna use my great big pipes and throw you the fuck outta here”, Lexa mumbles and jumps on the ice, then strides off.

“Alright, go, go, go, ladies, let’s push! Again!”

Reeve is a big fan of speed drills, and she likes testing her players’ endurance with back and forth endurance skating.

Clarke can see a couple of girls losing their focus trying to keep going, and beat the pain and urge to throw up. For her part, she’s alright, and both Charlie and Octavia, her immediate neighbors, are also fine. It goes without saying that Clarke has excellent cardio – she goes on morning runs when there’s no practice - that means usually on Thursdays and Sundays.

“Legs usually give first, you should feel the burn by now”, informs Reeve, looking at her timer. “I hope you understand the utility of such an endurance drill, ladies. We want to avoid players tiring out during a long presence, because some of you might be staying on the ice for several minutes at a time when there’s a penalty to kill or when we’re playing against a swift team, that means less time-outs, that means you don’t get to whine or drag your feet at the end of your presence.”

Out of the corner of her eye, Clarke can see some of her teammates losing their breath, sweat trickling down their brow. The game is next week – that means Reeve can tire them, and she will. The thought doesn’t make her panic – she knows she can last a long while, plus, she’s used to skating with pads, so she’s suddenly losing twenty pounds, and very much appreciates the feeling of lightness and agility.

“Oh, it’s been eight minutes, ladies, if you feel like you cannot take it anymore or if you need to barf or something, you may step off the ice”, Reeve announces, gesturing towards the vacant benches.

Many players have dropped their pride, and are eager to leave, some of them clutching their sides, others alarmingly pale. Clarke’s breath is rough and dry against her throat.

Around the ninth minutes, she spots Octavia and Charlie skating away, drawing unusually deep breaths.

And of course, Lexa’s still here.

Clarke looks left and right, and realizes that they’re the only two players left. Dammit. Now she really can’t stop.
It’s way more psychological than she thought. Lexa’s been a bit less of an ass, lately, and Clarke had almost forgotten how intimidating she can look when she gives her signature strides that slash the ice and make her large padded frame bounce up and down, leaving an impression of power on her path.

When they share a glance, Lexa gives her a sarcastic “hey, buddy” look and waves. There are two thoughts deeply rooted in Clarke’s mind: the first one – *fuck, I’m skating against Alexandria Woods*. The second one – *triple fuck, she’s back to asshole mode*.

Reeve makes them accelerate.

The sound of blades scraping against damaged ice echoes through the rink, the whole bench is staring at them, awe-struck.

It’s almost as if she can hear Lexa’s voice in her head, the smirk in her tone – *not cut out for hockey*.

But then she remembers what she said in the quiet of the viewing room. *Saves you do every fucking day. Numbers don’t belong to anyone.*

*This ice doesn’t belong to you*, Clarke thinks in reply, the thought setting a fury deep down her throat, unwinding the soreness in her legs. Then she gains speed, takes bigger leaps, forgets she’s a goalie, for she feels like a center.

It seems she’s definitely annoyed Lexa, as she’s increasing her speed as well, gives bigger pushes.

And that is exactly when Clarke realizes that she’s seconds away from breaking down.

*Is it the same for her?*

Her tongue grates against her palate, desperate to find moisture of any kind, but everything’s turned to sand paper and her saliva is thick and dense, hard to swallow. It tastes like blood.

Lexa is sweating profusely, shakes her jersey with one hand to relieve herself of the heat, and the move is like spitting on Clarke, like Lexa’s trying to coat the gesture in nonchalance. She smiles at her. A half grin, her little secret weapon.

It’s time. Clarke gives it all.

She doesn’t really see or feel anything besides the drops of sweat that begin to fly off her face, and the boards that appear closer by the second. She has to give more. She had to *show her*.

*Come on. Who’s not cut out for hockey, now? It’s not me. It’s not me. It’s not me.*

“Goddammit girls, this is not a fucking race!” Reeve’s voice yells loudly. “What part of exercise do you not understand?”

The world stops spinning, and she slows down until she sees the boards, sees the benches, sees Lexa’s furious, almost predatory stance. She’s huffing, nostrils flaring and jaw set, and Clarke knows that Reeve would be in big trouble were she not their coach.

“What was that, Woods?” calls the woman holding the whistle, eyes shooting darts.

“Coach, we were just-“
“Save the lame excuses, we both know this was not friendly competition. Explain.”

The moment she sees Lexa’s gaze darken, steel clad and deadly, Clarke knows she is about to step out of bounds.

“Pardon me, coach, but what is there to explain? I’m a fine skater and I won’t break when I’m being pushed, that’s something you should encourage-“

She’s not even finished her sentence that Reeve is already cutting her off. “I will never encourage teammates trying to tear each other apart! You are the captain, Woods! Act like one! Or at last, try to keep the damn title, for god’s sake!”

But Lexa has already left the rink.

——

“Come here, baby. Come here.”

He opens his arms and she crawls there, leaves her face hidden in the crease of his neck, and she’s safe, now.

He strokes her hair, this wild bunch of locks that get stuck ‘round his fingers from time to time – but when it does happen, he doesn’t mind, just untangles it all only to plunge right back in the mess.

“Did I do good, daddy? You saw me?”

“Yes, I saw you, honey pie.”

She lets out a small whine when he puts her back on her feet, and nudges her softly on the chin to bear his eyes into hers – green, pure, god, so beautiful.

“I got a point!” Her voice is so full of excitement it’s almost overburdened.

She desperately wants to keep her happiness untouched yet she sees the flash of dissatisfaction in his eyes, albeit it being so furtive and quick, almost repressed.

She’s eight, she’s not supposed to notice these things, and to this day, one might think that her daddy didn’t make the efforts to hide the defeat in his eyes, as if he wanted her to notice it.

“You remember what daddy told you the other day, right, baby?” he asks, smiling when she nods.

“Uh huh, you said ‘we’re gonna have to make a little winner out of you’.”

“That’s a sweet girl.” He rubs her head affectionately, kisses her nose.

And that’s the moment she will replay from now on, that’s how she will remember him, remember that she would’ve done anything to get a stroke on the head, a pat on the back, a kiss on the nose.

She clings to his arm and he doesn’t shrug her off, that means he’s not too mad – that’s good, that’s good. “What’s wrong?” Her voice is suddenly very small.

“There’s nothing wrong… daddy just thinks maybe next time you could be a little winner, just like daddy when he was young, would you like that?”

“How?” She asks, hanging on each of his words, drinking them as if they’re made of pure liquid gold.
“Well, baby, the next time you can score, don’t think, just do”, he explains as if it’s just plain simple. “You’ll be my little champion.”

“But Mary was there also”, she responds, “and she’s better than me.”

He frowns – she stutters. She shouldn’t have said that, daddy doesn’t like it when she says such things. “She is not better than you, Lexie baby, you need to understand that you will always be the best, no matter what. Just do what needs to be done, and you’ll be a winner, how does that sound?”

“Sounds good! I have to score goals, daddy? To be a winner?”

She has this puzzled expression she adopts when she’s not sure what he wants, yet she’s always ready to comply.

“You got it all figured out, don’t you, smart cookie?” He rubs her head again and it makes her so proud of herself. “The more goals, the better, alright? Winners like you have to work hard, don’t worry, daddy’s gonna turn you into a little champion.”

“Cool! And you’ll be proud of me?” That’s what matters, that’s what she wants to hear.

“And of course, daddy will always be proud of you if you do well”, he assures, but the end part, the ‘if you do well’, it rings inside the eight-year-old’s head like an order, like a mantra.

And she’ll do well. She’ll be the best in the Atom league, she’ll score almost every time she sets a foot beside the goal, and daddy will be proud.

But if she misses a shot, if she’s setting a goal instead of scoring one, she’ll see him watching disapprovingly from the stands, shaking his head silently from side to side.

By the time she’ll get to Peewee, he’ll have lost his patience and his loving eyes, he’ll have realized that she’s not as tough as he was when he was her age, and for that, he’ll set a punishment for each type of mistake. Consequences, he’ll call them, and to her, it’ll seem perfectly reasonable, perfectly deserved. She’ll want to be called ‘Champion’ again, because he’ll only call her that when she does good, when she obeys.

“Stand up for yourself”, he’ll tell her, the first time she’s checked by an enemy player and is too shocked and out of breath to fight back. “You’re a Woods, Lexa, Woods are not sheep, we’re lions. Show me the lion.”

Her mom will try to talk some sense into of him when she’ll see her at eleven, incessantly skating laps in their backyard’s outdoor rink, shooting pucks for two hours, going on jogs around the neighborhood.

“This is insane, Will, look at her go, she’ll get sick, she’ll-“ Her mom will start, only to get cut off.

“She’ll be stronger in the end.”

“But she’s just a little girl!”

“She has to show some back bone!”

Then, the summer before getting into Bantam, she’ll watch them leave and go to a concert for their 15 year anniversary.
Nothing will ever be the same.

She’s prepared to leave as well, but Reeve seems to have other plans in mind.

“Griffin, will you come a second?” She asks, and they’re now alone on the ice.

“Sure, coach, anything”, Clarke replies like the good little soldier she is, and she’s all ears.

Reeve seems conflicted, and a glint of frustration protrudes behind the composure her gaze normally holds. “Do you think I’ve made a mistake, Griffin?”

“What?” the blonde replies, unsure if she’s heard well.

“I’ve never named a captain this early in the season, but I thought since she’s been captain all her life, she’d be what we need. And now I’m having second thoughts… She’s a hell of a player, I’ll give her that, but she’s got the look - she knows all too well how good she is. And that’s dangerous.”

By now, Clarke understands exactly what she’s asking of her. “You want me to say if I approve?”

Reeve feels the need to specify. “Just enlighten me if you can, Griffin. You know this team just as much as me, and if you’re unhappy about Woods being captain, I’d like to know.”

And it hits her just now. She has the power to strip Lexa of her title with very few words.

“She’s definitely got an attitude. I’m trying to see if it’s just a façade, at the moment.” She explains frankly, and she knows that she is way too good to Lexa.

“Do you honestly think it’s just a front?” Reeve asks, stolid.

Clarke will not be the bad guy. “Yes”, she affirms, and she first thought she’d be lying, but she’s not sure if she is anymore. She thinks about Lexa’s small smiles and witty comebacks, thinks of the way she’d thrown her gloves without the smallest hint of hesitation to defend her against Pam Reed.

“Alright, then… You know I value your counsel, Griffin. I guess I could give her a few weeks and see how it goes from there.”

Reeve then excuses her, and as she leaves the rink, she thinks - you were too nice, she doesn’t deserve it.

Her shock is immeasurable when she realizes that’s a lie.

Griffin joining her in the locker room is pretty much the last thing she needs. She’s in no condition for a moral lesson – she’s barely able to keep her hands from turning into fists, and when Clarke throws her bag and drops on the bench opposite hers, she prepares for the lecture of the century.

Only, she’s plunged into a deep, heavy silence. It aggravates her. “What are you waiting for, Griffin?”

The goalie doesn’t answer in words, instead, she just clicks open the buckles of her pads and kicks them off way too calmly.

“You’re a silent treatment kind of girl, then?” She offers, in denial when it comes to realizing that
she needs Clarke to talk, needs it *badly*, for she’s seen happy Clarke, angry Clarke, annoyed Clarke, but never *silent* Clarke. *Silent* Clarke worries her.

“Fucking immature”, she mutters under her breath, and is relieved when she sees Clarke’s head jerk up.

“I’m done with you”, Clarke explains bluntly. She’s definitely not mad, just uninterested, and as Lexa realizes the trouble she’s in, a sickly-sweet panic gives her guts a firm twist.

“What the fuck did I do?” she yells a bit too loudly for her liking.

Clarke gets up, stuffs her gloves in her cubicle, and makes her way towards the door.

“I just got caught up!” Lexa continues, filling her bag as quick as she can.

The blonde turns around and *shrugs*. “Sure”, she allows, nodding softly and leaving the room.

Lexa snaps, and wonders, *why the fuck is this important?* but it’s too late, now. She drove her away, like she drives away everyone. *Good job, Woods. Nicely done.*

“Wait up”, she says in defeat, and hates herself for it, but hopes Clarke is coming back. When she sees a blonde head of hair pop in again in the doorway, she almost, *almost* sighs in relief.

Clarke doesn’t say anything, she just waits - arms crossed, frown drawing the smallest crease on her forehead.

“I’m sorry, alright?” Lexa blurts out, avoiding her glance like a child that’s been caught drawing on the wall.

She’d been prepared for almost everything – everything, except what Clarke does next.

Like a human tornado, she throws her bag back inside and gets in Lexa’s personal space, hands on the hips. “There you go! That’s all I wanted to hear! But of course, you got all stubborn-”

“Don’t push it. I said I was sorry”, Lexa grunts, throwing the rest of her equipment in her bag.

She’s annoyed Clarke, she can see it with the way she sits beside her, staring at the wall. “I told Reeve to give you another chance”, the goalie asserts. “Why are you screwing this up?”

She wants to give her an answer, searches for one, and loses control of her conscience. *You’re just a bad person, is all*. *He tore you apart, he ripped your skin and put bricks instead. He’s taught you how to bite.*

“That’s how it is”, she says, but what she meant to say is *I can’t help it.*

“You want to break me, then? You can’t cope with the fact that I’m good, is that it?”

*Touché.* Suddenly, she’s ignited with anger and self hate, wants to shove Clarke away from her head, *get out, you have no business here. This is personal.*

“I’m used to being the best”, she offers, and again, that’s not what she wanted to say – she wanted to tell her that if she’s not the best, she’s *nothing.*

“Well, I won’t go submit, Lexa. You’ve gotta stop this, or else you’ll destroy this team.”

“I know, I know. Just…” She trails off, running a hand up and down her face to ease the tension.
Her distress must’ve shown, for Clarke is now both angry and worried.

“What in the hell is the matter with you?”

“Nothing you need to know.”

She’s exhausted. There’s a throbbing pain in her neck - she needs fresh air, not someone peering inside her private quarters.

“So you do have a sob story… Dark cowboy with a dark past”, Clarke finally lets out, nodding softly.

Lexa stares at her like she’s this weird specimen she just discovered. “One, this is not funny. Two, is this you trying to pry a heartfelt confession out of me?”

Clarke smirks, but her eyes are still a whirlpool of annoyance, worry and frustration. “For the record, I am extremely funny – you once said it yourself. And no, I was just trying to lighten the mood a bit.”

“Ha, you’re a clever lass.”

“Lass? Were you going for Irish or Scottish? In any case, not very convincing.” Clarke is mocking her, yet she’s more relieved than mad about it. And with that, Lexa caves in.

“Thanks for saving my ass, by the way”, she gratifies with just the hint of a smile.

“No problem. Buzz Lightyear to the rescue”, Clarke chants with the extended superman fist.

Lexa chuckles. She’s warming little by little. “Buzz lightyear the ass saver.”

The other woman is quick at losing her grin. “No. No, that just sounds wrong.”

They make a little pause, and then Clarke intervenes again, realizing that Lexa’s not going to say anything. “Have you seen Toy Story?”

“No.”

“I’m gonna do you a favor and ignore this last answer for the moment”, Clarke calmly mentions. “But Woody and Buzz weren’t friends from the start, if it makes you feel any better.”

Lexa is a little startled by the comment. She fidgets with the zipper of her coat, trying to make sense of her thoughts. “No offense, but I don’t think we could be friends, Griffin.”

Clarke takes it really well – smiles, even, and it’d be almost uncanny if not for the devious glare she adds to the equation. “Is that a challenge?” She asks bluntly.

“What? How can it be a challenge?” Lexa asks, taken aback.

“You’re saying we couldn’t be friends. That means if I prove you wrong, I win.” Clarke explains like it’s just basic logic.

“That’s twisted… You’d still lose, though.”

And that’s what sets off Clarke’s competitiveness. “Oh, it is so on.”

“Alright, then. I just have to stay away from you and I win”, Lexa affirms matter-of-factly.
Clarke’s face contorts into a pout as she ponders the issue. “But there’d be no challenge for you, then. What if you had to hang out with me and still not be my friend?”

“That just sounds like you’re desperately trying to get me to spend time with you”, Lexa admits with a suspicious glint in the eyes.

“Or… It’s just a strategy to hear your dark and twisty past”, Clarke shrugs off.

“You will not get to hear my dark and twisty past.”

Clarke smiles confidently, and Lexa suddenly understands that she’s been given a taste of her own medicine. Now that’s just great.

“What about a quid pro quo? I’ll give amazing anecdotes about me if you tell me what’s up with dark and twisty Woody.”

Lexa grimaces at the nickname, and looks away, uneasy. “That’d only work if you had incredible stories. Like, if you were a secret vigilante at night – which you are not.”

“How can you be so sure?” Clarke replies categorically with a cunning grin. “Maybe I’m, hum… The Amazing… Invisible… Unicorn.”

Lexa can barely prevent the smile from blooming on her face. “This is so bad it pains me to hear it… And besides, how would you fight your enemies? By shitting rainbows on them?”

“No, by impaling them with my horn.”

Lexa frowns, a bit disturbed. “Oh. Geez. Okay. You know, you could’ve just said yes, you didn’t have to go there.”

“Did it entertain you?” Clarke asks nonetheless.

“It was more troubling then entertaining”, deplores Lexa, shifting awkwardly on her seat.

“You don’t wanna hear my other awesome stories?”

She likes to think Clarke’s hopeful grin gave her no choice. “Geez, how would I get to hear these awesome stories?” She questions sarcastically with an eye roll.

“Wow, thanks for asking!” Says Clarke with faux excitement. “So, do you… do things?”

“Things? As in what?” Lexa asks, dumbfounded.

Clarke shrugs and leans her head against the palm of her hand. “Well, unless you prefer to just sit down in a dark corner every time you get home.”

“But that’d be unlikely”, Clarke adds as if it needed to be précised – it’s childish, innocent, and Lexa does not find it charming. At all.

“I workout in my garage”, Lexa informs half-heartedly, only because Clarke expected an answer.

“How fascinating”, Clarke comically gasps (and it makes Lexa smile, but that’s a secret). “I go on morning jogs, so that’s that.”

Lexa sighs deeply, propping her head rearward against her folded arms. She enjoys the attention. “I can see you coming from miles and miles away, Griffin. You’re gonna ask me to join you on a
refreshing morning jog, is that it?”

“No, don’t be ridiculous - you couldn’t keep up.”

“Excuse me?!” Lexa shouts, and one could almost see the vein popping out of her forehead like in the cartoons.

“I’d run you to the ground”, Clarke calmly asserts, preparing to leave.

“Griffin! I’m not done here!”

The goalie stops herself halfway. “Well, if you’re so desperate… I guess a little jog wouldn’t hurt.”

Lexa grins devilishly, almost unaware of the fact that she’s been played to and fro. “Prepare to bite the dust.”

Chapter End Notes

Quick peek into the next chapter! On the menu: little jog in the countryside that will gradually set the stage for Clexa, casual party at Raven’s to watch the American League game opposing Arkadia and Polis, and a bet will go wrong... Hope you enjoyed this last chapter, stay tuned for the next one!

My tumblr: https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/
Sounds of the countryside

Chapter Summary

Lexa and Clarke go on a jog. Arkadia and Polis face in the American league.

Chapter Notes

Hello my dears! It's update time! I'm sorry if I took longer than usual, it was a complex chapter to write and I had to go back to school as well... Hope you will like it! And for those of you who would be interested in my writing soundtrack, I was listening to a song called Words in the fire by Patrick Watson while writing the jogging part of the chapter.

Happy reading!
xx

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Griffin the muffin 7:24 am

Don't tell me you're not awake, Reyes, I know you.

The boardgame addict 7:27 am

Oh I am very awake now that you just woke me up thank you so much.

Griffin the muffin 7:30 am

I thought you were still doing these morning yoga sessions outside on your balcony to fool yourself into thinking you have a stable and organized life?

The boardgame addict 7:32 am

Not anymore and thanks for reminding me of my daily failures what would I be without you

Griffin the muffin 7:33 am

I think you'd develop the tendency of getting inside your car naked and thinking oh shit I forgot to put on clothes

The boardgame addict 7:35 am

I get your point what did you wake me up for?

Griffin the muffin 7:36 am

Might be a little late for brunch I decided to go on a jog
The boardgame addict 7:38 am

Oh you decided

Griffin the muffin 7:38 am

Yeah I decided

The boardgame addict 7:40 am

Well something’s wrong

Griffin the muffin 7:40 am

What

The boardgame addict 7:41 am

How could you risk missing the extra extra runny egg yolk? What happened to breakfast of champions, Griffin? You never miss breakfast of champions

Griffin the muffin 7:41 am

I know I hate myself right now

The boardgame addict 7:42 am

But whyyyyy

Griffin the muffin 7:43 am

Reasonssss

The boardgame addict 7:46 am

What kind

Griffin the muffin 7:46 am

Nothing important

The boardgame addict 7:46 am

You going with someone?

Griffin the muffin 7:47 am

Yeah

The boardgame addict 7:47 am

Who-who-who-who

Griffin the muffin 7:48 am
Woods

The boardgame addict 7:49 am

Wait what?

Griffin the muffin 7:50 am

It’s no big deal alright? I’m doing this team a solid

The boardgame addict 7:50 am

Hold on imma pick up my jaw it just snapped right off… go figure

Griffin the muffin 7:51 am

Raven

The boardgame addict 7:51 am

Yeah that’s me. And who are you, by the way?

Griffin the muffin 7:52 am

Quit fooling around I’ll explain later

The boardgame addict 7:52 am

I am now displeased

Griffin the muffin 7:53 am

I said I’ll explain later alright? I told her 8:30 and I don’t wanna be late gotta go now

The boardgame addict 7:53 am

Young lady

Griffin the muffin 7:54 am

You don’t get to young lady me and I really gotta go

The boardgame addict 7:55 am

Why don’t I get to do that? Makes me feel mature and important. Do I need a permit?

Griffin the muffin 7:56 am

Bye raven

The boardgame addict 7:57 am

Alright then, bye but don’t forget to tell if ever the sex was good
Clarke almost replies with the middle finger emoji but then decides that the comment just isn’t worthy of an answer.

On her way to the park, she realizes she’s got no way of contacting Lexa whatsoever and her paranoia takes over until she sees her waiting, sitting on a bench, scrolling through a music playlist on her cellphone. She doesn’t look like the person that’s been dragged there forcibly – in fact, she seems relaxed, eager, even.

When she sees Clarke, she doesn’t wave, just smiles, and while it may sound rather plain a reaction, it brings a fuzzy warmth to the pit of Clarke’s stomach. She doesn’t see Lexa smile often - she usually only gives half grins away, which tend to be hard to read.

But she’s smiling, right now, and there’s no doubt that she’s comfortable with the whole activity.

“That’s your spot, then?” the brunette confidently asks, gesturing at the greater than life scenery of hills and trees traversed by a dirt road.

She sounded both amused and impressed, and as both emotions are opposites in this case, Clarke hesitates between the two. Then she abandons halfway through the brainwork, settling her gaze on Lexa’s arched brow that shows she clearly expects an answer.

“Yeah, I guess. My family and I used to do picnics here”, she explains, and watches carefully as Lexa’s smirk turns into a small pout of impress and acceptance.

“Cool”, the taller woman expresses almost as a courtesy. She then stands up, shaking off her soreness and placing an earplug in her ear.

Clarke accidentally notices the size of her quads, and the way they swell significantly when she flexes them. “What are you listening to?” the blonde casually asks as they make their way to the track. Lexa examines her cautiously, and Clarke wonders why she feels the need to treat a common question this seriously.

“Not sure it’s your type”, Lexa finally shrugs, handing her the second earbud.

Clarke immediately recognizes the sharp riff of Rush’s Best I Can and feels the smile as it creeps up, the nod of excitement that starts to agitate her head. “Are you kidding me?”


Clarke chuckles softly, removing the earbud from her ear and handing it to the forward with a half grin. “You assumed I was the top 40 type, is that it?”

Realization comes washing over Lexa’s face as she lifts her eyes to a clear sky. “I did not”, she calmly proclaims with a solemn look.

“Oh my god, you so did. I feel betrayed…” The goalie deplores, breaking into a small jog that Lexa immediately emulates.

“Less talk, more action”, she mumbles, shaking her head in disbelief like she’s not sure how they’ve gotten to such a distinct subject.

A small pause ensues, quickly broken by Lexa adding a few more words. “But yeah, you totally looked like the top 40 type.”
“Well you looked like you’d bang your head like crazy to Lamb of God”, Clarke shrugs, trying to be the easy going one, and failing as she lets small hints of embarrassment show.

Lexa frowns, and her small acceleration is probably due to frustration. “Is that meant as an insult?”

“See, I knew you were the type.”

“For the record, metal is just as complex and harmonious as rock, but not everyone has the capacity to enjoy it”, the brunette claims vehemently, and Clarke is rather happy to notice that she succeeded at pinpointing one of Lexa’s interests.

They make their way down the first (and only) straight line of the trail, dominant sounds being the soles rubbing against the dirt and the occasional chirping of birds. Ten minutes go by this way - just running and looking around, just enjoying the peaceful environment and the way the wind caresses their face like mother nature caresses her children.

“Just curious”, starts Clarke, as she catches up on Lexa, “what do you like other than rock and metal?”

“It’s already pretty vast, don’t you think?” Answers Lexa with her usual straight, impassive countenance.

“It is if you count all the other in betweens.”

“How about if I judge your taste instead?” Lexa offers casually.

Impulsive, Clarke’s eyebrows shoot up – she didn’t expect such a reversal of situation. Truth be told, Clarke takes a lot of pride in her music preferences, hence the delight rising in her chest at Lexa’s invitation. She licks her lips anticipatedly, eager to unpack the extent of her musical knowledge. “Led Zeppelin?”

“Is that meant as a serious question?” Lexa rolls her eyes, tongue slightly sticking out.

“Metallica?”

“Love them to death.”

Clarke cannot help the smile that slides along her lips, and she is now running backwards, front facing Lexa. “Genesis?”

“Alright, you’re getting warmer”, the forward concedes with a thoughtful smirk.

“Peter Gabriel?”

“Don’t push it!” Lexa warns, then she adds with a defeated laugh, “alright, I might’ve sung my lungs out to Big Time once or twice, but that was a moment of weakness!”

Clarke gasps, then serves her an amused glance that, as expected, brings an enormous amount of pride tumbling out of Lexa. “Don’t you dare tell anyone”, she menaces with a sharp glare, but Clarke only chuckles.

“Rolling Stones?”

“For sure, man.”

Clarke’s gaze lights up - the enhancement makes her downright radiant with bliss. “Alright, it’s
make or break for this one. Radiohead?”

“Fuck yeah!” exclaims Lexa, and Clarke knows she’s hit the bullseye, with the way Lexa’s grin has become a full toothed one – and such a sight is of utmost rarity.

Clarke thrives on momentum, and right now, she’s on a roll. “Muse?”

She watches as Lexa becomes the living portrait of exhilaration, and she gives her a friendly pat on the back. Clarke blinks, blinks again – what the hell just happened? Did she just get patted on the back by Lexa Woods?

“Respect, Griffin, respect! You’ve got good taste.” The hockey center declares, and her sharp green stare makes a weird buzz flow through Clarke’s veins.

The dirt trail twists around a hill flank, dips right below, then meanders towards flowering trees and thick, coarse wheat. The two women cut right through both sides of the field separated by crooked fences. Birds come flying away immediately, scared by this sudden disruption of their morning routine.

Of all the trails, this is Clarke’s favorite one. It holds a nostalgic flavor whose cause remains unknown - even after all these years. Numerous runs have brought her stumbling upon undisclosed sorrows, tears long forgotten leaking once again, and she would simply shrug it off, come back the next day and run herself to the ground.

*Dad used to put the plaid right there.*

The side of their calves are itching with the wheat that brushes against them, and the sun is surprisingly strong this early in the day, but Clarke lives for moments like these. She missed running this trail, missed the noise of the birds jumping from one branch to the other, missed the crushed dirt rolling under her feet. Out here, she feels grand. Out here, she feels like a giant.

They turn again, this time licking the side of the forest. However, they don’t pierce its border - they merely skirt around each tree trunk until the valley returns, until wheat turns into grass once again.

They gather sight of an imposing oak tree standing right atop a hill, and only then do they stop.

“How about a hill run?” Clarke asks, wiping the sweat trickling down her brow.

If Lexa is tired, she doesn’t show it, for her ego has been called upon by Clarke’s invitation. She neatly makes sure to get to the top of the hill first (only a millisecond before, Clarke will later swear). And when they realize where they are, realize that they’ve been running for hours and their legs are basically shaking with exhaustion, they drop right down next to one another, relishing the softness of grass against their skin.

“This is nice”, Clarke softly declares after one or two minutes of huffing and puffing.

Lexus looks at her, and that’s when she realizes how close they are, how their breaths are mingling, how she can distinctly observe each parcel of Lexa’s features – from her cutting jaw, to her sharp cheekbones, to the feral intensity of her gaze.

After a quick moment of inspection, Lexa speaks out, and her voice is assured, unwavering (unlike Clarke’s if she were to speak). “Are you getting used to my fuckboyness, Griffin, is that it?”

The answer comes shooting out of Clarke, with no hesitation. “No.”
“Are you sure?”

Clarke sees the glint in Lexa’s eyes, and finds it strangely similar to *amusement*. She wonders if this is the product of folly or simply a hallucination, yet she is unable to revoke the sight – how for as little as an instant, Lexa seemed glad, diverted.

“No. I mean, yes”, Clarke dumbly blurts out, lost in thoughts of Lexa’s scarce smiles and crystalline laughter.

“I sensed a hesitation”, Lexa teases lightly, eyes darted at the clouds.

“Oh my god.”

Lexa props herself on an elbow and Clarke suddenly feels vulnerable under her calculating stare.

“Why did you bring me here, Griffin?”

There’s a small hint of ice to the forward’s tone, and it makes Clarke grimace.

“What kind of question is that?” She replies, trying to buy herself some time.

Unfortunately, it merely makes Lexa grow even more restless – she hates being denied an answer. “Very simple, I think. You just explain what you’re trying to achieve with these attempts at befriending me.”

Her voice has regained the totality of its cutting edge, and Clarke feels like a prey again, like a fly stuck on a web.

“Is it too much of a hassle for you to cope with the fact that some of us just want to be your friend?”

“Some of us. That means the team?”

“What difference does it make?” The blonde defends her terrain vehemently.

She notices the hurt infused in the taller woman’s expression when she forcefully closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. “Everything, really. Do you want me to be friends with you or with the team?”

The question cuts deep inside Clarke’s defenses, leaves her wavering, disturbed and raw. “I don’t know”, she affirms with disarming franchise, and that makes Lexa lose her calm.

“I’m not nice, Griffin! When will you see that?” she almost yells.

“So you’re an asshole all the time?” Clarke responds, matching her tone.

Lexa gets up, leaving the spot beside Clarke vacant, *empty*. The blonde fiercely refuses to acknowledge the lack of warmth that results in the action.

“Yes! Yes, I am! Not everyone is all cute and cuddly inside, Clarke, I am the one you see on the ice! I am this chick, alright? Stop trying to pry *something* out, because there’s *nothing* there!”

“Then why the fuck do you act nice with me?”

“I don’t act nice with you-“ Lexa starts, hands turning into fists held securely at her sides.
“Yes, you do! You beat up a chick when she rubs me the wrong way! You laugh at my dumb jokes! You cheer me up when I’m having bad thoughts about my game!”

All color is seemingly drained from Lexa’s face. “I don’t blame you for thinking that.”

“You’re like two different people at the same time; it confuses the team! It confuses Reeve! It confuses me!”

At the ‘me’, Lexa’s gaze softens for a second, but then Clarke swears she can see the cold as it reappears, the steel as it is slowly poured back into Lexa’s gaze, and just like that, the moment has passed. “It’s the crowd that did it. And maybe I was someone else before, I don’t know, but what I do know is that it’s what the people are paying for. Don’t you see? That’s why they traded Compton, that’s why they got me instead of a rookie with twice the talent, they want the show, Griffin. I am the show.”

A wave of sorrow washes over Clarke, and she sees Lexa for what she is – someone that’s been used, changed, damaged. “Don’t you see how sad this is?” Clarke asks, her voice belittled.

“I don’t”, Lexa affirms, rock solid, but she is lying, she could not possibly be telling the truth. Could she?

“That’s why you use people, is that it?” Clarke asks, trying to be merciless, and failing to eliminate the twinge of emotion in her eyes.

“I don’t use people”, the other woman replies, but the way her voice sounds, it tells Clarke that she’s found a weakness.

“You do know that Wayne will be heartbroken when you move on”, the blonde proceeds cautiously.

“It only happened once, Clarke. She knew what she was getting into.”

“She is my friend. But you took her, and threw her away. The crowd didn’t do this, you did.”

Lexa’s jaw twitches. When she comes forward, Clarke realizes how tall she is, then she remembers how this woman hammers people into boards, how she fights with her bare hands, how most players of the league know better than to provoke her.

“Do you know what I’ve been through, Griffin?”

Clarke takes a deep breath, surprised by the lack of aggressiveness in this question. “No”, she exhales, confused and half worried.

“I’ve been shaped into something. Over time. I’ve been taken – I was six, maybe, and I’ve been told ‘Lexa, take that stick, and that’s what you do’. Now I shoot pucks, and I beat up the guys that run into my goalie.”

“That run into me”, Clarke specifies with a look of urgency.

“That run into my goalie”, Lexa counters sharply, but the way her eyes darken, the way she tenses, it says something else to Clarke. The opposite. Lexa punched Pam Reed harder than needed. She fought and spit blood, and held ice to her swollen face not because her goalie had been hit, but because someone had hurt Clarke. And maybe the latter woman won’t be able to pinpoint it, to declare it without a doubt, but some hidden part of her knows. Woods is Lexa, Lexa is Woods. Humanity does not leave her as soon as she steps on the ice.
“Am I flesh and blood to you, Lexa?” Clarke asks briskly, and watches Lexa’s gaze turn cautious.

“That is not the question—”

“And you are flesh and blood to me. Not a show, not an act, despite what assholes might’ve told you.”

The whole experience turns surreal – Lexa fails at repressing her emotions, and they show. She’s there, she’s someone. Her eyes are greener than they’ve ever been, and hold more meaning than they ever have. “I think I will deceive you, Clarke.”

“No, you won’t.” And she is absolutely certain of it.

“They’ve already told you who I am”, the forward continues, and Clarke has trouble believing she’s heard her swallow nervously.

“They didn’t tell me you liked Radiohead. I believe you can still surprise me.”

It’s close to noon and the sun shines differently – light dances across Lexa’s features, jumps over the bridge of her nose. She goes from brazen to child like, and the sun has no part in it when she tentatively sits under the oak with her back against its trunk, and folds her legs to make her chin rest against her knees. She looks wild and lost. Clarke’s heart tightens painfully at the sight.

Lexa takes a deep breath, and her stare burns a hole in Clarke’s very soul. “Don’t call me Woods again”, she demands.

It sounded like a plea.

They don’t speak again for a whole five minutes. Instead, they breathe and watch. Watch the contours of the valley below, watch how life can still go on without their voices breaking the silence every now and then, watch each other, although it hurts.

“You’ll have to work if you want to keep the job”, Clarke asserts severely.

Lexa looks at her again – there it is, that lenient glance, and it makes Clarke believe that she only gets to see this side of her, the yielding one. “I will”, the center assures with a quiet nod.

“This is why I brought you here”, Clarke softly announces, and while she believes the other woman already knew, she sees the smallest glimpse of torment – but it fades as quickly as it came.

“Do you want to change me, Clarke?” Lexa asks, expression unreadable.

“Do you think you need it?”

“Probably.”

The goalie nods calmly. “Then I won’t.”

Lexa’s contrite gaze turns into a thankful one. She observes Clarke extensively, thoroughly, searching for a landmark or a base to elect as a starting point. “Is this how Woody and Buzz became buddies?”

“And with that the tide just turned, ladies and gentlemen. Would you look at that…” Clarke teases sourly, and it earns her an exasperated look.

“Shut up”, Lexa mumbles, scowling with a small frown.
The goalie only smiles, and she knows what this whole thing means, knows that Lexa has accepted to show her true self, even though she doesn’t think it exists.

“But yeah, I guess that’s how”, breathes Clarke mindlessly, and it makes her reflect on the situation.

Lexa’s smile is imperceptible, could almost pass for a simple twitch of the jaw, but it’s too late - Clarke has seen it. “Do we have to go on Disney adventures, then?” asks Lexa, clumsily marching into unknown territory.

“What do you mean by that?” the goalie questions further, brows lightly furrowed.

“I don’t know, do we need to…” She draws vague hands gestures in the air to fuel her words. “Save the galaxy? Is that what they do in the movies?”

Clarke snorts in laughter, looking away to gather her thoughts. “They’re fucking toys, Lexa – no, they don’t save the galaxy.”

“Then what?” She asks, and despite the idiotic feel to the question, she doesn’t seem to lose her seriousness.

“They do toy adventures. I don’t know, they escape an evil kid’s lair, they escape a guy’s house, they escape a kinder garden.”

“They do a whole lot of escaping”, Lexa points out, head cocked to the side.

Clarke sighs, a tad bit frustrated. “Yeah, so they do. Big deal. And for your information, I found it very entertaining.”

“I didn’t say it wasn’t! Just a simple harmless remark, alright?” Lexa defends herself, raising her hands in submission.

Seeing as how it is impossible to get away with comments about Toy Story, Lexa moves on to the next subject. “So, what will our adventures be?”

“Disneylike?” Clarke asks.

“Erm, hockeylike if you don’t mind”, suggests Lexa prudently.

Clarke ponders the issue for a moment, then she shrugs. “Well, the kiddos are playing tomorrow and we’re all watching it at Raven’s. There’ll be BBQ wings and popcorn ashes.”

“Popcorn ashes?” Lexa raises a brow.

Clarke shrugs like it’s obvious. “Yeah, Octavia is bad with microwaves - last year she pretty much incinerated the only bag we had… There was a lot of crying that night.”

By kiddos, Clarke meant American League players. And although some of them are even older than her, she considers them youngsters, rookies.

Arkadia’s Dropships are a pretty nice team, rank wise, but they don’t always fare well against the Grounders, Polis’ own feeder-club. The rivalry has been going own for the last two decades, ever since they faced in the 1997 championship finals, but Clarke is still a die-hard fan and has kept her jersey from when she used to play for them.
The popcorn is fine, this time, but Lexa’s presence puts a bit of a damper on things, as Raven has been explaining to Clarke for the last half hour, talking her ears off in the process. “I know I told you to bring anyone, Clarke, but for fuck’s sake, have you seen this chick? She scares Bellamy off - look at the guy, it’s the third time he’s gone to the bathroom since the preshow!”

Clarke clicks her tongue in frustration, and takes a sip of her drink. “It’ll be better for the team! Chemistry, you know?” She adds a small motion of linking and unlinking her fingers for further demonstration.

“Yeah, good thinking – invite the goon to watch a game in a room full of enemy supporters.”

The comment makes Clarke’s gaze settle on Lexa’s Grounder team jersey, ‘Woods’ neatly printed at the back in white letters, and the number twelve under it.

She herself has always been very cold with Polis fans, and she finds it surprising that Lexa is maintaining adequate conversation with Octavia and Monty about player statistics.

“She’s not a goon”, Clarke defends calmly.

Seeing Raven’s exasperated demeanor, she pursues. “Didn’t you say you found her tolerable off the ice?”

“Yes, but that doesn’t mean I’ll allow her to sit on my couch and eat my lightly buttered popcorn”, the hot-headed host grumbles, crossing her arms.

The conversation is halted by Bellamy’s remarked entrance – he’s wearing his blue ‘number one’ fan hand glove, with the famous inscription Striker Fever. “Alright, I’m betting ten bucks on Arkadia!”

Clarke almost facepalms in embarrassment. “Wrong team, Bell. The Strike isn’t playing tonight, and if you want proof – we’re all here.”

Octavia and Raven wave sarcastically, chanting a singsongy ‘hello’.

