My Destiny in a Green Flannel Shirt

by mswarrior

Summary

Lexa is a lumberjack on winter break when a new omega moves into her town. This is a different trope, where Clarke is unknown by the familiar characters in this story. Keryon = spirit

Notes

So you may not have heard that there are people on Wattpad who are taking stories from Clexakru and converting them to their fandom. (other fandoms as well) As another said, the Clexa dynamics do not translate to other fandoms. Some are saying that they are okay if they take them. To be clear, I don't approve. Do not take my story for your fandom. I will hunt you down. You can download/share my story as is with my name, no problem.

Thanks,
Mares
You don't know me, but I need to tell someone about my journey that led me here, just as I suppose it did for you. Now I find myself near the high mountains covered in pine, oak, and walnut trees. Vast swaths of land, begrudgingly giving up its timber. It feels so much like my own life that I left behind.

~

Lexa scanned the delicately written words in the note she found a week ago while taking a walk in the woods near her cabin. The author carefully wrapped it in leather, held shut with twine, and left hanging from a branch. Lexa didn't know why the message should resonate with her so personally, but it was like the person spoke directly to her.

Gustus, her foreman, and a friend caught Lexa reading it while on her lunch break from clearing brush from behind his home, and she quickly shoved the note into her pocket. He sensed enough through her silence, her embarrassment and concluded; It's just the fairy forest folk who leave messages to the lovesick wanderers. Lexa heard about the legend before from the other lumberjacks and didn't believe them or Gus, but perhaps it was someone playing a joke on her. Nothing in the note indicated anything about love. Although, if she were honest with herself, it had crossed her mind. Logically it wouldn't be wise to take it personally because anyone could have found the note. It just happened to be her. Still, the playful side she kept hidden couldn't help but feel special that she was the one that discovered the message and wondered what it meant.

The author was correct. Her journey did lead her here almost three years ago. Fresh from college and into a career in a private equity firm. Bright-eyed and eager to make a lot of money until her life began to fall apart. A broken relationship with her first love was how it started. Then it was working with the more aggressive alpha males and females who would do anything to make their standing in their corporation, even at the expense of ripping off the little guy. Her company bought out struggling businesses, just to turn around and break the pensions of hundreds of people and downsizing the shop. Leaving the former owners with massive buy-outs and screwing over their workers. Lexa cringed, remembering she had a hand in it as well.

But, cutting wood didn't become her next choice. No, it was smaller consulting jobs within the same corporation that became the final straw. The pay was substantial, but the hours were too long. Then finding out they also put more people out of work at the expense of the bottom line. It seemed the one constant that became her whole world. She tried to find a way of saving their jobs but didn't have the control she needed to make the final decisions, and she quit in the middle of their last takeover. Lexa didn't want to witness the carnage left behind and made some enemies on both sides.

In disgust, she sold all of her overpriced furniture and her loft, bought a jeep and headed for the mountains. She shortened her name from Alexandra to Lexa and found this place by chance and put a down payment on a cabin and took a job with Forrester's Lumber.
Indra Forrester was another fellow traveler, fed up with the fast-paced world of the big city, and took over her father's business after he died. Lexa was physically strong and willing to get her hands dirty on an honest job. One that she could live with herself at the end of the day and made some good friends along the way.

~

Clarke studied the map on the cell phone and tried to get a sense of her direction. An urge beckon her to go northward and away from the city she lived her entire life. To leave the people that felt betrayed by putting their trust in her, but mainly flee from shame and guilt that weighed heavily on every decision she made. Clarke wasn't in search of anything in particular other than a simpler life, one in which she did not control the fates of people she worked with and had little sway over their destinies when everything went to shit.

Clarke used some of her money on the purchase of a late model car and packed her positions, and left. Hoping to find a place to discover herself again and pick up the piece of her shattered life and find a way to live with her guilt.

A few days into her trip found her at the base of a mountain and saw a Help Wanted sign in a window of a quaint restaurant called The Diner while filling up her car and on impulse asked the owners, Octavia and Lincoln if they were still hiring and got the job on the spot. The friendly couple gave her a tour of the place. Afterward, they rented her a cabin about a half a mile down the main road from their business.

It was almost too perfect, but with all she had been through in the past few years, she wasn't going to pass up an opportunity to take a break and get her head back on straight. This first stop wouldn't be permanent. It wasn't what she was looking for, just a place to blend in and make some money before heading to her next unknown destination, wherever that might be.

~

A few drops of rain came down on the windshield as Lexa shifted in the seat of her jeep while her thumb nervously tapped on the steering wheel, waiting to get up the nerve to go inside. Her anticipation grew to catch a glimpse of the new waitress through the window. Lexa recalled her scent from last week as her eyes filled in the rest of her details; the woman was blond, shapely, and an unattached omega. Lexa saw too few them in the town she lived in, next to the mountain where she worked.
Lexa saw the woman for the first time last week by chance, catching a glimpse of her leaving the local market as she pulled into the parking lot. The frazzled blond carried a couple of bags of groceries in each arm and struggled to open the trunk of her car and stuff everything in the back. Then watched as she labored to get her vehicle started. The stubborn car refused to turn over and overheard the woman cursing and pounding on the steering wheel. Lexa was close to getting out of her jeep to help the stranger until the ignition finally started. Lexa beamed as the woman pumped the air in victory and put her car in drive, and then headed down the road.

What Lexa did next, she convinced herself was for her protection and followed the stranger home. The sun had set hours ago, and for her peace of mind, Lexa needed to make sure this woman got to her destination safely. Admittedly she was also egged on by her alpha's curiosity getting the better of her. The drive wasn't long and soon found herself coasting to a stop down the road and darkened her headlights and watched from a distance. The woman parked her beater near a cabin, retrieved her groceries, and headed inside, but not before turning to look out as if she felt her presence. By this time, Lexa had already rolled down her window, lifted her chin, and sniffed the air trying to catch a whiff of her scent. It was subtle but present with the light breeze blowing in her direction. The distinct raw omega scent so rare, Lexa thought she felt the omega was in her bed last night. Stirring in the middle of a dream, she woke hard with her hand on her cock, dripping from her climax. She left the evidence in her sheets, now tossed in the dirty laundry.

A loud slam against the outside of her door caused Lexa to jump. It followed by the distinct laughter of her friend. "Are you coming in before it starts pouring, asshole?" Anya smirked at the side-eye Lexa gave her.

"Yeah, yeah, jerk," Lexa said, annoyed that her best friend had a way of snapping her out from her daydreams. It was just as well when she finally spotted the omega through the window; she was smiling and laughing at something a rival alpha named Quint had said. She would probably hook up pretty quickly in this town if its reputation holds to its history.

The restaurant was almost full, and Lexa saw an empty booth in back, shoving Anya in the direction and took the seat to the far side to get a clear view of the entire place. Lexa tried to justify in her head that she just didn't like anyone coming up behind her when in reality, she wanted to watch the omega passively. Anya wouldn't challenge her choice; she may be her tormentor at times, but she wasn't the dominant alpha of her group of friends; it was Lexa's place but kept herself from reacting most of the time.

Since the new arrival came to town, she had been all the talk. Curvy in all the right places. Friendly, but not giving up too much personal information. Lexa wasn't one to start a conversation with a beautiful omega because of her private nature, and if she possessed an urge to pursue this woman, it would probably be too late. It would be wise that she put away all thoughts of her. Chances were Lexa wouldn't be able to reach those highs in love again anyway. Afraid to put
herself in the game and ducked her face into the menu to avoid making eye contact when she approached their booth.

"Would you like some coffee?" Lexa shut her eyes as the gentle words caress her ears, and detected her familiar scent. She lost herself in her soft timbre of such a simple question, and to her embarrassment, the women ask again, "Coffee?"

"Since my friend is tongue-tied, go ahead and fill her up," Anya answered.

"You bet." The omega flipped over the coffee mugs and filled them up. "Just let me know when you've decided what you want for breakfast."

Lexa peeked over the menu and followed her back to the open kitchen and watched as she put up a customer's ticket on the order wheel and spun it around.

"What the fuck is wrong with you, Woods?" Anya asked as she poured some cream into her coffee.

Lexa didn't answer and gazed back down at the menu and tried to focus on what to eat. But what wasn't on it, was now standing not four feet away helping out another customer. Lexa nonchalantly observed the omega, and this time, when the woman looked at her, she smiled. It frankly stunned Lexa, but she didn't respond to the gesture and returned to her menu.

"Earth to Woods."

"Nothing...I don't have a problem, other than I didn't get a lot of sleep last night."

"Could it be your a little distracted by her?" Anya indicated with a lift of her chin, thankfully not pointing at her directly. "Like how long has it been since you've hooked up with anyone, a month?" Lexa glared at her, knowing no way Anya would stop annoying her, with what she thought was Lexa's lack of nerve. "Ah, no, I remember it's much longer than that. Was it Chloé back in November? No wonder you're losing it."

"Keep it up, and you can eat alone." Lexa shut her menu and began to fix her coffee with two scoops of sugar and cream and took a sip.
"Have you decided?"

Lexa sprayed her coffee across the table and menus when the waitress managed to slip behind Lexa startling her. "Shit," Lexa hissed and held out her arms and reached for her napkin and began wiping her mouth.

"Ooo, you're a bit jumpy. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you." The omega cleaned up the mess like she was skittish whelp making Lexa dart her eyes to Anya, who grinned at her expense at the woman's comment.

"No, I'm not..." Lexa stops speaking when she glanced up and couldn't avoid staring at the tops of her breasts, just peaking out the v-neck of her shirt then up the length of her unmarked neck to her flushed face.

A moment of silence hung between them, until the omega stuttered, "Do you mind if I...umm.." Pointing at her arm, "You have some coffee on your sleeve." Lexa didn't have time to stop the omega from holding her hand as she wiped at the coffee that landed on her shirt. The sudden warmth made the alpha wake up from its slumber as a pulse charge through her clit, and she awkwardly started to extend. Lexa whimpered under her breath when embarrassment washed over her. "Easy pup," The omega whispered so only she could hear and may have sensed her arousal. Lexa could have sworn the woman was taking more time than it should have, but in reality, it was a mere second or two.

Time stood still, and she felt her whole world come to a screeching halt. Before it got more out of hand, Anya cleared her throat and broke Lexa out of her spell and gently pulled her hand away and edged out the booth and held out her hands, hoping she understood she needed to wash them and moved away. "Thanks. I guess I'll have the number five. I'll be right back." Then took off to the bathroom to get herself back under control.

Lexa locked the bathroom door and put her hands on the edge of the sink and tried to will her erection away and having little luck, trying to focus on dull and uninteresting subjects and not the blond's scent that ebbed its way into her lungs. The woman wasn't in heat, but her essence tantalized her senses and urged her alpha to come out a play with her.

Her mind flashed her breast again, and her cock fully extended. "Not now," Lexa groaned. No way this going away on its own. Her mind already planted an image of her flawless face and the cute beauty mark above the corner of her kissable lips. Then remembered the adorable dimple in her chin.
"Damn. Why did you have to be so pretty?"

Lexa wasn't sure why she was hesitant to pursue an omega again. Other than how badly burnt she got the last time. When she hooked up with someone now, it would be a beta girl. Nothing that often or permanent. What they did together was just for fun, and she didn't want it to get serious. Going so far, that when she got together with a woman, she used condoms and never went down on her or vice-versa. Still, she left them satisfied, with evidence of happy texts the next day. But, Anya was right. It had been a while since she hooked up with anyone. And the urge to mate with the woman grew.

Lexa splashed cold water on her face and began thinking about her somewhat uncomplicated life. After arriving at Mount Trikru, she kept to her work. Learning the trade through the quick introduction with Anya and they headed up the hills to the backcountry to pull down some large trees. Indra had a rule. For every tree taken down, one was left in its place, if a volunteer wasn't already struggling to grow near the base of the one they just felled. The clean air and hard work kept her mind on the job. Along with safety with more than a half-dozen times, Anya yelling at her to watch the fuck out and don't let the damn tree fall on your head.

Now with her downtime with the weather growing cold and snowy, she spent time working on her cabin. What money she earned from spring through fall would be more than enough to keep her close to home, work on her projects, act like a regular person, and get intimate with someone for a night or two.

The reflection that looked back at her through the mirror took in a breath and released it as her cock started to go soft, and the urge to mate finally receded. Lexa washed her hands and returned to her booth and found a smirking Anya already eating her breakfast.

"I didn't want my food to get cold."

"No problem, Anya."

A few moments of blessed silence with only the clanging of forks and knives against plates and small talk filled the air, and she could eat in peace until she could sense Anya wouldn't stay silent for long.

"Listen." Lexa looked up and waited for Anya's pestering to begin. "If you can't handle being around a pretty girl, that's your problem. But I feel it's my responsibility to let you know; the waitress thinks you're cute and was sorry you got your shirt wet." Anya grinned, then dipped her bacon in the egg yolk and stuffed it into her mouth. Lexa ignored her remark but filed it away to
think about later and began eating her omelet. "Yeah, I also may have mentioned to her that you
don't seriously date anyone." Lexa kept her eyes on her plate and started on her hash browns. "Her
name is Clarke.

"Lexa gave her a nod and took a drink of coffee. "That's different."

"Yeah, I thought so too."

"Did you tell her you are dating the bartender next door, or is this going to be a side thing for you?"

"As if. Raven would have my hide. No, just getting the lay of the land, so speak, for my so very
unattractive, unattached best friend."

"Don't bother." Lexa indicated to Clarke, who had her arm around Bellamy at the end of the
counter talking with Octavia. "Seems she's already interested in someone else."

"She just friendly, Woods. Give her a break. And I don't know, but she genuinely seemed
interested in you for some damn reason, at least that's the feeling I got. Besides, you know that
she's not Bellamy's type."

"People don't always tell the truth, Anya. You know better than that. Hell, where is she running
from that she landed here?" Lexa winced at how that sounded. Like she had thought way too much
about this stranger.

"Tell the truth about what? And why do you think she's running?" Lexa didn't have an answer and
shrugged her shoulders but could feel the weight of Anya measuring her objection, when she
started again, "Since you've put a lot of thought into her, why don't you ask her tonight at the bar?"

Lexa paused and put her fork down. "Why should I? I thought we were going to hang out and shoot
some pool later."

"I asked Clarke if she would like to join us, you mainly. Since she is new to town and keryon, why
the fuck not? She seems nice enough." Anya stopped for a half a second and started in on her
again, "Hey, listen, why don't you just stay home and watch TV while real people actually
socialize."
Lexa looked down at her plate and continued eating, then murmured unconcern, "I didn't say I wouldn't go."

"Fine, asshole."

"Whatever, jerk."

"Is everything okay?" Lexa avoided Clarke's question to her.

Lexa kept her head down and continued eating, and Anya answered for her, "Everything's great, Clarke. Right, Lexa?"

On the spot, Lexa looked up to Anya, who indicated with her head to the omega and leaned back against the booth and answered, "Everything is perfect. Anya said you want to meet up later, sounds like fun." It looks like you got a date.

Clarke filled her coffee cup again. "Yeah, it does. See you later, then?"

"I'll be there."

After Clarke left, Lexa dared Anya with a warning scent to keep quiet, which she promptly ignored. "That wasn't so hard, was it?"

"Fuck you," Lexa drawled.

~

Clarke chuckled under her breath at hearing the alphas bickering and looked back to the cute one when she started to growl. Thinking, maybe it was a good idea to stop here. This local was pretty adorable and made her forget about her miserable life if only for a moment.
Chapter 2

I do not know your name, but I will speak to you as if you are the only one that matters to me. And to confess to you, I am responsible for their deaths. A lovely couple, who put trust in me, and by my foolish mistake, I gave them a reason to take their own lives. I bare guilt if not in the eyes of the law, but by my conscience.

~

After breakfast, Lexa returned home with the need to clear her head of the omega. Not that she wasn't looking forward to seeing Clarke again where they could sit and talk, but the caveat would be her friends, wondering if she could urge Anya not to kid her around the beautiful woman.

It wasn't a mystery why Anya gave her a hard time. Lexa left herself open to scrutiny because of how little she said about her past and why she kept her dominant alpha persona tamed. Anya could have been her older sister for all of her teasing ways. If Anya only knew why she kept the mystery of her past life hidden. She would probably dislike her as much as she hated herself at times; when remembering, she was apart of a company that ground people into bits. Lexa only gave minor details whenever it was necessary, keeping the past where it belongs.

After cleaning the cabin and doing a load of laundry, she hunted for something to wear that didn't look like it had worn it for days on end like when she worked high up on the mountain. Hanging in the back of her closet, she found a decent pair of faded blue jeans and her favorite flannel shirt and cleaned up her best pair of black boots.

With nothing else to do for the next few hours, she dressed in her heavy coat, work boots, and beanie and took off into the woods behind her cabin after the misty rain turned to light snow. Lexa trekked roughly half a mile and found another note along the way. But, held off reading it and continued up the hill to a crest and turn to look back over the town from her favorite spot.

Lexa liked to come up here in the summer nights with a bottle of Jack and little herb when she was back in town for a break and laid back in the grasses and witness the whole sky lit up with stars. Sometimes if she were lucky, the Milky Way's majesty would come into view to show off for her.

Now she stood in the growing cold as the words from the note crashed through her and felt agony the mystery writer imparted. A thousand questions unanswered crowded in her mind, and she tried to calm her thoughts and breathed out a cloud of mist in her effort, blurring the view of the lights of the town for a moment. Unable to unravel the mystery of the note, she wrapped it back into its leather covering and stuff it into her pocket.
A few cabins still had Christmas lights up from the holidays, and she could almost see through the trees her destination tonight, The Blue Ox, displayed in bright blue neon lights. Her eyes moved past it to the restaurant, still bustling with patrons but couldn't see anyone clearly inside. Lexa looked carefully through each window in the hope of seeing the omega at work. Regretting, she didn't smile back at Clarke when she had the chance that first time this morning.

The snowflakes continued to fall around her, and a few that dropped against her face sent chills down her spine and reflected on what Anya told her; that Clarke thought she was cute. Not her favorite word she would like to be described, but coming from Clarke, she could see it growing on her.

Still, her rational mind urged her not to lose self-control around an omega like she almost did this morning when Clarke innocently touched her hand. No matter how beautiful she was, it would break her again to have something so rare only to lose it sooner or later. Lexa decided to protect her heart, as much as her alpha resisted, she would just become a friend to Clarke, and nothing more.

"Hey, Lexa, I thought that was you." Lexa turned at her name and waved at Indra, coming down a path from her cabin higher up on the mountain. "What brings you up here? It's freezing."

"I could ask you the same."

Indra stood next to Lexa and looked out with her and said, "Just got the urge before the snow really begins falling. What about you?"

"I came to see the view from here."

"I call it my lover's lookout. I brought my wife here on our second date to watch the stars."

"I'll bet that wasn't the only thing you did," Lexa joked.

Indra shoved Lexa lightly on her side. "Hush. It was a long time ago."

They stood in silence for a moment as Lexa contemplated Indra's name for this place. It's not that she hadn't thought about bringing someone up here. It was just her feelings never got that intense
with the girls she hooked up with occasionally.

"You got plans tonight?" Indra asked.

"Typical, hanging out at the bar until they kick us out, I suppose."

"I heard the population of Mount Trikru went up by one recently."

"It did. The girl's name is Clarke. She's working at The Diner."

Lexa didn't see Indra studying her as she continued to gaze down into town. Her curious mind was fruitlessly trying to find the woman through the windows of the restaurant.

"What are you looking for, Lexa?"

Lexa considered for a moment and wondered, "My destiny?" Pausing then adding, "But, aren't we all?"

"Is that why you came here?"

Another question to elicit more from her past that Lexa dodged. The meaning was clear that Indra wasn't talking about where they stood. "Everybody needs a change, Indra."

"You never said it was your goal to find your destiny here. At least that's not how you seemed to me. You appear to be just going through the motions of fitting in our small town."

Lexa shivered and moved her leather gloved hands to her lips and blew warm air into them. "Are you saying that I don't belong here?"

"Not at all. Just taking down big trees couldn't be your only choice."
"Just like it wasn't for you?"

Indra laughed. "Touché. Still, when you look down at our town, what do you see?"

After a moment, Lexa honestly replied, "My home, I guess."

"At least, for now, you do, right?"

Lessa gave in to her curiosity and confessed, "I feel safe here."

~

Clarke checked her watch after the last customer left, noting still had a half an hour before her shift was over. The patrons would pick up later, and Octavia and Lincoln could readily handle them. That was their set up. Clarke took care of the busiest crowds in the morning and afternoon, and they took over in the evening now that the weather was keeping most folks home. Occasionally they’d get truckers, come through, but the roads over the high pass would grow treacherous, and they kept off the highways at night. She was exhausted but glad it was late afternoon on Friday, the last day of her workweek. She had time to go home and soak in the tub and get ready to hang out with her new friends. A friendly bunch of people that was refreshing and unexpected.

Working on her feet also kept her mind off of her past. Except when a customer would query personal information, and she quickly picked up on how to be vague but friendly. Thankfully her bosses never question her. Clarke wasn't sure why she should keep her life a secret, only that speaking about her past would bring up the fresh wounds she wanted to forget. But an urge would grow, and she would take a walk into the forest and find a place to relieve her soul and leave messages as a way of telling the forest of her sorrows so that it would be her witness.

"Hey, Clarke. Go ahead and punch out for the day," Lincoln called out from the kitchen.

"You sure?"

"Go on. We'll see you later."
"Yeah, it sounds like fun. I'll see you in a bit."

Inwardly Clarke felt charged and got her stuff and headed to her piece of shit car. Praying the stupid thing would start and knew sooner or later she would have to take it the local garage and have it checked out. Clarke crossed her fingers and turned the key, it groaned, sputtered and begrudgingly started after a few seconds. Instead of heading home, she went straight away to the garage across the street.

A floppy, dark-haired guy swung out of the office's door just as she came to a stop. "Hey, I remember you."

"Yeah, I filled up here a week or so ago. Thought I'd hang around for a bit. Do you have time to check out my car? It doesn't want to start when I turn the key over."

"Could be you need a new battery. Let me hook it up to my machines and check it out. I have a waiting room just inside if you like to wait."

"Yeah, it's a long walk home now that it's starting to snow. Jasper, is it?" Clarke indicated his name patch on his shirt.

"Yup, that's me."

"My name is Clarke."

"Right, Clarke. Okay. Let me check it out for you. Oh, just to let you know, my estimate isn't free. I charge fifty dollars just to open your hood, and I only take cash from newbies."

"Oh, of course. The thought of her money flying out of her wallet popped into her mind. Clarke figured she would be parting with all of her tips from the last few days and then some. "Does the estimate cover the cost if I need a battery?"

"That it does." Jasper leaned against Clarke's car as she hesitated. "What do you say?"

"Go ahead. Better be safe than sorry. Do you have an ATM around here?"
"Inside."

"Great." Great. Clarke mumbled under her breath and shivered in the light snow coming down and decided to go inside, get warm and pray the bill wouldn't wipe her out.

The warmth of Jasper's office was comforting, although it did smell of rubber tires, oil, and pine-scented car freshers. She wasn't alone and noticed a girl sitting on a well-worn sofa just to the left of the door, flipping through the channels on the dusty television hanging in the corner of the room, muting the sound when she saw her enter.

"Hey, you're the cute new omega."

Clarke chuckled, thinking that the town's inhabitants didn't see a lot of new people every day that hung around. "That may be the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me." Off the girl's questioning look, Clarke clarified, "The being, cute and new part. After the busy week I've had, I feel ancient."

"Oh, sure. My name is Maya. I sometimes work with Jasper."

"Clarke. It's nice to meet you."

"You too." Maya ran her hands down her jean covered legs and boasted, "Yeah, but my other job is working for the KOA. I get to be outside most of the time. It's located over in the next town, and we're on hiatus until next spring."

"You like working here?" Clarke removed her jacket and sat next to her.

"I like hanging out with Jasper, but yeah, the work is dirty but satisfying when we fix the problem. Do you want some coffee or..."

"No, thanks. I just need to get off my feet."

"What brings you to our town?"
Clarke couldn't confess to a stranger what brought her here and said instead, "Just passing through and saw the Help Wanted sign and thought I hang out for a while and get my footing."

"You'll like it here. In the summer, though, most of the workers head up to the hills. You know most of them are lumberjacks."

"I gather that by the folks that came through the restaurant." The sound of a big rig barreling down the road caused Clarke to looked out the window. "It's just starting to snow a little more."

"From the weather reports, it looks like we've got a pretty big storm headed our way by late tomorrow."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah, check it out." Maya turned the sound back the TV and changed it to the weather channel, and they listened for the next few minutes in silence. Clarke sat back on the sofa and got comfortable and shut her eyes for a moment and drifted off to sleep.

~

Warmth and the pleasant scent permeated her senses as the adorable alpha from breakfast slinked her way to on the bed with a mischievous smile on her face. Between her legs, she was hard and stood out between her folds. Even in Clarke's muddled mind, she knew this was just a dream, but the alpha woman on top of her naked body felt so very good. It had been a long time to be this close to another person, even if it was just a dream, and she gazed up into her sensual green eyes then felt lips on hers.

Toasty warmth surrounded Clarke, and she snuggled into her coat, draped over her, and heard whispers around her.

"You wake her," a male voice said.

Immediately followed by a female voice, "No, you wake her."
Blurry blue eyes blinked open to see worried faces staring down at her. "Damn, I'm sorry." Clarke covered her mouth when she yawned.

"No problem, Clarke. I repaired your car. It was the battery like I thought. Plus, you had a few leaks that needed tightening, top off your fluids, and inflated your tires. No charge, with a new battery."

"Thanks. What's the damage?" Clarke stood and wiped her face, hoping she didn't look as embarrassed as she felt and shook off her drowsiness and reached for her purse.

"Let me ring you up." Maya took Jasper's work order, and Clarke followed her to the register waiting until she plugged all her information into the computer and printed out the receipt. "The amount is at the bottom." Maya handed Clarke a pen to sign the receipt. "That'll be one hundred and eighty dollars and seventy-five cents."

_Fuck._ Clarke mentally groaned and tried not to wince as she smiled at Maya and gave her back her pen, then pulled out her credit card and withdrew out a hundred from the ATM and added the remained from the tips from this week. Clarke wanted to cry, watching as almost half the money she earned this week go to her piece of shit car. Two steps back, she thought and barely one step forward. Clarke took back the change and folded up the receipt and stuff it into her purse.

"Jasper guarantees his work, so if you have any more problems, don't hesitate and come back. Oh, and he made a note that you need new tires an oil change."

"It might have to wait, but thanks for the information."

"You bet, see you around, Clarke."

It may have been more than Clarke wanted to spend, but was relieved when her car turned over on the first try and took off for home. She contemplated staying home and getting warm, other than going out. Octavia let her have Saturday morning off, and going out tonight was hours from now. She had time to take a bath and have a nap and forget about her life for a while. Maybe she could lose herself in another dream.
The sound of the wipers clearing the snow from Lexa's windshield kept time with the beat of the music as The Blue Ox came into view. The parking lot held at least a half a dozen vehicles, mostly trucks, and she parked beside Anya's much larger midnight black four-wheel-drive SUV. Lexa did a quick check around the area for Clarke's sedan but didn't see it anywhere. She probably got cold feet. It was just as well. Lexa would have stayed home, but would never live it down with Anya.

It was just past eight o'clock when she entered the bar and got hit with a strong odor of alpha and betas making her rub her nose. Lexa wiped her boots on the doormat and hung her leather coat next to the door, finding an empty barstool waiting for her next to Anya. The bar held two pool tables in the back. Both were occupied for a moment and saw that Anya put her name under hers on the chalkboard.

"What'll you have?" Anya motion to Raven who didn't see Lexa come in.

"Usual."

Raven's eyes lit up when she saw Lexa. "Damn, girl, come here." Raven darted from behind the bar and pulled Lexa into a hug. "God, you smell as good as you look."

Lexa's cheeks immediately began to glow red, and she stumbled out, "Well..."

Anya turned around her stool, interrupting Lexa, "Please don't make her head swell any more than it already is. She's got a date tonight."

"Anya, it's not..." Lexa protested.

"Really, who is she?"

"It's not a date." Lexa then added, "Her name is Clarke. She works next door."

"Oh, the pretty blond? She's cute. Nice tits and ass."
"Raven," Anya groaned. Raven was worst at kidding better than both of them put together.

"Whatever." Raven poured a generous shot of whiskey into a tumbler full of ice and pushed the drink in front of Lexa. "Good luck, she looks like she could break some hearts."

Lexa sat down with a thump and contemplated downing the drink all at once but took a sip instead. Lexa respected Raven's insight on people, being a bartender, Lexa was sure Raven had seen some shit go down.

"Raven's kidding."

Anya wrongly mistook her reaction for disappointment and tried to correct her, "I know. Still, I think..."

"Don't think about it too much. Just hang out. Get to know Clarke, since she seems important to you. But, you know, I don't recall you getting that work up with the other girls you hook up with. This woman must be something special to you."

"I only interested in being her friend, Anya. She's an omega, and I'm not..."

"You mean unmated omega. Yeah, that's pretty rare around here. Good thing Clarke likes you."

Lexa's attempt to discourage Anya from her notion wasn't working and answered, "Maybe." Lexa tried to sound interested despite knowing nothing would happen between her and the omega unless she let it.

"Listen, partner. Do me a favor. Stop with the short answers. I know you've got a head on your shoulders. You just need to come out of your den."

Lexa bit her tongue to keep from growling at the dig. "Cute, Anya. But, I don't know what to say to a stranger."

"Believe me. I get it. Working with you the past three years, I kind of picked up on that. Raven would say be yourself, whatever the hell that might be. But, I have to give it to you, for being shy,
you still attracted this girl, and she's got eyes for only you, my dude."  

Instead of arguing with Anya's well-meaning but misplaced help, Lexa downed her drink. She motioned to Raven for another for the both of them.

~

Clarke felt refreshed as the snow coming down. The twinkling Christmas lights guiding her along the way back into town was getting her into the spirit. Could also be her warm bath unwound the tension in her body from being on her feet for days. She found, tucked into her travel bag, a lavender bath bomb, and made her sleepy enough to fall into a light and dreamy place with the alpha from this morning. The power behind touching the alpha's hand, woke up something inside of her that she thought she was incapable of feeling again, desire. Usually, it was always accompanied by self-doubt. For now, in this new place, she would try to push it away.

Clarke reduced her speed and turned into the parking lot and saw a white pickup leaving and took their spot in front of the bar. The snow continued to fall steadily and thought that coming out tonight might have been a bad idea, or it could be she was getting unsure of hanging out at the local bar. Clarke looked up through the windshield, watching the snow coming down, thinking it could give her a way out.

If the snow didn't let up, chances were that driving home later might become treacherous and didn't want to wreak her baby now that was humming along just fine. Clarke made a deal with herself, it the alpha wasn't here she would go back home after having one drink and before the snow began to fall harder.

Clarke hadn't given The Blue Ox a thought before tonight. But now, when she studied its appearance, she appreciated its uniqueness — constructed like a log cabin holding a substantial rustic porch and railing surrounding the entrance. The roof was like all the others in town and made out of sturdy metal. What was unexpected was the chimney puffing out a trail of smoke high into the trees overhead.

Another car pulled in, and a couple quickly got out and ran inside. As the door swung open, she could hear contemporary music playing, and it drew her inside.

Clarke braced herself and walked into a sea of familiar and strange faces. Heads turned in her direction to look and measured her status. Clarke smiled but held her scent in check and masked it further with light perfume and looked around the bar then saw the friendly face of the bartender waving her over.
"You must be Clarke," Raven said.

Clarke put her hand over the bar to shake. "Yes, Clarke Griffin. A pleasure to meet you..."

"I'm Raven Reyes, the proprietor, sole owner of The Blue Ox. We have the finest assortment of alcohol, wine, whiskey, and beer of your choosing."

Clarke liked her immediately and pulled off her coat and sat down on an empty barstool. "How about an Old Fashioned."

"Rye or bourbon?"

"Do you have Bulleit?"

"Good choice, I do, in fact, have a bottle somewhere." Raven ducked behind the bar and said from below, "I like to keep the good stuff hidden. Ah, you're in luck." Raven placed the almost full bottle on the counter and began preparing her drink.

"Hold the cherry, Raven."

"You got it." Clarke did a cursory look around the bar, hoping to find the alpha that Raven didn't miss. "Lexa is playing pool with my girl, Anya," Raven said as she began to muddle the orange wheel with the sugar and bitters.

Clarke turned back to face Raven. "I haven't been out in a while, does it show?"

"Not at all she's been doing the same thing all night, looking for you. She'll spot you soon enough. Lexa is shy, but she's a real sweetheart if you can get her to talk."

"Yeah, I got that impression with her this morning."
"Oh, really?" Raven's left eyebrow shot up.

"At breakfast next door, punk," Clarke laughed.

Raven chuckled and poured out the alcohol. "I like you, and here's your first Old Fashioned on the house." Raven placed the drink on a coaster in front of Clarke. "Welcome to The Blue Ox.

~

"Don't miss," Anya said as Lexa moved around the pool table and checked the shot of the eight-ball in the side pocket. One of the more lousy shots she had tonight. Her solids wouldn't break her way until she beat Anya back attempts and knocked another one her stripes into the rail, giving her another impossible shot. Lexa finally registered what she said.

"Stop fucking with me, Anya."

"Fine. It's just that Clarke is here, and I didn't want you to get distracted."

"It's not going to work, Anya. I know she's not here, or I would have smelled her all ready."

Lexa didn't see Anya wink at Clarke standing behind Lexa in the large opening and motion to Lexa to go ahead.

Lexa decided to cut softly to the right of the eight-ball and send it sweetly into the side pocket, hoping she wouldn't sink the cue ball in the corner, and line up the shot. Then heard the slight tinkle of ice in a glass behind her and looked up into Anya's amused eyes. "Sometimes, I really, really hate you, Anya." Lexa didn't turn around and now could sense Clarke's eyes on her ass from her position and took in a breath and held it, feeling the pressure that she had to make this pocket in front of Clarke or Anya would give her shit the rest of the night. Anya stepped out of her line of sight, and Lexa gave her a look. "Are you done moving?"

"Just shoot your wad, Woods."

Lexa narrowed her eyes at Anya and looked down at the cue ball. Aching to slam the eight ball
hard into the pocket and wipe Anya's stupid grin off of her face. She took a breath and held her alpha in check and pulled back her cue stick, and softly sank the ball into the leather pocket with a satisfying plop and watched as the cue ball came to a stop at the edge of the corner pocket.

"Good game, Lexa." Anya fixed her cue stick back on the back wall, and they shook hands. "I'm going to get another beer. Hi, Clarke. It's nice to see you again."

When Lexa turned, Clarke was standing with an amused smile of glossy red lipstick and drink in hand. Dressed in black boots up to her knees and a pair of black hip-hugging jeans. Wearing a cream-colored sweater with one shoulder laid bare with just a hint of black lace bra strap visible over a pale shoulder and her blond curls, lazily hanging on the side. Lexa visibly swallowed and wrapped her hands around her cue stick, and leaned against the table.

"Hi."

Clarke had time to watch Lexa without her knowledge, admiring her long-sleeved green plaid flannel shirt tucked inside of what looked like comfortably fitting blue jeans over a taut ass and legs. Her long thick dark hair held long over her back in a loose braid.

"Hello, yourself."

"You look nice, Clarke."

"You clean up pretty fine yourself."

Clarke was prettier than she remembered, and she stood dumbstruck for a second, forgetting she still had a cue stick in her hand and blurted out, "Do you play?"

"Excuse me?"

"Pool."

"Now?"
"If you want."

"Sure, but you'll have to show me how."

"No problem. Let me rack'em up."

"Listen, before we go any farther, can we introduce ourselves?"

Lexa mentally groaned. Her manners took a beating living in the mountains, and she pushed off of the table and walked over to Clarke and put her hand out covered in blue chalk and quickly wiped it on her jeans and put it out again. "My name is Lexa Woods."

"You're name suits you. Clarke Griffin. It's a pleasure to meet you officially. Now show me how to play pool. It looks like a lot of fun."

"It can be." Clarke smiled and watched as Lexa starting pulling out different colored balls from each pocket. "Go ahead and pick out a cue stick."

"Okay." Clarke stood in front of the rack of sticks for a few seconds. She looked back at the alpha and caught her gazing at her. "Anyone in particular that can give me an edge over you?"

_Busted_. When Clarke looked away, it gave her moment to remember what Anya said, to just be herself. It had been so long she forgot who that Lexa was and couldn't help but look at Clarke and see how striking she was. "Hmm, just look for a long and straight one."

Clarke chuckled, "They all look long and straight to me."

"Not really, some are older and shorter than others, and they can warp over time. We could share mine if you like. It's long, heavy, and stiff."

Clarke bit her lower lip and took a sip of her drink. _I wonder if she knows how cute she is when she isn't trying_. Lexa seemed pretty tame for an alpha even if her words seemed direct. Her omega
wanted to start purring and watched as Lexa neatly placed the balls in a wooden triangle slamming them back and forth until she deftly slipped it off and started chalking the tip of her cue stick.

"Now what?"

"You take the first shot and break the balls apart."

Clarke smiled. "Okay, I'll try." Lexa handed Clarke the cue stick over the table and positioned the cue ball and did her best at breaking the balls apart. She knew the game but only played it once or twice. It showed when the cue ball glanced off the side of the balls, and it landed in the corner pocket. Clarke laughed, "Dang, I meant to do that."

Lexa chuckled with her and pulled out the cue ball and placed it back on the table, and manually straighten the balls up. "I'll give you a Mulligan, and give you another shot."

"Why don't you show me how to break the balls?"

"I could do that. I mean, you've got to learn sometime, right Clarke?"

"If I'm going to hang around here, I better." Clarke was determined to break Lexa out of their comfort zone and was ashamed she used the oldest trick in the book when she asked for help. Lexa was just eager and sweet enough to not see through her tactic.

Lexa stood beside Clarke on her left side and watched as she aimed with her right hand. "Oh, you're left-handed."

"Guilty, does that mean we can't play?"

"No. We can still play. It's just I'm right-handed, and it might be a little awkward to show you how, but I'm willing to play with you if you are."

Clarke could help but like how natural Lexa was around her. It was like night and day from this morning. "I'd like that."
Lexa stood behind Clarke on her right side. "Let me know if you get uncomfortable, and I'll move away." Clarke nodded and wasn't about to object. Lexa wrapped her left arm around Clarke's back, placing one hand over hers, then did the same with her other. Lexa's hands felt powerful, but when fingers coiled around hers, Clarke had to close her eyes. Lexa pulled the cue stick back and forth a couple of times through both their fingers, and the motion felt wicked.

Lexa may not have known how much she was turning her on, and Clarke naturally responded to the alpha with her submissive scent. "So, like this?" Clarke shifted her hips into Lexa's pelvis. She wasn't hard yet, but the thought made her wet.

Lexa almost groaned at the sensation of the body beneath her and the warm scent tickling her nose. She obviously didn't think this out to well and couldn't help but leaned her cheek against Clarke and forgot all about shooting pool and only thought about but the smell of Clarke's hair and her ass on her clit.

They stood there in this position for a few seconds longer, and Clarke was reluctant to make her move until she saw Anya and Raven from the bar giving her a thumbs up and broke Lexa out of her spell.

"Umm?"

Lexa jumped back, releasing Clarke and stepped away. "Sorry, yeah, that's the idea. Do you think you can do it by yourself?"

Clarke was surprised at how shy she suddenly got and couldn't help but follow her. "Lexa?"

Lexa put the table between them. "What?"

Clarke shook her head and stopped following. "You don't have to be nervous around me."

"I think this is a bad idea."

"What, we're just playing a game."
"No, it's just..."

"You're shy. No problem. We're just getting to know one another, right?"

"Listen, I may not be the best person to hang out with."

"You've got me intrigued."

"You really shouldn't be."

Clarke was getting ticked and little surprised at how serious Lexa got out of the blue. "What has you so worked up? It's just a game of pool, or did you think that something more was going to happen tonight?" Clarke hated that she got annoyed with the alpha, to the extent that her self-doubt dissipated into thin air and tried to lighten the mood and smiled at her.

"I...well. I hadn't got that far in my head. But, I honestly Clarke, I just want to be your friend." Clarke's smile on her face disappeared, and Lexa continued, "For now, if that's okay."

Clarke tried not to show disappointment on her face and gave her a tight smile. "More than okay. Let's play it by ear and have some fun. I think I can shoot the ball correctly now." Clarke felt like she blew her chance and wanted to go home.

Clarke leaned over as Lexa showed her and managed to break the balls apart this time and sank a ball into one of the pockets. Clarke's heart wasn't in the game anymore and thought she should call it a night after a respectfully amount of time and said, "Was that okay?"

"Great. You got solids."

"And?"

"You shoot again."
"Really, when do you shoot?"

"After you miss."

Clarke thought that playing this game might take forever.

"Lexa?"

"What?"

"Can we just sit down and talk, my feet are killing me."

Lexa shut her eyes. She completely forgot that Clarke had worked all day, hell, probably all week, and must be exhausted.

"Of course. Let's grab a seat."

"Thanks. I should have spoken up at first. But, you seemed eager to play pool. I mean, if you're still interested, maybe I could just..."

"Clarke, it's okay. I rather just talk to you. As a friend, of course," she added quickly.

"Of course, Lexa. I get it." Clarke was a little disappointed by how shy Lexa was. Raven wasn't kidding. The short time she spoke with Raven, she got the impression that this beautiful woman had walls ten feet thick around her. They knew little about her life. Clarke could relate to her completely, and even though she may have wanted this to be more between them, the choice was taken out of her hands by the alpha who just wanted to be friends.

Lexa threw a couple of logs in the fireplace while Clarke curled up on a large cushion rocker nearby. "Do you want another drink, Clarke?"

"Sure, why not. I loved an Irish Coffee."
"Coming right up."

"Sit your ass down, Woods." Raven hooked a finger into Lexa's belt loop and swung her around. She heard the order as she came wiping off a few tables. "Another whiskey, Lexa?"

"No. Give me what Clarke is having."

You got it."

"There's room next to me." Clarke patted the surface, not quite ready to give up.

Now that she set down the ground rules, Clarke's gentle smile was starting to grow on her, melting the brick of ice she kept packed around her heart and smiled back and relaxed next to her. Hip to hip in front of the warm fire. Raven returned with their drinks, and they sat in silence for a moment.

"So you.."

"How long..."

They both laughed, and Lexa motioned, "Go ahead, asked away."

"Tell me about your work; you're a lumberjack?"

"I am — about six or seven months out of the year. I work for a local lumber company, and we harvest trees in protected areas. We don't take down the whole forest of trees, of course." As Lexa spoke, she rolled her sleeves neatly up her arms revealing what looked like cords of steel muscles.

"Sounds interesting," Clarke said and admired the firm thigh next to her.

