Beauty and the Alpha

by Red_Hope

Summary

Mount Weather has fallen to the Trikru and Skaikru. Now that their common enemy is gone, another war threatens the fragile truce, but Clarke & Lexa continue fighting for peace. Clarke hopes their two different cultures can meld together, that is until Lexa tells Clarke the secrets of the grounders. And Clarke fears true peace goes against the grounders' very DNA, including Lexa.

Notes

-Disclaimer & Notices-
Copyright: I do not own The 100 or certain characters but the plot is all mine.
Notices: This story may have violence, language, and sexual content for a mature audience.

Started: December 7, 2016
Series: One Shot

AN: So this is the opening chapter to my Omegaverse story I’ve had brewing for awhile. I won't go into finer details about the ins & outs of my version of an Omegaverse. What I will say is that Clarke (and all Skaikru) are human while the grounders are Alpha/Omega. Through Clarke, we will learn what it means to be Alpha or Omega, their biology, and their culture.
Oh. Yes. There will be sex... love and war.
Chapter 1

"Mom," Clarke rasped. She hesitated, for a heartbeat. Everything was a dream to her, a nasty nightmare that had sharply come to an end. But a firm grip on her shoulder grounded her and chased off her earlier fears. Her mom was still alive and okay.

"Go to her," the commander ordered.

Clarke exhaled and released the last snake of dread that had been coiled around her heart. She nodded at Lexa then hastened across the short distance in the busy room. She rushed past other Skaikru until she collided into her mother's solid, warm body.

Off to the side, Marcus Kane watched on then looked over his right shoulder. He sighed in relief at seeing the commander, Lexa, still with them. He visually counted at least a dozen grounder warriors that swept through the room to corral the few Mountain Men that survived the irradiation.

Clarke continued holding her mom. Earlier, she was positive that she would have lost her mom. Cage had been drilling her mother, for something other than just bone marrow. Her mom was drilled out of prejudice and hate. There was nothing good in Cage's heart, only selfish needs. It forced Clarke's hand, and she had to make the ugliest decision thus far.

Abby kissed the side of her daughter's head. She squeezed Clarke even harder. Her heart twisted after her daughter's low whimper. She held down her own because she wanted to be strong for Clarke. Abby knew what her daughter had done to save their people and even the grounders. Worriedly, she withdrew but still held onto Clarke's sides.

"I tried," Clarke confessed. She had glistening eyes from tears that held in place. "I tried to be the good guy."

Abby swallowed and saw the pain burrowed deep in Clarke. Most people would miss it, but Abby knew her daughter best, even with all the recent changes. Abby still knew her child. "Maybe there are no good guys."

Clarke weighed her mother's words. Somehow it absolved half the guilt in Clarke. She frantically nodded in hopes her own acceptance in absolution would save her. When her mom drew her in for another hug, she nearly fell into it because of her need to disappear from today's events. She finally steeled herself and remembered what was happening around them. It was an end of a bloody war and now the aftermath had to be handled by her. Clarke ended the hug.

Abby kissed her daughter's temple one last time. She nodded at the hardened features on her daughter's face. She understood Clarke's will to continue as a strong leader for their people. "Go," she softly insisted. "I'm okay now."

Clarke swallowed and gave a low nod. She hesitantly left her mother on the table. She went directly to the commander, who stood near the grounder warriors. "How are things looking?"

Lena nodded at her counterpart. "We have seven prisoners so far." She indicated the small group of
Mountain Men that her warriors had captured both in the hallways and in the room. She studied Clarke's blood spattered features. She suspected the blood was from Dante Wallace, who had been shot by Clarke. She wanted to offer comfort to Clarke for the hard decisions made today, but there were others around them. Lexa shifted on her feet, but the chance was stolen from her when Octavia Blake came to Clarke's side.

"Where's Cage?"

Clarke grew wide eye at Octavia's observation. "Shit," she hissed. She hastily scanned the room and realized he was truly gone. That damn monster had slithered out when they raided the room. She looked to the commander.

"I will send hunters after him," Lexa swore. She had bright green eyes against her war paint. She nearly called an order to her warriors. But, she was cut off again by another Skaikru.

"Clarke… Clarke," Jasper Jordan called. He hastened to his friend with another person in tow.

Clarke stiffened at seeing the person behind Jasper. The green suit, mask, and long filter nose would always haunt Clarke's mind. She calmed at seeing the friendly features behind the mask. "Maya."

She was relieved and thankful that Jasper had managed to get the suite for Maya in time.

"What are we going to do now?" Jasper insisted. He looked at Maya in question. "She'll be dead if she takes off the suite and the facility is completely-"

"Alright," Clarke cut off. She touched Jasper's arm. "Get Maya back to Camp Jaha and get her into that containment unit… the same one we put Emerson in."

Jasper listened finally rather than being irrational since the start of the battle for Mount Weather.

"Then my mom can perform the bone marrow transfer," Clarke explained.

Jasper took a deep breath and nodded. He looked at Maya.

"You should go now," Clarke insisted, "So Maya has enough oxygen."

Jasper nodded. "I'm going to go get Bellamy and Monty."

"I'll get Bellamy," Octavia offered. She left the small group in search of her brother.

Clarke agreed with the idea and offered a weak smile to Maya. She opened her mouth but suddenly a grounder warrior quickly approached them with a sword at the ready. She realized he was after Maya and hastily inserted herself between Maya and the warrior.

"Hod op," Lexa ordered the warrior. She slotted her eyes at the warrior until he backed away from Maya.

Clarke touched Maya's shoulder and told them, "Go."

Lexa turned to the warrior. "Goch emo kom maun op."

"Sha, Heda." The warrior slightly bowed to his commander then left with the Skaikru once they were ready to go.

Lexa focused on Clarke. For just a second, she wanted to speak to Clarke, alone. But again, she was denied the chance after a familiar voice called out her title.
"Heda."

Lexa turned on her heels to the right and looked at the entrance to the room. A hint of relief briefly flashed across her features before she demanded, "Hani?" She watched the second group of warriors flood into the room with their prisoners.

"Tu, Heda."

Clarke remained quiet, but she looked from Lexa to the commander's former mentor.

Anya signaled the warriors to take the two prisoners over to the others in the corner. After the warriors passed them, she focused on the commander. "Fotin gona stedaun, Heda."

Clarke was simply relieved that Anya was still alive after the battle. When Lexa had sent Anya off with a team of warriors, Clarke pictured Anya taking another gunshot to the stomach similar to a month ago. The only difference was this time Clarke would not be able to save Anya again.

Anya cut her honey brown eyes from the commander to Clarke Griffin. "Skaikru?"

Clarke realized that Anya was just as bloody faced as her and Lexa. She nodded at the question then quietly answered, "Klir." She nearly touched Anya's arm, but she faltered and merely offered, "Mochof, Onya."

Lexa regarded her former mentor and the Skaikru leader. She knew the story behind Clarke and Anya's first meeting. Anya's respect for Clarke was the very reason Lexa had listened to Clarke rather than strike her down. She put away the difficult memories that seemed like a lifetime ago.

"Have you seen Lincoln or Indra yet?" Lexa questioned.

Anya shook her head.

"You should go check," Clarke pressed the commander.

Lexa silently conceded. She had no idea what had become of them, but they each were sent off on a mission. Indra had orders to free their own people that were imprisoned by the Mountain Men. Lincoln was doing the same, but from a different angle of attack. It would also give her a chance to have warriors hunt down Cage Wallace.

"I will handle the prisoners, Heda."

Lexa nodded at Anya's offer. She took a step but faltered and looked at Clarke. Without words, she asked Clarke if she was okay.

Clarke had to tilt her head back to get a better view of the green eyes behind the war paint. She gave a curt nod in answer.

Lexa turned away and started to the exit. She called for several warriors to accompany her.

Clarke waited until Lexa was gone before she looked at Anya. "What will happen to the prisoners?"

Anya was resting her hand on her sword. She slotted her eyes at the Mountain Men in the corner. "It is Lexa's decision."

Clarke understood that most likely Lexa would kill them. They were war prisoners that fought for the wrong cause. They had taken blood from grounders and stole bone marrow from Skaikru. She sighed then mentioned, "Cage got away."
Anya barred her teeth and growled low. "And Dante?" She lost her angry features when she smelled a distraught air from Clarke.

"He's dead," Clarke quietly answered. She looked over at her people. "I should…"

Anya reached up and clutched the young woman's shoulder. "Ste yuj, Klark." She squeezed once then let go and went on her way.

Clarke brushed a wild strand behind her ear. She started over to her people. It would be a long walk back to Camp Jaha. As their unofficial leader, she readied her people to leave the mountain and return home. Once she was sure everybody was ready to travel, she led the group out of the room. Anya had already left with the warriors and prisoners.

The journey to Camp Jaha went by in a rush. Clarke had started at the front of the group and eventually ended up in the back as they drew closer and closer to Camp Jaha. She found Monty at her side. He wanted to be her foundation, but Clarke was too consumed by her guilt.

At the open gates of camp, Clarke lingered for a moment until Monty gave her a hug. She returned his comfort and whispered a thank you to him. Monty's constant faith in her eased the blow to her heart.

Bellamy waited until Monty was gone before he neared Clarke. He had impatiently waited at the gates for the group to arrive from Mount Weather. "I think we need a drink."

Clarke gave a broken laugh and met Bellamy's messy features. She only saw dirt and grime on his face, unlike her own. But it was Clarke who had handled the dirty work. It was her finger that pulled the trigger and her hand that pulled the switch. Bellamy was free and clear of the horrors of Mount Weather.

Bellamy moved closer to his friend. "Clarke…"

Clarke shook her head.

"We'll get through this," Bellamy promised.

Clarke swallowed and looked towards their people. "I don't know if I will," she confessed. Somehow giving life to the truth pushed down on her shoulders even more. Her heart thrummed against her heavy chest.

Bellamy stepped in front of his friend. He grabbed her arm, gently. "If you need forgiveness…" He searched her eyes and relived the memories from in the Control Room of Mount Weather. "I'll give that to you." He could see his words failed to break Clarke's guilt. He moved in closer and insisted, "You're forgiven."

Clarke briefly closed her eyes and cut off Bellamy's desperation. She took a deep breath and whispered, "I'll see their faces."

Bellamy wondered if Clarke meant the faces of the dead or the living. He found blue eyes on him again.

"I'll always be reminded of what I did."

Bellamy slid his hand down until he had Clarke's gloved fingers tangled in his own. "What we did."

"No," Clarke sadly argued. "I did it." She remained in control even though the pain bled in her heart.
"I made the decisions… I chose to wipe them out." She saw her hand on the switch again. She wanted the memory to go away, but she continued to see it. The switch's soft click was a deafening sound in Clarke's mind, forever.

"Not everybody," Bellamy argued.

Clarke huffed. "Those prisoners will be dead in days." She looked towards the camp. "And Maya?" She swallowed and whispered, "Is she really that lucky? She'll be the last one alive."

Bellamy wished he could break through Clarke's guilt. He was at a loss and wondered if there was a way to free Clarke.

"I bare it so they don't have to," Clarke whispered. She squeezed Bellamy's hand then released it. She walked past her friend and continued into the camp. She would bare it, until it destroyed her. And that included putting the pieces back together. Maybe once she worked out a true peace with the grounders then she could find her own. Yet whispers in her head told her it was all a lie.

Bellamy followed behind and listened to the gates shut after he was inside the camp. He paused and watched Clarke go over to Raven Reyes. He then went to Octavia.

By sunset, Camp Jaha had settled down and became quiet. Many ate their dinners in relative silence in the dining room. The only exception was Clarke Griffin. She was hardly hungry and instead helped her mother get to bed. Most likely it would be a few days before Abby was on her feet again. Clarke wanted to make sure her mother healed correctly.

After Abby was in bed, Clarke slipped into the small bathroom of their quarters. With her back against the door, Clarke slumped and fought not to fall apart any second. She pushed off the door and started the shower on the other side. She had hoped the warm water would clean off the blood, but Clarke quickly realized the Mountain Men's blood had long ago soaked through her skin and would always be there.

Eventually Clarke collapsed in her bed without any light. She was drained to the bottom and fell into a deep sleep for several hours. Closer to daylight, the nightmares attacked her and jerked her awake with a low cry. She hastily climbed out of bed and gathered her wits. Slowly the nightmare slithered back in the recesses of her mind, until another time.

Abby had awakened already and was in the bathroom. She moved carefully and came out to find her daughter making breakfast. She suspiciously wondered why there was only one plate until Clarke insisted that she had eaten already. Abby doubted it but made no further objections, for now.

Clarke allowed her mother to eat alone. She left the quarters and went in search of her friends. She wanted to check on everybody and also Maya. She suspected Jasper was with her. She found her friends gathered in one of the old hangars. Clarke was greeted with quick hugs.

"How is she doing?" Clarke asked Monty.

Monty shrugged and replied, "As good as can be when she's stuck in a box." He slouched against the table that his friends occupied.

Clarke sighed and promised, "My mom will help her."

"She'll probably have to get Dr. Tsing's research," Raven brought up.

"Which means we're going back to Mount Weather," Monroe summarized.
"Well what about all the supplies in there?" Harper started.

Clarke halted her friends. "We can't go in there… not yet."

"The Trikru have guards at all the entrances," Octavia mentioned. She had seen them when they left the facility.

"We can't let those supplies go to waste," Nathan Miller argued. He looked between his friends.

"Just wait," Clarke cut in, again. "I need to talk to Lexa first." She lowered her hand back to the table. "If we get anywhere near the facility, it's hard to say what those guards will do."

"It depends on their orders from Lexa," Octavia reminded.

"We should have those supplies," Nathan continued. "I mean we did bring down the mountain. The grounders would still be fighting them and-"

"Miller," Clarke bit.

Nathan snapped his jaw shut. "Sorry," he softly offered.

Clarke sighed now that she had cut off her friends' rebel ideas.

"When are you leaving, O?" Bellamy had been quiet until the conversation brought up the grounders.

"I need to go soon," Octavia replied. "I'm sure Indra is getting impatient." She was more concerned about Lincoln, who missed her. She wanted to see him.

Clarke focused on Octavia. "You're going to the grounder camp?"

Octavia only nodded.

"I'm coming with you," Clarke decided.

"Why?" Raven questioned.

Clarke looked to her closest friend. "I need to find out where we stand with the grounders… now that the war is over."

"Won't your mom handle that?" Harper questioned.

"Please," Raven dramatically replied. "Abby may be a great doctor, but she sucks at the chancellor part." She then quickly looked at Clarke. "Sorry. No offense but-

"No… no you're right." Clarke chewed on her lip then reminded, "Besides, the alliance was between me and Lexa… not my mom and Lexa." She looked over at Octavia, who sat between Bellamy and Monroe. "Can we leave in an hour? I need to get a few things." She also wanted to see Jasper and Maya.

Octavia nodded. "We can take the horses."

"I'm coming with you two."

Clarke blinked and looked at Raven. "What?" She shook her head. "You're not coming with us. You can barely walk, Raven." She wanted her friend to rest and heal from the drilling done to her leg.
"You're taking the horses," Raven reminded. "I'll ride with you."

Clarke wanted to argue further but Monroe cut her off.

"You're only going to lose this fight."

Clarke glared at Monroe even though it was true. She huffed and muttered, "Fine." She got up and looked directly at Raven. "Be ready in an hour." Sometimes Raven's smirk pissed her off.

Raven nodded and watched Clarke leave them, yet she called, "Toodles." She chuckled at the glare thrown her way. Once Clarke was gone from the hangar, she worriedly sighed and leaned against the table.

"Why are you going?" Wick checked. He was clearly unhappy about Raven leaving the camp.

Raven peered over at Wick and simply explained, "Because if anybody needs help… it's Clarke." She refused to tell him anymore. She knew Clarke enough and what had happened in Mount Weather was gnawing away at Clarke from the inside.

In an hour's time, the three friends gathered around the horses. Clarke hooked her things and Raven's satchel to the horse's saddle. She looked to Octavia. "I think we'll need your help."

Octavia seconded it and came over to the pair. Together, they boosted Raven into the saddle and then mounted the horses next. Octavia knew the way so she led them out of camp and into the woods.

"How did your mom handle it?" Raven asked.

Clarke shrugged. "She handled it." She shifted in the saddle and became more comfortable. "I promised her I'd be back in two day or three days."

"I guess Kane will look after her?"

Clarke nodded.

Raven tightened her arms around Clarke's waist. "They're awfully chummy now."

Clarke frowned but knew that Raven was right. She recalled Kane embracing her mother yesterday after the battle was over. "My father is probably spinning in his grave." She toyed with the reins. "My mom likes the man that arrested him for treason."

Raven weighed the distraught in her friend's tone. She squeezed her arms around Clarke and softly reminded, "We're all different people now, Clarke… since we landed here."

Clarke agreed that nobody was the same as they were up in the sky. Their lives on the ground remolded them all. "I know," she whispered.

Raven let the discussion die. She rested her cheek against her friend's shoulder. She eventually dozed off and only woke up when she heard Octavia's voice. She shook away the fuzziness in her head and heard Octavia call out something else but it was in Trigedasleng. She realized they were probably close to the grounder camp.

"We're here."

Raven wondered if her friend read her mind. She straightened up and freed one hand. She reached behind and fingered her handgun. She knew better than to draw it, but she was comforted by its
"Just act natural," Clarke offered. She gave a faint nod to the two grounder warriors that stood off to the side. She suspected they were apart of patrol. She was surprised when the two warriors nodded back at her. Never had that happened in the past.

Raven grumbled at the poor advice. She had yet to let any defenses down around a grounder. They were all too intense for her.

"This way," Octavia told the pair, over her shoulder. She guided them past a few trees and slowed when the grounder camp emerged in the open valley.

Clarke decided to dismount and kicked the stirrups off her boots. "Stay on the horse," she ordered Raven. She hopped out of the saddle and took the reins. She ignored all the stares from the grounder warriors. She was fairly use to it anymore.

Octavia had dismounted too and walked alongside Clarke, deeper into the camp. She slowed when a grounder came towards them.

Clarke had a slight smile. "Anya," she greeted.

Anya went directly to Clarke and held out her arm. "Monin, Klark kom Skiaakru."

"Mochof," Clarke offered. She took Anya's arm in a firm hold. She was learning the Trikru customs and often picked up new words in Trigedasleng. "Ha yu?"

"Os," Anya replied. She released arms. "Yu?" Her normally guarded features had long vanished around Clarke. Her eyes were a bright brown.

Clarke only nodded at Anya's question. She cleared her throat and explained, "I came to see Lexa."

Anya assumed so. "And Heda will want to see you." She could answer for her former second.

Clarke was relieved but asked, "Where can we take our horses?" She indicated hers and Octavia's own.

Anya slightly turned and signaled two warriors to get the horses. "They will be taken to the corral with the others." She looked to Octavia. "Lincoln is eager for your return."

Octavia had a smirk. "I know."

Clarke drew away from the group and went over to Raven. She held up her arms and helped her friend down from the horse. She allowed Raven's hand on her shoulder, for extra support.

Raven tested her own strength and pain. She slowly joined Octavia and the grounders.

Once Clarke was sure Raven was okay, she looked at Anya. "You remember Raven, right?"

Anya's earlier friendliness hadvanished upon seeing the new Sky person. "Sha," she coolly answered. "The one that blew up my bridge."

Raven rolled her eyes and argued, "That was a long time ago."

"Merely weeks ago," Anya countered.

Clarke curiously watched the exchange, not quite sure what to make of it.
Raven smiled at the general. "You need to let that bridge go." She shrugged and admitted, "It was a nice bridge though."

A low rumble came from the back of Anya's throat. She huffed and emphasized, "It was." Her attention cut to the warriors that took the two horses. She looked at Clarke. "Will you be staying long?"

"Two or three nights," Clarke replied. "If we can," she hastily added.

Anya bowed her head briefly. "I am sure Heda will agree." She started turning but paused and looked back at Clarke and Raven. "However, this one may have to sleep with the horses." She pointed at Raven.

"Hey," Raven fought. "I-" She was stopped by the hand over her mouth. She glowered at Clarke, even after Clarke dropped her hand.

"Anya is kidding." Clarke understood the general's sense of humor. It had taken her time to figure it out, but she enjoyed the rare moments Anya teased her.

Raven looked from her friend to the grounder general. She released a breath after she saw the glint in Anya's eyes. "So funny I forgot to laugh," she retorted.

Anya was hardly fazed by the Sky girl's ire. She revealed a smirk and taunted, "And your emotions are as subtle as a pauna."

Raven opened her mouth but was halted again by Clarke.

"Don't," Clarke ordered her friend.

Raven took a deep breath and slowly let it out. "You said to act natural." She missed Anya's quiet chuckle at both of them.

"Follow me." Anya led the Skaikru through the camp. They had to go up to Lexa's tent overtop of the valley where all the officers stayed, unlike the warriors in the valley.

Eventually Octavia broke off because Lincoln had found her. She promised to find Clarke and Raven at another time. She wished Raven luck because she knew the mechanic needed it.

The walk up to Lexa's tent was slow due to Raven's injury. Clarke noticed a sheen of sweat on Raven's brow by the time they were on the top. It was a cool autumn day so it was from Raven's pain. She wanted Raven to rest, but she knew what Hell she would hear if she brought it up. She would have to think of another way.

Once at the entrance of the tent, Anya asked Clarke to wait, and she slipped in to check on Lexa first. She only made it two steps in and found the commander standing tall in the center. She noticed how Lexa stared through Anya, towards the tent flaps.

Without any prelude, Anya simply explained, "She came to see you, Heda."

Lexa inhaled deeply, as if determining something. "Who is with her?"

"Reivon."

"Bring them in," Lexa ordered. She remained still while her general hurried out.

Anya escorted the two Skaikru into the commander's tent. She noticed Raven's strain from the walk
up to the tent. She held her tongue though.

Lexa curiously considered why Raven was with Clarke. By Raven's heavy limp, she could tell the mechanic was injured from the battle. She kept silent though. However, she softened inwardly at the slight smile from Clarke.

Clarke turned to Raven and suggested, "You should sit."

Any a was on the move and grabbed a stool from under a small table. She brought it to Raven.

For a second, Raven stared oddly at the general.

Any a grumbled at the look and merely stated, "We are not savages, and you are a guest."

Raven was uneasy for a second. "Thank you." She took the seat.

Any a looked to Clarke and mentioned, "I will located a tent for you and Raven for the next two or three nights." It was her way of informing Lexa of the plans. She did look to the commander for confirmation.

Lexa gave a curt nod.

Any a slipped out of the tent, on a mission.

Lexa had yet to leave her spot. She kept her stony features.

Clarke approached the commander but stayed a certain distance.

"I did not expect to see you soon, Klark." Lexa hooked her hands behind her back, which caused her long coat to briefly sway.

Clarke felt drawn to the commander's strength. She wished they were alone so they could be less formal. "Yeah... I'm a little concerned about this alliance... our truce." She folded her arms. "Now that the war is over."

Lexa moved her head in agreement. "I understand." She sighed low, almost silently. When she took a deep breath, she smelled metal and fire. She knew it was Clarke's natural scent, and Lexa had grown to appreciate it. "Your concern is well placed."

"God... I hope that doesn't mean what it sounds like," Raven complained. She found two sets of eyes on her. "Because it really sounds like another war."

Lexa noticed Raven's words had rattled Clarke a little. She nearly reached for Clarke but halted herself. "It is not the Trikru that is the concern, Klark."

Raven narrowed her eyes. She listened to what came next.

Lexa had worried sky blue eyes on her again. "The war against the Mountain Men united the twelve clans. Now that war is over and..." She allowed Clarke to fill in the blanks.

"Will the clans break apart again?" Clarke checked.

Lexa was truthfully unsure and flexed her hands behind her back. "It is too early to tell."

Clarke wanted to ask several questions, but she remembered Raven was with them. Then suddenly her prayers were answered because Anya reentered the tent.
"I have secured a tent for you," Anya told Clarke.

"Chof," Clarke offered.

Anya then neared the seated mechanic. "I will escort you to it."

Raven rolled her eyes and slowly stood. "Yeah yeah." She was next to the grounder general. "I know when I'm not wanted around."

Clarke chuckled and took a step closer to her friend. "Go rest, Raven." She glanced at Anya and silently thanked her for taking care of Raven.

Raven peered up at Anya and realized just how much taller the general was compared to her. She looked at Clarke and Lexa only a few feet from each other. It was the first time she noticed the stark height difference between them. Raven briefly considered whether there were growth hormones in the grounders' food. She shook off the weird idea and instead left the tent with Anya.

Lexa waited until Anya and Raven were gone before she moved towards Clarke. "How are you, Klark?" Now closer to Clarke, she sensed the heightened emotions that hummed from Clarke. She knew it was from what happened in the mountain.

Clarke shook her head at the question. She wanted to focus on the discussion about the alliance rather than herself. "So what's going to happen…" She lost her train of thought when Lexa took another step. Her personal space was taken over by the proximity of the commander. Her natural reaction was to move, but she held her ground firmly. "Lexa, I'm fine." They were this close yesterday afternoon when they shared a kiss. Yet, that seemed like a lifetime ago. Somehow Clarke felt like a part of her from yesterday was now drowned by the death from the mountain.

"You are not fine," Lexa argued.

Clarke was forced to tilt her head back because the commander towered over her so greatly. She locked eyes and even mental horns. "We need to figure out what to do about this alliance. My people-"

"Can wait a few minutes," Lexa cut off. She lowered her head closer to Clarke. She was overwhelmed by what she smelled around the Skaikru leader.

Clarke's back was ramrod straight when Lexa bent over her. She and Lexa rarely invaded each other's space unless it was for a show of power. She tried understanding why Lexa was pushing her resolve. She denied Lexa the pleasure of her own weakness and continued holding her ground. She only became confused when Lexa distinctly smelled her.

"You are hurting," Lexa whispered. Her lips were close to Clarke's ear. Clarke closed her eyes and warred with her emotions that wanted to spill out into the open. "I'm… I'm fine," she weakly insisted. Yet, her body betrayed her. She reached for Lexa's hips that were solid.

Lexa lifted her arms but hesitated to touch the Skaikru leader. Her hands hovered inches from Clarke's side. "I want to help you, Klark."

Clarke shut her eyes after the words rumbled low in Lexa's chest. She felt every syllable drive through her armor. She twisted her fingers in Lexa's coat. Again she was betrayed by her body's need for comfort. Clarke moved forward and finally pressed into Lexa. All the false pretense of a power struggle vanished into thin air.
Lexa sighed in relief and snaked her arms across Clarke's back. She held the broken Skaikru leader close. She knew Clarke's pain. There were ugly choices Lexa had made in the past and that still ate away at her soul. She understood what it meant to carry such weight.

Clarke held onto Lexa's side, but she clutched the commander's broad shoulder with her left hand. Her pain clawed against her throat and wanted release, but only a low whimper worked its way free. She attempted stopping it by hiding her face in the soft fur of Lexa's coat.

Lexa had heard it. She tightened her arms around Clarke and promised, "It will get easier."

Clarke turned her head and rested her cheek against Lexa's warm chest. She blinked against the formed tears in her eyes. "I want it to stop." She closed her eyes and whispered, "I want to make it stop." She jerked when a low growl sounded under her ear.

Lexa reigned in on her natural reaction to Clarke's confession. She huffed deeply, which cleared her head. She took a deep breath and argued, "That is not the answer." She lowered her head to Clarke. "You did the best you could in that situation."

Clarke shut her eyes. Again the memories from the Control Room attacked her. She dug her nails into Lexa's coat. In one of the monitors, she still saw Lexa fighting for her life against the Mountain Men's guns. Another screen showed Cage drilling her mother for bone marrow. And Dante Wallace was dead at her feet.

"Would you have done it?" Clarke whispered.

Lexa knew the extreme value in her answer. Clarke sought approval for what happened in the mountain. One young leader needed a seasoned leader's support. Lexa doubted her answer would free Clarke from the guilt, but it would make it easier. Or so she prayed to the gods for it.

"Yes."

Clarke squeezed her closed eyes tighter. Lexa's single word thundered in her ears. A knife of blame fell away from Clarke's heart, but there still was so much bleeding in her.

"If you had not done it," Lexa whispered, "Many more of our people would be dead."

Clarke swallowed against the lump and opened her eyes. Her blue eyes were fuzzy with emotions. She knew that the many dead would have included Lexa herself. Even with the grounders' sheer numbers, the Mountain Men's damn bullets mowed them over fast. Clarke's actions had saved both grounder and Sky people lives, but at the price of others.

Lexa stared across the tent, and her mind was on what happened in the mountain. She wished she could have kept Clarke from the battle. But, it was a useless wish. Everything was done, and now they faced the aftermath of it. All any of them could do was move forward, even with a darkness looming ahead of them.

After a long minute, Lexa swore, "It will get easier."

Clarke's eyes fluttered at hearing the promise again. Lexa's voice was thick and powerful, like always. Clarke was unsure when she had started loving the very tone of Lexa's voice. She was even at a loss at how she ended up here, in Lexa's arms. They had never hugged, once. And the kiss was a different matter, a warm memory that still tingled against Clarke's lips. But right now, Clarke continued clinging to Lexa for support, and Lexa held Clarke up from completely crashing into the ground, again.
With a blank future, Clarke wished she knew what to do next. She needed direction and came to the grounder camp to work out a sliver of hope. Instead, she found herself being support by the commander. Maybe Lexa was right that she could let her people wait for a few minutes. Clarke gradually closed her eyes and remained in Lexa's arms for awhile longer. Deep in her spirit, she knew Lexa would hold her until the end of their time.

To be continued.

---

**Trigedasleng to English**

Hod op. - Stop.

Goch emo kom maun op. - Escort them out of the mountain.

Hani? - How many?

Fotin gona stedaun, Heda. - Fourteen warriors dead, commander.

Klir. - Safe.

Monin, Klark kom Skiakru. - Welcome, Clarke of the Sky People.

Ha yu? - How are you?

Os. - Great.
Chapter 2

Clarke had been sleeping soundly, on her side. She was drained by today's travel and the later conversations with the commander of the grounders. She was ripped out of her dreamless night by an ugly nightmare. Clarke ran and ran from those she murdered in Mount Weather, but they always found her. Just before they could tear at her throat, she sharply woke up with a gasp.

The tent was fairly dark other than the outside fires that offered a soft glow. The air was also cool, but the furs were plenty warm. But still Clarke shivered, thanks to her nightmare. Behind her, she heard Raven slumbering in peace. Clarke was grateful that the mechanic was able to rest fitfully.

After several minutes, Clarke pushed the furs off. She welcomed the cold air around her heated body. She quickly put on her boots then grabbed her jacket. She tucked her handgun into her waistband on the way out of the tent.

Outside, the night was quiet other than the bonfires' crackles or the few grounders softly talking in Trigedasleng. It was a clear night and the stars shined brightly around the quarter moon. A soft breeze moved through the camp. It was a beautiful night compared to the horrors that lurked in the distant mountain.

Clarke folded her arms and stood in the shadows between two tents. She listened to the three warriors that talked in Trigedasleng. She could barely make out two words in every other sentence. She needed to learn more about the language. Gradually, she peered over her left shoulder and studied the commander's tent that was nearby. There was no candlelight or movement so she knew Lexa was asleep. After a soft sigh, she looked at the three warriors.

The grounders continued talking, but they also played a game between them. One warrior threw something on the ground and the two others cursed low in their native tongue. As the seeming
winner bent down to get his earnings, he sensed curious eyes on him. He twisted his head towards the attention until he saw the Skaikru in the darkness.

Clarke focused on him and stiffened when his eyes reflected back at her. She took a hesitant step until a hand was on her. Clarke jumped and brought up a fist meant for her attacker. Her other hand went for her handgun.

"Klark," Lexa soothingly called.

Clarke dropped her fist and sighed in relief. "I'm sorry." She pulled her hand away from the gun. "Don't sneak up on me like that."

Lexa glanced at the warriors, who settled down after they realized their leader was okay. She looked at Clarke again. "You should be sleeping."

"Sleep is a funny thing right now," Clarke muttered.

Lexa was openly concerned but offered, "Come with me." She covered the short distance to her tent and allowed Clarke to go in first.

Clarke stepped aside but stayed in the same spot. She could hardly see a thing in the tent. She suspected Lexa's tent was made from heavier fabric that held out both the cold and light. She heard Lexa's movements and wondered how the Hell Lexa could see a damn thing. Clarke would have fallen over something or even everything. Shortly, the tent came to life under the candlelight.

Lexa approached her guest and offered, "Do you want something to drink?"

Clarke realized how much warmer it was in Lexa's tent. She dropped her arms from her body. "Yeah… I think so."

Lexa nodded and opted to make tea for them both. She indicated the stool. She went about prepping a small fire that had a metal pot near it.

Clarke propped her feet on the bar under the stool. "I thought you were asleep."

"Sha." Lexa had started the fire then moved the metal rack over it so the hanging pot could heat the water. "But I am awake now."

Clarke glanced over at the pile of furs. She remembered when Lexa had sat there so casually the night before the battle. She shook away the thoughts and peered up at the tall woman that came over to the table next to her.

Lexa opened a small wood box that sat there.

Clarke curiously studied it and knew it was a special box by the ornate designs on the lid. She nearly asked about it until she saw how Lexa was carefully deciding on what to take out of it.

Lexa's first choice was fast. She dropped a white pouch into the right mug. Her second choice seemed to take longer, but she picked one and put it in the other mug.

"Different kinds of teas?"

Lexa shut the lid. "Sha." She ran her hand across the lid, which reflected back the special emblem. "I'm giving you one that's… not as strong." She failed to mention it contained a sleeping agent in it. She left the mugs there and turned her back to the table. She eyed the pot over the fire, but it still
needed more time.

Clarke stared across at the fire too. She was briefly caught up in the dancing flames, but she looked up at the commander. "Thank you." She found confused eyes on her. "For what you did up on the mountain."

Lexa folded her arms and leaned against the table. "Like you, I made the best decisions I could during the heat of battle."

Clarke puckered her lips a little as she weighed Lexa's decisions up on Mount Weather. "How sure are you of that?" She noticed the sudden tautness along Lexa's jaw line. "You didn't take Cage's deal… and you probably should have because a lot less of your people would have died."

Lexa stayed quiet.

Clarke wondered if she would get a response. As the silence drew on, her attention was drawn down past Lexa's shoulders. It was really the first time she had a chance to appreciate Lexa without a coat on and any guards around them. She stole the chance to inventory Lexa's thick arms and suspected there was plenty more underneath the clothes. Clarke looked away and blew out a low breath.

"I should have," Lexa admitted aloud.

Clarke looked up at the commander and watched the firelight reflect against Lexa's eyes. It reminded her of the warrior by the campfire earlier. She shook away the strange thought and focused on the conversation. "Why didn't you then?" Finally she had Lexa's attention on her.

"Because our alliance was more important." Lexa pulled away after she heard the water boiling in the pot.

Clarke sighed and silently repeated Lexa's reason. There was so much left unspoken in Lexa's reason. A secret was in Lexa's words that neither of them was ready to face.

Shortly Lexa returned with the pot and filled the mugs. "You did not need my help to get into the mountain." She set the pot to the side then picked up the mugs. She handed the one to Clarke and carried the other over to her favorite spot.

Clarke smelled the tea, which had a sweet and flowery hint. She cupped it between her hands and enjoyed the warmth.

Lexa relaxed against the furs and balanced the mug on her leg. "But if I had abandoned you and your people on the mountain then we would surely have war later."

Clarke looked over at the commander, who was comfortable against the furs. "We still could," she whispered.

Lexa tested the tea even though she knew it was too hot. She cleared her throat. "If there is then it will not be between Trikru and Skaikru."

"Azgeda," Clarke whispered. She stared down into the mug, as if it was filled with answers. "I swear they're just a bunch of war mongrels."

Lexa tapped the side of her mug and muttered, "It's in our blood."

Clarke narrowed her eyes at the commander. "Do you believe that about humans?"
"Humans?" Lexa repeated, as if confirming it. She shook her head and replied, "No."

Clarke noticed how the commander held something back. She was confused but decided not to press further.

"Your people reacted to a threat," Lexa recalled. She sipped on the tea and was pleased it had cooled off enough. "Even Anya understood that… later."

Clarke drank the tea and was pleased by the flavors. She hummed contentedly.

Lexa looked over at the Sky leader. She was glad that Clarke drank more of it. "What was space like?" She hoped the change of topic would help.

Clarke was startled by the question. She peered across to the commander. "It was… kinda lifeless." Like Lexa, she drank more tea. "Mundane too… really boring." She shook her head and peered into the half empty mug. "It's certainly not boring here on the ground." She was surprised by the throaty chuckle from the commander.

"No… it is not." Lexa enjoyed her tea. She could feel it working to sooth her natural instincts and cleared her mind further. She studied Clarke's now weary features. "I would like to experience… mundane sometime."

Clarke took a large swallow of the tea, nearly done. She decided against the rest and put the mug onto the table. "Put it on your bucket list then." Suddenly her body felt heavy.

"Bucket list?" Lexa echoed.

Clarke touched her forehead. For some reason, the commander's normally strong voice seemed awfully distant. She latched onto the base of the stool for support. "L-ex-a…" she pleaded, in worry. "S-something is w-w-wrong with m-me."

Lexa set her mug on the ground then quickly got to her feet. "It was a sleeping tea." She knelt in front of Clarke and grasped the Skaikru leader's sides.

Clarke's mind was nearly fuzzy. Now Lexa had two heads so she closed her eyes. "Why?"

"You need to sleep," Lexa softly answered. She knew Clarke would refuse the tea if she had told Clarke what was in it. She stood a little and slipped an arm around Clarke's back. She hooked her other arm under Clarke's legs then stood up with the smaller woman against her chest.

"I can't…" Clarke attempted shaking away the heaviness with no luck.

"You're safe here with me," Lexa promised. She turned and carried Clarke to her bedrolls.

Clarke's head nearly rolled, but she leaned it against Lexa's shoulder. She shut her eyes and started giving into the tea. "You're… getting Hell… tomorrow." She was floating in the air now but heard a gruff chuckle. She loved Lexa's deeper laughs that were so far and few, and also new to Clarke. She felt her body sink into softness.

Lexa had retrieved Clarke's handgun and placed it within reaching distance. She adjusted the furs over the Sky leader. She straightened up to her full height and freely admired Clarke's beautiful features. She took a deep breath and Clarke's fiery metal scent filled her senses. She huffed in hopes to chase off the distinct scent. Quickly Lexa moved away from the other woman and went for the tea near her favorite seat. She swallowed a healthy mouthful, and it soothed her belly's light ache.
"Damn," Lexa muttered, "It's getting worse." She peered into the empty mug and considered another one. She was slightly frustrated because the solution was only temporary before the real problem surfaced soon. After a low growl, Lexa went in search of her sword and whetstone. She needed to focus on something else.

For a couple hours, Lexa sharpened her favored sword with a lot of vigor. She would have gone for a walk normally, but she refused to leave Clarke by herself. Eventually her worries exhausted her so she dropped the whetstone on the ground. She slumped back in the furs with the sheathed blade across her lap. Somehow sleep found her a few hours before dawn.

A little after sunrise, Clarke stirred from her heavy, dreamless sleep. She softly groaned and tried wiping the fog from her head. She sat up on her elbows and scanned her surroundings with such confusion until she came to Lexa. She recalled nearly toppling off the stool last night thanks to a sleeping tea that the commander gave her. She glowered at the commander, who was still asleep. Lexa had fallen asleep on her seat. Her hand was locked around the hilt of her sword, just in case. Most likely her honed senses were on high alert for trouble.

Clarke ran her hand through her hair then looked at the gun beside her. She picked it up and got out of the bed quietly. She stowed the gun in the usual spot and muttered, "I'm going to kill you for this." She hated being tricked. "Not likely," came a husky reply.

Clarke glared over at the green eyes that peeked out at her.

"How did you sleep?"

Clarke folded her arms. "I'm sure better than you."

Lexa rolled her head until her neck popped back into place. "Case in point," Clarke muttered.

Lexa was slouched in the seat, legs slightly spread open.

Clarke was about to fire off another threat, but her thoughts were tangled up by her view. She looked away from the commander and mentioned, "No more tea for me."

Lexa had a sly grin. She finally stood up. "You will thank me later."

"I didn't take you to be delusional," Clarke poked.

Lexa approached the shorter female. She easily towered over Clarke, who was never weary of her power. "No… just a liar."

Clarke flinched at the harsh assessment she had given Lexa the other day. "I…"

Lexa stepped around the stricken leader. She went to the washbasin. "It's okay, Klark." She washed her face then patted it dry. "You only spoke true."

Clarke turned towards the commander. "I could have probably delivered it with more finesse than I did."

"Our people do not have tact. We speak only the truth, no matter how difficult." Lexa set the towel aside then collected her long coat.
Clarke weighed Lexa's response. She realized it was Lexa's own way of admitting Clarke was right. She bit her bottom lip then looked over at the commander. "Yeah but I kinda backed you into a corner… and I shouldn't have done it."

Lexa had shrugged on her coat. She neared Clarke with her coat still open. "Well you were lucky."

"Oh?" Clarke prompted. She saw a glint in the commander's eyes.

"When I am cornered, I rarely give in." Lexa wrapped her long fingers around her coat's buckles. "I usually bite back."

Clarke's eyes instantly went to Lexa's mouth. For a second, Lexa's teeth flashed in her mind, especially where she might bite. Clarke shoved the image away and cleared her throat, but it was too late. She felt the warmth in her cheeks. "I'll… keep that in mind."

Lexa knew she was too close to Clarke, far too close. She dug her nails into her coat when the pain flared up in her stomach. Yet still, she kept breathing in Clarke's scent as if it controlled her. She forced herself away but only made it a step before Clarke grabbed her arm.

"Lexa…" Clarke hastily released the commander's bicep when green eyes dangerously flashed at her. She thought she had crossed a line, but whatever she saw in Lexa was gone now. She pushed past her uneasiness and offered, "Thank you for the tea."

Lexa released a low breath then slightly inclined her head. "Pro," she returned in Trigedasleng. She started for the tent flap and buckled her coat closed before she went out into the cold morning.

Clarke quietly followed and went to her tent because she knew Lexa would busy with morning checks. She hoped Raven was feeling better after yesterday's trip. Shortly, she and Raven went in search of food and were helped by Anya and Octavia. Clarke was glad to hear that Lincoln and Octavia had spent time together. She considered how Indra handled her second's return.

It was close to noon before Clarke saw Lexa again. She had almost thought the commander was avoiding her. Anya had merely told her that Lexa had to handle the departing clans. It was true that the grounder camp was thinning out every hour. Soon only the Trikru clan would be left in the valley.

"Klark," Lexa greeted. She stood off to Clarke's right. Her hands were behind her back and Ryder flanked her.

Clarke took the greeting as a prompt. She excused herself from Anya, Raven and Lincoln, who sat with her by the bonfire. She neared the leader.

"I would like for you to join us for our meeting," Lexa informed.

"Of course." Clarke tucked her hands into her jacket pockets. "When is it?"

"Shortly… in about fifteen minutes." Lexa shifted on her feet and had a better view of her general. "Onya?"

Anya knew without asking and merely nodded her agreement.

"I'll see you soon," Clarke agreed then left the commander.

Lexa parted and took care of a few last things. She eventually met the others in her commanding tent. She slotted her eyes at the model of Mount Weather. She was grateful the damn war was over, even
if it meant another was well on the way.