“I knew that”, he assures, trying to look confident – but honestly, no one is falling for it. “And they’re the younger club, that means they’re still kinda related to you guys.”

Clarke smiles softly, and shares a look with her teammates. “What’s the name of the team, Bell?”

He furtively tries to get a glimpse of Clarke’s jersey, but she’s seen it coming, and is quick at hiding its logo with both hands, grin expanding even farther along her lips. “No cheating”, she orders with a knowing glance towards Lexa who still has both hands in the popcorn bowl.

“Something that has to do with space, right?” The young man splutters, rubbing at the back of his head.

The Strikers members appear unsure, and Clarke gives the ‘not quite’ gesture with her hand tilting from side to side. Bellamy groans, head thrown upward in surrender. “I swear, I knew it once!”

“Yeah, and I used to know my constellations by heart when I was ten”, Clarke smiles.

There’s laughter, and Bellamy forcefully tries to yank Clarke’s arms off the logo, but she holds on tight, darting out her tongue in provocation. Raven flies to the rescue, pushes Bellamy away and shoves a bucket of hot wings in his face to distract him. “Here’s the wings, now leave us alone with your botched partisanship, will ya?”
“Still! I’m betting on your team, you should be grateful!” Bellamy protests, dropping on the couch near Clarke, and snatching the remote from in between the cushions to turn up the volume.

“Everyone is betting on our team”, Raven counters, moving her hand randomly like she’s swatting away an imaginary fly.

The remark provokes a chorus of complaints from Lincoln and Lexa, both dressed in Polis apparel. The two, sitting close to one another, have gotten acquainted over the evening and Clarke assumes Lincoln has now reached the ‘bro level’ where one usually gets awarded some of Lexa’s signature fist bumps from time to time.

“I’m sorry, but you guys are a minority in this house”, Raven declares with made up composure, as she struts around the house to grab some beers.

Clarke can see that Lexa is holding back, she can see it with the way her jaw is tensing, with the way her green eyes seem to be a shade darker, and she thinks, why isn’t she saying anything? Then Lexa looks at her, and her gaze is softer, and Clarke does not like it that her brain is jotting down all these weird possibilities, one of them suggesting that Lexa is holding back for her. She opens her mouth to let more air in. Her imagination is playing tricks. Or so she hopes.

“That does not mean you will win”, Lexa proceeds once she’s regained her calm.

“But we will”, Raven challenges back, competitiveness set ablaze by the last comment.

Clarke chuckles quietly, and she busies herself into absorbing the maximum amount of popcorn her mouth can hold without bursting open. She likes the way Lexa is staring at her in silent disapproval. “This could make the bets a lot more fun”, the goalie announces, nodding in acceptance when Raven holds out a beer for her.

“What kind of bets do you take?” Lexa hurriedly shuffles through the pockets of her jacket, eager to be involved in the games.

Clarke gestures for everybody to stay calm, whistling her astonishment. “Let’s not lose a hundred bucks over this”, she advises.

She was talking to everyone, but Lexa apparently has taken it personal. “I’m surprised that you haven’t heard of Polis’ winning streak against Arkadia.” She mentions, quite fierce.

“I have heard of it, yes, considering I have played for the team”, the blonde retorts ironically, arms crossed and eyes gleaming with bittersweet amusement.

“Oh, so you would also happen to know that their defense has no depth”, Lexa points out, opening her beer with the flick of a thumb – and Clarke has to admit that both the move and the flippancy it exerts are insanely hot.

“It has greatly improved over the last few years”, Clarke snaps back with gritted teeth.

Lexa shrugs and takes a big gulp of beer, then rests the bottle against her shoulder like the laid-back stud she is. “Splitting their D-line was like skating through butter”, the forward ripostes cockily and Octavia’s eyes widen in incredulity mixed with shock. Even Lincoln looks impressed.

“I see you’ve never played against me”, Clarke mumbles, and Lexa’s gaze shoots up again with renewed confidence.

“I would’ve loved to”, she slurs, eyes squinted in confrontation.
“Funny, because right now I’m thinking about all the nice saves I’ve made on you.”

“You’re just getting worked up because you know you don’t stand a chance against my team”, Lexa coolly replies, both feet pulled up to rest on a foot stool. She takes another swig of beer and watches as Clarke’s gaze turns pensive, then malicious.

“Oh, I know exactly the kind of bet you’d like, Lexa.”

The other woman’s attention is definitely caught by anything even remotely competitive. “What’s that?”

Clarke puts her fingers together like a stereotypical villain, Machiavellian grin and all, and she bears her gaze into Lexa’s, emerald meeting cerulean in an intense faceoff. “There’s pie in the fridge, right O?”

A brown head of hair suddenly jerks up. “Huh? What? That’s for dessert, Clarke, don’t you dare!”

“Even if I use it as a tool for my diabolical plan?”

That makes Octavia laugh a bit, and she loosens up. “As long as there’s still some of it left for us to eat after.”

“I got you. It probably won’t be in good conditions, but still…”

And by then, everyone has picked up the clues, and knows where this is going. “The bet is simple. You bet on your team, and I bet on mine. The loser of the bet will suffer two consequences. The first one consists of wearing the other team’s jersey for a week. And when I say wearing, that means you show it off everywhere, to practice, to the supermarket and whatnot. Regarding the second consequence, that is when the fun starts. Loser of the bet gets pied.”

The group lets out an exaggerated gasp of surprise, Raven going as far as faking unconsciousness. “Yes, pied, ladies and gentlemen. And you will have the joy of watching it happen in front of your very eyes.”

“I want to do it!” Screams Octavia, almost slapping Monty in the face when throwing her hand as a volunteering gesture.

Clarke strikes while the iron is hot. “You mean you want to pie Lexa?”

The look on Lexa’s face is pure gold. To see her like this, jaw clenched and spears shooting out of her eyes, it makes something bloom inside of Clarke, a mix of fear and exhilaration.

The game shows itself uneventful for the first period, and Polis’ defensive robustness has a big part of responsibility. Lexa doesn’t shut up about Kelly Seal, a promising young defense, and her exceptional abilities. She’s played with her and against her in Junior Major league, and she swears that “the kid kept her on her toes” Clarke must’ve rolled her eyes more than three hundred times in the last half hour.

*Arkadia, 3rd in the league, and they hold their ground quite well against the big names.*

“Ha! See, even the commentator is biased!” Raven exclaims, pointing at the TV screen like she expects the analysts to notice her.

“He praised Polis twice as much”, Lincoln counter attacks with an irritated hand gesture. “And
that doesn’t mean anything, they say these kinds of things all the time.”

Octavia smirks, probably weirdly turned on by her teddy bear of a boyfriend getting all worked up and passionate about her sport. “I’m gonna make sure the pie is unfrozen!” she announces. Then, from the kitchen. “Be right back!”

She’s been out of the room for barely a minute when the first goal is scored by Polis and both cheers and boos are heard.

*Jessie Tucker, with a gem! And she has mastered the backhand over the years it seems, just absolutely gorgeous - and great timing at seven minutes into the second period, this will fire up the troops! There’s your Sunday night hockey, ladies and gentlemen, it is now one-nothing for the Polis Grounders!*

“What the fuck is happening to Williams, tonight?” Raven shouts angrily, talking about the Dropships’ goaltender.

“Doesn’t have Griffin’s catcher, I’ll tell you”, Bellamy compliments Clarke with a wink.

The blonde just scoffs, unimpressed with Bellamy’s usual clumsy attempts at flirting.

“No, she does not indeed, fortunately”, Lexa mumbles with another sip of beer, not once making eye contact with Clarke, and the latter woman does not know what to think of such behavior.

From then, it only goes downhill. Polis scores in the end of second period, and Clarke starts to think about how dumb she was to make a bet against Arkadia’s *bête noire*.

*The Dropships are defenceless against Polis’s heavy artillery, Mitchells makes it 2-0!*

“Hey, ‘defenceless’, that’s an interesting choice of words, don’t you think?” Lexa taunts, grinning arrogantly.

Clarke doesn’t want to answer. Instead, she steals the popcorn bowl from Lincoln’s lap (ignoring his cry of despair) and busies herself into eating the best-looking kernels.

By the time they get to third period, the whole Arkadia squad is lifeless, limp on the couch and almost entirely silent. Lincoln and Lexa, on their part, are singing traditional Grounder chants.

“Just drein! jus daun!” They scream, fist pumping in synch, and while Clarke has no idea what that means, she feels irritated by the whole scheme.

Justice is finally served when the Dropships score their first goal with five minutes remaining to the game, and it’s like the whole room is brought back to life. A spark of hope is ignited.

*With a differential of a single goal, Polis will have to watch out - their opponents have nothing to lose and they have definitely rebuilt some of their confidence.*

The second goal makes them jump, popcorn shooting across the room and screams of excitement bringing the tension up to the ceiling. Raven is suddenly giving hugs to everyone (except for Lincoln and Lexa, sitting gloomily in their little spot) and Bellamy is showing his best victory dance (70’s disco moves included).

*Now, would you have imagined such an incredible turn of events tonight? The ‘ships are literally everywhere on the ice, I mean, look at the solidity of the plays in this end of third period, there’s just something that wasn’t there before, and it can be like that for various teams in the National*
level as well - these are the nights where it suddenly just clicks.

During the break, bickering remains deep and passionate, Lexa going as far as saying that ‘the win will be even more satisfying in overtime’, which makes Clarke’s gaze turn murderous. Then Octavia informs that she’s put an extra amount of whipped cream on the pie, and neither Clarke nor Lexa can repress their nervous laugh.

Polis has chosen to add a defenseman to its triad, an interesting alternative to Arkadia’s redesigned first line, composed of center Jen Slater supported by the team’s sharpest wingers, Louisa Oquinn and Marjorie Sutton.

“They put Marge!” screams Raven, shaking Clarke by grabbing her shoulder.

“Yeah, and Polis put Seal”, Lincoln challenges with a shit eating grin.

Lexa smirks at that, eyes still fixed on the TV screen as the 3 vs 3 is making sparks fly.

Polis is knocking on the door and Arkadia will thank Williams for this excellent save. That’s the result of putting a line that cannot play defensively – they now have to rely on the goalie to make these important saves, and that shows a lot of trust.

“Oh god I’m sweating so bad right now”, Raven whines, fanning her face with a flat hand.

Stress takes hold of them all – even Lexa, who taps her foot anxiously and shares side glances with Lincoln.

Here’s Sutton with it, leads the ‘Ships attack, scampers ahead, leaves it to Oquinn and here’s Kelly Seal meeting her halfway through the zone and oh dear Lord! What a brutal check! Oquinn was pounded, she gets up, on her way to the bench. She must be dizzy right now, she had her head down and let me tell you that one must keep its head up when Kelly Seal is on the ice! Absolutely ferocious, with the shoulder, sent her opponent flying - and this is what she does best.

“That’s roughing! Get her out of here!” screams Raven, and Lincoln glares at her disapprovingly.

“I don’t think that was legal”, Octavia shakes her head from side to side in disbelief.

Lexa clicks her tongue with an eyeroll. “Softies. You’re a def, Reyes, you should know this was as clean as a newborn’s buttocks.”

“Well, I thought you were familiar with dickhead moves, but what do I know?” Raven bites back with gritted teeth.

Clarke interferes between the two. “Cut it off! What are you, kids?”

“So you’re the expert, then?” Lexa cuts sharply with a mocking smile.

Clarke acts like she didn’t notice the little attitude game, and simply states her opinion. “I admit it was a clean hit. And before you say anything, Raven - she had her head down, that’s our loss. They’ll just put Andrews instead.”

And the coach does just that – Irene Andrews is seen jumping on the ice, eager to join the game. Polis replaces its center, but other than that, the line is left unchanged.

Andrews leaves it to Slater, Slater dangles, passes Kelly Seal in what looked like an effortless move! Slater gains speed, Jen Slater now with the wrist shot! Caught by Miller!
“Fuck yeah”, grins Lexa.

Lincoln hits his beer against hers, then they both drink. Clarke tries to act composed, but she is growing restless with each passing second.

Arkadia wins the faceoff, they are closing the box. Sutton fakes the slap shot, hands it over to Slater. Slater, hesitating, looks for possible plays. From Slater back to Sutton again, Sutton shoots! But Miller froze it, ‘no problem’ she says, and she was never off position on this. Great shifting.

“Mills, baby, you got it tonight”, Lexa praises with a smirk.

Clarke scoffs. Baby. What the fuck is that supposed to mean? She wonders if Lexa has played with Miller, and it’d be totally alright if only her mind didn’t begin to drift and conjure images of them on the ice, sharing side glances and playful grins. She’s not sure if she likes it. And Clarke tells herself that maybe (just maybe) it’s because this whole teasing thing is their thing, and maybe she enjoys thinking that Lexa hasn’t had these friendship moments with anyone other than her. Because Clarke Griffin is her goalie now. Clarke Griffin is the one who she should be gawking over, when she does all these incredible saves, and Clarke Griffin is the one she smiles at, the one she jokes with, yells at, tries to get truly, shockingly mad at, and fails.

Puck drops at the left side of the net, Polis gets possession but they are now fumbling the disk and they lose it to Irene Andrews, she was quite sharp on that. Andrews quickly leaving it behind to Marjorie Sutton, who then circles the net and stops in the enclave. Arkadia still menacing, and the Grounders are in deep.

Clarke sees Lexa’s gaze darken, and she leaves her beer on the table to lean forward, eyes still stuck to the screen.

Sutton with a quick shot! Rebound, Miller couldn’t tame the puck – it’s caught by Slater in the enclave. There she comes, Mitchells is deked! Slater in front, turns around suddenly and SCORES!

Clarke jerks up, jumps in the air with little control over her movements – thank reflexes for that. She thinks she hears Octavia scream, but she’s not sure of anything except the look on Lincoln’s face, and the fierce hug she shares with Raven as the room explodes with cheers.

*Jen Slater, and the spinorama! Dropships win in overtime!*

“We say?” Clarke chants the team’s traditional hymn, cupping an ear.

“Goodbye!” The rest of the Ark fans yell at once, clapping to each syllable.

“We say?” the blonde goalie asks again, insisting, and she catches Lexa’s resigned glance from across the room.

“Goodbye!” They scream again – even louder, it seems.

Congrats are exchanged once again, and Lincoln reluctantly walks over and lets Octavia hug him and express her pride over the team’s victory.

A bit further in the corner of the room, Clarke is taking off her jersey and handing it to a lukewarm Lexa who half-heartedly puts it on. “I get that you want to pie me now?” the brunette asks with a quizzical glance.
“Absolutely”, replies Clarke, motioning for Octavia to go get the pie.

“Will I get to clean my face after it?” Lexa adds, grimacing doubly.

“Only if I feel like it”, the goalie replies with a wink, which just makes Lexa scowl.

It seems she’s got a sense of honor, for she doesn’t complain once – just deals with the punishment, and Clarke tries not to find her adorable with an inch thick of whipped cream leaving only her eyes to be seen glaring menacingly at her tormentors.

Even once Lexa’s all cleaned up, Clarke cannot control her laughter.

“This is not funny”, the forward snaps sharply.

“It’s hilarious”, Clarke replies in between giggles.

“Mockery is not the product of a strong mind”, Lexa retorts, her jaw twitching frustratingly.

Clarke dips a finger in the destroyed pie’s whipped cream, and arches a taunting brow. “You look like an angry mouse.”

“Shut the fuck up.”

“That wasn’t an insult, that was a compliment – aren’t mice cute?” Clarke’s grin is childish.

“Mice are weak little squeaky fucks”, Lexa bites back like she’s trying to keep intact the remains of her dignity.

“Oh, do shut up, Lexa, I know you’re all soft and sappy inside.”

Clarke watches the effect of her words play on the hockey center’s facial features, how she’s pulled out this murderous glare of hers, the one that sends enemy players squirming back to the bench, tail between their legs.

“I’ll give you the chance to take it back”, Lexa simply offers, but Clarke isn’t fooled by her civilized words.

“I won’t”, she replies.

And Lexa would probably go nuts on anyone who would dare say that to her, because she does know how to beat up people or intimidate them into a puddle of blind submission, Clarke reminds herself. Yet she holds back - there are no other ways to put this. Her green eyes are probably not as unforgiving, not as merciless as she wants them to be.

And that, that is the Clarke Griffin effect.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I love to hear from you guys in the comments section! Next update is coming as soon as possible!

*UPDATE*
I'm taking longer to update this chapter because of school and also because it's very very long... Don't worry guys, I'm working hard to post it as soon as possible!

Follow me on tumblr to ask me questions or read bonus content!
https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/
The next puck is wobbly, and she notices with apprehension, notices the way her arms are growing weaker with each shot, and she hates herself for it – she’s been trained well.

“You have got to grow some shoulders; do you know that?” His tone is icy, cuts through her walls, knows how to access the very defenceless core of her being.

“Yes, I know.”

Her voice, no matter how bad she tries, doesn’t sound as hard as he would like, and when she turns around, he’s put his whistle around his neck, and that’s not a good thing.

“Then flip the damn tires I’ve put out for you so nicely! Jesus, Lexie, do I have to tell you what to do all the time?”

She sees him raise his arms to the sky in exasperation, and feels the shame begin to pile in the pit of her stomach. “No.”

He obviously didn’t like how her voice quivered. “I didn’t catch that”, he pressures her again with steel clad eyes.

“No!” She yells and hammers a puck into the net in frustration.

That was a good move – his stare lightens, loses its cutting edge. Despite the anxious breath leaving her lungs in a tremble, despite the distress she is put in, she feels like this is what he wants, and she is ready to deliver.

“There it is, that’s the champ. I want every shot to be like this.” He orders, and she feels his words trickle down her back like honey – so sweet it’s sickening. But a part of her lives to be called ‘champ’, probably the part of her that slams people into boards, she thinks.

“How are your arms?” He asks, and to anybody else, it would sound like he’s simply worrying about his daughter’s physical state, but Lexa knows that this has nothing to do with care, just like she knows exactly what he wants to hear.
“They’ll be stronger for it”, she declares, but what she wants to say is ‘they hurt, I can barely move them’. Some days, she has trouble brushing her teeth correctly, can’t hold her arms in the air longer than a second or two, but she assumes this is not something she can say.

“That’s good, baby. Will you practice your backhand for me, now?”

“Sure”, she obeys, and executes the task as well as she can manage. Each raise of the stick burns, takes her closer to a breakdown, but to be a champion, you have to do these things without complaining, and daddy says whining is for the weak.

“I’ll leave a tire there and I expect you to use it, Lexie.” He points at the big tractor tire waiting near the garden, and she wonders how she will be able to flip such a thing in her current condition.

Three years later, she regrets deciding to jog that night, she regrets her father’s reprimand, the disappointment in his eyes and that makes her flip the damn tire in the rain, covered in sweat and mud and drowning in disgrace. It’s too late, now. She screams with each flip, and Anya must’ve heard her because she’s standing on the patio, concerned and upset.

“What the fuck are you doing, Lex?” She screams over the sound of raindrops drumming against the ground.

“Building shoulders! I’m building shoulders!” She must sound hysterical, and Anya doesn’t know how close she is to giving in to the tears and the knot in her throat, but she won’t break down, that’s not what she is.

“You’ll catch your death! Please come inside!” Anya asks, and the sound of rain can’t mask the way her voice cracks when she pleads.

“This is none of your business! I’m doing fine!”

“Lexa, no one is forcing you to do these things anymore!”

Her shoulders tense when she hears the warning in her sister’s tone, and she thinks about all the work she’s put in, how it cannot end like this, how daddy would not be satisfied or proud of her.

“He never forced me!” She cries out in synch with the next flip, and she’s rewarded with a big splash of mud on the cheek when the rubber hits a puddle.

Anya doesn’t give up, why doesn’t she give up? It’d be so easy if nobody questioned her every move all the time, if nobody had a say in whether she wants to workout in the rain, or in the night, or go on a jog when it’s freezing outside, when her breath comes out as a white mist around her face.

“Lexa, please! You’re not thinking straight!” Anya begs, voice smaller, shoulders down like a disillusioned child.

And Lexa stops, gets her hands off the tire, notices the blisters on her palms. This is madness, and she has to keep going. “Then what the fuck do I do?!” her voice thunders in the dark.

Anya is stunned. “What do you mean ‘what do I do’? You snap out of it! You hang out with your friends! You eat!”

“I don’t have any friends! I play, is all! And now I don’t play for anyone, and now I can’t even flip a fucking tire, and…” She trails off, lost in self doubt, lost in her own backyard that she doesn’t recognize, because everything is strange and out of place, and the world is spinning around her.
“That means he’s winning, Lexa, he’s got you broken! Do you want him to win?” Anya challenges, stepping out from under the roof, starting to get drenched by the unyielding rain.

“You’re all against me, then! All of you! Mama said I was to study instead, Daddy said I was soft! And you too, now?” Lexa is unreasonable, and cruel to Anya, and she knows she’s not the only one hurting, yet she has to let this out. She has to let it out in the open, or else it will destroy her.

“Oh, please! Is this really you speaking, or is that the shit dad put into you?” Anya points at her crudely, and if rain and darkness didn’t diminish her vision, Lexa would see how her sister is now so emotional it makes her tremble like a leaf.

“Don’t you dare say that of him! I’ll make him proud, you wait and see!” Lexa screams into the emptiness, and it reverberates around like an echo, sneaks right into Anya’s chest and pains her - oh, how it pains her. Because Anya has seen this woman from the beginning of her life, running around in a diaper, she has seen her smile turn into a smirk, has seen her laugh turn into a sneer, has seen her fall and transform into something wicked, something that lives and breathes through obsession. All because of one man, one man she now protects and cherishes like the brainwashed soldier she is.

“What the fuck did he do to you?” Anya murmurs, her words magically transported through the ruthless weather, until they shoot right through Lexa, and inject cold into her green eyes.

“He made me strong”, the younger woman asserts solidly, but her tone clashes with the fog passing across her gaze, and something is not right.

But Anya doesn’t see the sentimentality leaking from her sister, for rain and anger is blinding, and she loses faith, just once, just now.

“I want my sister back”, she weakly blurs, then disappears into the house.

Lexa falls asleep in the mud.

“Hey, everyone, Santa has arrived!”

The team greets Tasha Wickenson, the chief equipment technician, and she’s carrying a big pouch on her back.

It’s become some sort of tradition for Tasha to bring the special requests in a bag, and she probably enjoys the reception and spotlight. “Alright, now, I got a list.”

“She’s got a list”, repeats Charlie Langton, imitating her southern accent with a knowing smile. Then, getting up and offering a hand. “Does Santa need an elf?”

“For sure”, the technician replies as she opens up the bag and entrusts Charlie with the list.

The women start chatting excitedly, each player eager to receive their piece of equipment. “First off, I have here a very cute set of pink tape, this is Izzie’s, I think?” Wickenson announces, throwing the tape at a happy Wayne who seems impatient to try it on.

“Briggs, you wanted skates?” Charlie asks as a nice pair of Bauer’s are pulled out of the bag.
The usual gifts are apparel and equipment such as sticks, guards, socks and skates. But what Clarke is given is an absolute piece of art. “Ouh, Griffy, that’s cool! Is this from the Finish guy?” Charlie asks, carefully holding a brand-new mask.

Petri Pakarinen, one of the best artists affiliated with the league, graces Clarke with one or two masks per year, usually on special occasions. And with the Winter Classic coming up in January, Clarke has had the pleasure of choosing a wintry design, with a navy-blue background color and special details nicely airbrushed on the shell – the number 36 embed into the Strikers’ logo, and hidden patterns that are revealed with the cold.

“Shit, nice bucket you’ve got there”, Lexa later admires from across the room while securing her shoulder guard on.

Clarke smiles at the compliment. “Well thank you, cool whip.”

It’s hilarious how Lexa’s grin crumbles at the nickname - but it’s too late, Raven’s heard everything, and she passes them by on her way to the door. “Hey, cool whip”, she salutes before leaving the room.

“Yeah, you better get your ass away from me, Reyes! And make sure I don’t catch you!”

Lexa looks unusually playful as she gets up and chases Raven down the hall, and Clarke can hear their screams fading as they recede.

During practice, Clarke intercepts Raven as she skates near the slot. “Hey, so you and whip are now best buddies?”

Raven smirks, spinning her stick absentmindedly with both hands. “Yeah, we’re getting matching tattoos next week. But seriously, she’s a fucking stud. And she’s been asking the whole team if you’re playing against Polis Saturday.”

“What?” Clarke utters, a bit taken aback.

“Oh, your ass be triggering her ‘gay puppy’ mode. I swear, yesterday Langton just mentioned you in a sentence and her head jerked up like a cat that’s heard the can opener, it was hilarious-“

“She’s just a little fuckboy going on her everyday hunt, that doesn’t mean anything.” Clarke agilely slides from post to post, deploying her stick in a circular motion to cover each possible angle.

“Well, I told her yes and she looked glad. I think she wants to show off her goalie to Polis”, Raven shrugs, then picks up a lost puck with the blade of her stick and juggles it as Clarke makes a casual save on a teammate passing by.

“Her goalie”, grimaces Clarke, skulling forward and waiting for the shot, steady. She deviates it with her blocker, then stands straight, sliding around her net to grab her Gatorade bottle and squirt its contents through the cat eye grid of her mask. “I swear, if she’s doing all this to put down Eriksen…” She shoots a glance at Raven who’s covering Charlie, trying to stop her from settling in the zone.

“Hey, let me”, Clarke offers, tapping her gloves together and giving a push at her chest pad as a ritual preparation.

Charlie goes one handed, slides diagonally and tries a toe drag to show off, but Clarke just kicks away the shot and pulls her mask up to dart her tongue at a butt hurt Langton. “Again with the toe? You’re a quick release, just snap it.” Clarke casually advises.
“Snap it, you think? I wanted to fool around with you, Griff, but I forgot you’re always so professional.” Charlie circles backwards around a cone, practicing her cross de-cross and almost bumping against Lexa who gives her a playful tap in the skates with the blade of her stick.

“Yeah snap it, baby, snap it”, Clarke breaks into a small dance whose movements revolve mainly around shoulder wiggling and stick swinging. “You wanna get to twenty, this year, Charles?”

Langton throws her head backwards, annoyed. “I get to twenty every year, goddamnit! why does everyone in the team think I’m the chick who never gets to twenty?”

Raven laughs, lets a soft slap shot fly towards Clarke who traps it against her chest with a thud. “I’m a twenty and I don’t even play wing”, she taunts, plucking the disk out of the net and aligning it right behind with the rest.

Both Clarke and Charlie react quite strongly – they gasp in disbelief, shaking their head from side to side. “Shut up, Reyes, you’re not even a fifteen!” Charlie mocks, catching the attention of Lexa, currently stretching her arms over her head.

The captain cannot help the cocky comment. “Yeah, and how’s thirty-five?”

Clarke decides it’s time to serve some humble pie. “Alright, well I scored a goal, last year. Difference is, I did it from here.” She bumps her paddle against the blue ice of the slot, all of it with a sarcastic smile.

That is enough to shut them up.

Walking around Embassy Arena can be quite challenging, especially when you’re the number one goalie in the league and also happen to be playing against the hometown favorites.

Clarke isn’t used to being stopped by locals, and she mentally takes note of the number of times it happens while walking down the street, and buying shampoo and an Itzakadoozie popsicle in a convenience store. She gets to six – a surprising number, and by the time she’s back to the hotel, she’s taken three pictures and signed a cap, an arm, and a grocery list (her first stop was Walmart).

When she sees Lexa in front of the hotel, she’s signing a guy’s Polis jersey with her name in the back. “I can’t believe this - my little boy Jason is gonna be so happy! You’re his favorite player, he plays hockey too and he really looks up to you!” The guy proudly exclaims.

Lexa’s polite smile turns into an enormous, genuine one and she immediately takes off her Strikers cap, signs it and offers it to the man who has trouble accepting the gift. “I’m sure he’ll never part with it, in this case! He’ll probably wear it to sleep!” The dad exuberantly informs after Lexa insists he keep it.

“Will he be there to watch the game?” Lexa asks, radiant.

The dad’s smile turns a bit more wistful. “Eh, we’d really want to, but my wife Annie, she’s on a sick leave right now and we can’t afford it. But he’ll be watching at home for sure!”

Lexa looks authentically saddened by that, and determined to find a solution. “You know what, if you can give me just a second…” She composes a number on her cellphone. “I’ll try and see if I can get you a spot.”

The guy’s jaw drops open, and his eyes widen in shock. “Oh dear lord, are you serious?” He stutters, running a hand across his brow. “I cannot accept such a thing, it’s too much.”
Lexa shrugs it off like it’s nothing. “Please, my treat.” Then, on the phone with a chief of staff. “Hey, Jerry, how’s it going? I am great, back from the therapist, checking in late. Hey, listen, would you do me a solid? I have mates I’d like to bring tomorrow; can you see if there’s anything left?”

She sneaks a glance and a wink at the still baffled guy on her side. “Thanks a lot. Yes, could you ask him for me please?” She pauses for a second. “My buddy Jason and his dad.” She pauses again, smiling. “Green section or lower, if you don’t mind?” She covers the bottom of the phone and turns towards the guy still standing at her left. “Ask for Jerry when you get there, alright?” The man nods slowly, still stupefied.

“Perfect thank you so much, you’re the best! I’ll see you there. Bye bye”, she says into the phone, and ends the call. “There were seats in the green or double letters, but I thought since your son is a big fan, he’d like to see it from up close am I right?”

The man nods, deeply moved, and he shakes Lexa’s hand ceremoniously. “I don’t forget these things, miss. Seeing you play, I’ve always known how talented you are, but let me tell you, I couldn’t’ve chosen a better role model for my kid. Thank you, you’re an amazing person.”

Lexa bows her head slightly. “It’s my pleasure, sir, I’m just doing my best.”

They share a friendly hug and separate as Lexa enters the hotel.

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Once alone, she glances at her watch and clicks her tongue in frustration. She’s missing open practice. But then, it was worth it – she imagines the little boy’s eyes, how they’ll glow when his daddy will announce that he’s bringing him to the game. She thinks about how they will share a moment of joy together, eating popcorn and cheering for their team. She thinks about her own dad, and she isn’t sure if he would’ve liked her missing a practice to talk with a fan.

*Was it so hard to chant your kid’s name like all the other parents did?*

“Looks like I’m not the only one who forgot open was rescheduled”, a voice behind her teases in a sing-songy tone. “I guess I’ll have more energy tonight”, Lexa mutters, then turns to face the blue-eyed goalie behind her.

“But any stress?” Clarke asks, as they make their way to the elevator. When Lexa gives her a look of annoyance, she rolls her eyes, still smirking. “Oh, how silly of me – I forgot that the great Alexandria Woods is above such mundane things.”

*Give me a break*, she thinks, and fumbles for her card when the doors open. “After you”, she sarcastically invites Clarke to get out first.

“Such a gentleman”, the goalie approves, and Lexa has to admit that a part of her is disappointed with the way Clarke’s voice has donned an accent of irony and cold amusement – but then that would be her own fault. She should’ve been genuinely nice to her if she wanted to be rewarded, and when she realizes that she just *had that thought*, she panics, but it’s too late.

“Do you need me to escort you to your room to prove my good manners?” Lexa offers with a smirk when Clarke turns to the opposite side of the hall.
“That sounds a lot like a line you’d hear in *Pretty Woman*, Lexa, I’m impressed.” Clarke whistles comically, and the grin she gives is more heartfelt, more typically Clarke. “But you don’t have Richard Gere’s good bloke persona, so I’m afraid I’ll have to refuse.”

“But you do know any chick would’ve said yes in a heartbeat, right?” Lexa brags, arms crossed and alluring smile.

Clarke gets closer, and she looks confident like these girls at a bar toying with all the men under their spell. It makes Lexa gulp, Lexa who would normally be unmoved by these demonstrations, Lexa who has women wrapped around her little finger but this is Clarke Griffin, and she smells like a Goddess, even looks like one, *stop, stop, stop.*

Fuck.

She forces some arrogance into her eyes, just in case she seemed off balance for a moment (and she was), but doesn’t succeed in making Clarke back away. They could smell each other’s toothpastes if they wanted, by now, but all Lexa can smell is Clarke’s shampoo, something like Argan Oil or grapefruit – both, actually, she thinks, as she’s invaded with thoughts of Clarke’s lips, how they contort into a playful smirk, and the gleam of defiance in her cerulean eyes.

“I’m not any chick”, the blonde enunciates plainly. “Don’t go around expecting me to jump in your arms whenever you give me your preassembled pickup bullshit.”

Clarke licks her lips absentmindedly, but all Lexa can think of is how close they are. She could touch her arm if she moved so much as an inch forward. She even catches herself wondering what her skin feels like when you brush a knuckle against it, hell, when you feel it with the whole bare hand, or when your breath makes a layer of steam condensate softly at its surface.

“And I don’t fall for a womanizer”, Clarke whispers in her ear, and her glance turns sharp - she’s aware of the effect she has.

Lexa manages to catch her breath once there’s more than a foot separating them, and Clarke’s smile is victorious, she’s won the bout this time, with the way she’s made her opponent’s face flush with red, and her eyes darken with arousal. “So I’ll see you on the ice, then?” The goalie’s voice turns all rough on the edges like it’s barely escaping her throat.

“Of course”, Lexa grumbles, and she fears she might’ve let her discomfort transpire.

It’s only later that she realizes how weak her knees were during the confrontation, because she has trouble taking her first few strides on the ice during morning skate, and the reason behind all this she sees skating around her net, shouting encouragements and making good work -because even Clarke Griffin’s routine saves are amazing to witness.

One of her wings is shooting one timers in front of the goal, down on one knee. She gets only one puck past Clarke, then finds herself confronted with the wall that is Arkadia’s goalie, whose glove shoots upward like a cannonball, they say, and traps pucks with grandiose reflexes.

Lexa hears Clarke yell something at Lucy Marks, and the two share a nonchalant smile. “Can’t let Hurd get a few to raise her self-esteem?” Lucy barks back, circling towards the net, arched brow and amused glance.

“She got one, I reckon”, Clarke jokes with a look at Jaimie Hurd, knee still down, looking defeated yet amused. “Can’t let them have more than one or two at a time. Otherwise you’ll make them think they’re king shit.”
On the bench, Lexa forces her glance away from Clarke – it’s starting to be too much, she has to get a grip and there’s a game coming.

She doesn’t know how she manages to collect enough concentration to shower and prepare for the night, but she does, and just then, she realizes she might be able to do this.

Around two hours before the game, it’s full ritual mode. She tapes and retapes her stick until she gets the perfect alignment, then fills her bottle with purple Gatorade and drinks it silently in her corner of the locker room. She spots Raven Reyes in an animated conversation with Octavia Blake, and she can’t properly grasp its topic, probably something about defensive coverage.

Then there’s Clarke with her big headphones, and she’s adjusting the buckles of her pad while eating an ice cream sandwich. Lexa’s not sure she understands the idea behind eating such things before a high caliber hockey game, but she enjoys the easy-going atmosphere Clarke spreads, humming a song with an ice cream sandwich in the mouth, hands occupied with various equipment tunings.

“Want one?”

Lexa’s pulled out of her thoughts immediately, and only then does she realize she’s been staring at the blonde for probably close to a minute. “Huh?” She mindlessly mumbles, not sure what she’s missed.

“I got other ones, if you want, I put them in the freezer”, Clarke explains, pointing at the door to exemplify her words. Then she adds, seeing the look of judgment pass among Lexa’s stern features. “They had a sale, alright? It was cheap and I really like ice cream sandwiches, that’s who I am, you know-“

“Clarke, for fuck’s sake”, Lexa huffs, massaging her temples with her fingers to simulate a headache. “Oh, just admit that you want one.”

“It doesn’t even taste that good. It’s all mushy and shit.” Lexa defends herself, but as she takes another sip of Gatorade, she finds the taste quite boring all of a sudden.

“Lexa, do you want one?” Clarke repeats, nodding like she already knows her teammate’s answer, and it’s not that surprising, considering they’re starting to know each other more and more.

“Absolutely not”, the forward denies without even the smallest hint of conviction, and Clarke gives her the rest of her sandwich. She looks at it like it’s an alien of some kind, then crosses gazes with Clarke, and gives the sandwich back. “That won’t work”, she asserts calmly, resulting in the goalie’s puzzled expression.

“Why?” Clarke asks, and her smirk turns into an exasperated pout when Lexa doesn’t reply. “Oh don’t tell me you have food rituals?”

Lexa winces more comically than intended. “Yes, alright? But they’re not that bad, I mean, they’re not disturbing or anything...”

“What are they?” Clarke asks with a full grin.

That makes Lexa unable to hold her sigh, and she slowly shakes her head in disbelief. “You’re
impossible”, she winces, but Clarke is only getting started.

“Do you eat weird stuff?” the blonde goalie teases her, impatient.

“No, I don’t.”

“Are you sure? ‘Cause I knew a chick who always ate a tomato sandwich before a game-“ Clarke starts, only to get interrupted by a mildly irritated Lexa.

“I swear, the only rituals I have are dressing from left to right, eating cinnamon hearts, drinking purple Gatorade and taping my stick clockwise from toe to heel, only 20 rounds, with a half finger overlap in between each line”, Lexa blurts but as she’s saying it, and watching Clarke’s amused expression unfold, she realizes how intense she is, even frowns a bit. “It’s not as bad as it sounds!” She adds, trying to get away with it, but Clarke doesn’t seem ready to let her off the hook just yet.

“So, from what I understood, eating a bite of an ice cream sandwich two hours before the game will fuck this up, is that it?”

Lexa nods childishly – it makes Clarke laugh, and the sound of it brings a fuzzy warmth to Lexa’s stomach. “And you call me intense?” the blonde asks, pointing at herself.

“I’m not the one listening to Mothership all day on repeat and patting my net when a shot hits the post”, the team captain points out, shrugging and squirting some Gatorade in her mouth.

Clarke squints, shooting an accusatory finger at her. “Just eat the fucking sandwich, you know you want it.”

“I don’t want to”, Lexa resists vigorously.

“You’ve been staring at it for five minutes, it’s gonna melt and you’ll regret it for the rest of your life”, Clarke utters rapidly, waving the frozen treat in front of Lexa whose restraint is slowly crumbling.

“It’ll be bad luck!” the brunette counters, but she’s losing the aggressive edge of her tone.

“What if it’s good luck?” Clarke counters, still wiggling the sandwich under her captain’s nose.

And Lexa’s not convinced, but she kind of want to prove Clarke wrong also. “What if it’s not? Do you want us to lose?”

“Ha! So you think if you play bad that means I’ll play bad, and Marky will play bad, and Hurdle will play bad? And what about Charlie? She’s been practicing her wrist shot all morning.”

Lexa’s tongue makes an irritated clicking sound, and she wants to look scary, really tries to, but to Clarke, she’ll always look like a pouting teddy bear. “It’d still be inconvenient.”

“Alright, then. Although I’m sure the guys in the league would find it funny that the big bad Lexa Woods is superstitious.”

The teasing tone leaves a tart taste in Lexa’s mouth, and she gives Clarke a death stare. She doesn’t like being called superstitious, she prefers to consider herself a careful planner. And that’s what makes her snatch the sandwich and gulp down the last two bites in a frenzy. “Tastes like crap”, she complains and Clarke’s shit eating grin only grows.
each Polis player valiantly stepping on the ice to roam the entire rink like a formula one on a circuit. She stretches her shoulders mechanically, eager to greet the crowd, eager to show the world what she’s made of. She proves herself like that every night.

The announcer roars her name out like a war cry, and as soon as she takes her first stride, she’s on autopilot. She meets her net - snows it just enough, then bumps her paddle on the posts to ‘wake them up’.

Then they call Lexa, and it’s like time stops in its frame.

*Ladies and gentlemen, make some noise!*

The cheers are so loud they’re almost deafening, and they isolate themselves from the announcer’s voice in Clarke’s ears.

*She is coming back home tonight, let us give her a proper welcome! The number twelve, your grounder kid, your commander! Alexandria Woods!*

She doesn’t skate around, just comes to the center of the ice and raises her stick. It’s simple, yet efficient – the fans are losing their mind.