"Can be. So you like working next door?"
"Not really, but I need the money. I do have to say I really like Octavia and Lincoln. They make the job interesting and fun. I've rented their cabin down the road at a reasonable price. I suppose they took pity on me..." Clarke trailed off, catching herself before she almost said too much.

The door opened, bringing in a cold breeze followed by Quint and his crew, Fio and Tristan, who headed to the pool room. Quint stopped in the middle of the bar scouring the area as he sniffed the air when his eyes landed on Clarke.

Lexa visibly tense and shifted closer to Clarke and put her arm protectively around Clarke's shoulder. Clarke couldn't help but register the swift change in Lexa and melted into her embrace.

Quint stood in front of Clarke, knocking into the table and spilling their drinks and leered down at her. "I thought I smelled you." Quint was drunk and slurring his words. "Hmm, I haven't scented something as fine in this place in a long time."

"Quint." Raven came around the bar, followed by Anya. "Keep it up, and I'm 86ing your ass for a month."

"Is that so?" Quint kept his eyes on Clarke then noticed when Lexa bristled and released a warning scent, and he blinked against its power and put his hands up and wandering back to his buddies.

Lexa attempted to remove her arm but stopped when Clarke's fingers found her hand. Caught like a wolf in a trap, Lexa fought the feeling of running when Clarke leaned a little closer.

Clarke waited a few seconds to drink in her warmth before Lexa would likely pull away. It wasn't the fire she felt on her face as much as it was Lexa's smoldering alpha scent she released moments ago, heating the space between her thighs. Clarke spoke softly, "Is this okay, even though we are only friends?"

Lexa didn't answer. Her heart wouldn't let her. Something so simple as holding a frighten omega put a tiny crack in her wall. It was dangerous, but the thought of moving away from Clarke wasn't a question she could answer without regretting leaving her without warmth. Instead, she pulled Clarke tighter.

"I like the fire," Lexa stated.
"Me too," Clarke said and leaned as close as Lexa would allow. "I'm sorry that I'm so clingy. It's been a rough couple of years for me."

"I'm listening."

"There's not much to tell. I failed at my last job and left. End of story."

"Sounds, pretty much like my life."

"There has to be something more we could share. Maybe I tell you something and then you."

"You mean like a game?"

"How about we make a rule, then if we can agree to it, then we can start."

"What rule is that?"

"We have a safe word we use when we don't want to answer the question. That might make it easier to navigate the forest easier."

"Like if you ask me a question, I don't want to answer I could say, ax?" Lexa smiled

Clarke gave her a grin back. "Yeah, and my word is timber."

"Okay, ask away," Lexa said. Clarke hesitated when Raven brought them fresh drinks.

"Sorry about that, Clarke. Quint is usually more polite than he was tonight. If he gives you any more problems..."
"I'll take care of it, Raven," Lexa asserted.

Raven looked at Clarke, who gave her the slightest lift of her shoulder and then to Lexa's earnest face. "Oh, yeah. Sure."

"And if you could, please put our drinks on my tab."

"Already done."

Raven left, and Clarke grabbed the Irish Coffees handing Lexa her drink and asked her question, "How long have you lived here?"

"Two years and eleven months and some odd days. My turn." Lexa wanted to keep this simple. "Do you have a middle name, and if you do, who are you named after."

"That's two questions."

"Okay, answer the second."

Clarke laughed. Lexa was amusingly clever; the second question answered the first if she had a middle name. "I don't have one."

"Me too."

My turn," Clarke said and sat up a little straighter.

"Have you ever been to the Pacific ocean?"

"Yes and no."

"Come on. It's either one or the other."
"Well, I've been there, so my parents told me, but I didn't see it."

"How is that possible."

"I wasn't born yet."

Clarke playfully backhanded Lexa on the shoulder. "That doesn't count."

Lexa feigned Clarke's tap hurt her arm "Ow. Do you work out?"

"Sometimes. I guess you don't have to because of your work."

"True, true. Even in the winter, I work just not as much. I get, as my friends tell me, a chance to be a real person, if only for a few months or so."

"I think I'd miss you a lot when your working on the mountain. Maybe I could visit you."

"I'd like that."

The game fell away, and they asked no personal question, just comfortable topics of places to visit and maybe planned day trips down the road.

Clarke was growing on Lexa, and they soaked in the friendship of each other's company.

Lincoln and Octavia arrived later, and the rest of Lexa's friends joined them around the fire.

Lexa switched to water after her last drink, and Clarke followed suit. Clarke checked her watch, and it was nearing midnight and whispered into Lexa's ear. "I think it's best if I head home."
"You sure?"

Yeah, with the snow coming down. I shouldn't take a chance of getting caught up in it."

They said their goodbyes stepped out into heavy snow coming down. "I might have to stay here," Clarke said and put her hand out to catch the heavy flakes in her hand. A blanket of slushy snow covered the road. Lexa looked for Clarke's car as she shivered and saw it under a couple of inches of snow. "Do you have chains?"

"No, I don't. Jasper, my mechanic, said I needed a new set of tires, also." Clarke moved back to the bar, and Lexa caught her hand.

"Listen, if you like, you can stay with me tonight."

"I don't know, Lexa."

"I just know the roads around here, especially the one your cabin is on, and there's no way I would let you drive down there, not tonight in this weather."

Clarke was surprised and happy that Lexa was warming up to her. Albeit, weather caused event and helping out a friend kind of way. The lazy grin on Lexa's face as she opened the passenger door drew her inside. "Is it far?"
Chapter 3

It was an old feeling resurfacing when Lexa offered Clarke a ride home. That need to protect an omega on a level that was primal. Remembering when it started, and it was before she even knew her name. Now, she was trying to convince herself she only wanted to consider Clarke, a friend.

Lexa pulled out onto the road driving slowly through the snow, thinking she cleared the worst of it and pressed the gas a little too hard and skidded until she corrected. "Sorry about that."

"No problem." Clarke was quiet for a moment then said, "I'll bet this was the last thing you thought you'd be doing on a Friday night."

"What's that?"

"Umm," Clarke hesitated, not wanting to bring up the elephant in the room. That Lexa, with all her persistence on being friends, still invited her home. Her omega spirit tried to calm down and focus on being that friend.

"Oh. Yeah well. I almost got trapped myself on the road you live on, in a whiteout when I first moved here and swore I'd never let myself get into that situation again." Clarke shivering didn't go unnoticed, and Lexa turned up the heat.

"What happened?"

Lexa navigated slowly and said flatly, "My jeep spun out, and I slid down the side of the road."

"Oh my, where you hurt?"

"Nothing like that. I tried calling on my cell for help, but the towers were out, I guess, and I couldn't get any reception. Luckily I just put a winch on my jeep and pulled myself out. It was a long two hours in the cold and snow. Not one car came by, so I was pretty much on my own."

"I'm glad you got out safely."
"Me too. It took hours to get warm again when I got home. And to be honest with you, I don't think I could have slept knowing you could be in danger."

Clarke watched Lexa's profile in the dark, hoping that there was another reason. But, whatever happens between them, and if only they remained friends, Lexa might have just saved her life if she tried to drive home tonight, and it intensified everything she thought about her.

"Thanks for thinking of me, Lexa."

"Hey, no problem."

A chink in Lexa's armor fell away with the company she was keeping with Clarke. At first, her body resisted Clarke at the bar, but slowly over the hours, her subtle scent ebbed into her senses. Her rule about just being friends sounded stupid in her head, and she reached over and found Clarke's hand.

"Sorry about tonight."

"Don't be. I understand." Clarke linked their fingers together like it was the most natural thing in the world.

"Maybe, but for tonight can we just be two people getting to know one another and go from there?"

"I'd love to, Lexa."

Lexa released her hand and turned on the music, and soft jazz began to play. "I'm glad you understand, Clarke."

"Don't worry about it. Just do what you've been doing all night. I like this, you." Lexa didn't take Clarke's hand back, and she stuck them into her pockets and tried not to let it hurt, but did sense Lexa was warming up in her quiet way.
"It hasn't been easy for me, being open with people living here. It's why Anya, kids me so much."

"I noticed. Makes you want to clam up even more. I know I do."

"Yeah. Like there's always that question of why did you choose to become a lumberjack." Lexa mimicked Anya, "Someone like you should be working in an office since you're so good with numbers and have great ideas." Yes. I've been to college, and I have a degree."

"In what?"

"Ahh..." Lexa hesitated and glanced at Clarke then back at the road.

"I'll show you mine if you show me yours," Clarke teased.

"Nothing special just business." It was more than Lexa was letting on, but it was true she did have a degree in that field, just more extensive and ruthless.

"I managed a business for a well-known company until they went bankrupt. I really loved my job," Clarke sighed.

"I did too." Lexa held back at first. She couldn't quit her high paying job if she wanted because of her five-year contract. Breaking it would tarnish her forever in her field. So she stuck it out for three long years until it broke her. "Almost there."

Lexa turned right into a side road and drove over a bridge and stopped to turn on her bright overhead lights on the jeep. The snow falling looked magical as Lexa guided them slowly up a short treelined lane, and suddenly all the lights around the cabin lit up at once.

"Damn, girl. Are you afraid of a Sasquatch?"

"Ha, now wouldn't that be great? No, just a black bear or two, maybe a stranger."

"Bears?"
"Yeah, but there hibernating now."

The garage door started opening as they pulled up to the cabin, and Lexa coasted inside. Not only did she have a jeep, but there were a couple of kayaks hanging from the ceiling, a half-built sports car on the far end, and racks of tools covering the walls over the pristine area.

"Is this your alpha cave?"

"Nah, but maybe it should be. I do spend a lot of time out here. Let me show you around, but I've got to check some of my equipment first."

"Can I help?"

"How about keeping me company?" Lexa led Clarke to the back of the garage to another room filled with a huge machine, which vented outside. "This is my backup generator in case the power goes out, which it always does. It feeds off of the protected propane tank outside."

Lexa flipped on a few buttons and made some notes on a chart after she checked the outdoor thermometer, as Clarke watched. A thought crossed her mind about the size of this cabin. Lexa wasn't only hiding her backstory; she seemed living comfortably but overly cautious.

"Is this like the end of the world kind of stuff?"

"Not really. I just want to be prepared. These past years have been brutal. The first winter here, when the power went out, I sat by the fire all day and night just to stay warm. No electricity, no way to heat water or cook except by the fireplace. I made plans for all of this during that first month."

"That makes sense." Thoughts of being snowed in with the alpha for few days crowded into her mind.

"I try to be. Let me show you the rest."
The garage was attached to the house, and they stepped up into a mudroom, with washer and dryer that opened up into a spacious modern but rustic kitchen and great room. The rest of the cabin held two stories with the top half opened to look down over the open space. Center of the wall, right of the kitchen, a fire started burning in the fireplace, by way of a remote.

"It wasn't what I was expecting." Clarke's eyes drifted upward, where she supposed Lexa's bedroom was. It's where she would have put it if this was her home. Lexa helped Clarke take off her coat and draped it over a chair.

"What were you expecting?"

"Well, frankly, like the place I'm staying. Don't get me wrong. It's nice but dated. Did you build this cabin?"

"Not quite. I had help renovating everything. This place needed a lot of work from the floor to the roof, but I kept the log cabin feel to the home."

"But, you're not here half of the year."

"True, then I have a couple of friends look after the place. Not to stay over, just minor maintenance."

"Do you plan on living here forever?"

Lexa pulled out to a couple of bottles of water and handed one over to Clarke and leaned against the counter. "Not sure."

"Then why the big investment?"

Lexa emptied half her bottle, studying Clarke then wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. "You ask a lot of questions."

"I'm sorry. I just..."
Lexa awkwardly waited for a moment then mentally kicking herself for putting Clarke on the spot. It was a hard habit to break and apologized, "No, Clarke, I'm sorry. But it's getting late; maybe we can talk tomorrow?" Lexa thought the question would deflect from her rudeness.

"You want to go to bed now?" Clarke had contemplated the fireplace and spending the next few hours gazing at the smoldering green eyes just talking, now going up in a puff of smoke.

"Yeah, I may be busy clearing the snow around here tomorrow."

Clarke imagined another elephant popping into the room. "Where do you want me to sleep?"

"I only have one bedroom upstairs that you can use. I'll bunk down here on the couch."

"No! I..." Clarke stopped then schooled her face. "No, it wouldn't be right for me to sleep in your bed. I can stay down here. I insist."

Lexa looked towards the couch and back to her, deciding to give Clarke a chance at being her friend until they got to know one another better. "Clarke, how about we share my bed if you promise to be good."

"Oh, I'm always..." Clarke stopped when Lexa raised an eyebrow. "I promise I will be good."

~

Lexa's skin was on fire.

Of all of the mistakes she's made in her life, and she has made a few. Letting or should she say, deciding to invite Clarke into her bed to sleep ranks tops three. The second mistake was on a dare from Anya; she could handle Lincoln's four-alarm spicy chili. She couldn't and paid for it for the next two days.

Fortunately, soon as Clarke changed into a pair of her shorts, oversized long sleeve nightshirt, put
her hair up in a cute bun, and her head hit the pillow, she was out. Lexa attributed it to the omega worked all week on her feet and spent the evening drinking and socializing.

The digital clock on her dresser read a quarter to two, and she was still wide awake. Lexa was just able to keep her scent in check but, unfortunately, not her cock. She hadn't completely extended and considered herself lucky that Clarke was currently on her side facing away from her, snoring. Usually, that would have annoyed the fuck out of her. From Clarke, though, her breaths sounded like sighs from an angel and imagined that same angel that looked like a very naked Clarke under her sent a shudder through her cock and shifted her legs apart to make room.

Like a domino falling, it triggered Clarke to stir and fall over on her back and instinctively curled around Lexa. Clarke's right leg was now laying between her legs and resting over her half staff that gave way and fully extended. Lexa just managed to bite her lip to keep from groaning out loud at the sudden incredible feeling of her rock hard cock so close to Clarke's sex.

Clarke's pushed her nose into the side of her neck and began to exhale against her flesh, sending shivers down her arms and legs trapped beneath the omega. No way could she move now to adjust her aching shaft. She sniffed the air, noticing that even in sleep, Clarke's complex aroma filled the room. The warmth of the omega's scent emitted out as she slept enticed the alpha out to play like this morning at breakfast.

Was it only this morning?

Clarke edged closer as her hand clutched Lexa's bicep. Her scent was unmistakable now. Clarke wanted her even in her sleep. The throbbing of her cock grew more pronounced, but her mind wouldn't let her take advantage. Lexa adjusted her legs again and tried to pull free, but Clarke held her tighter.

A quiet pleading whisper in her ear, "Don't go."

"Are you awake?" Her question was met with more soft breaths sending chills down her body and directly to her need.

"I feel like I'm dreaming," Clarke murmured in a voice that held an honesty.

Lexa whispered back, "You've been awake this whole time?"
A soft sleepy answer, "Mmm, no. I just woke up and realized where I was and felt you pressed against my leg."

"Oh." Lexa blinked her eyes. It sounded innocent enough.

"Is it okay if I stay like this?"

Lexa's initial reaction was to bolt, but Clarke's voice held a want that Lexa couldn't ignore, not this time. Something deep inside urged her alpha to take what she offered. What Lexa tried to keep pushed away was right where she belonged.

"Clarke."

"I'm sorry." Clarke tried to pull away, and Lexa held her lightly in place.

"Just tell me, if this is the only thing you want from me?"

"If you mean just sex, no. I want more, but no more than what you're willing to share. That's if I can have the same understanding from you."

Lexa blinked then snorted, which turned into a belly laugh, causing Clarke to join with her. "We're quite a pair."

Clarke wrapped her arm around her waist. "A pair of what, Lexa?"

"Not sure, but when I figure it out, you'll be the first to know."

The hesitancy Lexa held in her mind against pursuing Clarke on a sexual level released and fell into the comfort she offered. Lexa leaned up and found Clarke's hand in the dark. Holding it gently open and pressing a kiss to her palm and then laid it on her chest. Clarke's body warmed from sleep caused her scent to cling to her pulse point. The distinct aroma of Clarke filled her lungs, urging her alpha out to play as her cock grew thicker excepting the invitation and found Clarke's lips.
Slowly at first. Mapping the features in the dark, but knew them well enough from watching all night. Yes, she memorized the bow of her lips and now tasted what delight lay past and dipped her tongue lightly within until Clarke drew her deliriously all the way inside.

Arms went around her back along with legs as Lexa tried to kiss Clarke everywhere. Pulling at her shirt until it ripped, kissing her exposed breast, her lips finding her nipple, making her hips naturally rut until Clarke pushed her back and stripped off her clothes. Lexa quickly tore her shirt off with one hand and pulled her undershorts down halfway on her hips when Clarke drew her back to her lips and ground her swollen wet pussy into the underside of her cock.

"Fuck," Lexa growled against Clarke's mouth and pushed her face into the hollow of her neck, sniffing her way upward and found the source of her scent. Licking the surface and nuzzling her nose against her neck, causing Lexa's heart to beat harder in her chest and pumped more blood to her cock. Extending it longer, thicker against Clarke's stomach and started to drip. Clarke blindly reached down and began stroking her, helping her to spill more, but Lexa kept from coming even over Clarke's firm hand on her. Unable to resist Clarke's tugging, Lexa let her guide her cock up and down her soaking lips, never resting in one spot.

Raw, primal, and untamed, remembering it to be a mating ritual.

Fascinated, Lexa understood what Clarke was doing. An ancient custom of marking your chosen mate. Now, only done in practice to heighten the sexual coupling. The method, if completed correctly, the alpha pheromones would likely only except this omega scent to arousal and none others for life. It was erotic and sensual beyond any experience she had felt in her life.

"Take me," Clarke chanted in her ear.

Lexa sucked lightly on her neck and reached down and edge the very tip inside. Clarke was tight and heard her whimper, and pulled out. "I'll go slow." Lexa ran her fingers down to meet her shaft, aching to go inside the warm wet omega and pushed a single finger inside, feeling her up. Lexa reeled from the smooth, warm softness along her walls and whispered into her ear, "You're so tight Clarke," and bit lightly under her ear.

"Please, Lexa, try."

A need in Clarke's voice drove her to fulfill her request, positioning herself at Clarke's opening, rubbing up and down soaking her cock, nudging inside a little on each pass. Trying to judge her partner's discomfort until she felt Clarke relaxed and kept the blunt end on her entrance and jerk forward, sliding a couple of inches inside.
A quick intake of breath then Clarke hissed, "Fuck yeah." Reaching for her ass to pull her to the hilt as Lexa's folds kissed inside Clarke's open lips, and her short drenched curls met her trimmed patch at the base of her cock.

Lexa held still and kissed Clarke along her neck and face, letting her adjust to her size. "Are you okay?"

Clarke ran a lazy foot up and down her leg. "More than okay, but it's been a while. I've never been this full." Lexa felt those words squarely between her legs and jerked forward a bit, bringing a grunt and sultry laugh out of Clarke.

"Been a while for you too?"

Thankfully it was dark, and Clarke couldn't see the blush on her face, and Lexa playfully growled, "Less talking." And she took her into another deep lingering kiss. Not wanting to reveal it has been awhile. Lexa admittedly hadn't been with a lot of girls and only one omega, but enough to know that Clarke was different and couldn't believe how pleasing she felt around her. Warm, wet, and incredibly tight and at first she could barely move, but with Clarke's slick growing between them, she was able to slide out and in again with ease and started to set a pace. Bracing her hands on either side of Clarke and rolling tight against her open legs on every thrust. The alpha she always kept restrained kick the cage door open and surged into omega beneath her.

Earlier, Clarke woke in that dreamy state, unsure of where she was until sensing movement, causing her to seek the warm body blindly in the dark. The alpha's warmth ebbed its way along Clarke's body, and all she wanted was to be held. Lexa's scent unmistakable when her nose found her neck, enticing what little control Clarke clung to, afraid to spill the evidence between her legs. But when she felt Lexa's cock extend against her leg, her sex began throbbing and ached for more contact.

Feeling Lexa tense stung a little bit. Understanding she had a long way to go to knock down her walls and clued in right away how reserved Lexa was, but it pulled her closer when her thigh felt her hardness, something lit inside drawing her to pressed nearer to her scent and strength.

Instinct took over when the alpha was above her, and she submitted by stroking her sex over Lexa's cock. Presenting to the alpha as a willing omega, attracted to this displaying mate. Wanting, no, she needed to be possessed by this woman — a drive before she had never felt, and in the dark, searching for a purpose to her life that was missing. To open herself up to fill up the emptiness inside of her, to feel again.
Lexa grunted above, when her hands and mouth found purchase to hold Clarke’s body tight to her firm muscles along her belly as she used her legs and ass to surged deep inside. If it was even possible, Lexa swelled harder, stroking her front wall at every curling thrust.

Lexa surged forward, stretching Clarke's walls enveloping her. Smooth wet warmth hugged her thick, straining cock. Each thrust made the base of her shaft grind against her swollen clit, pulling a passionate sob from Clarke. Then when her cock reached the very end of her channel, Clarke tried to pull her deeper if it were possible. Lexa groaned when she felt Clarke tugging her again and slammed hard against her open legs and sensed the pressure building as it sent an incredible ache along the base of her cock to the length of her as her knot rapidly began to inflate. Lexa kept from releasing, wanting to send the omega over first, have her explode around her before she let loose her climax. The signs were all there. Clarke clamped harder, and her muscles quivered around her shaft.

"So close. I'm so close, Clarke cried against Lexa's neck and reared up as Lexa plowed into her and felt the thickness at the base of her cock edging just inside, and her heart lurched and clung tightly to Lexa's body. Clarke wasn't a virgin but had yet to be tied, and now she was seconds from that joy. That empty feeling she felt all her life wash away with the flood from a true alpha, knotted to breed with her mate.

Lexa jerked forward deeper this time, and her knot nearly caught. Clarke cried out in frustration causing the alpha to growl and shoved firmer into her. Each time her knot edged deeper inside yet still not passing.

Lexa was lost in her rut. Each thrust created slippery friction between them. Her body ready to light on fire with the release just out of her reach and grunted into the omega's neck.

Clarke growled back, "Fuck me harder, Lexa."

The alpha snarled into her neck and thrust harder. Clarke cried out as Lexa continuously drove into her and stretched her open enough that her body instinctively excepted the fullness when Lexa's knot pushed past her entrance. Clarke's body arched when her muscles sealed around her knot, sending her into a powerful orgasm. Seconds later, Lexa's shaft exploded, spewing jets of hot come into her. Their tie complete as Lexa continued to empty with each thrust of her hips.

Clarke couldn't think, only feel. Her body drenched in sweat and sex, her pussy was a mixture of pain and pleasure reacting out of her control, and her clit was throbbing sinfully against Lexa's short curls as she continued to spurt with each pulse. She could also feel Lexa continue to release her seed as heavy knot kept it safely trapped inside. Her warm thick shaft safely nestled inside
while her cock flowed with each jerk of her hips.

Clarke's life may not be in focus, but this moment is real. The alpha above her still breathing deeply for her effort pulled at her heartstrings. Thankful that for tonight at least she let her into her world, into her bed. The alpha gave her protection from the world for one night.

Lexa's release caught her by surprise. Until Clarke orgasm, she was sure she could keep from coming and ride Clarke's waves and bring her more pleasure, but her knot gave way out of her control a second after the omega. The tie completed, and her knot released her pent-up desire for this woman. All she could do was hold on and let her knot spilled everything she was into this girl beneath her. Her heart and soul of an alpha, but most of all, her seed. A primal urge surge through her loins to show to the omega that she was indeed a dominant mate. That as an alpha, she can fill an omega and keep her womb sealed from all others and would fight to the death to protect her.

A million thoughts crashed into her mind as she grew still falling into a sleepy state of peace.
Chapter 4

Soft breaths against the palm of Lexa's hand drew her awake and soon followed by a wipe of Clarke's nose over her wrist. Lexa quietly chuckled, amazed at what her world changed into overnight. She was on her back, with Clarke's head in the crook of her shoulder, and she held her hand to covered her face with Lexa's palm. Not sure how the omega was able to breathe, but she was quite all right and comfortably warm. Lexa used her fingers to move strands of hair from Clarke's forehead and placed a kiss and eased her hand away. A quiet complaint from Clarke's lips, then she settled again into sleep.

The dawn's new light filled the room from the doors that led to her balcony and peered upward to the skylights to the vaulted ceiling and saw nothing but snow, now blocking the view through the windows. Lexa couldn't hear the snow falling but felt its presence. Soon she would have to rise and see how bad it was outside. But that could wait till later, much later. Lexa's satiated body from last night was beginning to fade, and the sway of the omega laying next to her pulled at her desire to come out a play once more this morning, and Clarke wasn't even awake yet.

It was indeed a primal urge laying with Clarke. A feeling she learned to pushed away when it drew to close with other omegas. She thought that living in the mountains; chances were, the young omegas already had mates would keep her safe from the bother. But what she thought was a mistake with Clarke, she now understood how they could share an intimacy they were both comfortable with, and she was beginning to enjoy her company, as well.

It wasn't just the sex and began to wonder about her life, Clarke also wanted to keep secret. If this were going to be something more between them, it would mean she would have to reveal her past to Clarke.

Lexa pushed that aside and let her mind drift to last night and played back in slow motion every moan and cry Clarke made when she made love to her. Yeah, she did make love to Clarke. It wasn't meaningless sex between them. Lexa knew it that first moment when her lips first brushed against hers. But, Lexa didn't want to put a name to it just yet. It was too soon.

Lexa's body sensed the alpha, omega connection between them, as pure desire when she rutted into her. It was so different from the betas she bedded, all unique, but not the same dynamic as with Clarke. It wasn't even close to being the same. Clarke's body emitted out hunger they lacked, and it naturally brought the alpha out of her with ease.

Not long after Clarke's first orgasm, the omega squirmed below, rousing her from her sleepy state. An urgency building between them, and it started with a kiss on her cheek. Lexa kissed her back, and Clarke began purring, then squeezed her cock. Lexa gave a little jerk of her hips, checking that they were still tied firmly together, and an urge swelled to see to Clarke's desires fulfilled, and Lexa
turned them over and brushed her thumb against her swollen clit bringing her to a sudden orgasm. She sat up as the omega cried out and held Clarke as her climax rocked through her body.

This time Lexa kept from releasing but felt her knot filling again with keen pressure and kept firm for Clarke's pleasure as she rocked against her again and again. Lexa went to her knees and held Clarke under her ass, lifting her a fraction of an inch from their tied bodies, pulling cries from the omega as she came once more, and Lexa exploded and emptied once more inside of Clarke.

It was a perfect moment, sitting back holding Clarke close to her sweat-soaked breasts, Clarke's drenched legs wrapped around her body still tightly connected. Lexa's eyes grew accustomed to the dim light and could make out Clarke's satisfaction held on her face. Droplets of sweat ran down foreheads and temples as they breathed the same humid air. Lips caressed flush cheeks and wet mouths. Lexa laid Clarke back down on the bed and settled on top of her once more.

As the playback wound down, a jolt hit her when she suddenly remembered she forgot to wear a condom. It had been so long she'd forgotten what it felt like. The bare contact of her cock against the warm wetness of an omega felt so satisfying it completely slipped her mind. Lexa knew it was foolish not to wear protection but wouldn't have changed anything about last night and held the Clarke tighter around her shoulder.

"Hmm, what time is it?" Clarke yawned, covering her mouth with the back of her hand.

"Not even eight o'clock," Lexa said as she ran fingers along Clarke's arm.

"Have you been awake long?"

"No, not long."

"Do you need to get up or anything?" Clarke's question was clear, and yes, she did need to get up and use the bathroom but didn't have the will to leave just yet.

"Soon. Are you hungry? I could fix you breakfast if you like to hang out here."

"Hmm, breakfast in bed?"
"Why not, it's a snow day after all."

"I thought you said you didn't get up."

"I didn't, but the snow is still falling, can't you hear?" Lexa pretended she could hear the snow and closed her eyes and cupped one ear to listen. Clarke leaned up on one arm and tilted her head to the doors, which brought a smile to Lexa that turned into a laugh when Clarke heard nothing.

"You punk," Clarke drawled and brought her other hand into the mix and crawled on top of her and held Lexa down.

"You smell like sex," Lexa teased and leaned up to kiss her nose.

"Well, that's mostly all you babe and the puddle I slept in."

"Shit, I'm so sorry about that. I usually wear something and..."

"Hush, it's okay my heat isn't due for a while, and I swear I'm clean." Clarke ran her fingers around Lexa's nipples and squeezed lightly. "It was nice."

"But next time maybe..."

Clarke smiled at the fact that there would be another time. "Let's just play that by ear."

Clarke was now hovering over her, having released her hands and sat back on her hips. Her breasts entirely on display as she fixed her messy hair back into a bun. She had scratches on them, and a few marks were left behind as well when she vaguely remember biting them when Clarke sat on her when they were tied last night. Her muddled mind lost in sucking on her nipples as the omega rode her cock for the third time.

"Sorry about that," Lexa said, running a finger against one mark on the outside of one breast.

"Stop saying your sorry," Clarke lightly admonish. "It's quite all right."
Lexa fidgetted a little, which Clarke quickly picked up and rolled off her and slipped back under the covers. "Anything you like for breakfast?" Lexa's cock had yet to recede completely and found her robe and thick socks feeling Clarke's eye focused on her and pulled her long hair free and fixed into a loose tie.

Clarke grinned as she watched her, and playfully said, "Sausage." Clarke couldn't hold her laughter and fell over on the bed and buried her face into her pillow.

Lexa smirked and sat next to Clarke, pulling up her upright. "You're a brat. You know that, right?"

"I can't help it. You're distracting."

"You should talk." Lexa pushed a blond curl around her one ear. "You're glowing."

"Shut up, stud," Clarke laughed, then wrapped her arms around her back and just held on. "Snow day, huh?"

"Might be." Lexa pulled back and tried not to smile as she said, "Okay, so I don't have sausage, only bacon. What do you take in your coffee?"

"One sugar and a little cream, and just fixed me whatever you're having.

"Couple of scrambled eggs?"

"Sounds good."

Lexa kissed her lightly on her cheek and headed downstairs. Clarke searched the bed for her bedclothes from last night and couldn't find her top anywhere. She eyed Lexa's flannel shirt from last night, pulling it on and headed to the bathroom.

Another one of Lexa's devices was instant hot water set-up for the shower and the sink. Saves water and kept you from waiting forever to get warm. Clarke washed her hands and noticed that
Lexa thoughtfully left a new toothbrush and fresh white towels and eyed the shower behind her.

"Damn, Lexa," Clarke exclaimed when she removed Lexa's shirt and saw the numerous scratches and bites on her body, but none broke the skin. She hissed, seeing a red mark next to a nipple left by the alpha's lips when she climaxed inside of her. Clarke remembered running her fingers through Lexa's hair, holding on for dear life as they came together. Her abdomen filled with the alpha's thick cock and come swelled her belly as if she was already carrying her litter. Clarke closed her eyes as the wetness flowed down between her legs. Fresh slick told her she was ready to be mated again. "Oh, no. It can't be, not now," and searched for her phone in her purse and checked her heat calendar. Relieved that is was indeed weeks away. But, the throbbing of her clit and warmth between her legs, Clarke couldn't be sure. Lexa did say she had condoms.

"Fuck." Just the thought of not feeling Lexa inside of her, skin on skin made her resentful and kicked the rug and turned on the shower and stepped inside.

~

Lexa shivered, walking down the stairs, and immediately headed to the dryer and found a pair of sweatpants and a tee shirt and used the restroom. She turned up the fireplace, thankful that the power was still on, even though it was flickering. Lexa expected it to go out any minute. Knowing that the generator would last long enough if they lost electricity.

Lexa caught herself repeating, "They?" and looked upward, hearing the shower turn on. The happiness she hadn't felt in years pushed aside all the reservations from last night and started breakfast.

All her mind could think was of Clarke. Wondering what's her favorite color, or what kind of flower she liked best. What season did she look forward to the most? Late summer was her favorite, knowing it would mean she would be coming home again. Lexa heard singing coming from her bathroom, but unable to determine the song.

Lexa sighed, "Oh Clarke, you're going to break my heart. I just know it." But smiled anyway and brushed the negative thoughts away.

The bacon was now frying, and Lexa grabbed her cup of coffee and opened the curtains to let in the natural light and saw nothing but snow covering the windows. Curiously she opened the front door, and the surrounding area in front of the covered porch was carpeted with snow and spilling onto the entrance. Lexa was only kidding about being snowed in, and now it was staring her in the face. Her entire yard in front of the cabin was thick with snow all the way towards the road. It felt
like her cabin in the woods, was now the only thing in the world.

Lexa checked her phone, and the local website said every road was closed from the highpass to miles out of town. The storm was still raging, with this being the front end, with the possibility of lasting a couple more days, maybe longer. Check back for updates.

Lexa looked up, hearing the shower turn off. "Snowed in, indeed."

~

Clarke sniffed the air at the wonderful smells coming from downstairs and saw the steaming cup of coffee on the nightstand. Clarke didn't want to get her hopes up yet at the care Lexa showed her. But, yeah, they just had mind-blowing sex on what wasn't even a real date. On the first day, they met at her work. Lexa was right. They needed to get to know each other better if they could keep their hands off of one another. Realizing she'd probably be home in a few hours and then be at work later, and she was already missing Lexa.

Clarke blew on the coffee and wandered towards the windowed doors and heard Lexa coming up the stairs behind her. "Holy Shit. Have you seen this?"

Lexa wrapped her arms around Clarke's middle and leaned her chin on her shoulder. "Yeah, I did. The snow is at least four-feet deep in parts and still falling. I can't see the road from here, but I'll give my friends a call after breakfast to see how bad it is. I don't think I can even shovel any of this out for a while."

"Well, I'm not sorry that I'm here with you. My little place is only one story and..."

"I'm glad you here. You want to eat upstairs or down?"

"Let's sit by the fire."

~

Lexa listened to Clarke talking with Octavia as she watched the news. They were calling this latest
storm the Killer Polar Vortex. The air was frighteningly cold and had taken some lives of people who got caught up in the weather overnight when the roads shut down. The jet stream was pulling frigid arctic air over everybody north of mid-America. Mount Trikru on the eastern side was in the heart of it, primarily because of their elevation. Clarke gazed back at Lexa and smiled, telling Octavia she was staying with her and would talk to them later.

Lexa also noticed how Clarke wore her shirt from last night — admiring how Clarke wore it better than she did. She playfully skipped a few buttons, leaving her cleavage on display for her pleasure. Thankful that Clarke was so thoughtful.

Clarke set down her phone and got another cup of coffee. "Well, Octavia said my car is covered like pretty much everything in town, and she said to stay put. Nobody in town would be out in this dangerous weather for at least a couple more days, according to the reports. Raven and Anya stayed overnight at the bar in case any stragglers wandered in from the storm."

"Well, for your peace of mind, we've got plenty of food to last, although the fresh stuff might go first." Lexa padded the surface, and Clarke curled next to her, and they snuggled under the blanket. The next half-hour, they sat in a comfortable silence as the storm raged outside and watched the weather report.

Clarke found a pair of Lexa's sweatpants and a pair of her thick socks in one drawer even though the cabin was warm enough. There was something more in being in the presence of a dominant alpha. It's was merely the company she was keeping with Lexa; it felt so much like a real home. A home, she had always dreamed. She looked around the room, admiring how it was so much like the alpha and looked back at Lexa. Her head had fallen to the side as she watched TV, and Clarke turned it on mute. Her eyes closed behind the locks of dark hair that hung over her face. Clarke's heart grew a little bigger, trying to make room for the feelings she evoked out of her and settle into a light sleep next to her.

~

A sudden gust of wind rattled the windows and howled around the cabin stirring Clarke, and she mumbled Lexa's name. Lexa blinked her eyes open and wiped her mouth. Stopping when she heard the blizzard winds picking up. "Damn." Lexa looked towards the door as it started to rattle. "We can't see anything from down here."

She grabbed Clarke's hand, and they laughed while they ran up the stairs to look out and couldn't see anything but white as the wind whipped against the doors. Lexa put her hand on the cold glass surface as Clarke stayed by her side.
"It can't break through, can it?"

Lexa put her arm around her shoulder. "Nah, it's bad. But the windows will hold." That moment the lights flickered, and everything went black for a moment and then went back on.

Lexa didn't even budge, but Clarke had to ask, "I take we're on the generator now?"

"Probably. Listen, if you'd like to hang out downstairs for a bit. I should take a shower."

Clarke leaned closer to her shoulder and sniffed, then hummed, "Hmm, I like the way you smell."

"Yeah, but I'll be smelling a little too ripe later on."

~

Clarke stayed in her bedroom to watched the snow falling for a bit. It was more like a whirlwind of white and got an idea and headed downstairs. The wind howled, and her curiosity got the best of her and needed to see and feel what a real blizzard and opened the front door. The breeze blasted against her body and eyed Lexa's coat hanging on a hook by the door, slipping it on and stepped outside on the porch.

She was staring a field of snow and shivered, pushing her hands into the coat pockets to keep them warm. Winter in the mountains. Her first time. Clarke breathed in the fresh cold air, and she shoved her hand deeper into the pockets and brushed against an object, and her hand naturally wrapped around. Clarke blinked her eyes as her heart jumped into her throat. She remembered the textured of leather against her palm. The agony she relived when she wrote down her pain came flooding back into her life, and it almost took her to her knees.

Clarke trembled as she stepped back inside and found in the pocket with the same leather-wrapped message she left in the forest days ago and looked upward towards Lexa's bedroom. Clarke unwrapped the note with shaking hands and found it to be the last one she left for the forest, never considering that a person would discover this. That wasn't her intention at all. "I'm mean, what are the odds?"

Now Clarke wondered if Lexa knew it was her all along. Maybe this is why she was so hesitant to want something more with her, and last night was probably just a pity fuck. Clarke looked around
the cabin, now feeling trapped with the wall of snow and her shame.

~

While in the shower, Lexa made a note of what she needed to do next on this lazy Saturday. Well, she only had one important thing to do, and that was to change the sheets from her mess, cringing when she thought of Clarke lying in her come last night. Lexa soaped up her washcloth and washed her body, looking down and finding a few scratches of her own. Hissing at the stinging of a scratch on her back and seeing a bit of blood on the washcloth.

"Damn. I didn't even feel that." Lexa blinked, remembering hearing those same words as an echo from the past.

Of another bedroom in another city and coming home late one night, almost six years ago, after telling her girl, she'd probably sleep at the office. But, by luck, maintenance was called after a flood in a bathroom, and they needed to leave the building. This miserable long grueling day at work finally over, and she could fall asleep in her omega's arms.

Quietly entering the loft and hearing the television in her bedroom, now quite sure she wasn't going to wake her girl and opened the door. Lexa stood in place and dropped her computer bag on the floor, hearing not the TV, but the omega calling out to male beta behind her, "I didn't even feel that. Fuck me harder, harder, oh fuck!" The omega turned around and saw Lexa in the doorway.

Lexa held her eyes for only a moment to let it sink what she was witnessing, then closed the door and went to the kitchen and got a beer and sat down on the couch. She used the edge of her coffee table to slap the cap off the bottle and took a drink and holding a mouth full of beer and eyed the baseball bat in the corner of the living room. Lexa swallowed the beer and looked away. No, she wouldn't resort to violence and finished the rest of the beer and waited for her soon to be ex-girlfriend to come out of her bedroom.

The full force of all her senses set on fire when she smelled the omega's scent on this weasel of a man when he came out of her bedroom, her bedroom. Standing up when he tried to pass and looked down on him, making him wilt under her gaze. "She's yours if you want." Lexa looked back at her, finding tears caught in her eyes that spoke of how sorry she was, she didn't want to hear. "I don't have time for her cheating."

Lexa got another beer and said over her shoulder before she changed her mind, "Take your stuff and leave my key on the counter before you get the hell out of my home."
She did and left without a word.

A rekindled romance from her high-school sweetheart that had lasted half a year, the woman whose engagement ring she kept in her coat pocket every day and had planned to ask her to mate with her on her next weekend off when they went out of town. She almost flushed the ring down the toilet. Expensive, yeah, but she was rolling in money.

From then on, Lexa built a hardened exterior to keep up as a barrier the rest of the time she spent in the city before she had enough and left.

Each day became a new burden to carry. Vacations were rare even though she would fly a lot. Most times, not staying the night. She was there just to attend meetings, take notes, and to bring ideas back forth, sitting in the corner with her laptop working her code. It was exhausting.

But, it was that one night when it broke her when she took a fated misdirected call from person begging for their job back from her company's eventual take-over. Lexa lied, saying she's sorry, saying she just answers phones and ends up listening longer than she expected. And now she bore another view about the destruction of this single stranger's life that she caused.

Lexa knew how many lost their jobs, she kept all of the figures, and it was in the hundreds, each with a different story of their own she supposed. Her alpha hid, like a coward she was. She couldn't admit to this person that she was in the thick of all of it. Lexa made some of it happen with her clever ideas and cost-saving schemes. It made her want to throw up. Her algorithm in a computer decided the fates of these people with a press of a key. A key she tried to destroy but got locked out right before she quit.

"Why the fuck did you go there?" Lexa leaned her head against the tiled walls and hoped the warm water could rinse away the guilt. It only kept at bay so long, until she could get her mind on a project. Nothing would ever wash all of it away.

Remembering this is why she kept people away from her. Why she held her secret to herself, she wasn't worthy of happiness. If Clarke only knew. But, somewhere deep inside, she wanted this to be more with Clarke, and somehow she would have to tell her everything.
Lexa felt the coldness in the bedroom when she stepped out of the steaming bathroom. Quickly dressing and found the front door wide open when she stepped down into the living room. A cold blast of air caused the snowflakes to litter the front hall. Lexa gazed out into a person-shaped hole realizing to her horror that Clarke had left. Lexa felt an object under her foot, a piece of paper. Hoping it was from Clarke, as she shook off the snow. Recognizing immediately, it was the note she found in the forest just a day ago.

Her mind ran over the message in the note and looked out again and whispered, "Clarke, it was you?"
Clarke dropped the note as tears scattered down her cheeks, sensing the walls close around her. She felt trapped by her for foolish pursue of the alpha against her resistance. Clarke needed to leave and ran upstairs to find her clothes and hurried to leave before Lexa got out of the shower. Almost tripping coming downstairs from the loft, she put her purse on her shoulder inside her coat by accident. She was barely aware of what she was doing, other than she needs to disappear. Flee from the humiliation that covered her like a shroud and left out of the front door.

Ignoring the cold, Clarke clawed her way through the freezing clinging snow and stumbled down the hidden stairs, almost falling face-first in the snow and crying out when her knee scraped against the edge of an obscure rock. She kept moving, using her arms as she swam through the drifts — the ghosts of her past following her. To run, run away from what she had caused. But her mind would never let her forget.

Remembering getting the call from the frantic adult children of the couple, she managed, stating they couldn't reach them after finding a cryptic note on a kitchen table with her phone number attached, right before Christmas.