Clarke approached the tent with Anya at her side. She knew Lexa was there because Ryder stood guard.

"Wanheda," Ryder properly greeted. He inclined his head with respect.

Clarke was baffled by the name and even Ryder's formal display. For several days Ryder had guarded her and never once used such a title. She shook her head and asked, "What did you call me?"


"Death?" Clarke repeated. She looked at Anya and then turned back to the tent's entrance. "Well that's just fucking great." She hastily entered the tent with a bitter look.

Anya traded a glance with Ryder but followed in the Sky leader's angry wake.

Lexa had briefly spoken to Indra, who was in the tent with her. She had become quiet when she heard the abrupt conversation between Clarke, Anya, and Ryder. She kept a neutral expression though.

However, Indra warily eyed the Sky leader. She considered why the commander had invited Clarke here. It was a meeting of Trikru leadership, not meant for outsiders. She held her tongue because she knew the commander's favor for Clarke.

Lexa moved closer to her throne. She stood in front of it and faced her two subordinates as well as Clarke. She considered her next words carefully. "The army of the twelve clans is dispersing," she informed her warriors. "Only the Trikru army will be left by nightfall."

Anya leaned against the table that had the model. She folded her arms. "Have you decided where we will winter, Heda?"

Indra crossed her arms similarly. "It will be difficult without Tondc."

"Boyce is our best option," Lexa decided.

"That will take us further west… away from Polis," Anya reminded.

Lexa understood the risk. "It is our best choice."

"What about Tondc?" Clarke prompted the group. "Will it get rebuilt?"

"Eventually," Anya answered.

"Will you go to Polis, Heda?" Indra asked. She clearly was looking for other indictors from Lexa's answer.

Clarke looked from Indra and wondered the same thing. She recalled Lexa had invited her to go to Polis, like a vacation. It was such a luxury in Clarke's mind.

"I am undecided." Lexa cut her attention to Clarke, who stood near Anya. She could tell the Skaikru leader was more comfortable in Anya's presence than Indra's own. She knew Anya and Clarke had formed a bond after their escape from Mount Weather. It was a bond forged in blood and death that would bind them close for years. Lexa respected their relationship. "My concerns fall on the alliances with the Skaikru."
"We have completed our alliance," Indra declared.

Clarke did her best to stay calm. She had grown mostly use to Indra's bitterness. She was more concerned by Anya's opinion. It was an opinion that could better sway Lexa.

"Yes, it is complete." Lexa firmly agreed she had seen the alliance through to the end of the war.

"And they have taken our lands," Indra reminded. "They owe-"

"Nothing," Anya finished. She looked over at Indra and countered, "Skaikru has given us back the mountain."

"It was never ours," Indra argued.

Anya shrugged. "It is now." She looked at the commander. "The land debt is paid."

Indra looked over at the commander and slotted her eyes at the consideration in Lexa's eyes. "You cannot be serious?"

Lexa met the warrior's annoyed features. "Anya has a point." She crossed her arms and reminded, "We would still be choking on the acid fog without the Skaikru's help." She looked over at Clarke, who had remained quiet the entire time. She wondered if Clarke was overwhelmed by the meeting somehow, yet they had been in more heated ones in the past. For some reason, Clarke was allowing it to play out on its own. "Klark?" she softly called.

The prompt caused Clarke to shake off her thoughtfulness. "We want peace... another alliance." She looked from Lexa to Anya then back at the commander. "Something more than just a truce." She fisted her hands at her side. "We helped you with the mountain... now help us survive on the ground."

A brief silence filled the tent until Anya broke it first. "Azgeda will wipe the Skaikru off the Earth, Heda." She looked at Clarke. "And take their guns to use against us."

Lexa sighed heavily and walked away from the small group. She weighed Anya's warning.

"If Queen Nia can find a weapon against you, she will take it." Anya watched the commander's stiff shoulders. She hoped her former second understood the deeper meaning to her words because the most powerful weapon against Lexa was standing next to Anya.

Lexa bowed her head slightly. She tasted the old memory's anger. After a few seconds, she put the memory to rest again and faced the two warriors. But her attention eventually settled on Clarke of the Sky people. She approached the Skaikru leader and asked, "What is it that you need to survive?"

Clarke lifted her chin and held the commander's gaze. Before she even gave her demands, she knew exactly how it would be handled by the three grounders in the tent. She always seemed to do a fine job of stirring up trouble. She took a deep breath and finally answered, "We need supplies from Mount Weather."

"Do you take us for fools?" Indra growled. She stepped towards Clarke but Anya blocked her. Indra was briefly startled by the general's protection, but she barred her teeth anyway.

Clarke nearly choked on the friction in the tent. She glanced at Anya's defensive stance and wondered when that happened between them. She only ever expected that from Lexa, who at the moment seemed far too calm.
"Indra," Lexa warned, fairly.

Indra broke from her threat and the growl suddenly died off. She huffed and moved away from Anya and Clarke. She walked further and hoped the space would cool her head.

"What kind of supplies?" Lexa asked the Skaikru leader.

Anya had backed off and looked at Clarke.

"Food, medical-"

"Weapons," Indra hissed from her spot on the other side of the tent.

Clarke slotted her eyes at the dark warrior and countered, "Well we don't exactly know how to use swords and bows." She was glad when Indra stayed quiet.

"There's probably stuff in there that we could use that we don't even know about," Clarke mentioned.

Lexa glanced over at Indra, who was still struggled with inner control. She took a deep breath that calmed her own nerves. There was a lot of nervous energy in the tent that set all of them on edge. She noticed Clarke was the least affected by it and rightfully so.

"It'll help us get through the winter," Clarke explained, "Until we can get on our feet."

Lexa understood Clarke's needs for her people. She sensed that Anya was far less concerned than Indra. She nodded and made her decision. "I will have my warriors take the supplies to your people."

Clarke narrowed her eyes at the terms meant to obviously satisfy everybody. However, Clarke was unhappy and it showed across her face. "No offense or anything, but we should really go through what's in the mountain. We'll know what to look for."

Anya felt the charge first that came off the commander. She studied the commander's features, which were barely staying together after Clarke's argument. She breathed deep and was filled by the bitter scent in the air. "Clarke..." Anya looked at the Sky leader. "Heda is being gracious." She saw the fire in Clarke's blue eyes. "You should accept the offer," she further advised. She prayed Clarke would listen to her. Normally Lexa had more resolve, but Anya suspected the recent battle had taken a toll on Lexa's self restraint.

Clarke ignored the warning in Anya's tones. She shook her head and argued, "No. The warriors could miss important medical supplies that we should have."

"Should have?" Indra snapped. She neared the group again and centered all her fire on Clarke. "As if you are entitled to it, girl," she snarled, dangerously.

"Well I did kind of take down the mountain," Clarke fired back. "After years of your failed attempts."

Indra took steps closer, hand on her blade. She barred her teeth in signal of an attack, until her path was blocked by the commander. She straightened her back and peered up into green eyes. Indra was pushed back by an invisible force coming off the commander. Still a low rumble sounded deep in her chest.

Clarke looked from the commander's back to Anya. She noticed how Anya was shaking, for some strange reason.
"Leave us," Lexa growled at Indra, first. She then turned her sights onto Anya, who also quickly left behind Indra. She remained rooted in the same spot. She was breathing heavy and stared up at the tent. "Everybody's nerves are still on edge since the battle, Klark… including my own."

Clarke sighed and carefully explained, "I'm not trying to piss anybody off but those supplies could make a huge difference for my people."

"I understand." Lexa finally faced the Skaikru leader.

Clarke noticed a strain in Lexa's features that had never been there. She nearly asked what was wrong then thought better of it.

"But you must understand that my people fear what is in that mountain… what can harm them." Lexa gripped her sword hilt at her side. Her knuckles were nearly white from her hold.

Clarke shook her head and asked, "I thought we were past this trust issue?"

Lexa took a deep breath. "You know I trust you." She heard the strain in her own voice and hoped Clarke did too. Her nerves were nearly fractured by Clarke's pure stubbornness.

"It doesn't sound like it," Clarke fought. She kept pushing the commander's limits, and she could see it. She struggled to stop herself. It was as if something dark controlled Clarke.

"Trust is not the issue," Lexa snapped sharply. She was trembling and yet doing her best to stay in place.

Clarke was breathing hard and felt overwhelmed by the fight. She tried recalling how it even started in the first place. She finally had nothing to say and yet her face said it all.

Lexa growled low at Clarke's continued defiance. She could feel a slow snap begin in her chest and caused her growl to get more dangerous. She had the sheer willpower to walk away until Clarke grabbed her hand.

"Lexa…" Clarke froze at the alarming brightness in Lexa's eyes when she looked back at her.

"Let me go before I do something we both will regret," Lexa suggested.

Clarke easily allowed Lexa's damp fingers to slide out of hers. She watched the commander rush out of the tent. Once she was alone, she felt a rush of calm air fill her. She let out a huge breath and touched her forehead. "What the Hell just happened?" She looked about the tent as if there were answers, except there was only more confusion.

Like the others, Clarke hastened out of the tent and the fresh air further cleared her head. She noticed Ryder gave her a dark glance. She considered whether he had heard all or parts of the conversation. She disregarded it and decided she needed a walk.

Like yesterday, it was a cool but calm day. There were more clouds but still plenty of sun. It was a perfect reminder why Clarke was happy to be alive. And whatever had happened in the tent was smaller than what was really important to Clarke. But how it all happened still troubled Clarke.

Eventually Clarke found herself at a creek. She decided it was a place to stop and enjoy further. She leaned against a tree and allowed herself a moment to relax. She became lost in her thoughts until a low cry caught her ear. Clarke grabbed her handgun and turned to her right. She waited for any other noise, but it was extremely quiet. She considered whether to go back to camp even though patrol was probably not that far.
After a few minutes, Clarke lowered her gun but kept the safety off. She listened to the creek's comforting sounds. Then branches snapping caught her ear so she peered around the left side.

"Klark," Lexa called.

Clarke relaxed and lowered the gun again. "Over here."

Lexa knew better than to sneak up on the Skaikru leader that had a gun. She had made herself noisy just so Clarke detected her. She continued to do so as she neared the smaller woman.

Clarke looked up at the commander and quickly noticed the strained lines were gone from Lexa. She was relieved and quickly offered, "I'm sorry about earlier." She shook her head. "I don't know what got into me."

Lexa considered a response, but all of them troubled her. She understood what probably happened to Clarke. She held the answer close to herself rather than telling Clarke.

"I know you do trust me," Clarke whispered. She pushed off the tree and faced the commander. "I'm sorry I said that to you." She and Lexa had come far in their relationship. She dared hoping they had formed a friendship in the past weeks.

"It's okay," Lexa offered. She had a slight frown and explained, "This battle has drained all of us… and that means you too."

Clarke nodded and ran her fingers through her hair. "I know but I don't usually push my luck like that." She was still confused by what happened in the tent. "You were being fair about the supplies in the mountain." She grumbled and quietly added, "But Indra was just getting to me."

"Indra is ruled by her anger," Lexa reminded. "Do not feed into it."

Normally Clarke would ignore Indra and yet it was just different this time. She sighed and looked back at the creek. She worriedly stared at it. "We're okay?"

"Sha."

Clarke felt better about it, mostly. "Thank you for trusting me… still." She peered up at the commander. Nothing was forthcoming from the commander, and Clarke worried again. She moved into Lexa's space and reached for the commander but only grabbed air.

Lexa had back stepped to keep their distance.

"Lexa-"

"We should return to camp," Lexa suggested. She waited for Clarke to go first.

After a heavy sigh, Clarke conceded and started for the camp. She noticed how Lexa remained behind her, flanked and careful. There was something strange going on between them. She wished she understood what, but she knew it was a bad time to press Lexa. Even if Lexa seemed calmer, it was probably more an act than anything. There was most likely a good reason why Lexa was suddenly keeping her distance. It was still strange to Clarke because only yesterday they shared a long hug and the day before that they had kissed. Clarke wondered if she would ever truly understand the grounders. She let it go for now and instead enjoyed the last of the walk back to camp. At least it was a beautiful day.
To be continued.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

AN: Thank you, all for the wonderful support on this story. I hope you enjoy the latest update. And for those celebrating Thanksgiving, I hope it's a great holiday!

Beauty and the Alpha
by Red Hope

Chapter 3
"Hey, how are you holding up?" Octavia asked.

Clarke nodded at the question but continued staring at either her food or the campfire. "It's getting easier," she lied. She felt Octavia's hard stare, but she refused to acknowledge it.

Octavia let it go, for now. However, she looked over at Raven, who looked secretly prepared to corner Clarke later tonight. Many things had changed between Octavia and Clarke, ever since Tondc's bombing. Octavia still held Clarke and Lexa accountable for the bombing, even if she knew Lincoln was right. Clarke and Lexa had never pushed the button to launch the missiles, but the two leaders were still accomplices. They were only slightly less guilty than Cage Wallace, in Octavia's opinion.

"Do you think we'll head back tomorrow?"

Clarke played with the food in the bowl before she met Raven's questioning gaze. "Maybe." She shook her head then corrected, "Probably not."

"It didn't sound like that meeting today went well," Raven attempted. She had seen Anya and Indra's grand exit from the meeting. Later, she had crossed paths with Anya, who was practicing with a sword against a defenseless tree. She had approached Anya and spoke a little to her. Raven felt as if she had somehow talked Anya off an unknown ledge.

"It went," Clarke muttered. She sighed and gazed out at the camp, which had shrunk significantly. It was only suppose to be the Trikru army left at nightfall, and yet the Azgeda army still lingered near the tree line in the valley. She suspected it was Azgeda that kept Lexa so busy this afternoon. From their bird's eye view, Clarke had already counted at least a hundred campfires that made up the Azgeda encampment. There were most likely twenty warriors per campfire. Clarke inwardly shivered at the sheer numbers.

"I don't think it'll be solved in one or two meetings," Raven prompted the group.

Clarke nodded. She truly agreed with Raven.

"Heda doesn't want another war with Skaikru," Octavia insisted. "Nor do the other Trikru warriors."

Clarke finally met Octavia's gaze. Even in the firelight, her relief was evident.
"We earned their respect," Octavia explained.

Clarke swallowed then scooped up more food in her spoon. Her people had earned the Trikru's respect, and Clarke had personally earned a new title, Commander of Death. All it took was defeating Mount Weather. All it took was Clarke murdering over three hundred. Before that it was Tondc, and in the beginning it was three hundred Trikru warriors.

Suddenly, Clarke lost her appetite, even if the food was good.

Clarke stood up and mentioned, "I'll be back." She quietly left her friends and decided on a slow walk to return her dirty dishes.

Raven's attention stayed on Clarke until she disappeared in the darkness.

"You need to talk to her."

Raven focused on Octavia and narrowed her eyes. "I'm a mechanic... not a dentist." She shook her head and muttered, "Getting Clarke to talk is like pulling teeth."

"She trusts you the most," Octavia argued.

Raven set her empty bowl down. She picked up a water skin. She was less confident in Octavia's conclusion. Without a doubt, there was at least one other, if not two others that were better at dragging things out of Clarke. One such person caught Raven's eye at a neighboring campfire. She studied Anya, the general of the Trikru army. Raven noticed how Anya seemed to be tracing Clarke's vanishing path with her eyes. Then from the darkness, Lincoln appeared behind Octavia.

Far from the bonfires, Clarke walked along the edge of the hill's crest. She recounted all the campfires down in the valley. There were two distinct groups, one for the Trikru warriors and another large bunching for the Azgeda warriors. The black abyss space stretched between the two armies marked the silent line. The only assurance in Clarke's mind was that there were more Trikru campfires, which she hoped meant more warriors. What truly put her mind at ease was the quiet steps behind her back. Without looking, she knew who was there.

Lexa took another step then paused behind the knelt Skaikru leader. She remained still and with her hands behind her back. Like Clarke, she observed the divide down in the valley's mouth.

Clarke grabbed at a few pieces of grass and tugged on them. She considered how Lexa could always find her. It was as if Lexa had a sixth sense, especially whenever Clarke was in turmoil either emotionally or physically. Briefly she recalled Lexa's ability to find her when Quint attacked her.

Finally, the grass was yanked from the ground, so easily and tossed over the side. It drifted on the breezes and slowly floated down into the valley.

Clarke stood up but continued staring at the fires. "Why is Azgeda still here?"

Lexa neared her counterpart. "They leave tomorrow at first light."

Clarke took a deep breath and argued, "I asked why... not when." She looked up at the commander's neutral profile. "You said at the meeting that all the armies would be gone by nightfall."


Clarke stayed quiet and garnered more patience after what had happened today in the meeting. She softly reminded, "You don't miscalculate, Lexa."
"Even Heda is mortal," Lexa rebuked. She turned a slight grin onto the Skaikru leader. "Nor do I admit it was my miscalculation."

Clarke huffed and folded her arms against her chest. "Why are they still here?" she tried again.

Lexa tilted her head then honestly answered, "The spoils of war."

Clarke bit her lower lip and muttered, "The mountain." She shook her head and looked the commander. "Has Trikru laid claims to the mountain?"

"Sha." Lexa finally turned to Clarke. "However, Azgeda feels that all the krus are entitled to what lies in the mountain." Even in the darkness, she could see the concern etched in Clarke's features. "I cannot give you supplies until this is settled with Azgeda."

"But the other clans have left," Clarke debated. She jutted out her chin towards Azgeda's camp. "With nothing."

"Other clans feel that anything from the mountain is cursed," Lexa explained. "Their treasure was having their people freed from the mountain."

"But not Azgeda," Clarke murmured.

"Not Azgeda," Lexa echoed. She looked back at the valley before she trailed her eyes upwards to the crescent moon that hung over them. She could easily count as many stars as there were fires down in the valley.

"Is there ever truly peace?" Clarke sadly asked the commander. Already, Azgeda was stirring up trouble for the commander and even the Skaikru. She could only imagine what the future held for them.

"Sha," Lexa whispered. She continued staring up at the sky. "Only in the heavens."

"I was there," Clarke reminded, softly. She shook her head at the dark sky above them. She remembered her prison cell, her cell number, and her offense for trying to save her people, with her father. She knew nothing of peace among the stars. "It was Hell." She turned away and started for the camp.

Lexa took the Skaikru leader's side. She had heard and seen tidbits of the Skaikru's life in space, but she barely knew anything. She silently promised she would learn more, especially since Clarke was starting to make an effort to understand her people.

"When will you return to Camp Jaha?"

Clarke became more focused on the present at hearing the inquiry. "I'm not sure."

Lexa decided to jump into it now. "I think it is best you return tomorrow." She paused when Clarke came to a sudden stop.

"What about a new alliance?" Clarke was perturbed but mostly worried now.

Lexa stepped into Clarke's space and gazed down at her. She hoped Clarke could sense her own concerns. "It is better if this alliance is formed with your mother, Marcus Kane, and yourself... not just you." She watched the worry deflate from Clarke. "I need assurances from them as well."

Clarke sighed and nodded. "You're right." She pushed her fingers through her hair. "Should we
"Come back here?" She could see Lexa working through pieces, one by one.

"No. Boyce would be better."

Clarke furrowed her brow at the commander. "I have no idea where it is."

"No but Anya does."

Clarke looked towards the bonfires only yards behind them. She suspected Anya was hidden among them. "She's your general, don't you-"

"I trust her the most," Lexa softly revealed.

"What about Lincoln or Ryder?" Clarke somehow felt guilty for having the general basically babysit her.

"Lincoln will join Anya," Lexa agreed, partially.

Clarke rolled her eyes at the stubborn commander. She let it go because it was pointless. Besides, Anya was high up on Clarke's list too. She enjoyed Anya's company, next to Lexa's own.

"I'm sure she will happily reminisce about the days I was her second."

Clarke grinned but argued, "You're just trying to win me over." Lexa only smiled, which Clarke could barely see in the darkness and that made her ache. She shook her head at the commander's persistence. "They better be damn good stories."

Lexa said nothing because she already knew what Anya would recant to Clarke. She let her smile slide, and she offered, "Tea before bed?"

Clarke huffed at the commander's attempt to ply her with sleeping aide again. "I prefer alcohol."

"I have just the thing then," Lexa replied. She continued towards the camp, specifically her tent.

Clarke decided to follow and entered the tent behind the commander. She was greeted by warm air from the fire in the center. She quickly unzipped her jacket and enjoyed the welcomed heat. She was hardly looking forward to the upcoming winter. What a horrible time of year to land on the ground, although snow may change her mind.

Lexa had removed her jacket in quick fashion. She tossed it onto a ladder back chair then went to her trunk.

Clarke stood near the fire, warming up further. She lifted her attention to the commander's profile just several steps away. She curiously noticed how there was a white ring formed around the edge of the commander's eye. It jerked her back to last night's memory of the grounders' flashing eyes in the firelight.

Lexa closed the lid and set two mugs down on it. In her left hand, she held a clay bottle, which was loosely corked shut. She popped the cork effortlessly then poured an amber liquid into the mugs. She recorked the bottle, left it on the trunk, and picked up the two mugs. She approached the Skaikru leader.

Clarke swallowed hard and faced the commander when a mug was held out to her. Whatever was in the mug, it was sweet under her nose.

"We call it **medhu** in our native tongue," Lexa explained.
"Medhu," Clarke repeated in Trigedasleng. She sniffed the contents again and teased, "No sleeping powder in it?" Her blue eyes glowed with mirth up at the commander.

Lexa's lips pulled with a half smile, but she let it fall.

Clarke continued staring up at the commander in the firelight. With being so close, she confirmed the distinct white reflection in Lexa's eyes that she had missed other times or dismissed it. Sharply her heart rate spiked at the realization that there may be something different in Lexa's blood than in Clarke's own. She tried quelling her fears and panic.

Lexa inhaled deeply and nearly reacted to what was under her nose, beside the drink's honey scent. She ended the tension in Clarke by raising the mug and offered, "To a new alliance."

Clarke responded to Lexa's break of the anxious air between them. She lifted hers and brought it against Lexa's own. "To peace." A long draw on the alcohol elicited a happy hum. She peered into the mug again and asked, "What is this again?" She loved the sweet flavor.

Lexa drew away from the other leader and went to the trunk. She sat on the corner of it and cupped the mug between her hands. "It's made from honey."

"I taste... apple too," Clarke guessed. She wandered over to the favored chair beside the trunk.

"Hmmm," Lexa confirmed. "Apples are in season this time of the year."

Clarke enjoyed another heavy swallow. "How is it made?"

Lexa knew the basic details about the drink's fermentation process. She explained it to Clarke, who quietly listened to the process's steps. She then asked, "Was there no alcohol in space?"

"Very, very little... for special occasions." Clarke shook her head. "At least, on the Ark we weren't allowed to have it in our quarters. That doesn't meant it wasn't made illegal in people's quarters."

Lexa listened to Clarke talk about life on the Ark.

"Our resources were too important to waste it on alcohol," Clarke further revealed and finished with an eye roll.

"What did you do while you were on the Ark?"

Clarke played with the mug. She had a weak smile at Lexa's interest in her previous life. She looked over at the commander, who hardly seemed relaxed on the trunk. She had the better seat, but she suspected that was Lexa's desire. "Classes... mainly." She touched her hand to her chest. "I was under eighteen so I had to go through education." She lowered her hand back to the mug. "But when you're around sixteen, you have to pick what track." At Lexa's curious head tilt, she better explained, "Medical, guard, engineering, education..."

"What were you?"

Clarke sadly smiled and stared down at the mug. "Medical." She looked over at Lexa. "I wanted to be a doctor like my mom." She wanted to save lives, not take them.

"And your father?"

"He was an engineer."

Lexa noticed the past tense. She had suspected he was no longer around because Clarke never
brought anybody else up but Abby Griffin. She debated whether to press further until Clarke made the decision for her.

"He was floated into space," Clarke revealed. She shook her head and tapped the mug's side a few times. "Executed by Jaha for treason... for wanting to save lives because the Ark was running out of air."

Lexa weighed the new information and started piecing together what may have brought Clarke and her people to Earth. She sat straighter and softly concluded, "You were test subjects."

Clarke met the commander's intense stare. All the truth and past reflected in Clarke's eyes. "We were expendable." She bitterly smiled. "We were criminals so they sent us down first... to see if we could survive."

For over a minute, Lexa and Clarke sat in silence. Lexa was amazed by the younger Skaikru's sheer tenacity to survive on the ground with basically nothing. She silently admired Clarke for her strength to rise up as a leader. Despite their different cultures, it was their abilities to lead that had given them common ground.

Anther swallow of the sweet alcohol washed away Clarke's memories. She was here on the ground now, in the commander's tent, and the mountain was asleep. Maybe peace was on the horizon, if Azgeda allowed it. She damn well hoped there could be peace because she was so tired from it all. Lexa's movement broke her from her darkness.

Lexa had gotten up from the trunk and opened it. "Do you want more?" She stowed the empty bottle into the trunk, near a fresh one.

Clarke shrugged and replied, "If you are."

Lexa took that as an agreement. She fished around in the trunk with her mug sitting in there. She opened a small box and retrieved a cloth pouch from it. She gently poured a white powder into the mug then returned the pouch. Last, she retrieved the favored drink.

Clarke curiously watched the commander sit on the closed trunk and latched onto the buried cork. She half expected Lexa to tear out her nails, but she was wrong. For a few seconds, she was given a show of strength as Lexa's arm muscles coiled against her tight black shirt.

Lexa set the cork aside then filled her own mug with the new honey alcohol. She accepted Clarke's own mug and refilled it. "This one has berries in it."

Clarke inhaled the strawberry hint and hummed happily. "You've been holding out on me all this time."

Lexa had a tight grin. "It's a good time to celebrate victory."

Clarke saluted her mug to the commander. "Cheers to that." She gulped the sweet medhu. She made a mental note to see if she could have a bottle for herself. The liquid heat in her stomach was welcoming, especially with the autumn weather's cooler temperatures. "It takes a lot of... sacrifices to get victory." Briefly, old faces danced in the flames. Clarke wished those people peace in the afterlife.

"Sha," Lexa whispered. She sensed the turmoil humming from the Sky leader. Lexa was torn between speaking or remaining quiet. Her people's way was to silently weather loss and hardship, but she suspected it was different for the Skaikru. She finally confessed her apology that had been deep in her thoughts for days. "I am sorry for how Finn's death affected you." Lexa had faced similar
when Costia was taken from her.

Clarke continued nursing her drink, but she looked over at Lexa for a second. She heard the sincerity in the commander's words. Lexa's apology was careful though and certainly not an apology for his death. She understood because Finn had taken so many innocent lives, and Clarke now accepted that truth.

"I came to terms with his death," Clarke stated. She tapped the mug with her freehand. "You know, he wasn't my boyfriend." She had a bitter smile and softly added, "But everyone thought so." If her confession had thrown off Lexa, she had no idea because Lexa was stoic, but Clarke sensed an odd charge from the commander. She considered whether the alcohol was messing with her own perception. It certainly had loosened her tongue around the commander.

"Lovers, perhaps," Lexa tempted. She barely withheld a low growl after her words. Every muscle strained in her body as she painstakingly waited for the confirmation.

Clarke gave a low snort of amusement. "Sort of." She shook her head and took another swallow of the mehu. "But... it wasn't what I wanted.. just what was expected of me. I don't know why I slept with him." Today, she felt stupid for it. "Maybe because of the fighting... the pain and deaths." She stared at the fire, but her mind was on one face that was long gone. A face she had kissed so many times, in the shadows of the Ark. Clarke briefly closed her eyes and tried pushing her face away because it hurt too much.

Lexa shifted and only continued listening to Clarke. She distrusted her voice because she struggled with the jealous aggression in her chest.

"I... I don't know why I'm telling you this." Clarke considered if it was because Lexa had disclosed she had been with another woman. Or perhaps it was the trust in their relationship. The alcohol surely made it easier too. She touched her brow as she broke their eye contact. But an old poison boiled up in the back of her mouth. "I guess I just get so sick of hiding what I am... of playing along."

Lexa set her nearly empty mug off to the side of the trunk. She swallowed and inwardly soothed her natural reaction to Clarke being with Finn. She took a deep breath then asked, "What you are?" Thankfully her voice was less strained than how she felt on the inside.

"I'm gay," Clarke said aloud, for the first time in her life. She glanced over at the commander, who probably had no meaning for the word in the grounder culture. "I prefer women."

Lexa weighed the news then considered how that related to Clarke living a lie. "It is forbidden among your people."

"No and... yes," Clarke argued. She shifted in the seat and better faced Lexa. "Up on the Ark, we had to keep a limited population due to food, air, supplies, etc. So same-sex couples weren't looked down upon because it meant less population but..." She frowned. "But for a family unit it could hurt them to have a gay child because it meant less for their family unit." Clarke thought back on the politics of it and decided an example would make better sense. "So if I had made it public that I liked women then my family would have been allotted less resources under the future assumption that I would have no children to continue the family unit." This time she saw the irritation in Lexa's eyes. "Why waste the supplies on that family? For that matter, why even bother utilizing that gay person's skills in medical, engineering, or wherever if their legacy was going to end? Why not shift resources to a family unit that's continuing?"

"This was your law?" Lexa asked with disdain.
"It wasn't a law exactly," Clarke replied. "It was more of a common practice." She finished off her medhu and toyed a little with the mug between her hands. "I hid myself so that my family could survive."

"But that no longer matters," Lexa reminded, "Here on the ground."

"No," Clarke softly conceded. "I just... haven't had a single minute to stop and truly appreciate that." She gave Lexa a sad smile. Somehow trying to grasp the fact that being on the ground meant she could be herself was surreal. For once, she could turn down boys without guilt or punishment.

Lexa admired the Sky leader's smile that held both a disheartening past from the Ark and hope for the future. She decided further assurance would help Clarke. "Among my people, we don't have prejudice towards those that love the same sex."

Clarke's smile pulled slightly wider. She was growing to appreciate the grounder culture more than her own. It made her think back on Lexa's invite from the other day. "So what about Polis?"

Lexa slightly softened at the mention of the capitol. "Do you wish to see it?"

"Is the invite still standing?"

"Sha." Lexa could no longer hide her smile. Clarke broke Lexa's controlled resolve at the mere mention of a trip to Polis. The smile spread ever so slowly and revealed bright white teeth, including distinct canines.

Clarke made the final decision. "Then we should go... along with your hundred closest warriors."

She smiled at the low, amused rumble that came from the commander.

"After the new alliance is formed then we will leave from Boyce," Lexa further agreed.

Clarke mirrored the smile because she loved the idea of getting out of the woods and seeing civilization. If what Lexa said was true then she wanted to see how Polis could change what she thought of the grounders. She sighed happily and sunk deeper into the furs. She sipped more on the medhu, which also warmed her belly. She had very little to eat so it was easy to feel the affects of the alcohol. For a moment, she closed her eyes and tried imagining what Polis was like.

Lexa had nearly dried her mug. She drank the last bit and set the mug down on the ground. She looked from the fire to the Skaikru leader's peaceful features. Swiftly a pang hit low in her stomach and pressed fire into her gut. She silently cursed her own body and wished the powder in her medhu would act faster. The powder was a weak relief, but it was better than the alternative.

After another painful minute, Lexa tore her eyes away from the Skaikru leader's beauty. She warred with her body and unknowingly let out a low growl.

Clarke was pulled away from her quiet haven by the sound. She looked at the commander's profile, which was taut and jaw locked down. She considered why Lexa could be so tense right now, especially with alcohol in them. But again, Lexa's soft eye shine caught Clarke's attention.

All the fiery pain in Lexa's gut was her own fate. She could keep a distance from Clarke Griffin and make it easier, but she refused to do so. The days after the war's ending were crucial to her relationship with the Sky leader. They needed to continue forging a foundation to build up the alliance on or else they all would suffer in the future. In truth, behind the politics, Lexa also desired to support Clarke, who was breaking from the role of being a leader. As a result, Lexa silently weathered through her own pain in hopes for a better future.
"Lexa?" Clarke softly called. She found weary eyes turned on her. "You've been really... tense lately." She hoped the commander would open up to her.

Lexa straightened up and offered, "It is merely Azgeda."

Clarke felt it was a half truth. She had noticed the tension and strain the day they had kissed, before the battle. Perhaps there had been hints of it prior, but now it seemed fully ignited since that day. There was something else, and Clarke wished she knew why because it was obviously culminating but into what, she had no idea. Lexa refused to provide answers so Clarke figured she would try another angle. One that was named Anya.

"We'll figure out Azgeda," Clarke promised the commander.

Lexa curiously gazed at the Skaikru leader, who just pledged her help. She would refute it another day, but not now when she was so drained. Azgeda was her problem.

"I should get some rest." Clarke finished off the medhu.

"I'll take you back to your tent," Lexa offered. She got up first.

"I can make it," Clarke argued. She popped up and immediately regretted her movements because she nearly toppled until Lexa had her arm. She blew out a breath and smiled appreciatively at the commander. "Maybe you should." The medhu was much stronger than it appeared to be in the mug.

Clarke went out first. She was moving slowly and half expected Lexa to trip over her because she was so out of it. She touched her brow and realized she had to be careful what she drank around the commander, tea, alcohol or otherwise.

"You will leave tomorrow morning?"

Clarke stayed close to the commander, in case she tripped on anything or just simply tripped on herself. "Yeah."

"I'll speak to Anya and Lincoln first thing," Lexa promised her. She slowed beside the tent for Clarke and Raven.

"Lexa, really we can manage on-"

"You know very little about these lands," Lexa reminded.

Clarke folded her arms but kept quiet. Her mind was moving at a snail's pace. "Fine." She then suddenly smiled, evilly. "I'll allow them to come under one condition." At Lexa's raised eyebrow, she went in for the kill. "I get a bottle of that medhu." She chuckled at the wolfish smile given back to her. How she wished she could see it better in daylight rather than the weak firelight.

"Deal." Lexa held out her arm in offer.

Clarke clasped it and held strong, even with the alcohol roaring through her veins. "Deal as long as I have the medhu tomorrow morning." She secretly ensured they would see each other again tomorrow.

Lexus's low rumble filled the thin space between them. "Enti gon yu, Klark."

Clarke opened her mouth to ask what the commander said in Trigedasleng. She understood the last two words but certainly not the first two. She logged the words into her memory for further research.
"Goodnight, Klark," Lexa cut off. She took a step back.

Clarke snapped her jaw shut then offered, "Reshop, Heda." Briefly, she watched the commander leave before she went into the warm tent. She hoped her night's rest was indeed good and maybe the medhu would help her.

Initially the alcohol had kept Clarke asleep and unaware of her demons until a few hours before dawn. She remained under the furs and tried enjoying the luxury of just laying there. The war was done and only a peace between Skaikru and Trikru had to be solidified. From there, Clarke prayed that the damn Azgeda kept from screwing up the peace.

Now on her side, Clarke stared at the closed tent flap. She imagined the commander was already starting her day. With a tilt of her chin, Clarke eyed Raven's curled up form. She was grateful the mechanic had joined her, but she knew it was a strain on her friend. But there was nobody more stubborn than Raven Reyes.

Beyond the tent, the Trikru general and the commander sat down at a campfire together. They shared a quiet breakfast, but Anya sensed something was on her former second's mind. She patiently waited for it to come to the surface.

"I have a mission for you, Anya." Lexa sat close to the general so that their voices could be low. She hated for the other officers to hear them. It would be easy to speak in a tent, but Lexa also liked having her eyes on her army officers.

"Sha, Heda." Anya enjoyed her apple slices before she was plagued with indigestion. She could only imagine what her commander had in mind. Lately it seemed as if missions included getting shot.

"Indra and I will disperse of the last two armies," Lexa explained. "Then I will go to Boyce."

Anya tilted her head and continued listening to the plans. She waited for her part.

"You and Lincoln will take Clarke and Raven back to Camp Jaha. Then you are to bring Clarke, her mother, and Marcus Kane to me in Boyce."

Anya considered the idea then looked towards the Azgeda army down in the valley. She could tell that they were breaking camp, finally. She picked up a piece of cheese but paused and asked, "How many men?"

"You and Lincoln," Lexa repeated.

Anya dropped the cheese on the plate of food and looked at her commander. "Lexa, I will need more men... to protect her."

"More men will only draw attention," Lexa debated.

"Better attention than death," Anya hissed. She gave a low rumble of displeasure and leaned into the commander's space. "Queen Nia wishes to have Wanheda's power." She indicated the army. "Why do you think her army deliberately disobeys you? It is not for those supplies in the mountain."

"I know," Lexa growled.

"It's dangerous enough that she is here... right in front of them," Anya furthered. She stiffened at the sharp air suddenly charged between them.

"Yet you saw it fit to invite her into the camp," Lexa snapped.
Anya huffed and met the fiery green gaze that was the commander. "Should I have sent her away instead?"

Lexa stared coldly at the bonfire. "If you go around the mountain then you will not be seen."

Anya dropped her plate on the ground, giving up on her food. She had hoped this would be a pleasant meal with her leader. She inhaled deeply until her clouded mind started to clear then she looked at her commander's iron features. "I will do this for you, Lexa but if anything happens then it is on you for gambling with our lives... with her life."

Lexa turned her coldness directly onto Anya. "I expect you to not fail me, general." Each word rolled off her tongue with a snarl. She felt a hint of madness claw up her throat.

Anya bristled at the feral nature in Lexa's eyes. She had never seen it in all her time with Lexa. Instantly Anya bared her teeth in natural retaliation at the challenge in front of her. Once upon a time, Lexa had been her subordinate until the spirit called Lexa to a higher power. With great strength, she jerked away from Lexa and hissed, "You are losing control of yourself."

Anya's words cut through Lexa's aggression, and she physically jerked back. She had unknowingly split in half the wood plate in her hands, the fallen food forgotten on the ground. She stared at her hands as if they belonged to another.

Anya huffed heavily and expelled the hot air in her lungs. She dared to lean into her commander's space again. Only Anya had the courage to be so close to the commander but their decades of loyalty to each other gave her confidence. "It has been many years since your last rut."

"It is not a rut," Lexa hotly denied, but a shadow of weakness showed in her eyes. She dropped the broke plate onto the food.

"Then what is it?" Anya's lips curled with a sneer. "Are your walks in the woods helping at all?"

Lexa was breathing heavy and struggled with the powerful beast in her chest.

Without any answer, Anya continued gently pushing her commander to admit what was really happening to her. "Your rut will start again because she imprinted you."

Lexa shut her eyes and snarled low at Anya's persistence. "She is human, Anya." She turned her wolfish green eyes on her general. "Humans can't imprint us."

"Then explain to me what's been happening to you?" Anya was desperate for Lexa to accept the truth. She shook her head and argued, "It's the only explanation why you've started laying claims to her."

"She is a human," Lexa hissed. "She is not one of us... she isn't meat to be fought over."

Any raised an eyebrow at the commander's continued protection that was so natural to their kind. She remembered such a similar story years ago, before Queen Nia took it all away. "Then tell me how you know when she's in trouble?" She slotted her eyes and softly demanded, "Why didn't you take the deal that would have saved our people's lives?"

"I made that decision with my head." Lexa was nearly close to her breaking point. She could feel that last braid of self-control about to unravel. She had to get away from the general before they fought more seriously, especially in public.

"You're many things, Lexa... but I didn't think you were a liar." Anya popped up just as a violent
snarl came from the commander. She hurried off with fisted hands. She had a lot of anger to burn off before she left with Clarke, Raven, and Lincoln this morning. How she wanted to beat the truth into her thick-headed commander.

Nearly a candlemark later, Anya found herself tacking up a horse for the ride to Camp Jaha. She glanced over at Clarke tacking up her own. Lincoln was saying goodbye to Octavia. His horse was hitched to a post next to the corral.

Clarke was nearly done with her horse and went over to Raven, who leaned against a corral post for support. "Here." She took Raven's pack.

"What's going on with her?" Raven whispered. She cut her eyes over to Anya's direction.

Clarke bit her bottom lip. "I'm not sure."

"She's grumpier than a dwarf without gold," Raven muttered.

Clarke raised an eyebrow at her friend but kept silent. She went to the horse and lashed the pack down. Just as she finished, she saw the commander in her peripheral view. She crossed her arms and softly smiled at the clay bottle in the commander's hand.

Lexa approached the Sky leader. She silently offered the medhu.

Clarke's smile had pulled into a grin. "Mochof." She turned to the saddlebags and undid the two buckles on either side of the bag. As she stowed the medhu, she picked up on the commander's dark mood. She knew it had nothing to do with her because their night had ended well. She cleared her throat and faced the commander again. She peered up into frosty green eyes that said enough about Lexa's mood.

"Be safe traveling and follow Anya's lead," Lexa advised.

Clarke worried a wrong response would fuel whatever fire was in Lexa. "I will," she assured. "I'll see you in a few days."

Lexa dipped her head in acknowledgement then turned on her heels. She went past Anya and only exchanged a hard stare with her general.

Clarke caught the bitter exchange between the commander and general. Mostly likely a bullet from her gun would have shattered the tension between the pair. A fight between them must have been ugly. She blew out a breath and muttered, "A dwarf with no gold and a starving pauna."

Shortly Lincoln arrived and everybody prepared to ride to the Sky camp. Lincoln was mounted first. Raven struggled to get into the saddle, even with Clarke's help. Anya watched from her perch on the horse, but she growled at the delay. She slid off the horse.

Clarke nearly jumped when Anya's snarling presence came to her side.

Raven gave a low holler when the large grounder grabbed her sides and tossed her into the saddle. She settled into the saddle but instantly turned her ire onto the grumpy general. "A warning next time," she snapped.

Anya flashed a glare then stomped back over to her horse.

Clarke remained still, off to the side, and her hands up. She was unsure what happened other than a grounder whirlwind had thrown Raven into the saddle.
Anya launched onto her horse's back and was already steering the horse around to leave.

Clarke cursed under her breath and scrambled up onto her horse.

Lincoln nudged his horse over to the two Sky people. "Give her some time, she'll calm down... especially the further we get from here." He then signaled his horse to follow Anya.

Raven hooked her arms around Clarke's waist. She blew out a breath. "Oh goody." She lowered her voice and added, "I have some explosives handy that'll fix her attitude." She smirked at the memory of the bridge's destruction and Anya's attitude about it.

Clarke smacked the mechanic's side then clicked her tongue at the horse. "Let's just get home without any explosions."

"Aye, aye, Chancellor Junior." Raven missed Clarke's eye roll. But, she kept silent now that they were closer to the grounders.

Clarke swayed with the horse's motions. She enjoyed riding and had come to appreciate it instead of walking all through the woods. She was still grateful Lexa had given her the horse. She fondly recalled the morning that Lexa gifted her a horse and also told her Ryder would be her guard after Major Byrne was killed by the pauna. To this day, the horse remained nameless but loyal to Clarke.

"Are we there yet?" Raven asked.

Clarke's thoughts were shattered, and she sighed at her friend's smart remark. She then took notice that they were going a different way than how they came to the camp. With a quick scan of the area and the sun's location, she deduced they were tracking west rather than east, away from the valley. It would lengthen their trip, but Clarke suspected there was a good reason. Grounders did everything with a precise reason, nothing was by accident or without importance. Clarke frowned but decided against asking Anya. As Lexa asked of her, she would follow Anya's lead to Camp Jaha and later to Boyce.

To be continued.

Trigedasleng to English

Enti gon yu, Klark. - Anything for you, Clarke.