Up on the big screen appears a picture of her in Scorpions’ uniform. The inscription under it reads “always a Grounder”.

The cheers are only amplified by such a setting, and the organisation has put up a tribute for their ex-captain – they start by showing notable players and hockey personalities’ testimony. Robin Eriksen appears on the screen, and Clarke is surprised by how young she is – probably eighteen or nineteen. “The first thing she said to me? Well, actually she patted me on the head, like that.” The rookie shows the little movement, laden with benevolence and familiarity. “I was new, I didn’t know anyone in the team, you know, so when you get there you feel out of your element, you feel like you don’t belong with the pros. And I recall seeing her for the first time and thinking ‘this is it, I’m in the league’.”

The tribute cuts to a clip of Lexa on a breakaway, with the commentator’s words echoing through the arena, painted with heavy emotion. *Woods seizes the rebound and she is off at full speed, she scores! Alexandria Woods, wicked toe drag!*

Then Eriksen is back on the screen, shrugging with a smile. “First goal she scored on me was in morning practice. I didn’t even see the puck - next thing I knew, it was in. But she later told me she liked my moves, so yeah, that was nice to hear.”

Another film of Lexa, cinematically arranged – she’s hunched forward, preparing for a faceoff, and the cold concentration in her eyes is almost feral. Eriksen can be heard as a voiceover. “It’s a privilege to play with her, that’s what it is. I believe every single girl in this team will tell you the same thing.”

The next clip shows one of Polis’ most talented wings, Deborah Mckoy. “I remember I used to tell the girls ‘just wait for the puck, no matter where you are’. She could be completely crushed between two guys and still fight for it, and find a way to make the pass. Just ridiculous, spinning around and dropping it behind for me because she always knew where I was, even without looking – she just knew.”

In slow motion, Lexa is seen determinedly checking a girl into the board, and the image turns to a
member of Polis’ defensive brigade, Ashley Curtis. The memories of her previous captain seem very evocative to her as a nostalgic smile crawls on her lips, painting a picture of respect and admiration. “Yeah, it was something. She is one mean lady, I’ll tell you that, in a sense that they didn’t want to play against us when she was captain - because they knew that they couldn’t rush Robbie or anything as such. It’d become some sort of unwritten rule that when you have got somebody as fierce as her, somebody as protective as her, somebody who will stand for the girls… You don’t mess around with her, you know what I mean? And every time you had some roughing, whether it be in front of the net, at the sides – she’d step in. People respect these kinds of players.”

Following up is a clip of Scorpions players visiting a children’s hospital, Lexa among them. Titus Trikru, the team coach, appears on the screen. “She gave it her best shot every time she set foot on the ice, and let’s say she didn’t do things by halves.” He lets out a little laugh. “But she was a sister to each of these girls. I could just point at her, say ‘there’s the example you follow’. She brought out the best of them.”

Lexa is seen celebrating with her team, shouting and jumping toughly against the boards, then catching two of her teammates in a ferocious hug.

Multiple highlight clips go by one after the other, each showing Lexa’s spectacular abilities – wraparounds, nifty dangles, a solid slap shot on a powerplay and a particularly gorgeous backhand top corner. Then the screen turns black and lights up again with a message, in neon green letters: ‘thank you’.

People are on their feet, screaming her name like an anthem, Lexa is smiling and waving her stick at the fans, but they’re not done just yet – more than half of the crowd lights the flash of their phone. And then they start chanting ‘thank you, Woods’ as a single, passionate voice, and the camera shows her standing there – speechless, in awe, face traversed by two teardrops.

*Thank you Woods. Thank you Woods. Thank you Woods.*

Clarke is shaking with emotion, bent over in the crease of her slot. She feels like something asks her to win this game. For Lexa? For herself? She doesn’t know.

What she does know is that the crowd is still singing and clapping when the puck drops, and they cheer when Lexa wins the faceoff and prepares the first attack.

*Alexandria Woods brings it behind to the defense, Reyes choses to hand it over to Marks. Marks, scampers ahead, makes it past the red line despite Lerman giving her a hard time. They’re at the end boards, vicious check by Lori Hamilton, and that’s enough for the puck to slip away from Marks. Gwen Lerman, quick on the occasion, she’s setting the rebound for her center and they’re off. Octavia Blake slows the play but they still invade enemy ground, Hamilton takes her space, gets rid of Reyes’ cover just long enough to obtain a pass.*

Clarke skulls forward and squares, both eyes focused on the rubber disk currently dangling on the blade of a wing’s stick. “Watch it! Watch it!” She yells to Raven who circles the net to assist her and points at Octavia.

*Zone coverage only for Arkadia it seems, and goalie Clarke Griffin is following the play closely, she doesn’t give an inch to the defense.*

Just as she’s checking the angle, Clarke sees the puck travel from Carolyn Banda to Gwen Lerman who already has her stick ready for the one timer.

*Lerman, shoots!*
It’s a routine save, she’s practiced this. And when she sees the puck squeeze under the blade of her skate, she knows she’s made the stop, but of course, Lori Hamilton had to be there.

Griffin makes the save, Hamilton comes along, pushes it in the net THEY SCORE! Two minutes in, on their first shot! Polis makes a statement!

Clarke doesn’t like this. This is the part of hockey she hates, the part where players can use brute strength to force a goal but she knows it’s part of it, just like she knows Lexa didn’t like it either – with the way her eyes gleam in anger, and her jaw twitches like it does when she’s barely able to contain her aggressiveness.

“I should’ve got that”, Octavia apologizes, but Clarke is busy trying to clear her mind of all memories of this goal, and when she raises again of all her height, she’s ready.

Polis wins the faceoff; Titus Trikru has deployed his second line, lead by Renee McLean. McLean, trying to pierce the defense but Octavia Blake does not agree, serves her a nice hip check. The puck is loose, Raven Reyes recovers it but she’s trapped by Annika Jehkinen, Lexa Woods gives her a hand, escapes with the puck at high speed and the crowd likes it.

Clarke cannot help but frown in disbelief at the display of excitement – as much as Polis likes her, Lexa is now part of another team and she is a menace to her opponents, just like she is a menace to Robin Eriksen whom she is facing right now.

There she is, comes to the center, what a move! Slips it past Kaestner, then Manning! Now alone in front of the net! She slows a bit, one handed, shoots! Stopped by Eriksen with a leg! She’s on her back - what a jaw dropping save! And this is how Robin Eriksen reminds Polis every night that they have found their next goaltending superstar! And boy do we believe her!

Lexa’s face contorts into vague annoyance as she makes her way to the bench without looking back.

First period ends on the cheers of the crowd and a nice shot by Jamie Hurd, that could’ve beaten any goalie other than the Scorpions’.

“Nah, I ain’t mad. We’re talking about Robbie, I mean, she’s seen me play.”

Lexa is leaning forward, both hands on the blade of her stick – her hair is pulled up in a bun, and she’s removed her jersey, leaving only her shoulder pads on. She looks like she’s back from war, what with the way her gaze is set ablaze by the adrenalin and her whole upper body is still tense, knuckles clenching and unclenching, forearms rigid and strained. She even looks strangely at people – and Clarke thinks ‘strangely’ because she’s become used to Lexa smiling to her, weirdly enough, and it seems she’s forgotten how impossibly fierce Lexa is when she’s in hockey mode. She thinks that the nickname ‘commander’ would suit her very well at the moment.

“So you’ve shown her all your little tricks, is that it?” Clarke asks casually while re-taping the shaft of her paddle.

Lexa just shrugs, and from the movement, Clarke gathers that she’s not in the mood to talk. “I guess”, the brunette mumbles nonetheless, reaching for a bottle to spray water in her mouth.

“You seem to admire her a lot.”

“I do”, Lexa nods seriously.

A moment of silence. Clarke looks away temporarily, only to plunge her cerulean gaze right back
into Lexa’s - profoundly green, immensely dangerous. “Sounds like you’d trade me for her.”

“What makes you think that?”

She didn’t sound angry or anything – just surprised. Everything on Lexa’s face screams shock, and she might try to hide it, she cannot control the enlargement of her eyes, the silent wonder they express, nor the shake of her head of the slight frown that draws a crease on her brow.

“I don’t know, the way you talk about the save she made on you”, Clarke advances not too carefully, like she’s eager to get this over with.

Lexa ponders the issue, pensive. “Well, I admire her talent.”

“So you would then”, Clarke concludes, almost disappointed.

The smile that creeps up along Lexa’s lips is one of vague amusement – she leans over Clarke’s shoulder, teasing. “What’s that? Do I hear jealousy?”

“No, you don’t. I’m just asking, in all seriousness please”, Clarke puts the emphasis on the last half of her second sentence.

“You need this ‘all seriousness’ of mine?” the team captain pushes further, wiggling her eyebrows, all of it with a still playful tone.

Clarke just sighs, exasperated by Lexa’s childish manners. “No, nevermind.”

After a moment of indecision, Lexa tries to redeem herself when she realizes that she is pushing the blonde away. “Clarke, come on”, she tries, smiling at her from underneath, trying to reach her gaze currently dissimulated by the bending of her neck. “What did I do?”

“You’re just-” Clarke starts, still grumpy. “You’re like a big baby, sometimes.”

Lexa points a finger at her, growing more amused by the second, it seems. “Hold on, you do realize you’re saying that after asking me your very subtle questions to ensure that you are still my favorite goalie. That’s like ‘elementary school teacher’s pet’ level.”

She is right - and it makes it all the more frustrating to Clarke. “Yeah, fuck you and your comebacks, Alexandria Woods.”

The following action is unexpected for various reasons, the main one being that Clarke is used to a rough, careless Lexa – one that doesn’t care whether she hurts people’s feelings, one that doesn’t like to get involved in soft discussions.

And for this reason – and many more – Clarke is startled when Lexa pulls a genuinely concerned face. In any other context, such behavior could almost go unnoticed, but when it’s involving Clarke, or worse, directed at Clarke… It’s enough to muddy the waters.

“I wouldn’t”, Lexa admits, and the shrug she adds to the confession is meant to suggest a certain nonchalance – yet it fails its mission.

“Huh?”

“I wouldn’t trade you, Clarke. It’s not like it’s a secret or anything.”

Clarke enjoys seeing Lexa like this – bare, exposed. She likes that the hockey center is not always composed, not always cold and confident. “What happened to the asshole, Lexa?”
“Still am”, the forward mumbles like a pissed off puppy.

A late smile lights up Clarke’s face, and she stands, travels toward Lexa’s cubicle and stops right in front of her, still grinning. “Look at you, all serious - it’s mighty cute.”

“It’s not cute, Clarke, I’m not-” Lexa blurts out frustratingly, flushed and at a loss of words.

The forward collects her thoughts almost comically, all before the eye of a diverted Clarke who can’t help but let out a soft giggle. “You having trouble?” The blonde asks teasingly, and Lexa gives her the look of don’t you dare.

“Alright, Griffin, you asked for my serious mode, I gave you my serious mode. And the game is starting, so don’t you have… Stuff? To put on?” Lexa is desperately trying to find a loophole, and Clarke lets her get away with it. Out of pity? Maybe. When she puts a steady hand on her shoulder, the captain is completely disturbed, like a robot that’s been cut off a few wires. And the ridiculousness of it all comes rushing to Clarke – the fact that Lexa, renowned lady-killer, is thrown aback by a hand on a shoulder, the fact that it bothers her so much she looks confused, nervous, hesitant.

“Calm down”, Clarke instructs her softly, massaging casually her strong shoulder – to no avail.

“I’m very calm”, Lexa stutters mindlessly, but her whole body says the opposite.

And just like that, second period has become even more exciting.

She forcefully flexes her quads to wake them up before jumping back on the ice – a mechanical movement, she tells herself, yet a part of her knows that this is just her attempt at driving away the sense of wobbliness in her legs after her encounter with Clarke. What is wrong with her?

Her hands grasp firmly both the top and the bottom of her stick, in a controlled movement, with just enough fierceness to install solidity back into her play.

Arkadia wins the faceoff, their first line is on the ice. Woods lends it to Marks, she was passing by diagonally. Quick puck work, little dangle around Burke, now past the blue line. Polis’ defense is organising.

Lexa accelerates to catch a drop pass, and sees the defenseman coming from the corner of her eye, just as she sees the net drawing near, Robin Eriksen squaring up in her own little special way, shoulders rolling just slightly, gaze piercing like a knife. She collides shoulders with the opponent, wins the battle and sends the other woman stumbling backwards dizzily.

Here’s Lavrov with a check, but Woods is solid as a rock, doesn’t move! And I think Lavrov was stunned by this one, look at the impact! She had speed, that wasn’t the problem - if only Alexandria Woods wasn’t so rock-solid on these plays!

She’s felt it in her whole body, the sudden spread of numbness and throbbing ache sizzling through her veins, and she forces her gaze back on the goal as frustration settles in the very core of her being.

Jaime Hurd helping out her center, she works to keep Eleanor Lavrov against the end board. Strategy pays off quite well, Woods is climbing up the blue line, she simultaneously disarms Burke and Ritchie’s defensive play – then, one handed towards the goal, and it seems no one can stop
A drop of sweat wets her upper lip, she glances quickly left and right, sees the goal near her, understands what she needs to do. In half a second, she’s sliding in front of Eriksen, whose eyes widen in anticipation. Her stick does all the job like it has a mind of itself.

Woods alone! Dangles, feints to the left and SCORES! OH! She did NOT just do that!

Lexa roars in triumph, greets her teammates with hugs and pats on the head.

She let the puck slip through the five hole! I can’t believe it! And the stick movement right before was all a cover up to keep Eriksen guessing, to make sure she would follow her and give a push to the side! Alexandria Woods, pulling off the fakeout!

While celebrating the goal, she sees Clarke tapping her paddle on the ice, mask pulled over to reveal a huge grin. And that, only that, makes Lexa twice as happy as she was.

The goal scored by Arkadia’s number twelve! Alexandria Woods!

The announce gives rise to a prolonged and thundering applause. Polis still loves her to death. Charlie Langton later gives her a big pat of the back as she’s circling the next faceoff spot.

“Good work, commander.” The wing praises her, then winks.

And with that, she starts the last five minutes of the period like she’s on a mission.

Faceoff won by Arkadia, Woods drops it behind for Reyes. Reyes to Blake. Along the board now, Blake meets Curtis for a strong check. Blake still standing, doesn’t give an inch. McLean is coming along but her momentum is cut by Raven Reyes who’s reached the blue line, awaits the pass. Blake squeezes past the defense, still with it, she hands it over to Reyes. Big defensive presence here by Arkadia.

Lexa stops by the goalie, asks for the pass but Lavrov shoves her firmly in the back. She replies with a small push, but makes sure not to anger herself too much – she knows she would’ve done the same thing in order to clear Clarke’s net.

Reyes fakes the slap shot, gives it to Marks. Hurd catches the pass flatly, gives her line the chance to organize. The pass is for Reyes, who’s now at the opposing side of the net, she shoots! Blocked by Lavrov, and she gets up difficultly, she was hurt by the shot, it seems it hit her flush on the ribs.

Robin Eriksen freezes the puck calmly to stop the play and Lavrov goes back to the bench, clutching her side. Lexa cannot help but sympathise with the girl – the dedication she just showed is admirable.

Faceoff at the right of Eriksen, won by Polis. They don’t lose time setting the play, McLean is already headmanning the puck to Lori Hamilton who’s carrying at full speed. Now at the side board, battling with Charlie Langton who’s offering support to her defensive line. Polis closing around Arkadia’s net, Allison Burke looking to make a play, fakes a pass to the left only to hand it over to Ashley Curtis. Curtis, cuts to the center, beats Johnson, clever deke, alone in front of the goal, SHOOTS!

Lexa blinks in amazement at Clarke’s outstanding glove catch, how she secures the puck agilely and gives a little reel upward to tame the recoil.

Griffin pulls out the glove! Oh, what a beauty of a save!
Ashley Curtis is slowly shaking her head from side to side with an insincere smile on her way to the bench, and it makes Lexa smile too, but hers is genuine, heartfelt. She makes sure to give Clarke a nudge on the helmet before the start of the next play, and only then does she ask herself, *why is this so important?* Couldn’t she have waited until the break? She’s unsure if she’s even able to answer that question.

Arkadia gets a great opportunity when a penalty is called against Polis – Renee McLean’s sneaky slash on Izzie Wayne is caught by a ref and she is confined to the box with three minutes remaining to the second period. Reeve decides to put Octavia and Raven on the blue line, along with Lexa’s offensive formation.

*Lexa Woods versus Mia Compton, it’s the faceoff of the two captains. Woods gets the upper hand, drops the puck and it travels back to Octavia Blake. Blake, shifting positions with her partner Raven Reyes, on the lookout with this great vision of theirs. Again, two quick passes to and fro, showing off good chemistry. Lexa Woods is in the enclave, receives the puck, passes it along the board and she is checked by Alison Burke right after.*

She took the hit without wincing, but her lungs collapsed under the pressure at each side of her body, and when she turns around, fury has spilled over her gaze. There’s only one way this power play ends.

*Jaime Hurd at the end boards, slides around the net, gives it back to Blake. From Blake to Woods. Woods, setting the play, she comes forward, fakes a shot, then with a pass that finds Reyes – slap shot! SHE SCORES!*  

Lexa jumps, lost in the noise of the crowd and the sight of her teammate’s smiles and Raven pointing at her to acknowledge her involvement in the goal.

*Raven Reyes, a cannonball! And what a beautiful pass, it’s like she’s just developed an interesting chemistry with her captain whom we all know can be quite the playmaker! So there you have it, the Strikers have the lead for the first time in this game! It’s two to one, and the buzzer signals the end of second period.*

Locker room talk is vibrant, with Raven receiving many congratulations and pats on the back by her teammates.

Lexa is sitting at the corner of the room, testing the bendability of her stick in order to make sure it’s still usable for the next period. She spots Clarke from across, and while she at first deemed her chatty in between periods, it looks like she misjudged – the goalie is silently glancing around the room, gaze steel-clad, concentration to its maximum level.

She is the complete opposite of the Clarke she plays against at practice, the one who goofs around and is smiling or making silly faces with her mask pulled up to rest on the crown of her head. The one who whips her paddle on Lexa’s ass and teases her, Clarke Griffin style, with the usual arched brow and witty comments. And when she crosses her gaze and stumbles upon a stunning shade of electric blue, she realizes how lucky she is. She asks herself (for only a second, to her defense) why she went through all this trouble to initially try to dissect and dismantle Clarke’s play, and it is now obvious to her (though still very frustrating) that she has found her match on the ice. For each time she wants to prove her superiority, Clarke is there to close a trapper around her shot. It used to frustrate Lexa to no end.

Now it mainly impresses her.

She remains lost in her thoughts until she’s back on the ice, and when she skulls backwards before
the faceoff, she sees (imagines, imagines) her dad sitting in the stands, arms crossed and eyes criticizing. Good god, how mad he would get if she told him she accepted that she couldn’t score on Clarke as much as she’d like to.

*Are you turning into a sheep, Lexa? Are you saying you'll comply to this girl? Is she the boss of you? Show me the lion, Lexa.*

She wins the faceoff, and dad would’ve liked it, that’s good.

She passes it behind, positions herself near the red line and takes the pass, eats it alive, *rules* it with her stick like a queen rules her kingdom with a scepter. *The lion, Lexa.*

There’s an emotion to the sequence, what with the brutal check she gives Ashley Curtis without second thoughts, just determined to cross the red line and set the play, just eager to prove herself. *The lion.*

She disappears behind Renee McLean as she slips the puck between her legs and recovers it on the other side of the line – the crowd’s screams fill her head, she hears nothing but their shock and awe, nothing but the pressure that’s being put on her shoulders.

It’s alright. She can take it. *Put on a show.*

She dangles the puck away swiftly when Allison Burke tries to foil her, and she’s still calm, still confident in her capabilities, but as soon as she sees the net, everything becomes realer, truer, critical. It’s like she’s not even controlling herself anymore, as if an entity of some kind has taken over and infiltrated her nerves, slid past the barriers of her mind, and added a second life to her hands.

*Alexandria Woods is on the lose, ladies and gentlemen, and it appears Polis’ defense cannot curb the turnover!*

Her skates cross and de-cross with extreme speed, she can hear the blades slashing, drawing cracks along the beaten ice. This is her purpose in life.

She maintains speed until she’s right in front of the net, and she reacts to Eriksen’s body language, to her following every movement with grand attention as if each change of direction could be predicted by the handling of the stick, the sliding of the puck.

There’s a moment of utter greatness, of calm and concentration, of Eriksen’s grey eyes piercing through the grid of the mask and settling on the blade of her stick, then climbing back up to give an intimidating glare, the one that breaks players apart.

The one that doesn’t break Lexa. *Where’s the lion?*

She gives a quick jerk of the stick, buries the puck in the back of the net in the blink of an eye and not even this gives her satisfaction yet – not the gasp of the crowd, not the defeated Eriksen, not the way she bumps against the board and feels each teammate colliding with her in a victorious hug.

She searches for reward in her distress, because who does she score for, if not herself? Because now that dad is not here, who does she play for?

She gets the answer when Polis counter attacks and makes it 3-2, and when a burst of abominable strength gets a hold of her, and she makes it coast to coast to shoot a puck down the net – only to see the relief wash over her blue-eyed goalie down the ice near the net, only to know that this is what she wanted. Not to humiliate her, not to beat her anymore, but for them to work as equals.
“Nah nah nah nah! Nah nah nah nah! Hey-eh-eh! Goodbye!” Charlie shouts over her shoulder when they disappear into the night, their little gang of victors, on their path to the nearest pub.

“Now that’s a secret, my little ladies, don’t you know that?” Raven giggles, then breaks her laughter down to transform her face into an overly serious one. “Because if Reeve finds out, she is going to fucking annihilate us!”

Clarke puffs out in disbelief, and spots Lexa calling herself a taxi. “Hey, there’s Woods! You already going back?” Clarke hears Raven yell from behind her, and she closes her eyes in silent shame, knowing very well that Lexa wouldn’t approve of this post game drinking.

“Yeah, I missed the shuttle, I think”, the captain blurts out, nodding quietly.

“You sure you don’t want a drink?”

“I’m good”, Lexa replies with a shrug.

Raven doesn’t let her off the hook that easily. “Aw, but man, you went for the fucking hat trick, don’t tell me you’ll lay low just now? Great wins call for great celebrations.”

“Exactly, like relaxing in my pajamas.”

Clarke is surprised by that last statement – she thought Lexa would be the party kind. Though she can’t say she doesn’t find the idea of the great captain in her slippers watching TV on the couch any less alluring, she feels a little disappointed in the display of reasonableness.

“A beer would do you good, commander of nerds”, Langton barks at her from the other side of the road, already walking towards the bar.

Lexa finally breaks when Clarke invites her as well, but swears she’ll only have one beer “and nothing more”. “I’m just mothering Langton to make sure she doesn’t die of intoxication”, the brunette grunts, eyes still on a very agitated Charlie who’s already holding the door of the bar for her friends.

“After you, mademoiselle”, she offers Clarke a charming smile who does nothing but trouble her.

“Are you alright, Charles?”

“Fantastic. Stellar.”

Raven gives her a look of exasperation. “Oh, fuck me, she’s already drunk!”

“I’m entirely sober“, the winger assures, pointing an assertive finger at Raven.

“You are so fucking drunk.”

“Am not!”

Clarke clicks her tongue in frustration and brings Lexa to the bar, desperately trying to escape the ridiculousness of the situation. “Let’s get you drunk instead, for a change”, the goalie mutters while gesturing towards the barman.

“I’m not getting drunk”, Lexa firmly states, “I’m sorry if that’s disappointing to you.”
“Why not have some fun? You should order a ‘hat trick’ of shooters for the occasion.”

“Oh my god, Clarke”, the captain mumbles in false anger.

To which the blonde replies, equally as annoyed:

“Oh my god, Lexa.”

“You should know that I am very problematic when drunk.”

“Well that only makes it more appealing”, Clarke informs with a devilish grin.

Lexa pinches the bridge of her nose with her thumb and index, well aware that she just worsened her situation. “Why don’t you get drunk and I’ll bring you back?”

“No”, Clarke refuses, still grinning.

The answer makes Lexa quite confused. “Why not?”

“Because then you might take advantage of me”, Clarke declares matter-of-factly, and even though she’s obviously joking, Lexa cannot repress the sense of constriction in her lungs.

“Alright, I’m not a rapist”, the captain defends herself a bit too vigorously.

“I don’t know you.”

“Would you quit it already?”

“Geez, I was joking!” Clarke laughs bitterly, holding out a finger to order a drink. Then, to the bartender. “A short vodka cranberry for me.”

The bartender, a middle-aged man with a strong chin and cunning eyes, gives a curt nod towards Lexa, asking for her order. “For you, ma’am?”

“Eh, what do you have on tap?”

He shows her the selection, after which she makes a careless choice – pale lager, nothing too fancy.

They take their first sip in synch, then look at each other kind of awkwardly. “So you’re getting me drunk on one beer?” Lexa grumbles while taking another sip.

“I opened a tab, just in case.”

“I’ll let you know that I have excellent self control.”

The captain turns towards the rest of their teammates currently playing beer pong with a beer pong hat that Charlie Langton judiciously brought along with her. “What the fuck is this?” Lexa gestures towards the ridiculous hat currently sitting atop Raven’s head – six cups are encased in its slots, in a triangular pattern. “I say we act like we don’t know these people.”

“Great idea”, agrees Clarke, swishing her drink around the edges of her glass. “Why don’t you tell me something?”

“Like what?”
“How nice you were to that guy”, Clarke casually declares, shrugging even though she was absolutely moved by Lexa’s earlier gesture, and the dad’s heartwarming reaction.

“How nice you were to that guy”

“You saw”, the brunette brings her gaze upward warily.

“You saw”

“I did.”

“I did.”

“It was nothing”, Lexa swears, but her face says something entirely different. And Clarke notices – she’s getting better at reading her.

“It was nothing”

“See, I always knew you weren’t that bad”, the blonde asserts.

“I always knew you weren’t that bad”

“That’s not true”, the forward battles steadfastly, averted gaze.

“That’s not true”

Clarke’s expression turns concerned. She looks for something in Lexa’s eyes – of what nature, she could not say, but it’s certainly related to the softness she once saw there, the humanity that transpires each time Lexa checks on her, jokes around, tries to be polite, or caring, or funny. She’s curious as to if these are all carefully crafted acts, but inside, she knows they aren’t.

“Why are you still pulling away?” She asks, slightly upset.

“Why are you still pulling away?”

“I’m not pulling away.”

“I’m not pulling away.”

“Do you even know what these guys were saying of you?” Clarke keeps her voice unwavering, but the tightness in her throat is building as she sees the hurt pass over Lexa’s emerald orbs like a stray storm, then vanish as quickly as it appeared.

“Do you even know what these guys were saying of you?”

“I don’t really mind.”

“I don’t really mind.”

And it’s evident, how she tried to simulate carelessness but failed in doing so, like she’s failing more and more at appearing strong and unwavering – but Clarke knows that she is smaller without her hockey gear on, just like she knows she lets glimpses of emotion leak from her somewhat stoic persona. “They’re starting to like you more.”

“They’re starting to like you more.”

“That is nice.”

Another sip of beer. Clarke is growing tired of this scheme. “You know what Briggs said to me last night, though?”

“You know what Briggs said to me last night, though?”

“I have a feeling I’m about to find out.”

“I have a feeling I’m about to find out.”

“She said that you stepped up your game.”

“She said that you stepped up your game.”

A moment of silence during which Lexa’s expression turns incomprehensive first, and then jaded.

“A moment of silence”

“And what is that supposed to mean?”

“And what is that supposed to mean?”

Clarke takes a deep breath, but tries not to show any discomfort slip through. “Means they all think I’m your fucking prey, Lexa, that’s what.”

“Means they all think I’m your fucking prey, Lexa, that’s what.”

She watches as Lexa licks her lips absentmindedly, as if pondering the issue with unforeseen calm.

“She watches as Lexa licks her lips absentmindedly”

“They really think this low of you?”

“They really think this low of you?”

“I thought you’d say something about being flattered.”

“I thought you’d say something about being flattered.”

“And you think low of me as well.”

“And you think low of me as well.”
Clarke’s gaze shoots up and meets Lexa – cerulean battles emerald in a jarring contest of supremacy. Lexa gives up first, surprisingly, although it’s become some sort of pattern of hers, giving up ground for Clarke to do as she pleases. “No, I don’t”, the goalie informs. “I mean, I did.”

“Then what the hell could’ve changed in only three months or so?” Lexa asks, growing restless with each passing second.

“You dropped the asshole mode”, Clarke shrugs again.

“I didn’t ‘drop the asshole mode’”, Lexa sighs, gulping down her drink. “And what does that even mean?”

“You want me to tell you exactly?” Clarke asks, still holding her gaze calmly.

“If possible.”

“Asshole mode is when you wanted to either get into my pants or beat the shit out of me on the ice.”

Clarke enjoys the utter bewilderment unfolding on Lexa’s face. “I didn’t… For fuck’s sake, Clarke, what do you think I am? A rabbit with high testosterone?”

“Pretty much.”

“Oh my go-“ She gasps, too exasperated to even finish her sentence. Then, to the bartender. “Neat double whisky.”

And that is how the drinking starts. As they get drunker, conversation flows and turns to lighter subjects – Clarke doodles on napkins, tells her weirdest childhood stories and even extricates some funny anecdotes out of a laidback Lexa.

It gets past the point of no return when Clarke gives away her phone number (not that she’ll remember any of it the next day) and starts making an inappropriate amount of sexual innuendos. They’re in the middle of an intense conversation about Pixar movies when a guy approaches Clarke and asks if he can buy her a drink.

“Sure”, she replies, a bit too drunk to care. He’s pretty handsome too – that helps, and maybe Clarke would’ve reconsidered if she’d seen the aggressive bulge in Lexa’s jaw.

The dude has a nice smile and confident manners, he sits besides Clarke and orders a next round of drinks.

When asked his name, he sympathetically introduces himself. “I’m Colin.”

“Clarke”, the blonde replies. “This is Lexa.” She motions towards the brunette who waves slightly, eyes still on her drink.

“So what are you guys up to?” the young man asks as a conversation opener.

Clarke grins childishly. “Oh, actually, we’ve been playing a hockey game uptown.” “Awesome! Did you win?” He looks genuinely involved.

“Duh! We’re celebrating! Look at all these happy ladies over there playing beer pong!” Clarke rambles, pointing at Raven who’s trying her best to get a perfect aim, tongue sticking out in the
“Well then, you must’ve done well. What position do you play?” Colin asks, but Clarke is oblivious to his attempts at hitting on her, instead focusing on her drink and the beer pong competition underway.

“She’s the goalie”, Lexa replies for her. “I’m the captain.”

“Oh, that’s nice.”

“Yeah, it is nice, Colin, it is very nice.” Lexa tries to be subtle, but even a very drunk Clarke can notice the aggressiveness in her tone. “Who are you trying to pick up, her or me?”

The poor guy is suddenly at a loss of words. “I don’t… I mean, neither.”

“Well I’m gay, Colin. Real fucking gay. I am so gay I am the summit of gayness, like Mt. Everest or the Kilimandjaro - that’s who I am.” Lexa manages to keep a very serious tone and glare, and Colin is turning uneasy.

“Alright, then”, he stutters, running a hand through his hair. “I didn’t mean to bother you.”

“You’re not bothering us”, Clarke quickly intervenes, but the guy is already leaving, stumbling across a chair along the way. “Geez, what the fuck did he do to you?” The goalie grumbles, finishing her glass. Lexa shrugs.

“Nothing”, she replies, as a victorious smile creeps on her lips.

They pick up right where they left off in the Pixar conversation, and when Raven comes to get Clarke, she finds that the both of them have fallen asleep tangled together – Clarke’s head resting on Lexa’s forearm, their fingers nearly touching.

She knows this should be kept a secret.

Chapter End Notes

That's all for now! Next chapter will be "fluffier" and shorter, so I'll do my best to publish it soon!

Here's my tumblr, go check it out:

https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/
New generation

Chapter Summary

Clarke worries (it's cute) and it's time to see how smol and adorable Lexa gets when she's around kids.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Time to catch up with the hockey squad!
This chapter is a bit fluffier than the previous one, I hope you'll like it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The air is particularly harsh, even for a January day. Clarke spends ten minutes in front of her suitcase wondering whether she should put two jackets on or just a thicker coat instead.

She can already hear Raven laughing as soon as she steps around the corner of the hall, and into the lobby of the hotel. The girls are in a great mood – Charlie’s sitting on Lauren Briggs’ lap, Jaime Hurd is telling jokes and goofing around. “So then I told her, ‘what the fuck did that dog eat?’ and she told me she had no idea so I brought the damn thing to the vet myself, would you believe that?”

“But then what did it eat?” Raven asks, way too involved in the conversation.

“Wait, I’m getting there-“

“But it wouldn’t’ve had the time to eat whatever shit was in the house, if only she baby proofed it before going to Finland! People never think about these things!” Briggs shouts over everyone else, and Hurd gives her a look of agreement.

“Very true”, the winger acknowledges. Then, to Clarke, who’s dropping her bags beside hers and putting on her scarf. “Oh hey, Griffy.”

“Hey guys, what’s up?”

“Not much. Reeve has it in her head that everyone must be there for her post-game announcements.”

“What kind of announcements?” Clarke asks, curious.

“Oh, probably the usual ‘good job speech’. We’ll find out once everyone is there.”

“And who’s missing?”

“Woods.”

“What?”
Her voice came out a tad too sharp, and she regrets the tone of urgency it displayed. “Who took care of her yesterday?” She asks, and Raven gets defensive.

“Don’t look at me, you should be glad I took you in!” The blue-liner counters, hands risen in submission.

“She was piss drunk! Do not tell me you left her there!” Clarke warms up in anger, already waving her hands around for further emphasis.

Raven senses the tension build around her like the walls of a prison and looks to her teammates for support. “Hurd?”

The winger shrugs. “I mean, I did go to wake her up, but she told me she’d leave later, and then there were ladies with her.”

A wave of frustration washes over Clarke, and the scary thing is she doesn’t know whether it’s due to jealousy or pure guilt. “And how the fuck do you think she got back here?”

“It’s a 3-minute walk, Clarke”, Raven points out, but she’s still sheepish.

“I know, I’m just saying she might’ve gotten hurt, and before you say she’s a responsible adult (she stops Raven just as she’s opening her mouth to speak), she’s also your captain and your teammate, so next time she is getting drunk in a bar, knock some fucking sense into yourself and bring her back home!” Clarke yells, pointing to each of her astounded teammates.

“I’m sure she got back home alright, Clarke”, says Lauren Briggs. “Don’t worry – besides, as Jaime said, she wasn’t alone.”

Yeah, because she needed to be reminded of that. She forcefully drives away thoughts of Lexa being hit on by her fans, but then it only gets worse – she sees Lexa flirting back, and bringing one of them to her room, and kissing her with that cocky half-smile and strong hands to lift her up on a table and take her right then, right there, gasping and bent over and held down and stop stop stop.

“And if she didn’t?” Clarke shouts, almost out of breath because now she sees Lexa cross a road and get hit by a car.

If this goes on, she’ll have to sit down at some point, and breathe slowly, because she is panicking right now, isn’t she? Is this a panic attack? Suddenly her throat is closing up, and nothing can go through, nothing.

“If who didn’t what?” A voice behind them blurts, and Clarke closes her eyes angrily, takes a deep breath, for she knows who is behind her – knows, and is both relieved and annoyed by it.

“Well, there she is”, Raven declares matter-of-factly.

“Where else could I be?” Lexa asks, puzzled by the question and the level of anger Clarke’s gaze now holds.

A moment passes, and then Clarke is rushing towards her abruptly, incapable of controlling her emotions whatsoever. “On fucking time instead of making the whole team wait on you like you’re royalty!”

Lexa’s gaze is furious at first, but it softens with each passing second because she is not dumb, she knows this is just worry passing behind Clarke’s oceanic orbs, she knows Clarke reacts like this when she is scared – because she is starting to know Clarke.
“Alright, then. I woke up late, I snoozed the alarm, shame on me”, Lexa grunts sarcastically, arms crossed and slowly advancing towards both Clarke and the door leading to the bus outside.

“I can’t even look at you right now”, the blonde goalie counters aggressively, picking up her bags and making her way to the door, passing by Lexa in the process and bumping shoulders with her.

“Come on, Griffin”, Lexa pleads, annoyed. Then, to her teammates after Clarke leaves the room and is seen through the window as she’s entering the bus. “Is she really that mad?”

Everyone nods gravely. “Alright, what’s the procedure, Reyes?” Charlie asks, looking at Raven like she’s expecting crucial information.

“Well, first, no sudden movements”, Raven jokes, turning around to face Lexa. “And oh yeah, next time, make sure you let people take care of you when you’re drunk! See, that’s convenient, isn’t it? Easy to understand and put into practice, one would’ve thought.”

Lexa winces slightly and leaves the hotel, determined to fix this situation.

Clarke doesn’t speak to her for the trip back, until Lexa decides to take matters in her own hands and sits beside her. “Did I say something when I was drunk? Is that it?” She gives Clarke a sheepish, hopeful look, and that, just that, hits Clarke deeply in the chest– to see Lexa remorseful, submitted. It is such a rare sight.

“Oh, you said many things”, Clarke mumbles, eyes still fixed on the window and the landscape running at it side.

“What did I say?”

“Stop pushing this.”

“Goddamnit, Clarke, nobody gets away with giving me the attitude game, you should know that by now!” Lexa downright yells at Clarke, eyes shooting lightning bolts.

“Oh yeah? What are you gonna do about it?”

“You don’t wanna find out.” Lexa tries to look intimidating and from the look she gets from Clarke, it seems she succeeded for once (surprisingly enough).

“Exactly - that’s why I’m asking you, very politely, to drop it!”

“It’s not considered polite when one is yelling, Clarke!” Lexa barks back, frustrated.

The blonde crosses her arms, stares at the seat in front of her, flustered and still very much annoyed. “What do you want me to say?”

“Why are you so angry with me?” Lexa tries, menacing but calm.

“Because you’re an idiot, that’s why!” Clarke exclaims, all of a sudden ready to empty her conscience.

“Ha, there it is-” Lexa starts, only to be cut off ferociously.

“No! No, you listen, Alexandria Woods! You wanna know why I’m angry with you? Because
you don’t fucking care, and you didn’t let Hurd bring you back, and then you expect people not to care either, because hey, you’re just kicking out your chicks from the penthouse while we’re all worried about you!”

When Lexa tries to speak, Clarke cuts her off again. “I’m not done!”

The captain grumbles a bit, but obeys nevertheless.

“You scared the shit out of me”, Clarke huffs, voice breaking just a bit.

“Sorry”, Lexa apologizes with a kicked puppy look.

“Don’t you dare do it again.”

“I won’t.”

“Yeah, you better.”

“I’m not complaining, Clarke”, Lexa affirms with a half grin.

“Stop that”, the blonde complains, rolling her eyes.

Lexa acts surprised, smiles a shit eating grin, eyes gleaming with amusement. “Stop what?”

“You know I can’t stay mad at you when you’re like that!”

“Exactly, that’s called a strategical choice.”

“Why don’t you tell me about your other strategical choices? Like flirting with chicks instead of bringing your ass back home?”

Lexa’s smile falters, and her eyebrows knit into a frown. “That’s part of the job, Clarke. Don’t you give autographs as well?”

“Yes, but I don’t give them on boobs”, Clarke replies, not skipping a beat.

“Alright, I don’t… I mean, I get it, but what difference does it make?”

“Doesn’t it get boring?”

“What?”

“The whole ‘hit on a chick, bring her home, kick her out, repeat’?”

“I don’t see any problem with that”, Lexa affirms.

Clarke bears her gaze into Lexa’s - cerulean meets emerald in a dazzling contest, and none of them give ground, both too proud, both too hot headed to submit.

“So you don’t get tired of it?”

“No”, lies Lexa.

She thinks of Costia.

And suddenly, there are unshed tears trying to creep out in the form of a nasty knot that closes around her throat.
“Like, instead of always having sex, you could also just watch a movie, you know. On the couch, in your pajamas.”