They found them in their car in the garage. A hose in the window from their exhaust pipe is how they ended their lives. A couple who met on the job thirty-five years ago, who helped build this company, and were both scheduled to retire last November. Clarke fatefuly asked if they could remain until the end of the year, and they gladly said yes.

The company suddenly sold the following week, freezing everything in place and pennies to the dollars offered for their pension or nothing at all. Nobody saw it coming. The company she found out later had not insured their retirement except those who had retired up to that date. So together, her friends lost seventy years of their future, along with what they had invested in this company. They wouldn't be able to retire and would have to jump in the job market at nearly sixty years old. The remaining employees, including Clarke, were out of a job, out of money, and locked out when they came back to work the following week.

Clarke's tears covered her vision along with the snow, and it was too much to bear, knowing that she would always be running to hide the guilt that she kept buried. Remember how she begged them to stay and how they joked about it at the time and agreed, what's one more month.

It was so cold, but she kept moving, frantically reaching for a limb of a pine tree, grabbing hold, and pulled herself along until she cleared her legs from the heavy snow and continued running,
moving away from the pending rejection from the alpha.

Clarke felt like a fool for pursuing Lexa so persistently. Her teeth started to chatter as she struggled with the winds blowing against her back as hair whipped around her face, her arms clinging around her body, desperately trying to stay warm. She thought surely the road back to town was in front of her but yet to find it, when a vicious gust of wind slapped against her body, and the cold caused it harder to think as she struggled against the storm and kept moving.

~

Lexa dressed in her winter gear and quickly stuffed her backpack with warm gloves and the rest of the hot coffee and snacks. It already had a first aid kit and a warm blanket. She checked the batteries in the flashlight and attached it to her hip. Hooking her GPS to the other side and marked her location, just in case she got lost.

It took less than two minutes to prepare, but before leaving the cabin, and tried calling Clarke's cell phone, hearing it ringing in the kitchen where she set it this morning to charge.

"Damn it, Clarke, why did you leave?"

Clarke's tracks were not hard to follow and were heading not for the road to town but up the mountain and away from safety. Clarke's pathway through the thickness of the trees would allow her to past mostly unobstructed by the heavy snow. Still, it was freezing, and her light coat would get heavy and wet in no time and moved faster, knowing Clarke could go into hypothermia quickly in this weather.

Lexa's thoughts went back to the note and agonizing over the writer's grief at causing someone's death, the writer she now knows is Clarke. A million questions she had yesterday came down to one, why?

"Clarke!" Lexa called out when she saw a streak of blond within the snow and started running, lifting her legs to clear the drifts and moved through the thick snowfall as fast as it would allow. Going to her knees and scooping out the snow and finding only a dead plant that had yellowed.

Panic set in as she checked the time. It well over a half-hour since she started searching, adding the time in the shower, Clarke could have been gone over an hour, with the light growing dim and the storm howling, her adrenaline surge in her bloodstream, urging her forward.
Lexa frantically continued to trudge through the snow and tried calling out. But her words were thrown back into her face by the howling winds. Lexa cupped her hands around her mouth and called out again, "Clarke, where are?"

A flash of vivid black against the snow caught her sight, and Lexa tripped as she surged forward. Each step felt like ten, cursing against the swirling and vicious wind like some unseen force keeping her from Clarke's side. Lexa got to her and quickly began shoveling the snow that surrounding Clarke. From what she could tell, a heavy snowdrift pitched over her trapping her in place.

"You're going to be okay, Clarke. I've got you." Lexa prayed to the spirit to protect the young omega.

She found Clarke's bare hands clutching at the snow and pulled her free. Clarke's lips were slightly blue, and she quickly removed her gloves and felt for a pulse and listened for breaths of air, feeling light movement from her lips when she held her hand over her mouth. Lexa remembered that it was only this morning she felt the soft, warm breaths against her palm. Lexa pushed that aside and covered Clarke with her blanket and fixed her warm gloves on her hands, then scooped her up in her arms and started their way back home.

Clarke stirred next to her chest as she battled the winds and icy-cold snow, and she held her tighter. Clarke, by her estimation, had traveled roughly a couple hundred feet if not further before she was overwhelmed by the raging blizzard. Clarke was slowly becoming aware of her presence and started to fight against her.

Her teeth chattered as she tried to speak, "Let...me...go."

"Clarke, you're not making any sense. I can't let you go. You'll die out here."

"I can't..." Clarke began shivering, still trying to fight but relented against her stronger grip.

~

Lexa stripped Clarke of her wet outer clothing in the front hallway as she shook and wrapped a dry blanket around her and carried her to the fireplace. "Don't move Clarke. Your body could still go into shock. I've got the get your warm without hurting you. Wait here while I get you some dry
clothes." Lexa hesitated to say that a sudden warmth could cause a heart attack having witnessed it happen before. Clarke's head trembled as she shivered and looked away into the fire.

Lexa needed a drink but put on her kettle instead and took the upstairs two at a time and found Clarke's clothes she tore off in haste, including her flannel shirt from last night that Clarke wore like a possessive omega. She dropped the shirt on the bed. Thinking she'd want some cleaner to wear and searched the closet looking through a dozen or more of her warm flannel shirts then paused, and looked back at the one from last night. Maybe this could work. Her alpha scent was all over it, and perhaps it might help Clarke calm her distress.

Clarke sniffed and rubbed her nose against the warm blanket. Her shivering slowed to an occasional shake. Her toes ached as did her fingertips and held them out in front of the fire, and they began to tingle.

What the fuck was she thinking? How could she have treated Lexa this way after how she cared for her last night? She watched Lexa in the kitchen with a worried look etched on her face. Her clothes from this morning draped over her shoulder as she fixed them a cup of something. She turned back to look a the fire quite embarrassed. But it would give the out the Lexa wanted. Their friendship, Clarke so desperately desired, now not possible. After this storm was over, she'd pick up her stuff at her place and head for another town.

"Hey, let me help you put on these warm clothes. Lexa knelt and dried her feet. She gathered her icy fingers into her strong warm hands and rubbed the chill away. She carefully slipped a pair of thick socks on her cold feet and added a second pair. Lexa let her hand rest on Clarke's bare knee for a second then looked up with anxious eyes that took her breath away.

"Please, never do that again. You can tell me anything when you're ready. Okay?"

Clarke nodded once, pushing down the urge to cry. She couldn't tell her just yet. Explaining what she caused would mean the end of this. Whatever ever this was.

"Looks like you've got a cut here." Lexa dabbed at the seeping wound on her knee with a towel, then brought out her first-aid kit and cleaned and bandaged it. With the cold, she barely felt it.

Lexa finished dressing her, surprised when she slipped her flannel shirt back on her shoulders — taking time to close each button until she got to her breasts. Lingering for a moment then glanced down in Clarke's eyes then gave her an earnest smile.
If Clarke could describe a moment in her life stood still, it was the quiet moment standing next to this alpha woman that held her gaze with a million questions held back on her face. Physically dominant, but in her eyes caught something much more profound and without a name, just yet, seeing in her smile, not a lie, and not pity. Her eyes held a softness that began to quiet her mind. Let her feel safe in her company. Lexa did this all without releasing her alpha scent. A rare gift of compassion flowed out just being in her presence.

"I hope you like whipped cream in your hot chocolate."

Lexa handed her a Winnie the Pooh mug, and she settled next to her with her cup pictured with Christopher Robin. Lexa didn't know where to began with Clarke and didn't feel it was her right to pry into her life. Wanting to shield Clarke from harm, would include herself if it meant keeping her from safe from pain. The last thing she wanted to do to Clarke was to judge her. She had no right. A wall of ice she used to keep people at bay now sat between them formed by a pain Clarke kept buried. She wondered how Clarke had so cleverly found every key that unlocked the gates and let her pass into her world. Lexa had no idea where to began with Clarke and looked down at her steaming cup of hot chocolate.

"These were a birthday present from my mom when I turned eight. She used to make me hot chocolate on cold winter days like today. These two are what's left." Lexa blew on the drink and took a sip and kicked off her boots, and stretched out her legs. "We never had a real fireplace. Just a fake one that my mom would use candles instead to substitute for flames and read me Pooh and his friend's stories."

Clarke pictured that young pup from her childhood, staring wistfully at made-up things. A precious memory she quietly shared. Knowing that just a day ago, Lexa would have never revealed. This tough alpha taking care of these childhood things like they were made out of fine china touched a deep place down to her core.

They sat in silence for only a moment when Lexa found her hand under the blanket and laced their fingers together and heard a sob caught in Clarke's throat. She wanted to whisper. When your ready, I'm here for you. Lexa could have released her calming alpha scent to help her quiet her mind, but hesitated. She wanted to wait to give Clarke time to adjust to just being together. Not wishing to overwhelm her and give her the space she needed.

Her analytical mind went back to what Clarke wrote in her note. Thinking of the first one she found, now quite sure Clarke was the author, and for some reason, Clarke wanted to tell someone why she ran and how she came here.

The time she lived in Mount Trikru, she buried her past and now sitting here in the quiet of her cabin with the storm raging outside sat Clarke and her life she wanted to keep hidden. Lexa
recognized the guilt Clarke must carry; she bore the same thing. She never wanted to share what she had done to another person, and maybe it was the same with Clarke, and no one was meant to read the notes, and perhaps this is why she ran.

Clarke turned inward, not ready to face losing Lexa. As if she already belongs to her. She didn't. Clarke didn't know her well enough that something as horrible in her past wouldn't drive her away. Lexa was already so hesitant to be anything more than friends and last night with the sex, well that was easy to fall into for one night. Lexa probably didn't think it was anymore between them but a one-night stand.

Clarke finally took a sip of the hot chocolate and hid her smile when she tasted the hint of cinnamon and held on lightly to Lexa's fingers laced with hers. The heat from Lexa's hand didn't feel like rejection, although Lexa's scent remained subdued. Clarke's retreated, but it was pretty obvious how she was feeling. If Lexa's cabin was going to be her home for the next few days, she had the right to know why she fled.

Clarke cleared her throat, "First, I'm deeply sorry for running away from you."

"That surprised me."

"I found my note in your coat by accident. I wasn't sneaking around. I just put your coat on to keep warm when I stepped on the porch to see the snow and stuck my hands in the pockets..."

"I found the note yesterday afternoon on a walk in the forest."

Clarke released her hand. "So, you knew I wrote..."

"What? No, Clarke, I swear."

Clarke watched Lexa's eyes trying to see if they revealed deceit. But saw nothing but the truth and took Lexa's hand back and slowly looked away into the fire and stated, "Sometimes my thoughts overwhelmed me, so I write them down. That first week after arriving here and landing a job gave me some breathing room. All this fresh air and mountains, I couldn't resist taking a walk. There was another note I left somewhere else in the forest."

Lexa just held her cheeks from blushing and released Clarke's hand and reached into her back
Clarke carefully unfolded the note and shook her head when she read her message. "Yes. It's the first one I wrote. That next morning after I arrived here, I took a drive and found a pathway into the woods. I thought just to leave it in the forest. I never considered someone would find them. I thought that they would rot away into nothing. It helped me deal with it somehow. It's silly, but I've been doing that all my life. Little notes I would tuck away and maybe find later. When I thought back on them as I grew stronger, I could face let downs in my life."

"I'm sorry that I intruded on your secret, Clarke."

"Don't be. I guess you have figured out by now why I left the city. I lost my job like everybody else I managed, and one couple..." Her voice caught in her throat, "My friends took it the hardest."

"I thought you said it was your fault. Not that I would agree with you at all. Not in something like this."

"But it was Lexa. It was a matter of timing. If I hadn't talked them into staying until the end of our fiscal year, they would have retired will their full benefits."

"How could you have known?"

"You don't think I used that excuse myself?" It was a biting remark that Lexa let roll off her back. "The only reason I ask them to stay was to pick up some of the backlogs because I was selfishly going on vacation that I didn't need to take. They knew and must have blamed me for all they lost."

Lexa felt the guilt of what she did in her career rise and turned to look at Clarke. "I know it's hard not to blame yourself. I wish I could have helped you through that difficult time. But, Clarke, you have to understand, a company going under can't be your fault. You didn't cause this company to fail. I know this because it's always the little guys that get hurt when..." Lexa paused and continued, "when greedy stockholders want their big buyout. For that, I'm sorry."

"Lexa, what I did couldn't be your fault."

The timing would never feel right to Lexa when she would find her courage to share what she was
apart of and not knowing where to began. Maybe she could start with something simple.

"I didn't always go by Lexa." Clarke's eyes quickly came up to meet hers. "I shortened my name after I moved to Mount Trikru. I just hoped to blend in, and no one would ever find out who I was or where I came from."

Clarke wasn't sure she was ready to hear Lexa's story. It didn't feel fair that because of her guilt, Lexa's history was going to lay bare before her. It's not that she didn't want to know about her life, but not like this because of her stupid mistake.

"Lexa, you don't have..."

Lexa continued, "My name before I shorten it was, is Alexandra." It felt odd to hear her name after so many years. Shame covered her face, and Lexa stood up and paced the room. She wanted to tell Clarke everything. To say to her, she wasn't the only one with sins. The guilt sometimes made it hard to breathe.

"You've got me scared, Lexa. It can't be as bad as what I did."

Lexa looked up at the ceiling and shook her head, and gazed back down at Clarke. "You can't know that for sure, Clarke. I..." Lexa felt the cold seeping into her soul, afraid to speak to her of what she created. Quite honestly, afraid to lose Clarke's trust. In the back of her mind, the possibility the code she wrote could have contributed to her company's takeover of their struggling business. What she so desperately wanted to keep hidden from everyone, "I told you I had a degree in business, which was all true. What I didn't mention is I also hold a degree in computer science. Specifically writing codes."

"I don't understand."

Lexa took a breath then let it all out, "When I was first hired fresh out of college. I planned to make a lot of money and make my mark. Leave a lasting impression with my skills." Lexa clenched her fists as her conceit so quickly rose in her. She hated how she use to be. "That first part I got right, and made a lot of money, as for the second part." Lexa paused at witnessing the grief that Clarke suffered. "Seeing you and hearing what you went through. I probably made this touch your life."

"How does writing code..."
"I found a way of streamlining businesses. More for the investor's bottom line. At first, I ignored the firings, thinking that because they would probably go out of business anyway, I just gave the push it needed."

"How many people lost their jobs?"

The question that Lexa avoided, it was the one that hurt the most. She turned to look at Clarke and said, "I have no idea. But at the time, it was in the hundreds. I tried to destroy my work, but I got locked out, and now, it's probably well into thousands of people, like you who lost their jobs because of me. Lives I helped ruin, Clarke." Lexa held her stare then glanced away, ashamed.

Lexa sat down across from Clarke as her vulnerability covered her face along with her hair as she gazed down at the floor. She couldn't face looking at her, knowing that it very likely that she was responsible for what happened to Clarke's job and friends.

"I can hear you thinking and blaming yourself, Lexa."

Lexa glanced up, and she wasn't crying. Clarke supposed an alpha rarely did. The pain covering Lexa's face hurt Clarke's soul.

Lexa turned away and stared into the fire. Lexa was shutting down, probably putting up her walls again. It didn't seem fair to try and breach them yet, but they were in this together for the next few days, maybe they could salvage an understanding between them at least. Clarke lifted the blanket after noticing Lexa shiver.

"It's warmer next to me."

Lexa didn't want to seem needy. Although being away from Clarke didn't feel right. She was aching and wanted to howl knowing she didn't deserve comfort but missed the loss of her warmth and moved next to her anyway.

"I'm not going to blame you, Lexa." Lexa didn't understand how she couldn't. "But, after the snow lets up and I get back to town, maybe it's best if I move to another city."

Lexa's eyes pricked with pain and pushed down her emotions from spilling out. "I get it. It would be hard to live in a town with a person like me."
"No, Lexa, it's not you, it's me. I'll remind you all the time."

Clarke's words hung in the air between them as her tears began to fall in earnest this time. Lexa wanted to wrap her arms around Clarke but couldn't. Lexa didn't respond and looked away. Both were too lost to dare seek comfort in each other while the winds continued to howl outside.

Chapter End Notes

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Call 1-800-273-8255
Available 24 hours every day
The light faded into the early evening when Lexa left Clarke on the couch while she made them something for dinner. Nothing special, just a couple of grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup, neither one of them were that hungry.

They ate in silence, and after removing the uneaten portions, Lexa laid a blanket over Clarke to sleep by the fire. The cold had seeped deep into omega's bone, wiped out by her internal struggle. She felt that also when the meal sat heavy in her stomach over the next hour and knew she had to keep moving.

Lexa decided that starting tonight, it would better if Clarke slept in her bed by herself and changed the sheets and lit scented candles to erase the air of their odors that remained. It was a painful thing to do, but necessary. She didn't want the memory of last night to stay fixed in her head or bring discomfort to Clarke. She knew that what they had shared would never happen again.

Lexa placed a hand on her chest, willing the pain away from shattering her heart and was having little luck. She was quite sure she would never forget Clarke after she left Mount Trikru.

Lexa spent some time looking down from the loft, watching Clarke sleep as the orange hues from the fireplace created a cocoon of warmth around the omega. Clarke seemed so lost and felt her anguish in every cell of her body. Wishing she could have thought of something to say to change Clarke's mind from leaving and cursing when she couldn't find her courage to reconsider to stay. And after sitting in silence and Clarke hadn't said another word, Lexa was sure she had made up her mind and the moment was gone.

Now that hours had passed between them, thoughts crowded her mind of where would Clarke go? Who would keep her safe? Lexa began to find reasons Clarke should stay in Mount Trikru, if not for her, but maybe what this town could provide. Rapidly ideas started filling her mind. The weather, well that was given, even with the snow. If you were prepared, it wasn't so bad. Then it was the mountains and trees all around them and a lake nearby. You couldn't put a price on what it was like to step out in your front yard and see nothing but your land.

Her mind went back to what they had talked about at The Blue Ox, where one of their planned day trips could have turned into a nighttime stroll up to her crest to watch the stars. Clarke grew excited when she told her you could see the Milky Way from her favorite place, and now if she leaves, the thought of going up there without Clarke would never be the same.

She thought her friends at the bar and how Raven and Clarke had hit it off like they had been
friends forever. Before they left for the evening, Anya told her, she was happy that she had found a girl that she would want to spend more than just one weekend with and asked if they could go with them on one of their trips. She kidded her, but Anya saw the spark between them even if she didn't at the time.

Anya. Lexa closed her eyes and laid her head against her outstretched forearms resting on the loft's railing. What is Anya going to say when Clarke takes off in her old beat-up car? Hell, what is everyone going to think? Clarke's car. Didn't she tell her it needed something? Cursing when she couldn't remember what Clarke told her the night before.

And why did she work at The Diner? Clarke stirred in her sleep and kicked at the blankets when it hit her. You idiot, of course, it had to be that she was probably broke and just scraping by. Clarke did say she wasn't fond of the work and clenched her fists against her frustration of not asking her to stay and turned away to gaze out the door to her balcony and wallow in her misery.

~

Clarke was in and out of sleep. Her body ached from running. But, not entirely in a physical sense. It was like under her skin, a raging storm existed. Maybe it was the memory of the blizzard slamming against her body. Whatever it was, it made her anxious and afraid — wondering if her life would ever be normal again. Would she always be running?

Clarke swallowed her sadness and thought of their lost long weekend together. She couldn't find the words or how to act around Lexa now that the spell between them was broken. All she wanted to do was drift back into the delightful evening before all of it went to hell.

But, now that she expressed a desire about moving away, Lexa shut down and wasn't sure if she could take it back when the minutes between them dragged on, and she didn't respond. Lexa's fear of rejection might have stood between them, and she truly believed she was to blame and couldn't ask her to stay for fear of what she said. *I'll remind you all the time.* The look on Lexa's face told her it was probably right. Fuck my life. Clarke sat up and kicked off the blanket. Her body still felt cold and thought perhaps another shower would help quiet her mind.

She found Lexa in her bedroom with just the light from candles holding this place in quiet solitude as she stared out through the windowed doors at the cold darkness. Clarke hated to break the silence and disturb Lexa and quietly asked, "Hey, is it okay if I wash up? Lexa turned to gaze at her and nodded her head and returned to look back at the storm. "Thanks." Clarke's heart sank at the chasm between them and closed the bathroom door. This time couldn't keep her cries silent as her tears wash away the last of her self-esteem that remained.
Lexa closed her eyes when she heard the door softly shut behind her. It was quiet for second until Clarke's cries filtered through the door. Her alpha responded by pumping out a neutral scent. But, listening to Clarke sobbing was too hard to resist and knew she wasn't strong enough to withstand her pull as it began to shred her soul. Lexa wanted to give Clarke space, but the aching in her arms against the emptiness was too much to bear. She needed to hold Clarke again, and somehow she would have to find her strength and go against Clarke's wishes and ask her to stay. Lexa shook off the reservation that hung over her and approached the bathroom.

The quiet knock startled Clarke and quickly wiped the tears away and slowly opened the door, finding Lexa staring down at her sock covered feet, hands pushed deep in the pockets of her sweats. She lifted her head as her lips parted, and the air between them held still.

Lexa's heart thumped hard in her chest when she saw the lost look in Clarke's face and was stunned by how it made her feel. She wanted to hold Clarke and beat back the sorrow that covered her but hesitated and chose to a plant a seed of friendship instead, "Can we start over?" A shaky breath caught in Clarke's throat and then slowly nodded her head. Lexa smiled in relief and put out her hand. "Hi, my name is Lexa Wo...oof." Clarke jumped into her arms before she could finish and instinctively wrapped her arms around her.

Clarke's sobbing against her chest immediately set off her alpha scent to protect and closed her eyes. It was the one that would calm an aggressor or soothe hurt feelings. But most of all, it sent out an air of confidence and power. She rarely used, because of how dominant it could make her. Having Clarke back in her arms felt right, even if it was probably for the wrong reasons. Lexa tucked Clarke closer and shook off the last of her doubts.

Lexa held quiet her purring under her breath until Clarke's tears and crying mellowed out to sniffing and rubbed her nose against her shirt, and Lexa said in jest, "Now I'm going to have changed my shirt because of all of your snot on me."

Clarke couldn't hold the tiny chuckle that snuck out of her, "I'm sorry," she tried to pull away, wiping her nose with her hand, but Lexa kept Clarke close to her chest.

She tilted Clarke's chin and looked directly into her eyes. Hoping to convey her hope and said, "Please stay, Clarke." Lexa meant it more than being in her arms at the moment.

Clarke couldn't tear her eyes away from the intensity of her gaze. "I..."
"We can work this out. I know it. Please don't leave because of me."

Clarke shook herself out of the power that poured off of Lexa. "What about everything I did?"

Lexa countered, "What we did. It's time I face what I did as well, Clarke. Maybe we could do it together?"

Clarke gazed up into her eyes and saw the strain that she put there. But it wasn't the only thing she saw. Behind her green eyes, she saw an understanding. A quiet hope lingered on her face.

Clarke's world felt like it was righting itself if only for a moment and brushed the hair out of Lexa's face and cautiously cupped her cheek and recalled their conversation from last night. "You said we were quite a pair. Have you figure out what we are yet?"

Lexa smiled, remembering and leaned her forehead against Clarke's and thought for a moment. "I'm still not sure." Lexa couldn't resist her scent and kissed her forehead. Leaving her lips there for a moment and whispered, "Thank you."

Clarke wanted to ask Lexa to join her in the shower. But needed time on her own to work through all of the emotions that stirred inside of her. It felt like she was on a roller coaster and required time to work through her embarrassment at running away and shook her head against her poor decision of taking a chance against the snowstorm. She could have quickly died tonight and not thinking at the time what would that have done to Lexa.

Clarke knew she needed to start making better choices. Decisions that wouldn't put her life in danger and make Lexa worry about her. Maybe she could find herself again. To discover the young girl she once was who saw wonder in the world. Maybe with Lexa... She left her thoughts to drift now that they had time to get to know one another again and sent out a grateful prayer to all the gods that Lexa didn't reject her.

The warm water helped Clarke wind down and wrapped a towel around her wet hair after she dried off. Lexa had replaced her clothes from this morning with a fresh tee-shirt and sweats and heard through the door, soft music playing a slow and haunting sweet melody that fit their moods she supposed.
Clarke wiped the fogged mirror to look at herself for a calm moment. She looked tired, but at least she was clean, and her guilt was pushed back into a room and locked the door. This day she would like to forget now that Lexa seemed willing to start fresh with her again.

~

After she left clean clothes for Clarke, a new possibility with the omega filled her mind. She didn't want to go overboard with her feelings. But just having Clarke in her arms caused her alpha to want fight for her. To fight for something that would give her life meaning.

She thought again about what Clarke asked her. It was a joke at the time. But it did require her to stop and evaluate her life. To judge their purpose to the time together that the spirit gifted them. A determination to move forward in a new direction she had never considered before.

Before meeting Clarke, her world consisted of just going through the motions of surviving and forgetting, and for a time, it was easy to do. Although in her downtime spent fixing up this cabin, sometimes wondered why she bothered — knowing that one day she would leave, and it was why she kept her friends at arm's length. And when Clarke asked her if she planned on living here forever, she hadn't even considered it, but now. Lexa looked around her bedroom and to her, bed where she made love to Clarke recalling that perfect moment between them and wanted it back again.

Lexa felt anxious like this was the first date between them when Clarke stepped out of the bathroom. Her hair was toweled dried and hung combed down her back and looked radiant to her eyes. A soft glow from the bathroom light surrounded Clarke, and Lexa's heart swelled for want of her but understood they needed to reacquaint again.

"You look beautiful, Clarke."

Clarke put her hands on her hips. "I'm in your clothes, without makeup, and my hair is still wet." Lexa didn't say anything but gave her a breathtaking smile causing her to reflect the same and said, "Thank you."

"Are you hungry?" Lexa held out her hand and pulled Clarke towards her. Unable to resist giving her another hug. She was starving now that the drama between them dissipated. "I could fix us something?"
"How about we do that together?"

~

"She did what?" Clarke was on the phone with Raven while she rolled a joint and poured a drink for both of them. Now that it was legal in all fifty states, the stigma fell away, and she could feel comfortable in her home and relax. Lexa didn't smoke much. But after a day like today, she just wanted to wind down with Clarke and didn't want to do any deep thinking for a while. "Really, two fingers?"

Lexa waited to light up and passed Clarke's whiskey over ice in a tumbler to her. Clarke took a sip, giving her wink and walked towards the fireplace, and turned around to shake out her hair. It was mostly dry and used her fingers to pull out any tangles that remained. Clarke was stunning to look at in a simple white tee shirt and a clean pair of gray sweats. She couldn't help but noticed the vee in the neck of her shirt could barely hold her cleavage from peeking to Lexa's delight.

Lexa already fell high, and she hadn't even lit up or taken a sip of her drink. Anya would probably say she was lovesick and running a fever of lust. She realized that it was more likely her body and mind were relieved, and it made her almost giddy, but she did find thinking about Clarke made her heart skip a beat.

Clarke didn't wait and lit the joint like a pro and flicked the ash off with the nail of her little finger and blew out the smoke after a few moments. Coughing a little a bit, then offered and took a pull herself. She didn't hold it in and released the smoke right away. That's all she needed tonight. Just a little buzz to make her mind wind down, and she could lose herself in a movie and Clarke for the next few hours.

"Yeah, it came down pretty thick here too. Yeah, okay. Tell Anya. I hope she's feeling better and will talk to you tomorrow," she paused, then started to laugh. "I'll make sure to tell her." Clarke tossed her phone on the coffee table as she reached for her drink and told her, "Anya broke a couple of fingers, and to tell you that she hates that you are at home and she's not. I'm sure Anya was only kidding."

"Ouch. How did that happen?"

"Slipping on an ice cube and her hand broke the fall, so to speak."
"Shit, she's probably pissed."

"Nah, Raven said they were hanging out getting pretty wasted, and Anya laid on the floor laughing while her hand started swelling up. Raven said it required a bunch of them to get her off the floor and stick her hand in a bucket of ice. They put a couple of splints on her fingers until she can see the doctor.

"Will it heal, okay?"

"Oh, yeah. From what Raven described, Anya needs to keep it elevated to get the swelling down. She's young. She'll recover."

"You sound like you know a little about medicine."

"Got it from my mother, the Doctor."

They met at the couch, and Clarke tucked herself next to her as Lexa started flipping through channels on the TV. "So, I take it you didn't want to follow in your mother's footsteps?"

"And be responsible for people? You see how well that worked out."

"Clarke," Lexa gently scolded her from beating up on herself and wrapped an arm around her shoulder.

"Right. So yeah, that happened, and they're still stuck at the bar but are eating pretty good thanks to The Diner but just haven't had a bath. They're going to try and set up something in the bar's bathroom."

"That's gotta suck."

"Raven's doing okay. I think Lincoln already has cabin fever. Jasper and Maya showed up, and it's two, too many bodies and nowhere to sleep except on the pool table and the spare couch that she
"Thank the gods for waiting till we got home before the storm hit us," Lexa said. Thoughts of spending a few days with their friends didn't sound appealing at all without the comforts of home.

Clarke was quiet for a moment and feeling relax against the herb moving through her system. It was just enough to let her mind find a bit of peace and not sweat every little thing so much when her eyes fell on her notes lying on the table where they landed after Lexa rescued her.

The final part of this ritual would be to burn them in a fire if they didn't end up lost or destroyed — a way of releasing what she couldn't fix. The regret in the note obliterated if only a little bit when the fire consumed it, and she could hopefully let it pass.

"You look deep in thought." Lexa gave up trying to find anything to watch. The picture kept freezing because of all of the heavy snow still falling.

"It's probably the kush. But I was wondering, would you mind if I burn my notes?"

"No, I wouldn't mind at all. Can I ask you why?"

"Habit, mainly. You see, as I said before, I thought the forest would have swallowed these notes by now." Clarke picked them up and stacked them together. "I need to let them go." Clarke walked over the fireplace and knelt. Taking a moment to read over her thoughts then tossed them into the fire. In seconds they were ash and floating in bits of black and white glowing vapor until nothing was left but heat.

Could she move on? Lexa's attitude towards her made her feel comfortable in her skin as if nothing happened between them. It was a strange sensation having another person believe in her after many months, and even years of self-doubt, knowing now she would never run away Lexa ever again.

Lexa pulled Clarke close to her chest and listen to the fire crackle in the fireplace and ran her fingers through Clarke's open hand. Clarke grabbed her fingers and laced them with hers, and they settled deeper on the couch. Lexa planned on finishing her drink after she rested her eyes for a moment but drifted off to sleep.

It was hours later when Lexa woke, and they fell into bed. Lexa tossed aside the thoughts about
leaving Clarke alone in her bed. Now that they started a journey back together again. She wanted to keep her close and tucked her close to her chest. Clarke grasped her hand and placed a soft kiss on her palm and left it there like this morning when she woke up and found her clutching her hand.

She wanted to ask Clarke if this was a habit of hers, but when the long day settled on them, Lexa yawned. It could wait until tomorrow, or maybe the day after that.
Chapter 7

Clarke sniffed lightly at the air, stirring against the familiar scent surrounding her while the light breaths from the alpha under her cheek lifted her head where it rested on Lexa's chest. She was so very sleepy and exhausted when they tumbled into bed — trusting in Lexa to guide them upstairs with one arm around her back and tucked them into bed. But staying asleep didn't last when a warm, slow yearning between her legs brought her awake. The pulsing welcoming heat woke up all of her senses. But she pushed it down, not wanting to intrude selfishly on the rest that Lexa needed after today's ordeal she caused.

A thought took root in her mind, why she sought Lexa out in her sleep. Cuddling with her like a packmate and reasoned that it was her scent falling heavy into her lungs might be why she naturally sought her out. That seedly started to sprout and hoped with the enticing aroma coming off of Lexa that it signaled she also must be awake and lifted her head to check. Frowning, she wasn't.

Clarke shifted to the side, wrapping her arm around her pillow, to contemplate this thoughtful but troubled soul. Her hands itched to touch her body, perhaps to give back the generosity Lexa selflessly offered her. To run her fingers over her warm skin, she couldn't see now covered by their shared blanket where underneath it held muscle and desire.

Much transpired between them in small moments as they held an understanding between them, making a connection to each other through the shared disappointments of their past lives. And through all of it, Lexa still wanted to be her friend, to her relief but did wonder where they would go from here after the snow melted, and they went back to their separate lives but brush it aside for now. No need to fall into any deep thinking in the middle of the night. She just wanted to cherish this quiet moment lying next to Lexa.

The light from the living room below gave enough to see and watched the alpha take lights breaths as her chest rose in a comfortable, peaceful rhythm. Clarke rubbed her nose as her subtle scent tempted her to reach out her hand to touch her but hesitated, closing it into a loose fist, choosing to let her sleep despite the accidental invitation.

Lexa grumbled in her slumber, sounding not unlike the first time they met when she got annoyed at Anya. Clarke couldn't reason at the time if Lexa were shy or what when she first met her but noticed she couldn't even look her in the eyes and was easily startled. Clarke pursed her lips together to keep from chuckling. But damn, as soon as she touched Lexa's hand, she sensed her alpha take notice of her.

Those memories drew her awareness of what Lexa held between her legs, and she just kept from moaning, thinking of Lexa's perfection. Yes, she was fascinated by her stamina from last night. She had never been with a person who could stay as hard as her body craved and found Lexa was a different creature altogether. Generous and thick, quite unlike the few people she slept with and wondered if she should coax her awake, but decided to leave a soft kiss on her shoulder instead and moved to her side of the bed. Minutes later, another mumble of complaint passed Lexa's lips, and she shifted and promptly rolled over, and deposited her body on top of Clarke.

She waited for Lexa to kiss her, but instead only heard soft breaths next to her ear that sent chills down her arms, and she remained stubbornly asleep but not her cock. Her shaft was coming awake between her legs. She could sense it starting to swell against her body and naturally reacted to buck upward in response, seek out her growing hardness with her clit but stopped. Knowing it wasn't proper to take advantage while Lexa slept. Yet, she could still kiss her and did so on her cheek.
Clarke wouldn't wake her, and it was just as well. Having Lexa lying on her was almost as good and drifted off to sleep with the comfortable weight she provided.

~

Lexa didn't remember who touched who first sometime in the middle of the night. She reckoned that they must have sought out each other in their sleep. It became a slow, languid exploration of kisses and caresses that lasted until her jaw began to ache. Their clothes remained on, if only just, and her cock extended passed the leg of her shorts, causing it to grow harder and drip as the blunt end brushed against Clarke's naked thigh as they discovered a way to reconnect. Hands found their way under their clothes, and for some reason, they just left them on even with the heat and sweat building between them.

Lexa remembered her warmth as they laid together before she fell asleep. A comfortable, quiet place of harmony and forgiveness. It could have been an awkward night with the omega, but it felt like home, and now that her body was wide awake, she craved to join with Clarke more intensely than the night before. Their kisses also held hunger and passion they both wanted. She desired to reconnect with Clarke on a physical level if sometimes words didn't always reveal what her heart reflected.

Their scents held heavy in the charged air and along with the urgent sounds of moaning and panting echoing about them. Laying down these memories with Clarke, so much filled her mind. The way Clarke's body fits perfectly under her and how her arms wrapped around her body to keep her close. There were no awkward movements between them as her body slid naturally against the omega's and into another sensual kiss that even took her breath away.

"Mmm." Lexa pushed off of Clarke left her breathing hard against their efforts of reacquainting, and she adjusted her weight against Clarke's open legs. Her words came out breathless and full of desire as she ran a finger along Lexa's lower lip, "Hmm, your lips are perfect for kissing."

Lexa welcomed Clarke's sensual moan down the length of her body to her cock and ran her lips over hers once more. "It's who you kiss that matters, Clarke."

Clarke cleverly challenged, "and sometimes it matters where you kiss," she purred, making Lexa groaned at the thought of taking omega's clit into her mouth, picking up Clarke's not so subtle hint when she shifted her legs further apart beneath her.

Usually, it wouldn't have been something she would be inclined to do. To take a woman in her mouth in this manner, to kiss the most intimate place on her body. Not even sure when it happened the last time. Probably with her ex. (An image she immediately cast out of mind.)

But the thought of sharing this private, sacred exploration of Clarke she wouldn't be able to resist. The pull from Clarke and judging by the heated wetness soaking through her undershorts that filled the space between her legs, she decided they both need to be naked.

Lexa went to her knees and eagerly worked at removing Clarke's clothes, sliding her fingers just inside the material, and edged them off her hips. She was able to see her damp curls covering her lower lips when Clarke wagged her legs wider. Lexa sensed her submission and darted her eyes to Clarke's flushed face. Her cock shuddered in anticipation and was unable to resist the pull, running her fingers through the wetness and let them linger a moment and edged a long finger inside.

Watching for a reaction when it drew an exhale from Clarke as her fingers ran along her soft wet lips as she pulled out and pushed in again.

Her head was spinning as she touched Clarke once more. This closeness they now shared that just
hours ago, she thought lost forever. Clarke must have felt the same when her heat and excitement spill from her. Lexa drew back her hand, finding glistening threads of Clarke's slick coating her fingers and promptly stuck it in her mouth. Lexa shut her eyes and moan against the taste of her thick enticing essence. No woman had ever got as wet as Clarke was at this moment with her and needed to take in her mouth.

A shiver quaked through Clarke. "Hmm damn, that was hot." Clarke sat up, quickly removed her top, and tried helping Lexa out of her clothes. Lexa laughed at getting her legs tangled in her shorts, and Clarke cursed in frustration, "Fuck, I need to see you naked, Lexa."

"I got it." Lexa kicked them off and found Clarke's lips again and rested her body down the breadth of her and took Clarke in another long heated kiss. Knowing she could only keep her alpha tame for so long before the need to claim the omega began to rise as the heat between them combining their scents in swirling intoxicating dance.

Clarke groaned into Lexa's mouth when her lips sought her out and tasted herself. A welcome relief flooded her body when the alpha, nip, and nuzzled her neck. She held still as Lexa sniffed her way around her body and found her lips again. Lexa's long thick hair hung over them, using the weight of her body to impart a desire for her that she was willing to give to her without hesitation. Clarke wanted to cry out as Lexa laid claim to her and freely submitted. What she thought was broken rubble between just hours before, came back fully intact as a solid foundation on which to build.

Clarke's slick coated the back of Lexa's cock as well as her abdomen and breasts while she inched ever closer to her desire. Her body inviting to linger and but the emptiness in her mouth left her parched and ached to have Clarke in her mouth and taste what joy lay between her open legs. But it wouldn't be fair not to savor each kiss she placed on a center of her chest and over a taut nipple. Moving to put another under her full breast until Clarke's hand found purchase in her hair to guide her to what she desired and took back a little control from the alpha.

Lexa pushed Clarke's legs further apart in which to rest her body and placed a kiss on her short damp curls taking in a lungful of her humid scent. Groaning when her shaft shuddered, and mouth watered and not so gently swung Clarke's legs over her shoulders and licked a line along the inside of her labia to her clit. But when she nuzzled her nose into her wetness, it caused her cock to protest in jealousy, rutting into the mattress to find a bit of relief.

"There, right there...Lexa..."

Lexa's felt her moan as well as Clarke's clit twitching in her mouth, growing stiff when she ran her tongue around the base and then drew her into her mouth, sucking and flicking causing the quivering legs around her head to hold her in place as the omega's orgasm started to rise too quickly. Lexa growled and sank her tongue deep inside of Clarke, not wanting her to climax too soon and slowed to draw the omega out and ravish her into a slow blissful powerful release.

Clarke felt the pull of her lips and sensed a slow-growing warmth in her belly. Her mind tried to put together what she was feeling. A swipe of a tongue making her arch upward seeking out the muscle that gave her such joy as it moved away to lick another place on her body. When Lexa returned to suck on her, the intensity sustained itself along her budding clit, working its way deep into the heat of her cunt.

My heat. Clarke's eyes shot open when she realized her body was opening up to Lexa. The hungry heat of her body desired to be filled by the alpha above her, knowing she had to stop before they went any further.
"Wait, Lexa."

"Hmm?" Lexa's response was muffled by her mouth firmly attached to her sex. Seemingly unwilling to release her catch.

Lexa continued to swipe her tongue across her clit, causing her to lose the train of thought when the welling desire rose again. Clarke groaned at the thought of having Lexa stop and cried out when her tongue was close to sending her over, "Oh damn, I need you to stop for a moment."

Lexa lifted her head as her tongue hung from her mouth and dripped with her offering. When she saw the questioning look on the omega's face, she wiped her lips on the inside of her leg as shame rose at the thought that Clarke didn't like what she was doing.

"I'm sorry, it's been a while since I..."

"Oh no, sweetie, I love what you're doing, you're quite talented. I...it's me. I think..." the blinking of alpha's eyes and confusion on her face tested her resolve. "I hate even say this, but I think my heat is starting."

Lexa looked lost in what was laid open before her, appearing not quite understanding until it became clear what she said, and her eyes came up to meet hers. "Oh, you want me to stop?"

Clarke's heart sank at the sad, bewildered look on the alpha's face. "No, I don't, it's just that my willpower to resist you may not last." Clarke had plenty of heats before, well enough to know that her body wouldn't reject the alpha if they went any further. Her suppressant should keep her from getting pregnant even if Lexa didn't wear protection, but she never took that chance before.

"Then, I should use a condom?"

The disappointment covering Lexa's face must have mirrored her own. "Honestly, I don't, but I use birth control, just in case. But if you need, to...I'm sorry for being so needy, and you've been nothing but nice to me."

Lexa could sense the omega's fear. The last twenty-four had taken a toll on their emotions but wanted Clarke even in her heat if she would let her. "Shh, Clarke, let me help you." Lexa desired her in every way and answered back by diving between Clarke's legs again, throwing all caution to the wind. Clarke cried out when her lips firmly applied the pressure her body needed and desired, pulling cries, and she shamelessly opened her legs wider for her. To take what she offered willing, now that they had already share this closeness last night.

Lexa was lost too in Clarke's heat to stop, lapping up what continued to spill from her cunt and bring Clarke to the place once more where she would fall over into her climax and wrapped her arms around her legs and used her fingers to spread her lips open and focus on her swollen bud. She nudged the hood away to expose the throbbing tip, laying claim to this flesh as her own. Wagging her tongue over and over until Clarke's body arched above her and held suspended, mouth opened in a soundless cry as her orgasm broke free and spilled over her chin and chest in a rush of heat and slick. Lexa kept flicking and lapping up her release until Clarke couldn't take the stimulation, and tried to push her away.

Lexa continued placing soft kisses on her clit, causing Clarke to jerk once more, bringing a smirk to Lexa's lips. She crawled her way back on top of her body and laid her head over Clarke's breast to listen to her heartbeat and hearing not only the rapidly calming beats but more cries caught in the omega's throat.
Lexa grew concerned over her emotion spilling out again. "Hey, hey. I got you," she shifted upward and cradled Clarke in her arms. "Shh."

Clarke wiped at her tears. "I..."