Reshop, Klark. - Goodnight, Clarke.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Disclaimers & Notices: See Chapter 1.

Started: December 7, 2016
Series: One Shot

AN: A new chapter with a little less drama than probably expected for this one. But, Chap 5 will have some excitement. :) Please enjoy!

Beauty and the Alpha
by Red Hope

Chapter 4
"Let's take a break," Anya declared.

Clarke seconded it and called out the order to everyone. Like the others, she steered off the trail and into an open glade.

One by one, everyone spread out in the glade for a well deserved break. There were eight Sky guards, Abby Griffin, Marcus Kane, Clarke, Lincoln, and Anya. Early this morning, they had left Camp Jaha for Boyce. It would take them most of the day with hopefully a couple of hours to spare before dark. Only the grounders and Clarke were on horseback, but often times Clarke made her mother ride too. Abby had improved, but she still had a distinct limp after being drilled by Cage Wallace. And last night's hard sleep on the ground did little to improve anybody’s mood. Everybody hoped for better comforts in Boyce.

In the glade, Anya sat by herself, on a large rock. Since leaving the Coalition army camp, she had been quiet and distant from all. Yesterday they had arrived at Camp Jaha by midday, and Anya insisted they depart this morning rather than staying two nights at Camp Jaha. She was grateful that the Sky leaders readily agreed with her. She had spent the last hours of sunlight yesterday sparring with Lincoln, and it had helped her cool off.

So far the trip to Boyce had gone well. They were only hours away from the village, and the likelihood that something would happen was slim. Begrudgingly, Anya admitted that Lexa was right about the trip. However, it helped that she and Lincoln were the guides. If it had been different Trikru warriors then certain attention would have been drawn to the group.

As Anya contemplated the upcoming days, she also wondered how she was in such a position in the first place. Many years back she had pledged her fealty to Lexa and still swore by it even though Lexa had offered to release her. Perhaps one day it would be time to retire from the army, but today she had a mission to complete.

Anya remained hunched forward and looked smaller than normal. She chewed on a few sticks of
meat. She enjoyed her quiet time but inwardly sighed when Clarke Griffin approached her.

At first, Clarke almost left Anya alone. But, she had noticed the general's mood was improving over the days. Lincoln had been right that getting Anya away from the grounder camp had helped, a little. It only confirmed to Clarke that Lexa and the general had fought about something. Ever since the grounder's camp, Anya barely spoke and kept to herself.

"Heya," Clarke attempted.

Anya cast a side glance at the Skaikru leader. She sighed and offered a token of peace by holding out a piece of dried meat.

Clarke gingerly took it and bit off a morsel. She appreciatively hummed at the smoked flavor. "Food is so much better on the ground."

Anya distantly smiled and handed Clarke the last jerky stick. "Hir." She continued staring across the glade and watched the Sky guards. She had instructed them to stay in pairs. She hoped the idiots listened to her. Regardless, she was glad to have the guards for extra protection.

Clarke enjoyed the jerky and took the offering as a good sign. She decided it was her best chance to push the general before they arrived in Boyce in a few hours. "Ha yu?"

Anya folded her arms across her knees and continued staring distantly. "Beda."

"Os," Clarke whispered. She finished the jerky then knelt down next to Anya. "I haven't seen you that pissed since Raven blew up your bridge."

Anya huffed and muttered, "Joken briven." She ignored Clarke's low laugh.

If it was one of the things Clarke learned quickly, it were curse words in Trigedasleng. She became more serious and cautiously asked, "Is Lexa okay?" She knew being direct was the best way with grounders.

"Lexa is Heda," Anya replied, as if it answered everything about Lexa.

"She's still... human," Clarke argued. However, somehow her statement felt false, and Clarke was confused by that notion.

Anya tilted her head at the Sky leader's hesitation in using the word human to describe Lexa.

"I know something else is going on," Clarke revealed. She peered up at the general.

Anya finally met Clarke's gaze. She could see the leader before her, not the teenage girl. She was reminded of Lexa's power as Heda.

"I don't know what it is exactly," Clarke continued. "But, I will find out... whether somebody tells me or I find out for myself." She had hardly meant for their conversation to turn into a soft threat. However, she was tired of the tough grounder routine of lately. "Because if this can affect the new alliance then I have a right to know."

Anya remained silent as she processed Clarke's demand. She nearly opened her mouth until Clarke cut her off.

"And I also actually give a damn about what's going on with Lexa." Clarke frowned and whispered, "She's been acting... stranger everyday."
Anya sighed heavily and returned to studying the glade. "I will speak to Lexa about your concerns." It was her only promise she could make to the Sky leader. There was truth in the fact that Clarke deserved to know the truth. An alliance built on a lie was bad for everybody.

Clarke let out a low breath and nodded. She hoped working on Anya would give her another angle of attack at Lexa's resolve. With enough pushing, she may find out what was going on with the commander. She stood but bent over until her lips were near Anya's ear. "Just a side note, I have noticed the eye shine in grounders' eyes at night." She ended the conversation by walking away.

Anya watched the Skaikru leader leave and slowly a grin tugged at the corner of her lips. She had to hand it to Clarke for being perceptive. But, she also knew eventually that odd features, mannerisms, and unexplained things would add up. She did sympathize with Clarke despite Trikru code. In the end, it was mainly in Lexa's hands.

Clarke sighed, slightly frustrated at herself. She had meant to talk to Anya, not threaten and demand things. She pushed it aside and simply hoped her relationship with Anya was solid enough. She went over to Marcus Kane and her mom to check on them.

Eventually the group continued the journey to Boyce. Everybody remained fairly quiet but diligent about their duties to look for trouble. Occasionally Lincoln would ride ahead to clear the path then return to the group. Anya remained at the head of the party. After a couple of hours, she curiously looked over when Clarke rode up to her side.

Still troubled by the exchange in the glade, Clarke attempted mending it on some level. "Lexa promised me that you'd tell a story or two about her days training with you."

Anya had a thin smile. She mentally juggled all the stories until she settled on a few of them. She loved to tell tales about her former second. However, she was careful who she told because it was a window into Lexa's past, before Heda.

"Let's see... Lexa was about ten."

"Ten?" Clarke checked. Her eyes were full of shock. "She was training at that time?"

"Yes, by age eight," Anya revealed. She drifted back in time and the horse's sway made her think back to that day. "We were traveling along a road, very much like this one. The forest was just as thick... perhaps thicker." She still had her smile. "Lexa was walking beside me. I'm on my horse. She wasn't allowed a horse yet... Thankfully."

Clarke stared ahead and started picturing a younger Anya with a ten year old Lexa walking on the road.

"Her sword was just a little longer than she was tall. The tip would drag along the ground," Anya told. "I often had to remind her to tie it higher. It's a wonder the tip is still on it today."

Clarke chuckled but continued listening to the story.

"We were working on hunting techniques at the time." Anya shifted in the saddle. "For some reason, she had a wild hair up her ass that day and spotted a deer off in the woods." She smacked the saddlehorn as she said, "Poof she was gone... chasing after this two headed deer."

Clarke bit her bottom lip to hold down her laugh.

"There was no way I could follow her on horseback because the trees were so dense," Anya continued. "I scrambled to get off my horse, tie her, and chase after Lexa." She sighed and
mentioned, "Of course all the training had simply bled out of her brain. She was a pauna charging through the damn woods after this sickly deer, which still managed to evade her." She groaned at her former second's lack of finesse and skill at an early age. "But Lexa is fast, and I started losing her."

Clarke was softly laughing now. She loved the story painted in her imagination.

"I stop and try to pick up on her trail," Anya told. "Nothing until I hear a scream."

"Oh god," Clarke murmured. She covered her mouth for a moment. She knew Lexa was fine, obviously, but she could only guess what had happened to little Lexa at the time.

"I called out to her, and Lexa thankfully starts yelling back. I follow her voice until I find her in a small clearing." Anya flashed a wolfish smile. "Up in a tree, Lexa was hanging upside down from a snare trap."

Clarke laughed this time and noticed several others in the group wondered what was going on between her and Anya. She ignored them and asked, "How did you get her down?"

"I didn't," Anya replied. She grinned, toothily.

Clarke was jerked out of the story by Anya's grin. For the first time, she truly noticed the distinguished canines in Anya's mouth. They were closer to fangs, in Clarke's educated opinion. Clarke shook it off and asked, "You left her?"

"More or less." Anya chuckled and explained, "I went back to my horse and brought her to the clearing. I started making camp under Lexa."

Clarke went slack jaw. "What happened?"

Anya smirked and looked down the road as Lincoln trotted past them. "I told her to get out of the trap herself... since it was her damn fault."

Clarke snickered low.

"She had lost her sword. It fell out of the sheath when she was snared." Anya happily sighed and enjoyed the old memory of her thick headed second. "She tried reaching the knot but the trapper was smarter than her." Anya shook her head. "She then tried swinging to tree branches but they were too far."

"How did she get out of it?" Clarke pressed.

Anya grinned at the Sky leader. "If Lexa is anything, it's persistent." She moved the reins to her right hand and rested her left on the saddlehorn. "At dawn, I woke up to her panting and huffing. I laid there and watched as she finally lifted herself up, grabbed the rope, and climbed up to the branch that the rope was attached to. She freed her ankle and climbed down."

Clarke shook her head and was amazed by the amount of physical strength Lexa must have had, even at that young age.

"I made her breakfast," Anya softly added.

Clarke stored away the wonderful tale about the commander. She knew on difficult days, she would pull it out and laugh again. She thanked Anya, who was still grinning about it.

Just then, Lincoln returned and mentioned, "We're not far... another hour, I'd say."
Anya considered this news. "You should ride ahead and let Heda know."

Lincoln weighed Anya's order then offered, "In half hour?"

Anya conceded because she silently agreed with Lincoln that the Sky guards may have guns, but they had few wits on the ground. She did want to give Lexa enough time to prepare for the Sky people's arrival.

"Is Boyce smaller than Tondc?"

Anya looked to the Skaikru leader. "Sha." She considered the village's size to Tondc and estimated, "About two hundred."

"Tondc was a bit more than three hundred," Clarke recalled.

Anya nodded.

"When will work on Tondc start?"

Anya sighed and considered all the difficulties to get supplies for the broken village. "In the spring, most likely." She looked at Clarke. "Lexa has to first choose a new site."

"They'll move it?"

"Sha. That is the second time Tondc has been destroyed." Anya had an obvious frown.

"Bad omen," Lincoln added.

Clarke remained silent. She remembered that night. She and Lexa could have prevented so much death, but the sacrifice helped them win the war. It was an ugly strategic move that Clarke loathed still. She had learned a valuable lesson about life, all lives. Lost in her thoughts, she missed that Lincoln rode off again.

"We will sleep better tonight," Anya promised.

Clarke barely heard the general. She struggled to break free from the past. Only when she noticed the Sky guards at her side did she realize they were near Boyce.

Unlike Tondc, Boyce was more manicured and welcoming with it's open, flat landscape. There was no gate or wall and the gravel road directed them into the village. Several farmers along the road stopped to taken in the newcomers. Many neared the road and looked on at the unusual travelers. News about the Sky people had made it to Boyce weeks ago and so did the victory over Mount Weather.

Clarke received a few waves from young grounders that were helping their parents in the fields. She nearly greeted them back, but she contained herself. She remembered the unpleasant welcoming in Tondc many weeks back.

"Some villagers from Tondc have been relocated here," Anya quietly mentioned.

Clarke was hardly surprised, and it made sense. She noticed the homes were starting now, one after another. She admired the fact they were wooden homes rather than metal ones like Tondc. It was a more Earth feel that made her think of the grounders.

Anya eyed the town center just ahead of them. She was relieved to make it safely to the village. Hopefully it would set Lexa in a better mood, but she doubted it. Just as they approached the center,
she spotted the commander coming from the brick building on the right.

Clarke recognized Lexa as well, and it caused a smile to tug at her lips. She had hardly realized how she looked forward to seeing the commander until the tall, bulky grounder leader was in front of her. As they drew closer, she read the rigid and formal tells from the commander. Clarke attempted doing the same.

Anya halted her horse then dismounted fluidly.

Clarke had less skills as she was still learning to ride. She dropped onto her boots then took the reins from over the horse's head. She looked to her mom and Marcus Kane.

"Hello, commander," Marcus politely greeted, with a smile.

Abby joined Marcus's side. "It's good to see you, commander."

Lexa exchanged a proper greeting back.

Clarke patted her horse's side, in silent order to stay put. She let go of the reins then turned to the welcoming party. She tried holding down her excitement to see Lexa, but her earlier smile came back when Lexa's features softened at her. Several electrical shocks twisted through her stomach.

"Klark, ha yu?"

Clarke enjoyed the occasional practice with the native tongue. "Beda nau. Yu, Heda?"

"Ai laik os. Bejaron yu laik hir." Lexa considered whether Clarke understood every word, but blue eyes sparkled back at her. She unknowingly preened at the fact the Sky leader was learning Trigedasleng so well. Behind Clarke, Lexa just caught Anya's raised eyebrow so she hastily hid away her pleasure.

"Mochof." Clarke then realized her mother and Kane were staring at them, especially her. She cleared her throat and switched back to English, for their sake. "We appreciate you having us."

Lexa gave a soft nod then looked at all three Sky leaders. "I have quarters ready for everyone, but you must first relinquish your weapons."

Marcus Kane was the head of security, first and foremost. He recalled disarming in Tondc for Finn's funeral. However, Tondc was better protected with walls and a gate unlike Boyce. "Commander, I... we don't feel quite comfortable giving up all our weapons," Marcus gently tried. He indicated the surroundings of the village. "There are no walls here."

Clarke sensed the commander's annoyance so she stepped into the conversation. "Maybe we can keep our blades, commander?" If they handed over their guns and kept their blades then at least they would be on even ground if there was a random attack. She noted the two grounders with baskets behind Lexa.

"You are safe here," Lexa assured the three Sky leaders.

Abby was the first to draw out her handgun. She held it so the barrel pointed to the ground. "We keep our daggers." She was attempting to be firm.

"And batons?" Lexa clearly recalled the electrified weapon that had saved Lincoln's life.

"We don't have any," Marcus assured the commander.
Lexa weighed the options and let out a low breath. "Very well." She took the handgun from Abby. "You may keep your blades... no other weapons." She signaled for the two warriors to collect the weapons from the Sky people.

Marcus turned and gave the Sky guards orders to handover their weapons. He was grateful that Lexa allowed them to at least keep the blades. It was hardly anything, but Marcus knew that Lexa would return their weapons if an attack happened on the village. He hoped it was indeed a time of peace.

Everybody had surrendered their weapons and were searched except for Clarke Griffin. The grounder warriors made their way to Clarke last. One grounder continued holding the filled baskets while the other one prepared to frisk Clarke. Just as his fingertips brushed the Sky leader's side, his wrist was snared hard by the commander. He stiffened and peered up at the commander.

Lexa said nothing, but her eyes flashed in warning for the warrior to back away from Clarke.

The warrior was freed, and he stepped away from the Sky leader.

Anya had remained at Clarke's side. She sniffed the weariness from Clarke and wondered if that prompted Lexa so quickly.

Lexa shifted closer to Clarke and sensed the hesitation in the Sky leader. She suspected a grounder about to pat her down was an uncomfortable situation, perhaps more so for Lexa. After a deep breath, she softly attempted, "Clarke."

Clarke licked her dry lips and nodded. "I only have my handgun... no blades or anything else." She fished out the handgun from her rear waistband then gave it to the commander.

Lexa deposited it into the basket and nodded at the warriors to secure the weapons in the armory. She looked between all three Sky leaders. She pivoted slightly and signaled another male grounder to her left. "Briggs will escort all of you to your quarters."

"That'd be great," Abby agreed. "Thank you."

"I'm going to stable my horse," Clarke mentioned to her mom.

Abby nodded and asked, "Do you want me to take your things?"

Clarke shook her head. "I'll get them but thanks, Mom." She needed her mother to rest, especially after the difficult journey with a healing leg.

Abby smiled, but it was tired. "See you in a bit." She, Marcus, and the Sky guards followed Briggs down the street further.

"I'll escort you to the stable," Lexa mentioned to Clarke. Then her attention cut to her general. "Onya."

"Heda." Anya inhaled deep until she had a better sense of Lexa's mood. Her throat constricted at the edgy air that bit at her senses. There was no way to hide a rut's early onset. It had been a very long time since she last smelled Lexa's rut, but it was a distinct pungent scent that was locked in her memory. Soon Lexa would no longer be able to deny her rut.

Clarke tensed at the challenging stares between the two grounders. Some part of her wanted to smack them both, but she went for a lighter tactic, first. "I heard about your early hunting days when you were ten." She found dark green eyes on her.
"My technique has much improved since then," Lexa stated.

Anya grunted and muttered, "Don't believe everything you hear, Clarke." She clicked her tongue once at the horse and turned to the stable.

Lexa huffed and waited for Clarke to follow the general.

Clarke was relieved that the tease paid off and that humor was still alive among the grounders. She grabbed her horse's reins then started for the stable too.

"Does he have a name yet?" Lexa indicated the horse.

Clarke patted the amber brown horse's neck and shook her head.

"It has been weeks," Anya prodded the Sky leader.

"I go between a famous horse name or an everyday name," Clarke explained.

"Famous horse name?" Anya was intrigued now.

Clarke nodded and rattled off a few. "Secretariat, Seabiscuit, Trigger, Red Rum, War Admiral..." She tried recalling others she had been suggested by her friends, but came up short.

"What's a Sea... biscuit?"

Clarke sighed and knew that most of the names would make grounders question her. "It's just a name of a famous racing horse in history." At Anya's unimpressed look, she rolled her eyes then demanded, "Well what's your horse's name?"

Anya fondly studied her horse's dark features then replied, "Faya Tri."

Lexa knew Clarke probably understood half of the name so she translated, "Fire Tree."

"Fire Tree?" Clarke repeated and chuckled. She noticed how Anya chose to ignore her, but she was still amused by the name. She looked at the commander. "What's yours name?"

Lexa paused to the side while Anya entered the stable first. "Star Gazer."

After a low hum, Clarke went into the brick stable. As she studied the building's interior, she realized it was once a fire department for the former American town. What had once been fire engine bays had been converted to stalls for the horses. She sought out an empty one and took her horse into it.

Lexa followed Clarke into the stall and helped her untack the horse. She was pleased at how natural removing the tack had become for Clarke. She suspected in the coming months that Clarke would be a more skilled rider.

Clarke tossed the saddlebags over her shoulder. She was about to grab the saddle, but Lexa had taken it from the other side. Clarke already had the headgear in her left hand. She decided between the two of them, they had everything. She went around to the stall door and nearly bumped into the commander.

Lexa caught herself in time. She shifted the saddle away from Clarke, but she remained rooted and eyes locked on the Sky leader. Every beautiful line and curve to Clarke's face stirred a low rumble in Lexa's chest. Each second made her blood hum louder, and she nearly took a step closer to Clarke until the intense silence was broken.
"Lexa, the door." Clarke indicated it with a nod. She was relieved that her voice somehow broke Lexa from the trance.

The commander elbowed it open, held it, and waited for Clarke to pass her.

Clarke worriedly edged through the tiny space with every ounce of care to not brush against the commander. She swore her heartbeat would out race even the Secretariat. She blew out a low breath when Lexa headed down the stable. They quickly deposited and hung the tack in the appropriate storage area.

Outside of the stable, Anya waited for them. She huffed heavily when Lexa went past her. She recalled the earlier conversation with Clarke about finding out what was going on with Lexa. She decided to accompany the pair so that she could have a word with Lexa. It was becoming apparent that Clarke's observations and Lexa's pending rut were about to collide in a mess.

"I guess we'll start alliance talks tomorrow?"

"Sha," Lexa agreed. She walked with her hands behind her back. She was leading the way to the quarters that she had setup for the Sky people.

Clarke was relieved because she was fairly tired from the travel lately. She shifted her attention to the village around her and took in the differences compared to Tondc. There were several buildings that were pre-nuking and survived the test of time. Like the stable, they were made from bricks or stones. Two of them were once churches while others were a post office and a bank. An old sign by the bank caught Clarke's attention, and she stopped on the road.

Lexa and Anya paused too and followed Clarke's stare towards the armory, which was an old bank with metal bars around the windows. But they both realized it was the road sign that truly peeked Clarke's interest.

Clarke adjusted the heavy saddlebag on her shoulder. She took a few steps closer to the sign, which was degraded and nearly colorless from the years of sunlight. She was able to read it from the letters' outline. The few fragments simply advertised "Ba k o Clarke Coun". For a moment, Clarke slipped back two months ago when they first landed on Earth. She had a topography map of the area, which had marked Mount Weather's location. At the time, it had barely mattered to Clarke, but she now recalled that the map had indicated Clarke County and Loudoun County.

"Clarke?" Anya called.

"Sorry." Clarke shook it off and rejoined the two grounders. "Just weird seeing my name on a sign." She pointed thumb over her shoulder at the armory's old sign.

Anya considered whether the Sky people could be superstitious like their own. She instead continued the walk to the quarters on their left.

Clarke noticed the newly constructed building in front her. She paused at the base of the steps and turned to the two grounder leaders. "What time do you want to start tomorrow?"

"Two hours after sunrise," Lexa offered.

Clarke nodded then looked to Anya. "Will you be there?"

Anya bit the inside of her mouth because she had no orders as of yet.

Clarke realized her own mistake and nearly put her foot in her mouth. She inwardly sighed and
wondered how to get out of the awkward moment. But, it was also her chance to ensure Anya was at the meeting or meetings.

"If Anya joins us then Indra must as well," Lexa explained.

Clarke barely held down a groan at the mere thought of Indra. She nearly made a smart remark but bit it down in time. "I was just assuming... since Anya is your general." She was close to an apology.

Anya held down a smirk at Clarke's reasoning and patiently waited for Lexa's decision. Every bit of humor was bright in her amber eyes.

Lexa sighed heavily and looked at her general. Mostly likely it was a ploy on Clarke's part because Anya had developed a fondness for Clarke. As she stood there in tense silence, she realized that Anya was the most level headed between herself and Indra. Anya had been chosen a mentor for young warriors for good reason, especially as the future Heda's mentor.

"Anya and Indra will be there," Lexa finally decided.

"Great." Clarke smiled, softly at the commander.

Lexa somehow felt like she walked into a trap after Clarke smiled at her. She huffed low and considered whether she need to investigate the relationship between Clarke and Anya. A slightly jealous charge bolted through her chest, but she fought it down.

"I'll let Mom and Kane know about the meeting." Clarke bid goodbye to the pair then headed into the quarters.

Anya folded her arms and watched Clarke vanish into the guest quarters. She cleared her throat then quietly huffed, "Humans."

After a chuff, Lexa turned and walked back towards the village. She remained quiet until Anya matched her pace. "Thank you for bringing them here safely."

"Sha, Heda." Anya thought back on today's earlier conversation with Clarke. It was more of a gentle threat that concerned Anya. "She's starting to figure it out." After a curious tilt of Lexa's head, Anya continued explaining what had transpired today. "She wants to know the truth."

Lexa listened and weighed the news. She finally replied, "You know the code." She smelled Anya's annoyance before she saw it.

Anya stepped into the commander's path and halted them both. In a low voice, she warned, "The code... your code was started before the Sky people landed here." She pointed back towards the guest quarters. "Those humans are different than the ones here on the ground." She dropped her arm and hotly whispered, "She will find out and when she does then you can forget this new alliance surviving it."

"We are not defined by our blood," Lexa snapped.

"But we are," Anya fired back. "We are what we are... and trying to pretend to be above it is going to destroy us."

"I refuse to allow our people to become Azgeda," Lexa snarled. She leaned into Anya and barred her teeth. "Do you want clan wars again? Omegas raped and murdered again?"

Anya clenched her jaw, but she held her ground despite Lexa's overwhelming aggression. "There
will always be another Azgeda."

"I refuse to believe that," Lexa fought.

Anya shook her head and decided they were further off topic than necessary. For years, she and Lexa had debated tooth and nail on their people's future. She fisted her hands in hopes it would give her strength against Lexa's building scent. She was nearly choking on it, but she refused to surrender to Lexa. "She will figure us out," she stated. "If you weren't so close to your rut, you would see that."

Lexa straightened a little at the accusation. She lost her sneer and tried calmly arguing, "I am fine."

Anya shook her head and sniffed the thick air between them. She suspected at first light, if not tonight, Lexa's rut would be in full force. There was only one other time that Lexa's scent was this strong, and a ball of fear settled low in her stomach. "You won't make it through these alliance meetings... especially with Clarke there." She cut off their argument by leaving Lexa. She inhaled the cooler, clear air now that she had space.

Lexa growled low and deep, but she tried talking her instincts down. She closed her eyes and breathed in and out several times. Once her aggression slipped back under a lid, she was aware of the pain in her lower abdomen again. For the past few days, it had lessen to a reasonable amount, but it spiked again now that Clarke was here. Anya's final warning echoed in her mind, and Lexa huffed in frustration.

Tomorrow would bring much debate and possibly arguments with the Sky people. Lexa knew that Clarke stood behind her people, fully. Lexa had the same mentality about her own, until recently. Until a beast awoken in Lexa and clouded her judgment and logic. Lexa damn well hoped Anya was wrong about tomorrow.

To be continued.

Trigedasleng to English

Ha yu? - How are you?

Beda. - Better.

Os. - Good.

Joken briven. - Fucking bridge.
Beda nau. - Better now.

Ai laik os. Bejaron yu laik hir. - I am good. Pleased you are here.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Disclaimers & Notices: See Chapter 1.

Started: December 7, 2016
Series: One Shot

AN: Well, there's a lot of details getting worked out for the story. I plan to pull different pieces from the Omegaverse trope and still make new things from it. The upcoming chapters will start building around that. Thank you all for the wonderful support on the story. It's time for the alliance meetings... and Lexa's rut! Good luck, Clarke. :)

Also, I will try to catch up on feedback from the previous chapter. Enjoy!

Beauty and the Alpha
by Red Hope

Chapter 5

"Os sonop, Raida." Clarke greeted to the guard.

"Sonop," Ryder returned to the Sky leader. He made sure to hold back Clarke's new title after last time. He could tell that the Sky leader was weary and trying to mentally prepare for the meeting. "Heda is inside."

Clarke nodded and offered, "Chof." She stepped in when Ryder shouldered the heavy wood door open. She entered what use to be a church. She paused in the entranceway and took in what was left of it. All the pews were gone and the space was filled by two large, long tables and chairs lined around them. At the altar, only an old marble pedestal remained and next to it was Lexa's throne. Further behind it was a marble table that held various items or artifacts of the grounders.

"Klark," Lexa called from her spot beside the table on the right.

Clarke realized it was only them, at the moment. Her mother and Marcus Kane would be coming shortly. Also Anya and Indra were due to join them for the talks. She took advantage of her few minutes alone with the commander.

"Did you rest well?" Lexa asked. She leaned against the table, arms folded, and held stoic features.

Clarke crossed the distance. "I did." After being escorted to the guest building, she took a room with her mother and all but collapsed into the bed. She missed dinner and slept until dawn. "I might have slept too hard," she admitted and flushed.

Lexa dipped her head. As Clarke approached her, she straightened up to her full height. She tensed at how close Clarke came to her. She considered when they had grown so comfortable around each other. Now it worked against Lexa because Clarke's metallic scent pained her. She worked her jaw repeatedly in hopes it would hold down her natural growl.
"I don't know how long we'll be here," Clarke mentioned, "But if we have time, I was hoping you could work with me more on horseback riding."

Lexa was breathing heavier the longer Clarke stayed in her space. She barely registered the Sky leader's request, and struggled with a response.

Clarke noted Lexa's stiff posture. Lexa's eyes were also fully dilated despite the brightness of the church. Clarke breathed in the thick air around them and felt a warm buzz across her temple. "Lexa, are you alright?" she heard her own voice crack.

Lexa had one hand on the corner of the table while her other one rolled into a fist. Her nails sliced into the wood of the table and offered the only distraction from her body.

Clarke felt as if an invisible force was rolling off the commander in waves. She was pushed back one step and gave them both space. She parted her lips but silence remained between them. The door's sudden whine made her jump, and she looked over to see her mother, Kane, and Indra joining them.

Briefly, Clarke peered up at the dark commander and silently hoped she was okay. Clarke blew out a breath and further backed away from Lexa as the others neared them.

"Good morning, Clarke." Abby smiled at her daughter.

"I heard you slept hard," Marcus teased the teenager.

Clarke flushed. There were a few that had tormented her about snoring a little too loud early on in the night.

"Good morning, commander," Marcus offered.

Clarke shifted her attention to Lexa, who barely had a grip on herself. She noticed Abby's bewildered expression because of Lexa's flushed features. Instinctively, Clarke jumped into the conversation before anybody read deeper into Lexa's strange behavior. "We should probably sit down. I'm sure Anya will be here any second." She hooked her mother's shoulder and guided her further down the table.

Indra waited until Marcus Kane followed the other Sky leaders. She cut her eyes to Lexa. Her nose flared wide after her next, heavy breath. "Heda-" She was silenced already by Lexa's raised hand.

Lexa brushed past Indra and neared the altar. She inhaled the fresher air, which soothed her natural reaction to Clarke. She hoped it could hold her through the meeting.

Indra warily eyed the commander and wondered about Lexa's better senses. She huffed and went to an empty seat further from the Sky people.

Lexa remained in front of the altar and waited for Anya before they started the meeting. Unknowingly, she began pacing near her throne.

Clarke was talking to her mother, but a few times she glanced over at the commander. She never recalled Lexa pacing in the past. It reminded Clarke of a pace from a caged animal rather than a worried human. Lexa was walking a short span as if preparing to attack her prey. Quickly Clarke's hopes for the meeting sunk into fears because something was extremely off with the commander.

Anya arrived in the church and faltered in her approach at seeing the pacing commander in front of the throne. She sniffed the heated scent that came from her commander. She cursed under her breath. Today she hated being right. She hesitantly glanced at the Sky people at the table and knew the
meeting was already doomed to Hell. At least she would not get shot.

Lexa paused when the general came up to her.

Anya had her back to the meeting table. She used Trigedasleng to play it safe. "Lexa, is this wise?" She hoped her soft plea was heard by her commander. "The alliance can wait."

Lexa bristled at the suggestion and hotly whispered, "I am fine." She was stronger than her rut.

Anya relented because she knew best the stubbornness that fueled Lexa. Now that stubbornness was multiplied by Lexa's rut. Anya sent a silent prayer to their gods for help. She bowed out of the argument before she lost it further. She instead went directly to the table and took the seat between Clarke and Indra. She concluded she would be the only Trikru leader with any senses. Indra already reeked of aggression, most likely feeding off of Lexa.

Clarke leaned towards the general and softly offered, "Thanks for coming."

Anya huffed at the appreciation. She doubted her presence would do any good now. Lexa was too far consumed by her fresh rut. No amount of herbs would halt it. Lexa's only salvation from the rut was the Sky leader sitting next to her.

Marcus Kane peered over his shoulder at the commander, who had her back to them. He debated whether to say something then decided to wait.

Lexa needed to sit down, had to sit down. She gathered her inner strength then faced the table. She approached them but went around to a seat further away from everybody, especially Clarke. Her hand curled around the back of the chair. "We have all fought hard to take down Mount Weather." She pulled out the chair. "Made sacrifices... lost many people."

Clarke was watching the commander, but she lowered her eyes after the last words needled her soul. She had lost people, her people. The Mountain Men were nearly extinct. And Lexa had lost hundreds of warriors since the drop ship touched down.

Lexa sunk into the chair and stared at the leaders gathered at the table. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." She looked at Marcus Kane and Abby Griffin. "Our common enemy is gone now."

"And the question is what does that make us now?" Marcus countered. He caught Indra's low huff, and he wondered at her thoughts. Indra was still so abrasive with them, but not Lexa or Anya.

"That remains to be seen," Lexa responded. She indicated Clarke and mentioned, "Clarke wishes for a new alliance."

"A mutual relationship," Clarke explained to everybody, but she settled her stare on her mother and Marcus. "A peaceful one."

"But what is it that you want?" Anya questioned the Sky leaders. "Since your landing, you've taken and hunted our lands, killed our warriors, and bombed our bridge." She glowered at Clarke next to her. "What else can we offer you?"

Clarke nearly rolled her eyes at Anya's constant badger about the bridge. "We'll build you a new bridge, if that helps." But her tease only ignited another fire.

"And the warriors?" Indra hissed. "Can you replace those or even return their bodies to their families?"
Clarke closed her eyes and relived those moments in the drop ship. Anya had stormed them and Monty was frantic to get the thrusters to work.

"It is done," Lexa cut off.

Indra huffed and still thought of the deaths of their warriors. Or the innocent that Finn had murdered. Even his blood was robbed of them by the girl next to Anya. Then the hundreds that died in Tondc. To Indra, the Sky people were a bad omen. Or perhaps it was just Clarke Griffin, Wanheda.

"Lexa is right. We can't change what happened," Clarke agreed. "But we can focus on now and the future so that none of this repeats." She looked at Anya. "So no more acts of war happen."

Abby had carefully listened because much of what had been done was by the delinquents before the Alpha station landed on Earth. "Clarke said there was some earlier conversation about Mount Weather... the supplies and future of the Mountain."

Lexa dipped her head and mentioned, "Clarke has requested that your people have the supplies from the Mountain."

"Who has taken possession of the Mountain?" Marcus asked.

"Trikru," Anya replied.

"None of the other clans?" Marcus tempted. He looked between the Trikru leaders.

Clarke curiously looked down at Lexa, who was staying relatively quiet now.

"The Mountain is cursed," Indra told Marcus. "No clans wish to own it."

"So that leaves the supplies free," Clarke concluded.

Indra slotted her eyes and challenged, "They belong to Trikru."

"Indra," Lexa silenced. She inhaled deeply and shifted in the chair. An uncomfortable look settled over her features.

Clarke sighed because they were looping back to the same argument from days ago.

"The medical and food supplies would be most beneficial to us," Abby mentioned.

"Weapons?" Anya countered.

Marcus straightened up. "More ammunition would be nice, but we have to be realistic..." She exchanged a glance with the chancellor before meeting Anya's curious stare. "It's going to run out sooner or later."

"We'd be better off learning to hunt and fight from Trikru," Abby added.

Indra snorted then leaned against the table, closer to the Sky leaders. "Never."

Clarke shifted and demanded, "Are you really going to cut off your nose to spite your face, Indra?" She locked horns with Indra. "We have medical knowledge far more extensive than your own. Technology that can-

Clarke gritted her teeth as the air thickened around her. She fisted her hand on the table. "I didn't hit the goddamn button that bombed Tondc. And I wasn't the one that sent those warriors to attack my drop ship."

Indra started rising, which triggered Anya to get up too.

"Daun ste pleni!" Lexa suddenly snapped at them.

Anya was halfway up and easily sunk back down.

Indra flexed her jaw then finally took her seat again.

But it was Lexa who stood up and moved away from the group. She massaged her brow, yet she continued grinding her teeth. "The supplies are Trikru." She faced everyone and added, "Trikru will take stock of everything in the Mountain. As of right now, the medical supplies will go to Skaikru." She saw a flutter of relief from Abby, but that was the only positive signal. "Any ammunitions will be destroyed and the food given to the victims of Tondc."

Clarke was stunned and instantly retaliated. "At least give Skaikru half of the food supplies."

Lexa focused solely on Clarke and argued, "We have given you our lands."

"And we gave you Mount Weather," Clarke snapped.

"Only because I sacrificed Tondc for Bellamy," Lexa sharply reminded. "Otherwise you would have given us nothing."

Clarke stared in shock at the commander.

"Clarke," Abby softly tempted.

Clarke started shaking her head and ignored her mother's warning. She pushed out of the seat and neared the commander.

Anya stood up next but stayed behind the table. It was far too late to head off the blast.

"I didn't want to sacrifice Tondc," Clarke hissed. She stared coldly up into blown green eyes. There were beads of sweat trailing down Lexa's brow, and she faintly questioned if Lexa was sick. She breathed in the electric air that made her heart go wild. Clarke felt like she was seeing red. "You forced my fucking hand and now you're going to punish me for that?"

A soft growl deepened further in Lexa's chest. Her lips curled into a snarl that signaled the end of her self-control. She leaned threateningly low into Clarke's face and whispered, "I could do far worse."

An icy fear charged through Clarke's entire body when she saw the blazing white ring that was Lexa's blown irises. There were fangs barred at Clarke. An inhuman growl drowned out Clarke's thundering heart. She no longer faced Lexa, but a predator that was about to break free.

Abruptly Clarke was jerked back by a hand to her shoulder. She blinked awake from the spell in her head. She focused on Anya's protective stance in front of her.

Lexa had lost her growl and was panting hard as she stared coldly at the general. She listened to Anya's calming command in Trigedasleng. Anya's very presence pushed Lexa's predator back into the darkness.

"Perhaps we should take a break," Anya suggested to her commander.
Lexa gave a low nod.

Anya returned the nod then faced the group. She realized that everybody else was standing up and prepared for whatever was going to happen between Lexa and Clarke earlier. She inwardly sighed and suggested, "We will start again in a few hours."

Clarke backed away until her mother touched her shoulder.

"Clarke, are you-"

"I'm fine," Clarke insisted. She waved it off and cleared her throat once. "Just give me a minute... I'll meet you outside."

Marcus was concerned like the chancellor, but he and Abby quietly followed in Indra's wake out of the church.

Anya was still toe to toe with the commander. She questioningly looked at Lexa and waited for a silent answer.

Lexa softly nodded and watched Anya leave the building. She was still breathing hard.

Clarke kept her distance from the commander. She swallowed hard and carefully studied the commander's very strained features. She noted the flushed hue and continued beads of sweat on Lexa. "I don't know what just happened but... I don't want to fight with you."

Lexa worked her jaw and finally replied, "Nor do I."

Clarke hoped not even though they kept needlessly arguing. Their relationship was bouncing all over lately, and it worried Clarke. "I know something is wrong." She indicated Lexa's edgy posture. "You're flushed... sweating and probably in pain."

Lexa swallowed hard at Clarke's accurate assessment. Clarke was both observant and also somebody with a medical eye.

"I don't know if you're injured from Mount Weather or sick," Clarke continued, "But I want to help you." She saw the immovable determination in Lexa's eyes, yet she still pleaded, "Just let me help you."

Lexa thought of so many replies to Clarke's plea, and she choked them all down. She finally promised, "It will pass."

Clarke opened her mouth but halted herself because her words would only spark another fight. She shook her head and whispered, "I hope so." She decided there was nothing else to say or that she could do without Lexa's willingness. She walked away with more confusion than before the day started.

Lexa waited until the heavy door slammed shut, signaling her aloneness. She huffed heavy then back stepped and sunk down into the throne. She clutched her head, which was coated in perspiration. Fire was burning deeper in her belly. A thick haze had settled over her mind and made her irrational. It had been so long since her last rut. Lexa had nearly forgotten the control that a rut had over her.

With a frustrated growl, Lexa shifted on the throne. Every seated position was uncomfortable to her. She unknowingly inched her own hand closer to her crotch where the throb ached the deepest. Her pants were suddenly far too constraining than normal.
Lexa pushed off the throne and stalked out of the old church. She brushed past Ryder, who jumped at the sudden storm.

Ryder hastened after his commander, but he pulled up short when the commander turned on him. From merely a ferocious look, Ryder was ordered to leave the commander's side. He took one last step then stared at the commander's receding figure through the village. A low grunt vibrated in his chest. Like the others, he knew the commander's problem.

Lexa passed villagers and warriors alike on her way north. Many scrambled out of her way, unless they wished to meet fate at the end of her sword.

Across from the street, Clarke Griffin continued talking with Octavia, who was taking a break from training. Clarke's need for fresh air had inadvertently brought her to the training grounds where Octavia was with a handful of other seconds. Clarke at first watched Octavia train then was greeted by Octavia.

"There goes Commander Grump Ass," Octavia muttered. She signaled the fiery whirlwind in the main street. "She looks like she chewed a wasps nest."

Clarke pivoted a little and watched the commander. She softly sighed and silently agreed with Octavia.

"I thought Indra could be a fuckin' ass." Octavia shook her head. "I guess we'll have to get use to their shit if we're forming another alliance."

Clarke was confused by Octavia's last statement. She wanted to ask more, but she was cut off by a warrior's barked order.

Octavia gave Clarke a frustrated smile then went back to train with the other seconds.

Clarke made a mental note to ask Octavia more later. She looked in Lexa's direction and decided to follow the cold trail. She hurried in her steps through village and went north. Beyond the center of the village, Clarke noticed that so few trees had leaves and the dense forest was more open. A slight breeze brushed past her cheeks and reminded her it would only get cold over the days.

At a slow jog, Clarke caught up to the commander on the road just north of the village. She could only guess where Lexa was headed, alone. She slowed when she came closer and ducked behind a tree on the road side.

Lexa broke away from the road and went into the woods. She moved fairly quiet, but she was less aware of her surroundings than normal. Her rut's fog made her more careless. Even coming out here alone was hardly her best idea, but clearer air was helping her. There were only scents of nature rather than the jumbled mess in the village.

Clarke crossed the road and entered the woods behind the commander. She glared at the fallen leaves that surrounded her, wherever she moved on the ground. Every step she made crunched, and she knew the commander would hear her at some point. But, as she groused at the leaves, she realized a faint trail showed in them from Lexa's wake. She grinned and tried moving silently as possible.

Lexa's trail wound through the trees for a solid two minutes before Clarke distantly made out a tall, dark figure near a tree. Clarke crouched behind a large tree and studied the commander about a hundred yards ahead of her. Without the leaves and plants in bloom, it was much easier to see, but Clarke still wanted to be closer. Whatever Lexa was doing alone in the woods was strange to Clarke.

Carefully with each movement, Clarke closed in on her target. She made it over halfway and could
make out Lexa's backside pressed firmly against a thick tree. Clarke remained knelt by the tree and tilted her head slightly. She hoped a few deep breaths would soothe her wild heart so she could better hear Lexa.

Perhaps it was a meditation walk in the woods after today's ugly meeting. After a long moment, Clarke realized a few grunts had nothing to do with meditation. A frustrated cry caught her ear next, and Clarke reached for her handgun, but it was held in the armory. Brilliant, she thought. Thankfully there was no attack. Only more curious, Clarke decided a better vantage point was necessary so she peered overhead at the tree. After careful thought, she decided climbing a tree would lead to her immanent failure and instead crept to her left.

Very slowly, Clarke wound her way through the trees and brush, around Lexa's position. She walked on the balls of her feet in hopes it would keep the leaves from crunching loud. However, it seemed as if Lexa was rather indisposed anyway. After what seemed like a lifetime, Clarke found herself in front of Lexa rather than behind her.

From a stooped position, Clarke worked in closer and ducked under two tall bushes next to a tree. Sweat was all over her nervous body. She ignored the shakes and crept to the end of the last holly bush. Just beyond the prickly leaves, blue eyes poked around and honed in on the commander. Lexa was still pressed against the tree, left arm up, and nails dug into the trunk. Her eyes were sealed shut and lips slightly parted from panting hard. The long, black coat was unbuckled and open, just as her pants were unbuttoned. But it was her right hand's rhythmic motion that had all of Clarke's attention.

For all of Clarke's medical knowledge about anatomy, she could barely grasp what was yards in front of her. Yet, it seemed as if Lexa had the best grasp. Her hand continued sliding up and down at a persistent pace. A low growl vibrated deep in her chest, and she cut her nails against the already scarred trunk. Lexa's increased pace caused Clarke to claw at the ground.