It hits Lexa so deeply that she almost winces, and when Clarke turns around, she sees how pretty she is, how pretty – not just hot or attractive, but pretty, gorgeous, a sight in itself, a thing of beauty, a landscape you admire on a hill, a diamond you polish everyday until it’s the most exquisite treasure, a delight, a shooting star in a jet-black sky.

From then, until the bus parks beside the arena and spits out a torrent of players, Lexa is deeply confused.

“Y’all listen, I’ll be very brief.”

Reeve raises a hand to obtain complete silence in the locker-room. “I think each of you ladies gave a hell of a performance. I mean it. I’m really proud of you, and I’m not gonna ask for you to give any more effort today, because hey, hotel beds are so fucking uncomfortable…”

The remark provokes a small chorus of laughs. “So hooray! Get your gear and go home, sit on your couch and eat cake, for all I care.”

The whole room comes alive in cheers and pure joy, but Reeve is not done. “One last thing though, and then goodbye. You guys all know the Strikers hockey academy is doing the annual practice with the pros?”

A response of general agreement resonates through the room. “Good. Would anyone be interested in participating?”

Charlie Langton nods towards Clarke. “Isn’t Griffin the one who usually does it?”

“Well the kids asked for her and Woods, this year, I was wondering if any of you guys would like to do it in case she doesn’t want to?”

Clarke is shocked by those words. She’s seen Lexa with Aden, and therefore knows that she’s not too bad with kids. “Oh, she’ll be happy to do it”, the goalie declares confidently.

“Are you sure about that, Griffin?” Reeve asks, hesitant.

“Of course, I’ll ask her on my way out if you want.”

She mainly wants to force Lexa out of her comfort zone, to make her enjoy herself and have fun instead of always obsessing over practice. She finds her outside of the sports therapist’s room, eyeing a sheet filled with various stretching exercises.

“You injured?” Clarke carefully asks, readjusting the strap of her duffel bag on her shoulder.

“Little strain”, Lexa’s gaze jerks upward, strict by default – it’s the look she has on during faceoffs.

“Oh. So you were going to try them now?”

“Yeah, little session real quick - Ed opened the gym for me”, the center casually offers, shrugging.

Clarke sighs, exasperated. “Why don’t you just take it down a notch? Coach said no practice
“I wasn’t there, so let’s say it doesn’t apply to me”, Lexa answers, serious but still displaying the smallest hint of a smile.

“Lexa.”

“Clarke.”

“Why don’t you have fun instead?”

“Gym is fun”, Lexa asserts sharply.

“I meant real fun, not obsessive fun.”

“Now, now, what are you gonna coax me into doing?”

“The fact that you know I’ll succeed amuses me”, Clarke grins.

“Just tell me what you want”, Lexa whines, rubbing her face tiredly.

Clarke’s smile only grows as she suddenly notices how Lexa’s gone from intimidating stud to soft teddy bear in a matter of months. “Can you do an activity with me?”

“Depends on what it is, and if it involves wearing something ridiculous or putting on a cucumber mask.”

“It does not”, Clarke assures, smile still on.

“Well, thank God.”

“It does involve little kids, though.”

“I knew it was too good to be true”, Lexa huffs - arms crossed, gaze wary.

Clarke lets out a cry of despair. “Oh, for God’s sake! You love kids!”

“I most certainly do not”, Lexa counters, eyes gleaming with frustration.

“I saw you with Aden!”

“He’s my nephew, of course I like him!”

“And that kid you brought to the game with his dad!”

“I didn’t interact with him”, Lexa points out, always the diplomat.

“Tomayto, tomahto.”

“I am incapable of being nice to kids, Clarke, they’re all scared of me.”

“You are basically a kitten.”

“Would you stop calling me that?!?”

“Never.”
“Ask Pam Reed if a kitten could’ve pummeled her like I did”, the center grunts with gritted teeth.

“Alright, alright, don’t get all worked up! All I’m saying is they asked for you, Lexa.”

Her frustrated expression turns into a mainly puzzled one. “Asked?”

“Yes”, Clarke assures with a satisfied nod.

“I am atrocious with kids, Clarke, I’ll only make them sad.”

Clarke sighs again, frustrated. “I’m telling you, they asked for you!”

“Well, then, what do I do?”

“Oh my god, you just come and you have a good time with them, and they’ll be excited just to be around you. You’re like Wonder Woman to them, or something.”

“Well, what if they realize that I’m all clumsy or cold with them, and then they’re all sad because Wonder Woman is not as chill as they thought?”

“Alright, deep breaths, Lexa. You go there, you smile, you wave, you say hello. That’s all.”

“Looks like you pulled this out of a book called Recipe for Awkwardness”, Lexa complaints, looking suspicious.

“Lex, come on, you’re 5”7, they’re about yea high – chances are they won’t even see your face properly.”

“Okay.”

“Wow, I didn’t think you’d fall for that. That was like my last attempt.”

“I know, it’s pitiful”, Lexa deplores with a disgusted expression.

But she’s agreeing nevertheless, isn’t she? And that makes Clarke smile again. “Come on, tiger. Gotta face this next challenge of yours. Ooh, kids! Scared shitless! I can’t even breathe!”

“Clarke Griffin, I swear-“

“9-1-1, this is Lexa Woods, there are toddlers everywhere and I’m having a serious panic attack, and oh dear lord – one of them is currently grabbing my leg, it’s a matter of seconds before he’s ripping it apart.”

“You know, I hate you sometimes”, growls Lexa, following suit and accompanying Clarke towards the hall.

“Only sometimes? Shit, that’s big step-up!”

“I deem you unworthy of my attention for the moment, Clarke. Thought I’d let you know.”

The kids are not that young, actually – some are nine, others are twelve. They all know how to skate properly, how to shoot or tend the goal, and boy do they know who Clarke Griffin is. Reed doesn’t even need to introduce her to the group – she just enters the room and generates gasps and
noises of enthusiasm. “So, Clarke will be teaching you guys a few of her secret tricks”, Reeve declares to the young goalies already dressed in uniform, barely able to contain their excitement.

“But don’t tell anyone. It’s a secret.” Clarke jokes, exemplifying her words with a ‘shhh’ motion from the index finger.

Lexa’s entrance generates such a turmoil it’s almost otherworldly. Little boys and girls are looking at each other, their faces the setting of gigantic grins, eyes filled with wonder, and their feet tapping in excitement.

“You guys know who this lady is?” Reeve asks, and the kids reply with screams.

“Lexa Woods!” Exclaims a little girl whose smile is so big it barely fits her face.

“The Commander!” An older boy adds, with a ceremonious bowing motion.

Lexa laughs, already at ease – and Clarke forgets she even heard her express initial discomfort. She’s casual and confident, as usual.

“What’s your name, young man?” the brunette asks with a half grin, and the little boy flushes instantly.

“Me?”

“Yes, you.”

“Oh. Uh, it’s Adam, ma’am.”

“Drop the ma’am, we’re not in the military last I checked.”

Clarke cannot help but smile at Lexa’s poise.

“What position are you, Adam?” the forward asks, with a reassuring smile.

“Center”, he replies, but Clarke swears she heard and saw him gulp before the answer could even escape his lips.

“No way! My favorite position!” Lexa exclaims with a smile.

“I know, right”, Clarke laughs from the other side of the room, while reuniting all her little goalies to soon jump on the ice.

“Be sure to get your gear and follow!” Reeve orders, then runs to fetch a stick that was left behind and gives it back to its owner, a tiny boy who mustn’t be older than nine.

They take their practice run with the kids, Lexa showing off her speed and agility in front of their astonished eyes (and Clarke’s mildly exasperated glance).

The blonde goalie has a front row seat when it comes to witnessing Lexa’s charisma and cute manners with the kids, how she lifts the small ones back up when they fall, how she makes sure to treat them like big boys and big girls to make them proud. “So if I’m coming up to the net, look - hey, I’m on a breakaway! What is Clarke going to do?”

“Stop the puck”, says a little girl matter-of-factly.

“Yes, Sally, great deduction”, replies Lexa with a grin, and only Clarke appears to notice that she is
half sarcastic – and gives her a subtle look of judgement.

“Apart from that?” the center continues, now drifting towards the goal and picking up a puck on her way there.

“Outplay her”, Adam declares, shrugging.

“Uh huh, outplay her… What is Clarke trying to do to make the save?”

“Know where you’re going to shoot!” blurs a voice in the back of the group.

“Bam! Got it!” Lexa exclaims. “Was that Kenny? Nice one!”

She brings the puck in front of her and plays with it, dangles it around to try to confuse Clarke, who’s watching closely. “Basically, Clarke is not moving yet if I’m coming in from the front, but if I’m coming from the sides – and that’s something I like to do in a breakaway – she’ll be matching my speed. It’s sort of a game of who moves first, because look-“

Lexa slides the puck on one side, which makes Clarke copy the movement and give the start of a push – yet that was only a bluff, and Lexa immediately brings the puck back to the opposite direction, then snipes it in the open net. “I’m giving her directions, just the small twitch of the stick or a turn… Anything to make her move, because if she stays right there in the net, she can stack the pads, she can catch it – Clarke, give us a piece of that glove, would you?”

The goalie smiles through the grid of her mask and sets herself in position, then traps Lexa’s wrist shot like it’s no big deal – except it is a big deal, but she does it all the time, despite Lexa’s pucks easily topping sixty-five miles per hour.

The kids react with a chorus of ‘oohs’ and ‘ahs’. “There, so you want to fit that puck at the sides, force her to leave a chunk of her net open.”

The kids are so serious it’s adorable – the way they give little nods of acknowledgement, keep their gaze steady and make sure not to miss a word of Lexa’s orders. “Three main options, there – snipe, backhand, and pads. Now, you know your shot. Don’t try to slip it in the five-hole unless your shot is really that good. I know some of you want to keep it simple, you’re stressed, you don’t know what the heck you’re supposed to do…”

She almost said hell, but quickly recovered and the kids saw nothing there. “Just think that breakaways are stressful for both the players and the goalie, therefore you wanna tease them, pull these mind strings, force them to move first. Clarke, a word for the little goalies?”

Clarke nods and pulls up her mask, sliding around the net to casually lean on its frame. “Alright, listen up! Remember what we said earlier about things like matching the speed, avoiding unnecessary moves and staying in their space all along. Don’t get all stressed, I see you guys – you’re thinking ‘damn, I gotta impress her’. At the end of the day, it is just a game, it’s not the end of the world if you give the goal.”

Lexa smiles at that, impressed at how comfortable Clarke is with the kids.

“Now, Eric goes first! Who wants to shoot?” the blonde asks, settling beside the end boards to freely watch the plays.

“Me!” Yells a young girl who’s probably ten or eleven. Lexa leans forward to give her cues. “Remember - watch his movements at all times.”
She scores on a wobbly shot that climbs over the left pad after she slid around to force a push out of the young goalie. When Clarke sees disappointment shine through his gaze, she comforts her protégé. “Hey, learning experience! It’s alright! Do you know how many goals I give in a year?”

The boy shakes his head in negation, already losing his hunched shoulders and gloomy pout.

“A whole lot, that is. Lexa scores on me all the time, do you think I get mad?” She adds, pointing towards the center who can’t help but feel a prickling sensation in her guts.

Again, little Eric shakes his head. “Do I have another chance?” He asks, pleading and the cuteness is melting Clarke’s heart.

“Of course you do, honey!” She assures, gesturing towards the next offensive player to come forward.

Eric makes a nice save with the tip of the blocker, and looks at Clarke adoringly when she compliments him. “Yes, that’s what I’m talking about! Great job on that positioning, keep working on that.”

Lexa watches as Clarke skulls forward and into the slot for further explanation. “When you get to the top, try to set yourself right away because otherwise you’ll be drifting when it’s time to receive the shot.”

She curves her feet to secure her stance and stays perfectly static. “See? Better, right?”

“Yeah!” Exclaims the little goalie with a smile, and he leaves the net to his teammate. They carry on with the breakaway plays, until Adam comes forward, last but not least.

“Hold on, Griffin”, Lexa requests. “Would you take his shot?”

“Sure”, Clarke replies, moving to gain control of her net.

The young center’s face is priceless – his eyes widen, his mouth drops open as he realizes he is about to face one of his favorite hockey players. “Really?” He asks, unsure as to how he can hope to compete with such a living legend.

“No, just do your best”, Lexa advises.

Off he goes, with good speed and as much confidence as he can muster – he even does a little toe drag and tries to bury the backhand, and Clarke purposely lets it fly past her shoulder without entirely raising the glove.

“Damn, son! You gotta show me your tricks, someday!” Lexa shouts, winking at the astounded little boy who can only grin.

Clarke’s heart soars when she sees Lexa fist bump her little apprentice, and stay on the ice with him a minute or two after practice to talk and exchange over hockey techniques. “Don’t stop playing, alright? There’s something there, you just have to develop it.”

Lexa doesn’t give praise often - but when she does, it’s well deserved.

“Admit that you had fun”, Clarke teases while snapping open the buckles of her pads in the locker room.

“I did, actually”, Lexa declares with a shrug.
“So…?” The goalie trails, hands slightly raising upward.

“So, what?”

“So, you also admit that I was right?”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake”, Lexa mutters under her breath, but she can’t help the smile drawing along her lips.

“I didn’t catch that?”

“Yes, you were right, Clarke. There. Happy, now?”

“Very”, assures the blonde, grinning.

She then settles on a bench near Lexa, watches as the center removes the remaining pieces of equipment – shoulder guard, elbow pads and shin protectors. “I saw your sister waiting for you in the stands.”

“Yeah, she’s picking me up.”

“What’s her name again?”

“Anya.”

“Nice. And why are you keeping your skates?”

Lexa looks at her in vague incomprehension. “Uh, bringing Aden on the ice, why?”

“Just curious.”

Clarke later tries to convince herself that watching Lexa bending over and carrying Aden two inches over the ice wouldn’t have an effect on her – yet here she is, almost weak in the knees, eyes shining with adoration, grin devastatingly big.

“She always says she’s bad with kids”, says a voice behind her.

When she turns around, searching for its origin, she finds Anya leaning against the door frame, arms crossed and playful half grin.

“Yeah, and look at her.” Clarke nods toward the tall silhouette hovering benevolently over the toddler, making sure he’s not falling or hurting himself in any way.

“You must think it funny how she’s so full of shit with everyone and then takes her little voice whenever there are children around”, Anya chuckles, green eyes darting away almost nostalgically.

“Indeed”, Clarke replies, and wonders if she can say what she wants to say, then thinks fuck it, and says it anyway. “Is she like this with everyone?”

“Is she like what? An arrogant jackass?”

Clarke wants to deny that last affirmation, but she doesn’t have time to speak, for Anya continues on. “No, she’s not. I mean, she can be annoying from time to time, but I’m her family, and she values family a lot.”

“I’d like to see her all nice and friendly”, Clarke admits out loud, then immediately regrets it but
Anya’s smile only enlarges.

“Oh, but darling, that’s how she is with you!” The woman exclaims, giggling.

“What?”

“If you think she’s bad with you, you should see how she is with my ex-husband! God, I’m lucky she didn’t get arrested.”

“That bad?” Clarke asks, puzzled as to how the Lexa she knows – inoffensive, witty, loyal, could turn hostile with someone. Then again, she’s seen her fight Pam Reed, therefore knows she’s capable of some upsetting things.

“Let’s say she can get protective. But she’s a little puppy when she’s around you - I saw her earlier today, following you around, smiling all the time.”

“Well, we’ve grown to be buddies.”

“She talks about you. Lexa never talks about her teammates.”

“Really?”

“Yep. Had to see for myself if you were that awesome.”

“Well, I like licorice and Disney movies, I guess that would make me kinda cool.”

Anya lets out a little laugh, getting comfortable with the conversation. “Uh huh, and Lexa likes black jellybeans and horror movies, see, it’s like the Yin and the Yang.”

“What did she say about me?” Clarke cannot help but ask, curious.

Anya seems to ponder for a moment, then relaxes a bit. “That you’re a good goalie, for a start.”

“Some of it is luck”, Clarke admits, slightly flustered.

“Not a lot of it, if you ask me”, Anya snaps right back, still grinning.

Then, more serious. “So, for example, when she’d win a game a couple of years ago, she’d come into the house super proud of herself, and she’d say things like ‘my backhand looked good, blah blah blah, I was faster than usual, I scored a goal’, and whatnot.”

“Sounds like her”, the goalie mumbles with a sarcastic smile.

“Exactly, that was normal, right? But now, she storms through the kitchen talking about what you did, how ‘her goalie pantsed them all’, and then when I ask her how she played, she’ll be like ‘oh, uh, I did a hat trick’ and then jump right back to you and how flawless you are.”

Clarke is startled by the comment – she didn’t know Lexa was that impressed by her, let alone did she know that Lexa spoke about her outside of practice. Then she thinks about Lexa’s smiles and laughs, how tiny and awkward and precious she’s beginning to look whenever Clarke is in the room, how she’s changed for the better since she got into the team, and only then does Clarke reflect on that fact, only then does she ask herself this one question that now seems perfectly called for.

Did she change because of me?
Sure, Lexa still makes cocky comments, still brags about her talent and skill, still likes it when girls are fussing over her, but then why is she always running after Clarke during practice and breaks, why is she trying all of a sudden, trying to make her laugh, trying to get her attention, trying to impress her, trying to make her smile?

_Goddamnit._ This is giving her a headache.

She’s beginning to get lost in her thoughts when Anya brings her back to reality by giving her a soft nudge on the shoulder. “You know what, kid?”

“Huh?” Does Clarke, dumbfounded.

“I know Lexa. She’s my baby sis, and I gotta look out for her in case she’s about to make bad decisions – which happens a lot, let me tell you. But to be honest, since she got into this team… It’s like she’s different. Not entirely new, like, I still recognize her and all, but… She’s growing up, I think.”

Anya pauses for five seconds, her gaze drifting to the ice where Lexa is currently skating backwards, Aden holding onto her hands, as if she wants to make him believe he’s going at such a high speed by himself. The little boy is laughing so loud it resonates in the entire skating rink.

“She stopped taking people for granted”, the older sister blurts, half confused and half amazed.

The conversation doesn’t stop – they speak of other things – yet all Clarke can think of is that last sentence. It resonates in her head like a mantra, and from now on it’s like everything is starting to make sense.

Chapter End Notes

That’s it for now, stay tuned for the next update!

*UPDATE*

Guys, for the past week I’ve had little to no free time for I’ve been preparing for midterms which are this week (on wednesday, thursday and friday). I apologize for the big wait, I know some of you are pretty excited to see what happens next in this story, but I’m gonna have to ask you to wait a little bit more... One more week, then I’ll deliver the next chapter, and I promise it’ll be an amazing one!

Follow me on tumblr for bonus content!

https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/
Chapter Summary

Anya happily sticks her nose in Lexa's personal life. The girls share a passionate conversation about snowmen and pokemons. Lexa and Clarke workout together.

Chapter Notes

I'm back! Thank you all for being so patient, I apologize for the long wait!
xx

Lexa doesn’t get suspicious when Anya gently delivers a plate of fresh pancakes right in front of her – and frankly, she should’ve, seeing as how Anya is now looking at her expectantly, leaning against the wall.

“Damn, thanks”, grins Lexa with a nod towards her sister.

“No problem.”

Then they stay motionless, in what becomes a somewhat awkward silence, until Anya finally finds a way to start a conversation. To her defense, Lexa isn’t exactly the most talkative individual.

“So, I met your goalie, yesterday. Clarke, is that it?”

“Yes”, the answer comes barging out of Lexa – an attempt to end this conversation before it even starts. And then she panics, looks at the pancakes and knows that this was all part of the strategy, but she can’t do anything about it except pray silently that this doesn’t go any further.

“I like her”, pushes Anya with another smile, and Lexa begins to think she’s just not very lucky in life.

“Cool.”

“Do you?”

Lexa stays abashed, looking blankly at her sister like she’s just asked her the mass of the sun.

“Lexa?”

“No.”

“Oh, you don’t like her?” Anya frowns, confused.

“Yes! No! Pass! I don’t like this type of question, it’s like there’s no good answer!”
“Oh my god Lexa, you’ve gone soft! Yes! I did my job!”

Anya is jubilating, dancing in the middle of the living room, while Lexa looks like a scared kitten at a party. “I’m not soft, where did you-”

“Don’t tell me you don’t gaze at her lovingly during games.”

“Anya”, Lexa bites sharply, giving her the death stare.

“She’d be the first one to actually knock you off your high horse-“

“Shut up-“

“Serve you some humble pie-“

“Cut it off!” Lexa raises her voice abruptly – she’s had enough.

She can tell she’s disappointed Anya, with the way her gaze lowers and darkens, lost in deep thoughts. “Alright, I’m sorry. Guess I got overexcited.”

“You did.”

Anya breathes in, turns around only to flop down on the couch, discouraged. “God, Lexa, the things you’re missing.”

“I’m not missing anything”, she counters aggressively, plucking a piece of pancake from the plate and plunging it into her mouth.

“I just think you’ve never thought about the possibilities”, Anya brushes it off, still out of Lexa’s eyesight.

“There are no possibilities.”

“You’re just scared of them.”

“I can’t be scared of something that doesn’t exist.”

“Yet.”

“Goddamnit Anya, don’t you have a kid to take care of?”

She gets a glimpse of her sister’s head popping over the cushion of the couch, and she looks amused if not annoyed. “Oh, he’s fine, playing in his room like a big boy, while you are acting like a child!”

Lexa’s head shoots backwards in frustration. “I’m not acting like a child, I’m just being realistic!”

“She is such a nice girl!”

“Exactly!”

“She is!” Anya yells, then her insistent expression turns into a mainly confused one. “Wait, what?”

Lexa rolls her eyes, angry that she has to put some effort and explain her thoughts. “She’s… She’s just not for me, alright? I’m not committed to these things.”

“Oh, please, Lexa, she says hi and you giggle.”
“Could you not?!”

“Sorry, go ahead.”

Lexa pauses, examining her sister apprehensively, then gives a curt nod of acceptance. “I’m done running after the pretty girl.”

“You did it like once, Lexa.”

“And I didn’t like it, so there you go!”

After a short silence, Anya continues. “Don’t you think you’ll get attached anyway?”

“I won’t”, Lexa affirms assertively, and her mind is telling the truth, but her heart knows that she can never, ever, try something with Griffin, or else things will get dangerous.

“How could you be satisfied with this? Lexa, you’re my baby sis and I love you so much but if you don’t let people in, chances are, you’ll break!”

Lexa quickly turns around to fully face her sister, shoulders dropping and gaze gloomy. “What makes you say that?”

She thinks she might’ve put too much bite in her tone, for Anya is now standing in front of the TV, looking defenseless, exposed. “You’re too strong, Lexa. You’ve been carrying teams and carrying me and carrying yourself, and when you get home, you’re not happy anymore – I see it. And I’m the only one left for you in this family. It scares me so damn much, because I don’t think I could pull you back together again—”

“But you won’t have to!” Lexa shouts, getting up also, but to leave the room, this time.

“Stop looking for the easy way out!” The older sister orders, coming forward to block the way. Then, softer. “Look at me, Lexa.”

When she doesn’t obey, Anya repeats – a bit firmer, but still indulgently. “Look at me.”

“What?” The hockey player’s eyes snap upward, nestle deeply into Anya’s.

“Are you happy, Lexa?”

“Stop.”

“Lexa.”

“Not always, alright?” She blurts, unsure if it’s Anya’s seriousness that broke her walls or just the pressure she’s been putting on herself lately. “But I mean, people aren’t happy all the time!”

“Do you like her?” Anya asks bluntly, not skipping a beat.

Yes, Lexa thinks, then panics, not only because the answer scares her, but also because the rapidity with which her brain conjured it is unsettling.

Because she used to hate Clarke, and that’s a fact – just like the mere thought of her bringing a smile to Lexa’s face is also a fact. And this lightness that spreads in the pit of her stomach whenever she gets a glimpse of the blonde goalie, and how she loses her words simply because Clarke is in the room with her, and the pure joy of watching her make these unbelievable saves, and the pride of having such an amazing player in her team…
“If I say I like her, you’ll start planning a marriage”, Lexa enounces plainly, rubbing her face annoyedly.

“You like her!”

“That’s not true!”

But it’s too late, now – Anya’s already convinced. “Ask her on a date! Bring her flowers!”

“I don’t wanna date anyone!”

Anya laughs, rubbing at her brow with both hands. “Okay, then, you don’t have to. Is that better?”

“Not really”, huffs Lexa grumpily, “because you’re still suggesting it strongly.”

“I can’t force you to do anything, Lex.”

The hockey player pauses, pensively contemplating the issue. “Alright, then… I’ll be lifting downstairs.”

And she could’ve gotten away with it just fine if Anya didn’t say anything else. Only, she did. “Does Clarke work out often?”

It resonates in the room – Lexa doesn’t reply.

For the next few days, she can’t stop thinking about the damn question.

It starts snowing early in the morning, and from the look of it (and the size of the snowflakes) it won’t stop anytime soon.

Clarke gets to the arena after a whole ten minutes of de-icing – whether it be her car or her driveway, and half of the team is already complaining about the climate (while the other half only cares about making a snowman). In fact, when Clarke enters the locker room, Raven is tirelessly explaining to a confused Lexa why this type of snow is clearly ‘construction material’.

“Do not tell me that you will wait this one out! It’s clearly the sticky one!” She yells at Lexa, who’s still trying to properly grasp the topic.

“There’s a difference?” She tries, wincing slightly at Raven’s cry of exasperation.

“Well of course there is! This one sticks together! The other is all powdery and doesn’t do shit! Oh my god, did you even have a childhood?”

“I did! I just didn’t like playing in the snow that much!” The center defends herself, sullen and frowning.

“What-“ Raven starts, but has to repeat her sentence again because Charlie Langton is gasping loudly at the declaration. “What the fuck is wrong with this kid? What did you do then, Lexa, huh, what did you do? Play Pokemon?”

“As a matter of fact, I did.”

“That is the least you could do! Just say you didn’t take Bulbasaur.”
“I took Charmander”, Lexa affirms, nodding solemnly.

“Oh, thank God”, Raven murmurs as she leans dramatically on Charlie’s shoulder like a flustered lady in the 1800s. “What about you, Griffin?”

Clarke’s eyes shoot upwards, meeting her friend’s. “Me? Oh, I took Squirtle."

“Traitor”, Charlie grumbles. “I suppose you like Mudkip as well? Fuck that, it’s Torchik for the win.”

The goalie starts slipping into gear, pulling her chest protector over her head and adjusting it mechanically as she’s done it a hundred times. “Torchik is cute, I agree, but what’s up with Blaziken? I mean, he’s got hair, he’s got little poofy feet, but what is he? A chicken?”

“I think he’s more of an eagle, actually”, Lexa shrugs off, choosing a stick from the rack on the wall, where they’re all lined up in an orderly fashion.

“Oh, he is not. He’s a weird ass chicken, I’m telling you”, Clarke barks from the other side of the room, halfway through tying her first skate.

Lexa scoffs, amused. “He’s got giant fucking claws, I don’t think chicken have any of those.”

“His name ends in -icken! Coincidence? I think not!”

Raven stands ups, apparently eager to leave the room. “Great, now that we’ve fed you enough material to start having one of your many pointless arguments…”

Lexa rolls her eyes, sticking out her tongue at the defenseman who’s already out the door, followed closely by Charlie Langton. “It’s called putting some life into the room!” She yells, but they’re probably too far away to hear her.

“I’m surprised your previous teammates didn’t stuff socks in your mouth”, Clarke chants singsongingly, securing her pads on with the click of a buckle.

“Where did you get the idea, Griffin? Have you, by any chance, been inflicted a similar punishment?” Lexa grins widely.

Clarke’s head is thrown aback in both frustration and amusement. “Keep running your mouth, we’ll see who’s laughing when I rob you this afternoon.”

“Shit, I’m all scared now”, mocks Lexa, still smiling arrogantly. “Don’t worry, I’ll clean the pucks out of your net when I’m done.”

That makes Clarke jump on her feet and advance menacingly towards her captain. “You either get the fuck out or you get my stick up your ass.”

Lexa tries not to chuckle and points the paddle in Clarke’s hand. “This is way too big to fit in my butt.”

“Wanna bet?”

And seeing Clarke’s deadpan look, she loses her grin and replaces it with a slightly worried one. “You know what? No.”

The remaining players of the team cheer and whistle as the goalie and the captain leave the room, the sound of their still vivid bickering immediately filling the hall.
“No quick release, Woods, we’ve talked about this.”

Reeve is circling the faceoff spot near the net, tapping her stick on the ice in mild frustration. “Look for the options when you’re up there! They’re not peewees, they’ll make these saves!”

Clarke pulls her mask up and casually leans on the frame of the goal.

“I want Langton on your left, today, she’s showed me what she can bring.”

Charlie jumps on the ice eagerly as Lucy Marks makes her way to the bench.

Reeve settles on the blue line to watch the play. “Funnel. Don’t leave your spot this time, I want the tic-tac-toe – make it happen.”

They spend some time moving the puck and organizing, while Raven, Octavia, Briggs and Wayne are working on coverage. Lexa tries a screen shot, but her aim is off – the puck deviates on a stick, then disappears in the stands.

“My bad”, apologizes Lexa, but she can see Reeve has had enough.

“Did you see Hurd?” the coach asks drily.

“Yes”, admits Lexa.

“Where was she?”

“In the enclave.”

“And where were you?” Reeve urges, arms crossed.

Lexa scratches the back of her neck – she’s uncomfortable. “At the front.”

Reeve skates forward until they’re less than a meter apart. “You had the perfect pass, Woods.”

“I still had a shot”, counters Lexa, a bit more aggressive.

“Woods-“

“Yes, coach?”

“Please don’t talk back.”

“I’m just stating the obvious”, Lexa bites, drawing closer as well, and she squares her shoulders like she’s preparing for a confrontation.

Reeve sighs and lets out a dry laugh. “Alright, then I’ll state the obvious as well.”

The coach looks around to calm herself down, and Clarke realises just then that she’d been holding her breath. “You’re a star, Woods. I get it. But you’re in my team now, I don’t care what Trikru has been telling you, if he’s been saying that you can do what you want or anything like that – because now, you don’t just shoot all the time. You give it to your mates when they’re better positioned. And guess what? You’ll get an assist, and that still puts you on the board. Is that clear?”
“Yes, ma’am”, nods Lexa, but despite her obedience, Clarke sees her jaw tense, her gaze burn – her ego’s taken a big hit.

Two months ago, Clarke wouldn’t’ve felt for her. Hell, she probably would’ve been glad someone put her in her place.

But now, she sees past Lexa’s attitude and arrogant grins. She sees her drop her shoulders, look down when she’s at the bench, evade Reeve’s gaze like a scared animal. She sees her break character for the smallest instant, and immediately understands that Lexa Woods is not a soldier – she just plays the part very well.

When practice ends, Reeve still seems a bit on edge, and Clarke can’t help but give her a few words. “She’s still young, she has time to learn.”

“It’s not a mistake, it’s in her personality, Griffin. Some people are like that.”

“I know, but just give her a chance, will you?” Clarke offers, a bit more hopeful.

“I’ve given her plenty of chances. She’s gotta earn them now.”

“I think she’s earned them last week when she scored a hat trick in Polis.”

The coach stops in her tracks, pivots to face Clarke. “So she puts on a show. Great! Now she’s gotta respect the organisation as well.”

“I’m sure she respects it”, Clarke affirms calmly. “She’s just not used to being a playmaker, is all.”

“The center is the playmaker, Clarke. If she wants to score that much, she’ll have to play wing.”

That’s enough, Clarke thinks, and she shakes her head in disbelief. “Coach, with all due respect – you don’t have to do this.”

“Oh, but I do. In fact, I think it’s an excellent idea.”

“It would humiliate her.”

“It would make her understand.”

Clarke pauses to think, then acts on instinct. “Permission to speak freely, coach?”

“Go ahead.”

“Of all the options you have, this is the absolute worst one.”

“Why is that?” asks Reeve, unable to mask her bewilderment.

“Because she’s the best offense you’ve had in your whole career, and to put her on wing would not only diminish her, but it would also play in her head, make her question herself – and we don’t want that.”

Her words definitely leave a trace, and Reeve seems caught off balance. “Then what do we want, Griffin?”

And Clarke knows she’s won, at that point, with the incertitude in the coach’s expression, and the pure trust her tone held.
She closes her eyes, picturing it almost perfectly. *What do we want, Griffin?*

“The cup.”

As Lexa settles on the bench and starts removing her equipment, she can’t help her gaze from settling on Clarke.

The goalie is fixing her hair into a bun and wiping the sweat off her face with a towel, all of it in a casual fashion and while laughing at Charlie’s imitation of a drunk Raven.

“I’m sure the offense is better than before, however, I don’t know if Wilkins is on a good streak this year”, says Clarke, talking about the Dune Demons’ goalie.

Lauren shrugs as she’s crossing the room to borrow tape from a teammate. “She’s on her knees often, but she’s taller than you.”

“I think this might be her year”, the blonde murmurs, thoughtful.

Lexa jumps on the occasion. “I think this might be your year, Griffin.”

She watches as a half-teasing, half-joyful smile appears on the goalie’s face. “Oh, was I that bad last season?”

It takes little to no time for Lexa’s eyes to widen in surprise and embarrassment, and she knows Griffin enjoys watching her struggle to find her words. “No! I mean, I didn’t see you play that much, but I guess not...?”

She notices how the whole team is now staring at her – Charlie shaking her head from side to side, Raven laughing quietly while partially hiding her face with a hand.

“Ouch”, laughs Clarke. “Is that one of your numerous attempts at telling me that you scored on me a lot last year?”

“That’s not what I meant! Besides, we weren’t in the same conference, so we didn’t play you a lot”, Lexa grunts, crossing her arms with a petulant pout.

Clarke stands up, shakes the soreness in her legs and rolls the sleeves of her compression shirt. “I remember you failing to deke me in shootouts two years ago, and hitting your stick on the board on your way to the bench.”

“I was hot tempered, alright?” the center counter strikes, on edge.

“Were?”

“I mellowed down, I swear!”

“God, then you must’ve been *insane!*” Clarke barks back, amused.

At that, Lexa smiles despite herself, and rolls her eyes. She’s starting to get used to the teasing, and she wonders if it’s the same for Clarke, although she’s noticed how some of the jokes she says don’t anger her as much as before. A while ago, everything she said was badly received, whether it be good or bad - because Clarke was weary and she didn’t know how to interpret any of Lexa’s signals. Now, she can get away with pretty much anything (except for the one or two times she
took the joke too far and had to deal with a silent Clarke all evening).

“Alright, I’m off early, fellas – see if I can fit a quick workout before noon”, Clarke announces, picking up her bag and leaving the room.

And Lexa would’ve been just fine if only she didn’t isolate the word *workout* in the sentence, and if only her brain didn’t start repeating another sentence, this time one of Anya’s: *does Clarke workout often?*

Now, she knows that she indeed works out by herself, not just at the arena. She feels a rush of adrenalin fill her whole body as she gets up and follows the goalie out the room and into the hall, only to call her out using all the courage she can muster. “You workout, Griffin?”

The blonde turns around and gives her a weird look – arched brow, questioning gaze, like she’s just said something ridiculous. “I’m a professional athlete.”

“I know, I mean, work out as in… Gym stuff. At home. Or anywhere, really. Just… Not in the arena all the time.”

“Eh, most of us do that.”

“Well, I thought you were more the jogging type”, shrugs Lexa, trying to establish some credibility in her words.

Clarke scratches her elbow awkwardly. “I am, actually.”

“But you still lift.”

“I don’t just lift.”

Lexa can’t hold back the little laugh of incredulity that escapes her throat. “Well then, what do you do?”

“Oh, there are many things to do other than lift”, Clarke defends herself, a tad offended.

“Enlighten me.”

“There are, I swear! I do box jumps, I do pistols… All sorts of things.”

Lexa crosses her arms over her chest, and she unconsciously squeezes her hands against her triceps, bulking them in the process. “So, you’re the bodyweight type?”

“Yes, is there something wrong with that?” Asks Clarke defiantly.

“No… But I mean, it’s incomparable to the brute force you get from lifting.”

“Is that so? Or are you just scared you can’t squat more than me?”

Lexa’s jaw drops open and she scoffs arrogantly. “To say such a thing is a declaration of war, Griffin.”

“Then be it.”

“I like competitiveness, but right now you’re just being foolish”, Lexa brags, arms still crossed.

“What time and where?” Clarke asks nonetheless, pressuring Lexa into an exhilarating type of
discomfort.

“Two o’clock, my place”, the center coolly replies, but she’d never admit that she’s feeling fuzzy and unsteady inside.

“Deal.”

And before she can say anything else, Clarke is already turning around and accelerating towards the door.

She avoids Anya all morning after being taunted the night before about Clarke coming to their basement gym. She tried her best to make it seems like it wasn’t that big of a deal, but Anya’s questions caught her off guard (as usual). “Are you gonna go for your usual ‘sports bra and no shirt’ outfit to showcase your abs?”

She was in the bathroom at that time, brushing her teeth and throwing on an old college hockey shirt, when Anya’s remark made her jump in surprise and swallow a bit of toothpaste. “No… No, I am definitely not going to do that.”

“Well, you never wear a t-shirt when you work out, I thought that’d be a good strategy, you know. The whole showing off game.”

“I’m not showing off, An, I’m working out with a friend.”

She heard Anya struggle to retain a chuckle. “A friend who is totally your type, but there’s no need to mention that.”

Lexa practically kicked the door open and bumped into a grinning Anya who watched as she strutted angrily around the room to find her socks.

“I’m trying very hard not to kick your ass, right now, thought I’d let you know”, Lexa grunted between her teeth as she absentmindedly grabbed two socks, regardless of whether they matched or not.

“I do appreciate the effort, which makes me willing to drop my tendencies.”

Lexa stopped on her way back to the bathroom, suddenly suspicious. “What tendencies?”

“You know, the inappropriate comments. The whole ‘fun fact, Lexa used to run around naked in the kitchen when she was five.’”

“I don’t know if I should be concerned about you making up all these random stories just to get back at me”, Lexa rubbed the bridge of her nose with two fingers.

Anya jumped on the mattress and started advancing towards Lexa with her knees. “Hey, I didn’t make this up! Remember, you were screaming ‘this is America’! And then you hid under the table the moment mom grew upset!”

Lexa’s eyes enlarged when she understood the potency of this story and how devastating it could be for her reputation. “Oh, don’t you dare!”

“Only if necessary! That means you guys can’t have sex on the carpet downstairs!”
“Jesus Christ, Anya!”

“I knew it! This carpet has lived through unspeakable things!” Anya gasped comically, except she really was horrified.

“That’s not-“ Lexa started, but she was immediately interrupted.

“No details, please!” the older sisters begged, making a run for the door with both hands on her ears.

Which now leaves us to the actual moment of Lexa hearing the doorbell and praying that her sister doesn’t answer. It appears today is not her lucky day.

At all.

It’s probably one forty-five – a bit early, and Lexa is halfway down the first set of stairs when she hears the door opening and freezes mid jump, supporting herself almost entirely on the handrails.

She hears Anya’s voice resonate from ground floor. “Oh, please come in! She should be here any minute, now, I think I just heard her run down the stairs, though I don’t hear her at all, right now. Are you alright, Lexa?”

“I’m fine!” the hockey player yells, emerging from the living room and coming face to face with Clarke, and it seems she forgot how intimidatingly gorgeous the goalie can be, for she blinks twice and settles in the middle of the room, not knowing what to say.

“I thought your excitement made you fall down the stairs”, Anya smiles, and Lexa’s jaw tenses immediately, because for fuck’s sake, can’t Anya be serious and supportive for a moment?

As Clarke snorts in laughter, Lexa beckons her to follow, desperate to escape Anya. They get across the living room first, then the study and the dining room until they reach the stairs that lead to the basement.

“What is this, some kind of manor?” Clarke marvels as they walk past a gigantic fireplace facing an equally impressive library.