"I understand. It's okay to let it out." Lexa continued to coo and pump out a scent for her.

Clarke's intense heat was making it hard to think as she stumbled out between gasps, "I...I want you and my heat...it's too early...I don't know why..."

"I'm here for you. I can try and help you through it." Lexa had no experience. But, had heard tales of omegas in heat, of graphic descriptions of hungry, voracious omegas seeking satisfaction that they were barely in control. "Tell me what you want."

Clarke's uncertainty answered when she stared at the alpha's sweet glistening face still covered with her orgasm, then following with her gaze down her chest past her taut abdomen and fixed her eyes on her shaft. A welling desired surged for Lexa's cock, but not to be inside her just yet. She wanted Lexa to be over her and tapped her breast in an invitation and wiped her tears away.

"Come here, Lexa." Clarke adjusted her pillow to a comfortable position as Lexa held her cock in her hand and unconsciously stroke herself, walking on her knees, straddling Clarke's thighs as she couldn't help dripping over her belly, and the valley between her breasts.

"Are you sure?" Lexa said with a smile growing on her face.

"You don't want me too?" Clarke knew this was just a game between them and played along.

"I..." Of course, Lexa did and answered by moving closer and giving her a lazy grin.

"C'mere, stud." Lexa loudly groaned when Clarke removed her hand from her cock and took over stroking her and tentatively stuck her tongue out and lapped up the pearl of come about to fall from her slit. "Hmm."

"Shit." Lexa held still watching in fascination as Clarke ran her tongue around her and reached for the wooden headboard to keep from thrusting it into her mouth. Clarke held on to her ass with one hand pulling her closer to draw a wet line with her tongue from under the base of cock until her lips reach the head, then pushed her back, leaving Lexa panting and wanting more.

Clarke's heat brain grew fascinated by Lexa's cock, standing proudly between the alpha's legs. The thick shaft in her hand pulsed when she began to stroke down the length of her and drew her closer to her mouth until she wrapped her lips around the head, gazing upward at the moment when their eyes found one another and slid Lexa further inside her waiting mouth.

"Fuck...Clarke." Lexa's panting filled the loft as Clarke laid claim to her. It had been so long since she had felt the silky warmth of a woman's mouth around her. Watching in fascination when Clarke inched her kiss-bruised lips down her length of her, taking her cock deeper until she was close to coming and slowly move in and out Clarke's mouth. Lexa was hazily aware of movement behind her and peak over her shoulder and saw Clarke's fingers working her clit. Riding her fingers as she sucked greedily on her cock.

Clarke sensed the shutter along the length of Lexa's shaft in her mouth and watched as Lexa closed her eyes and held on to the headboard, and stiffened. Sensing she was close to coming, she backed off sucking and played Lexa's slit with her tongue. Lexa tried edging back into her mouth, pleading with her desperate whines.
"Shh, it's my turn to tease," and resumed flicking her tongue across the broad tip, getting a splash of come for her effort over her chin. "Hold on a little more, sweetie."

"You're..." Lexa knew she deserves this after keeping Clarke from her orgasm and played along, willing herself to hold out and closed her eyes when Clarke drew a line with her tongue down the sensitive divet under the head of her cock. "mouth is so very ah...fucking..." Clarke lightly grazed her tongue around one more time. "...perfect. Damn omega." Clarke grabbed hold of her two-fisted and drew her deep in her mouth as Lexa jerked forward awkwardly, pushing further in and loudly groaned as she lost control and emptied into the omega's mouth.

Hot jets of come spilled out the sides of Clarke's lips. Jerking with each release, unable to control her movements, and finally pulled away, edging her cock out of her mouth, trying not to overwhelm with her thickness and length until she withdrew utterly. Her heavy cock dropped against her shaking thighs and collapsed by Clarke's side.

After few moments to catch her breath, she opened one eye and saw Clarke running her tongue around her mouth to collect her come that spilled out of the sides, obsesses with her release.

"Damn, Clarke," Lexa growled and slinked over her again, letting her cock drag over breasts growing harder as she sensed Clarke's heat starting to cloud her mind. All she wanted was sex. Lots and lots of sex and detected the same from Clarke from her intense stare and surprised her by pushing her breasts together, enveloping her shaft.

Clarke watched as the startled alpha slammed her eyes shut and hissed as she rutted between them over and over. "Look at me, alpha," Clarke charged. Lexa growled but complied with her request. Blue eyes bore into green in an intense battle of wills and groaned when she clutched Lexa's ass again.

Lexa found her rhythm moving between her breast and held her gaze, watching as Clarke's mouth fell open and kept her tongue flat so she could feel the warm firm wetness against the head of her cock on each roll of her hips. Lexa found it more comfortable to rest her hands on each side of Clarke's head as she thrust, edging only the tip over her moist tongue and whispered, "Your mouth is mine, omega."

Clarke shuddered at the low growling rumble as her eyes grew wide and yet held her stare, daring her to come until her cock reached her tongue again and took one long sensuous lick, shocking Lexa with the intense sensation of her firm muscle and Lexa's came. Her body shook as she exploded once more over her mouth and breasts, crying out as she squirted over and over and pulled back, filling the hollow of her neck and over her chest. Lexa finished with a groan and fell over on her back in a daze.

Lexa laid motionless, breathing hard, reeling from her second orgasm. It took the edge off of wanting Clarke for only a moment. Clarke leaned on one elbow. Licking her lips clean of her come that remain. Her eyes held a want that she had yet to satisfy.

"Sorry about that." Lexa indicated by wiping a splash of come off of Clarke's cheek.

"I'm not." Clarke kept still as her heat churned in her gut. "But, we need to talk about...

Lexa laced their fingers together over Clarke's breast, pulling her closer and rumbled into her ear. "No deep thinking, Clarke. Please let me take care of you."

The depth of her voice and how the humid breath fell against her ear pushed back the slight worry that tried to find possession and eased as the alpha kissed her again. Both moan into each other's
mouths. Their collective scents and their releases combined in their mouths and felt Lexa's cock grew hard against her belly once more.

Lexa took her time to worship Clarke's body. Bathing her soul with each caress over her skin and wiped away much of what had troubled her. Lexa held her nipple her mouth as she squeezed the other. Rocking over her body, displaying her harden cock to her once more.

What came to Clarke's mind was for the first time, she would be experiencing her heat with a true alpha. She had a pretty good idea about what to expect from last night. But still, the intense desire she could sense from Lexa made her clt thrrob in a deep, lasting ache. That was definitely new.

Clarke cried out when Lexa bit down on her breast and looked up with those glassy eyes, apparently lost in her thoughts. "Easy, these babies are little sensitive." Lexa immediately pulled back as regret started to wash over her face when Clarke guided her face back to her breast. This time Lexa watch her eyes, and she gently kissed her nipple and applied tender pressure and sucked. "Hmm, like that." Clarke laid one arm over her head and used the other to gather Lexa's hair away, and she began to worship her body.

Lexa moved slow a first, keeping in mind that Clarke's body was ready to be lit like fire. Each soft caress drew sensual moans and more wetness to spill from her sex. A heady mixture of pure desire and erotic request and Clarke hadn't said a word.

Clarke's innate instinct began to rise once more with the alpha. Reaching down between the sweat-soak bodies as Lexa held suspended over her, and found her cock again and opened her legs.

It wasn't a desperate blind reach for her as it was the first night. Still, it held that intense desire to mate in an erotic dance growing between them. It was once more, this raw and primal mating ritual from the night before, and Lexa let her set the pace.

Clarke sensed the heat coming off of Lexa's cock and rubbed her pussy shamelessly against her once more. Deep in her gut, she craved this strong displaying alpha and smeared what remained of her last orgasm from her sex, unable to control the wetness spilling between her thighs. Her body and soul desired this alpha, wanting every part of her, seen and unseen.

Lexa sensed they were growing in sync with each other and held suspended over the omega as she started to manifest for her once more when her knot began to swell. Clarke moved with purpose, lifting her hips and displaying her sex, for her pleasure. The ancient ritual between them rose once more. She found her courage. Understanding deep in her soul, she could never reject Clarke's request. She watched Clarke guide her cock over her sex as her body naturally release her mating scent that underneath held her desire — knowing that taking these next steps could bind her life with this omega forever.

That seed of friendship she planted early was winding around them, to bind them together, to feed their souls, but a little doubt remained, is she worthy of this omega's trust and devotion for life if she were to ask?

The thought pushed aside as Lexa took her cock back from the omega, as the urge swelled between them and slid her shaft through the wetness and coating the surface and edged slowly inside. Meeting only a little resistance of the last vestige of doubt was pierced through when she seated her cock, knot deep in Clarke's cunt. Tying Clarke would have to wait.

Lexa held still like the night before and took this quiet moment to take in every breath from Clarke. The tears that leaked out from sides of the omega's eyes, where not of pain or sorrow, but a yet unnamed feeling growing between them.
Chapter 8

Clarke held still. Captured by Lexa’s intense gaze, watching for a reaction as she slowly pushed inside of her and welcome every inch of her cock, penetrating deeper, stretching, searching until Lexa's knot rested just outside of her cunt and waited. Clarke released a breath as her tears pooled in her eyes and spilled over, seconds later Lexa shifted, reaching down and wiped them away with the back of her fingers.

"I'm not hurting you, am I? The sheer force Lexa's gaze didn't quite match with her gentle question. Carefully spoken words of concern, touch a deep place reserved for that quite hope she thought was impossible to achieve, she now had with Lexa.

Clarke's lips parted, "I...I've..." then stopping to shake her head, unable to find the words to convey what she was feeling at this moment and simply answered, "You're not hurting me at all." A need to confess bubbled to the surface, "I've never been with an alpha before you."

~

This time Lexa smiled instead of humping like a green pup in her first rut when her mind went back to the ritual Clarke displayed the night before. Recognizing after barely a day, she would be embedded deep inside this omega once more and searched for a meaning to what she was feeling. It felt so right. Yet, would she be willing to go further and claim Clarke as her own? It was a fleeting thought until she looked into Clarke's face and couldn't imagine a day not waking and seeing the omega lying by her side.

Lexa closed her eyes when Clarke shifted and pulled out a few inches and pushed back slowly. Coating her cock with Clarke's generous offering of heat. Helpless to stop moaning at what covered her shaft and uttered, "Is all this for me, omega?"

Clarke wrapped her arms around Lexa's neck and pulled her down to her lips, lightly brushing over hers and hissed, "Yes."

Lexa smiled against Clarke's mouth and began to move. She rolled her taut abdomen and hips tight against her belly and open legs. Lexa gave Clarke her thickness and length, her offering, hoping she could fulfill the omega's lust brewing in her belly.

Lexa rocked into Clarke as she pulled her down into a searing kiss. Her mouth coaxed her tongue
to linger while their bodies joined below, and lips searched, possibly finding that elusive connection that they both craved. Heat, sweat, rushing between them in a tangle of arms and legs as they surged over the bed.

The driving force of the alpha that lives inside of Lexa sought out the timid omega around her, and she growled low in her throat and pumped faster.

Tight muscles coiled around her shaft as she drove over and over inside of Clarke. The omega whimpered under her thrusts, whispering her desires between her grunting gasps. Lexa desperately wanted to give everything to Clarke.

Lexa pulled Clarke's legs around her, lifting her hips and wrapped her arm around her back and thrust downward in an intense purposefully grind. Driving her shaft into Clarke, and recalled her hunger to be filled with all she could give. There was nothing more in this world she wanted to do but render all to the omega her desire.

~

Every stroke of Lexa's body cradled between her legs rocked Clarke to her core. But when her shaft bottomed out, Lexa gave a little more, causing her to grunt against the pressure building.

Clarke's mind and body focused on the alpha when thoughts of what it was like to fuck in abandon filled her mind. Would it be like this moment between them, if they lived in some apocalyptic end of the world scenario? To take, give, and share this divine connection with another soul for eternity.

But, this wasn't the end of the world, and both could release the guilt they both carried and find a way to move past and consider how destiny put them on the same path to discover one another.

Maybe she could think about this later. Right now, she had a hot, sweaty hard alpha fucking her. The focus was raw and primal on alpha's face as it held a look of bliss and something more. Clarke held onto her biceps and groaned as her breasts bounced between her thrust and felt Lexa's knot began to edge inside, helped by her slick coating both of them. It was so much more than last night. Their scent and sweat-soaked bodies were close to careening off the edge of bliss together.

~
Lexa growled at the thought that Clarke wasn't her omega as she drove into her and hadn't earned that place by her side. It caused her cock swell and to grow harder against the pressure around her, and the need to prove to Clarke, she was a desirable mate. Giving her width and breadth, grunting with every rolling thrust, when Clarke answered back as she wrapped her legs around her back, giving the angle she needed to sink far as she could go, but her full straining knot kept her from tying. Lexa snarled at being denied. Her knot held her just at the edge of Clarke's cunt when the thought course through her mind of binding her life to this woman.

Once the thought took root in Lexa's mind, of the possibility of Clarke becoming her mate, it surged up in her soul and sensed the change between them growing. It shook Lexa to her core, what this would mean. Instead of running away from the possibility of sharing a life with another. Lexa could join in this binding ritual with the omega.

But what if Clarke wasn't ready to settle down? Her question answered seconds later when a new scent grew around them, blinking at the meaning, when completely out of control, all her senses aligned with Clarke, detecting that moment where they passed together from just having sex to something more. A deeper connection under the layers of her doubts and she pulled back, lifting her body to hover over the omega, seeing in her eyes the same recognition. Clarke cupped her hand to her cheek and spoke her desire, "I only want you, Lexa."

Lexa faltered, "Are you sure?"

The anticipation of what felt like minutes was only a few thoughtful seconds later when Clarke nodded her head. It wasn't how Lexa pictured in her mind how she would mate much less who she would mate with. The alpha in her roared at being captured by the beautiful omega, in its last rite at excepting the gift laid before her — she released the doubt that she was undeserving and saw in Clarke's eyes her future.

Her heart pumped harder as she thrust deeper, trying to find the way to give everything to the omega, then Clarke began purring as she canted her hips upward, and her knot slipped into the omega causing Lexa to groaned around the pressure. Her eyes grew dark, seeing more clearly, smelling more profoundly, and it drew her down to Clarke's unmarked neck. Sniffing at her throat and found pooling on her skin, her sweet submission, and bared her teeth, sinking into the neck of her omega. A sharp pain to the side of her neck a mere seconds later and Clarke grew stiff and shook and came around her, and Lexa moaned as she followed with her and exploded into the omega.

~

Clarke saw the shift and smelled their scents changed between them as the dominant alpha rose above her. Sensing the moment when they crossed over the threshold together, that separated that
seed of friendship into a mating bond.

She couldn't run away anymore; she honestly couldn't bear to leave Lexa. Not when the alpha inside of her gave her length and thickness. She knew it with every fiber of her body. Lexa has already proved she was worthy as a mate and released her submissive scent in relief. Clarke shifted her legs wider to take all of what the alpha offered and cried out when Lexa's knot pushed past her entrance. The pain and pleasure wrapped around her body as it released them from their past, and she held still once more as Lexa leaned closer to her neck, sniffing until she found that perfect place and sunk her teeth into her flesh.

Clarke held her tears from falling as her eyes grew dark and sought the distinct place along the alpha's neck, running her nose over the flesh, sucking in the sex-scented skin, and opened her mouth, bearing her teeth and bit down. Clarke arched her body as the waves of her orgasm crested, sending her tumbling over and rocked against Lexa's body.

~

Lexa surged with every jerk of her hips. Clarke held her tight, almost immobile by the tight muscles around her. She was in a haze of her climax and released Clarke's neck. Kissing the reddened marked skin below her mouth that caused the omega to hiss. Lexa pulled back concerned, and this time she didn't see tears in Clarke's eyes only wonder. Then Clarke laughed, causing her to grunt when the omega's sex squeezed her cock once more and squeezing more come as her knot held tight against her walls.

Embarrassment tried to take purchase on Lexa's cheeks as they started to grow red. "What's this?" Clarke ran her hand over her face. Cupping her chin and pulled her down into another kiss.

Lexa smiled against Clarke's lips and lifted off of her, once more. "I would like to think it was the effort of winning your heart, Clarke."

"I think you won it at the moment you saved my life, Lexa."

Lexa shook her head. "I didn't think I would be worthy of love. At least not in this lifetime with everything..."

"Hush," Clarke purred, "I'm not, nearly done with you." The meaning clear that Clarke was just at the start of her heat. Lexa groaned and jerked into Clarke, pulling more laughter and delight from
The growing smile on Clarke's face mirrored hers as well.

~

The discomfort of Lexa's bladder drew her sleepy eyes open. Seeing only blond curls covering her vision with Clarke lightly draped over her body and one hand holding her breast. It was a perfect way to wake up, even with the light snores against her chest, sending chills down her arms and legs. Lexa moved the hair out of her eyes and gazed lazily toward the clock. Almost coming out of the bed when the time was nearing noon on what she hoped was only Sunday.

Lexa laid her head back down and pulled Clarke closer and ran her fingers lightly against her back until she reached the curve of her ass and rested her hand. She remembered again what Clarke had asked her the night after they found a way to start over. Still not sure what kind of pair they were. She tried to think of something witty and amusing to say, but everything sounded sickly sweet. But, now that they are mated, she had time to figure it out.

That elusive meaning that she supposed everybody sought in their lives, everyone wanted to belong to another. To have your soul held in gently guarded by the one who cared for you the most.

Lexa's protective streak emerged from where it had lingered most of her life, lost and alone in a dark place. It shook itself as it left its den and found her home standing shoulder to shoulder with her omega.

Lexa released a breath. The pain that regularly accompanied her mornings was gone.

Clarke mumbled in her sleep, and Lexa kissed her forehead and slipped out of bed, pulling on her robe and walked to the windowed doors to find the bright sun starting to melt the snow. With just the peaks of the rocks surrounding the driveway beginning to emerge from the downfall.

Lexa took care of her full bladder and headed downstairs with the thought of fixing something for her new mate. Wincing when her soften cock swung heavy and tender from the friction of pleasing her mate, still a welcome relief of the alternative.

Lexa filled the glass pot with water and poured it into the coffee maker and noticed both of their
cellphones lighting up with text messages and put both of them in her pockets with a thought that they could answer them later.

Lexa hummed while she pulled out their mugs from yesterday and stopped in place and shook her head. She hadn't felt this happy in what felt like forever. A lightness to her heart and felt the presence of Clarke in the other room. She couldn't hear her, but the lingering scent that covered her body a reminder her life changed overnight.

Lexa jumped when one of the phones began vibrating against her sensitive shaft. "Yeowch." Lexa pulled out the phones. "Hey, Anya," she said around a yawn.

"Why the fuck have you not answered my texts? I've...excuse me. We've been trying to get in touch with you since early this morning."

"I just got up. How's everybody doing? How's your hand?"

"My fingers are okay, just a little sore, thank you very much. The roads are almost cleared, and Clarke may want to check with Octavia about starting her shift later today."

"Clear enough to drive?"

"Hell, yeah. The snowplows cleared most of the roads overnight. Raven and I got home a few hours ago, and we'll be heading back to the bar to clean up later. We're expecting to see folks coming in after this storm. It looks like the worst of it passed overnight. The sun is out for now, But we're expecting light snow later on tonight. You must be sick of being stuck at home."

Not even a little bit, Lexa thought as she smirked.

Lexa wasn't sure if Clarke would be in any condition to work today. Understanding that omega's heats could last a couple of days and offered, "About Clarke, she might be too under the weather to come in today."

"Let me guess; you gave her food poisoning with your lousy cooking."
Lexa giggled, "I'll let that one pass since your quota of insults is low for me."

*My god, you almost sound human today. Clarke must have broken you out of your protective shell.*

Lexa wasn't willing nor able to say to Anya. Her heart was spilling over for the sides, in love with the omega. A grin did cover her face at just thinking about her.

Anya cleared her throat and said, *Earth to Lexa?*

"Oh, yeah, sorry. Listen, let me speak with Clarke and get back to you. By the way, we still have a lot of snow covering the driveway, that I haven't cleared away yet."

*Okay, tell Clarke to call her boss, ASAP.*

"I'll let Clarke know."

*Later asshole.*

"Whatever punk."

Lexa heard Clarke yawn as she came down the stairs wearing another one of her shirts and sweatpants. Managing to put her hair up in a cute bun and Lexa's sighed, "Hey, sleepyhead. Let me fix your coffee."

"What time is it? And let me know what?"

"It's Sunday afternoon. Anya just called and said Octavia needs to speak with you..." Her words cut off when Clarke wrapped her arms around her neck and drew her down into a heated kiss. Clarke pulled back and laid her head against Lexa's shoulder, clinging to her as Lexa tucked her closer.

"Did she say what she wanted?" Clarke didn't seem in any mood to talk to anyone except for her. Her heat was still present and would linger heavy in Clarke's gut for at least another day or so.
Lexa brushed a curl of blond hair around one ear. "Anya said to call Octavia. The roads are clear, and they were able to leave the bar, so I guess they're expecting everyone to get out and join the world."

"You mean that they want us to join them? Right now?"

"Yeah, but I did tell Anya you were under the weather. But, hell, I don't think we could still leave home. The snow hasn't melted enough around the cabin to even get to the road. So, it's a pretty safe bet we'll be stuck here at least until tomorrow."

"Stuck isn't a bad word." Clarke grinned up at her with that knowing look, Lexa was beginning to recognize.

"I like being stuck with you." It was a sappy thing to say, but Lexa meant all the way down to the soles of her feet.

~

Clarke laid her head against Lexa's shoulder, contemplating home and never considering that when they went to bed last night that the next morning she would be mated to a beautiful woman. Her heat in her gut was making her feel all kinds of emotions — one of home, another of belonging, and still one more of a family.

~

After brunch, consisting of pancakes and the remaining fruit, Clarke and Lexa were in front of the fire once more. She was on her hands and knees, pleading for Lexa to fuck her harder from behind.

Clarke felt alive, loved, and gave back to the alpha all she was and shifted her legs apart and submitted willingly to her mate. Her mate, the beautiful, kind-hearted, and trouble partner who wanted to protect her.

Lexa could have easily spent the day removing the snow and...and well, they hadn't thought about anything else. Clarke moaned when Lexa found that sweet spot and hit it over and over again in a
rhythm that sent chills through her body.

~

Lexa kept from tying as Clarke rested her lower body on the soft carpet and held her on to her hips and drove into her, and seeing her cock disappeared as she thrust inside. Lexa pulled halfway out and found her shaft dripping with Clarke's soaking heat.

It was intense and sensual, and nothing she had ever experienced before in her life. Lexa didn't care about anything, but what existed in this room, with the two of them together.

Lexa was close to releasing again but held back as she was learning Clarke's secrets and sensing what pleased her mate as she rubbed her cock over the sensitive patch covering her front wall. Lexa pulled back and edged the underside of her thick shaft over again, drawing cries and grunts when they found their flow together.

Lexa jogged her hips faster and sensed the moment as Clarke edged closer to her release and pushed with keen pressure at the instant when she stiffened and pulled Clarke's legs further apart and sunk her knot past her entrance. Clarke arched her back and lifted her hands off of the carpet as Lexa pulled her back to rest against her chest as she came.

Clarke drew her fingers to her clit and opened her lips as she pulled at her tiny shaft. Pushing her hand between her thighs to gather slick and soaked her clit, making it easier to slide against the sensitive flesh.

~

Clarke's clit vibrated against her fingers as she came around Lexa's knot a second time. Crying out for Lexa to fill her with her release and she soon followed, letting loose her orgasm and filled her belly with hot jets of come.

Clarke groaned, falling forward onto the soft carpet as Lexa collapsed against her back and moved to the side, so her weight would overwhelm her in her state. Leaving sweet kisses on the side of her face and to her new mating mark.

"Thank you for this," Clarke said softly. Lexa breathed heavy against her neck and nuzzled her
nose in her hair, murmuring, "I love you, Clarke."

Clarke's eyes pricked with tears and let them fall in relief and gathered Lexa's arms around her body and kissed her palms. "I didn't think..."

"Hush. It's okay."

"No, I need to say this, Lexa. I never thought I would ever find love, not like this. I..." Clarke's voice cracked and then continued, "I love you too."

"It was meant to be, Clarke."

Lexa reached for the blanket and covered them against the cooling room. The protective alpha kept watched until dreamy, peaceful rest settled over her, then wrapped her arms around her omega and drifted to sleep.
Lexa tossed Clarke her dark green beanie and stood behind her as she pulled it over her hair and gazed into the mirror next to the front door.

"That color looks great on you. It makes your eyes look almost green."

"Since when have you looked into my eyes in the past few days?" Clarke said as she gave her a playful hip bump.

Lexa wrapped her arms around her waist and rested her chin on her shoulder, watching her. "I'll have you know. I gaze into your beautiful blue eyes all the time, Ms. Griffin."

"It feels different," Clarke lightly remarked as she adjusted her now clean sweater and jeans she wore last Friday night.

"What's that?"

"Clothes." Clarke paused, then smiled, and turned around in her arms. "We've been mostly naked for days."

Lexa laughed as she dragged her to the garage. "Well, I can't very well shovel the snow in only my boots, now can I?"

~

Clarke watched Lexa from the garage as she cleared a path of the snow for her jeep. It came up to just about Lexa's knees and too thick to drive through as she worked her way to the main highway. She had cleared out roughly fifty feet with more twice that amount to remove.

Lexa insisted that she wear her heavy coat, beanie, and her warm gloves while she waited. Clarke was mildly annoyed at first, wanting to help out and get some fresh air but soon began to realize that Lexa has a protective streak, and since this was new to both of them, she wouldn't protest too much. But, had little experience with someone that cared for her, and treated her like she would
Clarke shifted in the chair, Lexa arranged for her and laughed when she came back with a blanket. But, put her foot down when she tried to set up a heater for her.

Clarke liked the attention but knew she would eventually have to ask Lexa in a way that wouldn't embarrass her, that she wouldn't break and was capable of doing chores. Now that they were mated, it didn't change the fact that she was used to hard work.

Clarke shifted in her chair and called out, "Are you sure I can't help?"

Lexa shouted over her shoulder, "I've got it."

"But the job would go much faster if I help."

"You're just coming down from your heat, babe."

"I swear I'll let you know if I get tired."

Lexa stiffened, then stretch out her back and walked to where she was sitting, tossing the shovel into the snowbank and pulled off her gloves as she came into the garage. She stood silently, but a little winded, next to Clarke and placed a hand on her shoulder and sipped her thermos of coffee.

"I'm only going to work at it another hour then take a break for lunch. Maybe with the sun coming out will melt the rest."

Clarke looked out at what remained of the snow covering the long driveway. "But, Lexa, I want to help."

"I know you do, but for today, let me take care of this. It's a lot harder than it looks."

Clarke wanted to object again, but the comfortable hand on her shoulder made her leaned into the warm touch instead and welcomed this new connection. Another thing Lexa was doing, almost
sure she was unaware, was her closeness. She found that Lexa could barely keep her out of her
sight or touch, now that they were mated.

Clarke felt that.

That, she mattered to Lexa.

She woke early this morning and found Lexa on the other side of the bed. One leg outside the
covers and an arm draped under her pillow. She watched in the stillness of the new day, the rise
and fall of her chest in slumber. Her lips were still plump from hours of use from the last few days.

Seeing her at her most vulnerable filled her heart to bursting. It was such an utterly compelling
sensation and could only guess; this is what it feels like to belong to another.

Clarke watched as the sheet covering Lexa's hips began to tent, making her roll over, grumbling,
tugging her closer and buried her face in her hair and mouthed her mating mark, setting off the
sparks between once more. Instead of canting her hips upward, she turned Lexa over and grasped
her cock lightly in her hand, slowing working her up as she sucked her hard. Lexa watched through
slitted eyes as her hands clutched the bedsheets, and her legs bracketed her, moaning in pleasure
when Clarke ran her tongue around the head of her dripping shaft then bobbed up and down on her
until she stiffened and climaxed in her mouth. It set off Clarke's orgasm so suddenly and all
without being touched. She was a little shocked at her body's reaction to the pleasure she gave
Lexa. Clarke was at the tail-end of her heat and didn't think it was possible to react so strongly and
could only attribute her orgasm to the growing love she felt for Lexa.

"I can't wait to show you around, Clarke. After the snow clears, and we have some time. There are
trails to some beautiful hidden places on Mount Trikru that are breathtaking."

"Hmm, I'd like that." Satisfied that at least Lexa was willing one day to go on a strenuous hike with
her. But, that was probably weeks away, and she's itching to do something now.

"Well, let me get at the rest." Lexa squeezed Clarke's shoulder and removed her coat, rolled up the
sleeves, and headed back to her task.

Clarke sucked in a frustrated breath, then rested her head on her fist and remembered the first time
she saw Lexa's bare arms and denim covered ass just days ago, and now they're too far away to
touch. Her mind began to wander and imagined Lexa at another time as she worked. It was seeing
her lean muscular frame outlined with the tall trees acting as the background against the brilliant white of the snow that set her mind off into a daydream.

*She saw Lexa as a sylvan warrior of the forest riding her dark steed. Her body built for agility and strength that carried within her chest a heart that beat true — her aim to unite the nations and bring peace to their world.*

*The warrior was gilded with leathers and fine metals, leading an army of soldiers. (Because yes, her stoic alpha would be a leader.) This Commander who took down foes left and right as she conquered the evilness in the world.*

*Then after coming to the end of her campaign and seeking the last remaining kingdom to join with her people, she would find Clarke. Take her as her mate in conquest after securing the young woman's nation in treaty and loyalty — a consensual gift for the battle-worn rugged warrior to feast.*

*Clarke, the Princess of her people, found the warrior humble, almost shy when she courted her, drawing Clarke to her quiet way and finally succumbing to her scent in their first kiss. That evening after she mounted the well-endowed alpha and rode Lexa to her release, filling her belly with her seed. Soon if they were lucky, there would be little ones..."

Clarke blinked out of her daydream and lifted her head. "Whoa, hold your horses," she said under her breath, "Where did that come from?" Well, they did take a pretty big chance over the last few days if her suppressant didn't work. Their lives were going to get interesting.

Her eyes drifted back to Lexa and admired her grunting energy as she flung another shovel of snow out of the way.

Yesterday after breakfast, they made love in front of the fire until they both could barely move. But, poor Lexa, during one of their more vigorous session, made an unusual sound, falter then continue to plow through her to completion. She was almost sure she must have pulled a muscle, but she never hinted as much.

It was in the afterglow of one of their orgasms, sweat, and the scent of sex held heavy in the air; the alpha's knot stayed firm inside her cunt, with only the occasional vibration of their connection rolling through them, Lexa professed her love for her.
It was unexpected but felt their bond to the depth of her soul.

Lexa's hand ran over her body, cupping and squeezing her breast as the other drifted to her face and pulled her back to kiss her. Lexa managed to turn her around and let her ride her once more. She wouldn't question where Lexa's strength came from as she lifted her from the floor and took them back upstairs.

Thinking about it again caused a throbbing to grow in her clit, and mind went hazy with the multiple orgasms they shared — every one of them, a cherished memory filling her mind. A loud commotion from between the tree-lined path shook the air.

"It looks like the cavalry is here." Lexa stepped out of the way as Anya cleared a path with her much larger SUV, fitted with a snowplow. Anya removed the remaining snow from the driveway and parked her vehicle, effectively reconnecting them with the rest of the town.

A sudden wave of exposure caused Clarke to wrap her scarf over her bandaged mating bite. Not quite ready to share with the world. Not yet.

Anya hopped down from her vehicle and clasp Lexa's forearm then grabbed her around her neck, tugging her around, until Lexa nearly pitched her into the snow. Watching as they pushed and shoved each other as they made their way back to where she was waiting.

"I can't believe this dolt has you out in the cold." Clarke bristled at the remark and kept from growling when Anya elbowed Lexa again. Lexa roughly pushed her back, and Anya barked, "Hey, hey easy on the hand."

"Can I see?" Clarke asked. Anya smirked as she looked towards Lexa and let Clarke examine her hand. Her pinky and ring finger were bound together with white tape to keep them straight. Clarke flipped it over to look at her palm. "Sensation is okay?"

"Oh, yeah. Raven accidentally grabbed my hand when we were fuc...." Anya stopped talking and quickly hid her blush. "Yes, I can feel just fine. It's just tender."

Clarke released her hand and chided, "It should heal okay if you keep from screwing around." That comment was meant for Lexa's peace of mind and to get Anya to back down from harassing her.
"Yeah, yeah. You sound just like Raven."

"And you listen to your mate?" Clarke lightly scolded.

"Yes, I listen, but we're not mated yet. I haven't decided if it's the right time for us yet. You know, starting a family."

Lexa adjusted her shirt, covering up the bandage that covered her mating mark. She sensed, like Clarke, she wasn't ready to share. It was a relief to know that they were on the same page.

"Can I get you some coffee?" Clarke asked.

"Sure. Oh, by the way. Have you talked to Octavia?"

Clarke darted a look to Lexa, who rolled her eyes as she put away her tools then back to Anya, answering stiffly. "Yes, she gave me the day off. I'll be back tomorrow." Clarke wasn't used to sharing her life with a stranger even though Anya was Lexa's close friend. She sensed what Lexa had been dealing with and found that Anya was a bit of a gossip, busybody.

They trailed behind her into the kitchen while she made them all a fresh cups of coffee and watched with interest from the corner of her eye as Anya made like she was at home. Opening the refrigerator and began to hunt.

"So what have you two been up to since Friday?"

They both spoke at once.

"Nothing..."

"Watching..."

Any pulled back and chuckled, "Which is it?"
Clarke turned away from Anya and let Lexa do the talking. She half-listened and bit her lower lip when Lexa stated they've been playing games all weekend and called over her shoulder, "Yeah, that Lexa, she's a really hard and stiff opponent."

Lexa chuckled giving Clarke a hidden wink quickly picking up the ruse, "Are you kidding, Clarke has moves that I've never seen before, this woman took my legs right out from under me."

"But the way you can hold out as long as you can. I have to say you're quite impressive."

Anya looked as though she wanted to asked a question and then shook her head when Lexa played off this scene to perfection when she yawned.

Clarke sweetly said, "Coffee's ready."

~

Lexa held onto Clarke's hand on the trip back into town to have lunch now that the roads were clear. The fallen snow now dirty with mud from traffic was still high as the jeep's roof with streams of melted snow running off the sides of the road, as the air warmed by the sun made it's way up in the sky. Lexa decided not to put the chains on and took it slow, driving on the main road.

"While you were getting ready, Anya said they dug your car out of the snow, and I called over to Jasper's garage to ask him to take care of the issues you told me about, he just needs your key so he can get to work."

"Oh?"

"I hope you don't mind if I cover the cost for everything. I thought since we're together, it would be okay. And I don't want to worry about you. I mean, when you go back to work at The Diner, and you're out on the road..."

"Lexa," Clarke drawled as she looked away when embarrassment fell heavy on her shoulders. Clarke tugged her hand. "Hey, it's okay. But, how about we communicate? Like yes, I still have a job I've responsible for, and I have rent to pay, et cetera. Maybe it'll give me a chance to focus on
something manageable until I decided what I should do with the rest of my life. But, honestly, I
don't want to wait on people forever. I didn't go to college to not use what I've learned."

Lexa looked through the windshield then quickly glance over to Clarke. "Next time, I'll ask. This
just so new to me and..."

Clarke squeezed her hand. "For you and me both. Will figure it out together."

A big rig in front of them slowed down the traffic to a crawl giving time for Lexa to contemplate
what she couldn't ask Clarke after Anya arrived. After they mated, it hadn't occurred to her what
would happen afterward. Would they live in separate homes to keep up the secrecy of just being
friends, or should she take the next step asked Clarke to move in with her?

Bravely tucked in the pocket of her coat was a key to the cabin, for Clarke, attached to a keychain
shaped like a howling wolf that she carved out of wood one lonely winter. (That season of the year,
she was alone again for long periods. There's just much television and games she could stand,
ever mind not paying attention to the news. So she picked up this hobby, until one nasty slip of
the knife and she put down the project until her thumb healed.)

She cursed herself for not planning this better, but when Anya showed up, no way did she want to
ask Clarke to move in front of her friend and suffer from endless tormenting. She did sense the
familiar quirk of Anya's lips, detecting something between them. But kept unusually quiet,
surprised she didn't bring it up when they were alone. Lexa snorted.

"Penny for your thoughts," Clarke asked.

"Oh, just Anya."

"What about Miss Nosypants."

Lexa smirked, "Oh, you have no idea. I know damn well, she's suspicious. I caught her sniffing
around in the living room while you were upstairs."

"Oh shit."
"Yeah, well, she deserves it."

"Do you mean what I think you mean?"

"Your scent is pretty strong, so I'm sure it affected her."

"But she didn't ask?"

"No. It's a mystery why she didn't. But, I'm almost certain Anya got on the phone with Raven, the moment she left." The vehicles began moving, and Lexa casually stated, "I know we haven't talked about the future, and I don't want to assume anything, like with your car, but would you like to move in with me?"

"Right now?"

Lexa shrugged her shoulders. "Why not?"

"I thought you might want to keep your friends guessing." But the happy look on Clarke's face was her answer along with the squeeze of her hand. "You surprise me."

"How so?" Pulling Clarke's hand until it rested on her thigh.

"How shy you were at first, and then you made me chase you around the pool table."

Lexa chuckled, "The look on your face was priceless."

"You're lucky I gave you the time and day after being hard to catch."

Lexa tugged Clarke closer. "I hope I can make up for my bad behavior."

Clarke kissed her cheek and leaned against her shoulder and playfully said, "I'll let you know later."
So my place first, then lunch?"

~

Lexa showed Clarke how to clear a path into her cabin, and she commented that she was right. It was hard. But both did manage to move enough snow to pull up close to the front door.

"Brrr. Damn, I forgot to leave the heat on. It must be forty degrees in here." The cloud of mist from her breath confirmed as much. "Almost everything I own is still in boxes, except for my clothes and shoes and kitchen stuff. So we can do it in one trip. I need to change into something else."

"Go ahead, and I'll start packing your kitchen."

"Can you wait? I have a system."

"I can do anything for you, babe" Lexa turned her around and patted her butt, aiming her towards the bedroom.

"Make yourself at home; it shouldn't take me but a minute to change."

Clarke kept the majority of boxes in one location. Mostly in front of the sofa and seemed to pick out of them. Not ready to fully commit to staying in Mount Trikru, Lexa guessed. One box was labeled *Pictures*, half-opened and nudged the cardboard flap apart with two fingers, and looking up at her was a cherub face, Clarke, no more than two years old.

Leaning on her tiny fists in a Christmas themed outfit, Lexa couldn't keep the grin from forming on her face. Recognizing Clarke by her dimpled chin, bright crystal blue eyes, and blond locks.

Lexa pulled out the framed photo to study and stated when Clarke returned to the room, "Damn, you were a cute kid."

"Feels like a million years ago."
Lexa returned the picture to the box. "Listen, I don't want to pressure you into moving in today. Maybe we should..." Clarke pressed her finger over her lips.

"Do you think you could live apart for just one day?"

Lexa lifted one shoulder. "We'll have to in a couple of months."

"Oh, shit." Clarke's eyes grew alarmed. "I knew that." Hesitating, then admitting as she looked like she was about to panic, "Why did I forget that? Damn Lexa, why is it such a shock to remember your leaving for the mountains soon?"

"It's not that soon. We have a few months."

"I guess we better make it count and come up with a plan. Because I don't think I could spend one night away from you." Lexa followed Clarke into the kitchen, watching her open all of the cupboards and started her system of packing. "Where do you stay, like in a motel or something?"

"Nah, it's nothing like that. The area is pretty rugged up there, and the company has a few cabins to stay in while we're working. We bunk two to a cabin, and I always stay with Anya. The place isn't fancy and only has a toilet and sink, no shower. But they have one nearby. Water isn't that warm. But the food is outstanding."

"Sounds peachy."

"I'm not trying to talk you out it coming up, just preparing you."

"Do any other mates or partners come up?"

"Umm...not really." Lexa looked away and hopefully added, "We do have a get together for the 4th of July, no fireworks, of course. We have a huge barbeque for the town folk and a few lumberjack games."

"Damn."
"I'm sorry, Clarke." She wasn't happy either being away from Clarke. "Will meet again?"

Clarke stopped and looked deep into Lexa's eyes as a memory tried to take root then it dissipated into thin air and chuckled, "You big goof."

Lexa smiled and knew this topic wouldn't be settled in one day, and put it off for now. "Okay, what do you want me to do?"

"Bring me the empty boxes from the closet."

~

Clarke waited in The Diner's parking for Lexa to jogged back after dropping off her car at Jasper's garage across the road and waving at Maya as she came out of the office.

"Clarke?" She turned to see a quickly approaching Raven and didn't have time to reply before she hugged her. "I'm so happy your feeling better. You should have let me know when I talked to you. I'm sure I could have instructed Lexa how to make a tea for your cold."

Clarke didn't correct Raven, and it certainly didn't sound like she knew she was mated. Wearing the black turtleneck sweater was Lexa's idea. She looked away, not able to meet Raven's eyes when she told a little white lie. "I feel a lot better, thanks. So you're getting things back to normal?"

Raven looped her arm under her elbow and led her upstairs to the restaurant. "It was touch a go at first trying to keep Anya settled. She's like a caged animal if she doesn't have space. And when Lincoln and Octavia came back with the other two, she had a fit and began drinking."

"And that's how she broke her fingers?"

"Oh, shit, no. Not at first. You know I love Anya to death. But it became, who's got the biggest knot contest after a Lincoln challenged her after her tenth win in pool, saying Anya must be cheating and when she tried to prove him wrong she ended up slipping and landed on the floor, messing around."
Clarke laughed. "How does that...never mind."

The familiar chimes greeted her when she pushed open the door. "Clarke!" Lincoln embraced her in a bear hug. "Hey, Octavia. Look who showed up today."

"Hey girl, I didn't think you'd be back until tomorrow."

"I wasn't sure either. Anya came by and helped Lexa clear the snow away so we could join the world again."

"Grab a booth. Everyone is starting to come out of hibernation, and I sure could use your help tomorrow."

"I promise I'll be here, Ms. Blake," Clarke said jokingly and with a salute.

"Knock it off, Griffin," Octavia said, smiling and offered, "Coffee?"

"Oh, hell no. I've had my fill of coffee for days. Just bring me a soda."

"You got it. Raven?"

"Water is fine. Thanks."

Clarke didn't need to read the menu, deciding on Lincoln's perfection he called the BLT and A; delicious thick-cut crispy bacon, lettuce, and tomato. Instead of mayo, creamy avocado. She took the menu anyway to study and keep from meeting Raven's inquiring eyes.

"So?"

"Hmm?" Clarke refused to look up from the menu.
"How was it?"

"How was what?"

"Staying with Lexa."

Clarke opened her mouth but didn't have time to answer before, said alpha traipsed into the restaurant, and their eyes met over Raven's head.