Finally a choked cry fought its way from Lexa's lips, but she stifled it enough. She slouched against the tree and lowered her left hand to her open pants. She breathed in until her chest was tight, but she straightened up from a familiar scent. Instantly her sharp green eyes opened and darted around the trees until they locked on the owner of the scent.

Clarke tensed when her stare met Lexa's intense eyes. Her heart leapt into her throat and then raw shock jolted her entire body. "Shit," she hissed. Clarke scrambled onto her feet and adrenaline charged her forward.

"Jok!" Lexa hissed. With a growl, she hastened to adjust herself and rebutton her pants. It was a mad chase to go after the Skaikru leader. Lexa was godly fast and bolted between the trees. Her instincts helped her find Clarke's trail.

Clarke had a strong lead, initially. She raced through the tree maze and jumped over fallen ones. She became disorientated about her location. She briefly paused in the middle of the forest and realized nothing looked familiar to her. Before she could pinpoint the sun, she distantly heard Lexa's approach. Clarke ran to her right and jumped over a small bush, but her landing turned into Hell.

Masked in a pile of dead leaves was a vicious metal mouth. It sprang to life when Clarke's boot pressed into it. The trap snapped up and snared above Clarke's ankle, just past the boot's top. The trap's twenty canine-like teeth tore past the pant leg and drove into Clarke's skin and muscle.

Clarke screamed when the pain lanced up her leg. She crumbled to the ground in a heap, nearly slamming her head into a fallen tree trunk. Clarke rolled off her side and onto her back. Tears already
washed over her burning cheeks. With fear, she looked at the metal trap that had clamped over her calf.

"Oh my god," Clarke rasped and reached towards the bloody trap, but her movement caused it to dig into her muscle. Another scream broke from deep in her chest. Without help, she would only worsen the situation and white spots were already forming in front of her eyes. "Lexaaa!" She tried listening for the commander, but panic set in more. "Lexa!" she screamed again.

"Clarke!"

Clarke lifted her head at hearing the return yell. "Lexa, over here!" She tried reaching for the trap, but its grizzly jaws sank further and inched closer to the bone. "Fuck!"

"Clarke!" Lexa was overwhelmed by fear at hearing the distress from Clarke. She now caught the scent of blood, distinctly Clarke's own. She had her sword in hand and followed her nose to the source. She grew wide eye at seeing Clarke on the ground, leg locked in a metal trap.

"Lexa, please." Clarke reached for the trap, but it snarled its teeth back at her. She cried out again.

"Don't move," Lexa ordered. She tossed the sword to the side and dropped to her knees by the trap. It would take her minutes to figure out how the trap properly worked, but like Clarke, she wanted it off now. "I will open it then push yourself out of it." She threaded her fingers between the metal teeth. With a fierce growl, she fought against the trap that was losing against her.

Clarke whimpered as the pressure came off her leg, but she still had to wait until there was enough opening to move out of its clutches.

"Go," Lexa ordered.

Clarke scrambled backwards, using her hands and good leg. She was freed from the beastly trap, which snapped shut loudly after it was released by the commander. Clarke fell on her back and more tears burned down her cheeks.

Lexa stood up and hastily took off her still unbutton jacket. She dropped it then took a step over to Clarke. She knelt by the Sky leader's injured leg. She wasted no time in moving Clarke's ripped pant leg up, which only elicited cries from Clarke. She paused after Clarke's maddening grip was on her forearm. "I need to slow the bleeding before I can get you back to the village." She looked at Clarke's tears and paused at seeing the stricken features.

Clarke swallowed hard and briefly took in Lexa's deep worry in glossy eyes. She relented and laid back down in the leaves. She whimpered when nimble hands rolled up the pant leg. Lexa's low hiss made her open her eyes. "Did it get to the bone?"

"No." Lexa tore off her left sleeve. With the material, she wrapped it around the ugly wound and prepared to tie it. She winced from Clarke's next cry, but the wrap needed a strong knot in it to apply pressure to the wound.

Clarke wiped her face dry when Lexa got up. She tried fathoming how her day went from pleasant to a fight and now injured by a hunter's trap. She rotated her head towards Lexa, who was putting on her jacket after sheathing the sword. Clarke slowly sat up, using her arms. She was building up mental strength to get up on one leg until Lexa knelt beside her.

Without a word, Lexa hooked her left arm around Clarke's back then slid her other arm under bent knees. After a deep inhale, Lexa lifted Clarke up with her.
"Lexa..." Clarke wanted to protest because she could limp back to the village. But a quick glance up into hard features told her it was not an option. She closed her eyes and struggled against the aching lump in her throat.

Lexa adjusted Clarke once until the weight was right. She continued walking through the woods, back to the road. She stared straight ahead even though she felt Clarke's occasional glances. Much of her earlier frustrations were replaced by sheer worry for Clarke's wellbeing. Quickly her thoughts started brewing from the incident moments ago.

The air between them was thick and constricting for Clarke. She wanted to say something, but she was at a loss to what. Twice a thank you was on the tip of her tongue and countless times an apology danced on her lips. None were forthcoming though. Eventually, she settled her head onto the commander's broad shoulder. She clenched her hand in her lap as the deep throb in her leg wore against her resistance. Shortly she noticed Lexa's steps no longer crunched but instead scraped over gravel and stones. They were close to the village.

"Lexa, I can walk the rest of the way," Clarke protested. But, she was ignored by the commander. She briefly shut her eyes and tried locking down her emotions. For some reason, Lexa was determined to take her directly into the village. Clarke slightly straightened up when a Trikru warrior rushed to them. She suspected he was on patrol. As he grew closer, she realized it was Briggs from yesterday.

"Heda, ai na sis?" Briggs hastily offered. He matched the commander's gate.

"Sha. Hit yo stegeda en lom op fisa," Lexa ordered.

"Sha, Heda." Briggs took off at a run down the road.

Clarke sighed and touched her forehead. She imagined Lexa's arms had to burn by now, but Lexa showed no sign of tire. Just ahead, she saw the outlines of a few buildings and homes of Boyce. She realized in minutes they would be swarmed by grounders and Sky people. She inwardly groaned at the pending demands and questions that would come from her mother and Marcus.

After a worried sigh, she realized she only had a brief chance to say something or anything to Lexa before they were surrounded by people. Her heart skipped beats at the sheer idea of bringing up what happened earlier. She steadied herself then attempted, "I uh-"

"No," Lexa cut off.

Clarke lost her courage after the sharp, single command. She was trying but Lexa was hardly ready. She looked away from the commander's stone features and instead glared at the village. Somehow the pain in her leg was a comfort, and she ground her teeth together. Slowly she clawed and nailed down her emotions.

"Clarke!" Abby Griffin was moving as fast as possible with a still healing leg.

Marcus Kane followed alongside and slowed once they met the commander and Clarke.

"What the Hell happened?" Abby demanded.

"Heda," Nyko called. He jogged down the road and continued speaking in Trigedasleng.

"We went for a walk," Clarke easily lied. In seconds, her mind spun the story that protected both her and Lexa. "I wasn't paying attention and walked into a hunter's trap." She felt the waves of tension roll off Lexa, who still held her.
Lexa had heard the story, even during her brief conversation with Nyko. "We are going to Nyko's hut."

Nyko turned to Abby. "I will need your help."

Abby nodded. "Marcus, can you get my bag from my room?"

Marus understood which bag. "I'll meet you at the hut," Marcus promised. He was already rushing off.

"It's by the armory," Nyko informed Marcus Kane. He and the others then went to the hut.

"Does this happen often?" Abby demanded from the commander.

Slight displeasure shined in Lexa's eyes. "No." She considered her pending orders to a few warriors. "There is a law against setting up traps around villages for this very reason."

Clarke frowned at the idea that a child could have easily been hurt by the trapper's neglect. She bit her tongue from voicing it because Lexa's anger was stewing enough. She suspected the trapper would meet an ugly punishment.

Once at the hut, Nyko directed the patient to an empty pallet. He reached for the button at Clarke's pants until a soft thunder from Lexa warned him. His nose flared at the dangerous scent at his back. Nobody else seemed as agitated as him or the commander.

"Let me do that," Abby cut in. "Alone." She slotted her eyes at Nyko and the commander. "Can you boil water, Nyko?" She already had one boot off Clarke's foot.

Nyko was mostly relieved and nodded. "There are furs in the trunk." He left first, in hopes it would prompt the edgy commander.

Lexa held her gaze one last second with Clarke before the ducked out behind the healer.

Abby focused on her daughter. Both boots and socks were off. Next she freed the pants' button then worked the zipper open. "Is that what really happened out there?" She had wondered where Clarke went after the meeting.

"Yes," Clarke held the secret close to her heart and kept a neutral expression.

Abby nodded. She gingerly pulled the pants down and went past the knees. She braced herself for the injury's pain. However, she was surprised by Clarke's self-control.

Clarke clawed the pallet's sides and endured the white flashes up her leg when the pant leg brushed over the wound. She sigh in relief when they were finally off.

Abby collected a fur from the trunk and covered most of Clarke's body up other than her injured leg. A soft knock at the door called her attention to it.

"I have your bag," Marcus explained. He entered after Abby opened the door wider. He stole a minute to look over the wound, which was heavily coated in blood. A few visible teeth marks poked out past the bloody cloth and caused him to flinch in reaction. "Is there anything else I can do?"

"No but thank you." Abby had set her bag next to a table. She was already sorting through the supplies.

"I'll be outside if you need anything." Marcus quietly left. He noticed on his way out that Nyko and
the commander remained in the small common room.

Abby set down the items she needed for the wound. "How is your pain?"

"On a scale of one to ten... a six or seven." Clarke was doing her best to stare up at the thatch ceiling rather than take stock of her injury. She replayed what had happened in the woods, both Lexa's masturbation and being snared by the hunter's trap.

"Do you want any pain killers?" Abby offered.

Clarke weighed it but shook her head. "I can bare it." Like many other pains in her life. Nor did she want to waste the medicine when somebody later could seriously need the relief.

Abby was about to seek out Nyko, but he came in with a pot of sterile water. "Do you have any cloths, Nyko?"

The ground healer nodded and went to a cupboard full of clean cloths. He handed several to the Sky doctor then went to another cupboard that had other, herbal supplies. He was looking for anything that would aide Clarke.

Abby dipped a cloth into the hot water and then rung it out. While it cooled, she removed the bloody wrap from Clarke's leg. First the wound needed to be cleaned of the dried blood and then sterilized with medicine. As she cleaned it, she assessed how many stitches were needed to properly close all the small but deep lacerations. It would be a painstaking process, but Abby would see to every detail.

Nyko assisted the doctor as much as possible. He was intrigued by the stitching technique and took many mental notes. After the stitches were done, he offered a salve to coat the wounds before it was bound tightly. Abby readily agreed and helped Nyko apply the ointment.

Clarke was silent the entire time. Her mind drifted often times until a touch or push made her jump back to the present. She clutched the pallet throughout the whole process. Gradually she was becoming more weary from the trauma.

"We're almost done, Clarke." Abby glanced up at her daughter, who rolled her head to one side. "I just have to bandage it." She quickly but carefully worked to wrap the wound. "Did you bring other pants, Clarke?" After a long silence, Abby paused and looked at her tired daughter.

Clarke blinked a few times. "Yeah... a pair of jeans and my old sweats." If she had the luxury, she tried to sleep in her sweatpants, but it was rare.

Abby turned to Nyko and asked, "Can you have Marcus bring Clarke's sweatpants."

Nyko left the women in pursuit of the other Sky leader.

"I'm going to give you a tetanus shot." Abby returned to her supplies and fished out a needle. "We'll see if you need an antibiotic later or not." She filled the needle with the tetanus then came back to Clarke's side. She helped Clarke partially take off her jacket so she had access to her arm. After hiking up the long sleeve shirt, she administered the medicine.

Clarke put back on her jacket and sighed in relief. She closed her eyes until she heard Marcus Kane.

Abby was nearly done putting away her supplies. She received the gray sweatpants from Marcus and thanked him. Once he was gone, she helped Clarke put them on, thankful they were loose.

"Thanks, Mom." Clarke took her mother's hand into hers and squeezed it hard.
"You need to rest today," Abby informed. "I want to monitor you too." If a fever started then she wanted to battle it with the proper medication. She noticed Nyko and the commander reentered the room.

"I will as long as we don't have any meetings today," Clarke offered.

Abby cut her attention to the commander.

"We will wait until you're ready," Lexa agreed. She turned her attention to Abby. "Where do wish for Clarke to rest?"

"I prefer my quarters," Abby replied.

Nyko gave silent agreement to the idea.

Clarke started rising and stiffened when the commander reached for her, again. She opened her mouth, but the argument broke under Lexa's hard stare. She bowed to it, without control. In seconds, she was back in Lexa's arms and taken from the healer's hut.

Abby hastened to collect her things and followed the pair out of the building. Outside, Marcus Kane joined her and went to the shared quarters house.

Marcus rushed ahead and opened the door at the top of the steps. He waited until everybody passed before he followed last.

Abby pushed open the door to her quarters that she shared with Clarke. "Right over there." She indicated Clarke's bed.

Without needing direction, Lexa already scented which spot was Clarke's own. She bent over and lowered Clarke into the soft comforts. She felt Clarke's soft tug against her jacket, but Lexa ignored the silent request to stay. She wordlessly left the Sky leaders and sought the space she had needed hours ago.

Clarke allowed it and knew they would eventually face each other later. She sunk deeper into the furs.

"Try to get some rest, honey." Abby heard Marcus prepping the fireplace for them. "Is there anything I can get you?"

"No, I'm okay." Clarke weakly smiled at her mom.

After a kiss to her daughter's forehead, Abby straightened up and went over to Marcus.

For a moment, Clarke listened to their murmurs, but she quickly drifted off despite the heavy throb in her leg. She was completely drained after today. She hoped her head would be clearer when she woke up because everything was completely upside down at the moment. And it scared some part of Clarke.

To be continued.
Os sonop, Raida. - Good morning, Ryder.

Sonop. - Morning.

Daun ste pleni! - That is enough!

Jok! - Fuck!

Heda, ai na sis? - Commander, can I help?

Sha. Hit yo stegeda en lom op fisa. - Yes. Go to the village and warn the healer.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Disclaimers & Notices: See Chapter 1.

Started: December 7, 2016
Series: One Shot

AN: Happy Holidays! Hopefully everybody is enjoying the season. It's been fairly hectic with my family. I was able to sneak in this post because I had the chapter mostly done awhile ago. For those also following Hedatu, it won't get an update 'til after New Years Eve. I'm spending about a week in Wisconsin. The drive to and fro will give me a chance to work on feedback and that's about it. Sorry about that!

I hope y'all enjoy the update.

Beauty and the Alpha
by Red Hope

Chapter 6

At first, it was quiet and almost peaceful until a rotten scent crept under Clarke's nose. She struggled away from it and nearly toppled over until a firm grip was placed on her shoulders. It was a comforting touch that soothed her fears. Another breath filled her with an enticing smell that called to her spirit. She followed it forward through the darkness until she saw a person's outline.

"Wanheda," Anya warmly greeted the Sky leader.

Clarke frowned at the loathsome title, but she took another step forward. "Anya..." She was unsure what to ask and stared confusingly at the yellow misty lands in front of her. "Where are we?"

Anya canted her head and replied, "Wantof." She narrowed her eyes. "Your homelands, Klark."

"Wantof?" Clarke repeated. She looked at the grounder general then grew wide eye with alarm. "You're hurt, Anya." She quickly pressed her hands into Anya's bloody stomach. "Oh my god. You've been shot."

Anya had an amusing smile. "I was shot a long time ago, Wanheda." She clutched Clarke's wrists and pulled them away. "Don't you remember?"

Clarke frantically shook her head and peered up into the grounder's pure white eyes. She stiffened because they were brown moments ago.

"I was shot after we escaped Mount Weather... by one of your people."

"N-n-no," Clarke argued. "I saved you." She ripped free and took Anya's hands into hers. "I got you
into Camp Jaha before you bled out."

Anya reached up and pressed a cool hand against Clarke's cheek. "My fight was over." She then smiled slightly and nodded towards the misty lands. "It matters not now that you're home, Wanheda."

"Wantof," Clarke recalled. She worriedly stared at the dark lands that was cloaked in yellow mist.

"Deadlands," Anya translated for the leader. "And your people are here." She took Clarke's hands and guided her forward into the Deadlands.

Clarke drifted deeper in and the yellow mist parted for her. Slowly more figures started emerging from the mist and wolfishly smiled at Clarke. They were all familiar faces that had died since Clarke landed on Earth. First it was a Sky person then a Trikru warrior and another Trikru warrior and Mountain Men. Their eyes flashed white under the blood red sunlight.

"Hello, Clarke."

Clarke turned at hearing a voice she had forced from her memory. Instantly her throat clenched at seeing the boyish features of Finn Collins. She was barely older than him, but she felt aged compared to him and his idealism.

"Welcome home," Finn offered. He pushed past a Trikru warrior and then Dante Wallace. He stood close to Clarke and studied her worried features. "I've missed you."

Clarke backed away from Finn, but she accidentally pressed into Wells Jaha. She jumped away from him. "This isn't real."

"It's as real as your spirit," Anya argued. "Wanheda."

"We've been waiting for you," Finn explained.

Clarke pointed at Anya. "Don't call me that," she growled.

"She might have some grounder in her after all," Dr. Tsing commented from her spot beside Dante Wallace.

"We're waiting your command," Tristan, a former Trikru warrior, told the leader.

"Command?" Clarke echoed. She tried backing away further from them, but she was surrounded by white eyes and dead spirits.

"Your command to take on the thirteen clans," Anya clarified.

"It is your time to break free," Finn explained.

Dante Wallace was next to speak up with his firm tone. "We will take back our lands, Clarke."

"No." Clarke shook her head and glared at all the dead. Then somebody from behind Finn emerged and offered a tender smile.

"Clarke," she gently called.

Clarke broke inside at hearing the delicate voice she had missed for so many months. "Allison," she breathed.
Allison took trembling hands into her own. "I've waited so long for you."

"No... no." Clarke was frantic now but Allison's grip was strong. "You died... on the Factory Station." The news that the Factory Station had slammed into a cliff side had destroyed much of Clarke's hope.

"I did," Allison agreed. "I've been waiting here for you." She smiled sadly.

Clarke whimpered and freed her left hand. She brushed her fingertips along milky white skin that was once tan. Allison's eyes were also amber like honey and now were hollowed with frost white. She ached even more. "I.. I've..." She could barely confess her heart.

"It's okay," Allison whispered. "I knew you would come for me... Wanheda."

A tear fell from Clarke's face. Her torn features fell at hearing the ugly title. "Don't call me that." She dropped her hands from Allison's beautiful features and backed away again. She refused to be Wanheda or command Wantof. "Leave me alone," she growled at them all, but they ignored her, including Allison.

"Wanheda," a Trikru warrior called out. He was echoed by others.


Clarke tried escaping, by she was snared in the middle of the dead. She was sharply grabbed by Anya, who now had pastel green eyes.

"Clarke, you're safe," Anya commanded. "It's just a dream." Her voice deepened in timber and took on authority that called to Clarke. "Come back to me." Green eyes replaced her pastel ones, and her features became chiseled with strength.

Clarke jolted up from her horizontal position. She nearly slammed her head into another person, but a firm hand on her chest pushed her back down.

"You're safe... it's okay."

"Lexa," Clarke rasped and fell back into the furs. She was freed from her nightmare but cut through by her leg's injury. She sucked in a breath and groaned deeply. Once she settled down, the pain also lessened to its normal throb. Slowly the room came into focus, and she found she was alone with Lexa. It surprised her that Lexa was even here.

"What time is it?"

"It is dinner time," Lexa replied. She was seated on a stool next to the bed. She had been on it for twenty minutes and watched Clarke. Shortly ago she had come by with a tray of food for Clarke and herself. She insisted Abby leave for dinner.

"I am hungry," Clarke admitted. She sniffed the air, which was heavy with food smells. An appreciative rumble from her stomach filled the quiet space.

Lexa took that as a good sign. She stood up and collected the two plates from the table near the roaring fireplace. She came back and handed one to Clarke. "How do you feel?"

"Not as tired," Clarke replied. She was upright, plate in her lap, and using the worn fork to poke around the food. She loved the food on the ground. Thankfully the daily exercise and stress kept her from gaining weight. "Where is my mom?"
"She went to dinner with Marcus," Lexa explained. She had a smaller plate of food, if she could bare to eat it. She had skipped dinner last night and today's morning meal. Her appetite was less on food and more on other things. However, Clarke's recent injury only served to provide a minor distraction from her own pain.

Clarke ate because her breakfast had been small. She was slightly embarrassed by how fast she consumed the food compared to the commander. But Lexa made no comment and merely took her plate. She noticed Lexa had picked at her food. "You're still sick," she noted aloud after Lexa reclaimed the stool. Clarke saw the stiffness in Lexa's gait, the perspiration across her forehead, and lack of appetite. Earlier today when she was being carried, she had felt the heat radiating off Lexa.

"I'm fine," Lexa rebuked.

Clarke slumped against the headboard and playfully muttered, "Liar." She and Lexa sat in a thick silence that nobody wanted to slice open. Nobody wanted to make the first move in the game, but Clarke was willing to face it more than Lexa. She shut her eyes and whispered, "We both know what I saw." She looked over at the commander. "I want to know the truth, Lexa." She struggled against the commander's intense stare. A few seconds back in the woods when Lexa saw her behind the holly bush made her shiver. Clarke pushed it away and fought the silent battle with Lexa.

"You could have been hurt far worse." Lexa attempted deflection, but she already sensed it failed her.

"Don't," Clarke argued, "Make this about me." She crossed her arms, in the only attempt to show strength when she was the injured one. "Just tell me," she demanded, harder. She was breathing heavier with each word. "Tell me what you are." Her frantic heart leapt into her throat when Lexa popped up from the stool. She growled in frustration when Lexa headed to the door. "Walk out that door, and I'll lose all trust in you."

Lexa was rooted and stared coldly at the sealed door. She had made years of promises and planned so much for her people. But somehow that was unraveling in the shadows each day the Sky people stayed here. Each day that Lexa spent more time with Clarke.

Lexa fought hard to shield Clarke from the truth. In the end, their shared determination to either seek out or hide the truth ended with Clarke being ridiculously injured. She should have known that Clarke, in her stubbornness, would go to any length to find out. Anya was right. Slowly, her hand slid off the door handle because her own resolve was cracking. A secret howl in her chest urged her to confess every tiny detail, and Lexa wanted to give in for the first time.

"Tell me," Clarke softly pleaded, in hopes to break the bonds around Lexa. "Beja, Leksa." She realized her heart ached more than her leg's injury.

Lexa shut her eyes after Clarke's plea burrowed deep into her chest. There was an unheard snap in her that made her finally accept the truth. "In my people's tongue we are called Caineblida."

For a beat, Clarke thought she misheard the truth or made it up in her mind. But Lexa had truly told her. "Caineblida," Clarke softly repeated. She asked, "What does it mean in English?"

Lexa pivoted on her feet and looked over her shoulder at Clarke. "In Gonasleng it means wolf blood." She dared to return to her seat. Somehow telling Clarke her people's true name broke the very wolf in her blood free. In the firelight, her eyes shined a reflective white that hinted at her real nature.

Clarke blew out a low breath and tried keeping a steady head. She wanted the truth and now she had
"So you're not human? None of the grounders are human?"

"My people are not human," Lexa explained. She was bent forward, arms on her knees for support. Clarke's scent had been enveloping her since she came into the quarters house. It was a fiercer struggle to stay in control when she was so close to Clarke. But, she owed this to Clarke after today's accident in the woods. "But there are some humans left."

"Besides Sky people?" Clarke countered. She hung onto everything Lexa was telling her.

"Sha." Lexa took a painful breath then straightened up more. "There are humans who survived the apocalypse but the radiation disfigured them."

"So they're outcasts," Clarke guessed. She knew from being in Mount Weather that her people had evolved from the solar radiation over time. It was why Dr. Tsing wanted their bone marrow. "Then how did your people begin?"

"Nobody is certain," Lexa replied. She reached for her jacket's top button but faltered from undoing it. She was flushed, and her clothes utterly uncomfortable. "But we were born from the ashes."

Clarke mulled it over with a scientific eye. She wondered if the radiation somehow altered the ancestors of the grounders. Yet it seemed so quick and sudden for it to be evolution, even one affected by radiation. She shelved the ideas and instead focused on the commander, who was still in obvious pain.

"Does this..." Clarke indicated Lexa's stiff posture. "Have to do with you being a caineblida?"

After a low nod, Lexa better explained their culture. "We are divided into paka that we call Alphas and Omegas."

Clarke guessed paka was another word for groups. She hardly needed a translation to guess what an Alpha or Omega might be in the culture. "You're not sick then?" She received a wolfish smile that made her blood chill.

"No." Lexa instantly hid her predatory smile and took a deep breath. Normally, breathing practices helped her during a rut, but it was useless when Clarke was in front of her. "I am in my rut."

Clarke stared oddly at the commander. She wondered how such a statement answered anything for her. She wanted to ask more, but their conversation was an obvious strain on Lexa. She shook her head and offered, "Maybe we can talk more about this tomorrow."

Lexa was quiet for a moment then slowly nodded. It was the best idea. Her self-control was thin and nearly shattered like glass. She stood up and stared down at the Sky leader.

Clarke easily saw the war in the commander's eyes. She had no idea what the war was about or why it was there, but she would know far more tomorrow. She tried shaking Lexa from her daze with a strong voice. "Thank you... for telling me."

Again, Lexa only nodded then left the bedside. A hint of strength returned to her posture. She collected the tray with the plates then silently left the room. All her inner battle flowed out the door behind her and left the quarters lighter.

Clarke inhaled sharply and sunk against the headboard. She touched her brow and wondered how Lexa could function through the day. A tendril of guilt and sympathy rose in her belly. She wondered what a rut meant to a caineblida and what could be done to ease Lexa's own. Such troublesome thoughts cut into her sleep for the rest of the night.
At dawn, Clarke rose from bed and had her mother help her move through the quarters. She was ready to face the day rather than lay on her back. She decided to stay in her sweatpants because they were less constricting than her jeans. While her mom cleaned and check her wound, she considered the day's plan. She wondered if they would have a meeting about the alliance, but first she wanted to learn more about caineblida. It could affect everything.

Abby wanted to eat breakfast in the quarters, but Clarke insisted they go to the dining hall. She refused to be any weaker after yesterday's mess up. Marcus decided to accompany them as they left the quarters house. It was a slow, chilly walk, but they went into the dining hall near the center of the village. The long stares from Trikru warriors were normal, but they were still served by the villagers. Just as they finished eating, Anya approached their table.

"Heya, Klark," Anya greeted.

"Heya." Clarke was grateful to see the general.

"How do you feel today?"

Clarke considered how much Anya knew about yesterday. "It's better." She was in pain, but it was manageable. She wanted to talk more, but waited until Anya left them. She turned to her mother and Marcus Kane. "I'm going to stay with Anya."

"Are you sure?" Abby double checked.

"Yeah, I'll be fine," Clarke promised. She gave an assuring smile to her mother, who patted her shoulder on the way up from the table. She watched her mom and Marcus leave then she patiently waited for Anya.

Anya took the silent invite and slid into a chair across from the young Sky leader. "I heard you walked into a hunter's trap." She had a slight smirk.

Clarke rolled her eyes at the grounder's dark humor. "More like jumped into it."

"You and Lexa may share similar blood," Anya teased further. She noticed how her joke fell flat so she stayed quiet now and waited for whatever was obviously on Clarke's mind.

With one simple word, Clarke lit up the air. "Caineblida."

Anya paused with a mouthful and swallowed it down first. "She finally told you." A hint of pride swelled in her chest. "What do you know?"

Clarke shrugged then admitted, "Not much." She sighed and stared down at the small table space between her and the general. "We're suppose to talk more today." She curiously eyed Anya again. "Have you seen her?"

"I saw her speaking to Briggs this morning," Anya mentioned.

Clarke considered her options and decided she would gain little by sitting here further. She was antsy to learn more about caineblida and what it meant for the future. There were numerous questions swirling through her head.

"Clarke?" Anya waited until the Sky leader's attention came back to her. "You must have an open mind when you learn more about our people." She sensed the hint of confusion from Clarke. "The Mountain Men were... less willing."
Clarke frowned and softly argued, "I'm not them." She relaxed when Anya gave her a slight smile.

"I know."

Clarke nodded. She shifted in the seat, about to go but curiously studied Anya. "Are you an Alpha or Omega?"

Anya's smile slid wider and revealed her sharp teeth that were wolf-like. "Omega."

What little Clarke knew about caineblidas, she expected Alphas to be the more dominant paka while the Omegas were probably gentler dispositions. To learn that Anya was an Omega cut apart her assumption. She had a lot to learn about the grounders and their unique culture. Clarke nodded once then got up. "Chof."

Anya curiously watched the Sky leader leave the building. She was a little relieved that Lexa had broken the code for Clarke. But, it also meant the pending alliance could suffer. She kept her hopes up that it would be different with the Sky people than the Mountain Men.

Clarke was at a steady pace as she visually scanned the village for Lexa. She stood outside the dining hall on the street.

"Clarke."

Clarke turned to the grounder and returned the warm greeting. "Heya, Lincoln."

"I heard what happened yesterday." Lincoln was obviously concerned. "I'm glad Heda was with you."

"Me too." Clarke shifted her weight onto her right leg. "I imagine that hunter will get Hell for setting up that trap so close to the village."

Lincoln gave a low rumble of agreement. "Heda assigned two warriors to track him down." He folded his muscular arms. "How's your leg?"

"It's okay... better today." Clarke turned her attention back to the street. "Have you seen Heda?"

"She was actually by the training fields with Indra. I just came from there." Lincoln pointed in the direction.

"Great." Clarke flashed a smile at him. "Thanks." She bid goodbye and left the Trikru warrior. She hoped she could catch the commander. As she approached the fields, she was relieved to see the commander and Indra were coming her direction. She decided to wait rather than drain herself further.

Indra noted the Sky leader in front of them. She huffed and departed from the commander's side.

Lexa went to Clarke after she finished talking to Indra. She tilted her head at the other woman's persistent nature. "You are walking."

Clarke slid her chilled hands into her jacket's pockets. She tasted a hint of pride in Lexa's tone. "It'll take more than a stupid trap." She enjoyed Lexa's pleased rumble. "Is it a good time to talk?" She wanted to be closer to Lexa, but she fought down the natural urge. "I'm concerned whether or not your people being caineblida will affect an alliance."

Lexa slightly inclined her head. As a leader, she sympathized with Clarke's concern, but it also made
her Alpha bristle. She peered over her shoulder at the area. "I prefer to talk in the open." If they were indoors, she knew her instincts would be bombarded by Clarke's scent and only encourage her rut further.

Clarke nodded. "Wherever you're comfortable."

"Can you walk past the village?" Lexa wanted space from her people so they could talk in private. She was also concerned about Clarke's strength.

"Sha," Clarke agreed. She took the commander's side. "Just a slow walk."

Lexa matched the shorter woman's pace.

Clarke worried her bottom lip. She had so much on her mind and could barely wait until they were outside of prying ears. After a sigh, she offered, "Thank you... for saving me from that trap."

The appreciation stirred a few ounces of guilt in Lexa's belly. She remembered why Clarke was out in the woods. Anya had been right that Clarke would find out somehow. Lexa had hardly expected Clarke to go to such lengths and end up injured in the process. She inwardly groused at herself.

"And it's not your fault," Clarke softly added. "I just... freaked out... and didn't watch where I was going." She struggled with a flash memory of Lexa's masturbation, which had freaked her out. At least it was a cool day to calm her flushed cheeks. She hoped Lexa missed it.

Lexa was quiet. She concentrated on the walk out of the village and ignored the pending conversation ahead of them. She could only focus on one item at a time due to her rut. Earlier she had checked with Indra about training for the seconds. Already she had chewed off Indra's head about proper training for the seconds. Her flared temper was bottled up, but it lingered near the surface. Her lack of self-control only compounded the situation.

Clarke noticed they passed the last homes. They went north out of the village, the same direction as yesterday. There were no fields on this side of town, most likely due to the thick woodlands.

"This way," Lexa ordered. She led them into the woods and traveled only for a minute or two. She scanned for a spot and located a cropping of large rocks that were half buried in the ground. She decided it was a good, secluded location for them.

Clarke went directly to a rock and claimed it for a seat. She expected Lexa to occupy the one next to her, but instead the commander collected wood. She was chilled but hardly expected Lexa to build a fire. With patience, she allowed Lexa the silence.

Lexa setup the fire relatively close to Clarke. She was knelt down and organized the branches correctly. Then with a flint and striker rocks, she sparked the kindle first before igniting the branches and small wood. Shortly small curls of smoke rose up and filled Lexa's nose. It was a welcoming smell that helped mask Clarke's own scent.

As Clarke watched the commander, she thought back to the day they had escaped the pauna. Much like then, Lexa had built them a small fire while Clarke rested on the soft moss. She had needed the rest after their escape from the oversized gorilla. But today they were around the fire for much different reasons.

Lexa ensured that the kindling grew and remained knelt next to Clarke. After another heavy breath, she mentally stepped into a difficult conversation about her people. "There is a tale about how my people came to be." She tilted her head slightly but continued staring at the small fire. "After the apocalypse, humans had suffered greatly except for one named Bekka."
Clarke folded her arms against the cold air. She studied the commander's profile but carefully listened to the story.

"The story goes that our god, Caines, emerged from his home in the woods. He went to Bekka with an offer to save life. He offered to breed with her and promised their breeding would bring a new, better race than man." Lexa paused as the story continued swirling in the growing flames of the fire. "There are different accounts whether Bekka truly agreed... or if she was forced by Caines." A slight rumble thickened her words. "But Bekka conceived three pups. They were more beast than man though... aggressive and violent with fur and fangs."

Clarke had curiously realized Lexa called the offspring pups rather than children or even triplets. She bit her bottom lip. There was more to the story by the look on Lexa's face.

"Bekka couldn't control them once they grew of age. The three beasts were nearly feral and attacked the humans that were still alive." Lexa huffed low, angrily. "Humans were raped and killed but the offspring between man and beast were the first caineblida."

Clarke sat in distraught silence after the ugly tale about the caineblida.

"The happy ending is that Bekka assembled the caineblida and hunted down the beasts... and slayed them." Lexa released a heavy sigh and mentioned, "Bekka became Pramheda of the first caineblida." She peered up at Clarke. "Our beginnings were in blood."

Clarke shook her head and argued, "Sometimes it isn't about how you start... but how you finish." She heard Lexa's low rumble of agreement, and it nearly made her smile. She was realizing that the growls, hisses, snarls and other animal-like noises were hardly an intimidation act of a grounder warrior, but one of a caineblida's true nature.

Lexa rocked back until she was seated on the ground. She crossed her legs, which felt more comfortable than most positions at the moment.

"Why didn't you tell me sooner that you were a caineblida?" Clarke gently started.

Lexa flinched from a low pain in her stomach. She grounded her teeth against the spike of aggression under her skin. "It's our code." Her voice was thicker and heavier. "Many years ago I started a code for my people... to be better than just animals."

Clarke shifted her right leg against the side of the rock. She bit down her instant argument and reminded herself to stick with questions. "Your code includes not telling your allies?"

"All our allies are caineblida." Lexa then shortened, "Caine." She huffed and better explained, "Before my time, the Mountain Men and my people met on peaceful terms. But, it turned ugly when the Mountain Men learned of our true nature. We were snarling, savage dogs in the eyes of the Mountain Men... and perhaps we were at the time."

"Meanwhile they stole and consumed your people's blood... like vampires," Clarke muttered. Strips of guilt for the Mountain Men's demise started falling away in her heart.

"As a caine, we try not to speak often of our nature." Lexa breathed in the fiery scent around her. It burned away some of the fog in her head so that she could talk to Clarke. But, the hot ache in her gut was ever present.

Clarke had many thoughts on the topic, but she kept it to herself. There was much more to the caine's code and another time to learn it. Right now, it was the code that put direction in Lexa's methods as a leader of her people. She tabled the caine's code and instead focused on what mattered now. "What
are the differences between a caine and a human? Alphas and Omegas?"

Lexa balled her hand in her lap. Her body was smoldering under the long coat and from the campfire's heat. She struggled with staying focused on the conversation. "Compared to humans, a caine is usually stronger, better instincts, high sense of smell, and age slower." There were plenty of other differences, some more significant than others.

Clarke was startled by the news that a caine would age slower than a human. "How old are you?" When she first met Lexa, she had guessed Lexa to be close to her age, perhaps a year or two older.

"Twenty-seven," Lexa revealed. A whiff of Clarke's shock drifted under her nose, and it stirred a wolfish grin from her. "But, in a human's lifetime, I am your age." She peered up at the Sky leader. "I am entering my prime."

"When did you take the throne?" Clarke was still dumbfounded.

"Twenty." Lexa considered what that may mean in human years. "I was around twelve in your people's eyes."

Clarke blew out a low breath. She had hardly expected it. It also made Lexa a more seasoned leader than Clarke first thought. In ancient history, she had learned of many rulers that took their thrones at young ages. She cleared her throat and curiously focused on Lexa again. "You're an Alpha."

After a slight nod, Lexa explained, "There were three paka in the beginning, but only two have survived over time. We started with Alphas, Omegas, and Betas." She took a deep breath. "Omegas are usually smaller than an Alpha. They were originally viewed as breeders. They're known for caring for a family... instinctively protective."

Clarke considered how Anya was willing to protect her from Indra and even Lexa.

"Alphas are more territorial and aggressive." Lexa paused and considered the differences further. "We like order."

Clarke absorbed what she was learning, and it was a lot at once. She doubted she would remember every detail. She lowered her head and stared at the rock under her legs. Brief flashes from yesterday in the woods resurfaced and made her flush. Gradually blue eyes wandered to Lexa's pants where she knew there were more differences about caineblidas. She hastily closed her eyes as she decided whether to face yesterday's mishap. A low rumble from Lexa made her look again. She could make out the perspiration across Lexa's brow. She wondered why Lexa continued to sit in front of the fire when she was obviously hot.

After a nervous swallow, Clarke rallied her courage and attempted nudging the mental door between them. She softly asked, "So there are male and female Alphas and Omegas?" She hardly expected an amused rumble from the commander.

"We do not gender, like humans." Lexa's tone was thick and heavy again. "I am a ruusen Alpha." She lifted her attention to Clarke. "What you would perceive as a male Alpha is a rousen Alpha."

Clarke blew out a breath and straightened up. "And Omegas?" If she made it through the conversation without a headache, it would be a miracle.

"A female one is a juusen and male is a jousen." Lexa stared ahead again. "Be careful who you assume is male or female because it may not be true. You may see a male Alpha when in fact they're ruusen."
Clarke opened and closed her mouth twice before she finally asked, "Can you tell a difference between... all four?" She was unsure what to call the four types if they were not genders. Paka, she reminded herself.

"Sha." Lexa tapped her nose in silent explanation.

Clarke nodded. "Right," she whispered. "You can smell the differences." She shifted on the hard seat and asked, "Will I insult anybody if I call them an Alpha instead of an Omega? Or vise versa?"

"It is better to ask," Lexa offered.

The advise was true, Clarke decided. She had asked Anya earlier, which Anya seemed to appreciate. She studied her own hands and realized she had sweaty palms from being nervous. She willed her heart to steady, but it was difficult. Still she pressed forward further. "Yesterday you were... trying to deal with your rut?"

Lexa took a shallow breath and decided how best to answer Clarke. How necessary it was to get into the conversation about an Alpha's body, particularly hers, was a debate. Inside her chest, the Alpha gloated at the sheer idea of presenting herself. She struggled to stay in control rather than give into her inner desire, but the rut made the desire nearly tangible.

Clarke watched the internal war in the commander. She could see waves and strikes roll through Lexa. It made Clarke sympathize for Lexa, and she seriously considered whether right now was the best time. Most likely the rut was making it excessively hard for Lexa to function as a leader. "We don't have to talk about this," she offered.

"A rut lasts three to five days. This is my second day," Lexa rasped. She clutched her jacket's lapel. She took a deep breath.

Clarke nodded and considered what a rut was to animals. She took medical classes on humans, not animals, but she knew humans were still mammals. And right now, she understood the commander was facing sexual excitement at its fullest. "Maybe it's one more day," she softly offered.

However, Lexa highly doubted it because she sensed her rut well. She was still building up to her peak before it could wane off again.

A long stretch of silence made Clarke more tense. She burned with the need to voice what she saw yesterday, but she had no idea how to say it carefully or how Lexa would respond to it. In her people's culture, sexuality was off topic. Yet, the medical side of Clarke craved to understand a caineblida's biology. With a gentle tone, Clarke pushed the limits further. "Yesterday I... I noticed that... that you have... equipment." Her own embarrassment flushed against her cheeks. Lexa's responding rumble made her heart lurch for a beat. She relaxed slightly at the brief amusement on Lexa's face.

"Sha." Lexa heard her Alpha's excited howl, and she inwardly sneered at it.

"Is that..." Clarke shook her head and rephrased her question. "Are all female..." She sighed in frustration because she already lost the word for Lexa's type of Alpha.

"Ruusen," Lexa supplied. She met the Sky leader's crimson features. "And yes. All Ruusen Alphas have... equipment." Again, she was amused by Clarke's choice of words for an Alpha's anatomy.

Clarke turned her head away because Lexa's slight smirk was making her more self-conscious. She ran her fingers through her hair and was grateful for the cool breeze against her face.
Lexa scowled her inner Alpha's continued excitement about the conversation's direction. Sharply she stood up and put distance between her and Clarke. She soaked in the autumn weather that helped her rut's intense heat although it did nothing to soothe her body's pain or the sheer discomfort from her pants.

"There's a lot to think about," Clarke softly mentioned. She hoped the different topic would calm them both. It was obvious they touched into something neither of them were ready for. She studied the commander's figure and tried ignoring what she now knew was different about Lexa's anatomy. It had no bearing on an alliance, yet Clarke still knew.

"I do think my mother and Marcus should know your people are caineblida," Clarke pressed. "Obviously not all the details." Again, she felt a damn blush and chided herself for it. She was hardly a child, and they were both adults.

"I agree," Lexa consented. She had designed the caine's code years ago, but she could admit it needed an adjustment. The caine's code instilled silence about their true nature. Perhaps Anya had a point that the silence would hurt them.

"I guess Octavia already knows," Clarke concluded aloud. She frowned at her pseudo friend's neglect to tell her.

"Lincoln had told her," Lexa revealed. "She held her silence to protect Lincoln and the alliance at the time." She had moved closer and stood in front of the fire.

Clarke nodded. She was still displeased by Octavia's choices. Yet, Clarke had just lied to her mother yesterday about her injury, to protect Lexa. She sighed and hoped the pending truth flushed out all the secrets between her people and Lexa's own.

"You should rest," Lexa suggested. She sensed the human's weariness after their talk.

"Are we planning a meeting today?" Clarke was torn between wanting to have one and postponing it until Lexa's rut ended. Whatever hold the rut had on Lexa was clearly affecting many things, especially Lexa's leadership skills.

"Perhaps just a discussion about caineblidas."