“Eh, more or less”, Lexa replies in a disinterested tone that contrasts with Clarke’s.

“I thought you lived at your parents’ house?”

“Except that is my parents’ house”, the brunette enunciates clearly with emphasis on each syllable.

“Oh… What do they do for a living?”

“Stockbrokers, both of them”, Lexa replies as she opens a modest wooden door and invites Clarke to enter.

“Nice. So that’s the gym, then?”

“Yep. It’s been refurnished. Changed a couple of things, moved stuff around. Used to be in the garage when we got here, but we realised it’s cold as fuck.”

“Not the winter type?” Clarke teases, brushing a hand on the handles of the assault bike.

“Hate it. What about you?”
“I pretty much live for snowball fights, so there’s that. AND I make unbelievable snow forts.”

Lexa can’t help the crooked smile from appearing on her face as she unveils an impressive sound system from under a blanket. “So you were that one weird kid who got way too serious about a game, then? Did anybody get injured?”

Clarke has a moment of silence in which she seems to consider her options. “Actually, um, there was this chick I hit with a snowman.”

Lexa pulls out a genuinely shocked face. “What the fuck? You hit her with a snowman?”

“More like part of it, I think. But it was small, alright? I was out of ammo, I just took off the head and it happened!”

“Ammo? This isn’t bloody war, Clarke, it’s throwing solidified water at people!”

“I was ten! Now, would you pick up weights and do your thing?”

After a little grumbling, Lexa complies and starts loading a barbell. “I’ll clean and jerk the fuck out of you anyway, Griffin.”

The blonde shoots her an annoyed glance. “Do not use my name and the word ‘jerk’ in the same sentence.”

“I thought the word ‘fuck’ would’ve been the deal breaker, I’m surprised.”

The rapidity at which Clarke turns on her heels is alluring. “Lift the fucking thing, you perv.”

Which Lexa does, after muttering an almost inaudible ‘got away with it’ followed by a shy cough. The bar is propelled upward and the effort tears a huff out of the hockey player.

She’s got good form – it looks like she’s done the exercise a thousand times. In a surprisingly smooth motion, she raises the bar and holds it up before letting it hit the ground in a crushing thud. “Why are you looking at me like that?” The brunette asks, crossing her arms and being way too conscious about the action making her biceps seem twice as big.

Clarke scoffs, falsely insulted. “Like what?”

“Like you’re, I don’t know, shopping in a supermarket and you’re very hungry, and then you’re walking into the meat alley and you see this nice steak.”

“No, no. No.” Clarke is suddenly moving around the room like she’s trapped in some sort of cage.

“Well it was that or the ‘see something you like’ kind of crap! You can’t blame me!” Lexa defends herself playfully, already preparing to lift the barbell another time.

“Oh, but I can. In fact, I’ll do just that.” Clarke begins, advancing menacingly towards Lexa who recoils a bit.

“All while lifting the fuck out of you”, the goalie finishes tartly, not giving an inch.

Lexa just smiles.
It’s probably three when they start experiencing their first signs of fatigue. By the time it’s Clarke’s turn at the Keiser, Lexa is huffing and puffing about the room, pouring water directly on her face like she does in between periods. “Alright, Griffin, finish up if you wanna beat my time on the rower.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t miss that, trust me”, the other woman replies from the other side of the room. There would’ve been a minute of complete silence if only the sound of breathing coupled with that of the keiser’s strings didn’t fill the room like a tempest.

“Are you arms okay?”

Clarke’s head turns as she drops the handles, all of which results in a loud scraping noise. “Yes, they’re okay, Lexa. You do know I actually use my arms while doing my job, right? They’re not just a decoration – one of them holds a stick, the other wears a glove. And together they go on an adventure, and they stop the pucks, they do all sorts of cute things such as that, and…”

“Oh, pardon me for worrying about you going fucking berserk on that thing! Geez, Griffin, take a deep breath.”

The blonde goalie lets the machine go in order to face Lexa properly. “Oh. Oh. I just thought…”

Lexa interrupts her, brushes it away sarcastically. “You thought I was still not over the whole superiority bullshit and my obsession with being better than people? I’m fine, thank you for asking.”

“Well dammit, right when I thought you were out of the jackass mode. Here we go again.” Clarke grumbles, picking up her towel angrily.

“How many times will I have to tell you, there is no such thing as ‘jackass mode’, that is who I am 24/7.”

“Oh, you poor thing - rough exterior, jell-o insides!” Clarke barks back, half amused, half annoyed. She watches Lexa’s furious expression unfold with a satisfied glint in the eye. “Alright Griffin, I’ve had enough of this crap.”

“Yeah, well me too”, Clarke replies, faking indifference and grabbing her bag.

Lexa’s angriness suddenly turns into something else, something Clarke can’t pinpoint with exactitude. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Leaving, is what I’m doing.”

She’s already at the door, but then she stops and turns toward Lexa once again. She’s held by something strange, something that crawls up her guts and digs deep inside, something that could be, could be initiated by Lexa’s furious expression, Lexa’s clenching muscles and tense body, Lexa’s wet tank top that reveals the hint of her abs, Lexa who is right there, right there.

“That’s the coward’s way out, Griffin.”

“I wasn’t aware that there were other ways out.” The blonde counters sharply.

She approaches Lexa until they’re less than a meter apart. The proximity changes the mood a bit,
Clarke’s breath accelerates all by itself.

“I could find some”, the taller woman assures teasingly, and fuck, that jaw again.

“You are one arrogant asshole”, Clarke remarks with an arched brow.

“I’d like to think I’m a smooth asshole, as well.” Lexa chuckles, and Clarke is dizzy all of a sudden, consumed by that something again, that something that could be all kinds of scary things.

“Shut up, I don’t wanna hear your pickup lines.”

“These aren’t pickup lines, these are… prelims, I’d say.”

“Oh my god, you’re not improving your situation right now.”

“Could I improve the situation?”

“Depends on what you mean by ‘improving the-‘” Clarke starts, but she is stopped right away when the distance between them is reduced again, this time because of Lexa.

She realizes how close they are when she notices a bead of sweat sliding down Lexa’s temple. She gulps down the remains of saliva she manages to gather, and then her throat is dry and she’s breathing in Lexa’s perfume unintentionally at first, but she finds herself taking a deeper breath the second time just to smell that perfume again, and that makes her even dizzier (if possible).

Goddamnit.

“I don’t see the improvement”, Clarke lies, conscious about Lexa spotting that lie, also conscious about Lexa finding that lie amusing and smiling because of it and maybe that was the plan?

“That’s not the best I can do.”

Clarke’s heart almost skips a beat, and as she’s saying her next sentence, she knows what it involves, yet says it all the same. She likes to think Lexa’s charming, almost magnetic stare gave her no choice. “Prove it.”

Lesa manages to utter a muffled “fine” that Clarke doesn’t quite hear and then she brutally takes her by both thighs and swings her in her arms.

Clarke reacts instinctively and lowers her head, Lexa reacts instinctively and raises hers and that makes for a kiss - probably the messiest, sloppiest, dirtiest kiss Clarke has ever experienced in her entire life.

“I think you have a point”, Clarke huffs deeply as Lexa brings her down momentarily only to smack her back against the wall - Clarke has to admit it’s fucking hot.

“I think so too”, the brunette agrees, her voice turning almost feral with arousal.

Clarke initiates the kiss, this time. It’s rhythmic, involving a complex pattern of licking and pulling on the lower lip, as well as gently introducing her tongue in Lexa’s mouth who cannot hold back the loud sigh that escapes, vibrating though Clarke’s whole body thereby. From a distance, it looks like they’re fighting.

To some extent, they are.

It feels to Clarke as if a tension is leaving her body – all those months of lying to herself, of biting
her lip and retaining her emotions, months of deprivation, months of avoidance, months of trying and failing to deviate and repress the burning sensation in her stomach every time Lexa so much as entered a room.

She hopes it’s the same for her as well, but as she watches desire and need unfold on Lexa’s features, she begins to think they were both frantic, both desperate.

They were ticking bombs waiting to explode, weren’t they? And as Clarke begins to carelessly tug at the hem of Lexa’s top, she is now fairly certain that this – whatever this is – was bound to happen.

“Hold on, that is some Nike special edition apparel”, Lexa chuckles against Clarke’s lips as she backs away to remove the garment properly.

“She likes that?”

It seems Lexa might’ve learned to read her pretty well, for she’s now back to her smug, self-assured demeanor. Clarke does not find it sexy.

She does not.

Always confident about her abilities, Lexa doesn’t hesitate and puts her hands right where they are needed - on Clarke’s hips and rear end, that is - all while nipping at her neck. She hits the sensitive spot, right below the ear, and takes some liberties once she notices Clarke’s almost outrageous response to it.

A mixture of adrenalin and ecstasy surges through Clarke’s whole body, in waves, and when Lexa outright grinds against her hips in search of friction, her knees immediately buckle.

“Fuck”, she mutters, vainly gripping at the wall for support.

“That is what I’m doing at the moment”, Lexa replies teasingly, then releases a muffled groan after Clarke kneels her in the stomach.

The air turns almost toxic as Lexa twirls her fingers in blonde locks and, grabbing hard at them, pushes Clarke’s head upwards to force their lips together in a brutal, wet, open mouthed kiss. Clarke releases a sigh into her mouth, loses her balance and gives in to the hockey center’s hold, letting a hand wander along her thigh.

“I think I hate you”, the blonde mumbles without conviction, her lips already swollen with all the kissing.

“Yeah?” Asks Lexa, but she’s not entirely paying attention (and Clarke doesn’t take offense).

“Yeah”, Clarke repeats, and the more she says it, the falser it sounds.

Tension builds and escalates up to the ceiling, and only then are the two women left to shambles of searing lust and uncontrollable feats of passion. By the time they’re both half naked and still very much pressed up against the wall, the familiar rattling of keys in a door is overlooked. Clarke brushes her fingers up Lexa’s toned abs and reaches for her sports bra, revelling at the moan that escapes the taller woman’s lips.
And only then does it all come to an abrupt end.

“HI! WE’RE BACK!”

Clarke’s head jerks backwards and bumps against the wall in a thud – Lexa’s first reaction is one of concern over the small incident. “Shit, are you okay?”

Then, with a hint of annoyance. “That’s great, Anya! Really… Really great!”

“WE BROUGHT MUFFINS, ISN’T THAT AWESOME?” The voice yells again from ground floor.

“It’s wonderful!” Lexa replies, rolling her eyes.

“YOU GUYS WANT SOME?”

“Sure!” Clarke and Lexa both reply in unison.

The two hockey players share a glance of uncertainty – both realising how disheveled and unbridled they look. “I don’t think we can come out of this room without attracting suspicion”, Clarke points out, quick at putting her clothes back on.

“Especially with my sister”, concedes Lexa with a side glance towards the door.

Leaving no room for awkward silence, Clarke grabs her bag and shrugs. “It’s fine, I was about to head out anyway.”

Lexa has a nod of polite agreement (but really she’s just searching for an excuse to keep Clarke from leaving). “You don’t want, hum…” She snaps her fingers to cover the missing word.

“A muffin?” Clarke fills in with an amused half smile.

“Yeah?”

“It’s fine, I’ll grab one on my way.”

She gestures towards the door for further explanation.

“Alright, then”, says Lexa with a shy smile (yes, shy).

And when she sees Clarke’s hand closing around the doorknob, she adds hastily:

“Take care.”

For a second, Clarke doesn’t seem to react, but then she spins on her heels to face Lexa one more time. She’s still smiling.

Hard.

“Okay, that’s adorable”, the goalie chuckles, shaking her head from side to side in apparent disbelief.

“It’s…” Lexa begins, then just scoffs.

“Wow, you’re not fighting it”, pursues Clarke in the same teasing tone.

Lexa crosses her arms, suddenly very defensive. “I didn’t say… What does that mean, I’m not
fighting it? Of course I’m fighting it!"

“‘You are so not. We got past that point of mutual tolerance where I could refer to you as, say, a bear cub...’”

She pauses and sustains Lexa’s gaze in search of possible anger, but all she finds is annoyance. Annoyance.

“What did I say about small furry animals?” The hockey center whines, raising her arms in the air.

“Oh my god, I got away with that!” Clarke yells happily, opening the door wide and waving goodbye childishly.

“Clarke, I am...” Lexa begins, but she is cut off by the sound of the door closing and Clarke’s demonical laughter echoing as she’s climbing up the stairs.

“Not done”, she mutters to herself in the quiet of the room.

Chapter End Notes

Yup, so I wrote that. And I hope you liked it. Let's say Clarke and Lexa's messy adventure through the feels universe has just begun.

Don't miss a thing! Follow me on tumblr for bonus content, regular updates on my writing progress plus I'll answer all of your questions!

https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/

*UPDATE*

For those of you who can't wait anymore, I've put a little extra excerpt on my Tumblr for you to read! Come check it out!
Tour de force

Chapter Summary

The Winter Classic against Polis makes for some action on and off the ice.

Chapter Notes

Hey folks, I'm back! Merry Christmas eve to you all, I decided I would do my best to deliver my update today, as an early Christmas gift to you all! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

With three days remaining before the trip to Polis, Lexa neither sleeps nor dreams. Thoughts of performance and adrenaline swarm past her mental barriers like water through a breach, and the more they gain control, the more they begin eliciting memories of Clarke and their last encounter.

She shouldn’t be as shaken as she is.

Keep telling yourself that, a voice blurts in her mind, and she shuts it down immediately because it scares her, that voice, it scares her to death and makes her realise weird things about herself like her inability to think about anything other than hockey and Clarke. But that’s not the point, right?

(Except it is.)

On Monday evening, she gathers all her old hockey training equipment and practices all kinds of stuff in an attempt to distract herself (from Clarke).

She makes sure to arrange the synthetic ice tiles in a rectangle pattern instead of a square one, because it would remind her of the setup her dad used to put together on their training sessions.

There are many objects she didn’t expect to find again for she thought someone had thrown them away – attack triangles, shooting tarps, stick weights, passers, danglers and assorted dryland pucks. She remembers how her father always obsessed over each knew technology that came out, and how the other kids used to envy her expensive gear.

“I didn’t think I’d ever see you do this again”, a voice resonates from behind her as Lexa receives the puck from a passer and shoots it over the plastic goalie’s shoulder.

“Times change”, she replies, then turns around to discover Anya leaning on a treadmill.

Then she adds with a shrug, “besides, it’s really nice equipment.”

“Oh, remember what dad used to say about-“ Anya begins, but she gets cut off by a slightly annoyed Lexa.

“Champs need champ stuff, yeah.” She slides a puck under the attack triangle in one swift movement of the stick, then takes a wrist shot to the net - she doesn’t miss.
“Damn, sometimes I forget how great you are at this”, Anya mutters absent-mindedly, seeing the surgical precision of the shot coupled with the flawless technique displayed by Lexa.

“I know, I’m a champ”, Lexa jokes and the quick smile she offers is enough to reassure Anya about certain things.

Let’s say Lexa has been distant for the past days.

She seems to make sure her schedule always revolves only about hockey, whether it be practice, training or games. It doesn’t upset Anya, yet she’s grown concerned over time about the hockey player’s wellbeing. She is very much aware of her sister’s tendency to drown herself in training in order to distract herself from personal issues.

“When’s the game again?” Anya asks, suddenly thoughtful.

Lexa’s head jerks up almost by reflex. She’s been stressed out for the past few days, thinking about how big of a deal that game is to the whole team.

“The Classic?”

Winter Classic, that is. And Lexa couldn’t be more excited considering she’ll be playing her previous team once again, only with bigger odds. The organisation unveiled the jersey two weeks ago – it has a darker blue and gold color, with the 80s version of the logo. Polis changed their equipment as well, opted for the old forest green with black lines on the hem. But style aside, the rivalry between the two teams will make the walls of the stadium tremble.

“We leave tomorrow afternoon”, Lexa assures with a nod. Then, seeing Anya’s expression go from comfort to uneasiness, she adds, “don’t worry, I already packed my things.”

She frowns at her sister’s evident skepticism, demonstrated by her arched brow and pleated lips. “I swear, I packed!” She exclaims, throwing her hands up in the air in building frustration.

“Oh please, Lexa, you put two sets of underwear and a deodorant stick in there and you’re convinced you’re good to go.”

Lexa stops in her tracks and turns around, pointing a finger at her sister. “Okay, for the record I put two deodorant sticks! Now if that’s not irreproachable hygiene, it’s goddamn close!”

“And yet you don’t bring your own soap!” Anya deplores with a sigh.

A confused expression unfolds on Lexa’s features. “Why would I do that? There’s always some at the hotel.”

“It’s sticky, is what it is!” the older sister asserts with various exasperated hand gestures.

“Well of course it’s sticky, it’s soap!”

“No, no, soap is not sticky, Lexa, god, do you ever take showers? Is that something you do? Do you… Do you visit body-hygiene related places?”

“Oh stop that, I am super clean, I’m like next level clean, in fact-“

“Then bring your own soap, for heaven’s sake!”

“Fine! So it’ll be soap, deodorant and underwear! I got it, now, don’t you worry!”
She reaches for her cellphone, looks at its screen and notices that a member of the team texted her about Reeve rescheduling pre-game skate. She sighs, suddenly thinking of the game in itself again, and Clarke’s vibrant blue eyes. *Yeah, she thinks, it'll be a long week.

Polis has gotten excited about the Classic - Lexa can tell with the way the fans almost rugby tackle her to the ground in their hurry to ask for an autograph.

She arrives to Polis on Saturday morning, excitement roaming through her veins like a caffeine aftereffect as she settles in one of the city’s nicest hotel, with a couple of fans posted on the sidewalk just below her window.

She *tries* to resist the urge to use the jacuzzi. She’s stressed, alright? *Geez…*

Reeve calls them in the morning for open workouts in the gym, then summons a buffet over for them – mainly serving chicken and pasta with funky names.

She tries to analyse the mood between her and Clarke all morning, but it seems the goalie is occupied with her goaltending coach until the afternoon optional skate.

Lexa keeps telling herself, in the comfort of her room, that she isn’t the type of player to go to optional skates before important games, yet some unknown force of nature makes her get up and leave for the rink.

*Somehow.*

She knows it’s because of Griffin. She knows, and she grimaces because of it, and she hates it, hates herself, hates her tape when it doesn’t stick on the blade, hates her skates when they aren’t sharpened correctly, *why the fuck aren't they sharpened correctly?*

And why is she almost tripping over herself when she catches Clarke’s eyes from across the ice? *Get a grip, Woods. Get a fucking grip.*

There’s some sort of fire in her lungs that makes her get through the drills twice as fast as usual, and that means *fast.* And then she looks towards the goal, and Clarke isn’t paying attention – then she thinks, *why the fuck would she be paying attention when she has a job to do?*

She hears a cannonball of a shot, then sees Clarke make a windmill save. *She,* on the other hand, was paying attention. Lexa scoffs at the thought.

Some new accessories are distributed amongst the player - all winter classic related, whether it be caps or knitted hats or scarfs with matching gloves. Lexa cannot help but laugh when she sees Clarke put her knitted hat directly over her mask. She finds the courage (the *courage?!*) to go over later in the practice, right when Clarke is about to reach for a puck pyramid on the board.

“I’ll get that for you”, Lexa clumsily offers out of good will, yet she reads Clarke’s suspicious glance as the amused annoyance of the lady who rejects a hotshot gentleman’s offer to dance.

“And what would that be for?” The blonde goaltender carefully asks.

“Just being nice”, Lexa recovers with false confidence, giving a quick hit at the bottom of the pyramid with the heel of her stick.
Clarke watches the pucks topple over and cascade down to the ice, some of them gliding silently towards her feet. “I’m not disabled, Lexa, I can push pucks over without dying.”

“That was my attempt at being helpful, Griffin, you just messed it all up!”

“Oh, was that the hockey version of holding the door?” Clarke obliges, growing more entertained with each passing second.

“I… Maybe! I don’t know, I don’t think about these things!” Lexa frowns, suddenly confused.

“This is getting adorable”, Clarke remarks, knowing she’ll get reaction.

And she does. Lexa almost recoils defensively – and that means skating backwards, when one is on the ice. “Adorable?! I’m not adorable, Griffin, smooth, is what I am!”

Clarke skulls forward with an arched brow – Lexa swallows difficultly. “I like that ‘deer in the headlight’ kind of smooth, it suits you.”

“Alright, then, next time you’ll get your pucks all by yourself!” Lexa objects with the will of a little child.

“Oh my god, are you sure I won’t just pass out with the effort? I don’t have your insane arm strength! I can’t, look-“

She exemplifies by re-enacting the motion of pushing invisible pucks off the board, with exaggerated grunts of fatigue. “I’m already tired and that’s only half the move! How, but how do you make it look so easy?”

Lexa is almost butt-hurt, yet she tries to preserve her dignity and decides to play along. “Well, it needs an awful lot of practice. Big range of motion, also.”

Clarke’s wink almost makes Lexa weak in the knees as the two come forward at the same time. “Oh, believe me, you showed me plenty of that range of motion.”

It seems Lexa finds her ground again as soon as the situation gets flirty – she gives her signature smirk and leans forward to whisper near Clarke’s neck. “I can show you more of it.”

Clarke closes her eyes and takes a deep breath – and Lexa is content with the effect she evidently has on this woman whose smile alone makes her lose her balance. There’s an instant filled with wonder and tension, of vaporing breaths mingling together, then Lexa’s gaze jerks up to meet Clarke’s, and the hockey center then knows that she’s got little to no control over herself – Goddamnit, this woman, she thinks, as she gets suddenly scared of this feral lust, twisting and turning in the pit of her guts like a caged lion, for she hasn’t yet found out its limits and the amount of control it exerts on her being.

“Lexa.” Clarke says her name like a warning – with an urgency, a sense of alarm.

“What?” the center asks like she doesn’t know, except she does know. She knows very well.

“Back off.”

The edge of these words would’ve hurt her if she didn’t see the pleading in Clarke’s eyes, which lets her guess that she’s affected just as much, wants just as much.

“Alright, alright”, she lets out as she immediately skates backwards, and holds Clarke’s shaken,
“Don’t do that again”, the goalie orders firmly.

“Why not?” She chuckles, not yet gauging the seriousness of the situation.

“Oh my god, were you just hit with a brick?”

“I don’t think so. No.”

“Well then control yourself! Jesus Christ, Lexa, don’t you see there are seven people going about over there?”

Lexa ponders the issue, eyes fixed on the remaining teammates currently roaming the ice. “I suppose there could be some rules.”

Clarke just scoffs indignantly – and Lexa will remember thinking that she was outrageously beautiful right then. “Rules? Lexa, we had some sort of encounter… And that’s all! Right?”

“Right”, Lexa repeats, forcing herself not to feel the sudden pang in her chest.

Clarke continues in a decided manner. “And that means, we act normally around each other…”

“Yeah”, Lexa cuts her off almost purposefully.

“And you keep your little comments for yourself, and you stop acting like we’re married.”

“I don’t act like we’re ma-“ Lexa starts, irritated.

“You push pucks off a board for me!”

“I’m not sure married people do that for each other often!”

“That is a poor excuse, Lexa, you can do better!” Clarke counters, crossing her arms.

“I’m aware!”

“I’m waiting for the upgrade!” Clarke starts again after a short silence.

“My brain never does well under pressure!”

“That is my fault!”

They both jerk their arms in the air at the same time. “My repartee is uncharacteristically bad today!” Lexa offers as a last resort.

“Oh, you’re lucky I feel generous enough to let you get away with that!” Clarke darts a finger at her and edges away smoothly.

“You won’t get a thank you, though!” Lexa yells as Clarke is already far away, close to her net.

“Fine, I’m getting used to it anyway!”

And that’s how Lexa realizes that she:

1. Has an extremely important game to play.
2. Is emotionally unprepared for said game.

*Ladies and gentlemen, it is six forty-five PM here in Rendon’s Alliance Arena - we are fifteen minutes away from tonight’s big show! The game opposing the Arkadia Strikers and the Polis Scorpions will be presented to you by Polis’ Capitol bank and the GLN, Grounder Local News, that is! We are proud to sponsor such an exciting event!*

Clarke stands up near the entrance as soon as she hears the announcer’s voice before the arrival of the players. She concentrates on each of his words as a strategy to calm herself. The odds are that this game will dictate the immediate future of the Polis/Arkadia rivalry.

*(…) Starting with the scorpions! The number 46, Lori Hamilton! The number 23, Gwen Lerman! The number 8, Eleanor Lavrov!*

Clarke isolates the build up in the announcer’s tone from the applauds of the crowd. When he calls out Eriksen, she realizes again that this will most likely be a goalie battle.

*(…) Starting with the scorpions! The number 46, Lori Hamilton! The number 23, Gwen Lerman! The number 8, Eleanor Lavrov!*

*Clarke isolates the build up in the announcer’s tone from the applauds of the crowd. When he calls out Eriksen, she realizes again that this will most likely be a goalie battle.*

*And your number 34, Rrrrobin... Eriksen!!!*

She panics a bit at the thought of the ascending goalie star, and the fact that she’s a crowd favorite. It’s very different from the welcome she gets as soon as she steps in the Arkadia’s Chancellor Stadium. She finds Octavia’s reassuring smile and takes a deep breath.

*Their opponents! Starting with the number 16, Lucy Marks!! Followed by the number 27, Jaime Hurd!*

She sees Lexa shuffle towards the entrance in preparation. The black paint she’s wearing under the eyes gives her some sort of a warrior appearance – she looks like the leader of an army.

*(…) The number 12, Alexandria Woods!*

Just hearing the crowd’s cheer is enough to guess that Lexa is one of the favorites as well. Clarke is next in line, and she sees Lexa wave at the spectators as she hears her name being called.

*And the number 36, Clarke Griffin!!!*

The flashing lights and the louder than ever cheers of the crowd welcome her as she steps on the ice and immediately skates towards her net.

*Ladies and gentlemen, make some noise!*

She gets a glimpse of Lexa’s athletic frame, hunched over to take the first face off – which she wins, unsurprisingly.

*Face off won by Arkadia, they bring it back to their defensive unit which is composed of Raven Reyes and Octavia Blake at the moment. Blake, makes the pass, midfield for Lucy Marks who gets past Eleanor Lavrov. Marks, battling for the puck, loses it to Lori Hamilton who gives it over to Mia Compton. Compton, she’s in the middle, gets rid of that puck just in time because it seems Reyes was waiting for her. The disc, gliding towards the net and Griffin is getting ready because here goes Hamilton, everyone forgot about her it seems!*

Clarke’s gaze settles calmly on the intended target, with robot-like concentration. She tries to look for clues about Hamilton’s direction, then glides left as soon as she sees the little twitch of the
stick. She won’t get far enough – she thinks, *fuck it*, and drops her paddle.

*Hamilton comes up full speed, dangles it right, cuts through the left and gets DENIED by Clarke Griffin! Oh my stars! How did that stay out?! Griffin is pulling off her magic tricks early tonight!*

She feels the adrenaline burst, her heart drumming against her chest, and resists the urge to lay backwards and raise her fists to the sky. Instead, she just sits and takes a moment to regain her focus.

“Holy fucking fuck”, she hears Octavia blurt from beside the net, and she senses the smile in her voice.

*Look at Hamilton, she can’t believe it! I’m pretty sure she’ll have nightmares. But seriously, that’s a feat of athleticism right there by Clarke Griffin – you can see her making the leap and she probably thought about it for a millisecond and decided ‘hey, no need for that stick’!*

She squirts water in her face during the commercial break and gets the good idea of putting her gloves on the heater until the next play. But when she sees the coach’s knitted hat, she gets another good idea.

*Both teams facing off beside Clarke Griffin – and would you look at that, she’s put on a knitted hat! That’s original!*

Clarke feels the gaze of the crowd as she adjusts the hat over her mask. She hears a couple of whistles and cannot help but smile.

*Arkadia wins the faceoff, brings it behind, Blake takes control of it, accelerates, leaves it behind for Woods and she covers the rest of the distance, oh, nice deke right there. Woods still has it, waits for the rest of the offensive unit, there goes Hurd to her side, she circles the net...*

Clarke stands with all her height to try to get a sight of the play. She sees Lexa’s calm, collected expression and a whirlwind of emotions – mainly admiration- swirls past her mental barriers. That little confident glance to the side, that little shout to get Jaime’s attention, and the way her change of stance affects her role body – her shoulders widen, her hands tighten around the handle of the stick… She makes a pass, glides to the top and receives the puck again. Clarke only sees the whip of the stick, and she knows it’s in.

*Woods FIRES the one timer! SHE SCORES! A beauty of a shot!*

Clarke smirks as she sees Lexa’s little show unfold – the center points at Jaime Hurd, then they both jump on the board together and share a tight hug. Strikers fans can be seen dancing everywhere in the stands.

The period ends on Robin Eriksen making a beautiful stretched pad save on Charlie Langton, and the score is still 1-0. During the break, locker room talk mainly revolves around Christmas coming and Clarke’s ‘superman’ save early in the game.

“Are you sure you’re not Clarke Kent, though?” Langton asks from the back of the room, both hands covered with wool mitts in an effort to warm up before the next period.

“Uh, yeah, Charles, I’m pretty sure about my name actually.” Clarke chuckles with a side grin.

The whole room bursts in laughter, and Clarke smiles again while searching for Lexa’s reaction. She finds her sitting alone behind, looking as focused as ever, and decides it’s time for Lexa to have fun during breaks.
“What ya doin’ there stud?” She asks, way too conscious about the ridiculousness of her demeanor, and the phoney enthusiasm it holds.

Lexa seems to be reserving an entire ten seconds to situation assessment – first she furrows her brows, then arches one, then lifts them up in disbelief and bewilderment. For it is a known and now truer than ever – Lexa Woods can read any player’s body language, perfectly interpreting the slightest cue, from a twitch to a turn, to a stop or a leap (and everything in between), yet she is incapable of reading Clarke Griffin.

This one girl, this one blue eyed goaltender who appears to act on her own set of exquisitely complex rules.

“I’m working, Clarke, I’m on a… Why, I’m just doing my job.” Lexa declares, absolutely unable to showcase her usual coolness, or even counterfeiting it in that case.

Clarke, on her part, just observes her teammate for a moment – first opening her mouth, then closing it with an amused glint painted in the eyes. “You know, these past days it’s like someone took your... Envelope, let’s say, and then stuffed it with this foam-thing, and then… I mean, it’s you, but the stuffed-animal version.”

Seeing Lexa’s inappreciative glance, Clarke tries to save herself the hustle. “I don’t mean as in weak!”

“Yet it is heavily implied”, Lexa snorts with this angry glare of hers, and for just an instant, Clarke remembers these glares from months ago - these glares that used to make her blood run cold, her breath catch, her knees tremble. And she thinks, this is different.

“I swear it’s not!”

“Heavily implied.”

“No!”

“Clarke”, the captain calmly calls out in some sort of soothing tone (soothing?), and Clarke stops in her tracks right away.

She wonders how it is that Lexa’s voice alone can now make hers break or force the air out of her lungs.

“Yeah, what?”

“I know, Clarke.”

“What do you mean by that?” She asks, left out of breath by the dramatic intonations.

“I know what you mean when you say all that stuff, I just… I get uncomfortable, I can’t help it.”

“It’s all right”, Clarke brushes it off, except she later asks herself questions when she watches Lexa jump on the ice again for second period.

She wonders how it is that Lexa can go from soft, submitted puppy to this woman who she does not recognize - a battle-hardened warrior who provokes her opponents with arrogant smiles and crude taunts, and never backs away from a fight. She watches her shout something at an enemy player, all confidence and smug demeanor and proud posture, and seeing the contrast makes Clarke then realize how nervous and self-conscious Lexa is acting around her.
Second period starting now with the first face off, won by Polis. They give it back to Lavrov, she’s got Lerman at her side, short pass to the side that reaches Lori Hamilton. Hamilton, gets into enemy territory, great puck protection, circles the net and tries to surprise Griffin!! But she doesn’t take the bait and closes the door, manages to get a hold of that puck! It seems Hamilton almost pulled a trick on this Arkadia formation! Now, the defensive coverage wasn’t excellent, look at the turnover that was given by Octavia Blake, it seems she couldn’t match the speed. Fortunately, Griffin was keeping a close watch.

“Sorry for that”, Octavia apologizes in between plays, with a little nudge on Clarke’s head.

It seems the save was enough to fire up the troops, especially when a team is led by Alexandria Woods – Clarke can see the cold focus dripping from her hard stance and steely gaze, as the center wins the next faceoff and proves the stadium, once again, that she is a woman on a mission.

The puck goes to Raven Reyes, she’s retreating to her territory for a second, finally gets rid of Lavrov’s tight cover and makes the pass to Woods in the middle!! She goes up the ice full speed!! Joined by Jaime Hurd, and it’s A TWO VERSUS ONE! Woods slows down, dekes Williams! OH! What a pass to Hurd in the enclave – SHE SCORES!! Insane play, once again, by Lexa Woods! She serves Hurd, and they make it two-nothing!

And from then, the offense gets unleashed.

It starts with the second line’s hard work, keeping the puck in enemy for a whole two minutes (at even strength!) after which Robin Eriksen frustrates Charlie Langton with an incredible glove save that almost makes Clarke jealous.

But Lexa is remorseless, and decides not to let Polis get its breath back just yet.

Compton lets it behind for Hamilton who gets pressured back into her zone by Woods! She is everywhere on the ice, tonight! Woods pursues her again, she is relentless and STEALS THE PUCK AWAY! GETS THE TURNOVER! ALONE IN FRONT OF ERIKSEN, DANGLES AND SCORES! Oh, that is a ridiculous move!

Clarke almost throws her stick away in excitement, and finds herself desperately eager to join Lexa in her celebration, who boy oh boy, is back to her terribly dangerous and terribly attractive superstar self.

“Way to fucking go, guys!” the center exclaims in the locker room during the second break, while fist bumping each and every one of her teammates.

“Who is this animal!??!” Charlie yells, tackling Lexa into a brutal hug. “And who the fuck let it out into the civilization?!!”

“Stud!” Calls a girl from the corner of the room, hands cupping her mouth.

“How about I try to get you one tonight, Langton?” Lexa announces, and Clarke rolls her eyes at the arrogance displayed.

“Is it Christmas yet?!” Charlie cheers joyfully with a pat on Lexa’s back.

It sure does look like it, and third period surely doesn’t break the streak. Despite Clarke letting two goals in, the offense is still on fire and saves the situation by putting in another goal – short-handed, this time.

From Compton to Lavrov, then to Lerman. Lerman fakes a shot, gives it back to Compton, she
shoots! Stopped by Griffin! Rebound! Another shot blocked by Reyes! And here’s Woods to clear it out but Langton is already going off at full speed and RECEIVES THE LONG PASS! Langton alone, she skates up, dangles it, now backhanded SHE SCORES! Charlie Langton, on a beautiful pass – Woods does it again!

The crowd erupts in cheers, Clarke is dowsed with relief as Arkadia takes the lead once again. Little does she know that the offense is not done at all.

Soon, a second wave of threat sweeps in, and both the first and third line are as menacing as ever – Lexa especially is unwavering, reckless and particularly distracting to Clarke, what with her cocky grins and sweaty face which she dries up with the hem of her jersey in a cool, unbothered move.

“Having fun, princess?” She hears Lexa call out from behind her net while the play is at a stop.

She doesn’t answer, forces herself into silence because why would Lexa get away calling her this nickname she hates? But then she sees the captain’s grin, and she cannot help but notice that there is no malice emanating from Lexa – only amusement and joy. The realization puzzles her.

The next ten minutes are completely one sided, as the blue and gold formation is taking liberties, forcing the enemy into submission which leads to electrifying plays – and another goal. The author of said goal?

We’ll let you guess.

*The play is closing up on the Polis Scorpions, with the puck now on Lucy Marks’ stick blade, she sends it past Williams and it travels behind the net, where three players battle for it. Woods joins the hustle, passes it to Hurd. Hurd, trades positions with Reyes, that’s probably an attempt at putting some movement and confusing the enemy players.*

Clarke steals a glance at the clock – one minute forty-five seconds. She loosens the grip on her paddle a bit.

*Hurd again, shoots! Misses the net, Blake recovers the puck smoothly, gives it back to Hurd who pivots, that’s great puck protection. Jaime Hurd, still, skates up, passes it to Reyes. Reyes to Woods at the top! Woods takes a shot! No, that was a fake! She still has it, gets to the side, one handed! Lexa Woods, she dangles it to the front and falling down, SHE SCOOOOORES! UNBELIEVABLE EFFORT! LEXA WOODS, FOR THE HAT TRICK!*

All the players join her in the middle of the ice and share a crushing hug, some of them jumping and patting her on the head. Clarke looks up at the crowd currently throwing caps and knitted hats on the ice, and she thinks this might be one of the moments she’ll remember until the end of her career.

The game ends with the fans’ singing and dancing in the stands, and immediately, Clarke finds Lexa who’s still celebrating and raising her stick in the air to salute the crowd. The two share a glance – Clarke, admiring and happy and grateful, Lexa, not the commander anymore but Lexa, just Lexa, *the woman who held her and kissed her not too long ago*, Clarke remembers suddenly and shivers at the thought.

“Great game, champ”, Lexa compliments her as she comes forward and nudges her on the helmet.

“Says who?” Clarke replies, then fears the admiring tone might’ve ignited Lexa fiery ego once again, but she is surprised to see Lexa grin at her without an once of arrogance.

And that makes Clarke hug her.
Anyone seeing it happen from a distance would’ve thought it a simple expression of joy and victorious contempt. Yet Clarke feels everything in that hug – the warmth, the ferocity of it, the sigh that escapes her lungs and, more intensely than ever, Lexa’s strong, almost dizzying scent. She feels lost.

To some extent, she is.

Clarke almost goes to sleep that night – almost.

She barely makes it to her bed when she suddenly freezes, invaded with thoughts of Lexa’s half grin and muscular arms and sharp cheek bones, Lexa who’s literally mere meters away from her, probably half dressed, and very much capable of lifting her up like that last time, and maybe even kissing her, once you’re at it. Kissing her, and touching her, and stop, stop, stop.

She feels every last piece of her resolve crumble as she finds herself into the hallway, already out of breath and conscious of her folly. This is dangerous, and she knows it.

She knows it, and doesn’t care. All she thinks of is Lexa, all she sees is Lexa. Lexa and her adamant behavior, Lexa who listened to her and stopped flirting, stopped looking at her with these predatory eyes, stopped trying to gain her favors like she used to. And she understands that she’s the one to blame in this situation, just like she knows she got caught in her own game, and found herself starved in the end, starved and very much in need of Lexa’s attention. God, she can’t even believe she’s fallen this low.

She knocks just once at the door, the reasonable part of her hoping that Lexa won’t hear her and she’ll find the will to retreat back to her room like the good girl she is.

The hopeful breath she takes in as she feels the lock click in the door is almost embarrassing.

Then Lexa is just standing there, quizzical, wearing Captain America boxers and an oversized college hockey shirt that lets her tattooed forearms appear in all their splendor, to Clarke’s dismay.

“Yeah?”

Clarke blinks, then realizes she was just spoken to. By Lexa. Right. Probably because she’s knocked at her door and is now standing on her doorframe, in her pajamas, for no apparent reason.

“What?” She replies, still very much confused and infatuated with Lexa’s night outfit, like she can’t get over the fact that even Lexa’s loose clothes make her look extremely attractive.

“Uh, that was only me asking what you’re doing here in the middle of the night, Griffin, but hey, sorry for being rude, I guess.”

Lexa grins at her – that half grin again, and Clarke experiences intense difficulties with the simple act of swallowing. “Yup, pretty rude of you.”

“I’m the one being woken up at two A.M., so you could maybe acknowledge my efforts at being welcoming, or whatever.”

Clarke doesn’t think before she speaks, and instantly regrets the sentence that she blurts out dumbly. “I thought being welcoming meant inviting people in.”
And that makes Lexa confused. Confused, and horny, and confused.

“Okay, I didn’t say that.”

“You didn’t. I did.”

“Right”, Lexa confirms, scratching her neck in embarrassment.