"She was the perfect host. Join us?" Clarke padded the seat next to her.

"Hey, stranger."

"Raven." Lexa sat wearily down and leaned back against the cushioned bench.

"Coffee, Lexa?" Octavia delivered their beverages and handed Lexa a menu.

Lexa waved her off and slid the coffee cup out of the way. "Nah, just give me what Clarke's having."

Lexa said it so flatly that Clarke almost half believed that the last few days together were just platonic.

Octavia motioned to Clarke. "Could you join me in back? There's a couple of new items I want you to check out."

"Sure thing."

Lexa grunted as she stood back up and let Clarke pass and followed Octavia, not to the kitchen, but her office and shut the door.
The usually quiet but gruff Octavia took her into a hug. "I'm so happy for you both."

Clarke was dumbstruck and slowly wrapped her arms around Octavia. "How did you know?"

"Lincoln. And in the usual way, by your scent. He almost had me back against the freezer after being around you. Your stuff is pretty potent. Lexa didn't stand a chance."

"Shoot, is it still that obvious?"

"Maybe not to a beta. But, I'm kinda getting something off you." Octavia stepped back. "How is your bite healing?" Clarke pulled down the collar of her turtleneck and lifted one edge of her bandage. Octavia took a closer look and said, "It's healing perfect. Keep it clean. It looks great on you."

Clarke felt a sense of pride yet replied, "Please don't say anything."

"Not my place. But everybody will soon find out."

"Sorry about not coming to work sooner. We really were snowed in."

"No problem, we didn't have any customers anyway. But, that'll soon pick up. Are you planning on quitting, or can you stay on with us?"

"Oh no, I plan on working for you. After giving me a job and a place to stay, I wouldn't leave you hanging at least for a while. It's all so new to both of us."

Octavia smiled and held her hands. "That's a relief because I was thinking of giving you more hours."

Clarke smiled but wasn't looking forward to more time away from Lexa before she headed back up the mountain.
"Thanks. We haven't thought through what our plans will be, and I appreciate everything you've done for me. Of course, you know I'm moving in with Lexa. I just need to go back and clean up the cabin and give your keys back."

"Great, I think I already have someone that could use a place. Will make everything else work out, deal?"

"You got it."

~

Lexa could feel Raven's eyes boring into her as she studied the menu. Raven was intelligent and too bright to be a bartender. They once spent a spring evening together, right before she headed up to mountains and before Anya and Raven were a couple.

(All they did was kiss until Raven pushed her away. The girl was flustered and not ready to hook up with anyone her right after a bad break up from Bellamy. Lexa didn't push her and was grateful later, finding out they made better friends than lovers when her interest fell on a better match with Anya who just became single.)

She pictured Raven as a detective wearing a crisp business suit, hair up? No down. Definitely down. Having a gun tucked into her holster attached to her hip out of sight and grilling her for the theft of Clarke's heart. She was the suspect about to get interrogated from the best, knowing she didn't stand a chance. (They had a Plan A in place, to play it like they just met. Pretty much like strangers from Friday night. Lexa rolled her eyes and swore she'd try her best when she put the last box in her jeep.)

Raven cleared her throat.

Here it comes.

"So, you and..."

"There you are." Anya pushed passed Bellamy and plopped next to Raven, laying a kiss on Raven, effectively shutting her mouth and cutting off her question. Lexa ignored both of them. As long as their lips were occupied, it gave time for Clarke to return, and they could both face them together.
One versus two didn't seem fair. Anya pulled back and ran her fingertips through Raven's hair. "I thought you'd be next door."

"No...I saw...umm...what's her name...?"

"Clarke," Lexa helpfully supplied.

"Yes, of course, I saw Clarke and thought we could have lunch together. Get caught up." Raven seemed a bit flustered with the overly affectionate Anya. Lexa smiled behind her menu, knowing Anya must be under the effect of Clarke's scent, and maybe, just maybe this might work out after all. They'd be too into each other to worry about them. Raven was definitely sitting closer to Anya and saw her arm move to between Anya's legs hidden under the tabletop.

"You guys need a room?"

Anya narrowed her eyes at her. "Give us a break. We didn't have the luxury of sleeping in our beds like the two of you. Where is Clarke, by the way?"

"I'm here." Lexa looked up, surprise again that Clarke could so easily sneak up on her and politely stood up and let her slide in next to the window. "I should have taken your orders. It looks like they're going to get slammed, after all."

"Do you want to get out, Clarke?" Lexa asked.

"Let me eat lunch. Then I'll give Octavia a hand."

"No you won't, Griffin. I can handle this bunch. What'll you guys have?" Octavia asked.

~

Clarke and Lexa sipped on their sodas, getting an appraising look from the two of them and was about to speak when Anya leaned over and whispered in Raven's ear. Raven turned to look at her and nodded her head.
Raven smiled sweetly, gazing back at the both of them and said, "So, you guys look rested. Not much to do stuck up in the mountains, hmm?"

Anya started, "Oh, no, Raven. They played games all weekend. In between Clarke sick. Which you said she sounded fine to you every day you spoke."

"True, she did sound healthy. And you know I've got a keen sense of hearing."

"That you do," Anya acknowledged with a righteous nod.

"So spill it, you two."

Plan B. Lexa slipped her hand into Clarke's, then rested their joined hands on the table.

"We're going steady."

"Shut up. Congratulations, Pal." Anya nudged Raven in the arm. "They make a cute couple, right babe?"

Raven folded her arms over the table and leaned in to study them. "Yeah, they're a cute pair, alright. Almost identical in the way they're evading the complete truth."

"What complete truth is that Raven?" Clarke responded as she chewed on the end of her straw.

Raven hesitated, and Lexa watched as she tried to put two and two together and was coming up short when Octavia arrived with the food.

Clarke immediately sat up. "Oh, yum. Tell Lincoln I've been dying for this sandwich all weekend."

"Will do. You guys need anything else?" Grunts and okay signs were her answer as everyone plowed into their meal.
"You were right," Lexa said around a mouthful of sandwich.

"Told'ja," Clarke said, making yummy sounds.

After a respectfully amount of time to eat, the lull in the conversation moved from how good the meal was, into the dangerous territory of explaining their long weekend together. Her two best friends. Did they have a right to know? Maybe keeping it a secret, slighted Clarke's feelings. Still, it was all so new to both of them. It's not like they just hooked up like any other two people trapped in a storm. They're mated.

A realization grew inside of Lexa of how proud and protective of Clarke she was. She wanted people to know that they are a couple and keep Clarke from unwanted attention from the likes of other alphas like Quint. But, it was up to Clarke if they would share.

It was with one look at Clarke and the wink she gave her when Lexa leaned over and placed a kiss on Clarke's cheek. "Yes. There is something more between Clarke and me."

"I knew it," Anya said proudly. "Didn't I say that, Raven?"

"It's so comforting that we are such great interest to the rest of the world. Right, Lexa?"

"Hmm," Lexa said after she popped one last fry in her mouth. "You should write a book."

"Don't give me ideas, babe."

"Okay, we get it, guys," Raven admitted. "It's just..."

"Hush," Anya said, taking the big clue from the both of them that was all they were going to say and changed the subject. "Indra is stopping by later; she had some news for the both of us."
The Blue Ox's curtains were open, giving light to the usually darken bar. Clarke was sitting alone with Raven, while a few other lumberjacks were huddled over a table near the back wall with Lexa and Anya talking shop and waiting for their boss to arrive.

It was quite unusual to receive a text from their employer in their downtime from Anya's explanation. Indra Forrester's family were the founders of this mountain town. You could see her family's name on several buildings and signs. Clarke expected to see a towering alpha woman when she arrived.

"You don't want anything stronger than a soda?" Raven asked.

"No. I like how I'm feeling at this moment. I don't want to ruin it with liquor."

"Wow, that's a different reaction."

"How so?"

"Just thought you'd want to celebrate. When Octavia and Lincoln mated..." Raven stopped speaking when the door opened, and in walked a striking black woman with fire in her eyes swept the room. She was elegant in her winter attire and carried her frame with authority. She nodded in their direction as the group of lumberjacks waiting for her stood.

"Wow," Clarke uttered.

"I know. You ought to see her gorgeous wife and their three kids."

"I'm sure we will in time." Clarke turned back to face Raven. "Okay, so what's Octavia and Lincoln's story?"

"Oh yeah. The story goes like this; Lincoln has lived here all his life, and when Bellemy arrived, they became best friends. Octavia didn't come until later. Bell worked for a time at The Diner until the pull of the mountains took him north. He found out the those two hooked up pretty much that first week Octavia got here, and the big bad alpha came stomping back to town and picked a fight with his best friend. Something about crossing a line, anyway they fought, got arrested, and spent the night in jail. They came out with an understanding, and the charges were dropped. Then we had a party."
"That doesn't sound so bad."

"Are you kidding? In this small town, when someone changes the color of the hair, the news goes flying."

"So, Lexa and I?"

"Everybody made bets when you went home with her. You'd hook up." Raven wiped down the bar and stood in front of Clarke. "Honestly, Clarke, I didn't give half a thought, because of how reserved Lexa is until Snoopy Drawers over there called me and said she thinks you guys, umm..."

"Fucked?"

"Yeah, that." Raven blushed. "Shit, you guys really did it?"

"Yes, we really did." Clarke pulled down her collar and showed Raven her mating bite.

Raven fanned herself, "Holy shit, this is even better. I'm sorry, but I just live for this stuff, and I'm kind of jealous. Do you know I've dated Anya for the past two years, and she still won't commit? You're one lucky girl, Clarke. So Lexa must have confided in you all of her secrets?" Raven hinted as she wagged her eyebrows.

Clarke didn't answer; she just locked her mouth shut with an invisible key and tucked it between her breast.

"Oh damn, not the two of you now?"

"Sorry, but my priority is Lexa. I can let you know; I'm moving in with her. My stuff is in her jeep as we speak."

"I thought you might. But you don't think it's too soon?"
"I love her, Raven. So no, I don't."

"I do have to admit you guys are going to make some cute kids."

"Maybe. One day. We're not there yet."

They both turned when they heard laughter and saw claps on backs from the mingling lumberjacks filling the air as one by one shook Indra's hand. Lexa and Anya were the last that remained and walked their boss to where she was sitting. Clarke turned around on the stool to meet her.

Lexa made the introductions, "Indra Forrester, I'd like to meet my mate, Clarke Griffin."

Indra didn't bat an eye and extended her hand. "Welcome to the family, Clarke."

Her voice was like velvet, and Clarke could feel her alpha pull. "Nice to meet you." Clarke leaned against Lexa when she looped an arm around her waist. "So big plans for the future?"

Indra smiled. "I hope so." She turned to the other two alphas. "Call me later let me know what you both decided."

"You got it, boss," Anya answered.

Anya plopped next to Clarke and shook her head. "Wow."

Lexa joined her on the other side of Clarke. "I know. It's a lot to think about."

Raven set them both up with their usual drinks. "What's a lot to think about?"

Lexa motion to Anya to explain as she sipped her whiskey. "Indra wants both of us to learn how to scuba dive."
"Whatever for?" Clarke asked.

Lexa picked up her whiskey and twirled the liquor around in a circle in the glass. "There's a lake nearby that's fed higher up by the mountain runoff, and in the olden days, it used to be how they brought down the logs out of the forest. But, there were times the logs were too heavy and waterlogged and sunk to the bottom of the lake. Indra estimates there are tons and tons of square footage of prime old wood that the value really can't be measured. She wants us to direct the salvage this summer."

"It's dangerous as hell, but the pay is more than double what we're making," Anya said.

Clarke shuddered, causing Lexa to reach for her hand. "I know it sounds risky. That's why we're planning now and decide if we're going to do this. We don't even know where to begin? Maybe we could study how others have done this job before. The good thing is it's only a few miles up the road from our place. One of the pluses we both could be home every night. Well, almost every night. That's if Indra decides to start this year."

Anya continued, "Another big plus it will make the lake safer maybe brings some recreation up to this spot. Indra has some big plans for the future for our sleepy town."

Clarke leaned over to Lexa. "You're not doing this for me, are you?"

"What do you mean?"

"What we talk about before. I don't want to get hurt, just to be with me every night."

"Don't worry. Nobody is stepping one foot into the water until we've got this mapped out. Indra is going to hire a team to film underwater to get an idea of this massive undertaking."

Both Raven and Clarke shared concerned looks, as the two alphas began discussing tactics.

~

Clarke eyed the clock on the wall behind Raven. It was a quarter to five, and the sun had almost
set. She was tired, grumpy, and wanted to go home. Hinting as much to Lexa only in passing, but
didn't have a heart to completely pull her away from her friends as they started making plans for
the future. What little she did hear from her mate was the excitement in her voice. It sounded to
Clarke that Lexa had made up her mind. Worry, of course, took root in her brain about the dangers
hidden beneath the depths of the cold water of a lake.

Raven must have sensed her frustration in her smile, but before she could call over to Lexa to take
her woman home, the front door pushed open.

"Damn, I haven't seen her since..."

"Who?" Clarke turned and saw a woman enter the bar. A strikingly pretty, dark-haired slim
woman, dressed in comfortable mountain ware. Not the typical bar crawler from what she could
tell.

Raven quickly said, "Shit. Listen, Clarke, don't get mad."

Clarke shook her head slightly confused and watched almost in a trance with the woman's eyes
landed on Lexa's back and smiled and walked to just behind her and leaned over and whispered
into her ear, "Hey Romeo."

It was a split-second later when Lexa jumped off the stool, almost sending her drink flying towards
Raven and falling on her butt.

Clarke smirked. Good reaction, babe.

Lexa uttered a quiet, "Fuck." Covering her eyes with her hand and clutching her side with the other.

Lexa didn't get up at first and lifted her hand, and looked towards Clarke and covered her eyes
again. Anya smirked and tapped her in the side, lending her a hand and pulled her off the ground.
"You didn't break any fingers, did you?" Anya wiggled her bandage fingers in her face, which Lexa
promptly batted away.

"No."
The newcomer chuckled, "Hey, lover."

Clarke lifted one eyebrow and almost came off her stool but was held in place by Raven's swift hand in the collar of her coat, keeping her in place.

Both Anya and Lexa looked into their direction with Raven hinting with a head tilted at Clarke.

Lexa answered, "Chloe," and dusted off her backside.

Raven released Clarke when she stopped tugging and rubbed her shoulders and whispered, "Let Lexa handle this."

The woman had the nerve to smile. "You look good enough to eat. Are you busy?"

"No, I'm not busy."

Clarke gave Raven a pleading look.

"Hold, Clarke," Raven implored.

"I'm not on the menu."

The woman could barely take her eyes off of Lexa until she finally noticed Clarke. "Who is she?"

Clarke could feel her anger rise until Lexa's hand in the small of her back reminded her of their bond.

"My mate, Clarke. Clarke, this is Chloe."

Clarke nodded in her direction instead of speak, afraid she'd lash out at the girl who couldn't have possibly known that Lexa is mated.
"I guess I owe you an apology."

"You couldn't have known," Clarke said.

"True." Chloe leaned over and whispered into Clarke's ear, "I'm jealous. You're one lucky lady."

"Thanks."

Her comments held a lot of weight. Hinting to Clarke of an intimate relationship with Lexa that she once shared. Chloe shook her head, and then her eyes fell on Anya, who looked like a deer in the highlights as she reached across the bar blindly for Raven's hand. Chloe smirked and shook off the rejection and spotted another alpha sitting by himself at the end of the bar.

"I'm sure there's an interesting story that goes with her." Clarke nudged Lexa in the side.

"Ah, maybe later," Lexa said then checked an incoming text. "I call you later, Anya. You ready to go, Clarke?"

"I've been ready."

"Ooo, first fight," Anya kidded and received a bar towel in the face.

Clarke just rolled her eyes at her and tapped on the bartop. "I'll see you tomorrow, Raven."

~

Lexa drove them across the street to Jasper's garage and parked. "Let me take care of the bill, and we can go home. Go check out your car, babe."

"I just know I'm going owe you a ton of money."
"Don't worry about it."

Clarke smiled but wasn't used to having someone pay her way and walked to the garage and watched as Jasper wiped down a windshield.

"Hey, Miss Griffin. I've got'er all fixed up with new tires, brakes, and changed the oil. Just let me back it off the ramp, and you can be on your way."

Clarke was in shock and realizing now why they hung out at the bar so long. It was to give time for Jasper to complete the work. Lexa must spend a cool grand on her piece of shit car. Clarke stepped back as he pulled the car out of his garage. Noticing he even washed the damn thing.

"Key is in the ignition."

"Thanks, it looks great."

"It's a pretty nice car; if you're interested in selling, just give me a call. I have a buddy that might be interested."

"I think I'll hold on to it for now."

Lexa met Clarke at her car, and she couldn't help but pulled her into a hug then kiss her in front of the whole town. Well, everyone that was still at the restaurant. "Thank you for all of this."

"What's money for if you can't put it to good use."

"I plan on paying you back."

"Give me a second." Lexa smiled, then reached into her pocket and got into the car and pulled out the keys, and quickly fixing the keychain with the cabin's key to her set. "Sorry, I didn't have any wrapping paper. Let just say it's a late Christmas present."
"You didn't have to..." Clarke's eyes fell onto the keys, and the tiny carved wolf stained black and polished to a high gloss. "I love it. Did you make this?"

She didn't give Lexa a chance to answer and drew her into another kiss and hug and heard the distinct sound of a strained groan and pulled back.

"That's the third time today, Lexa I've heard you groan. How long have you been in pain?"

Lexa looked down at her feet and let her hair cover her face. "Since last night."

Clarke gave her a suffering look and reached for her hand. "Lexa. Have you taken anything?"

"Not yet. I thought moving around would help."

"So besides taking care of me over the past few days and shoveling snow, you've got to be exhausted. How about when we get home, you just rest, and I'll get my boxes out of your car, then afterward I give you a massage? Lexa shut her eyes and leaned into Clarke. "I'll take that as a yes."

~

"That's the last box," Clarke said, coming through the mudroom and shutting the door with her hip. It was quiet, too quiet, and gazed across the room to where Lexa was stretch out over the sofa. One arm draped over the back of the pillow completely wiped out and went silent.

There was no rush to unpack her boxes, but what Clarke was missing was her laptop and dug through the labeled box it was in, pulling it out and powered it up. Lexa had already given her the password to the wifi and plugged into the computer after it came online.

Over the past few days, besides talking to her new friends in this small town, she avoided any news or emails. Nobody from her previous life knew where she had gone, not even her mother, and dreaded what she might say.

The inbox was filled and went through the list of spammed items that weren't caught by the filter, and what remained was one message from her mother and half dozen emails from a couple of
people, they were laid off with her in that fateful November last year.

She hated to open up their mail and finding more disappointment waiting for her. Clarke ran her finger over the touchpad and landed on the first email from Mom sent the last Thursday.

Clarke

*I know I should have called you back after we had the blow-up after you lost another job. Work got in the way again, and I finally have some time for you.*

Shit. Clarke whispered as she slammed her eyes shut and took a deep breath. Counting to ten and opening her eyes and focused on getting through her email with her dignity intact.

*I shouldn't have said what I did the last time we talked. It was unfair and not your fault. I do understand the field you went in was your choice. I won't blame you for not wanting to follow in my footsteps. My job sometimes sucks, as you well know. But, if you'd like to give me a call, I could maybe set you up as our reception. Margo is leaving on maternity leave, and I could offer you a six-month position. Give you time to figure out what you want to do with the rest of your life.*

*I do miss you, honey.*

*Please call, and this time leave a message. I promise I will return your call ASAP.*

xo

*Mom*

It wasn't what Clarke was expecting from her mother, the perfectionist. The usual comments would be of Clarke's lack of drive. But this. It was almost motherly. Almost.

Clarke sniffed the air and looked around. Lexa must have taken a hit of the herb, then crashed. Good idea. Maybe she should join her and help her come up with a response.

She crept to the coffee table to retrieve the ashtray, but not before stopping and watching Lexa
resting. It ached to look at her in pain, sensing from her subdued scent. All she wanted to do was curl next to her and fall asleep in her arms.

Later, take care of Mom's email first, then Lexa.

Clarke returned to the kitchen and took a long drag off of the joint. Her eyes went narrow and took another hit. Holding her breath for a few seconds, then slowly releasing away from Lexa.

Clarke straightened her back and cracked her fingers and waited for the words to come flowing out. She closed her eyes and found there was nothing at the moment she wanted to explain to her mother, not of moving to a new town. And certainly not mating or what she had done in the previous forty-eight hours.

Clarke decided just to let her thoughts spill out and composed a message she had no intention of sending. Like her private notes that were for her eyes only. Now the words flowed out of her fingers all of her frustration of being her daughter. How she tried to do the right thing, and at every turn, something would come along and ruin her plans. Telling her mother, that her intentions were sound, it's just that the world will always be controlled by greedy people and that no one is immune. That she got caught up in the whirlwind and had to leave everyone she knew, including her flesh and blood.

*I needed space, Mom.*

With that pent-up frustration, she carried eased a bit that and the herb was mellowing her mind, Clarke found her thoughts wandering to where Lexa was resting on the sofa, and the things she could never tell her mother about the love she feels for her. It felt too deep, too personal to share. How in a few days her life took on a new meaning, a future she never even considered, now at her fingers tips. She also couldn't help but boast about Lexa's stamina in bed. Lexa was that one thing that was missing her life, and she found her in this small mountain town merely by chance.

~

Lexa moved and then groaned pitifully, "Oww."

Clarke looked up from the computer and closed it down. "Let's get you upstairs. Lexa tried to move, but her back was tight, and it ached to sit up."
Clarke helped her up, and she managed to walk up the stairs unaided. "I'm going to take a hot shower first if you could..."

"Let me get your clothes off, so you don't have to bend over."

Lexa was quickly stripped of her clothes and boots. Smirking through the pain as Clarke tried to avoid looking at her unextended. Probably a first since they first met.

"Looks different, huh?"

"You do look, hot babe. You're still you," and kissed her belly as she stood up.

Clarke came up beside her and wrapped her arms around her naked body. She took care not to squeeze her sore muscles along her back. Landing on the floor of the bar didn't help either and was sure there would be a bruise rising on her left butt cheek. She became aware of Clarke's fingers running through her short dark curls and reaching underneath to cup her.

"Hmm, soft," Clarke murmured in her ear. Lexa did feel her clit twitched, but with the pain in her back, she didn't extend. Clarke released her and leaned back. "I'll have everything ready for you when you get out. Let me know if you need anything."

Lexa blinked slowly. She was amazed at what she was seeing and feeling — and having a hard time processing this precious person in her life. Lexa kissed her softly on her cheek. "Thank you for coming into my life, Clarke." She kissed her once more, running the backs of her fingers over the tears that started to fall. Then left Clarke standing in the middle of their bedroom.
Chapter 10

So I guess this means your married now.

The hot steamy water flowed in rivulets down Lexa's back. It helped with the pain, though it couldn't stop the high from the last few days from washing off of her and down the drain. The pounding of the water almost numbed the ache, yet the words kept rattling around in her head, trying to take root. Anya said them in jest, but it was how she said it.

Like she was neutered.

It should have meant little, even with the constant ribbing, and after all the time spent with Anya, she thought it managed. But nope, just like an annoying song that keeps playing in your head over and over, Anya succeeded in wedging it under her skin.

She let the comment roll off her back at the time, basically ignoring her continued commentary about the possibility of not coming out as much. Anya hinted to a complete and utterly domesticated life awaiting her.

Lexa responded by downing her whiskey and ordered another and kept her comments to herself. But those words hung like a big neon sign blinking brighter and brighter until she thought she'd go nuts.

It irritated Lexa that the assumption behind Anya's statement could hold any weight. Knowing along with this comment, were other questions waiting in the wings to torment her judgment over mating with Clarke having just met the girl the day earlier.

Lexa tensed up and groaned, resting her forehead on the tile of the shower. Her body was now one ball of anxiety. Exposed is what she felt. The life she had kept so carefully hidden was threatening to come out of the shadows.

The sudden blast of cooled air poured into the bathroom and turned to see a Clarke shaped person through the frosted glass.

"You need any help?" Lexa called out.
"No, sweetie. I'm just unpacking a few things for now. Just let me know where I can put my stuff later." And she was gone again.

Clarke's stuff. Lexa could help the smile that stretched over her lips.

Lexa sighed as her tense back started to unwind. Screw Anya. She liked Clarke needed a place to put her things.

But now the blinking neon light in the back of her mind was of flowers, cake, and a ring.

~

Thank you for coming into my life, Clarke.

Sweetness and light and all that is pure in the world wrapped around Clarke like a comfy blanket. She was home and wiped the remaining tears away.

"Hell yeah, I'm home, and I need to unpack this time."

Clarke hesitated when she first landed in Mount Trikru. No need to set down roots when this was just a way station on the way to probably nowhere.

Clarke felt charged and headed back downstairs with the meaning to unpack her clothes when she heard the shower go on and reminding her of the necessity to get ready for Lexa.

She hauled her suitcases upstairs and hunted in her bathroom kit and found the bottle of what she called special sauce. It was a mixture of lightly scented essential oil with capsaicin and her most potent pain meds.

She passed her old life stacked in boxes near the front door, having no intention of dealing with them tonight. There wasn't much but books, journals, some old CDs, and other assorted papers and odds and ends — not much to show for her life.
"Knock it off." Clarke scolded herself and retrieved a glass of water for the pills.

The bed was a pile of rumpled bedding and whatever dried fluids they spilled from the last few days. Clarke quickly stripped and remade the bed with the clean sheets she found in the laundry basket resting just outside of the open closet.

A lot of things were waiting to be returned to their proper places. Signs of her coming into Lexa's carefully ordered life were everywhere and started picking up empty cups, plates, and clothes tossed about the room. She lit the candles and turned on some music.

Clarke stripped out of her clothes and rummaged through another suitcase and found a pair of panda PJs and something to wear to work tomorrow.

Damn.

Work.

Now that she's mated, she shuddered at the thought of being around anyone that wasn't named Lexa. After her heats, her usual attitude would be grumpy, quiet, and hungry as hell. This time it would be the clanging of dishes, smells of foods, and loud customers who wanted to be entertained with her quick wit. All those hungry truckers and lumberjacks, needing her assistance. She always succeeded in keeping things manageable because of the other starving customers wanting to place their orders, and with her ever-present hot pot of coffee in her hand, keep the topic flowing.

If that didn't work, she did have a welcomed advantage and planned on wearing her neck bare for all to see, she's mated to the hottest dreamiest alpha in town.

Secretly she enjoyed the crestfallen face of Lexa's paramour, Chloé, with the cute haircut. No, not paramour. Probably more like a one-night stand. Of course, her curiosity got the best of her and wondered if there was more to their relationship. Were there others like this girl Lexa bedded since she'd lived here? Lexa's reaction was her tell when she was so easily startled by the girl. Still, that could be something else altogether. Clarke didn't need to guess, if there was a Chloé, there were probably others she had yet to meet.

Clarke placed her hands on her hips, eyeing the room now ready for her girl's first massage, but something was missing. "Ah, I need a towel." Clarke quickly ducked into the bathroom to retrieve
Her warrior was soon to be returning from another battle in the Outlands to the south. A need to put down a group of thirty or more furious combatants bred for bloody violence. Marauders, that her scouts finally tracked down. These fighters had yet to face Alexandra of the Woods. They were either captured or slain on the field of battle.

The brisk morning found Clarke pacing the oddly lit hallways. Sun at one window then pitch black along the long corridor until it broke free again. It was the high-call now beginning to fill the air, and Clarke turned and hurried back to their quarters.

Alexandra held herself tall in her saddle, riding in the front of her victorious warriors, raising their swords in the air and cheering for their success. The Princess watched from the balcony of their chambers and could see with one look, the bone-weary, aching conquerer, but when Clarke’s eyes found hers across the open courtyard, the tightening around her heart released. The pent-up anxiety, now flitting away like so many leaves on a fall morning.

Clarke had kept secret. She had yet to tell her beloved alpha before she left, cupping the small swell growing in her belly. Tonight her joyous secret would be revealed to her mate.

"Ooo. Right there," Lexa moaned into her pillow.

Clarke blinked out of the daydream as she straddled Lexa’s backside and worked at the tight muscles along her spine that elicited that tired response.

"I've got to take better care of you." Clarke kneaded the area at the base of her spine with her thumbs and felt the knot untie with a crack causing another groan to let loose from Lexa.

Lexa went quiet for a moment as Clarke ran her hands along her back to her neck and backed down again, and Lexa uttered, "I'm going to miss you tomorrow."

Clarke stopped for a moment, then bent over and placed a kiss along the edge of one ear. "I'm not looking forward to it either. But, I can't play hooky another day. Octavia would probably fire me, and I'd mess up our brand new friendship."
"I know," Lexa drawled.

A few more seconds passed, and Clarke wondered out loud, "Maybe I could get out early or something."

Lexa whispered, "Maybe you could find a permanent replacement."

Clarke sat back and rubbed her nose with the back of her wrist. "I could, huh? And spend all my time with you?"

"Would that be so bad?" Lexa buried her face further into the pillow.

"You know I would, in a heartbeat, and as I said, I don't want to..."

Lexa cut her off, "What could you do instead?"

Clarke moved off of Lexa, wiping her hands with a towel and laid beside her, pulling the covers over Lexa's back.

"I'm not sure what skill I have in a small town like Mount Trikru. I'm used to working in offices; managing people. I'm pretty sure you don't have those around these parts."

"No. Not really." The disappointment, evident in Lexa's voice.

Clarke pushed a curl of hair around Lexa's ear. "This is what it's like, I'm afraid."

"Hmm?"

"Being responsible adults."
Lexa grinned, then made a pout. "I don't wanna."

Clarke shifted closer, needed to breathe the same air as her playful pup, and ran fingers through her hair at the nape of Lexa's neck, taking time to memorize the angle of her jaw and full lips and green eyes watching her.

"I don't even know how old you are."

Lexa blinked as she must have realized with a jolt that truth. "I'm twenty-eight."

Clarke blushed for no reason. "I just turned twenty-six."

"Just a new babe."

"Hardly. But I do see your point."

"What's that?"

"We know very little about each other."

"True. It does take time. Now we can enjoy learning new things about each other. Like what's your favorite flower?"

"I don't strictly have a favorite," Clarke mused as a dozen different kind tried to find space in her head and giving up.

"Okay. How about metals like gold or silver?"

"Hmm, I usually don't have a preference either. It depends on what I'm wearing. But in a pinch, I'd say silver." Lexa went quiet and gave Clarke time and the courage to nudge a little information out of Lexa. "So Chloé is cute. Did you date or what?"
"I wouldn't call it dating."

"Ah, so you just hooked up?"

"At her place down the hill, and yeah, it was just the one time." Pausing, then looking directly into Clarke's eyes. "Of course, I used protection. You were the exception."

That made Clarke warm inside. "Are there others?"

"A few." Lexa ran her fingers over Clarke's back. "And just so you hear this from me first. I kiss Raven once and before she hooked up with Anya, and it didn't go any further."

"Wow."

Clarke could visibly see Lexa opening up. Wrapping her arms around her pillow as she continued, "It happened the first year I got here. Raven was dating Bellamy at the time and broke up when she caught him with another girl that he swears it was his cousin. She wasn't, and of course, it was a deal-breaker for Raven. We talked, or should I say, Raven talked it all out over a pitcher of pale ale, and one thing led to another, and I kissed her."

"And?"

"And that was it. Raven stopped before anything happened. I was pretty grateful she did. I like Raven as a friend, but she wouldn't have been the first person I would have wanted to open up too. Besides, Anya and Raven make a better pair."

"At least you guys got it out of your systems. It's funny, though. Raven never brought it up."

"Why should she? It was all of fifteen seconds."

Relieved, Clarke got up to wash her hands and get ready for bed, turning and saying, "Thanks for telling me, Romeo."
Lexa tossed a pillow at Clarke's backside, missing by a mile.


Five o'clock came early once more, and all Lexa wants to do is keep her sweet, warm omega in bed with her the rest of the morning, as she craved every day the last few weeks. That was about an hour ago, and Clarke was already up and out. Her side of the bed was cold and lonely and could just see the beginning of light filtering through the windowed doorway to her balcony.

No need to stay in bed when sleep would evade her, plus she had plans with Anya, to meet with Indra later this morning.

Lexa rolled out of bed and stood nude before her opened closet now filled with Clarke's clothes and things on one side, along with a dozen or more shoes littering the floor. Lexa started planning to expand it to a walk-in closet and adding another bedroom to the second story. But construction would have to wait until the colder weather passed and right before her job started. The timing would be tight.

Lexa started making plans after Clarke's first comment that next morning she went back to work, "Damn, I'm I going to have room for all of my stuff?"

Lexa made room and then some. She turned, hearing her cell phone ring downstairs and grabbed her robe and dash to catch it before it went to voicemail.

"What's up, Anya?"

Change of plans. Indra wants to meet at her place in an hour.

"I haven't taken a shower or ate yet," Lexa complained.

Indra has breakfast covered. I let you go. See you in a bit.

"Fuck."
The three of them planned to meet at The Diner and sent a quick text to Clarke to let her know she'd see her at lunch instead of breakfast, that along with a few sad emojis'. Clarke's habit of including these silly things had seemed to have rubbed off. A secret, she'd never reveal to Anya.

~

Clarke was in the restaurant's bathroom, throwing up again. The second morning in a row. She didn't think she was pregnant, from her knowledge of the symptoms, plus it would be too soon since her heat. She reckoned it was the food making her nauseous. Ugh, the smell of eggs and fried foods day in and out. She could barely keep anything down first thing in the morning, choosing to have dry toast and tea instead.

A knock on the door followed her retching. "Hey, are you all right in there." It was the new girl, Echo.

Clarke wiped her mouth after rinsing it out in the sink. "Give me a minute."

"Well, hurry up, your tables are beginning to complain."

It also could have been the psychosomatic reaction to the new waitress Octavia hired. Clarke could smell the bubble gum the girl chewed and smacked around in her mouth, another irritant, the girl was completely unaware. But damn, when she pulled a long string out of her mouth and wrapped it around her finger, then stuck it in her mouth again, it sent willies down her back, and she gagged again.

"What the fuck is with me?" Clarke asked no one in particular since she was in the bathroom alone. The text from Lexa, saying she'd be by later, didn't help. Clarke wiped her hands dry, added some lipstick, left the bathroom, and got hit with another thought that made her ill.

Her mother, Abby Griffin, MD, her email arrived, and she had yet to respond.

The accidentally sent email to her mother to her horror greeted her the next morning she went back to work after the storm. Her mother responded with, "We need to talk." She was due in town any day and hopefully only for one night stay.
"Do you feel better?" Echo asked, blowing another bubble.

Clarke only nodded her head. She got away with the habit because she said it kept her from smoking, and Octavia for the moment was letting her get away with it. Clarke knew it was a lie because, time and again, she'd either smell cigarettes on her clothes or catch her stubbing a butt out in the parking lot behind her car.

Echo also had the advantage of being Bellamy's new squeeze, and Octavia wasn't about to rock the boat with the sometimes unsteady relationship she had with her brother.

A ringing followed the sharp slap of the bell, then Lincoln barking from the kitchen, "Order up for table three, five, and eight."

"That's me," Clarke said. Grateful to be out of Echo's presence.

~

Lexa was on her second cup of coffee as Indra continued to explain her plans, "I've scheduled the camera team to send a drone to scan over the lake. Later they'll run sonar and other equipment down beneath the water."

"How deep is it?" Anya asked.

"Good question. That's what we'll find out once the team is in the water. My pressing need is an assistant to help organize my plans since my wife wants to spend more time with the children."

Lexa's ears pricked up. "For how long?"

"Year-round, probably permanent. I need someone good at putting the resources to good use and placing them where I need them."

Lexa eagerly offered, "I know of someone. But, I need to ask if they're interested."
"Well, tell them I'm offering the usual salary rate to begin, medical, dental the works with the opportunity to run the day to day operation."

"I'll have her give you a call."

Anya rolled her eyes at Lexa, knowing she was thinking of Clarke, turning to Indra, and asked, "So about the scuba diving..."

"Yes, I've made arrangements for both of you next week to start training." Indra stood motioning for them to follow into her den. Inside rarely seen and only talked about was the town of Mount Trikru in miniature, Indra had worked on as a hobby, and now it included the new plans for the expansion.

"Wow, this looks great," Lexa remarked, recognizing landmarks of the town. Even the bar, The Blue Ox, and The Diner were apart of the plans. A new parking lot with room to grow.

"As you can see, this is going to take some time, planning, and a whole lot of dedication to make it work. I hope you know I'm counting on both of you for your help." Anya nodded then pointed out Lexa's cabin tucked into the woods. "Phase one is clearing the lake of the logs and any other debris. I hope we can complete the lake this year; it depends on what we find. Along with starting new construction for a hotel and restaurant adjacent to the lake. I'm hoping Octavia and Lincoln are willing to expand."

Lexa admired the hard work Indra put into this piece of art that was their hometown and said, "You might just be able to employ the entire town at this rate."

Indra shut her eyes then nodded at Lexa. "That is my wish and hope for our town." She led them back into her massive living room, where her three kids were playing, twins three-year-old boys, Isaac and Ivan, and a new baby girl, Isabell, almost a year — laying on her back, kicking her feet in a bassinet near her mother, Grace. She was a beauty in her own right. Piercing amber eyes, rivaling her curly hair and skin. An omega that also lived in this town since birth. Indra and Grace had been childhood sweethearts since they were in middle school.

Lexa's heart grew a little bigger as she reached down, and the baby wrapped her tiny hand around her finger. "She's a strong one, Indra."

"She got her mother's grip," Indra quipped, giving her wife a wink.
Grace blushed. "Hush, Indra."

Both Lexa and Anya laughed at their private joke.

"What's your friend's name you want to recommend?"

"My mate, Clarke Griffin. She used to manage a business before she came to Mount Trikru." Lexa didn't look up when she answered, too fascinated by the deep green eyes looking up at her in wonder.

"Have her send me her résumé, and I'll set up an interview. That's if she's interested in the job."

Lexa finally pulled herself away from the baby and got her coat. "You got it, and thanks."

~

Anya followed behind Lexa on the way into town. She almost sent a text to Clarke to let her know she'd be there shortly, hesitated, and called Anya instead.

Yeah?

"Don't say anything to Clarke about the job."

I'd asked you why but you'd probably come up with a nonanswer. But, yeah. I'll keep my lips sealed.

"Thanks."

It wasn't a perfect solution, but it would put Clarke's skills to use. Growing more excited, the closer she got to The Diner. What she wasn't expecting to see was road flares and numerous trucks and cars parked along the sides of the road. Near the restaurant was a car wreck, it looked to be three
Lexa quickly parked the jeep, jumped out, and started running. Anya was right behind her. The only thing she wanted to see was Clarke as her heart twisted hard in her chest.

She found Clarke beside a young child, putting pressure on a severely injured broken and bleeding leg. It appeared that a bone pierced through the skin. More people were being cared for as the first ambulance arrived.

"Is there anything I can do, Clarke?" Taking off her jacket and putting it around Clarke's shoulders.

Clarke quickly looked up and then to the boy who was gulping air as he was crying in pain. "See if you can calm him down. He might be going into shock."

Lexa pumped out a calming scent before she knelt. "Hey, there, little man. What's your name?"
Lexa blocked his view of his leg. He didn't answer, but his eyes were wide and filled with tears and looked everywhere but at her. "My name is Lexa, and this is my partner, Clarke. Help is coming soon."

The little boy stuttered, trying to speak as he looked around. "Where's....m..my ma...mama?"

"A woman behind him spoke up, "I'm right here, Daniel. Everything is going to okay, just listen to our friends, okay?"

"Yes, mama." He finally looked in Lexa's direction.

"Daniel, why that's a cool name. Like Daniel Boone."

His eyes grew alarmed. "I'm named after my papa." Then he poked out his lower lip, and his crying increased.

Lexa was at a loss of what to say. She usually was pretty good with kids. Now worried about his mother, but his father looked to be the most injured with a head wound. Lexa felt the warmth of Clarke at her back and leaned into her.
"How are you doing, partner?"

"I'm hanging in there. I'm surprised I didn't throw up again," Clarke whispered.

"Did you see what happened?"

"No, but I heard it."

Two EMTs moved to the boy and took over the care of him as they stepped back. Lexa reached for Clarke's shaking hand, and she politely pushed her away, showing that her hands covered in the boy's blood.

Lexa wrapped her arm around Clarke's shoulders. "Let's get you back inside."

Clarke tried wiping her hands clean with a towel growing more frustrated as she looked back at the wreck cars. Lexa's eyes stayed fixed on Clarke as they made their way to the restaurant.

"Haven't I been saying like forever we need a signal light right there?" This is the second accident in a week. This time we got injuries, Lexa. Somebody could be killed or even dying as we speak.

"I know."

"How is it possible no one in this town wants to do anything about it?"

Lexa turned to face Clarke laying her arms on her shoulders, pulling her focus on her. "Listen, I've got some news for you. It might be a solution to this problem, but I want to wait to tell you when we get home."

Clarke started to speak when Lexa's lips met hers — sending out another scent to soothe Clarke's nerves.

Clarke was pretty much useless the rest of the day as they watched the road crew clean up from the safety of The Diner. Octavia let her leave early since her customers had trickled down to a few regulars at the counter. But for Lexa, having spent the better part of the day with other people,
she's exhausted and grumpy, and only Clarke can make her feel better. She felt hungover by lack of proper contact.

~

Clarke hit the shower right after they got back home. It was a ritual with her. She needed to rid herself of the smell of food out of her hair and off her body. Looking at her hands, and now the tinge of red. Blood still under the fingernails she wasn't able to remove.

She tried to reject her life as a waitress. It was gnawing failure she needed to be rid of, and this solace would afford her this luxury when exiting shower she could be herself again. It only took Clarke a few weeks to realized she wasn't meant for this thankless job. She danced on the razor's edge of not wanting to offend others who enjoyed this work. It just wasn't for her.

In the back of her mind, she wondered what news Lexa was waiting to tell her. Hoping it wouldn't mean Lexa wouldn't be leaving sooner on her job earlier than planned. The weather had warmed up a bit so that any traces of snow was long gone and only higher up the mountain; it showed off that they were still in the middle of winter.

Not to say it still wasn't bone-chillingly cold outside, especially in the shade. But the roads stayed clear of the ice. And it was why the accidents were frequent — surprised that it hadn't resulted in death this time. The cars were that mangled.

Clarke used her towel to wipe the steam off of the mirror and began the process of drying her hair, dreading what Lexa might say.

~

Clarke found Lexa, sitting cross-legged on the bed with her laptop. "What'ya doing?"

Lexa didn't look up and continued to work. "Drawing up plans for expanding the second floor. Here look." She turned the laptop around. She had a CAD program running. A computer-aided design program she used for the cabin's renovation. "A new walk-in closet and second bedroom over the office downstairs.

"I wish I knew how to do that."
"Is fairly easy. Just takes practice."