Clarke nodded. "I think that would be good. It'll give my mom and Marcus time to think about it... talk about it." She pushed her hands into the jacket's pockets for warmth. She also hoped it would give time for Lexa's rut to end. However, if Lexa's rut lasted the full five days then she needed a better idea to delay the alliance talks. She knew, without doubt, Lexa would refuse to hold off the alliance talks due to her rut simply because it would be a display of weakness.

"Clarke?" Lexa called again. She waited until blue eyes finally sharpened on her. "We should return to the village."

Clarke agreed and sighed at being tired already. The day had barely started, and she was drained from what she learned about Lexa's people. She cursed her own stupidity for getting hurt by the hunter's trap.

Lexa had put out the fire then waited for Clarke to join her. She stood near the rock that was the Sky leader's seat.

Clarke stood up and applied all her weight to her injured leg out of sheer habit. Her mistake produce a bolt of pain up her leg, and she whimpered as her strength bled out.
Lexa was fast and latched onto the falling human.

Clarke instinctively clutched Lexa's arm for support. She released a strained breath when the pain settled down. "S-sorry." Yet again, her face was flushed from nearly falling and especially being held by the commander. She realized Lexa's hold was quite firm. "I'm okay now, Lexa."

For another second, the commander stared down into reddened features. Clarke's scent enticed her Alpha further, and a pleased growl began in the back of her throat. Only Clarke's pat to her arm stirred her daze.

"You can let go now," Clarke ordered. She was freed and created more space by taking a step back. "Thanks." She smiled at the commander.

Lexa dipped her head then turned on her heels. She started back towards the village.

Clarke blew out a low breath and struggled with collecting herself. Her first steps were shaky thanks to her natural reaction to Lexa holding her. She chided herself for acting like a silly thirteen year old girl with her first crush. She was a leader of her people and even slightly revered by the Trikru for Mount Weather's defeat.

The commander painstakingly walked slow, for Clarke. With her rut, she preferred to be moving and doing faster in hopes to burn energy. She unknowingly sniffed the confused scent radiating off the Sky leader. Lexa barely bit down a groan because Clarke's confusion was laced with excitement too.

Finally the walk brought them to the village again. Clarke was quite ready to depart the commander's side. There had been a few previous frustrating times that she needed space from Lexa, but this time it was a little different. Also the leg pain was wearing against her. "Do you want to meet in a few hours?" she offered. "To talk about your people."

"Sha." Lexa decided the time would give her a chance to train with the seconds and Indra. It was a perfect opportunity to let her Alpha gain more control.

Clarke nodded then gave Lexa a weak smile before she went down the intersecting street. She headed directly to the quarters house. Once inside, she released a sigh and went to her shared room. She hoped her mom was there to check her wound then she could sleep before the meeting. She refused to guess what her mother and Marcus Kane would think of the grounders being caineblidas. It was an impasse that could wait until after the meeting.

To be continued.
"I... I don't know what to think," Abby Griffin started first. She was seated by the fire like her daughter and Marcus Kane in her shared room with Clarke. She cupped a mug of tea between her hands.

Marcus was more relaxed and continued staring at the fire.

Clarke weighed her mother's lost features. Yesterday Abby, Marcus, and herself had learned that the grounders were another race called Caineblidas. First thing yesterday morning, Clarke had privately talked to Lexa about it then later in the afternoon they had a brief meeting to explain things to Abby and Marcus. It was now a half hour after dawn, and they were due to have a new alliance meeting. Yet, Abby was facing the largest quandary about what it meant for the possible alliance.

"Mom, I don't think it really matters," Clarke said. She was sitting between her mother and Marcus. She was also drinking tea that her mother had made them. At first, Clarke had been at a loss about the grounder's true nature, but she had more time to process it. "I... I personally don't care."

Marcus rubbed his chin a little but remained quiet. He was mostly listening to the mother and daughter talk about the new information about the grounders.

"I mean I care that I know they're another race," Clarke better explained. "But I don't care when it comes to the alliance." She looked directly at her mother's lost features. "We need an alliance with them whether they're human like us or purple skinned with three eyes."

"They're not aliens, Clarke." Abby met her daughter's gaze. "They're half animal."

"And half human," Clarke reminded. She shook her head and argued, "I mean we don't know their origins... they don't even know."

Abby sighed and shifted her attention to Marcus. "What do you think?"
Marcus lowered his hand from his chin. He was gravely serious and looked between the two women. "I agree with Clarke." He folded his hands in his lap. "We do need this alliance with them."

"We want... need peace," Clarke reminded her mother. "And to find the other stations... our people."

Abby digested the arguments from both of them. She sighed and softly asked, "What if they're not capable of peace?"

"If they're half human then they are," Clarke argued.

"Maybe only half of the caine are peaceful," Abby further debated.

"Because humans made out so well with peace," Marcus reminded the pair.

Clarke felt they were getting off topic from the current issue. She touched her mother's knee and questioned, "What do we have to lose at trying a peaceful alliance with them?" She leaned closer to her mother, who was the rightful chancellor. "But I can guarantee you if any one of us goes into those meetings with an attitude that we're better than them then we'll never see peace." She thought back on the warning from Anya about the Mountain Men. She also prayed that their people, Skaikru, could handle the news about the Caineblida.

Abby was still quiet. She gave a faint nod after a long minute. "Alright." She looked at both of them. "We'll try it."

Clarke squeezed her mother's knee and sternly reminded, "Do not think, let alone act, better than them... or else we'll be the next Mountain Men."

Abby understood the fair warning. "I just need time, Clarke."

After a headshake, Clarke reminded, "We don't have a lot of time."

"Fifteen minutes," Marcus mentioned. He grinned at Abby's soft glare. He shifted towards the women and suggested, "Just try getting to know one of them better, Abby... like Lincoln." He had more of a smile now. "It'll help."

Abby gave in and nodded at them. "Alright." She went back to her mug. She finished it in comfortable silence with the other leaders.

Clarke polished hers off last and then ordered, "Let's go." She got up and went to the table that had her jacket. She still wore her grey sweatpants so her wound could heal properly. She shrugged on her jacket while Marcus put out the fire in the fireplace.

Abby set aside the empty mugs on the table to clean later. She put on her jacket too then followed the pair out of the building.

Shortly, the Sky leaders entered the quiet meeting house. Briefly, Clarke admired the sunrise shining through the stained glass window. She noticed Abby and Marcus took their same seats so she slowly made her way over to hers. Just as she sat down, Anya and Lexa entered next followed by Indra. Yesterday's meeting had only been between the commander and the Sky leaders. Most likely Lexa had informed Anya and Indra that the Sky people now knew the grounders were Caineblida.

Anyah claimed the same seat next to Clarke then Indra was to Anya's left. She gazed over at the commander, who was unbuckling her jacket. It was warmer in the building than outside but not enough to take off a jacket.
Clarke realized it was probably from Lexa's rut. She watched the black coat get slung on the throne's arm. Clarke admired how tight the shirt was against Lexa's muscular, large frame. Quickly her own body temperature spiked in natural appreciation. In frustration, Clarke bowed her head and tried clamping down on her arousal. Now was hardly the time.

Lexa faced the waiting group and approached them. "Yesterday we discussed that my people are a different race from humans." She scanned the Sky leader's faces but realized Clarke's head was uncharacteristically bowed down. Her soft pause caused Clarke to lift her head and in a heartbeat Lexa smelled Clarke's subtle excitement in the air. Lexa's Alpha fiercely surged to the surface, and she clenched her jaw against a growl.

Anya sniffed the electric air between the commander and Clarke. She inwardly groaned that both of them lacked any control, especially Lexa. She hastily broke the daunting silence by speaking up. "Sha, Heda... you made Indra and I aware of such." She hoped her gentler tone helped refocus the commander.

Lexa looked to her general and gave a faint nod. She shifted her intense stare to Marcus and Abby, only. "You have had time to consider the new information. Are your desires for a new alliance any different?"

Clarke heard Lexa's voice so well, but the words were jumbled in her head. She should have spoken up with her mother and Marcus. However, her eyes trailed down the commander's muscular frame to the tight pants. Just behind the snug buttons, Clarke pictured what she had seen the other day and remembered how Lexa attempted to soothe her own rut. She considered whether Lexa had masturbated since then.

Such a personal thought cut through Clarke's foggy mind. She straightened a little once she realized she was blatantly staring at Lexa's crotch in public. She groaned, painfully and pressed her hand against her flushed brow.

Abby had finished agreeing with Marcus that the Sky people still wished for an alliance with the Caineblida. But, she quickly looked at Clarke, who appeared to be in pain. "Clarke, are you alright?"

Clarke was now bent forward, elbow on the table, and head in her right hand. She hastily tried thinking about her current situation because she could barely think straight. That reminded her that Lexa was most likely in the same position thanks to the rut. She vaguely wondered if Lexa's own rut affected Clarke, but she tossed aside the crazy notion.

"Is it your leg?" Abby further ventured. She placed her hands flat against the table, about to go to her daughter.

Her mother's question sparked an idea, and Clarke met her mother's concerned gaze. "The pain is pretty bad today." She hated lying, but it was an opening she could use to her benefit and probably all of them. She kept her right elbow on the table and her arm helped block most of Lexa's position from her view. She grumbled at Anya's very low huff and silently willed Anya to hold her tongue.

"Maybe it's too soon," Marcus suggested.

Abby was on her feet and at her daughter's side. She pushed Clarke's hand away and pressed her palm against her sweaty brow. "You're very warm." She became concerned that Clarke was contracting a fever from infection. "We should hold off on these meetings for awhile." She rather be a doctor before a chancellor.

Clarke straightened a little when her mother stepped aside. "I think so," she agreed. She finally
looked at the commander, who had been curiously watching the exchange the entire time. "If you don't mind, commander...?"

Anya read Lexa's befuddled thoughts so she decided to nudge Lexa in the right direction. "We shouldn't push Clarke, Heda. Perhaps a couple of days of rest would be the best course of action." She ignored Indra's displeased grumble, but Anya already knew Lexa's newly developed instinct to care for Clarke. She had played into it.

Lexa sighed and gave a low nod. "Very well." She had yet to make eye contact with Clarke and only spoke to the group as a whole. "We will delay the talks for another two or three days."

"Thank you, commander," Marcus sincerely offered.

Clarke was so relieved to have the meetings held back. She prayed it was enough time for Lexa to come out of her rut. Hopefully Clarke could get her head on right too.

Indra was the first up, and she shoved her chair in with more aggression than necessary. She was about to leave until the commander halted her. She waited until Lexa accompanied her out of the former church. The commander probably wanted to train with her and the seconds further. She silently cursed Lexa's damn rut.

"We should get you back to rest," Abby suggested to Clarke.

Clarke nodded, but she sensed Anya had something on her mind. She peered over at the general.

"Two... even three days won't be enough," Anya softly informed Clarke. She knew Clarke understood what she was really telling her. "She hasn't even reached her peak." She stood up and left the Sky leaders.

Clarke's mouth was slightly hung open after Anya's information. Today was the third day, which could be the last day of the rut or else there were two more days. The meetings' delay should have been enough to get them past Lexa's rut. And now there was a peak to the rut, which further confused her.

"Clarke," Abby attempted. She was confused by the one sided conversation between Clarke and Anya.

Clarke shook her head and slowly stood up. "Let's go," she insisted. She took her time getting back to the quarters house. The outdoor air was welcoming to her senses and allowed her to think more clearly than she had in the old church.

"I should probably return to Camp Jaha," Marcus mentioned during the walk.

Abby considered the idea.

"It's enough time to get there and back," Clarke agreed.

Abby conceded that one of them should return to Camp Jaha to check on things, especially now that the talks were delayed further.

"Lincoln can probably escort you and a few guards back," Clarke further suggested. "I doubt Lexa will have a problem with it."

"You should check with her first," Abby seconded. She gave her approval for Marcus to go, and he was the best option since Clarke needed Abby's doctor skills.
Marcus was pleased and nodded. He would get a few Sky guards prepared and then confirm it with Lexa. He hoped Lincoln was able to accompany them since he was the easiest grounder.

Clarke eventually made it to the bed and sat upright on it. Her mother checked over the injury, which had severely bruised skin around it. The wound itself was a mangled mess of skin, stitches, and scabs. In a few more days the stitches would be removed and the surface healing would continue for longer. Some type of scarring would ultimately be left on her leg.

Once under the furs, Clarke struggled to find peace in her head after such an awkward meeting today. She heard her mother leave at some point, probably to see Marcus off. But the hours were restless in the bed. Clarke scolded herself each time her mind went back to Lexa masturbating the other day.

And yet Lexa had been propped against the tree, arm up, and fingers clawing into the trunk. With her right hand, Lexa feverishly attempting relieving the aching pressure in her lower belly due to the rut. Every stroke up and down was painstakingly slow in Clarke's memory. She remembered each of Lexa's grunts. She was drawn further back to the kiss before the battle against Mountain Weather. Lexa's scent was musky and the kiss so sweet with promise of power under Lexa's clothes.

Clarke had argued she was hardly ready. Her currently damp underwear told her something else. Somehow it felt like a betrayal. Finn had been her betrayal to Allison. Now her obvious arousal around Lexa seemed like a betrayal to both of them. She rejected Finn's love, but she still cared deeply for him. Allison had been her secret on the Ark. They had been each other's secret for years. Finn had reminded her of Allison greatly, and she hoped to rekindle those feelings by being with him. It had failed and only served to confuse her relationship with Finn. She was confused by what, not just who, she liked anymore.

On the Ark, it had been black and white. Gays were a weakness to the human race's survival. Like Allison, Clarke had hid her desire for women and attempted finding a possible husband that would make the Ark proud. Wells Jaha had been the best option at the time. And she had found herself attracted to him, but she was still holding onto Allison. Until the Ark ran low on oxygen. Until her father was arrested and floated. Until she was imprisoned for treason. And until she landed on Earth.

Now on the ground, Clarke's entire world was reshaping itself including meeting Lexa, a caineblida. Specifically a ruusen caineblida, who was well endowed. What black and white understanding Clarke had about her sexual desires were being tested again. Clarke could no longer ignore that she was aroused by Lexa, both personality and physically. Thanks to a brief glimpse in the woods, Clarke now had fodder for a fantasy. A sexual fantasy that put her in Lexa's arms like their shared hug from days ago and a new kiss more heated than the first one. That was only the start of the fantasy, which left Clarke excited and at a loss.

After a frustrated growl, Clarke tossed the furs off and climbed out of the bed. She had fought for hours to get any fitful sleep, but it was pointless now. For whatever silly reason, she plagued herself with thoughts and images of Lexa. Her overheated body forced her outside into the cool, late afternoon air. It was probably three or so hours before sunset so it was enough time to explore Boyce a little.

Clarke had located the town's local market, which excited her even though she carried no currency. She wondered if the grounders had a currency at all. She made a mental note to ask Lexa or Anya at some point.

The market was quieting down after a busy day. The merchants were packing their wares and loading carts and horses for their trips back home. Several of them curiously eyed the Sky leader and knew she was from Skaikru. One vendor had grilled meat and was about to throw the last few
skewers to the roaming dogs. She paused and instead offered it to the Sky leader as she passed by.

Clarke shook her head and smiled at the kind lady. She had no means to pay her anyway.

The food merchant insisted with a soft, "Beja." She held out the three skewers.

Clarke gave in and took the food. "Mochof." She again smiled warmly at the merchant, who mirrored it before she continued packing her things. Clarke quietly continued down the aisle and glanced at the different items the merchants offered for sale. She came to the end and paused at the last merchant's nearly empty table.

The merchant, a young woman, had a large sack on her shoulder, her back to the aisle. She tossed the sack into a small cart that was hitched to a horse. She turned and was startled to see the stranger at her two tables.

"Heya," Clarke attempted greeting in Trigedasleng.

The merchant bowed her head in kind. She approached the table closest to the stranger. "Skaikru?"
She already knew without an answer.

"Sha." Clarke held out her arm in offer. "Klark kom Skaikru. Yu?"

"Naila... kom Trikru," the merchant introduced. She took the Skaikru leader's offered arm and clasped it tightly.

Clarke smiled warmly but a flash of silver caught her eye. She dropped her attention to the silver, thick bracelet on Niylah's right wrist. She tightened her grip and ordered, "Tell me about this."

Niylah tensed and peered up from the bracelet to the Sky leader.

"Where did you get the wristband?" Clarke further pressed. It was one of the very wristbands that the first one hundred had worn on the ground after crashing in the woods. Memories from the arguments with Bellamy and others about removing the wristbands still bothered her today.

Niylah kept calm and switched to English. "It was traded to me by one of my customers." She stared at the wristband that she had received about a fortnight ago. "I wanted a piece of your people," she explained, "Since you brought down the mountain."

Clarke finally released the merchant's wrist. She tilted her head back slightly so she could see Niylah's features better.

"My mother was taken by the mountain. You ended the reaping." Niylah sensed the human's distraught about something, but she still pushed the conversation. "Can you tell me about the mountain?" She had heard many stories. This was her first time meeting an actual Skaikru.

"There's nothing to tell," Clarke sharply replied. She took a step back. "I did what I had to do... that's all."

Niylah opened and closed her mouth a few times. Clarke's last statement made her realized this was more than just a Skaikru member. This was Wanheda before her. She had heard many rumors and whispers in her trading post about Wanheda and never a real name.

"That's all?" Niylah debated. She became slightly excited again and reminded, "You killed our greatest enemy... that is not nothing."
Clarke shook her head and further moved away from the merchant. "I can't talk about this." She stormed off with the merchant staring at her retreating figure. She was relieved to be out of the market and back in a street. She rubbed her brow and tried letting go of her earlier conversation with Niyalah. It was hardly the merchant's fault, and Clarke felt guilty for her natural reaction.

After a sigh, Clarke continued through the village, headed north. She was unsure why she was drawn this way. She passed the center of town and noticed Anya's distant figure headed in the same direction. She decided to follow to see if she could catch the general.

Anya spotted the training field and already heard a few yells. She suspected the commander was still there with Indra. She paused from her senses telling her something so she pivoted on her foot. She folded her arms at seeing the limping Skaikru.

Clarke glowered at the general's amused look when she was close enough. "Heya."

"Heya, Klark." Anya softly teased, "Are you looking for the commander too?" She tilted her head in the commander's direction.

Clarke cut her eyes over to the training field. She easily spotted the commander's tall figure among the seconds. "No." She smirked at the general. "I was actually looking for you."

Anya slightly bowed and taunted, "I feel so honored." She gave a playful growl when Clarke smacked her arm.

"I hate you sometimes," Clarke mentioned. She ignored the general's throaty chuckle. She went to the training field's fence post.

Anya was hardly deterred and continued tormenting the Sky leader. "Is that what you wished to tell me?"

Clarke rolled her eyes and took a spot on the wood fence. She was glad to put some weight on it rather than her injured leg.

Anya leaned her left side against the post near Clarke. She folded her arms again and admired the Sky leader's beautiful features. She understood why Lexa was in a rut for Clarke, even if Lexa refused to admit it.

Clarke was watching Lexa standing next to Indra, who was speaking to the eight seconds including Octavia. She decided Indra must have been in charge of all the seconds when the second's warriors were busy. She noticed Lexa had a rigid posture and was the only one without a coat on in the brisk weather. It took her back to this morning in the old church. She remembered what Anya said about Lexa's rut.

"Lexa told me a rut lasts three to five days," Clarke mentioned.

"Sha." Anya agreed. "It usually does for most Alphas."

Clarke considered the gray area in Anya's words. "Then why did you say it wouldn't be enough time?"

Anya ruefully smiled at Clarke's earlier attempt to buy more time for Lexa to work through her rut. She secretly admired Clarke's concern. "A rut builds up then fades off." She looked over at the commander. "She hasn't reached her peak. I suspect in the next day or two her rut will peak."

"How do you know?" Clarke urged.
Anya flashed a grin at the Skaikru leader. "I can smell it." She looked back at the commander with the seconds. "Just like everyone else."

Clarke huffed because she sure as Hell could not smell a thing. She was frustrated that the caineblida's had far more insight with each other than humans had with each other. However, she started calculating when Lexa's rut might end. Today was the third day and another day or two put them out to eight to ten days of the rut's full reach. She blew out a breath. "Is this normal?" She focused on Anya to her left. "For it to go this long?"

"No... not normally," Anya replied. She frowned at the worried look from Clarke. "You shouldn't feel guilt about her rut. It's not your fault."

Clarke was staring at the commander, but she lowered her eyes to the ground for a moment. She mulled over why Anya told her to not feel guilt or that it was her fault. Nothing made her feel at fault, even if she felt bad for Lexa's circumstances. There was something deeper to Anya's words, and she decided to bait Anya. After a low breath, she looked up and whispered, "But I do feel guilty."

Anya shook her head and insisted, "You couldn't have known you'd imprint her."

Clarke blinked and silently repeated what Anya revealed to her. A heavy furrow dug across her brow, and she turned to Anya. "I imprinted her?"

All of Anya's senses sounded with an alarm. She slightly sneered once she realized she had fallen into Clarke's well played trap. "Clarke-"

"What do you mean I imprinted her?" Clarke hotly demanded.

Anya cursed low in Trigedasleng for her own assumption that Lexa had told Clarke about imprinting, especially that it had happened to Lexa. She was also annoyed that Clarke cornered her about the imprinting. "You can discuss it with her." She started moving until the Sky leader stepped into her path.

Clarke held up her hands in surrender. "I'm sorry... but you have to tell me." She glanced at the commander behind Anya before she focused on Anya again. "If I'm causing her this pain then maybe I can help her." She lowered her hands and implored, "You know she's too proud to tell me."

Anya closed her eyes and cooled her frustrations that surged up. She huffed heavily and looked at Clarke again. "What do you know about imprinting?" She wondered if humans had such a thing, like caineblida.

Clarke sighed and wracked her memory from classes on the Ark. "I know it's a type of attachment. You often see it in young animals."

Anya nodded at the basic knowledge. "For a caine, it is very important to them." She glanced at Lexa then back to Clarke. "There are different levels of imprinting for caine. We can be imprinted on a pack or family level. And we can be imprinted on a... romantic level." She placed her hand against her chest and explained, "I imprinted Lexa many years ago, as a pack member."

Clarke had a slight smile, but it fell because she knew what level Lexa had been imprinted by her. "How did I even imprint her?"

Anya's hand fell to her sword's hilt. "It is less that you imprint her and more that she allowed you to imprint her." She sighed and continued explaining what probably happened to Lexa. "Costia has been gone for years now. They were imprinted to each other, but her death ended the mutual
imprinting.”

Clarke flinched at what turmoil Costia's death caused on so many levels for Lexa.

"Lexa has been shut off from love since then." Anya considered how it was done, and she silently cursed a particular Alpha's name. She despised the Alpha back in Polis that took advantage of Lexa's weaken state after Costia's death. "It's a weakness to her."

"That's what she told me too," Clarke softly confided.

Anya nodded and suspected Lexa spewed the vile teachings that had been jammed down Lexa's throat at a tender age. She wrangled down her own anger and focused on Clarke. "But we can't ignore what we really are," Anya explained. "Lexa still can be imprinted... Heda or not. And her self-control slipped the day you two met."

Clarke was surprised it would have been that early on. She shook her head and questioned, "Even though I'm human?"

Anya shrugged. "Caine believe only one caine can imprint another, but we really don't know." She signaled the commander with her chin. "I think our Heda just proved even humans can imprint us." She had a toothy grin.

Clarke was dumbfounded and followed Anya's gaze to the commander. She hoarsely whispered, "Why me?"

Anya lost her grin and studied the Sky leader's confused look. "Because you challenge her like an Alpha. And you smell similar to an Omega. You fascinate her and you frustrate her." Anya had watched the slow development between the two opposing leaders. "Her Alpha finds you worthy of her."

Clarke was positive she was blushing after Anya's assessment of how Lexa became imprinted by her.

Anya hummed at the human's secret pleasure at being worthy of the commander. She could smell it mixed in under all the uncertainty. Clarke may be a human, but Anya agreed with Lexa that caineblidas were still half human themselves. After a devilish smile, she decided to turn the table back on Clarke this time. She noticed how fixated Clarke was with the commander on the training field. Anya stepped closer to Clarke and whispered, "Just stay here for awhile and watch her."

Clarke shook her head and looked at Anya now. She softened at how close Anya was to her. She considered whether she somehow imprint Anya in a way, as friends. She cleared her voice and asked, "What you mean?"

Anya pointed at the fence. "Stand there and watch her." She lowered her hand to her side. "You'll see her giving you a show once they start practicing." Without doubt, Anya knew Lexa's Alpha would take full advantage to court Clarke. She relished her Omega's natural need to push Lexa's potential mate in the right direction.

Clarke returned to her spot but realized Anya was leaving her. "Wait... where are you going?" She thought Anya had to talk to Lexa anyway.

"I have a few things to take care of," Anya dodged. "I'll be back later." She hurried off and allowed the show to begin. She knew that Lexa would reserve herself in front of Anya's watchful eye, as if Anya gave a damn. She wolfishly smiled as she pictured Lexa flaunting in front of Clarke for the pure purpose of courtship. Even Lexa was subjected to her wolf blood and needs of being a
Clarke turned away from Anya's departure. She shook her head at the direction the conversation had gone. She wanted to pick Anya's mind about what she could do to speed up Lexa's rut. She leaned against the fence and noticed that Indra gave an order to the seconds. The seconds broke away and faced Lexa and Indra.

Lexa and Indra unsheathed their swords and moved to an open space. Indra was the first to strike. In a series of exact movements and hits, she demonstrated to the seconds how to perform a new yet basic attack. Lexa reciprocated by going on defense and deflected the blows. At the end, she and Indra had traded sides on the field.

For the umpteenth time, Lexa stole a glance at Clarke and Anya. She was please to find that Anya had left and the only audience was Clarke. Her Alpha puffed up in her chest and craved to showoff in front of Clarke. She cut her eyes back to Indra, who finished talking to the seconds.

"Again," Indra informed the commander, "But slower."

Lexa obliged Indra and went at a schooling pace for the seconds.

Indra went dramatically slow with each strike and explained to the seconds what she was doing. She indicated each of the commander's defenses as well. The third time they went at normal speed to demonstrate the moves and defenses.

Lexa was fluent and obviously a master with her sword. She had been helping Indra all day with training, and it assisted with cooling her rut, a little. But the training was slow too because the seconds were so new. Still it gave Lexa a chance to determine how each second would mold into future warriors for the army.

Several more times Indra demonstrated the new techniques until they had completed seven rounds of it. She broke away from Lexa and ordered the seconds to pair up and practice it. She allowed the seconds some time before she and Lexa began barking at them. Indra was rather pleased with Octavia's determination to master the offensive technique.

After awhile, Indra ordered the seconds to switch position so that the offensive second become the defensive one. Similarly, she and Lexa corrected any second that was making errors. There were a few seconds that seemed to have good heads on their shoulder. Typically one or two would present themselves to be anything but worthy of a warrior.

Lexa came to the end of the line and cast a stare across the field towards the fence line. To her amazement, Clarke was still there and watching them. A pleased rumble started in her chest, and she felt her Alpha push for control. To her Alpha, it was plainly obvious Clarke wanted Lexa to show her skills as a warrior.

Indra folded her arms and allowed the seconds to finish the series of moves. She then commanded them to take a break. She was about to move when Lexa stood in her path. "Sha, Heda?"

"Oso na granplei," Lexa ordered. She unsheathed her sword and lifted the blade.

Indra grumbled because she hated being at the brunt end of Lexa's rut. Yet she had to oblige the commander. She drew out her sword, which scraped against the sheath. She readied her weapon. She stepped backwards several times, gaining space from the seconds. Lexa trailed after her, and it gave Indra a moment to ready.

Lexa spun her sword once then suddenly lunged at Indra.
Indra ducked under and slid to her left. She raised her sword when another blow came at her face. She parried it then swept her blade around at Lexa's side.

Lexa blocked the attack with her blade pointed downward. She rolled away then swung the tip near Indra's face, just missing Indra's nose.

Indra growled in protest then surged forward, but Lexa side stepped her and smacked the flat of her blade into Indra's mid-back.

A few seconds cheered from the sidelines. They had rallied from their break to watch the two trained warriors battle each other.

Clarke had straightened up from the fence and clutched it with both hands. She flinched when Indra slammed her blade across Lexa's horizontal one. She held her breath as Indra tried driving Lexa down to her knees.

Lexa bared her teeth and snarled at Indra. She gave a low war cry before she jammed her knee into Indra's stomach.

Indra stumbled back, which also freed Lexa from the power struggle. She spun her sword and slowly approached the commander.

Lexa wolfishly smiled and suddenly blitzed Indra with one thrust after another. She spun in a circle twice, swiping the blade so close to Indra's face. She ended with a sidekick that sent Indra on her back. Another cheer from the seconds only fueled the fire in her blood.

Indra climbed back on her feet and growled at Lexa. With anger, she came at the commander with fast swipes and thrusts. She landed a solid blow with her elbow into Lexa's stomach. She grunted at the solid wall that was Lexa's abdomen, but Lexa's painful grunt was pleasing enough. Indra rolled away but not without slapping the flat of her blade against Lexa's sword hand.

Lexa reacted by dropping her sword, and she snarled at Indra's success. She instantly retaliated by kicked at Indra's sword hand.

Indra howled low after her sword went flying several paces away from her. She raised her hands in preparation for hand-to-hand combat. She could tell Lexa was hardly ready to stand down.

Lexa's growl continued getting thicker. She was showing all her teeth in ferocious display for dominance in the fight. For a heartbeat, she looked in Clarke's direction.

Clarke was digging her nails into the fence's wood. She was consumed by both awe and concern. Every blow become more intense to her. She wanted the fight to end peacefully, even if she was impressed by Lexa's skills as a warrior. She inhaled sharply when Indra charged the commander.

Lexa blocked a punch to her face then jumped before a kick had her in the stomach. Another punch came at her chest, but she latched onto Indra's outstretched arm. She bent Indra's arm and jerked her forward.

Indra slammed into Lexa's more solid frame. Suddenly her feet lost their grip on the Earth, and she went down harshly onto the ground. She rolled before Lexa stomped her. Indra spun her lower torso to bring her legs around and kicked Lexa below the waistline.

"Jok," Lexa hissed when a boot heel weakly struck her between the legs. A harsh pain throbbed in her groin from Indra's strike. She growled at Indra's dirty trick to distract her.
Indra was back on her feet and smirked at Lexa's dangerous glare. "Watch your soft spot, Heda," she taunted. However, her smirk fell when a white ring surfaced around Lexa's eyes. There was no mistaking an Alpha's control.

Lexa was furious and released the wolf throbbing in her veins. She snarled louder and lunged for Indra without care or technique. Her entire body collided into Indra like a blast.

Indra tried bracing for the impact, but Lexa was a full mass of muscle and power that was multiplied by a rut. She yelped when she was lifted off the ground then instantly brought back down in a shattering slam.

Distantly the seconds hollered for their teachers. Several of them gasped when Indra was lifted up by the commander. They all cringed at the harsh slam of Indra's back into the cold ground.

Lexa straightened up and glared down at Indra. "Try that again, and you won't walk off this field." She dared Indra to battle her further, but Indra was wiser this time. She watched Indra look away from her so she accepted the yield. Lexa huffed and broke away from the fallen warrior.

Indra released a strained breath and hoped she could get up on her own. She mentally inventoried her body for anything other than severe pain. Nothing seemed broken at least. She peered over her left shoulder when the commander started across the training field. Gingerly, Indra sat up and collected herself.

Lexa marched across the sparring field and went directly to her target, Clarke Griffin. She sheathed her sword only steps in front of Clarke.

"That's the first time I've really seen you fight," Clarke offered once Lexa was close enough. "I know you fought in Mount Weather... from what little I saw in the monitors in the Control Room."

Lexa folded her arms, which caused her biceps to bulge in display.

Clarke crossed her arms on the top of the fence. She admired the sweat on Lexa's features. Part of her wondered if Lexa was purposefully exhibiting herself. Anya's earlier suggestion surfaced in her mind again. She decided to test the theory and offered, "You fight really well." Even a blind person would have seen how Lexa flaunted at the compliment.

"I have been training since I was eight," Lexa declared, proudly.

Clarke straightened up once she realized Anya was right. Lexa was showing off for her, whether on purpose or subconsciously, Clarke was unsure. However, the preening was very obvious and different for Clarke. Since she met Lexa, there was no parading of skills or demonstration of muscle, but this was a different side of Lexa. This was the Alpha trying to court a potential mate. Clarke was, admittedly, flattered and also flabbergasted by it.

"That's what Anya told me," Clarke softly mentioned. She licked her lips and continued talking without any thought given to what came out of her mouth next. "Maybe after my leg is healed, you could teach me some basic fighting since you seem to be the best." She barely contained her groan when Lexa smiled at her wolfishly. What was she doing? She had flirted with Lexa and stroked the Alpha's ego all at once.

After a proud rumble settled in Lexa, she promised, "I would be honored."

Clarke patted the fence in hopes it would hold down her internal schoolgirl giggles. This was too far out of hand, and she needed to end it. "I don't want to hold you from training." She started turning until Lexa's question gave her pause.
"How is your leg?"

Clarke looked over her shoulder at the commander. "It still hurts quite a bit... but I'm sure it'll improve tomorrow." She shrugged until she saw the obvious concern in Lexa's features. She added, "Each day is a little better." She tucked her hands into her jacket pockets. Again, she attempted to go until Lexa's next question grabbed her attention.

"Dinner?"

Clarke slightly pivoted more in Lexa's direction. She hummed at the dinner invite that made her feel like it was a request for a date. She had no idea if caineblida did dates, but at the very least it probably fell into courtship. Declining the offer would have been the safest bet since Clarke had barely any idea what it all meant for her and the relationship she built with Lexa. Yet, Clarke rarely played safe nor could she hide from her attraction to Lexa anymore. After a steady breath, she smiled and replied, "I'd love that."

Lexa half expected Clarke to turn her down and the acceptance made her Alpha howl in pleasure. Just then her body reminded her of the rut that had only be tempered briefly by the fight with Indra. She gritted her teeth against the sharp pain in her lower gut and the harsh throb between her legs. She clamped down on her Alpha because she believed in her self-control. She was stronger than her rut.

"Come by when you're ready," Clarke offered. She finally broke away and left the commander. This time, she escaped for both their sakes. She blew out a low breath and considered what had just happened between them. As she gained more distance from Lexa, she realized she most likely had just granted Lexa permission to attempt courtship, if it was even a thing for caineblida.

With a groan, Clarke knew she needed to talk to Anya before Lexa came tonight. She refused to continue being uninformed about romance between caineblida. If she and Lexa continued down this path then the alliance could be affected by their mutual attraction. Already the alliance talks were being affected by them.

Clarke silently cursed both their people. She hoped one day her and Lexa owed them nothing else. She just wanted peace and possibly love too.

To be continued.

---

**Trigedasleng to English**


Oso na granplei. - We will practice.
Chapter 8

Clarke was seated upright in her bed, back against the wall. In her lap, she worked on a new sketch after weeks of ignoring her sketch journal. Beside her were several different colors of pencils, but she typically used just graphite. With a pause, she eyed her mother on the other side of their shared quarters. Abby was unaware that Clarke was having dinner with the commander, yet. Clarke sighed and went back to the drawing.

Abby was seated at the table and reading from her tablet. To her right was a mug of tea that would hold her over until dinner. Late this morning she saw to Marcus Kane leaving with four Sky guards and Lincoln. Thankfully the commander had been agreeable to the idea. After a quick glance at the crackling fireplace, Abby returned to her digital novel.

Sunset was only a hour away then most likely Lexa would arrive to collect Clarke. Shortly ago, Clarke had spent time with Anya and asked about caineblidas and courtship. Apparently Anya was proud that Lexa's initial attempt on the training field had worked on Clarke. From that confirmation, Anya eased into explaining what could possibly happen from that point. Clarke paused in her sketch and drifted back to the conversation with Anya.

"Sha," Anya agreed. "She is courting you... whether she realizes it or not."

"Because of her rut?"

Anya considered how to best explain it to Clarke. "To a degree." She sensed the human's dismay under the calm features. "She would have courted you with or without her rut... but her rut is simply pushing her sooner."

Clarke better understood and agreed because there were hints, before the rut. It was more than just the first kiss. From the beginning, Lexa had done small things like gifting Clarke a horse, ordering Ryder to protect her, and later inviting her to Polis. At every turn, Lexa silently shielded Clarke from trouble. Yet, the rut's control left her with a gut full of worry. "What if..." She hesitated, which gave a chance for a blush to show on her cheeks. She hoped Anya ignored it. "What if it's just... you know..." She shook her head and took a deep breath. "What if it's strictly sexual?"
"Then a caine wouldn't bother courting... especially an Alpha." Anya leaned closer to the seated Sky leader. She kept her voice low so that a passersby on the street missed their conversation. "I know Lexa better than most." She sniffed out a hint of fear under Clarke's skin and assessed why. "If you told her no then she would never push you... even in her rut."

Clarke released a low breath then nodded. "This is really... overwhelming." She dragged her fingers through her hair. "I don't know how we even got here... or where it's going."

Anya sympathized with Clarke's concerns. In the sky, it was probably a slower paced lifestyle than here on the ground. In time, she knew Clarke would get use to the faster life because a grounder never knew if they would wake up to the next sunrise. After a deep breath, she mentioned, "Caine are not the best talkers."

Clarke patted Anya's knee. "Exception."

Anya huffed, but she found it easy to communicate with Clarke. Perhaps it was because Clarke was a human and wished to converse. She pushed the thought aside and finished explaining herself. "But we do listen and act."

Clarke completely agreed with the assessment. Recently, she felt that Lexa was opening up more when they were in private. But the rut had made Lexa withdrawn and more open sexually. It was a strange transition that still took an adjustment for Clarke. After a sigh, she curiously posed, "How often do ruts happen?"

"Every other month," Anya replied.

Clarke blew out a breath and nodded. She raised an eyebrow at Anya. "Do Omegas go through ruts?"

Anya shook her head. "Heats."

Clarke easily guessed what a heat meant for an Omega. She narrowed her eyes at Anya and quickly checked, "Are you due for one soon?"

Anya throatily chuckled at the Sky leader's tease. "I have not been in a heat for a long time."

Clarke considered this news. It told her that Anya had no mate, which saddened her too. She wanted to learn more, but she was also tired from today. She was cold and ready to warm up in her quarters.

Anya stood up after sensing Clarke's weariness. "You should rest... before your date."

Clarke rolled her eyes at the general. She suspected Anya would use any chance to say date rather than courtship. She regretted telling the general.

Anya needed to catch up with the commander. She hesitated from saying goodbye and softly advised, "If you trust her and you're attract to her then don't waste your chance."

Clarke nodded at the meaningful statement. It was true that time on the ground could be short, very short. One day she or Lexa could be gone in an instant. She smiled at Anya and whispered, "Mochof."

"Pro," Anya returned. She said goodbye then left the Sky leader.

Clarke briefly stood there, in distant thought. Those same thoughts were still with her now as she sat on her bed in the shared quarters. The fireplace's low pop made Clarke refocus on the present rather
than her prior conversation with Anya. She looked down at her sketch of Lexa's empty throne. Perhaps one day she would redraw it with Lexa in it, similar to the first day they met in the tent.

With a huff, Clarke closed the sketch journal then quickly put the pencils into the small bag before she put everything into her leather pack. She got up and limped her way over to the empty chair next to her mother.

Abby set her tablet down. "How are you feeling?"

"A little better than this morning," Clarke replied. She stretched good leg then looked back at her mother. "I plan to have dinner with Lexa this evening."

Abby curiously studied her daughter's passive features. She failed to find any giveaways in Clarke. "Oh."

"I don't think we'll be long," Clarke promised. She was tired anyway. She touched her mother's knee and checked, "You'll be okay without me?"

"Of course." Abby shrugged and smiled weakly. "I'll see if Thomas will join me."

Clarke nodded and recalled Thomas Wilker was one of the Sky guards with them. She patted her mom's knee once then stood. "I'm going to clean up." Lexa would be here soon. She went into the small washroom.

Abby stared at the fire and considered Clarke's plans with Lexa. She knew that the pair had developed a mutual respect for each other. The original alliance had been forged between them, strictly. After a sigh, she let it go and instead got up. She put more logs into the fire.

Clarke returned from the washroom and decided to change out of her sweats for dinner. She fished around in her saddlebags until she had the jeans and a fresh shirt.

"I'll stitch your black pants tomorrow," Abby mentioned. "They should be dry enough."

"Thanks, Mom." Clarke sat down and gingerly took off her sweatpants. She clenched her teeth from the leg pain when removing the pants and putting on the jeans. After getting her boots laced, she grabbed her leather belt and started threading it through the loops.

Abby returned to her book on the tablet. She distantly listened to Clarke's soft movements. Later a knock at the door startled her. She went to answer it and offered a smile to the commander.

Lexa politely bowed her head in greeting to the chancellor.

"How are you, Lexa?"

Lexa had entered the room. Her linked hands rested in front of her. "Good. Yourself?"

"The same," Abby offered. She then turned to her daughter.

Clarke limped over and stood closer to Lexa. She felt all of the commander's attention on her, as if Abby was a figment. "I won't be long, Mom." She shrugged on her jacket.

"Please be careful," Abby pressed. She sighed when the young women left the quarters.

Clarke worked the zipper on her jacket as they left the building. She found it chiller than last night. "How much colder does it get?" She glanced at Lexa, who wore her hip length jacket rather than the longer one. She huffed at Lexa's obvious self-radiating heat from the rut.
"Much," Lexa simply replied.

Clarke grumbled and dug her hands deeper into the jacket pockets. She peered up at Lexa again then asked, "How are you feeling?" She walked slightly closer to the commander.

Lexa seemed to be searching for the right word. "Wolfish," she finally replied.

Clarke sucked in her next breath. She decided that perfectly summarized Lexa's current state. "Hopefully it'll come to pass soon."

Lexa crossed the street with Clarke, beelining for the dining hall. "Tomorrow will be the worst of it."

Clarke heard the certainty in Lexa's voice. She swallowed at what it could mean for Lexa. She was a human and had barely any concept what a rut was much less felt like. She parted her lips but the question died on her. She wanted to ask what she could do to help when she already knew the answer.

There was absolutely nothing medical that could be done beyond sedating Lexa and that was wrong. The second option was one that Clarke had already fantasized, and it wrought her with guilt. The simple math that equaled Lexa's relief from the rut was clear to Clarke, but it overwhelmed her. With Finn, it had been simple to be with him and the overall experience was decent. Her relationship with Allison had been more delicate, especially on the Ark. But with Lexa, it carried so many complications that Clarke could nearly drown in it. She suspected the sheer complications were what probably pained Lexa even more than the rut itself.

Lexa pushed open the dining hall's front door and held it for Clarke. Once inside, she was grateful for the food smells that permeated the building.

Clarke knew the motions of the dining hall. She soon had a plate full of food and was about to grab a table until Lexa's voice halted her.

"Do you mind eating outside?"

"S-sure," Clarke nearly stuttered. She internally shivered at the pending cold.

However, Lexa already had a plan to keep Clarke warm. Once outside, she guided them to a small bonfire that had a few warriors around it. All Trigedaslang conversations fell once Heda and Wanheda entered the area. No warrior argued the Sky leader's rare presence, some warriors slightly use to Clarke kom Skaikru.