There’s a pause during which both women look at each other – study each other, in fact, except they pay close attention to their lips, so much so that the air gets warm, gets electric, gets dangerous.

“What are you doing?” Lexa asks weakly.

Noticing the absence of reaction, the captain continues. “So you tell me to back off, and then you come see me in the middle of the night, asking me to let you in? What is your deal, Griffin?”

She’s getting angry, Clarke thinks, and panic – because an angry Lexa is also a hot, irresistible Lexa. Fuck.

“What’s my deal? I don’t know, Lexa, what my deal is, in fact what I don’t know, is why you kept giving me these half grins all through the game, like you were showing off just for the sake of it, and boy did that come out great, I’m not complaining – hey, hat trick, that’s nice, so-“

“Thanks”, Lexa gratifies her, yet there are still question marks dancing in her eyes.

“Why the flirting, though? That’s all I want to know.”

“There was no flirting, Griffin, that was just my normal self, and my normal smiles, and my normal-“

Clarke takes two steps forward – with the first one she enters the room, and with the second one she enters Lexa’s personal space. “Then stop… Just…” Clarke starts, then finds herself at a loss of words, and apparently at a loss of fucks given, for she wrinkles her nose in disdain. “Fuck you”, she casually says, watching Lexa go from surprised, to irritated, to amused. Amused?

“Oh, is that right?” The captain asserts, eyes laughing. “And will that be all, miss?”

Clarke sees red – falsely, because she’s just ninety percent mad, and she’s not even mad at Lexa. She’s mad at herself, and she suddenly thinks she’s already gone inside this fucking room, she might as well enjoy her time.

There’s a second of uncertainty, of Lexa being all predatory stance again, and very low resolve, and very high need, and then Clarke’s taking matters into her own hands. First she gets up close - close enough for them to be able to breathe each other’s air. Then she looks up, grabs Lexa’s neck and crashes their mouth together in what becomes another desperate and needy and helpless kiss, just like their first one, only even angrier (if that’s even possible).

She’s woken up Lexa, it seems, and that’s a dangerous business, for the captain immediately returns the kiss with twice the passion and searing hunger, eating her alive like a parched animal. They tumble backwards together, hit the table of the kitchenette because let’s not forget they’re in a hotel room – in a hotel room, with very little space and very little patience. Lexa outright growls when she realizes they’re too confined to do anything serious, or that’s what Clarke thinks, until she’s then being picked up and thrown on the table. Her equilibrium kicks in, and she keeps herself from falling on her back by throwing out a hand and only then does she find Lexa’s green
eyes staring hard at her like she’s some kind of Sirloin steak that’s being dangled in front of a lion.

“If you break that table, you pay”, Clarke warns.

“Clarke.”

“Yes.”

“I have just fucking thrown you on a table, that is commonly known as a 10/10 in the sex world.”

“Oh, then you don’t wanna see what I can do to you.”

And that’s when Lexa seems to entirely realize that she’s got Clarke Griffin spread out on a table, at two A.M., in her holiday pajamas. She didn’t think a reindeer t-shirt could be that sexy.

“Almost scared me right there, Griffin, but I’m not the one on the table”, Lexa taunts, advancing between Clarke’s thighs who jerks up and meets her halfway for a wet, open-mouthed kiss that reaches into her guts and tears her open, panting and out of breath and sick with anticipation.

“Oh, just come here”, Clarke replies, bumping their foreheads together in a move that could be way too personal and intimate were they not completely wild and dizzy with lust. Clarke doesn’t think, just grabs a handful of Lexa’s shirt fabric and pulls it up to get her fingers on her abs, trailing upwards and digging her fingers into the captain’s skin. The latter huffs, just once, and understands that yes, this is where they are going, yes, they are doing something all too forbidden and all too sickeningly infatuating.

“Is that you rewarding me for my hat trick?” Lexa difficulty articulates, watching the embers of lust dancing in Clarke’s eyes.

“Possibly”, Clarke declares, and with one swift move takes her shirt off.

It appears Lexa’s brain has stopped functioning – she stays there, panting, eyes wandering on the vast unexplored land of pleasures that is Clarke Griffin’s toned body.

Clarke gets sick of it eventually – and don’t get her wrong, she loves it when Lexa looks at her like that, but she also needs her touch. So bad.

“Is there a problem there, captain?” She teases, and watches Lexa arch a brow suspiciously, then, very slowly, lower herself until she’s mere inches away from Clarke’s chest.

The look she gives her is one of complete confidence in her capacities – head cocked to the side, terribly charming grin, and that’s it, Clarke feels warmth spread into her spine, then travel up until in reaches her nape.

“Calling me such names is a dangerous idea, you should know that by now”, Lexa growls, her tone warning her of the upcoming threat.

Clarke gives her best challenging glare, very aware of the possible repercussions. “What? Were you hoping for Commander instead?”

And she loses track of time – she thinks it lasts ten seconds, ten seconds of Lexa eyeing her cautiously like she’s wondering what she can and cannot do to this woman, what’s permitted, what’s unallowable. Then Lexa’s sucking at her neck - a sucking that start by a deliberate, flat-tongue lick and grows into something feral and wicked, something that makes Clarke close her eyes and feel all the blood rushing to her head. She jerks her hand up and buries it in Lexa’s hair,
and she thinks she hears Lexa purr, mouth still on her neck, feeling the throbbing of her pulse with dazing clarity.

“Other things you’d like to hear?” Clarke breathes, light-headed but eager to obtain more of these reactions out of Lexa.

“Say it again, you might get lucky”, the center enounces plainly, busying herself with Clarke’s bra.

“Start by opening my fucking bra”, the blonde mutters in false frustration.

Lexa closes her eyes and breathes in, clearly exasperated. “Clarke Griffin, I swear.”

But she’s already being beaten to this undressing game – with one ‘click’, Clarke is getting rid of her bra and throwing it further on the table. Lexa closes her mouth, afraid she might start to drool.

Clarke stands straight, reaching to pull off Lexa’s shirt but the motion is suddenly at a halt when Lexa’s hands get to her breasts, and she can’t think anymore, just huffs loudly and takes hold of Lexa’s forearms in an attempt to guide her actions.

“You know, I think I got this”, the center grunts, and Clarke reacts by pulling the hem of her t-shirt over her head, trapping her effectively.

“Griffin! Jesus, do you even want to be fucked?”

Then Clarke is removing the shirt with one quick pull and she’s devouring Lexa’s lips again, adds tongue to the mix like the little wicked thing she is, and she knows just how to get Lexa out of control, it appears, for the center’s hands are all over her again, climbing up her ass, nestling at the small of her back.

From now on, they don’t utter as single word – just kiss, touch, bite, send each other burning in all the right places. Clarke has three orgasms, which come ridiculously early into the process (it’s almost embarrassing). And as she bent over Lexa’s back, panting and over the edge, she vividly remembers dreaming about this the first time she saw her, remembers thinking of Lexa’s hands and arms and mouth on multiple occasions, and then she realizes just how bad this woman can dismantle her, leave her to pieces on the kitchen floor, leave her helpless and needy and weak. She’s scared, then breathless, then scared. Their eyes meet again, and they take it for sex, only sex. The fools.

They travel to the bedroom after hours, sorry, Lexa carries Clarke to the bedroom, in fact. The blonde cannot help but wonder how it is that they do so much of carrying and throwing – throwing on beds, on tables, on walls, why not on carpets, while they’re at it?

“I’ll wake up, don’t worry”, Clarke assures in between breaths.

Lexa doesn’t hear her (the thighs currently tightening around her head are not helping).

The clock strikes five A.M. when Clarke wakes up, deeply confused, and turns around only to discover Lexa still asleep beside her. She forces herself out of the bed, still light headed and unsure on her feet. Lexa looks quiet and god, so young. She looks like this pure, inoffensive child – it’s hard to remember her in her brutal, conqueror glory. It’s hard to remember that Lexa once acted cruel and selfish – callous, this warrior of a woman, this unscrupulous being that used people to her advantage, and looked down at the whole world like a greek Goddess on a pedestal.

Clarke backs away, torn and lost. She asks herself, how is it that she acts like a child around me, now? How is it that she’s laughing freely, just for the sake of it? How is it that she’s pushing
pucks off a *fucking* board for her, how is it that she’s *trying*, now? She reminds her of the little boys who brought her dandelions in elementary school during recess, these kids who were the very epitome of goodwill and clumsiness. Clarke leaves the room, almost in panic, and the truth hits her like a sack of bricks.

She has grown fond of Lexa.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked it! Come say hi on Tumblr if you want to read the first episode of my special issue called Off the ice, in which you'll get to read a radio interview taking place before the Classic!
https://thefrenchwriter-official.tumblr.com/

*UPDATE* Hello everyone, just wanted to tell you that I have had a crazy crazy week with many stressful exams, therefore I didn't have time to finish the chapter and I apologize for that. Unfortunately I can see my finals approaching in the distance, which means I'll try very hard to finish this week or next week, but if I can't for some reason, you guys might have to wait a bit more :( Again, I'm so very sorry I can't deliver my content as regularly as I'd like to... Thank you for your patience
It’s seven o’clock when Lexa awakens, astonished and still very much on a victory high – but it seems her neck has developed a mind of itself, for her head is suddenly turning around, checking and seeing the empty spot on the left side of the bed.

She is not disappointed.

She is not.

But then why is she noticing, as she struts to the other side of the room, that the air still smells like her, and why is she invaded by this wicked thought, that maybe the sheets still smell like her as well? And as she takes a step towards the bed, she stops and huffs, in disbelief of such a ridiculous course of action.

This was excellent sex, but she is Lexa Woods, is she not? Lexa Woods appreciates excellent sex; therefore this is normal. No need to get all flustered over this, no need to look forward to practice, or the next game, or the trip back home because Clarke always sits in the front and maybe she could try to sit in the front as well for once…

A type of cold, robot-like concentration installs itself, taking total control of her blood stream while she’s packing her two deodorant sticks, underwear and many other things (geez, it’s almost like Anya is judging her from inside her conscience).

She did bring her own soap just to make her sister happy. The thought makes her smile for the first time of the day.

In the elevator, she meets Raven Reyes whose multiple bags barely fit inside the shaft, and silently wonders if there’s a danger the machine might drop with all the weight.

“What you got in all of this?” She can’t help but ask.

“Clothes”, Raven shrugs, and her tone of common sense almost makes Lexa chuckle with the
absurdity of the whole situation. “What don’t you have in yours?”

Lexa smirks, eyeing the unique baggage currently sitting by her feet like a ridiculous guard dog. “Fair”, she mumbles absent-mindedly as the doors open and they strut into the lobby, only to see that the bus has already arrived.

Reeve is putting on her coat with one vigorous shrug and meeting up with some of the equipment staff, then she motions casually towards the pile of luggage beside the chic lobby couch. “And to answer your question, Blake – nope, we won’t be having a morning skate tomorrow.”

Sweet, Lexa thinks, then pauses because that certainly means they’ll be having an off day – an off day in Doah, with its miles and miles of beaches and cocktails and garlic lobster tails, and magnificent terrasses shaded by palm trees…

“When’s the flight?” she hears Raven ask before climbing the bus stairs.

“We leave at ten, we get there around twelve thirty”, Reeve affirms, taking her seat in front of the bus, then clapping loud enough to get the players’ attention. “Alright, quick message to you girls. First of all, CONGRATS!”

The whole bus comes alive with cheers and shouts of victory, Raven going as far as yelling her signature ‘woot woot’ coupled with a fist pump.

“So, mighty fine win, that gives me no choice… How about I give you the afternoon tomorrow?”

The previous cheers seemed loud, yet they can’t hold a candle to the roar of triumph and excitement drawn from such an announcement. If they weren’t currently in a bus, the girls would almost be bouncing around like kangaroos on a coffee high.

“Oh shit, there’s a beach there, right?!” Raven later asks a highly displeased Octavia who wants nothing but to settle on her seat with noise-cancelling headphones and her relaxation playlist.

She makes sure to let Raven know just that. “Yes, there is a beach there. Now-“ She points to her headset with a fake smile. “My peace of mind.”

Raven seems to reflect on the issue for a short while, then has another aha moment. “What about hot people? Hot people on the beach? Hot people on the beach under a palm tree?”

“I don’t fucking know-“ Octavia sighs, fumbling with her headphones like she doesn’t even know what to do with them anymore. “Do I look like I know?” She asks around, looking at the teammates nearby and catching Lexa’s amused gaze in the process, gaze that says I’ll take over.

“Ever heard of Doah girls, Reyes?” Lexa asks with the tone of the globetrotter who’s seen anything and everything.

Raven’s eyebrows come shooting up in bewilderment. “That bad, huh?”

“Fucking diabolical”, Lexa winks, then has a sigh of nostalgia. “Magical, but diabolical as well.”

She’s caught Clarke’s attention with that last comment. The blonde goalie is first clueless about the conversation, but is then informed by Octavia’s non-verbal communication - which consists of mimicking big boobs being grabbed and wiggling her eyebrows suggestively. “Oh, come on.” Clarke deplores, her feminist instincts set off by the topic. “Girls there aren’t all pieces of meat for you to jump on, Lexa.”
Raven quickly joins her side to make sure she doesn’t get the blame. “Very true, Clarke. And I asked about the guys!”

“What is your deal with objectifying people like that—” Clarke starts, only be cut off carelessly by Lexa.

“I didn’t really watch the guys, to be honest.”

“So you are not only gay, but very gay”, Raven shrugs, unwrapping the odd sandwich she’s just produced from one of her multiple bags.

“That’s right.”

“Couldn’t you simply assess quality?” Raven tries again, desperate.

“Would you leave her alone? She isn’t an expert, last I checked.” Clarke intervenes seriously.

Lexa chuckles, unable to keep her arrogant self locked out any longer. “Wouldn’t be so sure about that.”

That makes Clarke pissed.

And for obvious reasons, one would think, except Lexa is more used to annoyed Clarke - the Clarke that gives her a little smack upside the head or pushes her away (still smiling uncontrollably) whenever she says something inappropriate, because of course Clarke then acts all chocked like the respectable lady she is, says her name like an angry mom calling over her guilty child, gives her the eye enlargement. Then it’s all ‘shut it, would you?’ and ‘would you please grow up?’ but she’s still got that light in her eyes that means she either wants to slap her or kiss the dear life out of her.

It takes a while for Lexa to even figure out why Clarke would be mad at her, but she finally succeeds at the complex task by playing the scene over and over in her head, then focussing solely on Clarke’s reactions, and the words to which she was reacting and holy shit she’s jealous.

Lexa is confused and blinks, blinks, blinks.

Jealous?

That doesn’t seem like Clarke, she first thinks, but is suddenly hit by truckloads of content – images of Clarke rudely joking about her many admirers, Clarke’s very frequent eye rolls whenever she brought up a previous affair, and the way she’d get uncomfortable whenever someone joked about Lexa’s sex skills.

The face she made that one time Wayne sat on her lap.

When she asked her whether she wanted to trade her for Robin Eriksen.

It’s suddenly too much for Lexa, and she finds herself literally chasing Clarke on the runway to the plane, only to bump into the wall the goalie clearly built around herself.

“Do you want something?” she asks, unshakable.

Lexa almost rolls her eyes, but stops at the last second in fear it would only make Clarke angrier.

“Oh, maybe a nice panini, now that you’ve asked.”

Seeing Clarke’s deadpan look, she quickly adds: “Other than that, no, I don’t want anything.”
“That’s great”, Clarke simply affirms, every single part of her face implying the exact opposite. Lexa cannot help the sigh that escapes her lips as she scans her interlocutor’s eyes in search of any concrete signals. She finds none.

“That’s what I’m gonna do.”

It suddenly appears to her that once again, Clarke reduces her communication abilities by ninety-eight percent. “Starting now”, she pathetically specifies, and feels like Bambi trying to walk on thin ice.

“Well good to know”, Clarke replies with a little sarcastic nod that sends Lexa burning.

“Fuck, why do you have to be like this…?” She mumbles, then gets downright startled by Clarke’s reaction.

“I’m sorry?” She asks, her tone sending shards of ice flying towards Lexa’s face.

“Jesus Christ, Griffin, take it down a notch”, the captain counters, not giving her bewilderment away.

“What would you rather have me like? I’m not plastic enough for you, is that it?”

“Plasti-” Lexa starts, then promptly starts her sentence over. “What are you even saying?”

Clarke scoffs indignantly as she crosses her arms over her chest, dropping one of her bags in the process. “I’m saying that with the ease with which you bring up your affairs.” At that, her voice turns into a hushed whisper. “That if you bring me up in the future, even anonymously, I will…”

She stops, in search of words, and Lexa is nearly moved by the vulnerability demonstrated, the raw disarray leaking from Clarke’s façade of composure.

This invites doubt inside Lexa, a doubt so searing and scorching it leaves her bare, searching for her breath, shame puddling in her guts. She gets sick of herself, even only for an instant.

And for Alexandria Woods to feel sick of herself, that says it all.

“Clarke”, she only says – the way the name comes tumbling out of her is deeply surprising.

“Yes”, the goalie bites back, still hostile.

“Do you really think I could do this?”

To you, she should’ve said, do this to you, but it’s too late.

She sees the surprise light itself in Clarke’s cobalt gaze like a spotlight on a scene – sudden, almost chastening, turning her into a performer waiting for the curtain call.

She isn’t aware of the terrible certitude eating Clarke from the inside, the certitude that no, she does not think Lexa capable of such things – truth is, she cannot cope with the fact that Lexa hurts people, that it’s what she used to do and therefore can do again, even though she held her in such extraordinary ways, even though she was breathing erratically in her neck just last night, even with the look she gives her, the look that says terrible things and speaks terrible thoughts that maybe she wants to kiss her again so bad and maybe she would be ripped apart from the inside if it so happens that she can never see her again.
Of course, not knowing all this makes it all the more complicated.

“Yes”, Clarke lies, with a look to the left at the boarding in progress.

Lexa believes her.

Doah looks like heaven on Earth when the plane lands, looks like all the plastic sets of a typical Hollywood movie – with the way the water reflects the sunlight and the palm trees sway like they’re dancing, and everyone seems so joyful and satisfied it’s almost uncanny.

Raven, being Raven, jumps straight to her hotel room and is back from said room in a matter of minutes (not that Lexa counted), and when she erupts from the automatic doors and into the tropical weather, she’s got pink sunglasses on and a straw hat that makes her look ‘touristy’, as Clarke puts it.

Together, they assemble their beach group, composed of Lexa, Clarke, Raven and Charlie. The rest of the girls either decided to stay at the hotel for the afternoon (Lexa heard the spa is famously recognized) or are leaving to shop or play golf. The idea of an 18-hole game in such paradisiac setting first appealed at Lexa, but for some reason Raven loathes golf.

“Why do you hate it that much?” Clarke later asks while assembling a polka dot parasol, and laying a blanket under it.

“She won’t tell you”, assures Charlie, who obviously knows something more than the others.

Raven looks up at them, both hands holding ice cream sandwiches. Her hat lends her this austere look, one her sunglasses can only amplify. “No, and you won’t either.”

“You can’t control me”, Charlie says, tone sassy and defying.

“I sure cannot”, Raven admits, but she’s already motioning towards the sunscreen bottle on the blanket, “yet this bottle here can act as a weapon.”

“In what way?” Langton asks, pro forma, for she knows exactly what her friend means.

And Raven jumps to her feet, bottle in hand - which she points at Langton in a threatening manner. “I would suggest running.”

“Thank you for the suggestion”, replies the winger, but she’s thrown aback by the sudden squirt of the bottle, and the jet of sunscreen she barely has enough time to block with her hands.

Clarke sees them run past her and smiles at the infantility displayed – she’s mature, as usual, she’s got the smile of a parent watching children play.

Once the pair of ‘children’ is away from sight, Lexa breathes in and realises that she and Clarke are now alone, side by side, and this makes the air around her turn torrid in and instant. She wants to make sure things don’t get awkward, therefore she looks for tools of any nature – and finds one. “Frisbee?” she asks, waving the object around and grinning when Clarke lets a chuckle escape her rigid exterior.

“At least probably the less fun thing you can do at the beach”, the blonde mutters nonetheless.

“Says who?” Lexa exclaims like the ten-year-old she suddenly becomes whenever there’s a game involved.
“Me and every other person I know”, Clarke replies with a shrug.

Lexa snorts, turns her gaze to the waves grasping at the sand and leaving it damp and dark in their wake. “See, you’re no fun, when you’re like that.”

Clarke sighs, rubs at her face with the top of her wrist. “Sorry.”

“No problem”, Lexa also sighs. “I’ll just look dumb if I play alone.”

That makes Clarke laugh.

A proper laugh, not just a chuckle. Then she looks at Lexa and her eyes have gone soft, have gone affectionate, and it’s almost too real, too close to the look you see between married people, that look of admiration that says I’m lucky you’re here.

Maybe Clarke is realizing that Lexa has this part of her, this outrageously innocent, childish part of her, that she doesn’t show anybody else.

Some hidden side of a solid, imperturbable woman who puts on a show and celebrates her goals like an arrogant superstar but is also likely to transform into a puddle of goo as soon as a certain blonde goalie enters the room.

“Oh, I’m that funny?” Lexa grins, sticking her tongue out a tad.

“You have your moments”, Clarke admits, still laughing softly.

“Frequent moments, dare I say”, Lexa points out, stretching out on her blanket.

“Rare”, Clarke coughs, yet not entirely masking the word.

Lexa scoffs, then blows a raspberry. “Lies, Griffin. You’re a big liar.”

“Ouch! Did I just get called big?” Clarke barks back, only half-insulted.

Immediately, Lexa tries to recover. “No, of course not.“ She gestures randomly in the air, as if trying to fill in the blanks with eloquence (except the effect isn’t convincing). “You’re… thin.”

If Clarke had been drinking coffee, she would’ve spit it out violently. “Wait a sec, that’s all you can do?”

“I guess.”

“Don’t guess, try”, Clarke offers, seemingly unable to notice Lexa’s growing discomfort.

Discomfort which spawns from the feelings growing inside of Lexa – feelings of attachment, feelings she can barely repress with their indomitable force pushing down on her resolve, pushing down and extinguishing all things she thought she knew, resulting in uncertainty.

Brutal uncertainty.

She’s left hanging on a thread, she’s left searching for answers she does not possess.

“What do you want me to say?”

Her voice sounds exposed.
“Geez, I don’t recognize you, today. A month ago, you were flirting all the fucking time, and now you can’t even call me-”

“Don’t do this, Griffin.”

She is pretty. She is terribly, dangerously, rivetingly pretty. Therefore Lexa cannot call her such a thing, she cannot submit to emotions of any kind because that’s when it becomes real.

And then it’s not easy anymore, it’s not in good fun and in laughter and in messing around in hotel rooms, half drunk, with no worries and no expectations.

“You’re right”, Clarke simply admits.

Lexa raises an eyebrow, surprised by such a quick compliance. “I am?” She says, and the truth is a part of her wants to call Clarke pretty, wants to call her charming as well, wants to tell her she’s getting fond of her, but that’s as impossible as it is humiliating to Lexa. Just then, it occurs to her that she might regret this one day. She chases the thought away immediately.

“Yeah”, Clarke puffs, her words almost indistinguishable from the air escaping her lungs simultaneously.

She turns around so that they’re both facing each other, bent arms acting as pillows for their heads. “We’d need rules”, Clarke says, lays it out in the open, but her voice sounds indecisive like she’s just proposing something, not deciding its verity, and let’s not forget she didn’t want rules at first, or simply didn’t think they needed any. One could even imagine a possible question mark at the end of her sentence.

Do we need rules?

“We would”, Lexa affirms like it’s a mantra she doesn’t truly relate to. A philosophy quote whose meaning she can’t properly grasp.

“Alright, then.”

They both sound hesitant, maybe even reluctant. “It’ll be safer.”

“Definitely”, Lexa declare, a bit too keen.

“Yeah, so the first one… Any ideas?”

Lexa doesn’t have to think about it too long. “No staying the night?”

“Uh-huh, yeah, that’d work.”

Lexa notes the possibility tone, how she uses would instead of will. “No kissing in public.”

“Well of course not”, Clarke affirms with a fake laugh that almost instantly dies out.

The next one burns a bit as it leaves Lexa’s mouth (not that she’ll admit it). “No expectations.”

“No displays of affection”, Clarke counters right away, and any quick-witted individual would’ve labeled it as self-defence.

“No cuddling”, Lexa says after a short moment of reflection.

“What do you mean by that?”
“Well, no big spoon and little spoon”, the captain declares like it’s common knowledge.

“Well, when would that even happen?” Clarke asks, sceptic.

“In bed, she wants to say. “I don’t know”, she says instead, and quickly changes the subject. “No exclusivity.”

“What, you wanna fuck other people?” Clarke asks, the hint of a bite in her tone.

“No, Lexa thinks. Not because she doesn’t want to, but because she can’t. Maybe she’s broken, or something like that. Maybe (surely) Clarke did this to her. “Well, suppose we want to try something else… After a while.”

“Not a good answer”, Clarke warns with as much calm as she can muster.

“I said hypothetically!”

“I do not remember you saying that.”

“Strange.”

“You either hallucinated it or made it up for the sole purpose of escaping my wrath.”

At that, Lexa frowns. “Impressive deduction.”

“Yeah, I get that a lot.”

Clarke turns to face her and she looks like she’s studying her, searching for something, a clue of some kind, perhaps? “But seriously though, I don’t mind if you wanna get your daily dose of chicks, just don’t talk about them, or don’t mention them, or don’t-”

“No, of course not”, Lexa assures right away, and the secret here is she’s saying no to many things – no to bringing someone else home again, no to the meaningless fucks she used to barely remember the day after when she woke, no to even thinking about another girl, for she’s trying real hard to picture herself with anyone other than Clarke, yet fails miserably. For some reason, she sees only, only her.

Sees her eyes and lips, remembers the crease of her back and how she arches upward a tad when Lexa kisses her neck, and the sound of her voice when she begs. She gets dizzy just by thinking of it all.

“Well then, that settles it, doesn’t it?”

Doesn’t it? A question, again. It’s almost like this whole conversation has this big, invisible question mark standing at the end of it.

“Yeah”, Lexa mutters, a bit shaken up like she’s just been pulled back from the depths of her subconscious and into the reality.

A reality which can be summed up by a few words – Doah, the beach, the unknown.

She grabs the frisbee again from the top of the cooler and abruptly stands, motioning towards the stripe of pale sand stretching along the coast. “Get up and toss the fucking frisbee.”

Clarke obeys without a word, but she’s smiling.
“That’s great Lexa – if you could turn just slightly to the left and bend forward.”

Clarke watches Lexa nod politely, and obey in the blink of an eye – one must say that Lexa likes spotlights, whether they be during a game or during a photoshoot, or during a commercial such as the one they’re filming right now.

And Clarke has to admit that standing near camera three with her goalie pants is growing uncomfortable, just as she has to admit that Lexa giving her best charming grins at said camera is very fun to watch.

They’re filming Bauer commercials during which each of them has to try out a new piece of equipment, making for both individual clips and a commercial of them going toe to toe and joking around.

As soon as Clarke hears the pitch, she thinks, *that’ll make some good bloopers*.

And she’s right. In fact, it is now two in the afternoon, and they’ve had to push the commercial to the very end to get the snippets out of the way (that’s not how they said it, but surely it’s what they meant). She never thought she’d be saying that, but Lexa is *funny* today.

“Should I break into a dance?” Lexa asks at some point – just standing there at the end of the take, looking all too serious and without the shadow of a smile.

The staff members all look at the producer, who blinks. “That won’t be necessary.”

“Allrighty then”, Lexa casually backtracks and later turns towards Clarke, making sure they’ve got a camera on them. “I can tell they’ve never seen me dance.”

Clarke almost snorts her sip of coffee, then recoils on her chair in fear she might fall down. “I think so too”, she giggles, and the two exchange a knowing glance that makes Clarke recall their moments of chemistry on the ice, and she suddenly realizes just how many of these they’ve shared.

The main scenes are simple: in the first one, there’s a camera close up on water bottles being hit by Lexa’s pucks, and then the next scenes either involve Lexa training coupled with a voiceover, and then her playing against Clarke.

Clarke’s part also involves training by herself, making routine saves and measuring her skills to Lexa’s. She’s noticed how sports companies have developed an interest in them, how they enjoy the mix of Clarke’s bubbly personality and Lexa’s confident, self-assured demeanor.

“Okay so from the moment you say ‘when I’m in that place’.”

Lexa turns towards the technician, nods politely and gets in position near the sliding camera. She has to sprint to the center of the ice, then break suddenly and recover a puck, drawing a circle in backwards skating.

“In three”, warns the producer as he raises three fingers.

The sound of scraping blades fills the arena, only amplified once she breaks casually yet graciously, and sends snow flying a half meter away.

She snatches the puck flat on the blade of her stick, manipulates it in an effortless move then slides
it between the other pucks, lined up and dangerously close to one another – but Lexa neither hits nor touches any. When she gets to the last one, she quickly jumps over the line and takes a shot at the net, even going as far as doing one of her signature celebrations – gliding with one knee down and a hand stroking the ice.

It almost seems too good to be true – and Clarke knows this is when she comes in.

“Cut!” Yells the producer. “Alright, I think we’d need a goalie!”

Clarke smiles at that, pulls her jersey over her head and reaches for her mask on the table nearby. “Coming for ya, Woods”, she chants as she steps off the carpet and onto the ice, drawing a few circles as a warmup.

“Why don’t you stretch or something?” Lexa replies, mouthpiece half out and helmet unfastened - all of it part of the captain’s irreverent, show-off attitude that Clarke does not like.

Does not.

“Oh, how nice of you, I didn’t know you felt this concerned about my flexibility.”

Clarke catches a technician’s glance towards the producer, glance that says who did we hire? She even thinks she sees the producer shrug, but it might’ve been an optical illusion.

So she does stretch, just to piss off Lexa – and because it barely works, she begins to think Lexa just isn’t as easily frustrated as she once was.

Or maybe she likes seeing Clarke stretch.

The goalie reviews each and every move she does while stretching and struggles to grasp the possible sexiness they would hold. She is way too dressed to be sexy at the moment, isn’t she?

“All right, Lexa’s voiceover goes ‘this is my territory’. Then, zoom on the net, we hear Clarke saying ‘and this is mine’. So we’ve got the clash of both worlds.”

“Who wins? Is it up to us?” Clarke asks, not forgetting the ongoing rivalry between the two of them.

Lexa just rolls her eyes, because she’s doing a job and not playing right now – but she’s still got her playful smirk that says she wants to win so bad. “Clarke, you child”, she mumbles, suddenly acting like the adult.

“I think the point is to make it end in a tie”, an assistant suggests from behind the others, notepad in one hand and a mug of coffee in the other.

“Good idea”, says Lexa, like the witty little shit she is, and her voice almost sounded frank.

Almost.

The first shots turn out to be a complete yet intended mess – at times they’re literally chasing each other on the ice, making jokes or dancing in sync. Clarke laughs so much she can barely feel her face.

Ultimately, they shoot more intense shots – it’s still in good fun, but they’re taking it more seriously. Lexa is told to experiment different types of dekes, and Clarke eases off once she sees Lexa attempt to spin around while hitting the puck mid-air. It turns out that it’s a shot she actually
does in practice, and however crazy it may seem, Clarke lets it in (she was probably too focused on Lexa’s attractive, concentrated expression).

“Try, Griffin”, the captain mutters while recoiling backwards slowly, looking annoyingly laid back.

“Okay, get off Thunderbolt”, Clarke counters with a smirk.

She waits for Lexa’s confused expression to unfold as she takes a quick drink from the Gatorade bottle on the net. “Who’s Thunderbolt?”

“The high horse you’re sitting on.”

Lexa outright abandons, spinning so as not to face her anymore. “Griffinnnnnnnn…!” She whines, but she’s evidently entertained - it shows, with the smile she tries (and fails) to wipe off her face, and the snorting laughter that later escapes her lips.

“Should we keep that?” asks the cameraman, twice as confused as Lexa.

“No”, Lexa replies, polite but firm.

Clarke’s attempt at bewilderment comes out as a strangled snicker. “What? Yes! Put it in the bloopers!”

The cameraman’s gaze jumps from Lexa, to Clarke, to the producer who gives a feeble nod. “Eh, why not? It’s fun.”

“You didn’t laugh”, Clarke points out carefully.

“I experienced a mental hilarity”, the producer shrugs, and Clarke starts genuinely liking the guy.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Lexa asks with the look of a puzzled puppy, and Clarke just shushes her.

When urged to explain further, Clarke simply rambles as she usually does. “Let’s just say I am a funny, complex individual and the jokes I make are sometimes-“


Clarke lets out a vociferous sigh of annoyance. “Pardon me!? I’m sorry you aren’t smart enough to understand them.”

“I think you’re not smart enough to understand them, which makes you think they’re way better than they actually are.”

“I DO understand, since I’m the one making the joke!!”

“Debatable.”

Lexa braces herself for the hit – it comes in the form of a lively push that sends her sliding towards the board.

“You’re a jerk. I’ll rob you”, says Clarke, and Lexa is suddenly delighted.

And so they start by doing practice shots, supposedly for fun, but the two girls grow more involved by the minute (Clarke almost pulls a muscle extending the leg for a save she doesn’t even need to
They do have fun, though.

And Clarke wouldn’t admit it immediately, but she’s smiling inside out. She feels alive, she feels like she’s on top of her game, and why not on top of the world, while you’re at it?

The funniest, most absurd thing that comes to her is how she used to hate Lexa – she avoided her in corridors, sped away when she approached, yelled at her, sneered at her, pushed her away whenever she invaded her personal space. And now she loves it, when Lexa gets up close. She would never push her away again – not seriously, that is.

“Shoot, shoot, shoot!!!” Clarke yells in an attempt to distract Lexa, even going as far as sending her paddle sliding towards her skates. It’d be really nasty if only Lexa wasn’t one of the finest skaters – she just jumps over it and recovers the puck in a burst of laughter.

“Yeah, no stick, how’s that?” the captain teases while approaching the net, shoulders unstrung yet gaze still in attack mode.

“I can manage”, Clarke affirms, knowing very well that she cannot, in fact, do so.

Not against Lexa, in any case.

The center picks the puck from the ground, bringing her stick closer to the ice to gain speed once she suddenly jerks upwards – the puck now glued to her stick blade – and spins to knock the puck inside the corner of the net.

Clarke has seen that move already – has seen it, studied it, told herself that no player ever does that in a game but here she is now wondering if Lexa has the confidence required to pull such a feat instead of just shooting. Then she sees the cocky smirk reappear, sees the producer’s hands rise in bewilderment and joy, and she knows Lexa could do it, would do it.

She’s all fuzzy inside, now. *Isn’t this great…?*

They look at the clips with genuine excitement, as Clarke can tell that the ad will definitely look badass, what with Lexa’s half driven, half relaxed behavior and the evident complicity the two of them share on the ice. The whole crew looks satisfied with the work – and when Lexa asks if they have enough material for some bloopers, all of them nod vigorously at the same time.

“We’re just funny, I guess”, Clarke shrugs as they later fool around on the ice a bit.

Lexa passes her in backwards skating, and she’s got a mischievous glimmer in the eyes. “Well I don’t know about you, Griffin, but I do know I’m hilarious.”

“Now, now, don’t let it go to your head”, Clarke sighs, yet still playful.

“Too late”, Lexa sings, gaining speed and making the lap effortlessly.

Clarke just rolls her eyes at that, and cups her mouth to shout at her captain now shrinking in the distance. “I think it did end in a tie, though!”

Lexa pivots backwards immediately, looking both amused and irritated. “Griffin, you *threw* your stick at me. I call that desperation.”

Clarke scoffs and her eyebrows shoot straight up. “Desperation!? If I was that desperate I
wouldn’t throw my equipment and thereby make my job even harder.”

Lexa opens her mouth, then closes it before it gets awkward. Clarke catches up on her towards the exit of the rink and gives her a playful shove. “And they said you were a roughneck.”

“I am in fact… Would you stop laughing?!”

“Sorry”, Clarke half giggles, stepping off the ice.

“You just forgot how dangerous I am”, Lexa brags like a ruffled peacock, and she’s almost at the hallway when she hears Clarke bark in laughter once more.

“You’re real dangerous, Lexa – oh don’t talk back, dear, you’ll look like a lion cub trying to roar.”

And Clarke is stepping into the locker room when she feels Lexa’s stature pressing into her back and soon remembers that Lexa is pretty tall on skates and Lexa is also very jacked, and then she finds her green eyes once she turns around – not quite menacing, but reminiscent of this boiling heat of a character who’s now become an entirely new person. “How long has it been, Griffin?”

“No idea.”

“Make an effort”, Lexa outright growls, and Clarke swears she saw her jaw twitch.

That kickstarts her brain all right, but she’s unable to pinpoint the amount of time that went by since the Classic. A week, maybe? Surely not two weeks. Surely.

“There it is- me making an effort. Not very successful so far.”

Lexa’s eyes settle on her face, avoiding her gaze and piercing her barriers altogether, and it’s like she’s a rare animal being spotted by a curious explorer. Suddenly, she feels naked under a spotlight.

“Uh, it’s been eight days, and believe it or not you don’t wanna piss me off when I’m horny.”

“Ha! That sounded wrong and I love it.”

“It was supposed to be wrong, Clarke, it’s not like I tried to hide anything.”

And with that, Lexa takes a step forward (more like an agile leap, but Clarke tries not to pay attention) and that sends a small gust of her breath in Clarke’s neck.

“Fuck.”

Clarke takes a deep breath, unaware of it being a big mistake for she then breathes in Lexa and it takes everything in her not to stumble backwards and fall on a pile of bags. Then Lexa is slightly leaning forward and their mouths are inches away, inches of need and pure, gut-wrenching lust. “Bad plan. Bad plan”, Clarke mumbles, the first time not as intelligible as the second.

Lexa not only hears her but huffs in impatience.

“It’s never a good plan, Griffin. Don’t you see that?”

“Hey, it’s not my fault you fucking picked me up like a sack of potatoes-“

All air seemingly leaves her lungs at once when Lexa dips forward and kisses her way down her neck – she sighs and almost nods her head unintentionally. “I do get your point.”
She feels the tip of Lexa’s tongue and her knees buckle – yet the captain seizes her with charming confidence, hand first on the small of her back, then moving down to her ass and giving a firm squeeze.

“I see we’ve reached the ass level.”

Lexa almost chokes on her own saliva. “What?”

“The level of intimacy where one gives butt squeezes.”

Lexa gives her an eye roll, pupils full of that mischievous gleam of hers. “I’ll show you butt squeezes, you little-“

Clarke quickly backs away with a little yelp as Lexa pursues her around the room and quickly closes the distance, imprisoning her into a fierce but playful bearhug.

“Lexa, for fuck’s sake!” Clarke squeaks as she squirms away from her grip only to be slapped on the ass. She turns around, not sure if she feels insulted or not – but all anger suddenly vanishes from her once she sees Lexa’s toothy grin. “You little shit...”

She “attacks” Lexa with little shoves and slaps but the latter is laughing so hard the whole situation turns comedic in itself. “Ouch, stop that, you’re hurting me.”

Clarke just pouts – but Lexa pulls her in and kisses said pout, kisses it, like she’s not that self-advertised jackass anymore but its softer, gentler counterpart, the part Clarke blushes at and giggles at, the part that wants to act tough but cannot. Not anymore.

They kiss like they’re deprived and starved and parched – it becomes dirty when Lexa sucks harder, starts biting and licking all at once and Clarke lets out a sigh that reverberates into her mouth. Soon they’re breathing erratically, mouths crashing and recoiling only to take in little gulps of air, just enough to stay conscious, that is. Kisses deepen, become this sort of frantic, risky business, become violent, become dangerous. Clarke feels her mind as it’s derailing, breaks the kiss with a loud pop to find Lexa’s eyes still locked into hers – feral, careless. “We’re getting dumb.”

“Uh-huh”, Lexa hums with an immediate descent back to Clarke neck, going up to the back of her ear this time, both sucking and biting.

“Fuck, you don’t know where we are, do you?”

Lexa appears to make an effort. “Nobody’s there, though.”