"So, what did you need to tell me?"

Lexa shut down the computer and laid it on the nightstand. "Sorry about not meeting with you for breakfast. But there was a good reason. Indra needed to show us her plans for the future of Mount Trikru." Clarke changed into her PJs as Lexa watched her every move then blinked out of her trance when she looked in her direction. "What I wanted to tell you, Indra needs a person, an assistant to help keep her project organized. And I hope you don't mind, but I told her you might be interested." Only then did Lexa let her face break into a smile.

Clarke didn't react at first. Just a wonder grew on her face at the possibilities as she sat on the edge of the bed. "You're kidding? Would I be working with you?"

"Nope, I'm not kidding, and I can't say for sure if you would be working directly with us, but I don't see why not. From Indra's design, she would probably set up a double-wide on the land near the lake to operate. It's where you'd probably be working. Indra asked for your resume, and she'll give you a shot." The grin of Lexa's face mirrored her own.

The sudden possibility caused a jolt of adrenaline to surge through her body. She let her body ride it out before asking, "What's a double-wide?"

"A mobile office."

Clarke shook her head and said, "Of course, I knew that." She recognized the term. "Can you give me a minute?"

Clarke crawled over to her side of the bed and pulled over her laptop, opening her email and plugged in Indra's address, Lexa helpfully supplied. She went over her resume and adding a few changes and added note before she sent it off.

_Dear Indra Forrester,_

_You'll find attached my resume with my work experience and a copy of my college transcript for_
you to review. It will be my honor if you choose me to help with your effort towards bringing Mount Trikru into a new beginning. Making it flourish for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity and chance to join you in your endeavor.

Sincerely,

Clarke Griffin

"You don't want to wait and sleep on it?" Lexa asked as she ran her hand under the shorts of Clarke's PJs to her naked hip, snaking a long finger between the join of her leg.

"Nope. I'm done with being a waitress. I want this." Closing out the laptop and placing it nightstand next to her side of the bed.

"You know it may allow you to make those changes you talk about, like a signal light near the restaurant. Making it safer for everyone."

Clarke sat over Lexa's hips. "I'd like to give you an opportunity."

"You would." Lexa's eyes lit up as her hands held Clarke's hips holding her in place.

"Hmm." Clarke's top didn't stay on long and made a show out of releasing each button starting at the top, revealing the soft full swells of her breasts pushing out of the small garment.

"It still amazes me you even bother dressing for bed."

"But, then, it wouldn't get to do this." Her top slipped off her shoulders, and Clarke hid her breast in her hands, wiggling her hips. Lexa's eyes grew playfully narrow. Clarke chuckled when she sensed her mate's clit starting to stir.

Lexa pulled her down and found her lips, running her tongue along the edges of Clarke's mint-flavored lips and dipped inside and rolled on top of her.
Clarke nudged Lexa's face away, saying, "I missed you today. There just isn't enough hours in a day for me to get my daily requirement of you."

Lexa brushed her lips over Clarke's. "I feel the same way. Every morning you leave for work, the house isn't the same. The bed is cold and lonely." Lexa stuck out her plump lower lip for effect then bumped that same lip over Clarke's, taking her into another heated kiss.

Clarke groaned deep in her throat, sensing Lexa's cock grow thicker between her legs with a whimpering need to see and feel her mate without the clothing between them.

A quiet but necessary plea broke free from her lips, "Naked."

Lexa smiled into her kiss and leaned back on her knees and stripped for Clarke. Crossing her arms and grabbing at the hem of her tee-shirt and pulled it off in one swift motion. Her nipples grew hard against the cooling night air, fascinating Clarke as she sat up, pulling a pert nipple into her mouth and sucked, teasing the other with a pinch.

Lexa's immediate reaction was her cock trying to break free of her shorts. Clarke sensed her pulsing thick and hard between her breasts as their scent pooling heavy between them.

"Hmm, I love the way you smell when you first get turned on."

~

A rumble agreement from Lexa as she held still and let Clarke take her time to tease her harder.

A breath against her breasts, looking down and seeing Clarke's focused on her nipples. Eyes closed, face relaxed, and she licked around and sucked on her. Lexa ran her fingers through Clarke's messy hair as her eyes came open and looked up with intensity and reverence that took her breath away.

The pull was heavy with her omega, and Lexa revealed, unable to keep her feelings from spilling out, "I love you so much, Clarke."
Clarke blinked slowly, not releasing her lips from her nipple. Lexa didn't see, but felt Clarke's fingers edge inside of the top of her shorts and yanking down her legs, freeing her shaft. Clarke growled, biting down lightly and taking her cock in her fist and pumped her once, sending shivering ripples over her body.

Clarke quickly submitted, releasing her and laid down, placing her arms above her head and opening her legs, allowing her slick to pool out.

Lexa reached down to cup Clarke's chin. "I do not know what deity saw fit to bless me with you. For that, I will be forever grateful."

Lexa meant every sappy word, positioning herself at Clarke's entrance. It was like the first time that mated, incredibly wet and snug. Dipping her cock around, not meaning to tease but unable to stay in one place as she coated herself and slowly edged inside.

A quick intake of breath followed by Clarke. "I'm not hurting you, am I?"

"No, please don't stop. I like this part. When you take me, take what belongs to you alone."

With a groan and released a little over Clarke's entrance, but continued to push forward until she felt her relax. Easing inside a few inches, then with a sudden jerk nestled the rest of her shaft the rest of the way. Her knot swelled and held just at the edge of Clarke's cunt. Her mate pulled her down to rest on top of her.

Breasts flushed against each other. Abdomens slick with sweat, creating a bond between them with Clarke cradling her body between her legs. Their bodies fit together as if designed by Keryon herself.

Lexa didn't move. Not yet. These quiet moments between them grew heavy, layered. Something was connecting, binding, and not just their physical bodies, but two hearts beating as one. If it took a lifetime, as long as Clarke was by her side, they could find all the mysteries of life together. Clarke squeezed down her shaft, causing Lexa to grunt and lifted off of her. Lexa moved out and in, as Clarke drew her down and licked inside of her mouth, and their bodies melded together as the heat and passion between them grew thick as Lexa surged...

All at once, the lights outside came on, brightening up the bedroom. A few seconds later, Clarke's phone began to ringing, and the doorbell rang. Lexa growled and stopped from tying Clarke and
pulled out.

"What the fuck?" Lexa looked around as confusion covered her face.

Clarke reached for her phone, fumbling with it and gasped, "Oh, no." She covered her mouth, closed her eyes with one hand, and turned the phone around with the other to show her mate. Lexa saw the name and sat back on her knees between Clarke's legs, unable to keep her cock from going soft.

A cockblocker. The person who was waiting at the front door and their unexpected guest.

Clarke's mom.
The pair hurried around the bedroom, searching for their clothes as Clarke's mom continued to ring and knocked on the front door.

"Fuck me. I asked my mom to call when she got into town." Clarke reached for her cell phone as she fastened her bra together one-handed and sent a message she'd be there in a moment. "That should hold her."

"Where are my pants?" Lexa dumped all of her clothes out of the hamper onto the floor and found a pair. "Never mind."

Clarke finished dressing, grabbed her phone, and dashed downstairs.

Lexa pulled her pants over her hips and stopped at seeing her knot too swollen and thick to fit comfortably. Her cock hadn't receded, it only went soft, and it would be nearly impossible to release the pressure unless she got hard once more and took care of it. But no way that's happening with Clarke's mom just downstairs. Her pants would do little to cover her embarrassment and looked for a pair of black sweats and a longer shirt.

~

Clarke took a breath to settle her nerves as she fixed her hair up in a loose bun using one of her hair ties she found in her jeans pocket, checking her appearance in the mirror next to the front door. She looked passable, but her body smelled of sex, and there wasn't a damn she could do about it as she opened the door.

Mom was looking at her phone then gazed over the top of her glasses, next to her feet, two suitcases. Clarke's immediate worry, where the hell is she going to sleep? What was the worst? The idea of being around her mother more than a quick lunch as were their usual affairs. Her hand went to an eye to hide a twitch that started and smiled to greet her.

"Mom."

"Clarke."
"Please come in." Clarke grabbed her suitcases and placed them just inside the door. Her mother removed her scarf as she gazed around the new surroundings. Clarke helped her take off her coat. "I thought you said you'd call me before you got town. We are already in bed."

"At this hour? Why Clarke, it's still early." Abby removed her glasses and stuffed them into a pocket on the outside of her purse.

"And I have to get up early for work, Mom." Abby turned and held out her arms, and Clarke, the ever dutiful, daughter had to make the first step and pulled her into a hug. Clarke cursed herself for enjoying the feel of family. Her mom smelled of cookies for some damn reason. Clarke released her and brought her into the living room and turned up the heat on the fireplace. "How was your trip?"

Her mother rubbed her nose, as evidence of Clarke's recent activity with Lexa, and said, "Longer than I was expecting, but the nav-system guided me right to your friend's beautiful home."

"Awesome."

Clarke smiled and pushed down her comment. It was an old and tired habit of her mother's of always keeping her aware of her status. It was clear that her mother didn't see the two of them as a couple yet. She would have told her mother eventually. But by her own mistake, the decision taken out of her hands when she sent that damn email, really a letter to herself. Her trusty way of dealing, by writing down her thoughts, just bit her in the ass. It was just her way of using what was handy at the time.

Of what she could recall, there were a few lines about her frustrations being her daughter and one glaring admission, the triple x musings about Lexa, and could anyone blame her state of mind even if she did have herb coursing through her body.

But the one comment that must have stung her mother was Clarke admitting she needed space. That one sentence she recalled clearly. But, it was said and done, and she knows. And all the plans her mother had, even as an omega, went up in a puff of smoke.

(Clarke, at the age of twelve, already recognized as a gifted student when she skipped a grade by obtaining high marks in all of her classes. She took on advanced courses and was on her way to the field of her choice. All she had to do was study hard, and everything else would fall into place. She planned to follow in the footsteps of her mother growing legacy. A secret desire to be a doctor like
her mom, she kept from her as a surprise.

That was until her first heat when she presented as an omega for the first time. Her mother being beta and doctor was of little help in assisting her in understanding how her body was changing and developing into a woman. It seemed as if everyone desired her when she couldn't control the signals she sent out. She chose to skip school during that time while her grades suffered but did try to keep up online with the rest of her class during her heats.

It was an awful way to grow up. Isolated and exposed.

Clarke begged her mom for help, who never understood and said, *It's for your own good. It will encourage you to appreciate the human condition as you experience what it is to know your place in the world as an omega.*

That one comment crushed all of her dreams of becoming a doctor.

It was how she said that remark that cut Clarke deeply. Cold, clinical, like a physician and not her mother, who she desperately needed. It was an off the cuff comment at the time until her mother settled into the constant reminders with little quips to keep her in her place. It wasn't something learned in school or taught in special classes how to deal with these changes. It was something Clarke experience entirely on her own at her young age. It felt like a betrayal from her mother that she eventually never understood why Clarke eventually grew into an introvert.

Clarke kept a journal, to always remember.

No longer did she see herself as equal to others. It's how she learned that most omegas got mated early and raised families to be rid of the bother of fitting in as a single, unique individual with thoughts, ideas, and goals of their own.

It angered Clarke, and she stopped studying as hard and changed her focus away from medicine. The last thing she wanted to do was be by her mother's side, work with her, and hear her constant belittling her status.

Over the next decade, she did find her place with her degree, and her mother stopped pushing her away with her comments. But the damage was done. Her failure compounded when her last employer screwed everyone over, and she didn't want to face her mother and what she would say. She didn't want to hear what her mother would call her life lesson she failed once more.
And that's why living in this town felt different. Growing closer every day to the people and the slower pace of life. Being an omega in this town, everyone made her feel like an equal, even before she mated with Lexa.

Clarke could see Lexa upstairs, dawdling and motion behind her mother's back to join her. Lexa looked at the ceiling and pretended to put a gun to her temple and shoot, then reluctantly descended the stairs.

Abby, not one to miss a beat, turned, and watched her partner. Clarke rose and went to her side, to drag her, kicking and screaming to the living room if she had to, and not let her sneak out to the garage to fiddle with something.

But first, to make it official, she had to get this right, so her mother understood precisely the truth. "Mom, this is my mate, Lexa Woods. Lexa, my mother, Dr. Abigail Griffin."

Lexa put out her hand. "Pleasure to meet you, Dr. Griffin."

"Please, call me Abby. And you as well. I love your home."

Lexa darted her eyes to Clarke and then back to her mom. "Thanks."

Abby drew her down beside her on the sofa. "Have you lived here long?"

Lexa waited for Clarke to join them. "Can I get you something to drink, first?"

"I'm good. So have you?"

"A couple of years." Lexa stood and asked Clarke, "Can I get you anything?"

"I'll have whatever you're having."
Abby continued with Clarke, "So how long have you two been roommates?"


"I did two bi-passes on Friday and shot an eight-nine at the club later the same day."

All the while she was talking, her mother couldn't help but let her eyes roam to where Lexa was in the kitchen as she continued to tell her about work the hospital and everything Clarke was thankful she wasn't apart of anymore.

Her mother worked hard to get where she was at one of the top-ranked hospitals in the country. Her specialty and status gave her the ability to make changes on how to diagnose and lectured, and she was the head cardiothoracic surgeon of her hospital.

Lexa returned with their beverages, and Clarke smiled, seeing not an alcoholic drink, but two mugs of hot chocolate.

"Mmm." Clarke blew on the drink. "Perfect choice."

Lexa offered again, "Are you sure I can't get you anything, Abby?"

Abby almost objected until she saw Clarke enjoying the sweet beverage. It was a favorite of her mother's, especially in the wintertime.

"Clarke, you must have told Lexa."

She didn't, as Lexa offered Abby her mug.

Abby hummed at her first sip. "Hmm. What is that I'm tasing?"

Lexa returned to the kitchen to fix another cup. "It's probably the cinnamon."
"Simply perfect. Thank you."

"No problem."

Abby had a built-in bias towards alphas, and this added touched could easily make her mother swoon. Clarke felt that pull, going warm inside. Merely by chance, her mate soothed and quieted her mother for the moment. Clarke grew a little embarrassed that her mom might even respect her mate by this gesture.

Lexa returned and sat across from them, spreading legs and leaned back to get comfortable. It was awkward at first until Lexa was the first break the ice, "First time in this part of the country, Abby?"

"It is. I take it you're not from around here?"

Clarke knew that question a shot in the dark. She never once mentioned anything to her mother about Lexa's past. Only that she was a lumberjack period, and knew Lexa would never reveal her history to anyone, even family.

(They spend a night just talking about how she was raised and shared her painful first heat. It was the morning after she discovered she sent the email to her mother when Clarke started cursing, which turned to tears. Her alpha got protective and pulled her down on the bed to soothe her. Later after work, they spent the evening just talking about everything. Even bringing up their dinner and ate by candlelight next to the windowed door.

At the end of the night and after sharing her story, the one lasting memory of that evening was when Lexa's scent grew dangerous. Primal and protective and saying so as much.)

Lexa didn't even look in Clarke's direction for confirmation of her mother's probing and answered, "Mount Trikru is my home." Then change the subject to her work.

~

Lexa insisted Clarke's mother take their bed. Changing the sheets and showing her around upstairs.
Clarke didn't say a word of objection and made their bed on the sofa and was about to lay down with Lexa when Abby called from upstairs and asked if Clarke could join her for a late-night talk alone.

Clarke leaned defeatedly against Lexa's shoulder, saying, "I'm sorry. I'll try and keep it brief."

That was, Lexa checked on the clock hanging on the wall in the living room, almost an hour ago and could hear the muted conversation while sleep would evade her. Not because of the subtle noise, as much as missing Clarke by her side. It felt foreign and unnatural.

During the evening, Clarke received an unexpected call from Indra to set up a meeting for her interview tomorrow. Clarke begged Octavia for the morning off; that triggered Lexa to end the evening, now that she had an excuse. Clarke needed sleep for her big day tomorrow, and they said their goodnights.

Throughout the evening, Abby focused on prying information out of her, that she deftly dodged, giving vague answers to all of her questions. Abby didn't stand a chance with her talent of vagary, never failing to find unusual ways of saying nothing.

Abby's voice broke through her musing, "Clarke, please....I'm only doing this..." Abby sounded defeated.

Clarke responded, "Whatever."

Lexa looked towards the upstairs and waited, which grew to into hope for Clarke to return. After a few minutes, when the lights when dark, she saw her mate descending the stairs. It felt like a lifetime until she lifted the blanket, and Clarke fell into her waiting arms.

A quiet complaint, "Ugh. I'm sorry I waked you." Clarke's mouth found her mating mark and place a kiss.

"Shh," Lexa responded with a kiss to her forehead. "I couldn't sleep without you."

"I just knew we would get into a fight."
"I heard, but I couldn't make out what you were saying."

Clarke yawned. "I'll tell you later. What time is it?"

"It's nearly two."

Clarke curled her body around Lexa and groaned, "I'm going to be dead on my feet, and I so wanted to be sharp for my interview tomorrow."

"You'll do fine," Lexa grumbled. Clarke settled over her and went quiet.

Lexa forgot about the issue she had with her knot while they visited with Clarke's mother. It had yet to recede. And it wasn't likely to anytime soon now that Clarke was lying practically on top of her. And as always, Clarke's welcoming scent streamed out as she relaxed. A warm, seductive scent made her body's naturally respond to her closeness, as her cock grew rock hard once more.

Clarke's nightly habit of lightly snoring started right after her hands settled over her breast. Lexa's heart grew a little fuller and wouldn't wake her. It wouldn't be fair. Her omega needed her sleep. After waiting and listening to the soft breaths even out, she quietly slipped out from underneath Clarke and tiptoed to the bathroom next to the kitchen.

Lexa blinked at the bright light and seeing her disheveled self in the mirror. A ghastly sight at two in the morning. Lexa hunted for a lighter in one of the drawers and lit one of the candles Clarke brought in one day to decorate and flipped off the light. It was silly, but it might be easier to get off without the bright light displaying herself so vividly. Plus, she didn't want the lamp to shine under the door and wake her mate.

Lexa hadn't done this in a long time and wouldn't wake Clarke up just to take care of this nagging problem. She pulled her straining cock out of her sweats. Then pumped a few squirts of lotion into her hand and lubed up her length.

Lexa shut her eyes at that first touch, relieving the ache, and it shouldn't take to long to release when imagined Clarke stroking her with her warm hand, that blended into the one night Clarke took her into her mouth. So intent on playing by pulling away and kissing up and down her shaft, made the wait much more pleasurable, as her teasing kept her from coming. Lexa signed remembering, Clarke shifted, and penetrated her cunt from behind — pushing her knot past her tight wet silky entrance, and seconds later, triggering both of their orgasms.
Lexa groaned when she released a bit and a little too loud then went still. Silently listening, even going so far as to peak outside of the door and hearing only the quiet settling of the cabin.

Lexa returned to the business at hand and tried to keep Clarke's face and body in her mind and focused on the subtle movement that would cover her girl's face when they made love. Every reaction, a story within itself, that had yet to be told.

Lexa closed her eyes and remembered the first time she saw Clarke smile and stroked faster.

She didn't hear the door open and close behind her. But Lexa felt her presence when she curled her body around her and placed her hand over hers.

A quiet, "Let me help," was whispered into her ear and fell into Clarke's warmth covering her back.

The plea made her harder.

Clarke pushed Lexa's back against the door and went to her knees. Lexa knees nearly buckled when Clarke's mouth went around her and began to suck.

Greedy and wanting. A wicked tongue played with her slit, drawing a whimper from Lexa's lips.

Lexa saw stars as her fingers feathered into Clarke's hair as the light from the candle reflected her girl bobbing up and down on her cock. Clarke hummed as she sucked and brought her to the edge while she hung on, waiting until the crashing tide sweep over her and released with a grateful groan as she emptied into her omega's mouth at last.

Lexa reached down and pulled up Clarke into her arms. "You didn't have to do that for me."

"Hmm. Who's going to stop me?"

Awash of guilt almost flooded over Lexa until she saw the sweet smile covered her sleepy girl's
face. Her eyes shut and held on. Lexa kissed that smile and tugged her sweats over her hips. She lifted Clarke in her arms and carried her back to their bed on the sofa.

After they settled once more, wrapped around each other, Clarke whispered, "What brought this on?"

Clarke rose and fell with Lexa's chuckle. "You forgot that your mother interrupted us, and I...well.."

Clarke leaned up, "You mean to tell me you've been hard all night?"

Lexa pulled her down and kissed her temple. "Not quite. My knot decided to hang around, though."

Clarke buried her face into Lexa's chest. "Oh, damn. I'm so sorry."

"Nothing you could have done with your mom around. I just thought I could take care of it later after you both were asleep."

Clarke reached down between them to check. Lexa was only a little hard, but her knot had receded quite a bit.

"Are you okay now?"

"I'm perfect. I think I can fall asleep now, and you as well?" Lexa questioned.

Clarke said after a quiet moment, "You ground me." She then placed a kiss on her cheek and laid her head down and was out.

~

Domesticated life didn't include a visit from Clarke's mother so soon. It was one of Anya's comments now come to life, staring at her in the face as she made breakfast for both of them while Clarke left for her interview with Indra.
"What made you go into medicine?" A safe topic, Lexa thought.

"Why does anyone do what they do?" Abby still sounded defeated as she did last night after their late-night talk. Clarke had yet to explain what transpired between them before she left only that her mother wanted Clarke to postpone her interview that drew her ire.

"You don't like what you do, Abby?" Lexa placed the toast on a plate in front of her and poured herself another cup of coffee.

Abby sighed then laughed at what seemed to be a memory she recalled. "No, I do like my profession. It all started over a boy in grade school. All the girls liked him, and...you don't want to hear this."

Lexa wasn't one to pry, but Abby seemed like she needed to get something off of her chest and hope what she said next wouldn't be a mistake.

"Is everything okay?"

"You tell me? You seem to have Clarke figured out."

"I wouldn't say I have Clarke figured out at all, but I do listen to her."

"Are you telling me I don't?"

Lexa could only smile. Talking about Clarke when she wasn't here didn't seem right. "You're the only one that can answer that question."

Abby shook her head and smeared strawberry jelly onto a piece of toast and then laid back down on the plate.

"It was a mistake to come here. I'll be leaving before Clarke gets back. I'm sure both of you will not object."
Lexa wouldn't be goaded into asking her to stay longer. "We won't stop you from leaving, but surely we can navigate topics that don't involve me speaking about Clarke without her present. It's not how I am."

"You seem to know Clarke's secrets."

Lexa smirked, "I'm sure I don't know all of them."

"But, she talks to you?"

"Of course, she does."

"To be perfectly frank with you. I had hoped to bring Clarke back home with me. Undo what you two have got yourselves into so suddenly. You don't know her as I do. She always makes these rash decisions without thinking..." Abby blushed at the amused look Lexa gave her.

Lexa sighed and kept her scent in check. Abby was lashing out at not being in control. Not being the top alpha in the room, and being beta, she had no right to assume Lexa wouldn't defend her mate.

"Who's being unreasonable now, Abby? We are both clear-headed in what we both want. That's why we bonded for life and not just roommates as you suggested last night."

"That's easily fixed, alpha," Abby challenged.

Lexa clenched her jaw, placing both hands on the counter in front of Abby and said, "I'm not quick to anger, but I will defend my mate, and if you want to have a relationship with your daughter, such as it is, you should choose your next words wisely."

Abby didn't seem phased by Lexa at all. What she said next, unfortunately, wasn't what she was expecting at all.
Abby's worried hands tore the toast in half but still didn't take a bite. "You know she killed two people."

Lexa blinked. Stunned that Abby didn't know Clarke at all. She was kind, gentle soul, who tried to do the right thing and fuck, mistakes happened.

"So, this is the game you want to play? Try to tell me something, that Clarke has already discussed with me, just to see if you can drive a wedge between us and take her back with you?"

"I...well, she was responsible."

Exasperated, Lexa spat back, "Dear Keryon, what makes you think that?"

Abby seemed unsure and shook her head, "Because she left without saying a word. Nothing. What was I suppose to think?"

Lexa leaned back against the counter and put more space between even with the countertop separating them and tried dialing down the tension.

"Please tell me you didn't say this to Clarke." Lexa already knew the answer. Clarke would have been devasted by her mother's statement.

"No. I didn't. I don't know how to bring it up."

"You don't, Abby. Clarke has to be allowed to move at her own speed. Let her, in her own time, come to you and explain what happened."

Abby smiled and shook her head. "That'll be a cold day in hell."

"You brought it on yourself." Lexa wasn't going to hold back anymore.

"I'll admit that. But I..."
"No buts, Abby. You treated your daughter like a second-class person, your flesh and blood. And by doing so, you hurt her deeply. Clarke deserves better than that, deserves better from you."

Abby's eyes began to well up. Lexa pushed a box of tissue towards her when she tried to wipe her eyes with the stiff paper napkin.

Lexa needed a drink. Checking the time, it wasn't even ten o'clock.

Abby blew her nose. "I think I'll get my things and leave before my daughter returns. I..." Abby's voice trailed off, but before she left to get her things, and said, "Just one more thing, to be completely honest with you that I'm not a heartless monster."

"What's that?"

"I know what you see in my daughter."

"You couldn't possibly."

Abby straightened her shoulders and looked at her dead in the eyes. "You see a wonderful human being. If I hadn't pushed her away, she wouldn't have found you and that my dear is fate. For you and me." Lexa took in a breath at all the possibilities that could have changed her life, with Clarke not in it, and couldn't disagree with her statement. "All I want is to hear from her, maybe a visit. I know I don't deserve it. Not at all."

"I honestly do not know what to say to you, Abby."

Abby wasn't quite finished; she stopped before she headed back upstairs. "Ever since I laid eyes on you, I get the strange feeling I've seen you before."

Lexa could only shrug her shoulders, knowing she had never seen Clarke's mother before last night.
Abby was a force, not unlike the people she used to work alongside. Night and day from the people she knows now. This need to control, pry into places where they should delicately step. Abby came at her and retreated, having laid out what it is now clear to Lexa, her plans. To end their relationship, or reestablish the broken one with her daughter. Nothing was resolved when she watched Clarke's mother back out of the driveway and headed out of town.

~

Clarke blew out a breath to calm her beating heart. The tension of her real first interview in years still drew the uncertainty about her abilities foremost in her mind. She thought the meeting went fine and only stumble over a few questions and quickly righted her thoughts until Indra smiled when she leaned back and agreed with her amateur ideas.

She didn't have a clue. But she knew how to organize and honestly admitted she would be willing to learn anything. She just needed a chance. Clarke released the breath that caught in her throat. Feeling a bit overwhelmed and may be hoping too much that this dream of becoming apart of something big would be taken away from her and would have to settle for waiting on people the rest of her life.

Clarke wiped her eyes and turned on the radio to something upbeat. No need worrying about it now. Either Indra will select her or not. Indra did say she was interviewing other candidates and would let her know in a week. Clarke tried shaking off the dread of waiting, as she signaled and turned onto their road.

~

Clarke found Lexa waiting for her in the living room, tapping a white envelope on her leg.

"What's this?"

"You're mother left it on our bed. It's for you."

"Did she leave without saying goodbye to me?" Lexa nodded her head. Clarke sat beside Lexa and opened the letter and read it out loud.

My dearest daughter,
I was wrong to come at you the way I did last night and, indeed, all of your life. You were right; I did fail you. For that, my shame will carry with me for the rest of my days. I won't interfere with your dreams. I hope you will find the happiness you deserve with Lexa.

I also hope one day you can forgive me,

Mom

Clarke placed a hand on Lexa's leg. "My goodness. What happened after I left?"

Lexa looked sheepishly at Clarke and wondered where she should start.

~

It will only be for a week, or less," Lexa said as she hugged and kissed Clarke goodbye and loaded up her gear in the back of Anya's SUV.

Those words kept running through Lexa's head over and over. Her mind focuses on less part. It depended on how well they soaked up the knowledge of being scuba divers. Clarke put on a strong face, even after the conversation about her mother the day before.

There were tears from both of them. And Clarke promised to decide if she would make the break from her mother permanent or try to salvage their relationship.

"Did you read the diving manual?"

Lexa blinked out of the memory. "I finished last night."

"And? What did you think about it?"

"It seems pretty clear-cut. But how much scuba diving do you think we'll be doing?"
"Not a clue."

"Well, safety is first."

"What's that noise? Anya turned and gave her a stern look at the sound Lexa was making as she tapped her fingers on her pant leg, then stopped. "Don't tell me you're getting cold feet?"

"I'm not, but speaking of cold. The lake is going to be freezing, even in summer."

"That's why we're wearing a drysuit."

"Where did you read that?"

"It was in the notes, genus. We'll learn how to scuba dive in just our bathing suits. Then wetsuits, just to learn the process. Last day in the drysuit. What you'll learn now, you'll be glad later once our butts hit the cold depths of Lake Sonchgeda, Soncha Kapa. The City of Light."

Lexa shook her head and turned to gaze at Anya. "Do you have to say that every time?"

"My car, my rules, Woods. Better get comfortable we've got," Anya looked at the map on the nav system. "Two and a half hours. So if you need to go, tell me now, so I can stop before we leave town."

"I'm good. Anya." Lexa couldn't mask her attitude to what transpired over the last few days.

"What's got you all," Anya waved her hand around, "Whatever mood you're in now?"

"Clarke's mom paid us a visit." Lexa paused not for effect but ended up having the same impression. "It didn't go well." Lexa didn't usually share, but, "Abby, Clarke's mom, had a different reaction about our bonding I wasn't expecting."
Anya sat in silence as they drove. She offered the usual mutterings of someone listening, not interrupting with her usual bantering. Lexa kept the story of Clarke's reason for leaving her job in the city vague and giving only a general description.

"So, what did you say?"

Lexa snorted, "Some personal things, I'm not a liberty to speak about, but the gist was if she wanted was a relationship with her daughter, she needed to be the one to change. I just wanted Clarke's mom to listen to her. Respect her."

"You didn't?"

"I had to, Anya."

"Mothers-in-law, right?"

"I'd have to be married to Clarke before that's a reality."

"What's stopping you?"

"Nothing, I'm not scared or anything. I need to find the perfect ring."

"So, you've been looking?"

"I have when Clarke's not around. I'm down to the choice between two."

"I take it; you're going to tie the knot soon?" Anya smirked at the pun.

Lexa adjusted her jaw at the change of pressure. "I love her, Anya. And yes, soon." Lexa watched the winding road even out a bit when they came down from the higher mountains as her ears began to pop at the lower elevation, but still in the thick of the hills.
Anya tossed Lexa her pack of gum. "That'll help."

They sat in silence for the next few miles. When finally, for absolutely no reason, Lexa wanted to share, "I owe you an apology."

Anya darted a quick look, then back to the road. "My feelings aren't hurt. Mainly because I don't know what the hell you're talking about."

Lexa swallowed down her fear of telling her best friend of her past. "Of course, you don't. Because I didn't or should I say, I haven't shared with you anything about my life before Mount Trikru."

"What did you rob a bank or something? Have another secret life we don't know about?"

"Sort of, and no, I didn't rob a bank."

"I'm listening."

"I'll start with how I told Clarke. I shortened my name, hoping I could pass as just any alpha coming into town looking for work. They used to call me Alexandra."

"Hmm. I thought Lexa was short for something."

Once Lexa started, the floodgates opened, and she told Anya everything about her life before. Her part in her company's destruction of smaller businesses and how she grew to hate herself and needed to start over.

Through it all, Anya stayed silent. Rare for someone who delighted in picking on Lexa like she was her kid-sister. Lexa ended with, "I hope you can forgive me."

Anya signaled, then turned into a fast food joint and parked her vehicle, and turned to face Lexa. "Listen, you didn't have to tell me anything. But, I appreciate that after over two years, you finally got the courage to tell me about my best friend. A friend I do care about."
The moment held a silent understanding between them when Lexa had to know, "So, we're good?"

"Yeah, but don't let it got to your head, kid." Anya lightly punched her in the shoulder. "Let me buy you lunch, Alex."

"Ugh, Please, it's Lexa. My dad goes by Alex."

Anya genuinely smiled and without her usual smirk. "You got it, pal." As they made their way inside, Anya turned to ask, "Why did you tell me now?"

"I just thought if we're going to put our lives on the line for our jobs, I want you to know you can trust me."

"I would have anyway, Lexa. And stop being so hard on yourself. We all know you're a good person. That's not to say I won't still bug you at every opportunity I can."

Lexa pushed down the wash of emotions that one statement caused to bubble up inside her and said, "I wouldn't expect anything less from you, Anya."

~

Lexa was starving. Two days of strenuous training and all she could think about was food. Hamburgers and pizza with a big chocolate milkshake and fries all in one sitting. But she could eat anything.

"You up for a juicy steak with the works tonight?" Lexa poked Anya in the side as she pulled off her gear and hung it up to dry.

"Can't, I gotta date with my girl on Skype, and we're going to share a bottle of wine and have dinner while we talk."

"Hmm, I'm jealous. Clarke is so busy taking care of the restaurant since Octavia took sick, we haven't had time to talk."
"I'm surprised you haven't had withdrawals without your girl."

"As I said, I haven't had time. I'm so tired at the end of the day. I crash when I get back to my room."

"Two more days, and we're out of here." They both finished drying and got dressed. Lexa followed behind her and made the quick drive back to the hotel. Both were really too bushed to talk, grunting responses as they left to their respective rooms.

What she wasn't expecting was Indra loitering near her room. "Hey, boss. I thought you were showing up tomorrow."

"I finished early, and I'd save the early morning trip."

Since there were near her room, she invited Indra inside and quickly kicking her suitcase closed.

"Can I get you anything? I brought a cooler."

"Yeah, thanks. I'm dying for a beer." Lexa got each one and settled on the bed. That's when she noticed Indra with a bag she sat next to her on the floor. "How's your training going?"

"Fun. I think I've found a sport I could get into. I can't wait to see what we find in the lake." Lexa went on to explain in brief details of their training.

"That's good to hear. Well, to get the reason I'm here." Indra reached in the bag and pulled out a box and handed it to Lexa. "Could you give this to Clarke when you get back in town?"

"Sure, not a problem. Can I ask what it is?"

"Her hard hat."
Lexa blinked, trying to register what it meant, when... "Oh. Really?"

"She was my best candidate. I think she'll get a kick out of it. But tell her when she in the field I want her to wear it at all times."

Lexa could feel their world righting a little more. Pictures of all kinds of wonderful things coming into their lives, over this gesture, this new opportunity for Clarke.

"I can't thank you enough, Indra." Lexa stood and put out her hand. "I know Clarke will be a great asset to your project. Are you sure you don't want to break the news yourself?"

"I thought about that, but I agreed with Grace, that it would make a cute story for your children one day, when you tell her," Indra said with a wink and finished her beer and stood. "I'll see you tomorrow?"

"You bet." Lexa closed the door and jumped two feet off the ground. She'd wait to tell Clarke in person when she got back home. She wanted to see her face light up, experience this moment with her.

~

Jim, a drill sergeant of a man, yet a slim tanned fellow with a shot of bleach-blond hair, their instructor, called out, "Hunter, Woods, scenario number four. Hunter's tank has lost pressure. Demonstrate what you do next in the water."

Lexa gave the okay signal with her fingers being that her mouth was fitted regulator mouthpiece. Anya and Lexa settled at the bottom of the pool and went over the procedure as outlined. Anya gave Lexa the okay signal and removed her regulator to start their test.

Each step, each signal they made in a precise order so that they wouldn't feel rushed. Bubbles rose from their breath as Lexa pushed down the panic when they took turns to suck in a puff of air and made slowly made their way back to the surface when they completed their task.

Jim called out for the edge of the pool when he rose with them, "Excellent. Now I know I said this over and over. A swimming pool we're learning in is a poor example of the treacherous waters of a lake. Unknown conditions, dicy at most. Take time to understand your surroundings. Watch and
have each other's backs. And as always, do not panic."

Lexa removed her mouthpiece. "Thanks, coach."

They both waded to the shallow in of the pool and removed their equipment as Coach Jim instructed another pair to do the same procedure.

"Last day," Lexa said, unzipped her top and wiggled her arms out of the gear. "I thought we were going to learn how to used dry suits?"

"Yeah, that was postponed. I heard Jim speaking with Indra, and he wants to train us in real lake conditions."

"When?"

"No idea, but probably soon."

The gear they wore now, minus the wetsuits they would take back along with extra sets of everything, Lexa made sure to buy multiple packs of alpaca wool socks when Jim said; You won't regret the price when you're feet are toasty warm.

They had already checked out of the hotels, and after a warm shower to rinse off the chlorinated water, they dressed and loaded up the truck and started their way back home.

"Do you want me to drive home?" Lexa offered around a yawn.

"No way, you look too tired."

Lexa wouldn't argue. She was exhausted, with all of this new knowledge crammed into her head trying to take purchase, wiggling into crevices of her brain like some sea creature finding its home. She yawned again and leaned back in her seat, stretching out her legs and crossed her arms over her chest, and shut her eyes. A few hours, she would be home, and back in Clarke's arms.
Clarke's fingers flew across her laptop's keyboard as her words created this new world. It was on an impulse when she pulled out her computer the first evening Lexa left and filled page after page of her story. She wasn't sure where the tale was going that first day, but as the week progressed, she had a sense of what was growing inside of her.

Maybe continuing this project could take her mind off of what she discovered this morning. On a hunch of a nagging possible reality, and used a test to be sure. It explained her early morning's unease. A seed was planted weeks ago and presently seemed to manifest within her.

Now in this exercise of ideas gave her mind time to understand what she perceived within her body and found this task enjoyable and continued laying one stone at a time until she had a solid foundation on which to build.

"Surely, I will hurt the wee one," Alexandra uttered with liberated joy, holding her mate close to her breast and swayed in the mild evening. Clarke welcomed her mate after another long campaign. Finding her weariness blowing away like so many leaves on a crisp harvest day, that not to thoroughly examine what new delight sprang forth from this new beginning would be disgraceful in the eyes of Keryon.

However, the Princess's eyes held in mirth and spoke, "My love, she is but a tiny thing, no bigger than the size of your thumb." Taking one of the alpha's hands in hers and running the backs of her fingers over her palm, then lifting, displaying stated thumb. "See, you cannot hurt her."

"You say her. How is it possible to know not having witnessed her birth yet?"

"I dreamt of her, and us in the coming tomorrow. Perhaps with other offspring yet to be designed by the hand that guides us all."

The Commander leaned back. "So, that how is, my bride? I prevail on the battlefield, yet my immeasurable reward, my saving grace lies completely within you."

Clarke coyly pulled away from her mate to make hast to the other side of the bed.

This woman found the Commander's secret desires, held within her beating heart. Set let loose her
garments one by one, leaving bare as the day she was born before her she stood.

But not of a body of a child, or imbalance of youth. Favorite holding within her hips. The view of Clarke's breasts fed her wounded and damaged soul and grew hard at the vision now radiating next to their bed.

"Alexandra," Her omega beckoned. The lilting voice fixed her desire between growing need. "Please regard your wife."

Her mate, not one to shy away from her nakedness, spread eagle as to take flight. Alexandra found one leg, then the other, heaviness of her britches to much to bear.

Her mate's eyes found purchase to stare evenly over her length, causing her seed to spill free before its time. Waiting, dripping, and hard. One knee drew down then another as she laid her expanse in her lover's embrace once more.

Legs went about her thighs, as she long hardened shaft pierced the veil of dark blond curls and moved in a dance inside her beloved as they made their music and peace within the bedchambers.

Gasps of breaths fell on honey-kissed lips...

Clarke paused her story as tears well up in her eyes. The page to blurry to see. Before she continued to type, she heard the sounds of the garage door opening.

Never before had a sound, so relieve her. It washed over Clarke and took a breath to calm any remaining loneliness in her heart.

The utility door opened, and Lexa called out, "I'm home. I've got to put stuff away in the garage, and I'll..." Her words cut off as Clarke closed the distance between them. She cupped Lexa's jaw with one hand and the other behind her neck. The kiss was sweet and sorely missed.

When Clarke pulled back, her face flushed and said, "Sorry, but my quota of your kisses was low."

Lexa kissed her back, then pulled away with a smile and said, "Hold that thought."
Clarke reluctantly released her mate. But, just in that short amount of contact spread warmth back to their connection.

Clarke waited in the living room as she tried to think of clever ways of breaking the news. She had yet even to voice the words to herself. Afraid that once speaking out loud, what she knew to be true would make the reality of what she had avoided into a fact she couldn't ignore.

Lexa returned, leaving her suitcases next to the stairs and joined her on the sofa. Her eyes were so focused on taking in the vision of the smile on her mate's face until she finally noticed she carried in her hands a bottle of champagne and a large box.

"What's this?" Clarke smiled, overjoyed at the happiness radiating from Lexa.

"Wait just a minute while I get some glasses." She returned and presented her with the box. "Go ahead and open it."

Clarke laughed at Lexa's excitement. Like a kid at Christmas, she couldn't wait for her friend to open her present.

Clarke lifted the lid and paused. "I don't understand..." Lexa helped her and removed the object from the box, across the front was her last name in bold black print.

"Congratulations, Clarke."

Clarke blinked at the white hard hat when it hit her. "Oh my."

"Try it on." Lexa adjusted the fit and placed it on Clarke's head. "Indra said you are to wear in the field so that it will protect your head against falling objects."

Clarke could stop the flow of happy tears that fell. Sniffing and wiping away as the news settled and brushed away the doubt that plagued her.
"Are you sure she wants me for the position?"

Lexa's smile should have been her answer and then noticed along with the gift, a letter included would hopefully answer that question.

It did. Indra's crisp writing spelled out her position in longhand, Clarke was now an employee with Forrester's Lumber family.

Lexa opened the champagne and generously filled both glasses. Her eyes glisten with her tears she had yet to shed herself.

"You're awfully quiet, Clarke. I thought this is something you wanted."

"Oh, Lexa, it is. It truly is. It's just that." Clarke blurted out the thing she was avoiding. The words she couldn't speak to herself, and before her courage ran away from this new awareness or got cold feet, she stated, "I think I'm pregnant."
Lexa sat stunned into silence.

Her whole world narrowed down to the blue eyes gazing into hers. She didn't move but shift her focus from Clarke's eyes to her belly and up again. The only sounds she would swear later were their twin beating hearts between them. Thinking that maybe if she listened carefully, she could hear the tiny beat of a third heart wanting to join these two scared idiots, who stared at each other and wondered what they created.

Clarke looked shaken as Lexa felt.

"Uh..." Lexa stopped shook her head then went to her knees in front of Clarke. An untapped, profound joy of something she didn't know she even wanted, it caused happy tears to pool in her eyes and laid her head on Clarke's lap and expressed a quiet, "Thank you, Clarke."

Clarke removed the hard hat and nervously chuckled as she ran her fingers through her mate's wavy hair. "You're not sorry we should have been more careful?"