Clarke continued ignoring the stares from the Trikru warriors. Long ago, she accepted the unwanted attention that would eventually fade. Once she and Lexa claimed a log seat, the warriors went back to their conversations.

Lexa made sure to position herself upwind from Clarke. But, it was the bonfire's smokiness that gave her the best barrier to Clarke's scent.

Clarke made sure to keep a certain distance between them. Since learning about the rut, Clarke had become hyper aware of their personal space. For a few minutes, they simply ate in comfortable silence. She wondered if they would talk at all. With Lexa's rut, it was less likely that Lexa would prompt Clarke.

"I discovered the market," Clarke mentioned. She was nearly done eating. A low, pleased rumble from the commander made her peer up. "I uh... met a trader that had..." She lowered her gaze to the plate. "She had an item from my people."
Lexa had very little on her plate, and she was nearly done. She finished the deer meat then set the wood plate down with the tarnished fork on top. "What was it?"

"It was a bracelet," Clarke explained. She bit her bottom lip and thought back on the monitoring wristbands. "Sorta of." She sighed and better explained, "It was a piece of tech that we all had to wear when we were sent to Earth. It would relay vitals back to the Ark so they would know if we were still alive." She stared at her food and debated whether she was still hungry. "So that they could decide whether Earth was survivable or not."

Lexa gave a low hum. She watched Clarke break free from the memories and finish off her plate. She was glad to see Clarke was eating properly. Most likely there was no infection in Clarke's system. "How did she obtain it?"

Clarke sighed and put the plate down on the ground. "She said she got it in trade." She tucked her hands into her jacket pockets for warmth. "She wanted it because my people stopped the reapings... stopped the mountain."

Lexa silently considered this and mentioned, "Many villagers are grateful for what you did."

Clarke huffed. "I just wanted to save our people." But not kill off the Mountain Men. Yet, as she learned more about the Mountain Men, she felt less guilt for their demise. Perhaps there was no way around it. Even if the Mountain Men had adjusted to the radiation and came above ground then further Hell would break loose between Mountain Men and Caineblidas. There were many generations of bad blood between the two groups. Soon that would all be erased by Lexa's final order for the prisoners. She still held back from asking Lexa about the prisoners from the mountain. Ignorance was bliss in this case.

"We saved our people," Lexa reminded the human.

Clarke sighed and dipped her head. "We did," she whispered. Such thoughts about Lexa's people made her skip ahead to the future. "Are we still going to Polis?" It was the third time they were discussing it. So much kept changing between them that she had to be sure.

"Sha... if you still wish."

Clarke truly wanted to learn more about the grounders or rather the caineblidas. Their culture was different and still similar to the Sky people. "Sha," she softly returned. She flashed a smile at the commander. After a moment, she decided to bring up what she had learned from Anya. It was only fair that Lexa was aware of it. "Anya told me... about why your rut started again."

Lexa tensed and fisted her hands in her lap. She struggled with the low growl in her chest.

"It was my fault," Clarke headed off. She nearly reached for Lexa but held back. "I tricked her into telling me." She saw a sliver of self-control back in the commander. "She told me about imprinting."

Lexa huffed heavy, in displeasure and frustration. She strangled the excitement that her Alpha gave off. There was no reason to be a pleased Alpha when Clarke knew the truth about imprinting. She had to think with her head.

"She explained how I might have imprinted you." Clarke was still thinking it through yet. Now that the truth was out, she indeed felt guilt for accidentally setting off Lexa's rut.

Lexa saw the human's distraught about the rut. She grinded her teeth then tried remedying the situation. "It does not matter." She found curious blue eyes upon her. "After my rut ends, I will break the imprinting."
Instantly Clarke felt punched low in the gut. All the blood drained from her features. She looked towards the bonfire and cleared her throat in hopes it could rid of her natural distress. She shook her head slightly and weakly asked, "Is... is that possible?"

"Sha." Lexa considered her prior teachings about imprinting, especially from her mentor. "It can be done."

Clarke swallowed her discontent and instead stared at the fire again. Like the flames, her emotions burned hotly in her heart. She chided herself for silly, personal feelings when her people and Lexa's people were more important. Their new alliance was more important than her needs. In the end, she concluded she was mistaken in thinking their dinner was a date.

"I think I'm getting tired." Clarke normally enjoyed the commander's company. Tonight was too difficult on many levels. Their conversation disheartened her and Lexa was different under the rut's control.

Lexa dipped her head. She collected the plates as Clarke eased up. At a slow pace, they headed back to the main street. Now clear of the bonfire, Lexa had a better scent on the Sky leader. She grumbled at the distress that clung to Clarke. She now understood Clarke's real reasoning to ending their night. However, it was for the best and Lexa pushed down her Alpha's desires to comfort Clarke.

Once on the street, Clarke turned to the commander. "Thank you... for dinner." She slightly smiled at the commander and started leaving for the quarters house.

"Clarke..." Lexa waited until the Sky leader turned back to her. "Tomorrow will be... difficult," she explained, "It may be best if we don't cross paths tomorrow." She clenched her jaw when her Alpha angrily howled at the sheer idea.

Clarke stared at Lexa and studied all the rut's signals. Perspiration still coated Lexa's brow and once green eyes were fully diluted by excitement. Even the air was thick around Lexa, nearly suffocating, when it was often inviting to Clarke. Tomorrow would be the worst day of the rut, and Lexa wanted to protect her from it. It was unnecessary in Clarke's mind, but she still respected Lexa's wishes. "I understand," she murmured. Without a farewell, she quietly slipped away into the darkness.

A low chuff broke free from Lexa's inner Alpha. She continued to the dining hall to rid of the dishes. She had a few stops to make before she could retire for the night. Eventually, she found Anya in her small, quiet home on the edge of the western end of the village. She sniffed the familiar, comforting scents of Anya's home. It was a home she knew since childhood.

"Heda," Anya greeted. She allowed the commander into her home and indicated a chair by the burning fireplace. "Do you need anything to drink?"

"No." Lexa took a seat by the fire.

Anya had only been sharpening her blades after being dulled by the recent battle against Mount Weather. She left the blade and sharpening kit on the floor by her favored chair. "You are not here for small talk."

L Lexa sighed at her former mentor's intuition. There was very little, if anything, she could hide from Anya. "You informed Clarke that she imprinted me."

Anya huffed and remarked, "She is too damn clever."

L Lexa grunted and continued staring at the fire. She kept her legs spread, in hopes to make sitting more comfortable. She release a low breath and mentioned, "She is." She looked at Anya. "She is in
less pain than she claims to be."

Anya slotted her eyes at the commander. She was taken aback that Lexa actually figured out Clarke's scheme, even with the rut's haze. Without thought, Anya rallied to Clarke's defense. "She is only trying to help you."

"Sha," Lexa muttered. She had conceded to Clarke's request to hold off the meetings. At first, Clarke's leg pain had been a concern until later today Lexa concluded it was only a ploy to buy time.

Anya detected that Lexa was secretly touched by Clarke's concerns. She knowingly smiled until Lexa glared at her. She hid her pleasure quickly.

"I have told Clarke that we are not to cross paths tomorrow," Lexa revealed.

Anya stiffened and suddenly frowned at the news. Tomorrow Lexa would crest in her rut. It confused Anya why Lexa fought to hide and shield Clarke from her true nature. "You will only make this more painful, especially for yourself."

"I can't be distracted by my heart, Anya," Lexa growled.

Anya was hardly intimidated by the Alpha in Lexa. She had battled and defeated many Alphas in her lifetime. And she had basically raised the commander from childhood. "Fucking Titus," she hissed. She swore one day she would kill that rousen Alpha for all his misguided teachings he hammered into Lexa.

Lexa bared her teeth after the insult about her other mentor. For years, she knew how Anya felt about Titus. She cut the argument short by standing up. "I expect you to assist with keeping Clarke away. I will inform Ryder and Indra too." She headed for the front door.

Anya was on her feet and called, "When are you going to start thinking with your little head instead of your big one?"

Lexa had her hand on the latch. She released it and faced the general. She disbelieved what Anya just said to her.

"Wake up, Leksa," Anya snapped. "We are all caine." She saw Lexa's fisted hand was starting to shake, but she pushed Lexa anyway. She had always pushed Lexa so that their commander could be better. "You are a caine."

"I am Heda first," Lexa yelled at the general. "I will not be subjected to caine impulses."

"Because you're better than your people?" Anya demanded.

"Because I have to be," Lexa shouted. Then her low growl warned Anya to back down.

Anya ignored the warning and replied, "That is Titus's bullshit talking." She pointed her hand in the general direction of Polis. "Do you think that rousen Alpha has any fucking clue about our people while he sits up in that tower?" She then pointed at the ground. "You are down here... with us. You are no longer a child." She fisted her own hands and hotly demanded, "Fucking wake up, Lexa!"

Lexa was seconds from an explosion so she jerked the door open. She stormed out of the home, which nearly lost its front door. She wanted to yell furiously, but she managed to fight it down. She had to be the commander, not a feral Alpha.

Anya growled low and heavy after the commander left. How she wanted to claw Titus's face off
right now, before she ran her blade through his gut. She blamed herself for allowing that venomous Alpha to poison Lexa's young mind. If she had only known his plan, she would have kept Lexa away from him. One day his fate would come, Anya swore it.

After several deep breaths, Anya started pacing in front of the fire. Her mind was working faster and faster with each step. She needed a plan to ensure Lexa would chose Clarke in the end. Even if there was no consummation during the rut, it only mattered that the imprinting continued to strengthen so that they would mate. But, she had heard rumors that Lexa may go to Polis, which meant Titus. She seethed at the sheer idea of Lexa seeing Titus after so long. If Anya wanted to beat Titus and free Lexa, she needed to push Lexa and Clarke harder, before Polis.

"Expects me to help keep Clarke away," Anya muttered, bitterly. She puffed her chest then let it out slow. She grinned and promised, "I don't think so, Heda." With a better direction in mind, Anya sunk into the chair. She picked up the sword and sharpening stone. Tomorrow, she would located Clarke and give the push that needed to be done. "Branwoda," she muttered under her breath.

The night wore on and eventually the entire village of Boyce became quiet. Patrols continued throughout the evening. At first light, more home's chimneys bellowed with smoke from freshly started fires. The streets filled again with farmers headed to their fields. The fall crops only had weeks left before they had to be harvested when snowfall would begin.

Anya took care of several duties first thing then ate a quick meal. She left her home with a renewed energy to see her plans start. She went across the town and until she was at the armory. The guards eyed her but allowed her to pass. Anya was one of the few that could enter the armory without any authority from the commander. Her position as general allowed her many privileges.

Anya went down stairs to the former bank's vault. Even though the vault door was open, this part of the armory was sealed by a thick steel gate. Anya fished out her key and worked it in the gate's lock. After it unlatched, she swung it open and entered the secured area of the armory. Without much searching, she located the Sky people's weapons and easily determined which one was Clarke's handgun. She had seen it multiple times and the small blue marking on the grip was a giveaway. Anya nervously held a gun, for the first time. She gathered her courage and hid the weapon into her jacket's inner pocket. Anya prayed it was safe there.

Anya secured the vault again and left the armory. She cut across the street and entered the guest quarters that held the Sky people. She went down the hall and hoped that she was early enough. She paused at the third door and knocked on it. Anya straightened her back when the chancellor opened it.

"Hello, Anya."

"Good morning, chancellor." Anya stole a glance into the room, but she failed to see the other Sky leader. "Is Clarke here?"

"Yes... she's just getting ready." Abby wondered how their door was becoming revolving for these grounders. Last night it had been the commander and now the general. She stepped aside and offered, "Come in. Take a seat by the fire."

Anya did so and heard Abby speaking to Clarke in the washroom.

Clarke emerged from the washroom with a brush in hand and finished running it through her damp hair. "Heya, Onya." She was confused by the general's unexpected visit.

Anya nearly rose to her feet until Clarke sat beside her. "How are you feeling?"
Clarke suspected Anya meant about her leg. "It's better today." She suspected they could resume the meetings tomorrow, if Marcus made it back.

Anya was pleased and tilted her head. "Are you interested in going for a ride?"

Clarke considered the idea. It would be nice to leave the village, for awhile. "I think I can manage." She smiled at Anya's pleasure about riding together. She looked towards her mother, who came out of the washroom. "Mom, I'm going to go riding with Anya this morning."

"Clarke-"

"I'll be fine," Clarke promised. "We won't go far from the village."

Abby relented because there was little she could do to stop her daughter, who was just as stubborn as her. She sighed and said, "After breakfast together."

"Deal." Clarke looked at Anya again. "Meet at the stable in an hour?"

Anya rose up and answered, "Sha." She quietly left and quarters.

At the stable, Clarke found Anya in the stall with her horse. Fire Tree, as Clarke remembered the name. She had her arms loaded with the horse tack and saddle. She flashed a brief smile to the general then ducked into the stall that had her horse. The ride today would be nice, almost necessary. Clarke suspected Anya looked forward to it too.

Anya was finished prepping her horse so she walked him out of the stable. She waited outside for Clarke, who would take a little more time. As she enjoyed the cool, fresh air, she noted the commander diagonally from her spot by the stable.

Lexa had Ryder as her shadow today. They crossed the street to the former church, which now served as Lexa's office. By the building's steps, Lexa turned to Ryder to give a few orders. She was about to go up into the church until she sensed Anya's attention. She turned her head towards the general.

Anya briefly held the commander's intense stare but soft horse clops rang in her ears.

"I'm ready," Clarke commented. However, she followed Anya's keen attention to Lexa on the other side of town.

Lexa grounded her teeth when her Alpha became painfully jealous. She curled her hands into fists and tore herself away. She growled her way up the steps and entered the church. She had work to do now that messengers from Polis were coming to Boyce.

Clarke turned to her horse and attempted mounting, but it was tricky using her non-diminate leg. She was surprised when Anya helped her into the saddle. She became comfortable in the seat and made sure there was very little pressure on her injured leg.

Anya was already on her horse's back. She questioning glanced at the human, who just nodded back. Anya tapped the horse's side and led the way out of town.

Clarke enjoyed the quiet ride from Boyce. Similar to coming to the village, she observed all the town's character and the people. She could learn to enjoy this quiet lifestyle.

Once out of the village's eyes, Anya reached into her jacket and drew out the handgun. "Here." She nudge Fire Tree closer to Clarke's horse. "You'll need this."
Clarke was startled to see her Glock. "Anya..."

Anya kept her arm out and wished Clarke would take the damn weapon from her. "We're out of the village. It's not safe out here."

Clarke accepted the weapon and decided knowingly nothing about how Anya obtained it was better. She tucked the weapon into her waistband. "Thank you."

"You do seem to have a knack for finding trouble," Anya remarked. She grinned wolfishly at Clarke's eye roll.

"Sometimes I think I liked it better when you hated me," Clarke mentioned.

Anya huffed low and needled, "Who says I still do not?"

Clarke grunted and shook her head. She was surprised when Anya veered off the road and entered the open lands. She hastily steered her horse to the left. She simply followed the general through the beautiful, rolling lands. But she did notice a slight path in the grasses, between trees, and past rock walls.

"I had a strange dream the other day... with you in it."

Anya peered over her shoulder at the human. She raised an eyebrow to prompt Clarke to go further with it.

"You didn't survive the gunshot wound to your stomach." Clarke only glanced at Anya, to read emotions, but Anya was neutral. She continued aiding her horse along the path. "You were in a land called Wantof."

"Deadlands," Anya translated into Gonsleng.

Clarke moved her head in agreement. "Everybody that ended up dead because of me was there." She shook her head and softly added, "And I was their commander... Wanheda."

Anya bit her bottom lip then decided on a lighter approach. "Should I be flattered that you chose me as your general in Wantof?"

Clarke glared over at the caineblida. "Really?" She shook her head.

Anya had a slight smirk, but it fell away. "Wanheda is an honorable title among our people." She ignored Clarke's huff. "There is power associated with it... very desirable power."

"Not power that I want." Clarke steer the horse downhill on the path.

Anya noticed Clarke's immediate discomfort in the saddle so she ordered, "Lean back." After Clarke did so, she saw the immediate relief. There were still things Clarke needed to learn about riding a horse. Her thoughts went back to earlier discussion. She finally suggested, "Take advantage of the title, Clarke. My people respect Wanheda."

Clarke sighed and decided Anya had a point. "Respect or fear?" she muttered, more to herself.

"Fear is a healthy respect," Anya answered.

Clarke slightly smiled. She became quiet and enjoyed the beautiful landscape. She dreamed about Earth from her cell on the Ark. Now she was here, and it was bigger than her imagination. There were more colors than her pencils. And the smells were beyond anything in the Farm Station. She
loved every detail.

With winter only weeks away, the trees had mostly lost their leaves. The evergreens still held their lush color and occasionally speckles of red berries caught the eye. The ground was painted in browns, reds, and dirty yellows. Grass blades still peered through the leaves here and there. Soon the sky would wash the lands with white to welcome Old Man Winter.

Anya was enjoying the ride as well. She caught a glimpse of Clarke's wonder for Earth's beauty. She smiled at it and was glad they were out of the village for awhile. She decided her plan for a break would be even more appreciated once they were there.

Clarke willingly followed the general along the path. They were going uphill on a windy path. Clarke leaned forward in the saddle before Anya had to instruct her.

"Be careful here," Anya instructed.

Clarke kept strong control of her horse when the path dangerously narrowed with a steep ledge. She contained her own fear simply to help calm the horse. Soon the path widened again, but they continued upward.

"We're almost there," Anya promised. She was ahead of Clarke on the narrow path. She went around a right bend and smiled at their destination.

Clarke urged her horse to the right and came to Anya's left side on the grassy plateau. In front of them were several pine trees and a few large, flat rocks. But Clarke was more interested in what was behind her so she twisted in the saddle. She awed at the beautiful view of the mountain landscape.

Anya dismounted and walked her horse to the trees. She tied the reins off on a low tree branch.

Clarke followed Anya and also hitched her horse. She then noticed Anya had grabbed something from a saddlebag.

Anya wandered over to the rocky ledge that overlooked the mountains. She found a seat and waited for Clarke. With the pouch in her lap, she retrieved a few strips of jerky. She sealed it back up then tossed it to Clarke after she sat down next to her.

Clarke eyed the general but discovered the prize inside the pouch. She happily took a piece of jerky that had a nice apple smoke flavor. She happily hummed to herself.

"How was your date last night?" Anya prompted. She hid her smile by tearing into the dry meat.

"It wasn't a date," Clarke corrected. At the general's confused glance, she explained, "It just didn't play out like I expected it to." She had shared several dinners with Lexa in the past, all of them pleasant, even during war. The only exception had been the feast after Finn's ceremony, if it even counted.

Anya sighed but waited for more information. It did explain Lexa's already perturbed mood last night, even if Lexa was in a rut.

"I told her I knew about imprinting her." Clarke shrugged and set the pouch down on the ground after taking a third piece of meat. "She told me it didn't matter... that she would break it after her rut finished."

Anya nearly dropped the jerky in her mouth. She tore it from her lips and looked at Clarke. "What?"
Clarke shook her head and replied, "She told me it could be done. That's as much as I know."

"It is possible," Anya agreed. She frowned as she looked back at the mountain landscape. She thought about the suffering that went into breaking an imprint. It meant that Lexa would lean on Titus for help, again.

"We talked about going to Polis," Clarke mentioned. "And we agreed not to see each other today... because of her rut."

Anya stiffened at the news that Clarke was going with Lexa to Polis. She had no knowledge of it. She considered it for another moment and asked, "When will you go to Polis?"

"After the alliance is done," Clarke replied.

Anya filed it away in her mind. She then looked at Clarke. "She told me that you both were not to meet today." She shrugged and added, "I thought the ride would help."

"It does," Clarke agreed. She sat in relative silence with the general. She thought about Lexa and the rut that plagued her these days. In some ways, she missed Lexa because the sexual charged version was something Clarke was suppose to ignore, suppose to stay away from, and pretend everything was still normal. She sighed and silently thanked Anya for becoming a friend, or at least that seemed to be the direction of their relationship. Similar to Lexa, Anya went out of her way to protect her. It brought Clarke's mind back to imprinting, and she decided to risk asking.

"Anya..." Clarke found curious brown eyes on her. "I don't know how to exactly ask this." She had no idea how caineblida etiquette or social norms worked for them. However, testing it on Anya was her safest bet. "If I'm suppose to even." She cleared her throat once she realized she was rambling a little. "Have I possibly... imprinted you too?" She hardly expected Anya's wolfish smile. The long canines reminded her of Anya's biology.

"It is difficult to not be imprinted when you have saved my life twice, Clarke." Anya admired Clarke's loyalty to her. First it had been the gunshot injury then it was in Tondc, just before it was bombed.

After a long minute, Clarke raised an eyebrow at the general. "Is that a yes?"

"It is not the same as it is with you and Lexa," Anya revealed.

Clarke sadly smiled at the unspoken confirmation. Truthfully, she had grown extremely close to Anya, ever since Mount Weather. She sensed the strong bond between them. It was what moved her to bring Anya with her when Tondc was about to be bombed by the Mountain Men.

Anya bit into her last piece of jerky and hoped it was the end of Clarke's curiosity about their bond. Even if she was opening up to Clarke, to admit she saw Clarke, a Skaikru, as part of her paka was a difficult step. "Do you wish to learn how to handle Alphas?"

Clarke perked up at the news. "Sha."

Anya chuckled at Clarke's interest and promised, "Let an old Omega teach you something about Alphas." She partial turned towards Clarke. "Alphas are like clay... easy to mold in your hands." But that was only when they were imprinted, Anya mentally noted.

Clarke softly laughed at Anya's analogy. "Is there a way to do that?"

Anya popped the last piece of jerky into her mouth. She turned on the rock so she faced Clarke
better. "If you respond to aggression with aggression then you're just challenging her... challenging the Alpha in her."

Clarke nodded because it made sense.

"And there are times to be aggressive back," Anya insisted. "An Alpha will respect you if you hold your ground." She leaned back until her hands met the stone under her. "But staying calm can also deflect their aggression."

"You mean not reacting?" Clarke countered.

Anya straightened up when Clarke also shifted on the rock. After a nod, she explained, "If Lexa is being aggressive, and you're able to stay calm then she will come off her aggression... think more clearly."

Clarke summarized that there was an action and reaction in the dynamics of caineblida society. If she controlled her actions then Lexa would react accordingly.

Anya suggested, "The next argument you have with her, try it. If you contain your anger... don't rise to the occasion then she will calm down." She grinned at Clarke. "In a way, you're controlling her aggression rather than it controlling you both."

"Is that how you diffuse her so quickly?" Clarke checked.

"Sha." Anya still had her grin. "Lexa is the easiest Alpha simply because she doesn't want to be controlled by her aggression." She propped up her leg on the side of the rock. Her memory covered years and spans of arguments with Lexa. It was simply the nature of their bond.

Clarke considered the advise and silently promised she would try it next time. She considered how Anya was an Omega and also a warrior. Not just any warrior, but Lexa's feared general among the army. "How did you become a warrior anyway?"

Anya chuckled and replied, "Omegas are just as dangerous as Alphas." She tilted her head but then looked out at the mountains. "Omegas were perceived as breeders... still are in some ways but..." She looked at Clarke. "We're valuable in the army because our aggression doesn't rule us." However, it took Anya learning aggression to earn her place as the general. She did command mostly Alphas in the army with only a few Omegas peppered here or there.

Clarke had so much to learn about their culture. She turned on the rock and quietly looked at the mountains. She wondered how long they would stay here, but she was hardly in a rush. It was a beautiful day, enjoyable company, and an amazing view.

"Did Lexa tell you how I ended up getting caught in that trap?"

Anya had a slight furrow across her brow. Why the Hell was Clarke bringing this up now? She shook her head in silent reply. That's when she scented a hint of shame from the human. She was far more curious now and noted the red glow to Clarke's cheeks.

"We weren't actually on a walk together," Clarke admitted. "I was stalking her."

Anya slotted her eyes.

Clarke nervously cleared her throat. She had to talk to somebody about what really happened that day. Anya was truly her best option. "I found her up against a tree... working through her rut." She could barely manage to tell Anya. "I saw everything." She blew out a nervous breath and muttered,
"A lot of everything." Instantly her body heated under her clothes, and she was glad it was a cool day.

"And she caught you?" Anya pressed.

"She saw me," Clarke replied. "And I fucking ran." She laughed, hesitantly. "I've never ran so fast in my life."

"Then you jumped into the trap?" Anya checked. After Clarke's faint nod, she bent forward and laughed at Clarke's expense.

Clarke was utterly humiliated at this point. She glared at her supposed friend and snapped, "It is not funny! That fucking trap hurt like a bitch."

Anya straightened up with a red face and teased, "Once your leg stops hurting, you'll be laughing about it too." She wiped the moisture from the corner of her eyes. She decided both Clarke and Lexa were absolutely ridiculous with their persistence and stubbornness. She was pleased to finally laugh at both their expense because she was frustrated with trying to couple them. She smirked at the Sky leader shaking her head.

"I just freaked out," Clarke continued, "Because of what I saw."

"And getting caught," Anya pointed out. She heard Clarke's low hum of agreement. Anya was calmer after her laughing fit. "So are you still freaked out about what you saw?" She knew human's anatomy was different than caineblida.

"Sorta." Clarke brushed a strand from her face. "But more intrigued."

Anya also concluded aroused from what she smell in the air. She grinned at this secret and decided it might be her opening. "Ruusen Alphas are different than male humans... or female humans for that matter."

"Yeah... I got that," Clarke muttered. She was still quite flushed from her memory in the forest.

"Ruusen Alphas are..." Anya considered how to compare it for Clarke's sake. "They are like the moon." She enjoyed Clarke's confused look. "The full moon is the peak of their rut while the new moon is their anti-rut." She grinned because Clarke was still quite uncomfortable about the topic. "At her full moon, she is more like your male human and at her new moon, she will be closer to a female human."

Clarke rubbed her eyes with her fingers as she worked out what Anya was telling her in prose. She groaned before dropping her hand from her face. In some ways, it helped her better understand Lexa's nature. It almost sounded like Lexa waxed and waned between two genders, if she was having her normal rut cycle. It sounded similar to intersex, which Clarke had studied in medical classes.

Anya nibbled on her lip then decided to push the limits of her friendship with Clarke. "Do you find yourself more or less attracted to Lexa now that you know?" She already smelled the answer, but the confirmation was for Clarke's own ears.

Clarke had yet to lose her blush, it simply grew softer or stronger during the conversation. "More," she confessed. She groaned at Anya's toothy smile. Perhaps she should have kept that quiet. Then more confessions tumbled from her mouth, like she had no control. "I kept... staring at her... you know... down there during the damn alliance meeting yesterday." She barely made out Anya's low hum. "I was fantasying about it later that afternoon." She grumbled at herself and hunched forward.
"I don't know why I'm telling you this."

Any smiles at Clarke's obvious trust and need to talk about it. Slowly her smiled shifted into a devilish grin. "She will be pleased."

"What?" Clarke's head spun around towards Anya. "I can't tell her. She can't know."

Any chuckled and argued, "She perhaps already knows."

Clarke slotted her eyes and silently questioned the general.

Any simply tapped her nose.

"Seriously?" Clarke countered. She shook her head once she realized the caineblida could probably smell anything, possibly even emotions. She hung her head down in her hands. Her mind was flying in all directions, and she felt overwhelmed again.

"You should talk to her... soon," Anya pressed.

"I can't while she's in her rut." Clarke looked over at Anya. "Especially today." She straightened up. "Besides, she doesn't want this if she plans to break the imprint." She shook her head, which cleared her head.

"She wants it," Anya revealed, "She just believes she's not allowed it."

Clarke related because she felt much the same way. She was a leader too, even if her mother was chancellor and Marcus Kane assisted Abby. Clarke had done what Abby could not during the war and now Clarke had unknowingly built her own throne.

Any knew it was the same for Clarke, but she had learned that Clarke listened to her heart more. Ever since Tondc, something had changed in Clarke and given Clarke a new direction. "If Lexa breaks the imprint... you stand very little chance at having it again... ever. And it will change everything between you both."

Clarke warily stared at the grounder general. "But..."

Any finally confessed the truth of the entire future for the relationship. "If you both can come to terms about your feelings then the imprint will get stronger." She stood up and closed the distance between her and the human. She knelt in front of Clarke and had worried blue eyes leveled with her now. "With her being in her rut, she's more likely to admit her feelings to you... to herself because her rut keeps her barriers down."

Clarke chewed on the idea and finally replied, "Maybe tomorrow."

"Today," Anya insisted.

Clarke weakly laughed with tension. Already her imagination drew a picture of what could happen since Lexa's rut was at its strongest today.

Any sensed the human's worry. She grinned and added, "Besides... if something sexual were to happen then it'll only reinforce the imprint."

Clarke stood up from the rock and put distance between her and Anya. "No. I'm not ready to have sex with her."

Any was upright and studied the Sky leader's tense shoulders. "I wasn't suggesting sex." She kept
the wolfish tone out of her voice even though her Omega had surfaced to the top. "But... something more like what you saw in the woods."

Clarke closed her eyes at the suggestion. It was a mistake because she now imagined it so she looked out at the beautiful mountains. She blew out a low breath and tried ignoring the trembles in her stomach.

Anya made a final attempt. She played the one card that worked best on both Lexa and Clarke. "If a caine is with somebody then it relieves the pain. Even something small can help her pain."

Clarke clenched her jaw and told herself to ignore Anya's ideas. In her heart, she knew Lexa's pain was at its worst today too. The more she thought about it, the more worried she became about Lexa.

Anya sighed and picked up the pouch with jerky. She wanted to shake Clarke and Lexa but could barely decide which one first. She left Clarke and went to her horse to tuck away the jerky. She could only pray that her suggestions would sink in with Clarke. If Lexa did manage to break the imprint then there was no hope. In truth, it made Anya ache deeply for Lexa, who had been greatly altered by Costia's death years ago.

Clarke walked over to Anya and gently brushed Anya's arm. "How bad does the pain get?"

Anya lowered her arms after untying her horse. Clarke's genuine concern made her sigh and so she gave into it. "It's pretty bad, Clarke... it gets worse if we are mated to someone and are denied them."

"That's why she doesn't want to be imprinted.. or anything else," Clarke assumed. She started piecing it and guessed what history Lexa had with imprinting with a former mate, Costia. If the ruts could be halted then Lexa, as a leader, was only bound to her people. Nor was Lexa controlled by ruts.

"It's a very lonely... unfulfilling life," Anya countered. She turned away and started leaving with Fire Tree. "Trust me on this," she called over her shoulder. She refused to see Lexa follow Anya's own path in life.

Clarke grabbed her horse's reins and carefully mounted it, still with Anya's help. She waited until Anya was ready then they followed the path down the mountain side. Her mind was muddled with worry and confusion. There was so much, if not too much, to think through now. At the tip of it, she knew she had to make a decision about her future with Lexa.

To be continued.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Disclaimers & Notices: See Chapter 1.

Started: December 7, 2016
Series: One Shot

---

AN: I'm quite behind on feedback, but I will do my best to catch up on most of it soon. I do enjoy everybody's comments and reviews. It's great to have so many readers supporting this piece because I was very unsure about posting it. Enjoy the update... and have fun! ;)

Beauty and the Alpha
by Red Hope

Chapter 9

One tap followed another one until it turned into a rhythmic but mindless tick. Each exhale of breath matched the tapping sound from the graphite pencil. All of it went unnoticed to the ear because Clarke Griffin was replaying her conversation with Anya. It had been hours since they returned from the horseback ride. After coming down from the mountain's path, Clarke had renewed pleasant conversations, mostly about Boyce. But, right now, in the small space of her shared quarters, she could only think about what she had learned about Lexa and the imprint.

After her ride with Anya, she had limped to the training field and found the commander practicing with various warriors. Similar to yesterday, Lexa fought with a rut's fire rather than with a warrior's finesse from years as Anya's mentor. However today, Lexa never took a break to speak to Clarke by the fence. Octavia had been the one to say hello. It was also how Clarke learned that the commander's mood was volatile and aggressive. Every warrior that combated the commander on the field ended the practice with bruises, cuts, and occasional limps. Nobody wanted to be the commander's punching bag.

Clarke had only stayed by the training field for twenty minutes before she left with both concern and dismay. She returned to her quarters and attempted napping only to find her sketchbook in her lap. In days, Lexa's rut would end. Then shortly afterwards, the imprint would come to an end. Clarke should agree with Lexa's decision. She should respect it. Yet, her heart ached deeply at the idea. The broken imprint should only affect Lexa, but it already plagued Clarke now. And Anya's warning that a broken imprint meant a new one was nearly impossible.

"I'm not ready," Clarke murmured in memory. She rubbed her eyes with the pencil twined between her fingers. Allison was gone and Finn shortly followed her into the afterlife. With a drop of the pencil, she decided they were gone, mourn, and would stay in Clarke's heart. And Clarke, she was
still alive on the ground with feelings for a caineblida, who was also the commander. She was ready to move on and do more than just survive. It was clear that Lexa felt the same way.

With a flick of her wrist, Clarke closed the sketchbook and tossed it to the foot of her bed. She dropped the pencil on top. She and Lexa were going to have a talk, rut or no rut. In minutes, she had on her boots and shrugged the jacket over her shoulders. She was alone in the quarters, but she used her mom's tablet to leave a note. She went out into the late afternoon. A glance at the sun told her it would be dark in an hour or more.

Clarke considered where Lexa might be at the moment. She scanned the street for any signs of Ryder, who was probably guarding Lexa. Or more so attempting to act as a barrier between Clarke and Lexa. Gradually her scan ended with the armory, which triggered a thought. Clarke reached behind and fingered her handgun that Anya had forgotten to retrieve from her after the ride. She was so used to carrying her weapon that she had not given it a thought.

With a shrug, Clarke walked down the street with searching eyes. Nobody was at the old church at the corner. At the intersection, she considered whether to go left or right down the main street. She went to the left and again continued looking for Ryder. Nearly at the end of he street, before it passed the last homes, a familiar, burly figure stood at attention in front of a wood planked home.

Ryder had his arms crossed and stony features but relaxed shoulders until the blond haired Sky leader came into view. He freed his hands and rested his fingers on a sword hilt at his side.

Clarke smirked at his unspoken challenge. "I need to speak to the commander."

"Heda is not seeing anybody." Ryder further blocked Clarke from the front door of the home. "That includes you, Wanheda."

Clarke ignored Ryder's dig by using the title. "Fine." She reached behind and freed her handgun. "We always like to do this the hard way, Ryder." She pointed the barrel at his head and said, "Now open the door."

Ryder bared his teeth and growled, "How did-"

"Open the damn door," Clarke ordered firmly. Her fingers flexed on the gun's grip. "I won't say it again."

For the third time, Ryder had Clarke's gun pointed at him. He huffed, angrily, but he stretched out his left arm. He gave a warning knock then thumbed the latch before he pushed the door open.

Clarke signaled, with her gun, for him to go in first. She took a step forward for each of his steps backwards into the home. Inside the first room, it was quiet and empty but there was a hallway to the right from the common room.

"Heda," Ryder called, "Klark kom Skaikru hir." He kept his attention on the Sky leader but heard the distant footfall coming to the common room.

Clarke trained all her attention on Ryder until Lexa entered the room. For a second, she cut her eyes to the commander and nearly choked on her own tongue.

Lexa stood partially clothed with a small towel between her hands. She still had on her boots and the black, tight pants had dried mud, most likely from practice today. Then it was bare skin and muscle until a breast wrap broke the beauty between her stomach and shoulders. However, her dark eyes slotted at the familiar scene before her. "Clarke-"
"Order Ryder to stand down," Clarke cut off.

Lexa considered the options as the gun remained pointed at her favored guard. She clenched the towel between her fingers and tried staying calm despite the heat over her skin. Whatever Clarke wanted had to be fulfilled, she knew Clarke too well at this point. With a raise of her chin, she ordered, "Stand down from guard duty. I will find you when I need you."

Ryder wanted to object, but he held his tongue. The lowered gun prompted him to leave, and he closed the front door behind him.

Lexa bitterly stared at the gun in Clarke's hand. She silently concluded Anya had given it to Clarke because there were only four people who could access the armory without Lexa's consent. She huffed in annoyance after making a mental note to lecture Anya later.

Clarke double-checked that the safety was still on since she first pulled it on Ryder. He had no idea that the safety was never turned off and that it made it difficult for Clarke to actually shoot him. With no further use for the gun, she stepped over to her right and lowered the weapon onto the table, surrendering it to Lexa.

"Why are you here? I told you we could not meet today."

Clarke felt the aggression rumble in Lexa's voice. She suppressed a shiver of reaction and remembered all of Anya's advice about Alphas. "We need to talk."

Lexa was breathing a little heavier. "I don't wish to talk."

Clarke nodded sternly and corrected, "Alright. I talk and you listen." However, she was unsure if her earlier determination was cracked by the amount of bare skin in front of her. She had imagined the lines and dips of muscle under Lexa's shirt, but they were even better in person. Her fingertips itched to trace them. It took all her strength to keep her eyes above Lexa's neck.

Lexa gave a low, frustrated growl but went back down the hallway.

Clarke hoped it was a better sign than how it sounded to her. In seconds, Lexa returned with a black shirt nearly pulled down. She blew out a soft breath in gratitude.

Lexa passed the small table that held Clarke's gun. She indicated the seats in front of the fireplace. Clarke noted there was a sofa in the center then two chairs on either side. She opted for a chair since it was closer to the fireplace's heat.

However, Lexa ignored a seat and stood opposite from Clarke, behind the other chair. Every caine impulse screamed at her to claim Clarke. She had cooled off this afternoon but now sweat recoated every inch of skin. The damn fire made it far worse.

Every second was precious, Clarke realized. She had to get straight to what mattered the most, for them. "I don't want you to break the imprint." She ignored the displeased grumble from the commander. "I was trying to survive on the Ark. Now I'm trying to survive down here." She shook her head and argued, "I'm done just surviving."

"You are not ready," Lexa reminded. Her voice tightened with strain. She continued grinding her teeth just to hold down her Alpha. But the pain, it drilled into her gut and made her heart work more.

"I'm not ready for sex," Clarke admitted. There were so much to still learn about Lexa's body as an Alpha. "But I'm ready to start living." She stood up from the chair. "You are too... you wouldn't
have kissed me otherwise." Another step brought her closer to the commander, but she gave pause when Lexa growled low at her.

"Love is a weakness, Clarke," Lexa reminded. She folded her arms, in hopes to keep control.

Clarke shook her head at the lie. She started believing it too, after Allison and Finn's deaths. That was until her decisions affected hundreds of people, including those she cared for. "You know that's not true... we both know it." Clarke narrowed her eyes and countered, "I get why you are scared to face-

"I am not scared," Lexa snapped.

Clarke instantly responded to Lexa's anger with her own aggression. "Then fucking stop lying to yourself." She countered Lexa's growl with a threatening glare. "Wake up, Lexa." For some reason, Lexa stiffened after Clarke's last words.

"You think I don't understand?" Lexa growled. She pushed past the chair that provided a barrier. She towered over the human, who matched her stance. Her Alpha was both elated and furious at the same time. "I have been down this path and it put Costia in an early grave!" Her chest rose and fell with great weight. Caine impulses hummed in her blood, yet she still fought against it. "I will not repeat my mistake." She shook her head and bitterly added, "I am Heda. I cannot be yours when I am already my people's."

Clarke struggled at keeping her hands to herself. She finally fisted them at her side and tried calming her anger with deep breaths. She patiently countered, "You can have both."

Lexa huffed at Clarke's naive idea. She brushed past the human, trying to end the conversation.

"So that's it?" Clarke hotly demanded. Lexa faced her again and swallowed at the glisten in Clarke's blue eyes. "Costia dies, and you give up." She nodded once then huffed heavy because perhaps Lexa was hardly as strong as Clarke originally thought. She rubbed her eyes with her finger and thumb then started over to the front door. "Then our kiss..." She grabbed the handle and parted the door open. "It was meaningless," she quietly and painfully admitted to herself. Then the door became too heavy from the stronger hand that held it in place above her head. Clarke shut her eyes from the heated presence at her back.

Lexa sealed the door shut and waited as Clarke slowly turned to her. She kept her hand on the door but her dark eyes were locked on the human trapped between her and the door. "It wasn't meaningless," she whispered. Her Alpha's panic lessened when the distress in Clarke's blue eyes faded a little. "And I didn't give up. I just made a decision to protect you." She believed she would only bring pain to Clarke. As the commander, she had too many enemies and she valued Clarke's life more than her own happiness.

Clarke had one hand against the door and was frustrated with not touching the commander. Fuck it, she finally decided. She pushed the flat of her left hand against Lexa's firm stomach. "I'm not Costia," she declared in a strong tone. Her blue eyes hardened like an icy winter day. "And I am not your weakness."

Lexa trembled at the determination in Clarke. Every piece of her Alpha ate away at it. She lowered her head closer, breathing in the musky yet metallic scent that was Clarke. She had been craving it more each day. Her nails clawed against the wood door.

"We have a chance at life... together," Clarke whispered. She reached up and caressed Lexa's flushed cheek. "And now you can make a new decision to take that chance with me." She released a
shaky breath when Lexa's forehead met her own. She soon found her right hand tangled in brown braids. "Beja, Leksa." She willed the person before her to open up her heart again. Clarke ached for this no matter if Lexa was human, caineblida, or something totally else. All she needed was Lexa.

Slowly a strong arm snaked behind Clarke's lower back. She whimpered when Lexa's body pressed into hers. She was anchored more safely with Lexa than she had been in days. Then Lexa sought out her lips, and Clarke guided them together. She trembled at tasting Lexa after wanting it for days. Their tongues were cautious at first then started stroking against each other. For a second, Clarke gasped for air before she sealed their lips in a more demanding kiss. A low, dangerous growl made a quiver drive down from her stomach to her knees.

Lexa tore the kiss to an end and lifted her head slightly, for distance. Clarke was panting and gripping Lexa's shoulder. She swallowed down her next growl at the passion in Clarke's eyes. "I will..." She shook her head and gruffly corrected, "We will give this a chance." A grateful sigh from Clarke made Lexa's Alpha howl. "But you have to leave for the night." Otherwise, she was certain her already brittle self-control would shatter then she would mate Clarke.

Clarke moved her hands to Lexa's hips. "I know you're in a lot of pain." Every signal from Lexa's rut were barely telling of what throbbed inside Lexa. "But I can help relieve some of that."

"Clarke-"

"Just show me what you were doing in the woods," Clarke insisted. She read Lexa's internal war of self-control versus needs. She wanted them both to learn each other's bodies. They were different races with different anatomy and needs. "I trust you... I trust your Alpha," Clarke pressed.

Lexa clenched her jaw when her Alpha happily preened at the news. She lowered her head again and struggled with her answer. She blew out a low breath near Clarke's ear. Clarke's scent continued singing to Lexa, and the agonizing throb between her legs pulsed harder.

"Slide the bolt," Lexa ordered.

Clarke twisted her head to the left and weakly managed the bolt into place. With a surge of confidence, she took Lexa's hand and led them both to the sofa. "Lay down," she commanded. She grinned at Lexa's raised eyebrow. She patiently waited for Lexa to lower into the sofa's center.

Lexa turned until she was able to sprawl along the sofa's length. Her right leg hung off the side of the sofa, boot heel pressed against the floorboards. She was pleased when Clarke climbed over her. A very soft growl shook in the back of her throat.