“Nobody from the team.”

“Doesn’t matter.”

“What about all the fucking staff, Lexa? What, do you think this whole place just empties itself while all of us are gone?”

That makes Lexa flinch. “No, I get you.”

Once they’ve effectively separated and retreated to opposite sides of the room, silence settles and lingers until Lexa lets out a frustrated sigh. “You’re right.”

“I know”, Clarke offers with a smile that might just be a scowl and Lexa’s eyes jump right back to
her face, take in the sight of her all agitated and apprehensive, take it all until it gets too much and
her glance has to flee elsewhere.

“What if that’s just us getting accustomed to the rules?” Lexa blurts out, rubbing at her neck while
Clarke stays motionless.

“Yeah.”

“Yeah.”

Then they’re nodding at each other, almost frantically. They’re both unaware that this looks a lot
like denial.

“Alright, then.”

“Yeah”, Clarke mumbles unconsciously.

“Stop saying ‘yeah’ all the time.”

“You say it as well.”

“You say it more.”

Clarke chuckles feebly. “If by more you mean one time more than you-“

“See ya, Griffin”, Lexa interrupts her suddenly as she struts out of the room and into the hallway,
thinking she might just pass out from the animosity and the adrenalin coursing through her blood,
back and forth.

She’s getting weak, these days, isn’t she?

One minute spent with Clarke Griffin and she’s worn out like she ran a marathon.

From time to time, she even regrets her life in Polis - not because it was further away from her
family and friends but because it was easier.

She lived alone.

She spent time forgetting stuff, and she almost succeeded.

Maybe it’s because of Clarke that she now sees glimpses of her life go by at extreme speed and that
she feels the urge to run red lights and just get her freedom back, get it all back like it was before
when she had control. She pulls the windows down and feels the wind rushing in her lungs and in
her hair, some sort of shock, something that both chokes her and revives her.

At once, she blinks, and she sees Costia.

The door, as it slams, sends a framed picture swinging to the floor. The crushing noise resulting
tells Lexa the glass broke, but she couldn’t care less.

“Alright, Lex, just tell it as it happened.”

The voice of her sister came from the other side of the door, she’s sure of it.
“Nothing to tell”, she assures, but she’s trembling like a leaf now.

“Oh, please.”

Lexa takes a deep breath and feels the tears gathering at the corner of her eyelids. “Alright, she cheated. That’s what you wanted to know, is it?”

Silence. Anya must be a mess too, it appears, with the quivering sigh she hears behind the door.

Then, her voice turns smaller, like it doesn’t know where it belongs. “Oh, Lexa.”

“Don’t pity me. I… She wanted to get back at me.”

“And for what?”

Lexa opens her mouth but is interrupted at the very start.

“Don’t tell me you neglected her.”

“But I did. And she’s a bitch for doing that, but I wasn’t great either so I guess that’s a lesson.”

“Lexa, she cheated while you merely did your job and went to all the try-outs and made sure you’d earn your living. I don’t call that neglection.”

“I didn’t say I deserved it, I just said she had a reason. An… You have to see me as I am, alright, not as your sister. Look at the headlines, and look at this life I’m living and then tell me how I can fit someone in.”

“That has nothing to do with—“

Lexa finds herself standing in the room like a neurotic freak, all trembling hands and pale skin and reddened eyes. “I’m tired of being like this! I’m… I’m giving so much…! Don’t you see that!? Dinners, all on me, super expensive gifts, then I fly there and back, because I can’t be late or I can’t leave my cellphone ringing in my pocket without fearing she might jump to conclusions and say I’m ignoring her! Goddamnit, I’m not doing this shit again! I… I did it once, and it’s not for me, and I’m not getting through this again!”

“Breathe, Lexa, breathe.”

She starts walking circles in the room, restless. “Yeah, ‘cause it’s not what I’m doing right fucking now…”

“Just… Just in and out, Lexa, in and out.”

And she does, just for the sake of it.

In.

She almost coughs, but inhales slowly as the pain in her chest grows and the tightness increases. “She… I found them in the shower. She was there and she was glad and that was payback, to her. Fuck.”

Out.

She coughs violently, and that makes room for the sudden burst of emotion - tears and whimpers come rushing out of her, leaving her panicking and falling right down to the floor, just when Anya
opens the door and catches her, hugs her, wipes the tears off her face. “I got you, I got you”, is all Lexa hears, all that gets to her as she grips her sister’s arm with a sense of urgency she didn’t even know existed.

“I loved her”, Lexa chokes and Anya just strokes her hair and tells her she knows.

And from there, they rock back and forth on the bathroom’s ceramic floor.

Lexa falls asleep in her sister’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading, see you next update!
Lots of love

xx
**Rain and thunder**

Chapter Summary

The team plays TonDC and an incident turns Clarke's season upside down.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone, sorry for the big delay! This chapter was a monster, although very fun and entertaining to write. I do hope you'll enjoy it, we're now pretty much halfway through this fic so hurray I guess? Anyhow, you're welcome to comment your thoughts below. Have a wonderful weekend.

P.S. I've written this chapter to The National's new album, Sleep Well Beast. You might wanna try Nobody else will be there or Guilty Party for the ending scenes, I find that they fit very well with the ambiance.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The last time she played TonDC, Clarke fought, lost, and cried for thirty-five minutes in the locker room afterwards.

It was a big game – lots of goals, lots of fighting at the boards, extreme effort on both sides, but it just wasn’t their night, as it sure happens many times in the national league. Except that game needed to be won – it decided whether or not they’d lose the matchup and leave the playoffs. Clarke had told herself in between periods that she would do anything to make the next stops, then she stepped on the ice and gave two goals, and retreated to the bench during the final minutes to see her teammates play their guts off and lose.

Hockey is hard.

She knows it now, just like she knows she has to be better than the masked woman on the opposite side of the ice, and when she feels like the lesser player, she finds ways to win or conjures them out of thin air.

Hockey is a duel.

When star goalies make impossible saves, she has to match those saves. When Robin Eriksen pulls her glove out, she has to do to the same, but even better somehow. Clarke is stressed, and Clarke performs, no matter what – she knows the public is impatient, she knows they can love her for a time and boo her shamelessly the very next day. She has once given multiple goals on a bad night and gone through the sarcastic applause when she then made an easy save. She can be equally regarded as a goddess or as a joke, all of it depending on if she reads well the play or doesn’t raise her glove high enough, or doesn’t predict the incoming wraparound.

And amid cheers and boos, amid journalists asking question after question, Clarke loves her job and does it the best she can.
Therefore, on Monday morning, when she sees ‘Shockwave’ on the calendar, Clarke thinks of it as both a possible redemption and a stress factor (the latter probably not as emphasized as the first).

Practice is not as intense as she thought – Reeve probably wants to spare her the additional effort seeing as how she’s already got to do a mental workout of some sort. She’s instructed to work on her individual shifting and that gives her a front seat to watch the attack wave clinic hosted by the offensive coach (none other than former Polis captain Indra Forest). The defensive coach, Harper McIntyre, is also nearby to handle the d-liners’ offensive feed.

“You’ve got a quarter of a second to make a choice, ladies, I hope you’re aware of that. I see some of you, you look left, you think ‘oh that’s too bold’, you look right and that’s not good either, but then you’ve got the other guys coming at you and it’s too late for that nice first pass”, Harper explains blandly while gesturing towards the drawing on the strategy board. “And I can tell you that the lady you look at on the left, if she does her job right, she’s supposed to be free and super happy to get that pass. Now I’m not targeting anyone… Hello, Langton.”

She waves sarcastically at Charlie who sticks her tongue out in a butthurt manner. “I’m trying, coach, I swear!”

“You could show it to me, that’d be good.”

Clarke chuckles in the back, knowing all too well that nobody can hear her.

“Alright, stand up everyone, it’s drill time!” Indra shouts, smiling at the exasperation she just generated. “Reyes, Blake, you go ahead and give me a nice first pass. Blue jerseys, you’re blocking, yellow jerseys, you’re carrying it up. Griffin can goal as well but it’s all in the play this time, no matter the outcome.”

Clarke stands up just in time for the first drive. Raven chooses to skate up to the line where she meets a rival player and gets rid of the puck in a backwards pass towards Lexa who then brings it forward effortlessly, supported by her two usual wingers.

Indra claps twice to stop the play. “Alright, good, simple one, that’s what we want. Kudos to Reyes, I’m sure you guys saw this calm decision making, and how she wasn’t scared to skate to the middle which is interesting and bold. Other than that, we’ve got the perfect scenario – three girls here, one two three, punchline right there. So, when Clarke sees this, she knows it can go either way, it’s shots from anywhere she has to cover, makes her job harder.”

Clarke silently articulates ‘thanks a lot’ when her gaze finds Lexa’s, and the two share a teasing smile.

“Another one! Call loudly, move around, be confident! Let’s go, ladies!” Harper instructs, whistling the beginning of the play.

This time, Raven shoots it across the ice where it ricochets on the board and serves Lexa who then glides at medium speed to evaluate her options. There’s an opening right between the defense and the wingers – Lexa uses it intelligently with a quick diagonal pass towards Lauren Briggs who already has her stick up for the one timer.

Clarke gives a half push and leans on her post as she sees the puck fly past her shoulder – she knows it doesn’t count and it’s all in good fun, yet she can’t help but think it might be bad luck for tonight.

“Great job girls! Reyes, Woods, I like that passing game”, Indra informs, generating smiles from
the two players. “Now, moving on to puck work and high shots, I want you girls in line. It’ll be pretty simple, one player will be moving around with the puck, the other will settle for a one timer. I want quick passes, back and forth, until you shoot and make sure to keep that knee down.”

It’s light work, but it still serves a purpose and Clarke takes a moment to appreciate the direct ferocity held in each of Lexa’s one timers, how her whole body assists the motion to provide full power, how she drops on a knee almost graciously, almost like she’s aiming a gun, puck acting as the bullet and piercing through the air with, it appears, a similar velocity.

She only catches four of the ten top corners, and blocks about seventy percent of the five-holes – a poor performance, and it makes her grind her teeth until she’s back to the locker room and throws her stick by the bench in evident frustration.

“Boy oh boy, what did I do to you today, Griffin?” Lexa asks as an introduction, dropping next to her even if her stall is way further in the opposite corner.

“Nothing yet”, Clarke chants, words loaded with sarcasm.

“That’s good news. Hey, do you know what, I’m buying myself a new place nearby!” Lexa exclaims, quickly changing subject.

“Oh”, is Clarke’s only response, for all she can see at the moment are various replays of her worst save attempts, showcasing exaggeratedly awful glove-placing and ridiculous shifting.

“The excitement is palpable”, Lexa replies, cautiously directing her gaze towards the wall at the far end of the room.

That sets Clarke’s mind back on track as she jolts upward a tad, as one would do when waking from an eventful dream. “I meant as in ‘oh, that’s nice!’ And very nice, actually!”

Obviously, Lexa moving closer to the arena would mean Lexa moving closer to Clarke, but she doesn’t think about such things.

(Except she does.)

“So then, that’d be better, wouldn’t it? No need to drive for an hour and a half, no need to wake up at six in the morning, no need to shower here…”

That makes Clarke’s heart skip a beat, which is bad not only because it’s pretty dangerous but because it also means she hasn’t completely forgotten the shower incident, which needs no retelling but since this is an omniscient narrator one would think it’d deserve to be explained and, in the process, extremely detailed.

As such, it’d be interesting to add that Clarke rarely bathes in the team shower and that the one time she did, it was to realize after twenty minutes - she takes long showers, and that’s a first detail - that everybody else had left except Lexa, and that aforementioned Lexa was very naked and very there.

Then, and in these otherwise paradisiac conditions, began a game of silence and of Clarke’s desperate attempts at controlling her thoughts and where they wandered, and making sure they didn’t go into dangerous territories such as ‘what does showering-Lexa look like?’, and that is, of course, just an example.

The main component of the event consists of Clarke dropping her soap and for said soap to immediately vanish out of her reach, somewhere beyond the boundaries of her peripheric vision
(which was of course limited because let us mention again that Lexa was naked and somewhere in the room).

“Lexa”, Clarke said, almost calm but nevertheless flushing from head to toe.

“Yes, hi”, replied Lexa, a tiny version of the irreverent captain she usually portrays.

And Clarke peeked at the space between her own legs, in a desperate search for the goddamn soap, and not only saw a foot but also saw a leg attached to it, all of it far in the distance but still there in the same room and that made her retreat so fast she almost got dizzy. “Uh… So I dropped my soap.”

“Okay…-” Lexa began, but was interrupted immediately.

“And I can’t see it on my side.”

She heard a slight shuffle which could be attributed to Lexa taking a few steps back and searching around. “Can’t see it either.”

“Well, it must be somewhere on the floor.”

Eternally witty, Lexa replied without missing a beat: “And here I thought it’d be glued to the ceiling.”

“Ha.”

“Seriously, Griffin, it can’t be far. Make an effort.”

“I… Why don’t you search for it?”

“Well, it’s not my soap.”

Clarke just expelled a deep sigh, muscles sore with exhaustion and desperately asking to be cleaned and rested. “It doesn’t matter! Besides, I think I heard it slide, it must be closer to you.”

“Assuming it’s closer to me, Griffin.”

“I don’t fucking care if-“ Clarke began, but was cut right away.

“Assuming it’s closer to me. It being closer does not make it mine. Therefore, you are still entitled to that soap.”

“Are you making fun of me, by any chance?” Clarke yelped, only half entertained.

“I’m not! I’m just saying you have the soap priority.”

“What’s that, now?” the goalie challenged, bemused.

“Just turn around and look for the bloody thing!” Lexa replied, almost pissed now.

“It’s the arena’s soap anyhow! Not mine! I didn’t ask for that soap, I didn’t buy it, it doesn’t even have the characteristics I search for in a soap…”

“What, do you shop for soaps, now?” Lexa asks, in a state of amused shock.

“Yes! Well, no! Not particularly, no!” Clarke struggles, slowly piecing her thoughts back
together.

“Then for the love of god, just search for it yourself!”

Clarke has the reflex of turning around, but immediately represses that reflex and just stands in a blatant state of confusion. “Why can’t you do it?”

Lexa takes a shivering breath. “Uh, nothing comes to mind other than ‘I don’t want to’.”

“Liar.”

“Turn around, Griffin.”

“You turn around.”

Clarke could hear Lexa pacing in her own corner, though probably still facing the wall. “What is this playground bullshit anyway?”

“It won’t be the first time you see me naked”, Clarke simply declared, though feeling the sense of uneasiness as it spread through her spinal cord.

“The room was never as bright as this.”

Lexa’s voice was strange, came from a part of herself she usually keeps hidden from the public eye.

Clarke just took in a gulp of humid air. “We are both adults, I believe we can do this.”

“In a normal context? Don’t think so.”

“What do you mean, a normal context?”

“Like, with no sexual intercourse”, Lexa offered almost childishly.

“I have heard one single person refer to sex as ‘sexual intercourse’ and this person not only was sixty years old but was also my sex ed teacher. Something is definitely wrong with you.”

Lexa kept silent for a moment. “Alright, I’m turning around.”

“Is it done?” Clarke asked after four or five seconds.

“No yet”, Lexa bit back, slightly irritated.

Another five seconds went by. “Is it done, now?” Clarke went.

“No it is not, Clarke, I have not done it. Geez, I feel like we’re talking about some criminal deed.”

“You seem stressed”, Clarke simply observed.

“Yeah, and why would I be stressed? I don’t know, maybe because you’re forcing me to commit voyeurism.”

Clarke smacked her forehead with the palm of her hand. “Alright, don’t do it, then.”

“No, it’s fine, but you go ahead and deal with the consequences.”

“Oh, the consequences?” Clarke crossed her arms, challenging yet aware that Lexa couldn’t see
“Yes, the consequences.”

“Which will be…?”

“Don’t make me go down that path.”

“Oh, but we’ve already gone down that path many times, Lexa. In fact, I do believe it’s become a highly frequented highway.”

“Well I’m not going on that highway!”

Clarke scoffed, thinking of how Lexa used to bring up her one-night stands with that little smirk of hers, and went into details about her pickup lines that inevitably charmed women. And it was funny, seeing Lexa struggle and walk on thin ice around her now, like it was interesting to hold the strings and play with this woman who used to be a hunter and a firebolt with eyes who sent shards of glass with every glance and forced people into submission with ridiculous ease.

“Lexa if you don’t do it in ten seconds, you might as well-”

“Not helping with the pressure, Griffin!” Lexa chanted with the animosity of despair.

Clarke breathed in as much air as she could gather in her lungs. “Alexandria Woods, I will only say this once - get yourself a fucking towel!!”

“Yes, ma’am”, Lexa quickly complied. “I’m walking along the wall at the moment.”

“Well, walk faster.”

“Alright, I’m making my way towards the towels.”

“Thanks for walking me through the motions”, Clarke snapped ironically.

She heard the rustling of tissue.

Lexa cleared her throat awkwardly. “You will now see the flash of an object to your side and that will be your towel. I’m not sure if the throw will be accurate or not.”

“That is awfully specific, Lexa.” Then, when she caught the towel mid-air: “Thanks.”

There was a second of uncertainty, and then they turned around at once and faced each other.

Two things leaped at Clarke with searing clarity – the fact that Lexa was still dripping, and the fact that her arms were very, if not extremely tanned. Clarke of course knew this information (in theory) yet it appears it had vanished from her brain for the last half hour, reduced to a jumble of mixed memories with no real meaning.

She looked Lexa straight in the eyes, waiting for some sort of abandonment, maybe, or a type of laisser-aller that would resolve the tension except that tension stayed all too intact and soon they were watching each other’s lips, each other’s necks, and from there, everything down to the crease of their collarbones.

“There’s the soap”, Lexa mentioned blankly, not even caring to be frustrated for the soap was directly next to Clarke’s stall, way within her reach and evidently overlooked during her first search.
Maybe Lexa understood that Clarke had almost wanted her to turn around that first time, and maybe that scared her.

No one will know.

And there goes the story, one that still makes Clarke, as was previously mentioned, *skip a heartbeat*.

Yet she can’t help but think, what if Lexa had turned?

“No, don’t give Woods the speaker, she’ll put something old as fuck!”

Charlie’s voice comes shooting from the second to last seat, with a desperate move towards the blue Bose as it’s changing hands until it reaches Lexa’s, who’s pulling off her music expert persona, the one that makes Clarke both exasperated and turned on.

“Let us see, shall we?” The captain slurs, quickly scrolling through her personal playlist in front of Lauren Briggs’ concerned scrutiny. The latter barely has the time to open her mouth that the first notes of the Yardbird’s *Heart full of soul* already resonate in the whole bus.

“Oh my god”, mutters Jaime Hurd, slowly sliding into a crouching position until she completely disappears behind the back of the next bench.

“Relax, guys, let’s do the ‘oooooooh’ part together”, Clarke suggests, joyful (and secretly agreeing with the music choice).

“See, Clarke has some music taste”, Lexa points out, and the way she shifts positions on the bench, all backwards snapshot and baggy sweatpants and rolled up sleeves, it almost makes Clarke forget the arrogance displayed and the teasing tone, makes her want to believe that Lexa’s giving her a compliment at least, in a way, and that means a lot considering Lexa is still the player people never want to face on the forecheck yet sometimes she kisses Clarke so softly and chuckles in her neck and calls her ‘babygirl’ when nobody’s there, and that makes it oh so different suddenly.

“Some music taste?” Clarke replies tartly, but she’s unable to retain her smile, in a way that it still appears and can still be read on her face, however small and subtle.

“Yes, we could say that based on the hidden attachment you have for 80’s disco”, Lexa starts, drawing imaginary circles in the air.

“I do have a weakness for *Earth, Wind and Fire*, but that does not make me lesser than you!” Clarke rants, growing more impatient by the second.

Lexa has a look of calm confidence when she gives her a half smile, and shrugs. “Well then, let’s put you to the test.”

“Oh, we’ll test the both of us”, Clarke counters, gathering shouts of enthusiasm from the rest of the girls surrounding them.

And that makes for a hard-fought duel of music knowledge, one that almost lasts the remaining two hours of the drive to TonDC.

“I’m gonna ask Clarke to name five Led Zeppelin obscure songs”, Jaime instructs, ready to jot
down the answers in the note section of her phone.

“Easy”, Clarke brags coolly. “All my love, Custard Pie, The Rain Song, Royal Orleans, Ozone Baby.”

“Impressive, Griffin… Yeah, I’ll give it to you”, Lexa smirks.

Clarke just scoffs. “Give it to me?”

“Yes, give it to you. The Rain Song is not an obscure song.”

“It is.”

“No”, Lexa smiles, in an effort to make it all the more infuriating.

“I bet you couldn’t even sing along to it, that’s how obscure it is”, Clarke observes, still calm (miraculously).

“It is the springtime of my loving, the second season I am to know, you are the sunlight in my growing, so little warmth I’ve felt before”, Lexa immediately intones, and not only is her voice pretty nice but Clarke almost has to flee her glance with the sheer intensity it holds.

Luckily, Jaime goes on with another question which helps alleviate Clarke of the answer she had to produce (and was clearly unable to). “How many studio albums did Radiohead make? Name them all for a bonus point.”

The game lasts another whole thirty minutes or so, and Clarke wins by a point (to Lexa’s immense annoyance) when she gets the sudden death question right - a ‘finish the lyric’ that she does say a bit faster than Lexa but mainly just yells twice as loud (which probably influences a bit the decision).

Later at open workout, and to add to Lexa’s frustration, Clarke realizes she’s put on a very revealing training camisole that seems to squeeze her breasts upwards and make them appear twice as big. The problem is she realizes it only after practice, which made her unaware of the teasing held in each of her actions surrounding Lexa.

It appears the captain did notice.

So much so that when Clarke hears a knock at the door that night, she isn’t surprised to find Lexa in all her angry, predatory-eyed glory, jaw twitching like it does when she hates and likes Clarke at the same time, and both with embarrassingly strong passion. “You won. Happy, now?”

Clarke is still trying to figure out whether Lexa wants to punch her or kiss her, as each option appears as likely as the other, yet the tone of extreme annoyance makes her eyes jump straight to Lexa’s, and boy does she look pissed. “Uh… Won what?”

“Oh, for god’s sake, Clarke, you knew what you were doing”, Lexa bites back, moving forward with a slowness that seems to spawn from the battle of restraint and self-discipline currently taking place inside her head.

Clarke is still trying to figure out whether Lexa wants to punch her or kiss her, as each option appears as likely as the other, yet the tone of extreme annoyance makes her eyes jump straight to Lexa’s, and boy does she look pissed. “Uh… Won what?”

“Oh, for god’s sake, Clarke, you knew what you were doing”, Lexa bites back, moving forward with a slowness that seems to spawn from the battle of restraint and self-discipline currently taking place inside her head.

“Well no, actually”, Clarke replies, telling the truth but also entirely conscious of how insincere she must look for she doesn’t even have the courtesy of wearing pants (or a bra, for that matter).

“Bullshit”, hisses Lexa, still coming forward until she outright bumps against Clarke - who wants to stand her ground but is also melting with need, and barely recoils.
“What time is it?” Asks Clarke, just for the record because the truth is she couldn’t care less.

“Nine thirty.”

“Good.”

Lexa motions behind them, with her eyes still on Clarke. “Close the door.”

“Will do.”

And that’s all it takes.

The first kiss is a tempest - it starts with Lexa’s hands digging under Clarke’s shirt and grabbing a breast straight away, shamelessly, because that’s what they’ve become, and then it’s really just a game of eating Clarke’s outrageous sighs before they resonate, and grunting agreement, and sharing breaths until they’re falling on the couch with what soon becomes angry exhilaration.

It all changes when Clarke thinks, *this looks normal*, because it does look normal - she knows it, just like she knows how scary it looks as well – just them tangled together and smiling, and dropping the hate game immediately because Lexa is not that rough, she learned, and Lexa sometimes likes to kiss her body more than her lips and that means something entirely different, something she can’t afford to think about.

Then, before she can even notice it, Lexa’s cushioning her head with an arm so that she doesn’t ‘strain her neck’ on the side of the couch, as she puts it. Clarke just rolls her eyes, and they look happy, and they look like they’ve done this often – which they did, don’t get her wrong, but the idea is still strange and foreign.

They do it twice. The second time turns into lazy caresses that could be too intimate, yet neither of them want to say a word about the issue, probably knowing it’ll turn into a fight in no time. Lexa falls asleep and snores like a truck driver, and Clarke smiles so hard, knowing that she is one of the lucky few to witness such a proud woman transform into a low maintenance teddy-bear. She strokes her hair and stops herself as soon as she realizes the nature of what she’s doing. That’ll be a secret, she swears silently in the dark.

She remembers jolting awake, a couple ten minutes after, to an alarmed Lexa jumping into her pants.

“First, you’ve got to wake me up”, the center pesters, roaming the room trying to find her socks.

*You were snoring way too loud,* Clarke wants to say, but stops herself, knowing she might lose a limb. “I was tired”, she says instead.

“Well me too, Griffin - so is everybody when lying on a comfortable surface in the middle of the night.”

“What time?” Clarke yawns, holding herself up with an elbow.

“Eh, midnight and change”, answers Lexa, still looking left and right despite having gathered all her clothes. “Alright, then. I’ll, uh…” She points at the door awkwardly.

“Yeah, go ahead.”

She likes to think it’s her longing glance that makes Lexa walk back to her and kiss her again with an intensity that makes her blood stream go nuts - but she doesn’t know anymore what she does or
doesn’t do, and how Lexa’s brain works because she says something and does another all the time, so much so that it’s getting tiring.

“Bye”, the captain simply mutters, and struts out without another word.

Clarke not only sleeps on the couch that night (not because the smell of Lexa’s perfume impregnated itself in the cushions) but mainly just stays awake in the darkness.

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Oh, there’s a big check here by Sam Harding, you can see she’s put her whole shoulder into it.

Lexa grinds her teeth as she feels the shock of the board spread through her limbs, and makes sure to voice her frustration at the d-liner in between plays – she knows Harding to be a dirty player, and the fact that the check was completely legal makes it all the more frustrating.

“You’re a big star, aren’t you? Yeah, you’re a big star.” Harding teases as she’s settling behind the faceoff circle.

“Brat”, mumbles Lexa, on her way to the bench, knowing if she fights she’ll get a 4 vs 4 against one of the fastest teams in the league.

They play a colorless game, truly – and Lexa would’ve loved to say otherwise, but she’s also tired and numb with the many back to back games they’ve played lately, and she’s sure Clarke is too because she’s stretching a lot more than usual. From a distance, she looks like a child making snow angels on a sunny afternoon, but the reality is quite different, Lexa tells herself, and Clarke is a professional athlete, for God’s sake – she must stop seeing her as this bubbly, inoffensive kitten yet for some reason there’s a heat ignited in the back of her skull at the mere thought of touching her.

The game has been different for the past months.

And it says a lot for her to finally be able to confess it to herself. That before, hockey was fast, and hockey was hitting the puck, or the board, or other players, for that matter. It would be true to say that hockey was more like her, in a sense, because she was made of it and built by it, honed by it, driven by it.

Now if there’s a break, she skates by the crease and smiles at Clarke. She’s gotten weak, she knows it – curses herself for it regularly, in fact- for she’s now driven by Clarke, at times. It’s a weird feeling, one that’s out of control and makes her giddy and out of breath whenever Clarke so much as skates nearby (even though she thought she had an impressive stamina).

She likes watching Clarke with her mask on, because it feels like she doesn’t know her as much and somehow is confronted with a whole other person – one that’s focused, and stone hard, and merciless, one that she still remembers holding in the night, and the contrast initiates an enthralling confusion.

“Yeah!” She shouts at Octavia for the pass, which turns bumpy but still tameable. She stops, dictates the play, revels in the control she exerts on the opposite defenders. They’re putting forth a couple of new offensive techniques that she thinks shows the extent of the cohesion and solidity the team now gained as a whole.

She digs forward again, still dangling – she’s barely looking at her left when she steers the puck away toward Octavia, but it turns out she miscalculated and the pass is cleared in front, to be
Lexa just snaps momentarily, frustration pilling in the pit of her guts as she sees the three vs one unfold in front of her eyes.

All because of her.

Unacceptable mistake, dad would’ve said, and for once, she agrees almost too entirely.

With the way she’s positioned, Lexa has trouble registering the then following sequence, but when she sees Clarke’s movement slip awkwardly, she knows something is wrong.

First there’s a collision.

Her vision blurs when a player rushes in front of her, and the next thing she sees is a bunch of players getting rowdy in what soon becomes a free for all beside the net. Then, she clicks.

She can’t see Clarke.

Her skates seem to have developed a mind of themselves, because she doesn’t remember skating up the ice, she just does, and when she gets to the net, it’s to find Clarke spread on the ice - face down, unmoving.

Shit.

A truck hitting her would’ve probably produced a resembling effect as the one Lexa is currently experiencing - she feels blunt, flinching, as her eyes turn into dark orbs and automatically find Sam Harding, who’s currently talking with a ref.

And she then knows what happened – sees the hit happen again in front of her very eyes, so much so that she has to close them and focus, and take a deep breath.

Shit. Shit. Fuck.

Clarke. It’s like she suddenly sees the name flash like an advertisement sign in her brain, and from there, she’s hurrying towards Langton, almost clinging to her in an effort to reduce the dizziness.

“What happened, what…?” She stutters, completely out of her otherwise stoic character (Charlie seems to notice, and it shows in the way her eyes enlarge just slightly).

“The post, I think”, Charlie murmurs, like she can’t even believe it, or accept it, or both.

“What?” Is all that gets strangled out of Lexa.

“Harding ran into her, and she fell on the post. She’s like knocked out, or something. Fuck.”

Even though she guessed what happened, hearing it from Charlie’s lips makes Lexa see red. “I’m gonna kill her”, she growls, leaping towards Harding as Octavia and Raven hold her back with great difficulty.

“Calm down”, they utter, watching as specks of pure rage flash across Lexa’s tensed up face until she straight up breaks free and makes a run for the enemy, yet Harding had been watching and studying, had been expecting the assault.

Lexa throws a fist and misses the hit.
As she blinks, an explosion of pain spreads all over her cheek, and she hits the ground with a thud.

Harding *hammered* her.

She only understands the extent of the situation when she recognizes the metallic taste of blood on her tongue.

“*The fuck outta here, Woods*”, a voice resonates in her ears. She gets up despite the numbness of her jaw, and attempts at another charge, this time met with an equally powerful punch to the nose. Her hand shoots straight up to keep the blood from dripping, and her brain only registers the fall when her knee meets the ice to prevent another drop.

“*Don’t make me hit you again*”, Harding orders bluntly, whole body bending forward to reach Lexa at ground level – teasing, provoking.

“*Try*”, Lexa challenges nevertheless, hereby showing the entire essence of her character- its imperishable strength, one that seems cocky at first, yet turns brave, almost foolish, as soon as loyalty is involved.

She barely has time to get up and settle her breathing – deafened, like a hunted animal’s- that Raven’s yanking her behind, whispering calming words as a group of teammates usher her towards the bench, and ensure her return to the locker-room.

There, the walls start spinning around her – both the result of her beating and the fact that she now sees Clarke everywhere, falling again and again with an injury that each time appears more critical. She sits down, head cradled between bloodied hands and it’s only then that the guilt begins to wash over her like a crushing wave – back and forth, never to stop.

*She* is the one to blame for the turnover.

*She* threw the puck carelessly, recklessly, all of it to set her own goal like the fucking jackass that she is.

*This has to stop*, she thinks, meaning that she’ll have to change at last, and for the better, meaning that she’s not only attached to Griffin but feels the scorching need to protect her, and the only way to achieve that is to become trustworthy.

“No, of course I know that…! I swear, it’s not that big of a deal-“

Clarke brushes a stray lock out of her face, and readjusts her pillow frustratingly.

“… *And sweetie I know that’s your job, and you’re okay with the risks involved, and I am too, believe me, it’s just that… I just feel so far away when my little girl is injured.*”

Clarke can’t help the sigh that escapes her lips, and the slight twinge in her gut. The truth whips her in the face hardheartedly – it’s been six months since she’s last seen her mom.

“Hey, I’m alright, don’t get all sad on me now… It’ll be fine, mom.” She hears herself blurt, but the truth is she knows she’s *absent*, always, and she knows how much her mom must miss her.

She rarely talks to her, these days, because she makes her think of family, and family makes her think of her dad. She can’t afford to think of her dad – not during the season, that is, because it can
sometimes leave her teared apart for a whole afternoon, or a sleepless night, even, and she can’t let her team down like that.

“Have some rest, drink water, and get somebody to check on you every hour when you sleep—“

“I know, I’ll call Octavia later this afternoon, see if she can come for a while”, Clarke promises, rubbing at her forehead absent-mindedly.

She feels stupid, and unlucky, and weak.

She could’ve stayed in her crease, and controlled her movements. She could’ve avoided the collision, she knows it.

But she didn’t.

One little slide to the left. One little mistake that turned big, and messed it all up - ruined her season, no, the team’s season. She resists the urge to cry and let it all out. She has to stay strong.

“You know I’d come if I could.”

She hears the restraint in Abby’s voice, restraint that shows her how messed up they’re getting, how time is speeding off around them and that makes her feel guilty. Of what? She doesn’t know, couldn’t pinpoint with exactitude, yet it has this abominable effect of constriction in her stomach and this smell of failure – a paradox, really, since she’s the most successful goalie in the league. If only all the fans knew how small she looks in a bed, unable to serve herself a goddamn glass of water or even turn the tv on.

“I know”, she articulates the best she can despite the ship casting anchor in her throat.

“I love you, sweetie. I’m proud of you, always.”

She waits for the inevitable ‘dad would be proud of you too’. It doesn’t come, for the first time in a month. Maybe (surely) because the last time she heard it, Clarke freaked out, and sobbed, and yelled, and Abby then knew that this era had ended, that she had breached a wall that needed to stay put.

“Thanks, mom”, Clarke says, and makes it a closure, for the phone is already distancing from her ear.

“Have a good afternoon, now—“

She hangs up, almost against her will. She knows how rough she acts, but she is just so tired, and she’s failed her teammates, failed them all, destroyed the season they built with hope, tears, blood. She tries to imagine Lexa’s frustration after seeing the injury, but has trouble with both bearing the ruthlessness of it and remembering anything beside the hit of metal on her helmet and the world extinguished in an instant, like a tv screen going black after the wire gets pulled.

“Hey O, um, just wanted to see if you’re home. I called in the morning but you didn’t pick up, so I thought maybe you were sleeping in, despite how unlikely that would be… Anyways, call me back whenever.”

She hangs up and feels a wave of relief wash over when she sees a text light up her phone.

**Popcorn murderer 12:34 A.M.**
Rise and fucking shine, you little unstoppable you

Muffin the Griffin 12:35 A.M.

I acknowledge your attempt at cheering me up

Popcorn murderer 12:35 A.M.

I’m guessing it worked

Muffin the Griffin 12:35 A.M.

Minimally

Popcorn murderer 12:36 A.M.

Now get a hold of that attitude, we’re doing well out here. The backup showed up this morning, and she’s better than you!

Muffin the Griffin 12:36 A.M.

Ha. Ha.

Popcorn murderer 12:37 A.M.

Jokes aside, I can’t come today, Lincoln’s got it in him to go minigolfing and believe me, I can’t say no again or he might cry.

Muffin the Griffin 12:37 A.M.

Fuck, does that mean I’m getting Charlie as a caretaker? You know she can’t even feed a goldfish without killing it.

Popcorn murderer 12:38 A.M.

Relax, Woods will be there in a few minutes.

Clarke almost coughs on her own spit.

Muffin the Griffin 12:38 A.M.

Woods?

Popcorn murderer 12:39 A.M.

Uh-huh

Muffin the Griffin 12:40 A.M.

Wish me luck, then.

Popcorn murderer 12:40 A.M.

Why so?
Muffin the Griffin 12:41 A.M.

You know why. She must’ve turned into bloody Hulk.

Popcorn murderer 12:42 A.M.

Erh… A very smol, very anxious kind of Hulk then.

Muffin the Griffin 12:42 A.M.

What do you mean? What’s she like?

Popcorn murderer 12:43 A.M.

Well let’s say she asks a lot of those ‘what’s she like’ herself, except she’s talking about you, and she has that kind of aggressive death stare that makes us pee our pants, and when we say we don’t know, she just grumbles nonsense and goes back to her same old cold-blooded self. Well, no, not the same cold-blooded self, because, I kid you not, she’s broken three sticks today shooting bullets at the poor backup. She says she wants to ‘test the kid’. I, for myself, think she’s trying to kill her to force you back into health. You’d have to pay me to tell her it doesn’t work like that.

Clarke frowns at the colorful picture just painted by Octavia – picture that does seems like Lexa, but still clashes with the solid person that shows up to the arena everyday and checks people onto boards for a living.

Muffin the Griffin 12:45 A.M.

Alright then, ttyl

Popcorn murderer 12:45 A.M.

Get some rest while I annihilate Lincoln with that legendary golf game o’mine.

Muffin the Griffin 12:46 A.M.

Don’t make him cry

Popcorn murderer 12:46 A.M.

Can’t promise that

Clarke smiles and leans back on the cushion, a thought going to Lincoln and hoping he won’t get depressed.

She’s thinking of the silent treatment he might inflict on Octavia when she hears the apartment door open and outright yelps in surprise.

“Griffin?” a voice calls from the kitchen.

“What the fuck?” she answers, and is startled again when Lexa suddenly appears at the door, waving awkwardly.

She’s still got her aviators on, coupled with a Mets snapback that makes her look like a celebrity
trying to go unnoticed in an airport. And frankly, she’s incredibly hot (not that it needs to be said aloud).

“Hi”, says Lexa. Then, pointing at a drug store bag. “I brought candy, is that okay?”

“Always”, Clarke answers.

“Sorry for the entrance. Octavia gave me her spare key.”

First she drops the bag on the bed, then she’s wandering around the room like she’s at home, getting rid of her shoes and opening the tv in once swift wrist movement, only to discard the remote – and her cap – by throwing them on the bed cushions nearby.

Clarke is not shocked by such familiarity (even though she should). She sees Lexa roam the space, almost too real, too tangible, she notices the smirk lighting her lips when she finds a sitcom channel. “What do you wanna watch?” The center asks, eyes still glued to the screen.

“Dunno… But I can tell you all about my day”, Clarke tries with the grin of an eight-year-old child.

Lexa’s smirk turns into an endearing half smile. “Yeah, do that for me.”

“So, I had an awesome morning, I opened the curtains all by myself, then I had a breakfast slash snack, then I went to the bathroom and got a bit sick so I sat on the floor and looked at the ceiling for a while.”

Lexa has that look of not-quite-hidden-concern, and Clarke is fairly certain, as she observes the intricacies of her face, that there might be a buried, concealed part of Lexa that wants to kiss her forehead and pet her hair, and tell her everything’ll be alright. But then, it might just be her dizziness speaking.

“Do you want a glass of water or something?” Lexa offers, already getting up to fetch said glass of water.

“Nah, it’s fine...” Clarke replies but halts her words for Lexa is already coming back from the kitchen with a bottle of water and a Tylenol container. “Well, alright then…”

“Might help if you have a headache”, Lexa shrugs, setting the gathered objects on the nightstand.

Clarke has a second of hesitation she attributes to complete bewilderment – it always makes her fuzzy and stunned when Lexa acts this way with her, acts like she cares.

“Uh-huh. Thanks. I mean, thank you very much for that, I do appreciate it.”

“I like it when you stutter like that”, Lexa declares absent-mindedly as she pulls out gigantic bunny slippers that she then proceeds to put on.

Clarke can’t help but gape in awe. “Bunny slippers? Really?”

“Yeah, I do like furry animals”, Lexa mumbles, taking the right spot of the bed and carefully arranging her limbs on the bed so as not to bother Clarke or invade her personal space – yet at that very moment, Clarke brusquely scooches to the left and unashamedly, confidently, spreads her limbs like the messy sleeper she is, and lets out a generously loud groan as she stretches.

Their knees and feet are now touching.
They both try to remain cool about it, but Lexa’s skin is burning at every point of contact and it’s distracting, to say the least.