Lexa glanced up, surprised. "Nothing about this could ever make me sorry, Clarke." Lexa knew she needed to tread carefully with her questions and asked, "But, how do you know for sure?"

"I'm not quite sure, maybe fifty-fifty, but you'll think it's ridiculous of me why I decided to say anything at all."

"Try me."

"Well, what I thought was my irritation from the new girl at work didn't make any sense. Echo bugged me, but not to the point of throwing up."

"You've been throwing up? How long?"

"Just recently and a week shy of six weeks since we..." Clarke lightened the seriousness of the mood when she used her hands. Making a circle with a finger and thumb and poking her pointer
finger in and out a few times.

Lexa chuckled and bowed her head.

"Yeah, it can be one of the signs, the other which isn't a sign at all and can't believe it could be related. I've had this urge to start writing about babies, and I think even dreaming about them. I'll show you what I wrote later if you're interested. But, I probably should make an appointment with a doctor to be sure."

"I could do that for you," Lexa was unsure of what to do next, but like in all things new, her mind started to make plans out of her control. "I guess I should get my butt in gear and finished the designs for the second bedroom, or I should say nursery. Then I need to childproof all of the cabinet doors and electrical outlets." Already making a list in her head of what she needed to do and what to buy. "Diapers! Disposable or cloth?"

"Lexa," Clarke drawled and then giggled, causing Lexa to smile with her.

"Can I see, Clarke?"

"See what?"

"Your belly."

Clarke seemed to recall something and said in an old-world accent, "She's just a wee thing."

Lexa tilted her head and laughed, "What?"

"Nothing, just something I wrote..."

"So, you think we are having a girl?" A puzzled look covered Lexa's face and thought that being an omega, maybe there was some unique way they had of knowing. She remembered her mother, who was also an omega telling the story of her pregnancy and birth when she was old enough to understand.
(Alexandra was five years old and asked where babies came from in the middle of shopping and drew laughter from her parents. Her mom leaned over and promised she would tell her later.

But it was all she could think about, and it started when a neighbor stopped to talk to her parents at the market, and the word, baby, and almost due caught her inquisitive ears. Her big green eyes peered up at her mother's friend when her eyes fell on her swollen belly and reached out to touch.

Her dad quickly grabbed her grubby hand, when the nice lady said it was okay and held it her stomach and waited. What little Alexandra wasn't expecting was the kick and quickly pulled back, dashing behind her mother's legs and eliciting more rounds of laughter from the adults standing around.

Later after supper and after her dad read her another story of *Winnie the Pooh Adventures*, she yawned and felt a kiss on her forehead when her eyes popped open and remembered her question.

"Daddy? Mommy said she was gonna tell me 'bout where babies come from."

Lexa couldn't recall the rest of the evening but remembered their smiles.

Another thing she remembered because they always brought up with grandparents and other adults; that Alexandra took after her father. At the time, she thought it was his coloring, having the same hair and eyes like her dad. And only later understanding, she favored her father in that she was an alpha, and unlike her counterpart omegas, Alexandra presented at birth; learning when she grew older, biology gave her an advantage early in life.)

"Oh, No. I don't have a clue, and I'm not sure if I am even pregnant. It's just a feeling." Clarke smiled and leaned back and lifted her shirt out of the way to show her mate. It was flat as always. "Not much to see, but you're welcome to listen anyway." Lexa scooted closer and pressed her ear to Clarke's abdomen.

~

Clarke combed the locks out of Lexa's face and felt the warm breath against her belly as she grew quiet and listened. She almost knew for sure there was a new life growing inside of her, but to say it without seeing a doctor meant she had to add a caveat just in case it was a false alarm. One pang of regret would be that she wouldn't share this news with her mother, like in a normal mother,
daughter relationship for a myriad of reasons, as for Jake, her dad, he was out of the picture a long
time ago and wouldn't tell him even if she knew for sure.

"Do you think that Indra will object?"

"To what?" Lexa moved to lay on the sofa and to gaze up while listening to her belly.

"Well, she just hired me, and seconds later, I might be pregnant." The word still sounded foreign on
her tongue.

"Grace has been either pregnant or caring for her kids when she worked. So, no. I don't think it's
going to be a problem, Clarke. Plus, you'll won't give birth till late..."

Clarke put a finger over Lexa's lips when a sudden jolt of fear took hold of her thoughts and didn't
want to put a jinx on what they were hoping.

Lexa pouted. "I can't hear a thing, but your stomach, growling." She sat up and asked, "Is it okay if
you have a sip?" Lexa held out a glass of champagne.

"I'm sure it won't hurt. But I should probably only have one glass."

Lexa held up her glass with Clarke mirroring her as they held each other gaze and stated, "There
are so many things in my life I got wrong, but not this, Clarke."

Just as the bubbly champagne crossed her lips, she hummed. It was bright and cheerful, tasting
when work popped into her mind and swallowed.

"Fuck me." Clarke stood up, "I can't be drinking. Octavia only gave me the morning off, and I'm
supposed to help out in the evening while she's sick.

"Wait!" Lexa shouted after Clarke as she charged upstairs to change. She caught her hand and led
her back down. "Can't you call and say your quitting?"
"I can't do that with my friends." Clarke and Lexa faced off, and she was close to saying no when Lexa pulled out a trick and gave her a look with her pleading face then stuck out a lower lip in a pout once more. It broke Clarke's resolve and kissed that puffy lip and said, "Okay, I'll call Octavia and break the news to her about the job only, and see if she's responsive with me quitting today. I can't make a promise to you if they are slammed right now. I will have to help out. Deal?"

"I could live with that."

~

Lexa waved at Clarke as she back out of the driveway. Pout or not, Octavia said through her rumbling coughs, they were indeed busy and needed all hands on deck. So it left Lexa with all of this big news and no one she could tell because she made a promise to Clarke, that until they found out for sure, she would keep it to herself and called the local doctor in town. Doc Luna Waters was that person and made an appointment for Clarke. Then she made a call to her mom. Christine answered on the fourth ring.

Alexandra, my prodigal daughter! I'm surprised to hear from you. What's the special occasion?

Lexa laughed at her mother's joke. "I wouldn't say I was prodigal, that would imply I was wasteful." She loved hearing a voice from home and became that little alpha-girl again.

Her mother joined her chuckling, Of course, you're right, and you, my child, were never wasteful. Why do people even use that expression?

"Not a clue, Mom. Hey, I needed to touch base with you, and I have some news."

Oh, I hope you're not planning on moving again. You are already so far away. Oh my, you're not sick, are you?

"Oh no, Mom, no. I'm healthy as an ox. But what I wanted to tell you; I've met someone special." Her mother stayed silent as she continued, "She's the one I've been waiting for all my life."

Did you mate with this girl?
"Clarke, her name is Clarke Griffin. And yes, we're bonded. Like you and Dad."

_I wish your dad were here, but he just stepped out, Alexandra._

"Mom, people here call me Lexa. I decided on using a nickname."

_Not Alex, like your dad?_ Her mother answered her question, _and then I suppose I would get you two mixed up. I hope you don't mind if I call you by your given name._

Lexa could hear the worry in her voice. "Of course not, Mom. Calling me, Lexa wouldn't sound natural coming from you."

_Thank you, dear._

"The reason I called. I thought maybe you could come out and visit us when the weather turns warmer."

_I can't come anytime soon with my restaurant opening in the spring. But let me check our calendar, and I'll get back with you about that. So tell me about..."

"Clarke. Clarke Griffin." Lexa was usually pretty honest about her life with her parents. They knew everything, even all of the stuff about work and everything about her old life. Lexa gave a brief account of Clarke's life before Mount Trikru and her new job. "A description wouldn't do her justice. I'll send you her picture when we hang up."

_Alexandra, I'm sure anyone who could capture your heart must be beautiful inside and out._

"She is Mom all that and more..." Lexa's voice trailed off, thinking about everything she loved about Clarke and the possibility of a baby.

_I can't wait to meet her. But, honey, is there something else? It was like when you were a small child, and you had so much information you were about to bust to tell us._
"Yes and no. But, I'll let you know later for sure."

Is she pregnant?

Lexa closed her eyes. Hopefully, Clarke wouldn't be mad. "Maybe. But, until we know for certain, please don't say anything to the rest of the family." Her mother was silent, and then there was a sniff. "Mom, are you crying."

*Happy tears, only.* Her mother sniffed again. *Please let us know when you find out.*

"You both will be my first call, Mom."

Lexa got comfortable and poured herself another glass of champagne and moved to the living while her mother filled her in on everything that was happening at home.

~

Clarke's duties while Octavia was sick, happened behind the counter. To keep everything flowing, she worked the cash register, fed the dishwasher, and helped out cooking when needed. With the added difference, Echo waited on all the tables and booths, and they were currently three quarters filled, and Clarke tried not to smile too big when she noticed that the gum she always chewed was gone.

Relieved, she went back to check on Lincoln. He was busy making burgers with the works for a table of five. He moved with efficiency to check the order of chicken-fried steak for a couple of truckers waiting at the counter.

"Need any help back here?"

"I'm good." Lincoln glanced at Clarke and went back to cooking. She pushed down the guilt of leaving them one waitress shy and reckon he might be a little annoyed. But he smiled when he turned around said something different. "Octavia gave me your good news."

"Yeah, I was shocked too, and I hope this isn't going to be a burden to you guys."
"Don't sweat it. Waitress jobs usually turned over pretty fast. It's apart of the industry. Hell, we didn't have the sign up in the window more than a half-hour when you waltzed over. We'll be fine. Just keep in touch."

"Oh, I plan on it. Maybe I can make arrangements to bring out food for the crew. Since we'll be down the road a short way."

"I'm sure we can make that work for your new team, Clarke." Clarke could sense the loss coming in her near absence with his statement, even if it didn't warrant that reaction. His tone was calm and honest, making her feel a little selfish.

"Hey, Griffin!" A yell from Echo got her attention. Clarke looked in her direction, seeing her face pleading for help.

"That's me." Clarke nudged him on the way out of the kitchen. "I did not waltz over here. I drove." Lincoln chuckle and flipped the burgers creating a hissing response.

~

Two weeks passed that turned into four as the air grew slightly warmer. Clarke rubbed her belly now with just a little fullness that wasn't there before. Still, she hardly showed, and this might have been wishful thinking on her part. Lexa didn't care and spent most nights after working on the cabin, laying with her ear pressed against her belly, listening for a sign. Any sign. She was even getting worked up over her, especially noisy digestive system, clearly mistaking a gurgle for the baby moving.

The weeks after leaving her job at The Diner didn't work out as Clarke had planned. She hoped for a break, but Indra was in constant contact with her from the moment she was hired, and they put her workspace in the living room when construction began while the cabin grew bigger.

Indra gave her the reins when it came to setting up their office near the lake, and she fell into the role pretty fast. Lexa started right away with the addition to the cabin and decided on a second bedroom instead of the one nursery. Of course, the walk-in closet with an additional bathroom with a tub included in the plans at Clarke's request.

Lexa's project was approved by the local officials, who worked with her before on her renovations.
Soon the roof over the office was removed, and the rooms started to take shape.

The timing was essential in completing most of this work before Indra's project would commence. Now that she had control over when they started at the lake, it would give her the liberty of making everything flow. Clarke was in her element in this new job, working at home and having Lexa nearby was a relief.

Outside she could hear the noise of construction crew as most of Lexa's friends helped to make this new addition happen quickly. Like in the olden days, when an alpha was setting up stakes in a new village with their omega. Eager new friends pitched in to help make their house into a home for a growing family. In the present, talented craftspeople, both men, and women would come and go as they were needed to help complete this job right before Indra's project would start.

On a break, Clarke opened the CAD program Lexa created of their home, to envision their dream. It's three-dimensional capabilities let her walk virtually through the rooms and imagine their life together when she got to the nursery she remembered their first doctor's visit when she found out for sure they were pregnant.

~

The doctor's office parking lot was empty save for a couple of vehicles parked side by side and away from the entrance. Lexa remarked that she was happy it would only be the doctor and staff at the office and wouldn't have to suffer from unwanted attention from the townsfolk of why they were here.

Clarke's heart hurt at what she mistakenly perceived was Lexa's embarrassment and said as much, "Maybe I should have just come alone." A biting remark, she soon regretted at the hurt look Lexa gave her.

Lexa looked up at her with soft eyes and entwined their fingers. "Hey, now. That's not what I meant." Tugging her closer until they breathed the same air and foreheads pressed together. "I'm just nervous for both of us without unwanted attention from gossip."

Lexa's soothing scent caused Clarke's unease to unwind, and led them both inside the quiet and cheerfully lit office and sat down as Lexa got the forms and started filling out what information she could answer, then handing it to Clarke to finish the rest.
Clarke studied the paperwork, and when it came to the reason for her visit, she whispered, "When did we first?"

Lexa leaned back, lifting her chin as she closed her eyes and seemed to do a mental calculation of when they first mated and came up with the date, approximate time, weather conditions, her state of mind, and arousal. Clarke chuckled to herself, loving this new side of Lexa.

"That's not on the questionnaire."

"Should be." Lexa folded her arms across her chest, then released them and rubbed her hands along her pants.

"Uh-oh," Clarke uttered and pointed to the blank line asking for her insurance. "I don't have any."

"Don't worry. I've got this covered. Besides, Indra has insurance for all of her employees, or I can add you to mine. We only have to cover the co-pays."

"But..."

"Clarke, today's visit can't be more than a couple of hundred bucks. By the time you come back, you'll be covered."

The door swung open, and a young woman stepped out. "Ms. Griffin?"

Clarke stood. "That's me." She made her way to the door as she handed her the clipboard and turned to see Lexa picking up a magazine and cleared her throat. "You coming stud?" Lexa quickly uncrossed her legs and tossed the magazine aside and followed her to the back.

~

The nurse assistant took blood and vitals, and then they waited. It was going on a half-hour. Clarke sat on the examination table and was sort of naked wearing just the hospital gown and a paper blanket over her legs. Lexa stood protectively by her side and held her hands, her sweat-soaked hands to be precise. Clarke reached up and ran her finger over Lexa's mating mark.
"So I take it this would be first for you? Getting a girl pregnant?"

"As far as I know. Not that I've been with a lot of girls before. Lexa reflected as if trying to remember and came back with, "I doubt it. I only ever used condoms the past few years here, and the only other girl I didn't was my ex, and that was a long time..."

"You're ex?" Clarke's voice rose in surprise.

"I didn't tell you about her?" Lexa blinked in mild confusion.

Then Clarke started to get mad. "No, you didn't. Is there some reason why?"

"No, I just forgot."

Now she over judged. "How could you forget to tell me you had an ex-lover?"

"Clarke, we don't have to talk about this here. I swear, I'll tell you later."

For some unknown reason, the thought that Lexa hadn't told her she had a special someone before, got her upset and to the point of wanting to leave and tried to scoot her naked butt off of the paper covering the table.

Alarmed, Lexa put her hands on Clarke's knees and tried to keep her from leaving. "Clarke, wait a minute."

A knock on the door and a deep auburn, wavy-haired, gorgeous sexy woman opened the door. "Catch you guys at a bad time?"

Clarke grew even more irritated at the beautiful woman's smirk and voice, saying with a little too much force, "Yes."
Lexa didn't bother to look over at her question and followed with, "No."

The doctor rolled her eyes at both of them and stepped inside and pointed to Lexa and a chair. "Please sit while I check your omega out and you, cool your jets. I could hear you guys in my office." Clarke was sufficiently scolded, embarrassed, and did as she was told. "Deep breaths, Miss Griffin. By the way, I'm Doctor Luna Waters, it's a pleasure to meet you," and offered her hand.

"Clarke Griffin, and you as well. Sorry about that before. It was nothing." Glancing towards Lexa and mouthing a sorry. Lexa's face showed relief when the doctor looked away.

The doctor sat on a rolling stool and began, "Okay, Ms. Griffin. Your vitals looked great, and the blood test we took will measure all of your CBCs, and also see if you're pregnant, but that will take longer for those results. We could find out in minutes with a urine test if you haven't already tried it at home."

"I haven't yet."

"So why do you think you're pregnant. Ms. Griffin?"

"I threw up?" Clarke wasn't sure now that she heard the question from a real live doctor. And no way was she going to mention her erotic story she was writing as if it was some way to tell if she was pregnant.

Dr. Waters started to take notes. "More than once?" Clarke nodded her head. "Have you been around anyone that's been sick, any friends or co-workers?"

Clarke's face flushed a deep red, creating heat at the obvious when she remembered. "Holy shit, Lexa. Octavia and her cold."

Lexa slumped in her chair. "Yeah, that's right."

The doctor took more notes and said as she patted Clarke's leg, "Well, let's be sure with a urine test. Then go from there. She rolled over to a low metal cabinet and pulled out a box, studied it, then put back and pulled out another one. "Go ahead and follow the instructions and leave it on the counter in the bathroom. Then relax for a few minutes, and I'll come back with the results."
Lexa stood up to go with her to the bathroom, and Clarke shook her head, and she sat back down. Clarke waited for the doctor to leave, then bent over and said, "I'm sorry for being such an ass to you when you've been nothing but perfect. I'll be right back."

Lexa's fingers caught in the neck of the gown and pulled her down for a kiss. "I'm rooting for us."

"Me too."

~

Five minutes turned into another half an hour, and the doctor hadn't returned. Lexa held her arm over Clarke's shoulder when she opted for the chair next to her, instead of the examining table.

"So, what was she like?"

"Who?"

"Your ex."

"She cheated on me, end of the story."

"So you'd still be with her..."

Lexa rolled her head over to Clarke's. "It's all water under a bridge that washed out with a cat five storm, and yes, I had plans with her."

"Sore subject?"

"Clarke, can I tell you later? Today is about us. Maybe the three of us." Clarke went quiet, but Lexa continued in a low whisper anyway, "We went to the same high-school and dated a couple of months then we broke up, which I probably should have heeded but we got back together when I"
landed my big job in the city. I was different back then. I had all of these plans. Hung with the wrong people and when my life started to fall apart, which I really couldn't blame her for all of my decisions. One evening when I should have been at work, I came home early and caught cheating in my bed, and that ended the relationship. Now when I think about what I was about to do. It was probably the best thing that happened to me, although it didn't seem like it at the time. Continuing with her and probably marrying her would have..." Lexa trailed off, then turned back to Clarke. "Fate gave me another chance when I came here. Every step away from my old life led me here; led me to you. I will be forever grateful to Keryon for all that I have with you."

Clarke's chin trembled and sensed Lexa's need to explain in the most straightforward language she could. The truth in her words caused tears pooled in her eyes. "I understand. I do. When I look at you, I see only my future. Everything I have in my past that I regret." Clarke paused. "If I were to pull at one of those threads of my life, to change one moment would have unwound and changed all that we have." Clarke held her hand over her stomach. "All that we might have now."

Lexa pulled Clarke closer and kissed the top of her head and tangled their fingers together. Taking in and hold her breath and releasing it slowly.

"I love you, Clarke. With all of my heart and soul no matter the results."

Another knock on the door, and Dr. Waters returned. This time she couldn't hold back her smile. "Let me be the first to say, Congratulations."

~

Clarke sighed at the memory and how their lives quickly changed afterward. Lexa pulled out her phone on the way back home, stopping to ask if she could tell her parents, and Clarke spoke with Christine for the first time, and she promised to come to visit.

Later Lexa's mother called to speak with her for much longer, and Lexa let them be and left her lying on the bed to talk in private. Christine answered the questions she had about her first and only pregnancy with Lexa and remembered her doubts from before. Her life narrowed down to just an omega, and she would only be expected to raise children like some broodmare when Christine straightened her out.

Actually, she got pretty damn mad when Clarke shared why she had those insecurities. Christine told her that her ambition and goals were worthy of exploring and explaining to Clarke, she ran a restaurant through her pregnancy with Lexa that her ideas and thoughts were just as valid.
Clarke couldn't help but wish that some of Christine's kindness and wisdom would rub off on her mother. She had yet to tell her mother of her news, but would in time.

~

Lexa brushed off a pine cone that landed on the set of blueprints in front of her then ran fingers over the next step. She had placed her workbench with the plans just outside the new construction. It wouldn't mean much to a layperson, but she could envision each piece like putting together a model car or airplane.

Her father taught her how, and it became her hobby. Cutting each piece precisely from the machine stamped balsa wood and laying each piece on the printed instructions plans. They were fastened in place with pins on a styrofoam base, and she made the construction from two-D printed design into a three-D object in a few hours. She still remembered her fingers rough with dried glue for her effort.

Later, Dad would stand behind her as he lifted his glasses to get a better look and squeeze her shoulder and say how proud he was of her build. Lexa knew it wasn't the best, but he made it seem like it could be in a museum the way he went on.

Another pinecone knocked over her water bottle, sending it rolling into a small dip in the yard. The next one, she heard it zipping through the air and caught it one-handed and eyed the perpetrator in the form of Anya, now climbing down from the scaffolding.

"Asshole."

"Jerk."

"You're in a good mood," Lexa said, flipping the pinecone over her shoulder and offered her a bottle of water from the ice chest.

"What's not to be happy about? I live for this stuff. Are you sure we can add another room or two?"

Lexa leaned against Gus's pickup and drawled, "Ah, nope."
Almost all of the workers had stripped off their heavier coats and wore the thick flannel shirts they used when up on the mountain when the air was still cold. Today's work included putting up the sides of each room, complete with cutouts for the windows to create the overall structure. The roof would go on tomorrow, followed by the wiring, plumbing, outer walls, and insulation.

"How much square space are you adding?" Anya down the bottle of water and reached for another.

"Just under eight hundred."

"It seems larger." Anya joined her leaning against the truck, and she shifted the toolbelt on her hips out of the way.

Lexa and Clarke had yet to tell their friends they were pregnant. Clarke wanted to wait until she was at the end of the first trimester and had a few weeks to go. Then Clarke would feel comfortable telling everyone the good news. So this addition made little sense she supposed to her friends, but they were just happy to be outside in the fresh air.

"Did Indra send you the videos of the lake? It was pretty clear down below, and it looks like the bulk of the logs have settled in the deepest part." Anya asked.

"She did. I saw just as many along the far bank."

"And what do you think?"

"And, I think this project is much larger than I imagined and extremely dangerous."

"As opposed to trees falling in the wrong direction or exploding after you've already cut because you didn't know it was rotten in the core and tons of wood are flying everywhere? They aren't called widow makers for nothing."

"It's the water, Anya, and the unknown. Every video I've seen of recovering these heavy, drenched logs, it was evident that the water gets pretty damn murky just from wading."
"Raven and I discussed this just last night, and we came up with an idea based on one of those claw games." Anya moved to the workbench and picked up a piece of two by four and started to draw. "Check this out."

Lexa half watched as she rolled up the blueprints, and Anya drew the lake from the side, looking out towards the other bank. Two scuba divers, one below, one above guided the claw to the bottom of the lake.

"Did Indra tell you that we can only remove at most on any given day around twenty logs?" Anya grunted as her tongue stuck out of the side of her mouth, and she continued to draw. "The added component is not disturbing the environment of aquatic life."

Anya finished with a flurry and signed her work of art. "You're the diver below," Anya said with a snort.

"I know about the cranes you big goof, and we will both be down there dive buddy," Lexa said, chucking the piece of wood in the scraps. "Don't you know, it's important for new life to be able to survive, and just because we want to use the lake doesn't mean it belongs to us."

"We will be careful. Besides, that's why Indra and Clarke are making plans. Clarke knows all of this, and I'm sure she wouldn't want her little boo to get hurt and save the little fishes. Hasn't she shared any of this with you?"

"Only a little. Clarke wants me to keep my mind on the construction of the cabin. And when we start the project at the lake, I do know that they are going to bring in some experts and give us a hand until we know what we are doing. But to answer your question. By the end of the day, we are both too exhausted to talk about work."

"That sounds like more than a little, dork." Anya had picked up another pinecone and attempted to make a three-pointer into a trash can nearby, hitting the rim sending bouncing to the ground.

"Speaking of which." Lexa saw Clarke waving through the window and pointing to her wrist just as the outdoor lights kicked on. "If you guys are done for the day, go ahead and head out. Will pick up tomorrow."

"You got it, Pal." Anya whistled to the crew and gave the signal to clean up the site.
"See you guys tomorrow."

~

Clarke insisted, over Lexa's minor objections, and agreed to a special night of reconnecting. They had waited to go any further and only mostly cuddled even as Lexa grew hard, and she became wet from hours of just making out. Clarke wanted to take care of her alpha the proper way, but her mate requested they wait.

But, Lexa's waiting and anybody else...well, she would show her exactly how creative she can be when she waits.

Lexa laid on her back, pulling her cock towards her breasts as she mounted on top, giving her easy access to rub her clit over the backside and creating slick friction against her filling knot. Clarke had to admit things got close to penetration, when she leaned over, two hands alongside Lexa's head as she gave her show grinding her cunt over her stiff shaft. Her breasts brushed over hers and slowly shifted up and down and trying to sneak her cock inside. But, Lexa pulled her down and settled her tongue intoxicating inside as she held firm to her hips and guided her along her length until they both came. It was altogether messy and heated, and just thinking about tonight, her mate would be inside of her...

"Hmm." Clarke smiled as she lazily ran a finger in a circle around today's day on an old-school paper calendar that she preferred using, even if she kept a computerized version on the network with Forrester's Lumber.

There was just something uniquely qualifying about physically writing things down on something she could quickly glance at and note; that on the thirteen of January was the possible first day of conception. Today, March twenty-third, she was ten weeks pregnant, and the baby was the size of a kumquat.

The paper calendar pictured with drawings of babies was a present from Lexa's mom. Along with a few gift certificates and a promise of proper gifts down the road. Expect more on the way. I can't way to be a grandmother, it said in her card. The only one, because Christine agreed to wait and told no one at their request.

Clarke flipped through to October and sometime during the second week...Clarke stopped when her alarm chime noting the time was five o'clock.
She lifted herself out of her chair, a little wobbly on her legs from sitting so long, and walked to the window to watch Lexa for a moment before letting her know it was time to wrap things up for the day.

~

Clarke stood on the porch and waved at the gang then grabbed Lexa's hands when she stepped on the landing and pulled her inside. Catcalls and whistles echo in the yard behind her as she shut the door. Clarke nudged her nose into the hollow on her neck, searching for her scent. Lexa pressed her palms, and back against the door held still and quietly waited. This new connection with Clarke, she craved as well, and when her omega began to purr, that was Lexa's signal to leaned in as she tucked her fingers into Clarke's sweatpants pulling her closer and inhaled in her sweet fragrance now layered with that of being with child. Highly intoxicating and knowing if she didn't step back and clear her nose of her aroma, she would grow hard.

"Hmm, you smell good," Clarke murmured into her neck.

"I highly doubt that. I'm covered in sweat, dirt, and sawdust." Yet Lexa let her have her way, and she snuggled closer. Clarke explained that apart from the changes her body was going through, her senses heightened. Lexa was grateful that even if she could use a shower, Clarke didn't seem to mind her stink.

"You guys made a lot of progress today."

Lexa kicked off her boots and slowly turned Clarke and guided them up the stairs. "I hope to have the walls closed in by tomorrow. Just need the inspection to pass, and we are on the way to..." Clarke wasn't listening by this point and set her down on the bed. "Do you want to join me in the shower?" Lexa said as she held out a hand.

Clarke's hand met her halfway. "It sounds appealing, but I've got to check on dinner."

"Okay."

Lexa stripped out of her clothes, giving Clarke a little show, and was down to just her underwear as her omega's eyes traveled down her body. Her reaction was immediate, and her clit jerked to attention.
"Hmm, you look hungry yourself."

"It's date night." Lexa grinned then tossed her dirty shirt over Clarke's head.

"You punk," Clarke said as she removed the offending garment off her head and stuck in her nose in the shirt once more. "I take that back. You smell like sex.

Lexa suitably blushed and ducked into the shower.

~

Lexa waited after dinner for Clarke to come to bed and let her mind daydream of their infant experiencing a hundred firsts. The baby's first breath of air will come as a relief when her eyes opened for the first time, or the first time Clarke holds her and then it would be her turn. What would that feel like? Her flesh and blood, staring up into her eyes, meeting in wonder.

Her.

Lexa didn't know why they both kept referred without knowing for sure, to the baby's gender. For both of them, it didn't matter. A healthy child was the only concern.

She closed her eyes and felt thankful for once in her adult life and pushed her hands under the pillow, her head rested. Checking that the tiny box she placed there after her shower was still there and stuck it into her pajama pant pocket. A first for her as well, when she would ask Clarke to marry her.

Lexa's face began to blush for no reason. A few seconds later, her heart began to be a little faster with an unexpected jolt of adrenaline. It was too fast and sat up and put her legs over the sides of the bed.

"The fuck?"

Lexa put both hands on her knees and closed her eyes, and took in a slow breath and released. A little better. However, she was troubled with her body's reaction to her plans. And now, the moment
Both of them had been so busy she hadn't been able to come up with the time and how she would ask Clarke to marry her. That they were mated wouldn't matter even if rings were never exchanged. It was something she felt Clarke would want. She wanted it also, but her body was reacting differently. A nervous chill course through her, what if Clarke said no? It was always a possibility that Clarke wouldn't think it wasn't necessary to get married.

Clarke never brought it up, and Lexa didn't, for the apparent reason, because she had kept this a secret as you're supposed to, and to top it off, she hadn't thought of what to say.

Lexa wanted to give Clarke a special occasion to share with friends and family and announce they were also having a baby. Not sure if these two things should coincide at the same time. She was overthinking this whole thing. Lexa wasn't quite sure of the formalities or even if they needed one. She just wanted Clarke to have a ceremony that she supposed every young omega desired.

The lights went out in the bathroom as Clarke stepped out. Lexa's eyes grew large as well as the smile on her face, and her cock twitched. Instead of Clarke wearing one of her tee-shirts to bed, she wore a deep burgundy lace lingerie with her belly showing just a little bump. Clarke put her hair up and let ringlets falling to the sides of her face and showed trepidation as she looked at her with big blue questioning eyes.

"You like?" Clarke said as she spun around.

"You look beautiful, even wearing my old shirts, Clarke." Lexa watched as Clarke looked down at herself, and she quickly added, "But this...you take my breath away."

Lexa stood up and turned Clarke around and helped her sit down on the edge of the bed. Then she went to her knees. Clarke's natural reaction was to bend over and kiss her on the lips. Lexa was grateful she had the sense to slipped the box into her pocket and held both of Clarke's hands in hers and waited.

Her heart had Clarke's name tattoo across its beating precision. It had settled the unease she felt trapped in for too long. Gone was the loneliness she had settle for these past few years. A fact that up to when Clarke arrived in this town, she could hardly remember it anymore. Clarke filled up space so thoroughly; it was as though she always belonged here.
Lexa smiled, leaned over, and kissed Clarke's hand. "You probably think I'm crazy for kneeling. I swear, I'm not." Clarke laughed. "I just needed to reflect on this moment we have between us. How just a few months ago, I didn't even know you existed. How too empty my life..." Lexa shook her head, saying, "You know the drill."

Lexa shifted closer on her knees, taking Clarke's left hand in her right. "My world stopped being gray and dreary when I first met you. It stopped in a way that I could enjoy a moment — the air between us, that first night by the fire. I can still feel you trembling under my arm. You put a crack in that big block of ice I kept around my heart. I honestly didn't stand a chance when you first smiled at me."

"I felt it too, Lexa."

Lexa looked up as she wet her lips and slipped the tiny box out of her pocket and opened it up. The light hit the surface of the diamond scattering its gleam as it caught Clarke's sight.

"Will you marry me?"

~

Shock was Clarke's first reaction, and then she looked up into Lexa's eyes and saw fear, that took her breath away. She belongs to Lexa in every way possible, and until this second, her life seemed complete. Joined with an alpha who shared a child between them, but this, "Yes, I'll marry you."

Lexa's hands shook as she removed the ring and slipped it on her finger. The fit was perfect and heard her mate nervously laugh, "You don't know how relieved I am, Clarke."

"Did you think I wouldn't say yes?"

Lexa nodded her head and rose and gathered Clarke into her arms. "I thought you wouldn't think it necessary."

"It isn't, but..." Clarke held the ring out behind Lexa's back. "It's beautiful."
All the lights in the cabin were turned off, with only the flickering candles dancing around the room surrounding them. Clarke sat on Lexa’s hips and pressed both hands on the bed over her shoulders. They were both still fully clothed.

Lexa reached up and caught Clarke's hand, feeling the slight difference along one finger.

She held it up and kissed her knuckles, then kissed the ring. "I swear fealty to you, Clarke Griffin. I promise to treat your desires as my own, your needs, for me to fulfill." Lexa winked and bucked up with her hips pulling a startled shriek out of her mate and flipped her over, spilling more laughter from Clarke's lips.

"Do you want to set a date for the wedding?" Lexa said as she nudged her nose over Clarke's.

"Later, you promised me a date tonight," Clarke emphasized by exposing her neck. The heat from Clarke warmed the scent along with her throat and drew her down to its source. That wonderful feeling of being set free from self-suspension and cock extended fully in seconds, pulling a groan from her and a laugh from Clarke.

"My my, are we eager?"

Lexa eased one strap down and exposed the top of Clarke's breast, seeing under the light material her nipple hardening against her gaze.

"I could say the same thing." Lexa felt like the luckiest alpha in the world and took Clarke into a soft kiss. The heat coming from her omega traveled around her torso and over her back. Gathering this sense of a more profound connection, she had never felt with another living soul in the world.

Their lips met again and in a hurried tangle of tongues and moans as they both needed to be naked, and she began to strip. Clarke shimmied out of the tiny panties and removed her bra one-handed, and tossed across the room.

Lexa settled her body between Clarke's open legs, and her cock was greeted with drenched curls, and the space between her legs beckon to her. Thoughts of penetrating her omega and filling her with her knot filled every corner of her mind.
Reaching down blindly to her hardening cock, she nudged the tip just inside Clarke's wet but now very tight cunt. She stopped when two hands went to her shoulders, and Clarke grunted, "Wait. Just a little at a time so I can adjust."

"Oh gosh, I'm sorry, Clarke." Lexa tried to pull away but held by Clarke's legs wrapped around her hips.

"Hush. I have to get used to your size again." Clarke pinched her butt and pulled a startled yelp out of her.

Lexa playfully growled and did as instructed. Finding Clarke's lips again and making slow passes with her cock over her entrance and only allowing the tip to slip it, until a few inches more would go in with ease as Clarke's body began to relax.

Lexa pushed a little more inside when Clarke's hands held firm to her ass and pulled her into the hilt. She stayed still and lifted over Clarke to see her face.

The light from the bedside candles flickered, creating a warm orange hue over their connected bodies. It drew her down to Clarke and began to rock in and out of her omega.

It was like the first time. Their bodies heated and wet with sweat. The deeper she pushed, the more Clarke wanted.

~

Full.

So very full.

That was Clarke's first thought, and Lexa hadn't penetrated her yet. Just the head of her cock. That firm wet and dripping part of her body, aching to fill her, but Clarke grew a little anxious. The days then hours of anticipating of the pleasure-pain of reconnecting against hadn't quite prepared her for her mate's shaft. She needed to be thoroughly drenched and open to accept her length and width once more.
That first night and the nights after, it became a drug. Wanting to feel Lexa touching the deepest part of her, then explode within her and fill her till she came herself.

It was the grunting alpha above her and scent pooling out of her pores that urged her to relax. Lexa's next attempt, she accepted her full length, and her body remembered, and she groaned in pleasure when she helped Lexa sink deliriously inside and waited.

Lexa held still as she raised over her. The light showed her alpha's face covered in pleasure as she filled her omega and claimed her. Clarke's reaction was complete as she smiled with her and drew her down to her lips.

~

They moved together, reconnecting in that primal level reserved for the lucky souls who found each other over the expanse of time and space.

Lexa's whole world again narrowed down to the girl underneath her. The love she felt for Clarke, and their baby was complete. Nothing else could explain this deep connection she felt, but one word could.

Blessed.

Clarke cried out as she began to move out and in again. Setting a rhythm between her girl's legs and pulling more groans of pleasure from her lips.

Lexa still worried she might hurt her mate and whispered, "Is this okay?"

Clarke hissed and drew her down again. Her lips and tongue against her mouth was her answer as Lexa pushed harder. Lexa felt rather than heard her response as she pulled deeper inside.

It was in that split second of time. The scents gathered around them that she couldn't hold back, and on her next surged, her knot inflated inside of Clarke, sealing her cunt tight and came. Rocking and grunting on each tightly held jerk as Clarke climax with her. The time waiting to reconnect led to this moment.
It always came down to this perfect moment with her lover's body wrapped around her. The warmth and connection Clarke shared with her and now a child.

~

Lexa settled against her mate until Clarke shifted, and she rolled them over. She moved the bit of hair from Clarke's ear and kissed her cheek. She was met with wet tears streaming down Clarke's face and grew alarmed, but then felt as heard a muffled laughter spill out of her mate.

Relieved, Lexa ran her fingers up and down Clarke's naked back. "You had me worried."

Clarke settled comfortably against her chest as she reached down and pulled the blanket over her back. "Hmm. I missed this."

Lexa kissed her forehead and wrapped her arms around her back. "Me too."

The air between them grew quite as Clarke sighs even out and soon could detect her mate had fallen asleep.

Lexa couldn't stop her happy tears from falling. So very happy that Clarke said yes. Tomorrow she would start making plans with Clarke and set a date to get married.
Chapter 13

Clarke trudged up the hill behind the cabin, out for a brisk walk before she headed up to the lake for the first time. She was at the end of her first trimester and scheduled an appointment with Doc Luna later this afternoon and decided to get off of her butt. The slight weight gain from her pregnancy was starting to show and hated that she felt self-conscious about what was naturally occurring, and yes, out of her control.

Flustered and needing to clear her head, she wiped at her eyes of the annoying tears of frustration and emotional changes that were happening to her. It came to a head this morning when she asked Lexa to go with her to the doctors, and the most she could get out of her was a grunt, and she left Lexa tinkering in the nursery, a little hurt that she wasn't too keen on going with her.

The weeks of constant noise with being pregnant and the new job brought Clarke to her breaking point. Grabbing her coat and beanie, she slipped out of the cabin, but this time she took her phone, having no intention of getting lost. She just needed to clear her head before she said something she would regret.

Clarke's joy became tempered by too much of everything hitting her all at once and hoped that Lexa would understand. But for some unknown reason, she seemed to be oblivious to her frustrations and felt alone and frankly, quite scared.

Unsure of Lexa's quiet nature at times, she seemed to let her guard down when her friends were around and would hear her laughing as if she didn't have a care in the world and not focusing on the job coming up at the lake or her pregnant fiancee.

Clarke hated that she felt this way, really a weakness that placed all of her self-doubts at the forefront of her mind. She was back to being that useless omega where no one expected much out of her. It didn't help now when seeing her body in the mirror and worried that months from now, she would be big as a house, and Lexa would probably avoid touching her altogether. Clarke wiped her eyes and hunted in a pocket, finding an old tissue and blew her nose, and continued up the path.

~

Her passing through the woods didn't go unnoticed by the small woodland creatures as the chittering from the squirrels increased at her intrusion, when a silly notion popped into her head, of wishing she had their life. They seemed to live in the moment, only having worries of simple things. Honest things. Where to sleep, what to eat, and to procreate when the urges of their natures' awakened.
The leaf-littered pathway crunched under her footfalls as the air stirred with life and caught sight of birds flying overhead in and out of trees making nests for their future offspring. They were fussing with one another as they tucked tiny twigs and dried moss into place when a light went off in Clarke's head. Could it be, that this was what Lexa was doing?

Her anxiety receded a little as she reached the crest of the hill and looked out and saw how quaint the view was of their small town. Below through the trees, buildings lined the roadway on either side and wondered if this was the place Lexa spoke about that first evening?

"Hmm," Lexa replied to Clarke from the upstairs nursery. Eager to see their baby on the ultrasound, and focused on finishing putting together the baby's new dresser; details that require her undivided attention for the little one's clothes. Each drawer divided into compartments for tiny booties and what not. She just needed to make sure the rails lined up correctly so they could use them with ease.

Each new day with Clarke was a gift and tried in her simple way of giving back to her omega, hunting on the internet late at night after she went to sleep and reading up on how to be a thoughtful partner to a pregnant mate. But the best advice she got from her mother. Listen to Clarke and be present for her. She'll let you know what she needs. And so far, Clarke hadn't asked much from her.

The last drawer locked into place, and she pushed it shut, waiting until it softly closed. Lexa wanted to make sure the baby wouldn't be disturbed by loud noises and needed her first bedroom to be a safe and comfortable place.

Lexa stood, tossing the screwdriver into the toolbox and called out to her mate, "Hey, Clarke, come up and check this out." Not one to leave a mess, she cleaned up the room and took one last look around and headed downstairs. "Hey Clarke, where are you?"

The cabin was mostly silent with the only the sound of the dishwasher running and noticed that Clarke's coat was missing off the hook by the front door and figured she probably stepped outside, tired of waiting for her to get ready. Lexa took the stairs two at a time as she stripped out of her pajamas and jumped into the shower.

Soaping up, she ran over the things needing attention, and one was touching bases with Anya after
Indra let her know late last night she was planning on moving up the start date as soon as the office was in place, which was happening later today. Clarke mentioned she felt it was way too earlier, but Indra was eager and hell they all were available now the addition to the cabin was finished in record time.

The other running lists were for their child. Lexa wanted her baby to want for nothing, and her mother sent her a list of items they would need first. It was a great relief with her help that they do this correctly, and her mother warned Lexa, she may be putting to much pressure on getting everything right. Informing her that just stuff happens, and you couldn't always predict what little thing might spring up. For Lexa, it was too hard to ignore all she needed to get ready for the coming change in their lives.

Lexa started to dress, calling out to Clarke, hoping she had returned but heard nothing. Her mother's words she warned her about, that Clarke might need more emotional support and up to this point, everything seemed perfect between them. But that seed of worry started to sprout and called Clarke on her cell phone as she picked out a pair of jeans and slipped them on.

Clarke answered on the third ring.

*Hey.*

Her voice sounded flat, which in itself shouldn't have caused any worry. But...'Hey, yourself. Are you already at the lake?'

*No.*

Lexa hunted for her boots. "Where are you?"

*I'm just out ."

Sitting down on the bed, she stuffed one sock-covered foot into her boot. "Is there something wrong?"

*I just needed to take a walk ."
Concerned, Lexa asked, "Can I join you?"

Clarke paused an uncomfortable amount of time and mumbled, *If you want.*

Lexa looked up at the ceiling and cursed under her breath. "Of course I want. Give me your location, and I'll find you."

*I took the trail behind the cabin. I think I'm at your favorite spot.*

Curious why Clarke would go there, she kept that question to herself and added cheerfully, "Great. I'll see you in a bit."