Clarke was happy to get the weight off her injured leg, which she had mostly ignored until now. She found Lexa supported her with a hand. Clarke placed her right hand down on a cushion, under Lexa. Her knees on either side of Lexa's leg held her balance.

Lexa expectantly looked at the human, quite intrigued by her demands. She revealed a wolfish smile when Clarke blushed back at her.

"I'll need your help," Clarke admitted. She willed her hand to not shake, but it did faintly when her fingertips grazed the first button on Lexa's pants. Together, they manipulated each button until the last one was free.

Lexa peered up into Clarke's blue eyes that had glossed with anticipation. But Clarke's breathing was quite irregular. "Clarke?" Her thick tone held concern in it. Even though she scented extreme excitement from Clarke, she also caught a hint of panic.
Clarke smiled, reassuringly. "I'm just nervous," she confessed. She cleared her throat and briefly glanced down at the opening in Lexa's black pants. "Show me," she insisted.

Lexa nodded and captured Clarke's left hand with her right. Together, they reached for the thick membrane that was a part of what made Lexa a ruusen Alpha. She held her breath when both their fingers wrapped around her cock and pulled it free from the tightness of her pants. She smelled slightly more panic from Clarke so she whispered, "Breathe, Clarke."

And Clarke took the advice. The inhale calmed her heart and nerves. She shifted her fingers around Lexa's cock. Her touch was delicate, cautious too. She relaxed when Lexa's own hand brushed against hers. She had yet to steal a glance, almost not believing what she felt in her hand.

"I kind of know what to do," Clarke revealed, "But..." She held Lexa's gaze.

"First, you can grip me harder, Clarke." Lexa's wolfish grin reappeared when shock ghosted across Clarke's features. "I won't break."

"Right," Clarke muttered. She tightened her hold around Lexa's cock. She was rewarded with a pleased moan from the Alpha. "Better?"

Lexa still had her grin, especially from Clarke's teasing question. "Much." She covered her hand over Clarke's own. "You can slide up and down." Together, they moved their hands up the length of her cock. Her grin started fading as they slid their hands along the full length. She inhaled sharply but willed a drop of focus. "Massaging feels good too."

Clarke was surprised by the amount of pressure she could apply. It was in fact less delicate than she expected it. Their hands squeezed and softened against the middle of Lexa's cock. Unknowingly, she had trailed her eyes down and watched their hands massaging the long length. She bit her lower lip because it was obvious that Lexa was thicker than male humans. She tried not worrying about compatibility issues. They would figure it out later.

Suddenly, the cool house felt excessively hot to Clarke. "Damn it," she muttered, "I'm getting warm."

Lexa forced herself to focus again. She released the base of her cock and grabbed Clarke's unzipped jacket with both hands. She easily pulled Clarke's one arm free but Clarke had to stop touching her to get her left arm out of the jacket. A displeased groan came from Lexa's lips until there was a firm hold on her cock again. After tossing the jacket onto a chair, she went back to supporting the Sky leader. She realized Clarke was indeed a quick study. "Clarke," she growled low.

A proud smirk pulled at Clarke's lips. She leaned down and nuzzled against Lexa's cheek. "I think I've got it now." The rest she would figure out on her own.

Lexa withdrew her hand and gripped the sofa's underside while her right arm continued supporting Clarke's weight. She grounded her teeth against the beautiful passion building in her lower stomach. Every muscle curled tighter and her next breath stilled in her chest. The only repeating thought in her mind was that Clarke was touching her. This was real and no longer a wild fantasy.

Clarke felt as if she was leaning against a rock rather than her heart's desire. She read every tension line across the commander's face. "Relax," she coaxed. She smiled encouragingly when Lexa's attention sharpened on her. "It's okay to enjoy this." She wanted Lexa to let go of the restraint. To emphasize her point, she gently tugged on Lexa's hard cock.

Lexa dropped her head back and growled, "Jok."
Clarke was pleased at the reaction. Lexa's rare curse made her stomach flutter. She continued running her hand up and down the hard length. Occasionally she slowed and worked in a brief squeeze before she continued sliding her hand.

Lexa clawed the underside of the sofa. Controlled moans escaped her while her head stayed rolled back.

Clarke remained upright and enjoyed watching Lexa under her. Each heartbeat, the commander broke away under the Alpha. Clarke stroked and massaged the passion with more demand and speed.

"Don't stop 'til..." Lexa gritted her teeth and growled more loudly.

"Until you tell me," Clarke promised the Alpha. She nearly halted her hand's movement when Lexa lifted her head and revealed the white ring around her irises.

"Clarke," Lexa demandingly snarled.

Clarke returned the speed to her hand and bit down an apology. She focused on the task in her hand rather than swooning at the powerful Alpha under her. She was matching Lexa's pants for air.

Lexa released Clarke and clutched the crimson red fabric of the sofa's back. Brief worry about gripping Clarke too hard eased from the last recesses of her mind. The sudden increased sliding of Clarke's hand against her cock freed her Alpha. She growled hard and bared her teeth when heat swelled up into her chest.

Clarke shivered at the sound, but she never slowed down. Her heart pounded at hearing the feverish yells from the Alpha. She was forced to adjust her body when Lexa arched up and cried out. She started slowing down, nearly certain Lexa was done.

"Don't. Stop." Lexa growled at her.

Clarke shoved aside her surprise and returned the speed, even if her left arm burned from the demands. She slid her hand up and down the solid length of Lexa's cock. As her hand went down, she increased her grip on the way up to give a strong pull halfway.

"Jok, Klark," Lexa growled between clenched teeth. Her fingers tore into the sofa fabric. Her Alpha was lost in the sear that burned through all her veins. She had already orgasmed earlier, but it was a small wave. Her body built a fire in her, filled her chest, and washed over in her head. She raised her hips off the sofa and met Clarke's strokes. How every movement was better than how she touched herself. Then another soft yank against her cock made her howl low.

Clarke loved every pant and growl from the Alpha. She had fantasized about this moment, and the reality was better. She savored the build up in Lexa, and she knew it was close. She slightly adjusted her body against the sofa back, prepared for what might come from Lexa's cock. With a grin, she pushed Lexa over the edge with a firm slide down the hard length and a jerk back up. She squeezed Lexa's cock when Lexa's hips pushed off the sofa. But the deafening yell made Clarke briefly close her eyes. She took that as a stop from the Alpha.

For seconds, Lexa was overloaded by heat and passion. She let her yell fade off before she gasped a few times. She felt her body tremble under Clarke. In those moments, she tried grasping that her orgasm was from Clarke. Her Alpha was howling crazily in her head.

With a strange expression, Clarke was confused by the lack of ejaculation from Lexa. There was absolutely nothing and everything was dry in the space between them. She was familiar enough with
men to expect it, but she had been wrong about Lexa's biology. If she gained the courage, she would ask Lexa some time. After a several heavy breaths, Clarke started realizing her muscles were reaching their limits. She wanted to move but was stuck.

It seemed as if Lexa sensed it too. She shifted and reached for Clarke, who softly quaked above her. She moved more onto the sofa and pulled Clarke down onto her body.

Clarke somewhat rested on her side, against Lexa. She sighed contently but was still breathing a little hard. She placed her left hand on Lexa's solid stomach.

First, Lexa took her cock and gently wedged it back into her pants, but left the buttons undone for now. She then snaked her arm across Clarke's waist. A low rumble vibrated in her chest.

Clarke grinned, to herself. She not only heard the sound, but she felt it since her head rested on the commander's wide shoulder.

After a good huff to settle the last of her breathing, Lexa considered her relationship with Clarke. Her mind was less fuzzy than the start of her rut days ago. Again a rumble started at the sheer thought of having Clarke touch her.

"Did it help with your pain?" Clarke softly asked.

Lexa grinned but seriously considered it. She was still basking in the after effects of the orgasm. Yet, eventually, the pain would regenerate itself. Perhaps it would lessen overall thanks to Clarke. "It helped," she replied with a low rumble. She turned her head into Clarke's own and whispered, "Mochof."

"Pro," Clarke murmured. She sighed contently then her thoughts went to Lexa's rut. She could tell it was abrasive and wearing on the commander. She shifted again and lifted her head so she could see Lexa's face. "When was the last time you slept?" The darkness under Lexa's eyes were telling. But, Clarke was happy to see some green back in Lexa's eyes.

"Two nights ago," Lexa admitted. She admired the frown and concern on Clarke. Her Alpha loved the attention from the Sky leader.

"Jesus, Lexa." Clarke brushed back an annoying blond strand. "You... I could have..."

Lexa shook her head. She was accustom to her rut, even if it had been years since her last one.

Clarke sighed because it was done. She lowered until their foreheads connected together. She was unsure why their closeness came so natural to her, and Lexa's soft rumble eased her concerns further. Their earlier argument replayed in her head, and she tightened her closed eyes. She was worried about one thing only, which affected all the rest between them.

"Are... are you still going to break the imprint?"

Lexa's Alpha instantly snarled at the sheer idea of a broken imprint. She clenched down on her natural instinct to please Clarke.

"Lessa," Clarke shakily breathed. She cupped her hands against Lexa's flushed cheek. She had unknowingly pressed her forehead down harder.

With a clear enough mind, Lexa had a chance to actual process the future, what it meant for them, and where their relationship could go. She shifted her head in signal for Clarke to lift hers. She looked into glossy blue eyes that burned into her spirit. She pushed a few loose blond strands behind
Clarke's shoulder. "Are you really ready for this?" She considered the past few days. "Especially now knowing I'm a different race?" She indicated her body, which was different from anything Clarke knew.

"It's what's in here..." Clarke tapped Lexa's brow then rested her palm against Lexa's chest. "And here that matters to me." She shook her head. "The rest we'll figure out."

"Our people," Lexa reminded the Sky leader.

"I know... I know." Clarke sighed and considered how to handle the situation. "We'll be slow and keep it private for now." She shook her head and reminded, "We wouldn't be the only caine and human couple." She raised an eyebrow and reminded, "Octavia and Lincoln."

"But I am Heda," Lexa pressed. "And you are-"

"Wanheda," Clarke cut in. She sported a grin and argued, "I think there's some political appeal to Wanheda being mated to Heda." She enjoyed the low yet pleased growl from the commander.

"Trying to charm my Alpha doesn't always work."

"Doesn't it?" Clarke countered. She chuckled at the playful growl from Lexa but became serious again. "We can handle the politics."

Lexa released a heavy sigh and stared over at the fire as she considered the future. There were so many unknowns and worries, but she agreed that they could shoulder them. She saw hope, for them both.

Clarke decided to test Lexa and asked, "Do you want this?" She placed her hand against Lexa's chest. "And I'm asking you as Lexa... not Heda."

Lexa blinked and cut her eyes to the beautiful features above her. "Sha," she whispered. Very much, she silently added.

"Then keep the imprint," Clarke softly ordered. She hoped simplifying it made it easier for Lexa.

Already Lexa had promised to give them a chance, despite the hardships and risks. If she broke the imprint, it would change every last aspect of their relationship and would be felt for a lifetime. Nor did her Alpha want to break it, ever. She softened at seeing the resolve in Clarke's eyes. After a faint nod, she promised, "The imprint stays."

A flood of relief washed through Clarke. She sunk heavily against Lexa, who tightened her arms around her. Under her confidence, she had been scared that so much would be undone between them. She was close to other people in her life, but she felt tied to Lexa. It was a strange notion considering imprinting was a caineblida state. However, Clarke wondered if somehow Lexa's imprint passed onto her on some level.

After a deep breath, Clarke suggested, "We should eat... then you should rest."

Lexa sighed but did agree it was best. Tonight she may be able to actually sleep even if the lower, gut pain softly twisted in reminder. Tomorrow the alliance meetings would probably resume again, if Marcus Kane arrived earlier enough. Such thoughts made her consider Clarke's leg. "How is your leg today?"

"Better," Clarke replied. She stiffened when a snarl filled her ear.
"You lied the other day," Lexa explained, in a dangerous voice. "You were not in such pain that we couldn't have had the meetings."

Clarke decided it was best to be honest. "No but..." She shifted and dropped her head against the sofa, near Lexa's left arm. "You were." She smiled, devilishly at the commander's glare. "I saw my opening and took it to delay the meetings."

Lexa gave a soft chuff and started sitting up. "I can handle it."

Clarke agreed but also felt as if Lexa's rut would only steer the meetings in a different direction. "We were just arguing all the time." She took the hint to get up and climbed off the sofa.

Lexa knew it was true. She stole a second to rebutton her pants, but only could do half of them. She stood up and finished the last ones.

Clarke cringed at how tight the pants had to be for Lexa, especially now that she knew Lexa's size. Lately there was a distinct bulge in Lexa's pants that often caught Clarke's eye. She cleared her throat and gently suggested, "Maybe you should wear looser pants."

Lexa growled at Clarke before she moved around the sofa.

Clarke then smirked and muttered, "Not that I mind how good they look on you." She realized she had actually spoken it rather than thought it.

Lexa paused and narrowed her eyes at the Sky leader.

Clarke groaned and dropped her head. With her hand, she tried scrubbing the blush off her face. "I really said that."

Lexa made no further comment and went into the back of the home.

Clarke grabbed her jacket and shrugged it on by the time Lexa returned to the common room.

"I own looser pants," Lexa informed, "But they are in Polis because I haven't been in a rut in five years."

Clarke met the commander by the door. She shyly smiled and weakly offered, "Sorry." Lexa's disgruntled huff made her grin. She slid the bolt out of place and pulled open the door. She was quite pleased and extremely relieved with how the afternoon went between them. She had feared that their relationship would be undone by a final, nasty fight.

Lexa sniffed the chilly air. She left her short jacket unbuttoned and welcomed the cold against her heated skin.

It was already dark, and Clarke wondered how long ago was sunset. She nearly went to look at her watch, but recalled it was tucked away in her things back at Camp Jaha. It still felt strange not wearing her father's watch. Maybe somehow she could at least get the glass fixed so she could wear it again.

Lexa scented Clarke's slightly distraught but doubted it was something to do about them. She scanned the faces of passing villagers on their walk to the dining hall. Once at the dining hall, she bounded up the steps and held the door open for Clarke. She indeed noted Clarke's limp was significantly less than prior days.

"Chof," Clarke whispered as she passed the commander. The first smell of food made Clarke's
stomach happily rumble.

Lexa had a faint grin and followed Clarke into the short line of people. Soon they were seated together at a quiet meal. Clarke stole a few glances at Lexa during the dinner. Already it seemed as if the effects from their fun on the sofa were wearing off. At least tomorrow would be the downhill side of the rut. After the rut ended, Clarke wondered how, or if, Lexa's body changed in anyway physically. Her wandering thoughts eventually looped back to the sofa in Lexa's small home. Even now, she could still feel the thickness of Lexa's cock in her hand.

"Clarke," Lexa growled, in warning.

Clarke jerked out of her memory and peered over at the heavily breathing commander on the other side of the table. She saw very little green left in the commander's blown eyes.

"Stop thinking about whatever you're thinking about," Lexa ordered.

With parted lips, Clarke nearly asked what Lexa meant by it. However, she snapped her jaw shut as she recalled the caineblidas' strong sense of smell. She mentally groaned at herself for not being more careful. "Sorry... I'm not use... to this." She was sincere in her apology.

"I know," Lexa assured. She sighed and decided a topic would help redirect Clarke. "How was your ride with Anya?"

"It was nice to ride with her," Clarke replied. "We went... east out of town." She pushed her finished plate aside and picked up the mug of water. "She took me to this plateau that overlooked the mountain range." She relaxed in the chair and asked, "Do you know what mountain range?"

"They're the Blue Ridge Mountains," Lexa answered. "They are the same ones where Mount Weather is located."

Clarke considered her mental map. "Further north." After an agreeable hum from the commander, she considered where Polis might be located from Boyce, Tondc, and Camp Jaha. "How far is Polis from here?"

Lexa was done eating. She picked up Clarke's plate and placed it on her own dirty one. "It's about a two day walk from here."

"North?"

Lexa shook her head. "It is due east from here... only a little further north."

Clarke smiled at the information. She drank the last swallow from the mug. "What's the area like? Mountainous? Flat?"

Lexa gazed across at the curious Sky leader. She had a faint smile at Clarke's keen interest in Polis. "The immediate area is flat. There's a river to the north-east and the mountains off in the west."

Clarke was lost in her imagination at the picture painted in her mind. She happily hummed and mentioned, "I'm looking forward to seeing it."

"As am I," Lexa seconded.

Clarke puckered her lips as she repeated what was around Polis that Lexa just told her. "What river is near Polis?" Perhaps it was one she would be familiar with on the old maps.
“We call it the O’mac River,” Lexa revealed.

Clarke had a curious expression as she tried guessing what the American name was before the grounder’s renamed it. She shook her head and let it go. She stood up because they were obviously done dinner. "I'll walk you back."

Lexa should object, but she instead nodded. She returned the dirty plates then met Clarke outside of the dining hall.

"I'm curious to see snow," Clarke mentioned on their walk.

Lexa huffed but lightened at the thought of the Sky leader seeing it for the first time. "It is pretty... at first."

Clarke chuckled and guessed, "Makes for difficult travel." She and the commander fell into comfortable silence for the rest of the walk to the home. At seeing the small house, she asked, "Do you own this house?"

"Sha,” Lexa replied. She had the home all her life, but it hardly felt like hers anymore. Many of her things remained in Polis while the home in Boyce was more or less stripped of its character.

Clarke followed Lexa into the home. She briefly glanced at the handgun still on the round table. She hoped Anya survived Lexa’s earful about it. She sighed and went to the nearly dying fire. She started loading a few logs into it.

Lexa admired Clarke's almost domestic-like care. She shook it off and went down the hallway to her bedroom. She found the bedroom fireplace also needed attention, which she did quickly before rejoining Clarke in the common room. She squatted down behind the knelt Sky leader and suggested, "You should return to your quarters."

Clarke sighed and made no attempt to get up. Most likely her mother was beginning to worry about her. She turned her head sidelong. "Once you lay down," she softly compromised.

Lexa was unsure why she had crouched behind Clarke other than it was her Alpha's needs. She was exhausted from fighting against herself. She continued following her instincts and slid her arms around Clarke's waist. She gave a pleased rumble when Clarke leaned back into her for support.

"If you stay any longer," Lexa murmured huskily, "I will mate you." She had a wolfish smile when Clarke shivered against her. Instantly the aching throb started heavy in her gut and between her legs.

"Alright," Clarke weakly agreed. "I'll go." She turned her head to the side. "Just promise me you'll try to sleep."

"I will," Lexa swore. She nuzzled Clarke's cheek and deeply inhaled Clarke's distinct scent. "Tomorrow will be easier."

"Goodnight, Clarke," Lexa offered as Clarke exited the house. She held the door open for another moment and watched Clarke until she faded in the darkness. She expected her day to end with excruciating pain instead it was a mostly manageable ache and warmth in her heart.
To be continued.

Trigedasleng to English

Jok. - Fuck

Reshop, Heda. - Goodnight, commander.
Chapter 10

"I was concerned for her safety," Anya explained. "Especially since she is Wanheda." She knew that Lexa agreed with Clarke's safety, first and foremost. "I had no idea she would use it on Ryder."

Lexa shifted on the throne and considered Anya's transgression. It was a couple of hours after sunrise, but Lexa had been up for awhile after getting several hours of light sleep last night, thanks to Clarke. First thing, she had returned Clarke's handgun to the armory. And now she was lecturing Anya for forgetting to confiscate it after the horseback ride.

Anya kept her neutral face and gave away nothing to Lexa. She tilted her head. "Lexa, I merely forgot." She stood at attention in front of the seated commander.

Lexa rose from her seat and took the one step off the dais. She stood inches taller than Anya. "Be sure it's the last time you forget," she sharply reminded. "Or I will revoke your authority to go into the armory."

Anya dipped her head in agreement. "Sha, Heda." If Lexa had revoked her authority now, it was worth it to her. Already she smelled a different mood to Lexa. The Alpha in Lexa was much more docile than it had been all during the rut. Something had changed between Lexa and Clarke yesterday. Anya's Omega was inwardly parading at the sheer idea.

Lexa strolled over to one of the tables, her hands behind her back. "We will continue the alliance meetings if Marcus Kane returns today."

"He should."

Lexa nodded. She turned back to the general. "What of Cage?" She was already displeased when Anya's lips twisted in a silent snarl.
"We lost his trail."

Lexa fisted her hands. "He was headed north." She recalled from the last report Anya gave her.

"He may already be in Queen Nia's hands," Anya reasoned. She watched the commander begin to pace between the two tables. "He knows the secrets of the mountain.... the missiles."

Lexa growled and tried thinking what to do about Cage. "The missiles are his only value to Queen Nia."

"Then we have to destroy those," Anya concluded. "Which means we need the Skaikru's help." She sighed at the scenarios for the missiles and Queen Nia. "We should discuss it in the meetings."

"I worry the Skaikru will want to reside in the mountain," Lexa softly revealed to Anya.

"That is very unwise, Heda." Anya frowned at such an idea.

"It would be like living in their Ark again," Lexa muttered. She looked at the general finally.

Anya shook her head and checked, "Has Clarke given any indicators that they want to go into the mountain?"

"No."

Anya nodded a few times. "Then maybe not." She still smelled the concern from the commander. "The mountain is just as unholy to them as it is to us."

Lexa conceded with Anya's thoughts. She sighed but concluded, "We'll wait and see." She turned when Ryder opened the heavy doors.

"Heda, Skaikru don kom daun." Ryder received a nod so he left the church.

Lexa exchanged a glance with Anya, and they both departed the church together. Distantly, they listened to the villagers' clamor about the approaching Sky people. They went to the village center and only waited for a few minutes before the Sky people entered the town.

"I heard they're back." Clarke and her mother approached Lexa and Anya. She held Lexa's eyes and already assessed the rut's hold on Lexa today.

"Sha." Anya jutted her chin towards the approaching group. "And with more Skaikru."

Clarke scanned the faces coming towards them. She was startled to see that Raven, Monty, and Bellamy had joined Marcus Kane.

"What are they..." Abby dropped it and shook her head. She was sure Bellamy wanted to see Octavia then Raven was plain stubborn. Then there was Monty who cared greatly for Clarke too.

Clarke left everybody's side and went towards the nearing Skaikru party. She was hardly surprised when Raven walked faster and met her halfway.

Raven scooped up the blond haired Clarke Griffin into a strong hug.

"It's good to see you," Clarke whispered in Raven's ear. She withdrew from the hug and smacked Raven's arm. "What are you doing here though?"

"She had to get away from Wick," Monty joked.
Raven rolled her eyes. "Don't bring up that homophobic prick's name."

Clarke was bug eyed and briefly saw that Marcus and guards continued on to Abby, Anya, and the commander. She shook her head and asked, "What did I miss?"

"Tell you later," Raven promised.

Clarke blew out a low breath then went to Monty for a hug. She exchanged her last hug with Bellamy.

"We heard you got hurt," Bellamy brought up. He folded his arms but was curious about Clarke's blush.

"It was an accident," Clarke explained.

"In a bear trap." Monty winced on Clarke's behalf.

"It wasn't a bear trap exactly." Clarke sighed.

Raven clutched her friend's shoulder. "Now we can limp together." She and Clarke indeed started limping towards the larger collective a few yards ahead of them.

Lexa cut her attention to Clarke and her friends, who joined them.

Clarke met the commander's inquisitive eyes and shyly smiled because of her friends. "I hope you don't mind."

"No." Lexa scanned the three friends that were close to Clarke. She suspected Octavia would be excited to see her brother. "We have room."

"Mochof." Clarke turned to her friends and explained, "You have to give up your guns." As if on signal, Briggs and another grounder were collecting them.

Raven rolled her eyes dramatically. "I thought we were past this."

Anya was still beside Lexa and heard Raven's distinct voice. She kept a serious face as she walked over to the group of friends. "I have an open stall in the stable for her." She nodded at Raven.

Clarke bit down a smirk and decided Raven could handle this, for once.

Raven shot a glare at the grounder general before she turned to Clarke. "Is there is nearby bridge that needs blowing up?"

Clarke held up her hands. "I'm not getting into this one."

Anya leaned towards the mechanic and softly threatened, "Blow up another one of my bridges, and you'll be limping with both legs." She wolfishly smiled then.

Raven raised an eyebrow. "Oh, a challenge."

Clarke suddenly inserted herself between the pair. "Okay, children." She pushed Raven back one step by using her shoulders.

"No fun, Princess." Raven grinned at her friend.

Clarke rolled her eyes but stepped aside because Briggs was near them.
Anya returned to Lexa's side and noticed the amusement in Lexa's eyes. "Chit?" she asked in Trigedasleng. She huffed when the commander ignored her.

Lexa rarely saw Anya go out of her way to tease somebody. Plus it was a Skaikru. She waited until Briggs finished taking the Skaikru weapons before she focused on the three Sky leaders. "We will start the alliance meetings after lunch."

Marcus Kane was the first to agree. It would give him a little time to rest before they started the meetings. He also wanted to update Abby about Camp Jaha. With that in mind, he and Abby went to the quarters house.

Clarke also guided her friends too. She knew there was enough space for the three of them. She was grateful that Lexa was willing to accommodate them even though they were not essential to the meetings.

Anya stood beside the commander as the crowd fizzled out. She had briefly met Monty and Bellamy in the past. She tilted her head when she saw how close Bellamy was to Clarke. "Is that the boy she cares for? Octavia's brother."

"Sha," Lexa confirmed.

Anya heard an undertone of envy in the commander's voice. She imagined Lexa's Alpha snarling at the boy's arrival. She nearly poked the Alpha but decided against it. It was enough that Bellamy was here and not just to see Octavia. She shrugged and strolled off to leave Lexa to her own devices.

As the morning wore away, the Skaikru found themselves doing various things. Monty was tinkering on a project that he brought with him. Raven was sleeping in a room by herself. She had hardly slept last night with being on the road. But Bellamy had wrangled Clarke into a tour of little Boyce before they came to the training field. Like Clarke, he leaned against the fence post and watched Octavia train.

"She's getting better," Clarke mentioned. She wondered how long it would be before Octavia could say hello to her brother. Indra was tough as iron nails.

"I can tell too," Bellamy agreed. He cautiously looked over at Clarke. "How are you doing?" He grinned a little. "Besides your leg."

Clarke honestly weighed the question and finally replied, "It's a little better." She realized a lot had to do with Lexa's support. They occasional talked about what happened in Mount Weather, but what helped her was Lexa's constant presence. Together, they had muscled though the war and now they were weathering the aftershock of it. All of it was easier than had she done it alone.

"I still have a lot of nightmares but..." Clarke looked at Bellamy.

"It'll take time," Bellamy encouraged his friend. He looked over at his sister practicing against another second. "I keep telling myself that who we are and who we have to be are two different things."

Clarke sighed because she recalled the first time Bellamy said that to her. She pushed away the memory of Lincoln being strung up and bloody. "I wish I could compartmentalize it like that... but I can't." She looked over at her friend. "I'm still responsible for what I do."

Bellamy reached over and covered his hand over Clarke's forearm. "You're not a monster, Clarke." He thought of Finn, who murdered innocent when he let his monster come out.
Clarke wanted to believe it. Yet, her monster was called Wanheda, and it was hers. "We all have one, Bell." She sighed when he squeezed her arm. She then sensed an approaching presence behind them. Clarke slightly turned but twisted her head around towards the newcomer.

Bellamy followed Clarke's line of sight to the tall, dark commander yards behind them. He curiously looked back at Clarke.

Lexa stood there with her hands laced together in front of her. All her attention was centered on Clarke Griffin. She patiently waited even if it was difficult. Her Alpha's jealous nature had her on edge because of Bellamy's arrival.

"We'll catch up later," Clarke promised Bellamy. Soon they would have the meeting and whatever Lexa needed now could take up her time.

"See ya, Clarke." Briefly, Bellamy watched his friend leave before he turned back to Octavia's training.

Lexa released a strangled breath once Clarke came to her side. Clarke's expectant look made her come up with an excuse. "We have something to discuss before the meeting."

Clarke slotted her eyes yet held her tongue. She instead followed Lexa into town and found herself going up the church's steps. She noted Ryder, who opened it for them.

Lexa slipped past the Sky leader and listened to the door's heavy shut.

"Were you able to sleep last night?" Clarke prompted. She walked between the tables and curiously watched Lexa take off her jacket. Clarke leaned against the left table's edge and folded her arms.

"Sha." Lexa slung her jacket on the throne's arm. She crossed the distance between her and Clarke.

"So, what did we need to talk about?" Clarke was under the impression that their conversations were still limited thanks to the rut. She had grown use to it. But, as she looked up into dark eyes, she knew there was no pending conversation. It was a different kind of conversation with bodies.

"I wish to return the favor last night," Lexa quietly explained.

Clarke's heart instantly palpitated at the offer. She trembled from the excitement that grew in her stomach and ran deeper. "Lexa... I uh..." She shook her head and weakly argued, "I'm not the one in a rut... or heat."

"No." Lexa stepped into Clarke's space. "But I know you have needs as well." She clutched the Sky leader's hips.

Before Clarke knew what happened, she was lifted onto the table's edge and feet no longer on the floor. She gasped and quickly latched onto Lexa's muscular biceps. "What... what are you doing?" Her heart dropped into her belly when Lexa wolfishly smiled at her.

"Returning the favor," Lexa huskily replied. She easily pushed between closed knees and spread Clarke's legs open.

Clarke was breathing hard and quite nervous at the sudden events. She only had to deny Lexa and it would stop. She trusted Lexa, fully. That was hardly the issue. She was just undeniably shaken by Lexa's obvious want for her. The Alpha was peeking out from behind the commander's self-control.

Lexa leaned down to Clarke and offered, "We can wait for another time." She sniffed Clarke's
hesitation. "But I thought it'd help us get through the meeting."

Clarke straightened at the thought of the pending meeting. She pushed her hand against the commander's broad shoulder. "I don't think that's going to help you get through the meeting... quite the opposite." A low rumble was the only response.

Lexa straightened up as she capped the Alpha. "Then do you suggest something else?"

Clarke merely answered by reaching for the button at Lexa's pants. "Maybe a redo of last night."

"Clarke," Lexa growled. She covered her hand over Clarke's own to halt her from undoing another button. It was hardly her intent to have Clarke touch her again. However, the look on Clarke's face was a challenge. She swallowed down her next growl and instead countered by reaching for the belt at Clarke's waist. "It's only fair."

Seconds passed before Clarke could actually grasp what was happening to them, in the damn building where they would hold the alliance meetings in an hour. She wanted Lexa to touch her, and she could let Lexa. It was fair now that she had touched Lexa. And maybe Lexa was right, it could help them both focus in the meeting.

"This is so we can get through the meeting," Clarke reminded. However, Lexa's toothy smile made her stomach quiver.

"For the alliance," Lexa growled, playfully. She enjoyed Clarke's brief eye roll. She released Clarke's hand and now was able to work Clarke's leather belt, much like Clarke freed one button at a time on Lexa's pants. "But, you are first," Lexa firmly ordered.

Clarke had only managed two of the five buttons on Lexa's pants, before she lost her chance. Lexa was pressed against her, and she was forced to latch onto Lexa's sides.

Lexa had undone the belt and first button. It only took her a second to figure out the zip on Clarke's jeans.

Clarke shook at the sheer thought of Lexa touching her. A dull throb between her legs grew into a soft ache of need. She was unsure what to expect from Lexa, but these events caught her off guard. Suddenly Lexa leaned down with arms on either side of Clarke.

"We must be quiet," Lexa murmured near Clarke's ear. She lifted her hand and brushed Clarke's beautiful blond strands behind her shoulder. "Ryder will keep others out, but..." Her breath brushed against Clarke's soft ear.

"Quiet... got it," Clarke agreed. "I can do..." She jumped from a the nip against her ear. "Fuck," she hissed loudly and dug her nails into Lexa's shirt. Another shiver skated down her spine and settled between her legs when Lexa growled low in her ear. She was breathing even harder when teeth grazed down her neck and paused at her pulse point. "Lexa," she gasped.

Lexa felt her Alpha tear free in her veins. She continued growling as small yet warm hands went under her shirt and clutched her side. Her Alpha thrived on Clarke's desire for both support and independence. Lexa sucked in a breath then lifted her head until she found Clarke's silky lips.

Clarke pressed hard into the kiss. She moaned when their tongues brushed over and across each other. Ever drop of heat sunk lower in her belly, and she knew she was already undone for Lexa.

After the kiss, Lexa pressed their foreheads together. She opened her eyes to find Clarke's own as dilated as hers. She revealed her canines in a wide smile. Clarke's deep, needy groan caused a rumble
Lexa. She answered Clarke's needs with teasing the top of the black underwear.

Every breath left Clarke more frantic. She watched Lexa's fingertips graze across her lower abdomen. She was overwhelmed by both need and fearful excitement. Without thought, she naturally attempted widening her legs for the commander. But, it was difficult with her feet in the air.

With enough sense, Lexa registered it. She straightened and leaned to her right with an outstretched hand. She grabbed a chair's ladder-back, jerked it around, and brought the seat under Clarke's left boot. The chair provided traction and support for Clarke's injured leg.

For the second time, Clarke was warmed by Lexa's care for her. And the sensation further pooled low in her stomach. She groaned at the strong hand on her side. She was slid to the very edge of the table.

Lexa resumed her earlier position after checking that Clarke was comfortable. She nudged her hand past Clarke's jeans, the underwear still acting as a barrier. She wrangled her Alpha's feral desire to simply take Clarke. She was undeniably curious about Clarke's human body, even in a rut's haze.

For a heartbeat, Lexa distinctly noticed the underwear was unexpectedly damp. Such a strange idea excited her Alpha greatly and caused her to growl. With her thumb, she hooked the underwear's top part and pulled on it.

"Leksa... beja," Clarke demanded. Briefly she had the notion that Lexa was exploring her body. Perhaps a female human was different from the Omegas. The thought died when a callused hand now slipped in through her underwear. She sucked in her breath and stiffened against Lexa's hand.

Lexa was growling in excitement and want for the human. But, she reigned in on her Alpha as she touched Clarke for the first time. With care, she pushed two fingers deeper and parted the soft folds that protected the bud. Instantly her fingertips were coated by warm, slick liquid that was new to her. Again, curiosity swelled in her and in her Alpha so she could hardly contain her next words.

"You are wet here," Lexa murmured. She grinned when Clarke questioningly gazed at her.

Clarke struggled for concentration, slightly lost by Lexa's strange observation. She swallowed and hoarsely replied, "That's normal." She melted at Lexa's wider grin. Most likely Lexa could smell every drop of her excitement.

Lexa put aside her observation of Clarke's human body. She instead slowly pushed her index finger forward against the swollen bud. Her fingertip pushed down, and she tensed when Clarke nearly jumped off the table.

"That's really," Clarke hissed, "Sensitive there." She realized she had latched onto Lexa's wrist to hold her hand still. She loosened her grip and let out a breath. "Try to the side instead of under my clit."

Lexa wondered if she would retain Clarke's Gonasleng word for the swollen bud. She instead focused on the piece of advise and moved the pad of her fingertip to the side of Clarke's clit. Gently at first, she started rubbing the pulsing clit. She was rewarded by Clarke's throaty groan.

Clarke breathing picked up again. She closed her eyes as pressure built down in her belly. She was surprised by Lexa's cautious pace, but it went a little faster each moment. Her left hand fell away from the commander's wrist and clutched the edge of the table.
Every stroke across the clit made Lexa harder. She loved how Clarke’s dampness made it so easy to please her. Her Alpha was in the forefront again, and she hungered for more moans. She moved her hand down under Clarke's ass and yanked her forward further so that her larger frame supported Clarke's weight.

Clarke yelped but went with it. She leaned completely on the commander and placed her hands behind her, on the table. She gave Lexa better access and was given faster strokes. She tilted her head back and bit her lip to hold down the louder moans. Soft shocks rippled through her body as heat built in her. A fuzziness settled over her head.

Lexa glanced at Clarke's face and growled at the lust there. Her Alpha howled in pleasure and wanted to mate Clarke even more than before. But, Lexa stayed in control because right now was more than she could ask for from Clarke. Their growing trust swelled proudly in her chest. As if sensing her emotions, Clarke met her gaze and they both felt tied together. It spurred Lexa to satisfy Clarke, and she added soft pressure against Clarke's clit.

A soft yell broke from Clarke, by mistake. She bit her lip to hold the rest down. She began rolling her hips against Lexa's strokes. For a second, she peered down at Lexa's crotch so close to her own and groaned at what more they could be doing. She pushed away the idea because right now was so amazing. Her whimpers crept through until finally she lost the sliver of control. Her orgasm cut through her and the passion made her gasp loud. Sharply her hand shot out and halted Lexa's continued movements. If Lexa went any further then the entire village would certainly hear Clarke.

"S-s-stop," Clarke rasped. She was losing arm strength and barely managed to sit up, but with Lexa's help. She leaned against the commander's strong frame and continued panting until her heart calmed down.

Lexa gently retracted her hand and snaked her arm around the human. She lowered her head and nuzzled blond hair. With closed eyes, she listened to Clarke's breathing and felt the hum in her own blood. Eventually she noticed the soft strokes of Clarke's thumb across her side.

A last deep breath settled Clarke, and she lifted her head from the commander's chest. She grinned at the dark eyes above her. "Mochof," she murmured.

"Pro," Lexa replied. Her voice held a thick timber of a wolf.

"Now your turn," Clarke insisted. Brief temptation to ask Lexa why she found Clarke's wetness different niggled at Clarke, but it could wait for another time. Clarke had more important things to do. Like her fingertips tracing down across Lexa's stomach under the black shirt. Every taut line of muscle made Clarke’s fingers tingle in both awe and excitement.

Finally back at the buttoned pants, Clarke slowly worked each round barrier one at a time. Similar to last night, her breathing accelerated in anticipation and slight nervousness. Her mind had yet to truly reconcile Lexa's feminine features with the lower male anatomy inside the tight pants. She pushed aside her own misunderstandings so she could focus on Lexa. All the buttons were freed and pants slightly parted to reveal soft skin that vanished into dark cloth.

Lexa released the human and placed her right on the ladder back. Instinctively, she wanted to help Clarke, who was noticeably still adjusting to the reality of Lexa's body. With patience, she allowed Clarke to take her time. When Clarke questioningly peered up at her, Lexa only held a neutral expression so that Clarke could choose.

After an inhale, Clarke trailed her fingertips along Lexa's warm skin, down past the waist line and between the open fly. In seconds, the base of Lexa's cock halted her fingers so she paused then
started closing her hand around the thick shaft. With her other hand, she gently pulled the full length free from the pants' confinement. Lexa's soft yet relieved groan reminded her just how uncomfortable the pants had to be for Lexa.

"I don't know how you walk around like this all day," Clarke spoke, without thought. A soft growl made her grin at the commander. She held Lexa's stare while she gently ran her hands down the length of Lexa's cock. Lexa was already hard, most likely for most of the rut. Last night, after the orgasms, Lexa had only softened for a short time.

For a moment, Clarke stole the chance to observe Lexa's cock since there was far more light now than last night. Again, she gently ran her left hand slowly down the length and took in the details. She still concluded Lexa's girth was more than male humans. There were also very soft ridges along the top of the shaft and a slightly more distinct ring like ridge at the very base that could only be felt, not seen. But similarly to humans, faint veins protruded along the length until the very end. As Clarke's hand made it to the tip, she found no true corona along the glans but a retracted, natural foreskin. Her only other observation was that Lexa strictly had a penis, no testis. Every detail was logged into Clarke's medical mind for later consideration.

Lexa was being patient while Clarke's medical curiosity was somewhat satisfied by the study. She should have felt self-conscious about it, but her Alpha was all too proud. Like Clarke, she knew they had a lot to discuss once the rut came to an end. But for now, their delicate acceptance and strong desire of each other was enough.

Clarke returned her hand to the base and tightened her grip, knowing it would please Lexa. A satisfied groan filled her ears and excited her further. But she kept her hand there and held the rest of the length with her right hand. At an aching pace, she massaged the hard length. The nearby chair's low crack made her glance at it and grin.

Eventually, Lexa slumped forward but used her left arm to hold up her weight rather than subjecting Clarke to it. She nudged her head against the side of Clarke's own and continued growling in pleasure. An unexpected yank of her cock made her snarl louder, her teeth gritted hard. "Jok," she cussed. The resumed massage soothed the feral nature in Lexa's Alpha. She eventually released the chair and was completely bent over the human. She locked her elbows and kept her hands flat against the table on either side of Clarke.

How prone the commander was made Clarke feel elated now. Her skin burned with excitement and every one of Lexa's growls made her heart jump. One heavy pant after another brushed across Clarke's ear. She wondered if she was enjoying this too much.

"Clarke," Lexa breathed, "Beja." As much as the massage felt good, it also kept the smoldering heat at bay rather than satisfying it. She needed more so she could climax.

Clarke gave in after the needy request. She moved her right hand to Lexa's hip and held on for support. With her left, she began sliding her closed hand up and down the shaft at a slow pace. Lexa stiffened for a minute before she desired faster friction. Her hips rocked against Clarke's hand. Clarke increased the pace and squeezed Lexa's hip.

Every growl came deeper from Lexa. She thrust her hips harder to match Clarke's demands. But when she pulled back this time, Clarke jerked on her cock and Lexa snarled low. Her dark eyes were locked on Clarke and the Alpha was ever present by the white of her irises.

Clarke had yet to be intimidated by the Alpha, who she trusted too. She instead coaxed the Alpha by squeezing the end of the shaft. She was pleased when the Alpha rocked her hips forward again, sliding the cock through Clarke's hand. With Lexa so close, she briefly exchanged a heated kiss and
then whispered, "Don't stop now."

Lexa answered with a growl. Her Alpha howled at the challenge set in front of her. She obliged the human by drawing her hips back then forward, again and again. She matched Clarke's speedy pace and growled every time Clarke gently pulled on her cock. But she didn't stop once, which only fueled the pleasure in her body.

Clarke was so close to Lexa that each drive forward pushed the head of Lexa's cock close to her still unzipped fly. For a second, she imagined their fooling around going further. But, she closed her mind to it and focused on Lexa's needs. She sensed Lexa's pleasure was nearly to the tip. Clarke added more squeezes up or down, which sent pleasurable shockwaves through Lexa.

Together, they drove Lexa to a breaking point that ended with Lexa's last thrust forward. The pleasing heat washed through Lexa and nearly forced a cry from her lips. Lexa's nails dragged against the wood table. She was breathing hard near Clarke's temple. But her locked knees still weakened after such a rush and to her amazement, Clarke hopped off the table and held her. Even drowning in the Alpha's pleasure, Lexa was warmed by Clarke's concern.

Clarke managed the bit of weight Lexa put on her. Again, she noted there was no ejaculation again. It was simply another thing to talk about later. She held Lexa for at least a minute before Lexa straightened up from the table. She could hardly help her slight smile at seeing notes of green in Lexa's less blown eyes.

"Mochof," Lexa murmured. Most of the hardness in Lexa's cock had dissipated, for now. It would be back soon, but it probably was enough to get her through the meeting.

"My pleasure," Clarke teased back.

The commander wanted to roll her eyes, but she was too drained at the moment to bother. A sudden knock at the door made her slot her eyes. Like Clarke, she had stiffened too but was pleased when Ryder only cracked the door open.

"Heda, Onya hir."