“So you’ll agree with me if I tell you I wanna watch anything Disney, right?” Clarke tries, earning herself a nice eye roll.

“Eh…” Lexa starts, wincing slightly. “Why not some horror flick?”

“Oh! God, no.” Clarke reacts rather strongly, shielding her face in protection. “Face it, you just want me to be super scared so you can protect me, is that it?”

Lexa’s hesitation says it all. “No”, she violently denies, blowing a raspberry at Clarke’s scoff of disbelief. “Griffin”, she adds, fairly frustrated when Clarke does not stop laughing.

“And then you’ll be all courageous like ‘let me take care of it, ma’am, with my (at that, Clarke barely controls another burst of laughter) bunny slippers-“

Lexa jumps to her feet and grabs the first Disney movie she finds. “Here. Now shut the fuck up.”

“Got the angry walk down, Lex. And dare I say, you look even more menacing with these-“

“I swear, if you say bunny slippers one more time, I’ll-“ Lexa starts, pointing a finger dauntingly.

“Oh, I know you, you sex freak, we’ll just fuck on and on for three hours until you’re so sore you can’t even walk straight”, Clarke just explains with disarming calm.

“But maybe you’ll be the one who can’t walk straight”, Lexa counters.

“Yeah! But maybe less because of your sex skills than, say, my concussion.” Clarke ironizes tartly.

That manages to shut Lexa right up. She does open her mouth in search for an answer, but then closes it thereafter and just sets up the movie like an obedient pup.

“I appreciate your lack of complaint”, Clarke teases, grinning as Lexa mimics her by opening and closing her hand like a puppet to imitate her babbling, all while rolling her eyes once again.

“I’m guessing you don’t realize how lucky you are that I’m letting you get away with this one”, Lexa warns, but she’s gotten so cozy and childish with her sweatpants and her slippers that it’s now impossible to take her seriously.

“Oh, please. What’s the movie?” Clarke asks, immediately moving on.

“Beauty and the beast.”

“AWESOME.”

“You are getting way too involved in this”, Lexa grumbles like the party pooper she is, but then she sure enjoys the proximity once they start watching the movie and Clarke drifts in and out of sleep, occasionally commenting on her favorite scenes.

“Don’t you think they looks a bit like us?” Clarke mumbles mid-movie, as Belle is seen teaching the Beast how to feed little birds in the backyard.

Lexa raises an eyebrow. “Seeing as how I’m not an eight feet tall animal living in a deserted castle and you’re definitely not into literature, uh, no.”
Clarke feels the urge to push her off the bed with that last comment. “You don’t know that, though!”

“Whether I am or not an eight feet tall animal? I beg to differ.”

Clarke chuckles even if she’s slightly annoyed. “No, I mean as in maybe that’s what we are inside. Like, I’m the one singing in the village with the folks while you’re busy being dark and moody in your castle.”

“I’m not dark and moody!” Lexa revolts, jolting backwards involuntarily.

“That is exactly proving my point.”

“Would you just… Not, please?” the captain pleads, knowing she’s backed in a corner.

Clarke starts laughing, and the more her laughter extinguishes, the more it seems she’s falling entirely asleep. Lexa is exasperated at first, but then she sees the little smile still drawn on Clarke’s lips – a child’s smile, almost- and it makes her heart flutter as reality hits like a brick.

Clarke is the bubbly, joyful person that reached in and pulled Lexa out, and forced her to breathe better, to laugh more, to appreciate things.

She thinks of her dad, and her mom, and her sister, she thinks of how she grew twisted and torn, like a flower in between rocks, and she thinks of the closed, egocentric, obedient soldier she became over the years – an obsessive monster that lost sight of anything other than work. And when she realizes how much she wants to stroke Clarke’s cheek, she understands that there’s been a change.

But she can’t think of it too much, else she’ll panic and leave, and that would be a terrible thing to do. Instead, she slides under the covers and watches.

Watches, because she can’t afford to sleep into this bed, into Clarke’s bed – it would break rules (as if she’s not already breaking any). She feels like she’s already cheating herself on so many levels anyway.

“My head is fucking exploding”, Clarke whispers, indicating that she wasn’t in fact completely asleep. “I feel like my brain is trying to… to crawl out. Oh, my god… Oh, fuck.”

Lexa wiggles closer, immediately reacting. She’s had migraines before. She knows how panicking and grueling they feel. “Hey, it’s alright. It’s alright.”

“I might barf on you, Lex, you shouldn’t get close.”

It doesn’t bother Lexa at all. “Yeah, I know, it feels like it but you won’t, trust me.”

“Oh, make it stop. It’s like there’s a heavy metal song in my head and it won’t just stop, it won’t, why can’t it stop?” Clarke whispers, her face contorting into a grimace of pain.

“Shhh, keep your eyes closed”, Lexa advises. “Hey, Griffin.” She puts both hands on her cheeks, strokes them gently. “I got you, don’t worry about it. I’m gonna tell you something good, you just listen.”

Clarke nods slowly, focusing on Lexa’s voice as the captain proceeds to tell her stories of her favorite hockey legends, and stories of her childhood in the backyard skating rink, and how she always played until she couldn’t feel her ears, so much so that it hurt like hell once they defrosted.
“So I learned to skate after falling on my ass a hundred times – I swear I had the biggest bruise on my butt cheek… Didn’t stop me though, ‘cause dad had signed me up into this little neighborhood league, and I had to be ready so in a single week I went from clumsy duckling to insane war machine… I started slapping pucks but I was putting my whole weight into it so I fell every damn time – dad had to take me out of the league because we were getting competitive and I think he saw some kind of talent in me, so the next day we went to try for atom. I was pretty tall for my age, you know – but I was the softest kid you’ve ever seen-“

Clarke shakes her head from side to side, a smile creeping up as she voices her protest. “Nah. No way.”

“I swear”, Lexa chuckles, sending vapors of breath against Clarke’s temple. “One game I got tripped by this little girl who was the terror of the league, so I went crying to dad after the game, and he had to actually take me aside and explain to me that I had to hit back, you know?”

With her eyes still closed, Clarke frowns. “Uh, how old were you again?”

“Nine. Why?”

There’s a moment of silence during which it’s hard to determine if Clarke is concerned or if she’s trying to stomach the pain in her head. “I didn’t know there was contact between little kids… That seems a bit rough, doesn’t it?”

“There wasn’t actually, I just had to make it look like it was an accident.”

“What kind of psychopath were you?” Clarke asked, puzzled.

Lexa reacts in complete bewilderment, unable to understand the shock factor in such a situation. “I wasn’t a psychopath”, she articulates slowly in the dark-lit room.

“Didn’t you say you were soft as fuck?” Clarke asks again.

There is absolutely no teasing in Clarke’s tone, yet Lexa winces – she doesn’t like to hear it from people, doesn’t like to be reminded of how weak she used to be, because she’s worked it out, now, she’s gotten better, faster, stronger, she’s become a hitter and she’s proud of it, proud of how she stood under each of Sam Harding’s hits, proud of how she would’ve swallowed the blood and fought on ‘til unconsciousness, because that’s what she does. “Yeah, so I had to work on it. All these small things, you just get better at them.”

“Weren’t you scared?”

“No”, Lexa lies.

Yes. Yes, you were. You fucking were. You got hit, and you cried every damn time. Don’t you blame him – he had to do something about it, else you’d still be a wimp, and you wouldn’t’ve become a competitor.

“And what happened then?” Clarke urges her, clearly into the whole storytelling deal.

Lexa takes a deep breath, unsure if she should keep going. “Well, I went Peewee, and then I went Bantam. Then Midget”

“Your dad must be proud”, Clarke remarks.

“Eh, not so much. Not always, that is.”
“Why not?”

“Many things”, Lexa difficultly blurts, stepping into dangerous territory.

Clarke yawns involuntarily, covers it with her mouth. “I’d be if I were him. You’re pretty much the youngest player to be that decorated, I’m sure.”

“Yeah, but that doesn’t really matter, does it?”

“What do you mean, that doesn’t matter? It does matter. Stop kidding yourself.”

Lexa blinks a couple of times, conscious that the distraught state she’s in probably shows on every single square centimeter of her face. “I’m just caught in all sorts of bullshit. I’ll never be a natural, you know.”

“A natural? What does that even mean?”

“I had to learn all of it. I… I fell on my face and all my friends were better - they would’ve been better than me if they trained as much, I’m sure. I had the stick, but I just didn’t have the guts for it. Sometimes I feel like I don’t even have the guts anymore, Griffin, I go over and I talk to you, and… You’ve gotta know how fucking useless I actually am, I mean, I get stressed when there’s cameras around and I’m just this super well-maintained joke, I don’t… Sometimes I don’t really know what’s real and what’s not, what’s… What’s been installed, and what was there, you know?”

As she realizes the extent of her confession, Lexa’s sharp intake of breath resonates in the silence.

“Don’t worry about it”, Clarke calmly suggests. “People say things, and they don’t know you. You’ve gotta see yourself as you are.”

“What if I’m not sure of it?”

“Lexa, you know. Trust me, you know. If you were that person you show on the ice, I wouldn’t let you hold me in my bed.”

And Lexa barely resists the urge to kiss Clarke, kiss her soft, kiss her real. She’s getting drowned in the bedsheets, disoriented by this whirlwind of emotions. In that instant, she’ll remember thinking (knowing) that Clarke Griffin is the only person who can get her like that – with such brutal, disarming truth, like she’s this long-lost childhood friend that she suddenly recognizes in the daylight, by the shape of her lips, by the intensity of her eyes.

They stay silent until the clouds turn the sky into a gray, stormy painting of rain and thunder.

“What’s wrong with this, then?” Clarke murmurs, closing her eyes – as if for an instant, a small and indefinite one, she was just letting herself go, letting all of it go, letting themselves break rules and crack each other open. Through this voluntary mistake, Clarke has a doubt, a doubt that maybe they’re getting so close to each other that their beings are merging and it’s good, and it’s reassuring - that maybe after all these months of hating each other they got caught into it and fell into it and melted the hostility, melted the anger, until it grew into a whole different shape.

“I think we might be buddies, now, Griffin”, Lexa offers blatantly.

“My head stopped hurting”, Clarke ignores the statement, rolling until she’s facing the ceiling, panicking and breathing a bit faster like she’s only then, only now realizing that they’ve been sharing a bed for hours on end and the sky is dark, outside, so much so that it looks like the night
and she can’t, they can’t. Fuck.

“That’s good”, Lexa observes, holding her body off the mattress with an elbow.

“We’re not buddies”, Clarke coldly responds.

Lexa just snaps.

“Then what the fuck are we?”

She feels like she’s losing control of her own self. “Explain”, she orders, now getting unreasonably furious and messy.

“Shut the fuck up and kiss me”, Clarke breathes, pulling Lexa over her so she straddles her, both pleading and livid with frustration.

Lexa bends over and kisses her like she’s stealing her soul from her lips, kisses her different, sucks at the throbbing pulse of her neck and then descends, breathes her skin in through her nose, gets dizzy, keeps going, caresses her legs, the curve of her hips, grabs at her clothes desperately, recklessly, and that’s when it gets completely out of hand. “I fucking hate you”, she huffs onto trembling skin, then half licks half bites everything on her path as Clarke’s head falls backwards, sinks into the pillow.

“Don’t say anything”, the blonde instructs again, knowing that if they talk, they’ll mention the rules and not tonight, not tonight, not tonight.

Lexa nods.

She nods because she feels the same, except maybe a bit more scared, maybe a bit more lost. The way she embraces Clarke and falls apart with her, through her, holds an unspeakable lie. The way they tumble onto each other, the way Lexa has this delicacy every time she puts her hands on Clarke, the way she follows the skin and bones and muscles of her body like it’s a rare artefact she has to remember perfectly before she dies, and how hopeless she knows this is, how hazardous, how sincere.

Lexa leaves in a hurry, doesn’t spend the night, doesn’t say goodbye, just takes her coat and leaves her sunglasses on the table and by then it’s almost eight, and she’s left breathless on the street, in a zombie state as she sees Clarke again, with stunning clarity, and all through the drive back home – laughing, grinning, arching her back – and her eyes when she pleaded, kiss me, kiss me, kiss me.

She gives a sharp turn of the steering wheel and pulls the window down, opens the radio, throws her head repeatedly against the seat, again and again.

Why is it that things are so complicated, and why is it that she now knows that she’s given Clarke these strings to pull on her heart, strings to heal her, strings to hurt her, strings that could almost make her jump off a cliff? Why is it that Lexa is still that same old fool, the one that fell into the bottomless pit of love with disgusting naivety, the one that wept for Costia and slept through days and nights searching for the will to get up and move on, and why is it that in so little time she’s become lost in Clarke’s blue eyes without being given the slightest chance to fight back?

Chapter End Notes
That's it for now! I believe we've got our daily dose of angst, don't we? Don't worry, I promise there will be a happy ending but I won't lie, we're running into a patch of turbulence... All I'm asking is for you to be patient with me and trust the process! I won't let you down.

xx

*update* Guys, I'm really sorry for the long wait. I've got many personal projects I'm working on and I'm really trying to set the creativity alight once again but it's a bit tougher than I expected. You've been so kind up to now as to not rushing me in any way, I appreciate the support and patience. See you soon.
Les années folles (merrigiare)

Chapter Summary

ANGST ALERT I'M SORRY I LOVE YOU GUYS THEY LOVE EACH OTHER IT'S ALL GONNA BE ALRIGHT SOMEDAY

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry, my dears. I've been so overwhelmed and so not in the mood to write, these days. I've also been doing a big, big, personal project that has become a full-blown book which is so complex to construct and I just so desperately want to do it right. Anyways, I'm back now. I don't promise anything, BUT I'll try to work on this a bit more these next weeks.

I love you all, thanks for the support. I have NOT given up on this thing.

With love,
Con amor,
Mit liebe,
Avec amour,

Your french writer

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There’s some sort of confusion when Lexa breaks in front of the puck and evaluates her options again – people are screaming, both the crowd and the players, and suddenly there’s blood on the ice, her blood, Lexa realizes in horror as she evades backwards until she gets a glimpse of Sam Harding pushing Clarke on the post not once but two, three, four times. And then it’s unclear whether Clarke is unconscious or plain dead, it’s unclear if the players are really players of the team or her family and friends, it’s unclear whether her dad is watching her in the stands again – but she starts to believe it when she gets a glimpse of him, with his strong chin and his cunning eyes that knew hockey more than he knew her. If only she had time to see better. If only she paused.

“Fuck”, she hears herself blurt as dad is now nowhere to be seen, and Clarke is still falling on the post, except she’s screaming as it happens, screaming loud, clear, distinct, screaming Lexa’s name now, like she knows she’s alone and cheated.

“Stop”, Lexa mutters first, then slowly enounces each time louder than the last until she’s screaming just like Clarke, and then they’re both screaming and everybody vanishes, and there’s a spotlight on Lexa, and a phrase written up on the giant screen.

You failed me.

Maybe dad wrote it. Surely dad wrote it.

It can’t be Clarke. Please. It can’t be Clarke.
Lexa will remember panicking because of that last thought – that Clarke being disappointed in her is worse than her father’s disapproval. Panicking, and jerking awake in the night, alone in her apartment that sometimes looks small and always looks empty – with empty rooms, empty walls, empty cupboards, and no pictures on the bedside table.

She wonders if she made a mistake moving here.

And on second thought, even the scenery – with its buildings towering over neon signs and street lights, bathing in car horns and the smell of living Americana- seems dull and colorless without someone to enjoy it with.

Clarke would like this apartment.

And not only because of the cat-themed calendar or the colorful set of salt and pepper on the dining table, or the enormous queen bed, but mainly because Clarke lives in such places and makes them breathe and chime and **bloom**.

She misses her, but figures these things can’t be said or thought just now, so she opens up a mental trap door and stuffs it all in, despite the pain, and she sees Costia again and then sees what she did to everyone she loved, sees the light of cruelty flash inside her own eyes and figures this is what she is and this is what she does.

Any visits her around noon and smiles while unveiling a box of sushi and a can of mango juice from inside a reusable shopping bag. “Surprise! Food.”

“Thanks, but are you aware that I’m a functional human being?” Lexa questions, jumping towards the box nevertheless.

“Strongly doubt it”, Anya intervenes, testing the softness of the couch. “Hey, look at this couch, Lexa, look at it. Does this look like comfort to you?”

“I guess”, the hockey center ventures, hesitant.

“Well, to me, it does not”, Anya states exasperatedly.

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah.”

Lexa takes the sushi box with her and limps forward, crashing on the couch with the graceless, unabashed style of a woman who cares not and speeds through life with old, ripped jeans and baggy t-shirts. “Eh, ‘s alright.”

Any makes no further opposition other than a tired sigh. “How’s the goalie, then?” She asks casually.

“Could be better”, is all Lexa dares answering.

After a short silence, Anya entices her sister to elaborate. “… And?”

“And, there’s nothing more to say. I don’t know what you expect from me, but I mean, I’m a professional athlete, these things happen. We just gotta push through. It’ll be hard for us, but I’m sure we can manage-”

“Alright, alright! Thanks for the details.”
Lexa just huffs angrily, shuffles back to the kitchen and towards the kitchen drawers in search of soy sauce. “You pressured me into it.”

“You know, Lex, if ever there’s something going on...” Anya advances delicately.

“No, I get it. Not much happening, though.”

Then, the chime of a cellphone seems to awaken Lexa from her slumber. She checks it, sees Clarke’s name and can’t keep the wave of shock from spreading on her face.

“Lexa?” Anya’s voice seems far away and inches from her ears altogether.

**Space ranger 12:36 A.M.**

**Hey. I hate to be the annoying one, but do you think we screwed up?**

“Yeah?” Lexa blurts, attempting to force confidence back into her features.

“Call me crazy, but I feel like something’s up”, Anya indicates.

**Woody 12:37 A.M.**

Maybe

**Space ranger 12:38 A.M.**

Can I call you so it doesn’t get weird?

Lixa distances herself from her phone as if escaping a carnivorous plant trying to eat her face off. “It’s nothing”, she bites sharply at her sister.

**Woody 12:38 A.M.**

Sorry, can’t talk right now.

**Space ranger 12:40 A.M.**

Oh. Right.

**Woody 12:40 A.M.**

I said sorry

**Space ranger 12:41 A.M.**

You did. Are you sure we’re okay?

A mixture of hurt and anger comes flooding through Lexa’s mental barriers. She snaps.

**Woody 12:42 A.M.**

You’re the one making it weird now. We’re fine, I didn’t say anything hinting otherwise.

**Space ranger 12:43 A.M.**
Oh, of course you didn’t. Go take a shower, Lexa, clear your head a bit.

Woody 12:43 A.M.

You’re unbelievable.

“Who is it?” Anya asks, unsure if she should come closer or not.

“It’s nothing, now could you please-“ Lexa starts, then redirects her gaze back to her phone.

Space ranger 12:43 A.M.

Oh, for fuck’s sake

Woody 12:44 A.M.

What? What is there to say, now?

Space ranger 12:45 A.M.

Nothing. Not a single fucking thing

Woody 12:45 A.M.

Oh yeah? Well then why are we still on this?

Space ranger 12:45 A.M.

Maybe because you’re making me feel like shit, how about that?

Woody 12:45 A.M.

Don’t make this about you

Space ranger 12:45 A.M.

You know, for a while I forgot how truly mean you are.

Despite the state of stress and anger she’s in, Lexa feels a pang in her chest.

*It’s sickening, how cold you are, Alexandria Woods,* she hears Costia’s voice call out from inside her head. *I’m surprised I even loved you once.*

She once cried for Costia thinking she did her wrong, thinking she played the evil part, and then felt the urge to hit her head on the wall because she knew, in her moments of sobriety, she *knew* Costia liked to feel stronger than her, liked to make her feel small and insignificant, especially in the end, when they slept on different sides of the bed, when they missed calls from each other and wondered if it’s still considered love when the match stops burning, and found themselves noticing how ugly this match can then look – all dark and torn and twisted, all extinguished and purposeless.

So she throws the phone on the couch, hears it thud against the cushions, then thinks, thinks, *thinks.* What could she possibly have become?

*Not only rough, but useless as well, now.*
Useless, as in *ripped* by Clarke, enthralled by Clarke, rendered pathetic, rendered swollen and sent burning through the fabric of her mattress in the night, thinking of her, always.

“Lex, are you alright honey?” Anya’s voice seems to originate from an entirely separate dimension.

“Yeah.”

“Oh, but *please*, cut the bullshit”, the older sister retorts, sharply yet pleadingly.

Lexa stops in her tracks. Cut the bullshit? She suddenly feels a new wave of anger spread through her limbs – anger at Clarke, anger at her expectations, but mainly anger at herself. She thinks it might be time to come clear. Maybe that’s the first step of her redemption.

“It’s Clarke, then. It’s Clarke”, she says, voice unwavering contrarily to the rest of her being.

“What?” Anya asks, genuinely concerned.

Lexa’s breath comes in and out of her lungs at once, raspy and uneven. “There’s something.”

“What-“ Anya repeats, only to be cut off right away.

“It’s *not* emotional”, Lexa assures, though it’s unclear whether she’s saying it to her sister or to herself.

“It’s *always* emotional”, Anya arches a brow, already suspicious.

“I swear it’s not! We’ve got rules! We don’t have them all written, but we promised not to break any.”

“What rules?”

“What?”

“Do they…” Anya starts, waving a hand in the air rapidly. “Keep you from getting attached, or… Keep you from, say, *turning pale as a ghost when you get a text from her*?”

Lexa gulps (she hopes it didn’t make a noise). “We have some fights, is all…”

“Fights? In a no strings attached relationship?”

“What’s your point?” Lexa disputes, turning defensive immediately and failing to notice the pain in her chest at the sound of her sister’s words. *No strings attached.* With Clarke Griffin, whose smile somehow makes her feel cornered in a room and robbed of every last bit of oxygen.

*Get a grip.*

“Alright, Lexa, it’s time to grow up. Either you get involved in this or you end up breaking her heart.”

“She *knows* it’s not serious, she... We made the rules *together.*”

Anya gets up close, so much so that Lexa can see the veins in her neck and the flutter of her nostrils. “What do they mean to you, these rules?”

“That I don’t lose control over this”, Lexa nods slowly, coldly, yet there’s a flicker of light in her
eyes.

“What do they mean-“ Anya starts, raising her voice.

“Everything-“

“Nothing.”

That shakes Lexa to the core. She stands abashed, though trying to hide her surprise by coating it with anger. “Stop that, you’ve gotta stop…”

“It means nothing. It’s a game of who gives in first, you see - I almost had that with Roan, remember? He made like he didn’t care about it, and I followed, and soon we had to put our pants on like adults and fucking tell each other. That’s how it is.”

Lexa’s jaw twitches in fury. “Don’t you bring Roan into this! He fucking left you! How can you talk about him like that?!”

“Because I move on, Lexa, and guess what? Raising a child whose eyes look just like his doesn’t make it easier.”

“Yeah, good for you”, Lexa defies tartly, eyes getting blurry with tears she will not shed.

And Anya grabs her by the arm, pulls her in for a hug – despite the anger, despite the grudge and pain of years and years of solitude. “I love you still.”

Lexa opens her mouth to answer but doesn’t find the right words so she just nods silently.

“It’s alright”, Anya whispers. “Just, don’t lose sight of the people who care.”

“Nobody cares”, Lexa declares, and she almost believes herself.

Then, just when she thinks Anya won’t say anything else:

“She cares.”

***

Spring comes as soon as Clarke feels the headaches drift away, and gets to put her equipment back on.

The first time she puts her chest protector, it’s almost like the fabric is hugging her. Which is what her teammates do, quite literally, when she joins them on the ice.

“SHE’S BACK!” Charlie yells, twice as hard as the others as she takes a leap towards her and stops herself at the very last instant, in fear of hurting her. “Woops! Shouldn’t send you out again, should I?”

“Better not”, Clarke nods unironically. Then, to Octavia whose hands snake around her from backwards, pulling her into a heartfelt hug. “Hey love, I missed you lots.”

“I missed you too – hey, make sure you don’t take any slap shots.”
“Yeah, cuz they’ll pierce right through me”, Clarke corroborates sarcastically.

“It’s not that, Clarke, it’s just… With the playoffs and everything”, Octavia rambles.

“I really am fine. Just don’t hit the head, is all.” The goalie jokes lightly.

“What did they tell you exactly, though?” Charlie chimes in, curious.

Clarke shrugs. “Well, I can’t really practice with you guys just yet, but I’ll do some work and then I’ll hit the gym to stretch a while.”

Truth is, Clarke is pretty relieved she won’t have to face Lexa today. She’ll never admit it aloud, but she didn’t sleep well the day after their last fight. Something about the way Lexa reacted, something about her words and the brutal disdain they expressed. It makes Clarke sick in the stomach, which is not only forbidden but embarrassing, because they’re just friends, aren’t they? Is weeping part of friendship?

She twists and turns the thought inside her head, fits it into boxes then throws it out, pulls it in again, all of it until she can’t take it anymore and almost chokes on her own breath when she gets a glimpse of Lexa stepping on the ice. That’s it.

It’s not Clarke making the decision to leave – it’s just bare reflex, a jerk of the knee when hit with that little hammer at the doctor’s, eyes blinking at sudden light.

She’s halfway through the hall when she realises how dumb this is, and how she’s acting like a coward.

It’s like a match is lit inside of her, and before she knows it, she’s back on the ice with a killer stride, the willpower of an entire pack of wolves. As if Lexa forced her out of her good-natured, friendly, bubbly self and let the professional goaltender out, the one that breaks sticks in fury and faces shootouts with stone-like composure. She’s at practice, not at a school reunion. She knows she’s gotta put in some work.

As soon as she steps in front of the net, she feels Lexa’s steel-clad gaze on each of her movements, yet she couldn’t care less. A part of her revels in the attention, in the fact that she’s now out of reach, that Lexa can’t touch her, can’t kiss her, and knows it damn well.

Being watched is part of her job. Being under pressure is part of her job.

And she’s Clarke fucking Griffin - she’s damn good at this.

“Hey, the little injured warrior”, Luna chirps as a greeting, bending forward to throw a couple of pucks around. “How’s it going?”

“Wonderful”, says Clarke, with the most convincing smile she can manage. “Shall I take shots today?”

Luna’s gaze studies her from head to skates. “Only low ones. Don’t wanna risk it just yet.”

“I feel fantastic, though”, Clarke urges her, both enthusiastic and exhilarated. “You know how much I like working my glove.”

“Aww, kid, don’t make me feel bad, now. Dr. Gill will burn me alive with that stare of his if he finds out I’m hurling pucks at you behind his back.”
“But I do feel a bit useless, to tell the truth”, Clarke deplores frankly.

Luna evidently pities her. “I know, honey, it’s hard for everyone.”

“I just hope I’ll be ready…” Clarke starts, then trails off.

She’s extraordinarily serious about the playoffs. The team has never been this good in ten years, and despite knowing it’s not all about talent (there’s a whole lot of luck involved), she can’t help but think they might go all the way. They surely can, and that’s a fact. On paper, they’ve got the most productive goal scorer in the league, the best goaltender and a nasty first pair of blue-liners. They’re the terror of the league and in Clarke’s head, when you add all these components, you get a conference final at the very least.

“I’ll take full responsibility for that”, Luna promises. “You do your thing and leave the rest to me.”

“I appreciate all you do”, Clarke gratifies her, only she knows she’s the one between the posts and it’ll all come down to her, inevitably so. She’ll fight through and make sure it doesn’t affect her sleep.

“It’s not much”, assures Luna, then proceeds to lay the pucks in front of the net. “Now, let’s get moving.”

###

Lexa takes showers to unwind.

It’s been like that for years.

Sometimes she even forgets to wash her hair with all the philosophical reflecting, steps out, then back in once she realizes her mistake. But today, she’s damn well focused.

The short temper makes her open the water with one quick, imprecise jerk of the handle and she gasps with the cold of the water as it trickles down her back and soaks her hair.

*Fucking hellish day.*

A while ago, she busied herself in the angriest, most tedious run she’s ever had in ten months. She had to get her mind off Clarke, she knows that’s why, but instead she mentally dissolves the thought again and again until the pieces end up washing away with that *way-too-cold-water-doesn’t-it-warm-at-some-point?*

*Deep breaths, Lexa.*

She inhales, then exhales fiercely, sending droplets of water flying to the ceramic wall.

Why is it so fucking hard to think of any other subject – really, out of the millions and millions of things and details and the color of her skin reddened under the hot water, and her big toenail she didn’t clip right so now it hurts like hell… She throws her head back, again splashing the wall. Griffin takes too much space, too much space, and she saw her this afternoon, absolutely stunning, she saw her work through basic stances and only that stole the breath out of her lungs - if only she could go back in time and erase this flick they had, and be *focused* again.
Anya had a talk with her that enforced the idea of clearing her mind, especially before the playoffs. She’s had trouble with that up to now – just thinking of anything other than hockey inevitably comes back to Clarke. So she trains, and she runs, and her burning muscles somehow lead her mind elsewhere.

Lexa has always been an athlete, she must not forget that.

***

She’s got the bravest, toughest mind there is, which makes the first time she crumbles even more devastating.

Something about the death-cold weather and the coffins disappearing under dirt – black dirt, the wet one that gets stuck under your nails – and the faces of people who didn’t even know them that much and whose tributes are just jumbles of generic, meaningless words. Lexa feels all alone in the world. She’s 12.

She feels the thunder in her veins and loses sight of anything good when she closes the door of the bathroom to isolate herself, late in the evening. Everybody’s gone. She knows Anya is close-by - she hears her pacing around restlessly just next door. For a minute, she forgets that her sister is just as alone and just as orphaned.

Anya will be forced into adulthood, and that’s that.

They went to see a show. It had rained the day before, for many hours. The water froze - a dark, almost black ice on the roads.

The police found the car in a ravine, almost flipped over, water up to the ceiling – they were knocked out straight away, didn’t suffer, didn’t panic.

“You might just make it to three A”, her dad had said before leaving – the keys were in the car, he’d just forgotten his phone on the kitchen table and come back for it. Three A was the best of the best in the bantam division, so it was one hell of a praise, coming from her dad. She’s happy he believed in her, that night – she’ll get to remember how proud he was.

Then comes the shock, when she plays her next game and sees the empty spot, just by the players’ bench. Dad always sat there to make sure she’d hear his comments.

And now, without him, she doesn’t play for anyone. That’s a hard pill to swallow. She even asks herself if she chose this – with every stride, with every shot, her mind freezes and goes back to the day she tried those tiny skates and followed her dad on the frozen pond. How funny, that she’s gotten into this so soon she can’t even remember why.

12 is a young age to question yourself. Lexa goes through that phase with that same energy, that same character she’s had since she spoke her first word. Yet there’s an emptiness, now. She feels like she’s faking.

Is it passion, or is it habit? And say it IS passion, how can she keep going without encouragement?

She does get into three A, in fall of that same year. She thinks it might be because she’s got
nothing else to do, but she can’t ignore the fire that burns inside of her every time she steps on the ice. She learns to rekindle that fire, to control it, appreciate it, recognize the fury and have fun when she plays. Dad would be proud, she thinks.

And when she scores, each and every time, she turns to the audience and imagines her dad.

She’s growing up.

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Between interviews and her mom calling incessantly, Clarke has no patience and that means no time to put up with people’s shit. Unsurprisingly enough, dozens of ‘are you ready for the playoffs’ directly followed by Lexa’s attitude proves to be no good mix. She’d always thought to be a calm person under pressure, but now...? She feels alone in a room filled with people.

It’s hard to fully understand how intense the playoff fever gets. She’s training as hard as she can, still feeling the lactic acid in her muscles throb at regular intervals while simultaneously attending a journalists’ meeting, her sweat not even dried – and those journalists are concerned about her, about her health, and they want to make sure she’s providing answers (which she often does not have). She feels lost through it all, for the first time in what seems like an eternity. She doesn’t ever recall facing the playoffs with such anxiety.

There doesn’t seem to be anyone in the gym when she enters – it’s nine PM, she’s already dead from movement coaching with Luna but it’s unlikely she’d be able to fit in her stretching once at home. She pretty much throws her stuff around. Bottle? Somewhere in a corner. Towel (already drenched, must she admit)? Scrunched up under a bench. That’ll do, and besides, she probably won’t even need it anyway.

She’s halfway through her session when she hears a metallic click.

And of course, of fucking course, that would be Lexa workout out, half naked, with a barbell.

She turns around and there, the eye contact that makes it impossible to escape the encounter.

“Hey”, blurts Lexa like she didn’t plan to see her again ever in her life, like a person who sees a colleague from that place they worked at when they were eighteen and that they only vaguely remember.

“Oh”, does Clarke, like the antisocial mess she is. “Oh, hi.”

Why the fuck would one say ‘oh’ TWICE? It’d be bad enough just once, as it seems!

Jesus Christ.

She breathes in through her nose and hopes Lexa doesn’t hear it. “What are you up to?” She follows through, somehow casually (while her internal organs are violently burning).

“Not much. I’m almost done.”

That ‘almost done’ sounded like an apology. Some sort of don’t worry, I won’t put you through this for too long. Clarke wonders how it is that they’ve gone from exchanging saliva to this kind of awkwardness. For a second, she thinks she doesn’t mind, but then again, seeing Lexa anywhere makes her feel like her lungs are repeatedly punctured with knitting needles.
“Oh, no problem.”

Another ‘oh’?! Hasn’t she done badly enough already?

They maintain a ridiculously tense silence for about a minute, until Clarke can’t take it anymore and feels like she can either speak up or ruin her stretching with all that stiffness.

She chooses the former.

“So, big games coming up…” She starts, leaving a blank for Lexa to jump in, which she does not do, forcing Clarke to continue her sentence half-heartedly. “Lots of fun, isn’t it?”

“Yup!” Is all Lexa manages to enunciate.

“How are you tackling it all?” Clarke tries again.

“Quite well.”

“I feel great as well after that injury o’ mine, you know”, the goalie stumbles clumsily.

“That’s nice.”

“And what about you?”

“Quite well, like I said.”

“Nothing else to add?”

“Clarke.”

“I’m just saying…” Mutters Clarke, completely aware of it being pointless.

“It’s not supposed to be like that”, Lexa cuts firmly, her first display of involvement in the discussion.

Clarke is visibly thrown off. “What do you mean?”

“You know damn well”, states the center, then gets up to leave.

“I want to hear you say it.”

“Why?”

“Just show me you have the balls, and then… Then, I’ll show you my side of it.”

Clarke didn’t expect to be this emotional. She’s getting choked up over this skin flick - she’s unable to breathe, all of it over this skin flick, she can’t sleep, plays their conversations over and over again in her mind except this time she’s getting the upper hand and that’s the only way to be satisfied, is if she’s winning and walking away with her heart still intact. God, this is no heart business (except it is, it is, it is, it fucking is).

“Alright, then… We’re done, Clarke. At least for the moment. I’m training a lot, I’m putting lots of effort and I can’t keep it going.”

“Oh, YOU can’t keep it going?” Yells Clarke – way too loud, and she surprises herself with the amount of anger she’d been bottling up without knowing.
Lexa’s gaze turns deadly. “Yeah, you’re gonna do this whole thing, I know you, you’re gonna do this bullshit with me. Go right ahead.”

“You –“ She gets up as well, gets up close, “YOU can’t keep it going, while all you’re doing (she gestures randomly in the air) is making sure that YOU are not getting overworked while I’m fucking getting over a woman bashing my hand on a metal post but that’s all right, ain’t it? As long as you’re not overworked. Because that would be too damn much.”

First Lexa seems about to pound on her. Then, she seems to lose all care over the discussion and makes her way to the exit.

“Oh, you’re not doing this”, Clarke defends, blocking the door.

She barely finds her breath as the two hold gazes, and suddenly Clarke is sick and she can’t do it anymore, and she panics as she feels tears of anger and exhaustion prickle at the corner of her eyes. She holds them in as best as she can. “I feel like shit”, she articulates, “because of you. Do you understand?”

“Yeah, Griffin, right on. Demonize me all you want.” Replies Lexa on the exact same tone. “Oh, how you had it hard recovering while I made you hot chocolate and warmed your bed.”

“Don’t you dare.”

“Would you please get out of my way?”

“Why are you making it so damn hard?” Says Clarke, pleads, almost. She’s so tired and she, at that moment, wants the fight to end more than anything.

“Ask yourself the same thing. Now, make room, Griffin.”

Reluctantly, Clarke moves to the side and watches Lexa storm away with that might and will she’s shown since the beginning, when they barely knew each other and just stared from afar. If only she knew it would hurt her that much, she would never… She thinks of it and her heart burns, and she lets the thought drift away.

She’ll need time to sort herself out, so she closes the door and there, the tears burst out uncontrollably and it’s pathetic, and she cries on the bench silently, secretly, as if it’s forbidden.

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Lexa’s foot is half out of the door when she pauses. She knows if she doesn’t control herself, she’ll run back to the room and take Clarke in her arms and do something ridiculous.

You’re a lion, Lexa. Sometimes, you’ve gotta do what it takes.

Would it be that bad, though?

She hasn’t touched Clarke for so long. She aches for it.

The hockey player, Lexa. Show me the professional, not the amateur.

Fuck it. She’s going back. She’s been an asshole. She’s gotta make it better.
Just then, a movement at the door.

“Hey Lexa.”

She turns around and her breath catches - a woman is standing there, soaked in the rain. “Call me irresponsible, but I’ve missed you.”

Tiffany is her name. They’ve met three years ago in a bar, talked about awesome nonsense and before Lexa knew it they were taking shots and kissing messily in the restrooms, and she remembers her smell vividly – something mellow that lingered for days, lilac and a hint of beach salt.

Lexa’s only stopped seeing her when she met Clarke.

She knew it would be too much to ask to see Clarke going about, and then hold this other woman and somehow not hope it was Clarke between her arms. A suicide mission.

“Tiff. What are you… What?”

She comes inside, dripping from the rain. “Take my coat”, says Lexa.

And that’s the last straw.

Tiffany comes forward, gets in Lexa’s space with those eyes that scream with how much she missed her, and how time passed and they changed and grew apart. For just a second, Lexa forgets Clarke is still very much in the building.

“I was close-by, I just thought…”

“Did you drive the whole way?” It’s more of an accusation than a legitimate question.

Tiffany just stares at her, and Lexa sighs. “Oh, baby, but it’s been months, now”, Lexa deplores, desperately seeking closure.

“I know, I just felt like it. I mean, I missed you, is what I’m saying. You don’t know how much, you can’t even imagine-“

“I’m all fucking sweaty, I don’t think you wanna do this”, Lexa rebuffs, only half joking.

Tiffany outright gives herself to her. “You know I don’t care, Lex, you used to come from gym and we’d do it in your kitchen, don’t you remember? How good it was, don’t you remember?”

“Yeah…” Admits Lexa, swallowing almost nervously.

It happens like a commotion – Tiff throws her arms around her and kisses her, rubs herself against her thigh immediately. Lexa’s heartbeat soars, she feels it pound against her temples like a war hammer. “Alright, Tiff, let’s not-“

She kisses her again, harder. “Did you miss me as well?” Her voice is sultry, melts through her mental barriers.

Still, she backs away. “I shouldn’t be doing this”, she blurts out like it’s painful to say, like it cuts through her chest.

“What do you mean?” Asks, Tiff, puzzled and out of breath. “You’re not married, are you?”
“No”, acknowledges Lexa, losing a bit of her spite. “I’m not in the right mindset, is all.”

There, she said it.

And Tiffany complies reluctantly. But as they’re gently backing away from each other, something catches Lexa’s eye in the distance – a silhouette receding from the door and into the parking lot, a silhouette that terribly, awfully looks like Clarke.

Chapter End Notes

OKAY DO NOT PANIC. DEEP BREATHS. It'll all come together, I have literally got a document with ALL the story planned out and it ends WELL so fret not my friends, I've got you.
Remember,
slowwwwwwwww burn.

End Notes

Just got a tumblr account! Yay! Follow me for bonus content, plus I’ll answer your questions;)  
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