Clarke groaned but curiously waited for Lexa's response. She remembered her own situation so she hastily zipped her fly and fumbled with the button.

"Sen juusen op," Lexa ordered. She was already working herself back into the tight pants.

Clarke did her best not to comment again about the damn tight confines of Lexa's pants. She instead pushed away from Lexa while threading her belt back through the buckle. She stood feet away from the commander, who was now walking towards the throne while she hooked the last button.

Anya entered heartbeats later yet slowed at seeing Clarke already here. She suspiciously eyed the Sky leader and then scented the excitement in the space between Clarke and Lexa. She nearly grinned until the commander spoke to her.

"Chit yu gaf, Onya?"

Anya looked to Lexa, who now faced her. She tucked away her knowledge about what probably happened moments ago between the commander and Clarke. "Oso hon hunta daun."

Lexa fisted her hands. She knew Anya meant the hunter that had set the trap that Clarke stepped into the other day. "Os."
Clarke failed to translate Anya's statement so she narrowed her eyes. "What's going on?"

Anya pensively looked between her commander and the Sky leader. She may have wished to tell Clarke, but it was in Lexa's hands. Perhaps she made a mistake in coming in to tell Lexa, in front of Clarke.

Lexa cut her attention to the Sky leader. "Warriors have captured the hunter that set the trap you stepped into."

Clarke was surprised that the hunter had been caught at all. She inwardly cringed at what punishment may await him or her. "What will happen?"

Lexa linked her hands behind her back. "The law requires that the hunter pays damages to the injured party." She noted Clarke's slightly wide eyes.

Clarke shook her head and asked, "How?"

"For six months the hunter's catches will go to you," Anya replied.

Clarke caught a faint nod of agreement from Lexa. She blew out a low breath. "I... it was an accident."

"It was no accident," Lexa argued. "There is no accident in setting up a trap within village limits."

Anya wholly agreed with the commander. She noted that Lexa's was more loquacious for being in a rut. She thinly smiled at the crisp green in Lexa's eyes that had been gone for days. It was all the confirmation she needed to understand what was transpiring between her commander and her human friend. It was more than she had hoped for months ago when she brought the pair together in a meeting for a rocky alliance against the Mountain Men.

Clarke was pensive and gently asked, "Don't you think it'll be... a bit much to force a grounder hunter to pay a penalty to a Sky person, especially Wanheda? The relations between caine and humans are so fragile right now." She looked between the pair.

"It is our law," Anya argued. "A very old one at that." In the early civilization of caineblidas, the law had started to protect unsuspecting villagers. "Ignoring it would only send the message that it is okay for hunters to trap Sky people."

Clarke sighed at Anya's good point. "What about if a grounder human walked into one? Does the law still apply?"

Anya grumbled at Clarke's deceptive attempt. She could tell Lexa was displeased by it too.

Clarke sensed the frustration from both caine. She blew out a breath and tried explaining, "I'm not discrediting your law, trust me. I agree that letting the hunter get off free would send a bad message but... it's still a political message."

Anya folded her arms and waited for Clarke's resolution.

"What do you purpose?" Lexa offered, with much patience.

Clarke was relieved and nodded at Lexa's open mind. "Maybe just reduce it to three or four months." She looked between the two grounder leaders. "Just present it that me, Wanheda, is feeling merciful. It'll still send the message that there's punishment for breaking the law."
Anya grumbled, inwardly, but she could tell Lexa was leaning towards Clarke's idea. She waited for what she already knew was Lexa's decision.

"Very well," Lexa granted. She looked at the Sky leader. "If that is your wish."

Clarke nodded and reminded, "Besides I was the idiot that jumped into the damn thing." She tensed at the instant growl from Anya.

"It should have not been there regardless," Anya sharply reminded. Her protective nature flared up like it had when she first saw the hunter locked up. The damn hunter had trapped somebody she considered part of her paka. She knew Lexa felt the same about the situation.

Clarke saw that the commander wholly agreed with Anya. There was no way she was swaying either of them, and it was enough that she had the punishment reduced for the hunter.

"But, I will teach you to mind traps in the future," Anya promised the Sky leader.

Lexa gave a low grunt of agreement.

"As I taught another many years ago," Anya teased and grinned over at the commander.

"Anya," Lexa warned the general. She could say nothing else because the church doors opened for new arrivals.

Clarke looked over at seeing Marcus and her mother. She smiled at them as they came closer.

"We will deal with the hunter after the meeting," Lexa softly ordered both the general and the Sky leader.

Clarke heard the order and saw Anya's agreement. She greeted Marcus and her mother. She saw Indra trailing in last. She took her usual seat, like the others. She was grateful that she and Lexa had used the other table or else she her mind would be on something else the entire meeting.

Lexa had retreated to the marble table on the dias. She quickly drank water just to help cool herself. She returned to the group and spoke. "I hope there will be no other delays in these talks." She saw no arguments, her attention settling last on Clarke.

"None, commander," Clarke firmed. She was suppose to keep her attention up, but her eyes dropped to the slight bulge in Lexa's pants. She shifted, uncomfortably in the seat, after her mistake. This was getting ridiculous, she ridiculed to herself.

Lexa chewed down the Alpha's wolfish smile. She sensed Clarke's trouble so she quickly resolved it by taking a seat at the table. "We last discussed the supplies from Mount Weather." She kept her chair slightly away from the table so she could stretch her long legs and keep them spread open. It was difficult to be comfortable in a seat with a rut. Already a light ache started low in her gut, but it was easily ignored for now.

"Sky people will take the medical supplies," Marcus reminded. "The weapons destroyed and the victims from Tondc will receive the food supplies."

Clarke bit her tongue just to hold her protest.

Lexa gave a low nod. "If there is a lot of food supplies, which I suspect there will be, then we will split it with Skaikru." She closely watched Clarke, who was slightly taken aback. "The victims from Tondc have been taken in by various villages throughout Trikru territory. It has placed a strain on
those families to compensate for extra mouths."

"Nearly all the food supplies in Tondc were lost," Anya clarified to the Sky leaders.

"That's understandable," Marcus Kane agreed. He and Abby were there when the village had been bombed that night.

Like Lexa, Clarke knew there would be an abundance of food supplies in the mountain. Her Sky people would in fact end up with such supplies once it was inventoried by the Trikru. Relief washed through her because the difference would probably help Camp Jaha ride through the winter. So much of their agricultural was on the Farm Station, which was god knew where now.

"Thank you," Clarke finally spoke up.

Lexa slightly bowed her head.

"There is one thing, medically, that I do need to obtain from Mount Weather," Abby brought up.

Clarke followed her mother's thoughts and nodded. "We need Dr. Tsing's research." She hoped Lexa would allow them to access Mount Weather's medical systems. "We need the research so we can do the bone marrow transfer for Maya."

Lexa was quiet. All the alliance talks had made her forget about the single Mount Weather survivor, other than the prisoners.

Indra had a frown and looked at the Sky people. "There is another prisoner?"

"Maya is locked in a containment unit... to protect her from the atmosphere," Marcus answered. "But she's not a prisoner."

"If she is cured," Anya brought up, "What then? Will she become one of your people?"

"Yes," Clarke firmed. She saw Indra's dislike of the idea. "Maya was crucial in defeating Mount Weather. She turned on her own people to help us."

"After taking how much of our people's blood?" Indra countered, bitterly.

"It would have been a lot more, if she hadn't helped us," Clarke debated. She kept the edge out of her tone, remembering what Anya taught her about Alphas.

"It's not about how we start," Lexa cut in. She found Indra's narrowed gaze on her. "But how we finish that matters." She sensed Clarke's appreciation for the support in Maya's life.

Clarke sadly smiled at how Lexa remembered her advice from days ago.

"The Maunon may remain with the Skaikru without fear of punishment from Trikru," Lexa declared. She back tracked further to the original issue. "How can you obtain the information to perform the bone transfer?"

"It'll be in the medical databases," Abby guessed. "Probably secured."

"We'd need Monty to find it," Clarke further told the commander.

"You require accessing their tech," Lexa summarized. After Clarke's low nod, she released a low, disapproving rumble.
Anya was one step ahead of the commander and vaguely mentioned, "Perhaps it is to our benefit, Heda." She lifted an eyebrow and added, "Oso gaf flosk klin in maun."

Indra clearly understood what Anya had said. Her lips tightened.

Marcus Kane glanced at Clarke, but he could tell Clarke had no idea what Anya said to the commander.

"Emo gaf odmin in tek," Anya insisted.

"Sha... en's ridyo." Lexa drummed her fingers once on the table. She saw that the Sky leaders were quite curious about her conversation with Anya.

Clarke was familiar with only the works tek for technology and maun for mountain. The rest went over her head, and it frustrated her. "Chit?" she countered in Trigedasleng, just to get their attention.

"There has been discussion about the fate of the mountain after the supplies are removed from it," Lexa explained to the Sky leaders.

"What is the discussion?" Abby asked for all of them.

Lexa saw the Sky leaders’ keen interest. First she composed her thoughts, carefully. "There are concerns that the mountain's weapons will be used."

"By who?" Marcus asked.

"The Ice Nation," Clarke answered for them all. She knew it was true. The Ice Nation had blatantly ignored Lexa’s orders to depart the territory. Whatever the argument had been between the Ice Nation's general and Lexa had to be more than just who took what supplies.

Marcus and Abby saw the truth in grounders' features and posture.

"Who rules the Ice Nation?" Marcus looked between Lexa and Clarke.

This time the commander took the question. "A queen named Nia." Lexa leaned heavily against her chair. "She has ruled for nearly thirty years."

Clarke was stunned by the news. She had hardly expected a grounder to survive that long in a leadership position. From various conversations with Lincoln and Anya it seemed as if Lexa's position as commander was constantly being replaced by a new person.

Marcus inferred that Nia's lengthy time as a ruler was either from kindness or hardness. From the grounders’ dark features, most likely it was the latter.

"Does she pose a threat to us?" Abby asked the commander.

"She poses a threat to all," Lexa replied.

Abby slumped in her seat and rubbed her brow. "You're talking war."

Indra curiously studied the chancellor. She knew how Abby Griffin felt about war. She recalled her first meeting with Abby outside of Camp Jaha. Peace had been Abby's avenue, but it was Clarke that was willing to fight first. A part of Indra still respected the chancellor's stupid courage to contact and speak to Indra.

"What are the plans for the mountain?" Clarke kept her full attention on Lexa. She sensed that Lexa
and Anya had already thought through something. She suspected that something involved her people helping to get it done.

"The missiles are dangerous... to all of us." Lexa saw hints of agreement from everybody at the table. Nobody forgot what happened to Tondc because they were all there when it was destroyed by the Mountain Men. "It would be in our best interest to destroy the mountain."

Clarke bit her bottom lip.

Marcus folded his hands on the table. He curiously studied Abby, trying to read her thoughts.

"But we could use the tech to help us find our people," Clarke argued. Already she sensed Indra's ire warming up. "They had access to the satellites."

"The missiles are a threat," Marcus cut in.

Clarke looked to the security officer. She respected him and often had his support. "We could lock down Mount Weather again. The grounders couldn't get in for a hundred years without..."

Abby shook her head at Clarke and reminded, "I don't think our people are willing to live in tight confines again."

Clarke had forgotten that the grounders were sitting with them. She was so intent on finding their people. "We don't all have to live-"

"Clarke." Abby silenced her daughter, for once. She agreed that finding the other stations was important, but it could cost them an alliance, start a war, and even end their existence. The Sky people did not leave space just to be trapped in another can down in the ground.

Clarke released a strained breath and rubbed her brow, which softly throbbed for some reason. She sensed Anya leaning into her space, and it soothed her mind.

Lexa had remained quiet and curious about Clarke's determination. With her rut briefly still, she actually viewed the world more clearly. She could see a fracture in Clarke's self-control that allowed a strange aggression free. She was grateful that Anya, an Omega, was beside Clarke.

"Perhaps some of the satellite tech can be removed." Marcus looked from Abby to Lexa. "We can set it up in Camp Jaha to access the satellites and find our people."

"As long as you're willing to destroy the mountain afterwards," Anya proposed to the Sky leaders.

Lexa's silent agreement showed in her features. She liked Anya's deal.

"We can do it," Clarke spoke up. She nodded at Anya then looked over at the commander. "Monty can remove the tech... Raven can blow the place up." She hoped her mother agreed to the idea.

Anya softly huffed at the mention of Raven and her explosive skills. She silently conceded that Raven was the one to take down the mountain.

"I think that's the best course of action." Abby saw that Clarke and Marcus agreed with the idea. She turned to the commander to her right. "The missiles will only bring death."

Lexa was relieved even though she seemed neutral. She had feared what could happen if Queen Nia learned details about the mountain from Cage Wallace. The mountain's destruction would set Queen Nia back. But, they needed to act quickly. "We will begin removing and dividing the supplies..."
immediately."

"What of the medical supplies?" Abby curiously studied the commander. "Jackson and I should really be the ones to go through it. We know what we're looking for." She hoped she was not insulting the commander.

Clarke tensed because she had requested much the same. However, her mother was using an open posture and calm tone. It would probably help.

Lexa was still leery about having Sky people in the mountain. She was realistic too because somebody like Monty would have to remove the tech. It was true that Abby would understand what medical supplies were needed by the Sky people. With a stolen glance at Anya and Indra, she made her decision.

"You may inventory the medical supplies." Lexa held down a devilish smirk and kept stoic. "Indra will work with you."

Indra briefly awed at the commander, but she hid it when Abby looked at her. She instead gave a firm nod at the order. "Sha, Heda."

Abby recalled Marcus's advice the other day about getting to know at least one caineblida. She decided this was God telling her it was her chance. She inwardly sighed but smiled at the commander. "Thank you, commander."

"You will also be able to obtain the information to complete the procedure for Maya," Lexa added.

Clarke was relieved and silently thanked Lexa. Later, she would have to thank the commander in private. Most likely the temporary reprieve from the rut's pain was helping Lexa to make clearer choices.

"Once all supplies and equipment are removed from Mount Weather," Lexa said, "Then it will be destroyed."

"Agreed," Abby seconded. She saw Marcus and Clarke nod too.

Lexa felt they had closed the chapter on Mount Weather, as far as talks. She shifted them to discussions about their alliance. She could only hope the alliance talks would go as well, but she doubted it. But, she was determined to push forward.

To be continued.

Trigedasleng to English
Reshop, Heda. - Goodnight, commander.

Heda, Skaikru don kom daun. - Commander, Sky people have returned.

Heda, Onya hir. - Commander, Anya is here.

Sen juusen op. - Send her in.

Chit yu gaf, Onya? - What is it, Anya?

Oso hon hunta daun. - We caught the hunter.

Os. - Good.

Oso gaf fosh klin in maun. - We need to destroy the mountain.

Emo gaf odmin in tek. - They need access to the technology.

Sha... en's ridiyo. - Yes... it's true.
Chapter 11

Hours ago, the Trikru and Skaikru leaders had settled on what do with Mount Weather in the coming weeks. However, the plans for a new alliance required more energy, more focus, and more demand from them.

As the meeting wore on so did Lexa. Her patience became thinner as they approached the mid-afternoon. She struggled to stay open minded, but her rut's aggression was bubbling up again. Her rut forced her to think about Clarke, about sex, and mating. She struggled with her Alpha.

"Maybe we should stop here," Clarke suggested after another bout of arguments. She noticed Lexa's returned pacing between the table and throne.

"We have been here for hours," Anya readily agreed. She easily sensed Lexa's self-control was deteriorating to nothing. She hoped that Clarke could soothe the Alpha. "Heda?"

Indra inwardly sighed because the meeting's end probably meant she had to be the commander's punching bag. Yet, she sensed that Lexa's overall mood today was better than it had been in awhile.

Lexa paused a few paces in front of the table. "We will resume tomorrow." She folded her arms. "An hour after sunrise." Everyone was nodding and stood up. She started to her throne where she left her jacket.

Clarke was on her feet and studied the commander's tense shoulders. A natural urge started taking her toward Lexa until her mother stepped into her path.

"I want to look at your stitches," Abby said.

Clarke sighed and realized she had to adhere to her mother for once. Most likely her stitches were ready to be removed, if the itching was any indication.

Lexa shrugged on her jacket and turned just as Anya came up to her. Similarly, she was gravitating to Clarke, but Anya needed her. For a brief second, she held Clarke's gaze across the distance.

Clarke inwardly ached at the darkness in Lexa's eyes. Her guilt ballooned in her chest, but she had already agreed to her mother. She promised Lexa that they would meet up soon. With a slightly
lowered head, she followed her mother out of the church and back to their shared quarters.

Abby collected her medical kit and scooted a chair closer to her daughter. Between the firelight and sunshine from the window, she was able to inspect the wounds from the trap's teeth. She decided stitches were ready to come out. With scissors, she carefully worked the stitches.

Always with a medical eye, Clarke watched her mother and occasionally asked certain things. She was relieved to have them out, and it seemed that the wounds were healing correctly. There would still be mild scarring and always remind her of the day she learned Lexa was a caineblida.

After they were done, Clarke was getting ready to leave. She nearly collided with Raven Reyes when she left her quarters.

"What's going on, Princess?"

Clarke rolled her eyes at the old tease. She then slightly faltered from Raven's waiting look. Somehow she felt a little shameful for going to see Lexa. She had hardly visited Raven, Bellamy, or Monty since they came to see her. "I needed a walk," she mentioned.

Raven took that as an invite to join. "Well let's limp together." She followed Clarke outside and was grateful for the cool day.

"So what happened between you and Wick?"

Raven sighed heavily and thought back on their last argument. "He's a prick."

Clarke shook her head but waited for her friend to say more.

"When I heard you were hurt, I decided to come with Kane and mentioned it to Wick." Raven's pace slowed, and she moved closer to Clarke. "He got mad and asked if I have a thing for you."

"What?"

Raven grinned at Clarke's shocked look. "He was pissed that I left with you to go to the grounder camp and was jealous that I was leaving to come to Boyce... to see you." Her grin fell though. "He asked me if I had a thing for you." She shrugged and added, "I asked whether or not it mattered if I did?"

Clarke halted and grabbed the mechanic's shoulder. "Seriously?"

Raven chuckled at Clarke's awed features. "Yeah... seriously. And he blew up... telling me that it was wrong for two women to be together." She narrowed her eyes and hotly whispered, "I could have floated him myself when he started being an ass." She huffed low. "What the Hell does it matter if somebody is gay?"

Clarke sadly smiled at her friend's words. She squeezed Raven's shoulder then yanked her into her arms.

Raven was startled by the unexpected hug, but she returned it.

"Thanks for sticking up for me," Clarke whispered into Rave's ear. She ended the hug then continued walking.

"We should be with whoever we want to be with," Raven said, in conclusion. She hobbled alongside her friend through the busy village.
Clarke wholly agreed, but she suspected not all Sky people felt the same as her and Raven. She put it aside for now and asked, "What are Bellamy and Monty doing?"

"Bell was hanging out with Lincoln and Monty was taking a bath."

Clarke seconded Monty's idea. She had bathed yesterday morning and decided doing so tonight would end her day nicely. With her stitches gone, it would make it far easier.

"How are the alliance talks going?" Raven asked. She zipped up her jacket for warmth.

"They're going well enough."

Raven nodded. She scanned the village's surroundings after rushing by it all this morning. She decided it was much different than Tondc. "Is Abby being smart about it?"

Clarke shrugged then replied, "Probably better than me."

Raven curiously eyed her friend. "What does that mean?" She was somewhat worried because like others, she relied on Clarke's skills as a leader.

Clarke glanced at the passing grounder villager then waited until they were out of earshot. "Well we found out some new information about the grounders."

Raven became further concerned but waited for Clarke to tell her more.

"The grounders are another race." Clarke shifted closer to the engineer. "They're not totally human."

"What?" Raven grabbed her friend's shoulder and halted them both. "What you mean they're not human?" She slotted her eyes. "They look pretty damn human."

Clarke shook her head. "They're half human and half... something else." She glanced at a passerby then sighed at Raven's worry. "They're called caineblidas... or caine for short."

"Why does that name sound like canine... like a dog?"

Clarke shrugged at the keen observation. "The legend is that their god, Caines, was a wolf and mated with a human."

"They're fucking werewolves?" Raven tensed after she spoke too loud.

"Not werewolves... they don't change forms."

Raven huffed and asked, "How sure are you of that?" She continued through the village. "How are they different than us?"

"They uh..."

Raven rarely heard Clarke hesitate and an obvious red hue on Clarke's face made her more curious.

"They have a strong sense of smell," Clarke replied. "They're larger than us and can live longer."

Raven considered the information. She could only imagine what their people would think of the grounders being a different race. "Does Octavia know?"

"Yeah... she's known for awhile."
Raven noted a hint of annoyance from Clarke about Octavia. She shifted away from the topic. "How do you feel about the grounders?" She was unsure herself and needed time to process it.

Clarke was quiet for a moment and continued down the broken sidewalk. "I'm okay with it." She looked at Raven's profile. "They're still people that want to live... just like us."

"How did your mom and Kane take it?"

Clarke sighed and replied, "Kane seemed fine. Mom is having a harder time with it."

"Well..." Raven thought about it for a long minute. "It's not like your mom will want war. She's not a fighter."

"No," Clarke readily agreed.

"She'll adapt to it." Raven slowed when they came to the end of the sidewalk at the main crossroads. She gazed across the street to the aged firehouse.

Clarke followed her friend's line of sight to the stable. She softened at seeing Lexa and Anya standing in front of the stable's entrance. They were discussing something but both stopped and stared at Clarke and Raven.

Lexa was the first to move forward, toward the Sky people. Anya joined her.

Clarke was drawn toward the commander and Raven followed her. They met halfway in the street.

"Heya," Clarke greeted first. She looked from Lexa to Anya.

"We were just discussing the hunter," Lexa said.

Clarke recalled that they were suppose to deal with the hunter after the alliance meeting. "Right," she whispered. "I was just giving Raven a tour of the village."

"One Skaikru showing another Skaikru a Trikru village?" Anya was highly amused.

Raven folded her arms. "Well it looks like you're not doing anything." She enjoyed Anya's brown eyes darkening at her. "So why don't you show me around."

Anya parted her lips, but the commander beat her.

"Sha, Onya." Lexa's eyes twinkled at her general. "A Trikru should show her the village."

Anya pretended to grouch, but she huffed and nodded at the Sky girl. "Follow me."

Raven smiled devilishly at Clarke. "See ya later."

"See ya, Raven." Clarke chuckled at the mechanic limping off with Anya. As she thought more about what just happened, she concluded that Lexa had done it on purpose. She looked up at the commander. "Is there something going on?"

Lexa revealed a wolfish smile. She decided it was good for Anya to try her own medicine at being matched with a mate. "Nothing of concern," she promised.

Clarke gave a low hum. "I guess we should take care of this hunter." But after Lexa's nod, she noticed they were standing still.
"There is something I must show you first." Lexa turned to the stable. "This way." She was headed toward the firehouse entrance rather than the entrance to the bays where the horses were stabled. She opened the door and held it for Clarke.

Once inside, Clarke was surrounded by the scent of leather. The space inside was completely open other than black wrought iron steps that spiraled to an upper floor. All around them was various horse tack either hung up, laid down on a wrap around counter, or items set on the floor. There were a few workbenches off to her right.

"Anya said that your stirrups are too long," Lexa mentioned.

Clarke had known early on, even without being horseback riding experience. She had adjusted them as high as possible, but they were still just too long. Most likely they were designed for grounders' taller stature.

"I had a new set made for you." Lexa stepped around the Sky leader and went to a workbench.

Clarke joined Lexa and smiled at the new stirrups made for her. "Thank you." She could tell already that they would be better. She ran her fingers down a leather strap and toyed with the bronze stirrup. "This will help."

Lexa agreed too. It was unsafe for Clarke to use inappropriate horse tack.

"I figured out what I'm going to name him." Clarke looked up from the stirrups. "The horse." She grinned at the commander, who had gifted her the horse. "Alexander."

Lexa huffed and folded her arms. She debated whether to be flattered or insulted by the horse's name.

Clarke sensed Lexa's thoughts and mentioned, "And not just because it's a variation of your name. But Alexander was a famous ruler in Ancient Greece. He conquered and ruled an empire. I always admired him." She looked down at the stirrups again. She not only admired Alexander the Great but also Lexa. Similar to Alexander, Lexa was a young leader of thousands of people and trying to expand on it. Her thoughts broke when firm hands pulled at her waist.

Lexa ached from the surfaced admiration in Clarke. There were many times that Clarke sought advice from Lexa, as a leader. But now the horse's name was in honor of two people that Clarke keenly respected as leaders. A pleased hum shook deep in her chest when Clarke pressed against her. "I hope that means you like the name," Clarke teased. She slipped her hands between Lexa's open jacket.

Lexa struggled with her Alpha. She held Clarke close even though it pained her greatly. She wanted to mate Clarke so deeply. It bore into her heart and made her Alpha whimper in need. She fought hard to stay together. There was something in her spirit that pulled her to Clarke, not just a heated desire.

Clarke hurt for Lexa and hurt from the rut's torture. In desperate need to help, she pushed Lexa against the workbench. Her previous hesitation about Lexa's body was smoldered under her new confidence. She was driven and jerked each button with determination.

"Clarke..." Lexa lost her concern when she received a fiery glance. Her Alpha howled at Clarke's strength. She should have argued further, but her rut clouded her head. She leaned against the workbench and gripped it with both hands behind her. She groaned when her hard cock was pulled free from the tight pants.
Clarke gave it an initial tug and still briefly wondered how Lexa dealt with the rut. She stroked up and down the shaft a few times. It gave her a chance to plan her next move. She edged slightly closer then slowly began kneeling down. She had never given oral sex, at least to somebody's penis.

Lexa straightened up when Clarke started lowering, hesitantly. A soft white flared around the edges of her irises. Hastily she reached for Clarke and grabbed her.

Clarke nearly had her knees pressed against the cracked concrete floor until strong hands clasped her upper arms. She was suddenly pulled back up, and she was surprised by the change. She questioningly peered up into displeased features.

"No," Lexa simply ordered. She took Clarke's hands into her own and brought them to her cock again. "Only use your hands." She sniffed a hint of startled fear from Clarke. "Beja," she added more gently.

Clarke nodded at the request. She was somewhat relieved too. After a deep breath, she tightened her grip on the thick shaft.

Lexa remained bent over Clarke so they were close. She needed to settle Clarke's earlier fears and hoped their close contact was enough. She nuzzled Clarke's exposed ear and gave a playful growl.

Clarke smiled to herself until it became more of a grin. She yanked hard on Lexa's cock and earned a real growl. She was starting to love the sounds Lexa made in her ear. She stroked at a steady pace.

Lexa was a mixture of groans and low growls. She opened her eyes and peered down at Clarke's firm hand riding up and down her cock. Her Alpha loved every bit of it. From the smells, her Alpha knew Clarke enjoyed it too. They were both becoming more comfortable each time.

Clarke pressed her right hand against Lexa's chest. "Lean back... I need more room."

Lexa was happy to oblige and resumed her earlier position. She gritted her teeth from another hard jerk to her cock. She loved it and growled deeper. She was somewhat startled when Clarke kicked at the inside of her boots. She followed the silent order to spread her legs wider. Her Alpha bathed in the more aggressive nature from Clarke.

With a firmer grip, Clarke pulled down hard on the thick length. In a short time, she had learned what Lexa enjoyed the most. She felt more confident each time with Lexa. As she gazed up, she met the Alpha's hungry gaze.

"Faster," Lexa demanded. She felt the heat in her veins and the build in her lower belly. She clawed her nails into the edge of the workbench's sides.

With a smirk, Clarke teased, "Think you can help?" Her answer was a thrust from Lexa's hips. She held her grin and shifted a step to the side so her left arm had more room. She held onto the workbench with her other hand, for extra support.

Lexa continued thrusting with each of Clarke's strokes. She grounded her teeth hard and growled deeper. Her Alpha was so hungry and this had to be enough.

Clarke matched Lexa's rhythm and every thrust up, she tightened her grip down. Together, they built the passion until it tightened and wrapped around Lexa's very core. With a constant firm hold, Clarke pushed Lexa to the final point, into the orgasm. She briefly closed her eyes at the snarl from the Alpha. She gazed up at all the control it took Lexa to hold down a yell.

Suddenly a rush of weakness filled Lexa, and she slumped against the workbench. She held herself
up enough as the warming sensations rushed through her entire body. She heaved and softly panted from the orgasm.

Clarke had released the slowly softening cock. She instead moved her right arm behind Lexa's lower back, just in case. She pressed her left palm flat against Lexa's taut stomach.

Lexa straightened up but kept her knees locked for support. She bent toward Clarke and shared a gentle kiss. When it was over, she revealed her green eyes to Clarke. She mirrored the smile given to her.

Clarke brushed her thumb across the commander's flushed cheek. "Welcome back," she teased.

Lexa realized how capable Clarke was of pushing the rut away, for a little while. In the past, her rut was all controlling, even with Costia's attention. She was grateful for Clarke and what Clarke was willing to do for her. Their tentative relations were a delicate situation.

After a deep breath, Lexa pushed her cock back into her pants. With Clarke's help, the buttons were back in place. She straightened up and filled her full height.

"Why..." Clarke hesitated but nudged herself to ask it. "Why did you stop me earlier?"

Lexa sighed and turned to the human. "It is something your people do?"

Clarke flushed and nodded after a second. "Yeah... oral sex is pretty common."

Lexa considered it and wondered if that meant Clarke enjoyed both receiving and giving oral sex. "It happens among our people, but not often." She saw the curiosity in blue eyes. "I don't enjoy receiving it." She had never given oral sex either.

Clarke was mildly shocked and stared at Lexa. She shook her head.

"It's not as pleasurable as using your hands."

Already Lexa was drawn back to moments ago when she was thrusting her cock in Clarke's hand. She tried quelling it. "But..." She thought about why Alphas received oral sex from their lovers. "Among our people, it is considered demeaning to perform oral sex on anybody with a mami or pisa."

It was the first time Clarke heard the Trigedasleng words for Lexa's penis. She wondered if there was a slight variation between the two words. She then tensed at the sneer from the commander.

"There are Alphas that will force their lovers to do it."

Clarke frowned and whispered, "A show of dominance." She was not completely against giving oral sex if it was something Lexa enjoyed. Yet, it sounded less pleasurable in general. She questioned whether Lexa even had any experience. She tucked away the information for later reflection.

"We should go see about that hunter," Clarke prompted.

Lexa hooked Clarke's wrists and drew their bodies together. "Clarke..." She leaned down and brought her lips near Clarke's ear. She drew lower and clamped her teeth around soft flesh on Clarke's neck.

"Lexa... later." Clarke grabbed the commander's broad shoulders.

"You have touched me several times," Lexa reminded, near the shell like ear.

Clarke chuckled and joked, "I'm saving up all these favors for another time."
"Oh?" Lexa asked.

Clarke had a grin at the rare playfulness from the commander. She was happy to enjoy it before the rut reared its head again, literally. "Yes." She ducked away before Lexa could bite her earlobe. She loved the growl but still held her ground. "Like when you train me to fight, and I need a massage."

Lexa considered the idea then revealed a wolfish smile. "Very well." She turned to the workbench and scooped up the stirrups.

Clarke shook her head and went past the taller leader. She felt Lexa directly behind her. She wondered when they had become so close and even in sync with each other. It warmed her heart and made her pause in front of the closed door of the firehouse.

Lexa pressed into Clarke's back, a last chance to touch before they were out in public. "Clarke?"

"Sorry." Yet for another moment, Clarke stayed in the doorway and held the door's bolt. She turned her head sidelong and whispered, "I really want this to work. I want us to work."

Lexa's chest shook with a pleased thrum. She bowed her head down until her cheek ghosted across Clarke's own. "I swear I will do my best."

Clarke sadly smiled and nodded. "Me too," she promised. She pushed the bolt and opened the door as Lexa straightened up.

Quickly, Lexa put the new stirrups with Clarke's tack. Then she and Clarke crossed the town until they were at the prison. One of two guards pushed open the heavy wood door then resealed it after Heda and Wanheda passed it. Lexa guided Clarke down twisty, narrow stone steps into a short hallway that had few lit torches. The hallway opened up into what seemed to be a former office space. At a dirty metal desk, a grounder was seated with his sword and a sharpening stone.

"Heda," the grounder greeted. He was instantly on his feet and slightly bent forward in respect.

"Hunta," Lexa simply told the grounder.

The grounder, Greenway, acted as the jailer and was appointed by Anya. Recently he had an influx of prisoners thanks to the fall of Mount Weather. It took him an extra moment to pull the correct key from the wall behind him. He then hurried past the leaders. His fast speed made his open leather jacket billow around him.

"Stay close to me," Lexa warned the Sky leader. She fingered her sword's hilt at her side.

Clarke swallowed a nervous breath when they approached the aisle between old, rusty jail cells. She followed behind the commander, but her curiosity had her peering into the cells. The first few cells held grounders then there were two empty ones. The next five cells' prisoners made her slow down. Nearly all five cells held the bloody faces from Mount Weather. They were the last survivors from the security team that had received the bone marrow from Dr. Tsing. Several of the men lifted their heads at hearing the newcomers. One stood up and approached the bars as the two leaders passed by.

Clarke took two wide steps to close the gap between her and Lexa. She bit her bottom lip from asking about the Mountain Men. She had to leave it in Lexa's hands because she wanted to be done with Mount Weather.

Greenway stood beside a locked cell that contained one individual. He inserted the key, worked the lock, and held open the gate for the leaders.
Lexa immediately stepped in first and easily filled the small cell with her height and Alpha ego. She took a side step and continued holding her sword hilt as a fair warning.

Clarke stood next to the commander and heard the gate lock behind her. The jailer's boot steps grew distant. For a moment, Clarke stole the chance to take in the hunter's features. She was mildly surprised the hunter was a woman, who was weathered by mother nature's hardships.

The hunter had been seated on a wood bed until she heard the arrivals. She stood to greet her visitors and frowned at the obvious Sky person. Her brown eyes darted from the human to the commander.

"Klark kom Skaikru, this is Paris," Lexa introduced. She barely restrained her Alpha's growl. "The hunter that laid the trap that harmed you."

The hunter, Paris, shifted uncomfortably on her feet. She had heard she had trapped a Sky person, but she had no idea it had been Wanheda. Nearly all the color drained from her scruffy features. "Heda, I had meant no..." She lost her bravado under the commander's fearsome stare.

Lexa released a low, heavy breath to dispel her overly protective Alpha nature. After she flexed her grip on the sword hilt, she sharply reminded, "Klark kom Skaikru was injured by a trap that you set within the no-hunt radius of the village. The no-hunt radius is clearly indicated on the trees around the village and on village maps."

"From my understanding..." Clarke attempted in hopes to soften the tension. "The law is fairly clear. Why risk setting one so close to the village?"

Paris balled her hands at her side and glanced over at the commander, silently waiting for approval. She conceded to the commander's soft nod and looked at the Sky girl. "Animals are becoming scarcer because Tondc was destroyed along with all their food, furs, and goods. I thought it was worth the risk to place a trap in the no-hunting radius."

Clarke remembered Lexa said that survivors from Tondc were dispersed among the local villages. There were indeed unplanned people to feed and clothe because everything was destroyed in Tondc by the missile and fires. She rubbed her brow and softly concluded, "More competition." Now she felt even guiltier for taking any of Paris's desperately needed kills, especially with winter upon them. The entire situation was a mess.

Lexa heard Paris's reasoning, but her rut barely allowed it to sink deeper into her mind. She only wanted justice for the harm brought onto Clarke and to set an example to all hunters. She loathed blatant disorder such as Paris's decision. "The punishment for breaking the law is six months of your kills go to the injured person."

Paris inwardly whimpered at the impact it would have on her life and family. She had lost her mate to a reaping from the Mountain Men and only had her young child left. She knew the punishment allowed enough kills to be kept for their own survival but any extra would have normally gone toward trade.

"However," Lexa continued, "Klark kom Skaikru wishes to show you mercy. You will only forfeit three months of kills to her."

Paris blinked after what she thought was a joke, but the commander was truly serious. She looked over at the Sky girl.

"And you won't be giving those kills until the spring time," Clarke added. She nearly jumped from the displeased rumble from the commander, but she pretended to ignore it. "Since the winter months
are the most difficult." She watched the relief flood through Paris's entire frame. She peered up at Lexa and softly smiled at her. "Heda felt it was best to forfeit the kills in the spring since everyone is hurting from the destruction of Tondc."

Lexa grounded her teeth at Clarke's tactic. Her chest was puffed up with unreleased growls, but they each dispelled as she looked at Paris's grateful features.

"Mochof, Heda." Paris took steps closer, but she refrained from touching either of them. She looked at Clarke and whispered, "Mochof, mochof, mochof."

Clarke smiled sadly.

Lexa shifted to the sealed gate and called for Greenway. She was still grinding her teeth together thanks to Clarke. Once the cell was open, she pulled Clarke out first and left the cell last.

Clarke waited for Greenway to lock the cell then she followed him down the aisle. She felt like Lexa was nearly on top of her, but she knew Lexa was protecting her.

"Hey, Griffin... Clarke Griffin," a man called from a cell to the right. "Hey, Wanheda!"

Clarke paused even though Greenway kept going down the aisle.

Lexa pressed her freehand against Clarke's shoulder blade, but Clarke ignored her.

Clarke pivoted and neared the cell that held one lone security guard from Mount Weather. "How did you know I was Wanheda?"

Lexa released her sword hilt and instead unsheathed her dragger from within her jacket. She edged closer to Clarke's back, the dagger hidden between them.

"They've been calling you Wanheda for awhile," the Mountain Men revealed. "Ever since you burned three hundred of their people with the drop ship."

Clarke narrowed her eyes but decided he was pointless.

"Did you find your other ships?"

Clarke paused at the question. She wanted to know about her people, and it drew her back to him.

"I know where one of them is," he said.

"Where?"

The Mountain Man chuckled and replied, "For a price."

Clarke seconded Lexa's low growl and shook her head. "I don't think so." She leaned closer to the bars. "We'll be using your satellites to find them ourselves."

"That's if the grounder clan doesn't find them first," he argued. He smiled toothily. "And you know how savage these grounders are."

"Not all of them," Clarke declared.

The Mountain Man laughed and countered, "But the ones to the north..." He chuckled again and moved closer to the bars. "Just a piece of advice, you can't train them to obey commands." He smirked when the commander behind Clarke Griffin started growling louder.
"Go float yourself," Clarke snapped. She started turning away from him.

The Mountain Men snorted at the weak curse and enjoyed her frazzled nature. "Watch your back, Griffin." He cut his dark eyes directly to the commander. "She's gonna mount you like a bitch in heat." But his smirk was cut short by the hand around his throat and blade tip pressed to his temple. He stared down at the canine teeth bared at him.

Clarke hardly saw Lexa move and spun around to find the Mountain Men dangling from Lexa's grip. She took a deep breath to ease her nerves. She needed to diffuse the situation before Lexa lost anymore control. With a firm grip on Lexa's tense arm, she whispered, "Beja, Leksa." She hoped she could reach Lexa through the Alpha's power. "Leave him for your people." She waited to see if her reasoning and soft voice soothed Lexa's aggression.

After a few more seconds, Lexa dropped the gasping human to the dirty, cracked floor. She withdrew from the bars and faced Clarke, who was sighing in relief.

Clarke looked down at the fallen Mountain Man. She shook her head at his weak attempt to divide her and Lexa, to divide Sky people and caineblida. She considered his earlier remark and slowly a sly smile pulled at her lips. She amusingly concluded, "It's obvious you have penis envy." She enjoyed Lexa's low chuckle but her smile fell.

The Mountain Man rubbed his throat, too sore to speak at the moment. He could only watch the pair finally leave his cell's door.

"And you're the dog that needs putting down," Clarke called over her shoulder. She and Lexa were finally leaving the prison after an interesting visit. Once outside, she happily breathed in the crisp autumn air. She then noticed Lexa was pacing beside the building. She neared Lexa with caution.

"Word will spread about the change in punishment." Lexa was annoyed with Clarke's change without first consulting her. And the damn Mountain Man did nothing but finely sharpen her irritation further.

Clarke could tell that any argument was a loss for them both. She decided Lexa would see reason later so she said, "Lecture me after your rut is over."

Lexa abruptly went still after the human put an end to their pending fight. Even her Alpha was taken aback by it. Her eyes comically widened at the human.

Clarke was facing the commander but was walking backwards. "I have to go." She was antsy to speak to her mother and Marcus Kane about what the Mountain Man unknowingly disclosed to her. "I'll see you tonight," she promised. Without another word, she rushed off and finally a smirk broke free thanks to the rare shock on Lexa's face. Sometimes she absolutely loved rattling Lexa. Anya was right that once an Alpha was understood that they were easy to handle.

Clarke hurried through the town until she made it to the shared quarters. She was relieved that Marcus was already with Abby, sharing tea together. Clarke closed the door and made sure to bolt it so nobody interrupted them.

"Clarke, is everything alright?" Abby started standing until Clarke sunk into an empty chair at the table.

"I think I know where we can start searching for another station."

"What?" Abby asked.
Marcus set down his mug of tea. "How?"

Clarke unzipped her jacket once she noticed the room's warmth. "Lexa and I were down in the prison and there's a few Mountain Men held there."

Abby exchanged a curious glance with Marcus.

"They're all guys from the security team and one of them said he knows where a station landed." Clarke pivoted her head between Marcus and her mother.

"Where?" Abby pressed.

Clarke shook her head and sighed at the important question. "He won't tell me exactly but he did slip up." She grinned as she considered the conversation with the Mountain Man. "I told him we were using their satellites to find the stations soon. He then said that maybe the grounder clan might find them first and went on about how savage they are."

Abby had a thick furrow across her features, still waiting for the answer.

"I argued that not all of them are," Clarke continued. "Then he said 'but the ones to the north...'' She grabbed her mother's knee and squeezed it. "There's a station in the Ice Nation. Why else would he say that?"

Marcus slumped back into his chair and considered such a thing. Very slowly a worried breath expelled from him, but his fears were sinking in deeper. "If some of our people are truly in the Ice Nation..." Today's meeting had included heavy discussion about the Ice Nation, which was a darkly driven clan. "They could be dead already."

"They could be alive." Clarke held hope that more of their people were alive and fighting to rejoin them.

Marcus toyed with his hands but asked, "What did Lexa say?"

Clarke inwardly sighed at the episode down in the prison. She doubted that Lexa had quite picked up on the Mountain Man's slip because the rut was still affecting her. "Nothing... yet." She slouched against the chair. "But I will talk to her about it."

"Do you think she knows about a station in the Ice Nation?" Abby asked.

"No... I don't think so." As the days went by, Clarke was growing closer to Lexa and the same was happening to Lexa. They were both leaders of two different races, but they were building trust.

"If there are any of our people in the Ice Nation..." Marcus hesitated to say what they all feared in their hearts. "Their queen will use them against us and maybe even against Lexa."

Clarke stared at her lap as she considered the ugliness behind the truth. She had yet to meet the queen of the Ice Nation, but she had learned enough to know that Queen Nia would seize any opportunity to wound or control Lexa. Once the Skaikru solidified relations with the coalition then Skaikru captives were even more valuable. And not only were political relations going to make Skaikru captives valuable but so would a romantic relationship between the commander and a Skaikru leader. Clarke sunk heavier at the weight pressing down against her chest.

To be continued.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!