~

Detecting Clarke's scent, Lexa followed it up the pathway almost absentmindedly. She knew the way well enough and pushed down the disappointment that Clarke had left without her on the first trip to the crest. Lexa scolded herself for being utterly focused on the cabin's renovation. It was what she had been living and breathing this past month, and apparently, she had not seen to her mate's needs as she thought and couldn't blame Clarke if she wanted to get away.

But, with the rooms now mostly completed, they needed to be furnished, when an idea popped into her head. Maybe she could talk Clarke into going to an actual store instead of ordering everything from the internet and take her on a road trip to get away from the town for a day. But her immediate concern was making sure Clarke was okay. Hearing her mother's words about her duties to be there and listening to her, omega rang in her head, even if it made no sense.

Clarke usually kept quiet, working diligently on her projects with Indra. Spending some late evenings at her computer, and finding her asleep. She'd scooped her up and carried her to bed with Clarke mildly complaining and would be practically asleep by the time she tucked her into bed after brushing her teeth. Lexa assumed the baby was sapping all of her remaining energy and worried that Clarke was overworking herself.

Just as she got to the clearing, she found Clarke standing still, eyes closed and soaking of the rays from the new spring sun. She looked radiant and quickly pulled out her cell phone and took a few pictures before Clarke noticed and objected.
One day while on the working on the cabin, she noticed Clarke wandering around the grounds. Touching a tree and gazing up into the branches seemingly acclimating herself to this place and instead of interrupting her quiet introspection, she selfishly took snaps of Clarke's unguarded, candid expressions meant for a wildflower, and oddly shaped rock or a bird flying overhead. It made Lexa's loins ache for want of her but wouldn't take these quiet moments away from Clarke.)

Lexa made sure to make enough noise as she came up behind Clarke so she wouldn't frighten her as she placed her hands protectively on either side of her belly, hearing her hum, "I sure hope you're not a bear."

Lexa playfully growled, "Hardly. What brought you up here?"

Clarke sighed softly and uttered, "I was mad at you."

Lexa didn't react by moving away. She pulled Clarke closer. "What did I do now?"

"Nothing. It's just..."

"Tell me."

"Do you want this baby or not?"

Lexa closed her eyes and pushed down the pain she sensed it Clarke's words. "With all my heart, Clarke. Whatever made you think that?"

"You don't want to go with me for my checkup today," Clarke whispered.

Lexa blinked in shock, a little hurt by her remark. "What gave you that idea?"

"When I asked you this morning," Clarke paused. "You grunted at me."

Lexa laughed, remembering that she did indeed do that. "I'm sorry about that. But for what it's worth, my grunt was a yes. I guess I should have..."
"Do you think I'm fat?"

"What? No." Lexa stepped in front of Clarke, her face downturned, and heard a sniff. "Hey, now. Look at me." She didn't, and Lexa leaned over until her eyes found Clarke's. "Come here." Lexa opened her arms, and Clarke fell into them. "Tell me what's bothering you."

Clarke sighed and breathed into her chest. "I can't shake this feeling of...hell I don't know, just everything?"

"Are you feeling overwhelmed?"

"Sometimes."

"Worried, something might go wrong?"

"Lately, I have." Clarke clung to her as if she would disappear if she didn't.

"What can I do to make you feel better?"

"This is a start." Clarke nudged her nose into Lexa's neck as she released a warm, calming scent. "Hmm. Thank you."

"How about after today, we make plans for a trip out of town?"

"Just you and me?"

And there it was. A little insight came to light with those four words. "I'd like that. But, Clarke, next time you're feeling overwhelmed..."

"You've been so busy and..."
"I don't care how busy I am, Clarke." Lexa pulled back and gazed down into her eyes. "I can't begin to understand all of the changes you've been through these past few months, and when you have worries about anything, you've got to talk to me."

"Even if it sounds ridiculous?"

"Even then. What you're feeling matters to me, Clarke, and to be clear if you still have any doubts about this afternoon." Lexa looked directly into Clarke's eyes so she could see her sincerity. "I'm looking forward to going with you to the doctors. Hell, I can't wait to see our baby."

Lexa could sense Clarke's relief ease as she held her and wanted to make this last. "Right after the doctor's visit, let's take off for a few days. Just you and me."

"I wish I could, but Indra probably needs me this weekend."

"But, nothing. Let me talk to Indra about letting you have a few days off."

"Oh no, you can't do that. I don't want Indra to think that I'm flaking out on her."

"Okay, but honestly, look around, even though Spring has sprung. What's there to do but wait until the weather turns warmer?"

"Indra may need me to organized the office."

"That can't take more than a day, and it sounds like it would work in progress."

"Okay, I'll ask. Maybe Indra wouldn't object if I promised to make it up to her."

"That's my girl." Lexa decided to change the subject, having maneuvered through this little bump in the road. "Since we're here, let me show you something up here, I found one day." Lexa took her hand and walked further down the path on the other side of the crest.
"Do you have another special place up here?"

"Sort of, but honestly, I'm not sure what it is. I discovered it on the first day I came up here, and as far as I know, no one else knew about it until I found it covered by overgrowth. This thing just stuck out of nowhere, and I thought I could clear it off of the trail, but it ended up being something totally different."

"You've got me intrigued."

"Anya would say, it's apart of the legend of the lake."

"You mean, Lake Sonchgeda, Soncha Kapa. The City of Light," doing a pretty good imitation of Anya."

"Oh, damn, you're right. Our friends have been hanging around the cabin too much. Here it is."

Lexa stopped when they came to a large flat rock in the middle of the trail. Its diameter measured at least three feet and was half as tall.

"This stone isn't a natural outcropping that you find in most forests. Someone brought this rock here."

Lexa showed how its edges were rounded off not with time, but by someone's hand who inscribed what looked to be long lost names too worn to make out and an arrow pointing northward.

"What does it mean?" Clarke said as she touched the surface.

"I haven't a clue. But you can see part of a name written at the top; it looks to spell out the name of the lake. Maybe it was directions."

"But, why would anyone put it here where no one could find it?"

Lexa lifted one shoulder and replied, "I found it."
"True. Okay, let's see what I kind find on the internet." Clarke took out her cell phone and began taking pictures of the rock at different angles and was about to stop her, because yes she did the very same thing, even noting the GPS location. She never got around to doing any in-depth research and let Clarke have this moment now that her mind was off of her worries.

~

Lexa kept quiet, only occasionally glancing at Clarke as she drove the distance to the lake while she composed their shopping list. Eager to get out of town when Indra said, of course, and was surprised when she found out Clarke worked through most weekends and insisted she take time off.

The setup for the office was simple enough, and until everything was hooked up, Clarke wasn't needed. Already packed for the weekend, and they would head out after the doctor's visit to Eden's Pass City Center, a somewhat modern shopping center that lived miles from Mount Weather, on the other side of the mountain.

Lexa signaled right and turned onto a gravel road, now widen for the future larger big rigs that would be hauling the logs they recovered out of the lake. Marked on one side was a No Trespassing and the other, Pardon Our Dust. However, the word Dust was line-through and replaced with Mud, now that this summer, they would be working at the lake, a running joke among lumberjacks. Noting to tell Clarke later, that they were always filthy working long hours taking down trees, and dirt got everywhere.

The jeep's wheels crunched over the gravel road, and she turned into a make-shift parking lot off of the new pathway that led to the lake. "We're here." She put the jeep into park and set the brake. "Don't forget your hardhat, Clarke."

Clarke shut her laptop as she looked out of the windshield. "Oh, damn, I forgot to bring it."

Lexa reached behind Clarke's seat. "I remembered for you." Looking over just as Anya pulled alongside her jeep. "Here comes trouble," Lexa said as she handed Clarke her hardhat. "Excuse me, double-trouble."

Raven pushed passed Anya and drew Clarke into a hug as she stepped out of the jeep, holding her for a few extended seconds before she guided her to where Indra was waiting, leaving the two alphas staring at each other when Lexa finally broke the ice, "Sup?"
Anya nodded, then leaned over, staring into the back of her jeep and saw they were going on a trip and cast her an amused look at her. "You guys going somewhere?"

Lexa muttered under her breath, "Shopping."

Anya raised her eyebrows almost to the edge of her beanie. "With your suitcases?"

"Out of town," Lexa emphasized each word.

"Still, that doesn't answer the question, why are you taking your suitcases, unless..."

And just like the Anya hit that nerve that could set her off with her prying.

All the time they spent working at the cabin, Anya never once asked why they were expanding the cabin, and she had spent a lot of time working mostly alone in the new nursery. Unaware of its real purpose, mainly because it looked almost identical to the other bedroom, except for the paint and position of the windows and she let her temper die down now that the secret they kept would be revealed, hopefully, later this afternoon.

"Listen, Anya..."

"Lexa. Honey, can you come here and fix my hat? It's too tight."

"You bet." Thankful for her girl's distraction, and started walking towards were Clarke was standing.

Anya followed and quipped, "She's got you whipped."

"If you want to keep walking normally, I'd watch what I say next."

Anya laughed then mocked, zipping her lips shut as she hip-checked Lexa.
Lexa wasn't sure where her anger was coming from with Anya. Maybe it was the smirk on her face or the constant teasing at her expense. They had yet to tell anyone about being pregnant, and after today's doctor's visit, they planned on sending out a text blast to their friends. Still, it was out of portion to her simple ribbing. "Anya, if you have to know, Clarke wanted to get out of town, because...she's needed a break."

"So, you're not coming out to the bar tonight?"

Lexa stopped in place, remembering they had made tentative plans to hang out. "Sorry, not sorry, but Clarke comes first."

"I hear you. Maybe we could go with you. Raven's been bugging me about taking a trip, and I..."

"Maybe another time, Anya."

~

"It's been so long since we've hung out. You've been pretty busy with your new job," Raven said as she led Clarke by the elbow to the job site, seeming to need the contact. That hug of hers, however, held something unspoken.

"Yeah. Pretty much. I love the challenge. But it's the noise at the cabin with the renovation that's driving me crazy. We're taking off after this is done, out of town for the weekend."

"Oh. Damn. I thought. Anya said you were coming out tonight. Well, I do understand. Mount Trikru doesn't have much in the way of shops. I order a lot of stuff online unless I can getaway. But that's been ages."

Clarke could sense Raven's scent was different but didn't need to smell it, to detect something was up with her. Raven's face remained neutral, but yeah something was different with her.

Raven stopped her in place and gave her the once-over, "Something different about you, but I can't put my finger on it. Have you lost some weight?"
Clarke couldn't believe that Raven just read her mind and sputtered, "I don't think so." Clarke looked down self-consciously and thought that Raven's question was extremely odd since she wore an oversized sweatshirt to hide her baby bump and hadn't been that long since they hung out, but before Clarke register what was up, she saw Indra motion to her to join her at her work table. "Listen, let's get caught up later before we take off. I've got to..."

"Go," pushing Clarke in the direction of her boss. "I'll hang out over here." Pointing to where Anya and Lexa were standing.

"This shouldn't take long. I hope," and gave Raven a one-arm hug and pulled back. This time Raven couldn't hide the blush to her cheeks. Clarke let it pass and joined Indra studying her plans, spread over a table.

~

This simple project today started collecting rubber-neckers. Town's people pulled into the lot and gathered near the roadway. "I guess I should be surprised we would cause a spectacle."

Indra glanced up for a second and shook her head and gazed back down to the plans. "It's okay for today. What time will the truck get here?"

Clarke opened her laptop to the spreadsheet and hunted for the scheduled delivery to be sure. "I've got noon. Give or take a half-hour, and then I'll give Doug a call."

"Great job getting everything in place."

"Thanks, Indra."

The land where the modular office would occupy was leveled and prepared with gravel bed for it to rest. As for the amenities, like water, heat, and electricity, Clarke arranged for the hook up after the office was in place. It was just the waiting that was making her nerves stand on end, hoping the truck wouldn't be late. Clarke spent more time that she would have liked working the timing of today's events. It was the first real test that would finally begin to show and what would probably be her life for the next year or more. After the submerged logs from the lake were removed and taken to Forrester's Lumberyard to be sawed into planks and slow kiln dried, then construction on the hotel would begin.
"Have you thought about what I offered you, Clarke?"

"Honestly, I have to admit only a little. It's a big step, and I hoped I had time to decide."

"Managing a hotel nine months out of a year with a part-time salary when we shut down for the winter for maintenance, not a sweet enough deal for you?" Indra joked.

"It's more than I could have imagined, and I am interested. But until we're at that point, can I sleep on it?"

"Take the time you need, and yes, we've got plenty of months before we even close to laying down the foundation, and your baby will probably be walking by that time."

Clarke couldn't halt the blush that covered her cheeks. "How did you..."

Before Clarke could finish her statement, Indra tapped her nose. "You don't think I know when an omega is pregnant?" She laughed and rested her hand over Clarke's. "You've kept it secret from everyone?"

Clarke gazed up from under her hard hat and said, "Yeah. I'm just finishing my first trimester, and then the doctor said it should be safe to tell everyone."

"Just like my Grace. I'll keep to myself, Clarke."

A horn blasted caused everyone to start clapping as the truck loaded down with her office arrived earlier than expected, and Clarke let out a breath of relief.

~

Lexa beamed, watching Clarke take over when the driver was having problems getting the office onto the lot. She directed the large truck like she had been doing this all of her life. Lexa chuckled when a large bear of a man stepped out of the cab, meaning to give her a piece of his mind, but
ended up pulling his worn baseball cap off of his head and holding it to his chest when Clarke calmly pointed out his truck wasn't lining up correctly. Clearly smitten by her mate, he did as Clarke instructed without any further word of complaint. She noticed that he might have actually bowed at Clarke. Well, she couldn't blame him, Clarke was a princess in her eyes, as well. Blushing, when remembering finding Clarke’s story opened on her laptop one day.

(She found Clarke late one afternoon asleep on the sofa currently snoring, a clenched fist supporting her head under her chin and covered her in a blanket and turned to shut down her computer. But not before seeing something about a well-endowed alpha on the screen.

Lexa's blinked, then darted a gazed back to Clarke to see that she was still asleep and sat down and scrolled to the beginning and found out her talented mate had an erotic imagination.

Surprised at Clarke's interpretation of her as a warrior conquerer and taking Clarke, the Princess as her mate. Well, Clarke was right about that, she could see her omega in that role.

The two of them set in a different time. Now understanding Clarke's dreams coming to life on the pages in her story. That omega also became pregnant. Maybe there was something mystical about their lives together that Clarke could sense, or perhaps it had something to do with being pregnant for the first time.)

Lexa saw out of the corner of her eye Raven and Anya whispering, then noticed a fresh mating bite on beta's neck just as she pulled up the edge of her sweater. A jolt of recognition hit her square between the eyes, seeing now how Anya talked low to Raven and recognizing for the first time real devotion in her eyes.

Anya caught her staring, and without batting an eye, she lifted her chin and saw that yeah, she too shared a bite on her neck as well. Lexa mocked, wiped her eyes as if it brought her to tears, and her friend smiled and mouthed, *Fuck you* and kissed Raven on her cheek. She couldn't wait to share the news with Clarke.

~

"Are you both ready to see your baby?"

They nodded as the doctor dimmed the lighting and rolled over to Clarke's side and squirted warm gel over her exposed belly and rubbed the wand over as Lexa's eyes studied the small monitor. All
she could see was a black and gray image, and nothing that looked to be a baby. Her heart sank, praying it was a mistake and reached for Clarke's hand and squeezed.

"And..."

Lexa steadied herself for the bad news.

"Here we go."

Relief washed over Lexa as she released her breath, now seeing with her own eyes the shape of a head and a hand. The screen became a little blurry and wiped the tears the filled her vision.

"Damn, Clarke. There she is," Lexa whispered and felt Clarke's hand squeeze her back.

"Look, honey, it's a little Lexa."

Lexa released a watery laugh, leaning over to get a better look. "Nah, it looks like a little Clarke to me."

The doctor shook her head and said, "It's too soon for me to see the baby's gender, but there is a genetic test to find out. But, I don't recommend unless I feel something is going wrong with the fetus. In your next visit, we'll know for sure, and then you can make plans."

"I can wait if you can, Lexa."

"I don't want to take any chances with your health or the baby's."

The doctor smiled and found the perfect shot and took a couple of pictures as the machine started to spit out the baby's first photos.

A wave of pride and responsibility surged over Lexa and looked down at her mate. Clarke's eyes glistened, matching her own and bent over and kissed her forehead, and whispered, "Thank you, Clarke."
"Clarke, you indicated, in today's questionnaire, you've been feeling a little down, can you explain?"

"I've been through quite a bit in the last year and wasn't expecting to be, expecting so soon. We didn't plan this pregnancy."

"Are you getting enough sleep?"

Lexa butted in, "No, she isn't. Not that I haven't tried to get her to come to bed early."

"But, I've got so much to do, honey."

"Clarke..." Lexa gently scolded her partner when the doctor stopped her.

"Clarke, you need to take breaks when you feel stressed and worn out. It's not good for you or the baby."

"See," Lexa added.

"And you, what have you been doing to help out your mate? Because I'm not quite sure that this is prenatal depression."

Lexa was grateful for the dim room as heat warmed her cheeks. "Uh.."

Clarke did a one-eighty from this morning and butted in, "My alpha takes good care of me."

"How does she do that?"

Lexa could sense Clarke's anger rise and stopped her from getting into with their doctor and placed a protective hand on her shoulder. "I take my responsibility to Clarke and our child with everything that I am." Lexa let her out aggressive alpha persona out of its cage, "My worth, my being I do for
Clarke and our child, Doctor Waters."

"I see. Do you make sure Clarke eats right, sleeps enough, takes breaks to let her body and mind adjust to these new changes?"

Clarke jumped in, "I'm right here, and yes, she does all of that."

"Then why are you feeling down?"

Clarke looked up at Lexa then to the doctor's concerned face. "I...don't know."

The doctor placed her hand over Clarke's "I'm not trying to make you both angry, and you're feeling depressed may be just a passing phase as you said all of the changes you've been through. My recommendation is to take some time off, Clarke, and enjoy being pregnant."

Clarke laughed, "How do I do that?"

"Do you have any hobbies? Something fun that maybe both of you could do together? It's quite okay to let your hair down, laugh, dance. Be intimate and enjoy each other."

"Does taking a trip out of town this weekend count?" Lexa asked.

"That sounds wonderful. Let's try to make this a habit without guilt, Miss Griffin."

"We do have a wedding to plan, Lexa."

"I think I can come up with some more fun projects. We will both work on it, I promise," Lexa said.

"Good. And no pressure trying to make everything perfect for your first child. Let's make another appointment in a few weeks, shall we? And please, try to have fun this weekend."
The doctor left the two of them alone, and they were both quiet as Clarke got dressed, and Lexa waited. Unsure of what to say or where to began to make this right for Clarke. She looked down at the picture of their child. Completely, aware that the two of them didn't know what the fuck they were doing at times.

"I guess it's safe to let everyone know."

Lexa looked up. "I'm sure Mom and Dad will be relieved." Are you going to text Abby?"

"A text seems too impersonal. I'll call Mom on the way."

The room grew still, and Lexa was unsure of what to say and went with her gut as she looped a finger into Clarke's jean pocket and pulled. She held Clarke to her chest and purred. Releasing what Lexa hoped was the proper scent of an apology, then sensed Clarke's response with a sweetness that drew her down to a kiss.

Remembering those first few moments when she laid with Clarke and held in her arms and kissed her, for the first time, felt like this moment, when the smell her omega's scent of arousal and submission grew.

Clarke whispered into her ear, "Let's go stud, I've got plans for you tonight."

They left the room, hand in hand, and promptly ran into Raven and Anya sitting in the waiting room. Clarke didn't skip a beat and leaned over, whispering into Lexa's ear, "Well, I guess we don't have to text these two."

Lexa couldn't help but laugh, recognizing the expression of fright on Anya's face, mirroring the same one she had weeks earlier.

~

"I know, Mom. I said I was sorry." Lexa ducked around Clarke, finally getting a call back from Abby on the way to their rooms, and from the sound of it, her mother wasn't pleased just now finding out Clarke was three months pregnant. "No, we don't know the baby's gender. We're going to wait until..."
Lexa put their luggage on the floor near the table by the window. Giving Clarke a look to hang up and she held up one finger, sitting on the bed already looking wiped out, and their mini-vacation hadn't even started.

"Mom, I've got to go. I promise I'll keep you updated and one more thing before I hang up. We're getting married, and I'd like you to come. I'll send you more information once we get a date nailed down. Got to go." Lexa looked up, surprised. Then chuckled at Clarke, when she stuck her tongue out. "I'm sorry it's was the only way I could think to make her stop talking."

"Did it work?"

"Only if she doesn't call me right back." They waited for a bit, and the phone remained silent. Clarke finally had a moment to look around the room, just now noticing it included a heated tub for two. "This is nice."

"Later." Lexa reached for Clarke's hand and slid the window open. "Smells like snow is coming." Clarke tucked her body close to her and could finally feel her body relaxing.

~

Clarke's stomach was pleasantly full after they decided to have their dinner in the room and planned for their day of shopping tomorrow. She combed her fingers through Lexa's long mane of hair lying within reach. A habit Lexa had of placing her ear over her belly and quietly speaking to their child hadn't changed from that first day.

She ran over this morning's confusion and hurt, surprised how quickly she was able to get over what had upset her when Lexa found her in the forest. Her comforting embrace had the effect of soothing what had been bothering her and placed it back on the shelf. It also helped after talking with the doctor.

Having Docter Waters tell her to relax, took the pressure off of her shoulders, she sorely needed. Clarke could get used to taking time off with her mate and enjoying this new chapter in their lives. Honestly, she didn't have a choice. She was caught between working herself to the bone or taking time off when needed. It's wasn't even a contest. Clarke would have to learn how to pace herself over the next six busy months.
Clarke wrapped a curl of hair around one finger and found joy in that simple action helped her relax. It was in Lexa's scent she found her comfort. That somewhat intangible thing she had sought all her life.

Their bond, laid down between them when they joined together and took each other's bite. Remembering the intensity wash over her when looking up into Lexa's eyes when she tied with her and Clarke moaned out loud, then covered her mouth.

"Oops."

An amused look fell over Lexa's face when she glanced up. "You got something on your mind, omega?"

"Only you, my love."

"I was telling our child, before you interrupted us, that she will have a friend to play with when Raven and Anya's baby is born," Lexa mused, looking between Clarke's full breasts.

"Have you told her to go to bed, because Mommy needs her alpha, something fierce."

Lexa put her ear to her belly once more, then smiled. "I believe I just heard her yawn."

Lexa kissed her belly and moved up to lay next to Clarke. Finding her hand and entwining them together over the same spot, her kiss lingered.

After a quiet, still moment, Lexa asked, "Do they hurt?" running a thumb over Clarke's nipple covered by the light material of her gown, having discarded her bra hours ago.

"Not right now."

A glint of delight held in Lexa's eyes as they ran over her body, like a kid in a candy store, not sure of what to purchase with her weekly allowance. Clarke added to her pleasure as she eased her gown off of her shoulders, revealing her breasts to her mate. They had changed. Growing fuller as her nipples took on a noticeable rosy hue.
Clarke unveiled her body's transformation from mating with Lexa, further connecting one to another. Clarke detected a whiff her mate's arousal as Lexa's sweats couldn't hide her growing need. She rocked up and crawled over her body, her lips eager to kiss her and was stopped in place with two hands on her shoulder.

"I want to see you too."

Silently Lexa rose on her knees, giving Clarke a wink as she crossed her arms at the hem of her tee-shirt and pulled it off. Shaking out her mane of brown wavy hair and damn, was that ever sexy. The coolness of the room caused her nipples to grow stiff as Clarke's eyes turned dark, appreciative, and beckoned seductively with one finger to come closer.

The air in the room held silent as no words needed to be spoken between the two lovers as Lexa bracketed her legs and kept still as Clarke ran her fingers lightly over the bloom of her chest. A thumb passed over one taut nipple and leaned up, capturing the other between her lips, licking, sucking, and lost herself in the texture and scent of her woman.

Lexa stiffened, holding Clarke in place with a hand at the nape of her neck, the other reached down, cupping her breast with the other. She caressed over the tip of her nipple, in kind, caused Clarke to hiss at the light pressure, and she pulled back and let her take control.

Clarke splayed her hands over Lexa's abdomen and added teeth as she bit down, flicking the captured tip with her tongue, prompting her alpha to groan. At her breasts, Lexa's cock extended down her leg as Clarke's hand followed her length, finding her swollen, hungry, and stroked the thickness of mate's hard shaft. Lexa whimpering grew to a growl, pulling Clarke's face up, capturing her lips as she urged her back on the mattress, spreading her legs with her knee, and arched over her open thighs.

The remaining guilt and forgiveness met with desire and lust.

Heated breath connecting when lips met, and Lexa's tongue licked the edge of her mouth, asking for entry. Clarke submitted to her alpha's insistence, enjoying her mate's gentle aggression in taking what she easily gave to her.

With the heat and moisture gathering between their bodies still clothed caused Clarke to fidgeted and squirmed, needing both of them to be naked, but with the weight of her lover holding her down, she couldn't move..."Lexa, please." She broke free from her lips. Her cunt was soaked and
ached to be filled.

"Tell me what you need, Clarke." Lexa's eye grew dark, and her scent even deeper. Desire poured from her mate, as sweat gathered at the hollow of her neck and dripped over her breast.

"Naked, now," were the only words she could speak. Lexa sat up as they both stripped their clothing, tossing across the bed and room, coming together once more.

The head of Lexa's cock grew red, filling with the blood and extended over her swollen belly as she kept her lips on her mouth and arms around her body. Rocking over her and spilling her desire over her.

Clarke reached down and stroke her thick shaft, coaxing her release to break free and hearing the wanting need caught in Lexa's throat. She knew the sound well enough. Lexa wanted to be inside of her and positioned her cock at her entrance and held Lexa's ass one-handed and urged her to push inside.

"I don't want to hurt you," Lexa moaned.

"You want to stop?" Clarke looked up into her mates eyes, glinting, unsure.

"No, but..."

"Don't stop. Just fuck me."

Lexa removed Clarke's hand from her cock and took over. She guided over and through the wetness spilling out of her sex. Each pass, like before, she nudged a bit inside. Clarke hissed at each try, crying out when Lexa moved away and ran her shaft over her clit.

"Lexa, please." Lexa's accidental teasing made her spill more wetness.

"Trying," Lexa grunted as ran once more over her aching cunt and pushed a couple of inches inside, then out again. So close. It made Clarke's body hum anticipation. Lexa leaned up, hands beside Clarke's head and pushed steadily and with a moan, deliriously thrust until she slipped inside
and held still. Looking down at Clarke and shook her head. Clarke could sense Lexa's apology on her lips and cover them with a finger.

Clarke uttered through the fullness, "Mmm. I've missed this" Lexa's face held desire as she pulled out to her tip and pushed slowly back in, setting a slow pace as always to let Clarke get used to her thickness.

Her comforting weight settled firmly on top followed by a first kiss that was gentle and spoke of a promise of more to come as Lexa's breath mingled with hers; until the desire let free, as tongues met, wet and needy as the heat between them built, and Lexa eased in and out.

~

Tight.

So very tight.

The power from the muscles of Clarke's cunt squeezed down on her girth. A warm surge of pleasure washed over Lexa and rolled into mate's open, inviting legs.

"Clarke." Lexa moaned into her neck, searching and finding her mating bite and nuzzled the surface. Clarke's scent clung heavy, in her nose, and swelled hard, longer, pumped deeper.

Clarke clung desperately to her body and wrapped her legs and arms around her as they rode out the pleasure between them. Lexa gave as Clarke took. It narrowed down her whole world of what mattered. Only Clarke's happiness, and shifted over onto her back, so her mate could ride her. Holding Clarke's hands as she let herself break free from her sadness, her face now lost in desire. Understanding now how Clarke pictured them in her story. That warrior lived in her heart as it desired only this one person, this woman, her omega, bound to her for life.

Lexa rested Clarke's open palm over her breast as she reached with the other to her clit and fingering the slippery swollen bud as Clarke cried out and arched over almost falling backward. Lexa leaned up and held her to her chest, mouths connecting. Another pass over her clit and Clarke exploded, covering knot and hips in her release.

Lexa unable to hold out from the pressure of Clarke's cunt massaging her cock. She let loose her
climax spilling deep inside her mate, turning Clarke on her back and continued pumping into her. Needing to bring Clarke more pleasure, she pulled out and put Clarke's legs over her shoulders and pushed two fingers inside, coating them with her combined released and latched onto her clit with her mouth, sucking and flicking the swollen bud. Tasting both Clarke and herself mingling together, made Lexa grow stiffer, harder and moaned into Clarke's sex. Her mate arched her back again as she suddenly came, overflowing with more come, coating Lexa's face until she glistened.

Lexa licked around to clean up the mess when hands to her shoulders pushed her away. "Too sensitive," Clarke cried out.

Spent, Lexa laid her head on her belly now covered with their fluids and felt fingers feathering through her hair. Slow intake and release of breath followed by a contented sigh from Clarke.

Minutes passed, and Lexa was close to drifting to sleep when Clarke broke the silence, "My love, you are perfect, but I'm hardly done with you."

Lexa blinked her eyes open and smirked and cast her gaze upward and found crystal blues eyes gazing down at her.

"Oh yeah, what did you have in mind?"

Clarke just smiled and wagged her legs open. Lexa kissed her clit once more and crawled up her body and position herself at her opening and pushed inside once more. Clarke pulled her into a kiss, moaning at tasting their combine released and responded with her seductive scent of desire.

~

The windows to their bedroom were open, letting in an unexpected warmer breeze. Almost unheard this time of year. It had in its coming, woke the forest with birds and all sorts of animals all around them. It didn't, however, mask the noises of the highway, now adding to the symphony of sounds.

Lexa could have let the sounds bother her. But, with her new life with Clarke, things like this didn't worry her as much anymore. She rolled her head over to spy on Clarke, still sound asleep. One bare leg on the outside of the covers, and she had stripped her top somewhere in the bedsheets.
Lexa took in and held her breath, expecting their happy bubble to break any moment. Nothing can be this good and last forever, as they say, and Lexa put a hand on her chest and said a prayer into the heavens, hoping that this would be their life. Happy, mated, crazy in love and expecting their first child.

Lexa rolled over towards her sleepy girl, reaching out, then closing her hand into a fist. Just because she has to get up didn't mean Clarke had to, it wouldn't be fair. She was taking care of two people now.

She gently pulled the covers over Clarke that had slipped down, aching to see her mate full with her child. Clarke was striking beautiful all the time, but it was in this quiet mornings when her love was deep in sleep, hopefully dreaming pleasant fantasy that surely would include her by her side, that seeing Clarke at her most vulnerable, she was unafraid and reflected the peace she felt being by her side.

Lexa now understood how Keryon blessed and gifted her with this new reality. She surely didn't feel she deserved this life when her old world came crashing down. But somehow, someway, they both were given a second chance.

Lexa moved closer and carefully laid her hand on Clarke's belly, now with more fullness. Clarke was four months pregnant, beating Raven by one. How her friends found out they were pregnant, almost came to blows one evening at The Blue Ox, when Anya had too much to drink, and kind of, sort of, blamed Clarke and Lexa for getting them pregnant.

A stupid hairbrained idea Anya came up with when she joked about all of their fucking pheromones, making everybody hornier than usual. Lexa was the unspoken alpha of the pack, and well, Anya figured it's what caused her and Raven to forget about using protection one cold evening and...

Lexa chuckled.

Clarke sighed. Lexa moved her hand up and guided the hair covering Clarke's eyes away. Leaving them there for an extended second, then dropped it down to the bed. Clarke complained in her sleep and rolled over on her side, thankfully facing her.

A yawn and hand to the back of Clarke's mouth. "What is all that noise?"
Lexa sniffed, "Nature, my love."

"Turn it off. I don't want to get up yet."

Lexa rolled over and stumbled out of bed to the windows, shutting them and crawled back into bed.

With her eyes shut, Clarke mumbled, "Today is the day."

"That it is. I've got to get up. Do you want anything for I head to the lake?"

"I'm good." Clarke rolled over on her back, made a puffing sound, and blindly reached for the covers and pulled them up to her chin. Lexa sighed, kissing her cheek and got up.

She took one look back and headed to the shower, not the kitchen, per usual to start the coffee. One of the things Clarke insisted on getting for her was a coffee maker with a timer. A present, she said, because she had missed all of her birthdays before, but Lexa knew it probably was because she covered everything, and Clarke felt self-conscious of not being able to add equal in the way of income to their union, as of yet. Lexa shook her head, telling her, Her value wasn't in money at all. They each brought something into their relationship that currency couldn't buy. Clarke laughed and called Lexa, Her sweet talker. She would have blushed any other time, but coming from her girl made her love Clarke even more.

~

Clarke was swimming, which was strange because she only had a passing interest in big bodies of water; she just never learn how. But, she was now. It felt more like wading, she guessed. The lake was warm like bath-water and dipped her head under the water, going deeper and deeper. Taking in a breath of oxygen and wasn't surprised by water filling her lungs. Just sweet, pleasant air.

Air.

Clarke frown, forgetting something, sensing the water, then remembering the lake.

The lake. *Fuck, the lake.*
Clarke bolted upright, her heart racing and felt for the other side of the bed. It was cold. Lexa was already gone. "Fuck me, she better not have left yet.

Seeing the door to the bathroom closed, she laid back down when she heard Lexa singing and chuckled. "I keep telling her she got a voice like an angel." The first time she said that caused Lexa's lower lip to jut out, and now rarely heard her sing.

This morning she got lucky and just listened. Today would be hella busy and a little worried about their first venture into the lake. They had scheduled a pretty hefty day, Indra expected to pull at least a half a dozen maybe more logs on their first attempt.

Lexa and Anya, not afraid to take up a challenge, said they'd try for twice that much.

Clarke pursed her lips, then got up. No sense in laying here wide awake and worrying. She slowly got up and wandered into the bathroom, stripping the remained clothes off, stepped behind Lexa, and hugged her from behind.

~

Clarke checked the grid of the lake on her tablet. The lidar camera on the drones could capture its journey over the body of water they needed to map. She could easily see deep under the surface, in hues of colors and images, and make out the logs submerged beneath.

Grateful that it gave her a good idea of where to begin this arduous monumental task, that hopefully would go smoothly. A barge was now situated on the lake. Clarke worried that when the movement of the divers started, the water would be difficult to see, by the years of silt that had built up.

Teams of workers now with their different tasks assigned on the whiteboard in her office. Clarke lent a hand and drew the map of the lake and indicated each stage. Simple enough, she thought, and Indra stated how pleased she was that Clarke came up with this idea all on her own.

She called it efficient and cost-effective and hopefully would run steadily. From Clarke's calculation, they were looking at three or more solid months of dives. Tanks of o2 at the ready and spare divers Indra hired to be back up to the cause.
One extra item Anya asked for, a hot tub near the lake to get into after they spent hours in the cold lake. It served a couple of purposes. To warm up the divers and soothe aching muscles and to help set a pace they could handle.

Large trucks sat waiting for their delivery of there precious cargo, and damn it was finally happening.

~

Lexa adjusted her dry gear, half-listening as Anya went on to explain to Clarke about the history of this ancient lake. She was pretty sure Anya was pulling this out of thin air. The lake may be old. But, it's just a dumb old lake.

"What happened to the people?" Clarke asked, falling into Anya's well-laid trap of colorfully story-telling.

"I hear it tell, the old lumberjacks tried to recover the long-lost treasure, but they all drowned," Anya drawled, sending a wink over the Lexa who just rolled her eyes.

"Don't listen to her, Clarke. She's making it up."

Clarke pushed Anya. "You fucker."

Anya snicker holding up her hands. "Sorry, I couldn't resist. Let's get wet."

Indra joined the group and announced, "Safety first. Check your gear, and let's clean up this lake."

Anya and Lexa took turns checking over the values and remaining equipment. Testing the regulators and giving thumbs up and stepped into the water to retrieve the first log.

Brrrr. Lexa thought. Each step stirred the silt as they waded into the cold lake, only feeling a little of the cold. Surprisingly warmer than she imagined. A tap on her shoulder and Anya indicated to
dive down and to the first log on the list.

Carefully Lexa floated to where it had laid for the past hundred years and wrapped a chain around its diameter. Anya, on the other side, worked with her to fix it in place, giving her a thumbs-up, and they floated upward, one hand on the line as the breached the surface. Lexa indicated with a signal to start reeling the log up.

A slap of the chain as it became taut and groaned under the weight. Anya and Lexa swam away from the log as it broke the surface and turned to see her friends whistling and clapping at this first success. *Just a couple of hundred more logs*, Lexa thought and hoped it would go as smoothly.

~

It was well after one o'clock as the two of them soaked in the hot tub, Lexa grateful that Anya came up with this idea. After hours in the lake, it felt like the cold and seeped into her bones, and she could hardly move.

She also was hungry as an ox and polished off a couple of sandwiches and bottles of water. Currently, a total of six trees removed. It was well behind what she had personally thought they were capable of but didn't take into account getting the logs out of the lake and onto the truck would take up the bulk of the time. They had to wait until the heavy chains were ready again each time.

"It's going to take forever to clean up the lake," Anya mused.

"You got any bright ideas of speeding up this process?"

Anya shook her head, showing her exhausted by closing her eyes and soaking up the warmth.

"Maybe, it's just best we go slowly. Anyway, it's more money in the long run."

"True."

Both of them were surprised how large these old logs were, not the length as much as the width.
The ancient trees, by their rings, at the time they were cut down already close to hundreds of years old, laid wasted in the lake. Lexa commiserated with the lumberjacks of old, who worked hard to bring the logs down from the mountain. Only to lose them to the lake's hungry monster that lived in the bottom.

Another tale, Anya made up.

Lexa didn't detect Clarke approaching from behind her and turned to see her mate when Anya motion her to look. "Hey."

"Hey, yourself. I just wanted to let you guys know that you're done for the day."

"What..." Lexa attempted to splash her mate when she was pulled under the water by Anya. Splurting and coughing up water that got in her nose. Lexa got her revenge, jabbing Anya in her ribs, and brought her under as well.

After they stood in the hot tub wiping the water from their eyes, Clarke said, "You alphas are definitely done for today.

~

~ A week later ~

Lexa's life began to flash before her eyes, running like a film, each tick of time defined by warmth and love. The last bit moments of her life were of Clarke, her smile, laugh, and her scent when she heard the chain snap and yelling from the crew alerted her to the thousands of tons of wood falling directly on top of her. At the last second, she dove deeper and away she hoped from where the log would crash in the lake, cursing at being weight down by the drysuit.

Hoping that if the log did land on her, her death would be swift and as the last moment before everything would go dark, she said a prayer to Keryon to take care of Clarke and her new baby she would never see.
Chapter 14

Lexa felt the log hit the water with a concussive force of what seemed like an explosion, taking a quick look back and saw it bearing towards her. Thankful she didn't get slammed when it initially fell but couldn't get out of its way and was presently taking her to the bottom of the lake.

Its weight would probably crush her like a beer can under your foot and remembered the tank on her back. She turned to protect it from the force and tried to kick away from the beast.

At the last moment when she was almost free, she hit bottom with a muted thud as one end of the log landed lengthwise on top of a raised flat rock next to her right side, and the other end settled on the silt-covered lake bed, wedging her in place.

The water turned a dark brownish-green, blinding her by the silt stirred by the force of falling. Moments later, a hand reached out, and she pulled Anya to her. Frantic eyes finding hers, then Anya put a hand to her chest. Lexa immediately understanding it almost gave her a heart attack, and Anya motioned her status with a thumb up or down?

Lexa wagged her hand and showed she was stuck and put them up in frustration. Anya grabbed her hands and tried to tug her free, having no luck. Then Anya attempted to push the log off of the rock when Lexa waved her arms, making her stop. Her fear, either direction, the log would roll would either crush her legs or her upper body. Right now, even though she was stuck, she wasn't injured.

Anya searched for Lexa's gauge partially caught under the log, signaling she had approximately twenty minutes of air left. Anya reached into her side pocket and retrieved a couple of fluorescence divers flares and broke the glass tube inside, then shook them up, creating a bright glowing blue light and placed it a few feet away from her. Anya gave her a thumbs up and shot back to the surface, while Lexa noted the time on her watch.

Lexa rested her head on the lake bottom, one for relief she was still alive, and two in frustration that she incredibly, stupidly stuck. Fuck me. Clarke is going to kill me when she finds out what I've got myself into.

Lexa tried again to squirm free and wondered if she could remove her tank and work her way free and couldn't reach anything at this angle and was glad she wasn't face down in the mud. But, moving around could fuck up the tanks and glanced up, trying to see the surface, but the silt was blinding everything around her.
The only thing keeping her company was the glowing blue light. Anya quick thinking saved her wasting time if she tried to reach for the flares she held in her side pocket, now hidden under the log. If she gets out of this jam, she owes her girl big time. It was Clarke's idea using them to mark the trees for removal because of the heavy silt.

She didn't have to guess what went wrong up top. The lift operator brought the log out of the water with a single chain that wasn't scheduled to handle the weight and broke. The crewman working was Fio, one of Quint's buddies. His skill wasn't top-notched and was only filling in while some of the other lumberjacks headed up the mountains to work in the forest for a couple of months.

Lexa checked the time. It had only been a minute but felt like more five and tried to remember her training. To keep calm. Even though her buddy wasn't physically with her, she knew Anya would do everything she could to rescue her. She just had to wait and hope there was another chain available, or they would have to find another way to get her free. Lexa didn't want to think of the alternative.

~

Clarke looked up from her computer screen at the sound of a tremendous crash coming from the open window to her office. Then the yelling started and stood up and gazed toward the lake. A minute passed when Anya breached the surfaced, shouting something about Lexa. Her heart jolted sideways in her chest and stumbled out of the door. Gustus was already working on pulling the chains off of his big rig that held the logs going to Forrester's Lumberyard. His intentions it seemed was to drag them out to the lift crane as Anya swam to the shore.

Anya pulled off her face mask and shouted, "Fuck, I'm going to kill you, Fio."

Clarke looked for her mate when she didn't emerge and uttered her name, "Lexa?"

Anya grabbed Fio and pulled him out of the rig, balling up her fist and was about to flatten his nose when Clarke got to their side and stopped her. "Where's Lexa."

Anya said through her labored breaths. "This idiot dropped a log on her."

"Did not. The chain broke."
"Fucker. All-day long, I've seen you swing that chain around like it was a Tonka toy. Lexa better not die, or I'll kill you." Anya caught Clarke as she wavered and led her to a bench and helped her sit down. "Clarke, she's okay but wedged under a log. I've only got..." Anya checked her watch. "Around eighteen minutes to hook another chain and lift it off her."

"GO!" She pushed Anya, then called 911.

~

Lexa kept her eyes focus upward despite the murky water shrouding her in darkness. It helped somehow, knowing her whole world existed up there and that Clarke and their baby were safe and probably knows by now she's in trouble. Lexa wasn't so much afraid for herself, but for Clarke being upset and pregnant, couldn't be good for either of them. Lexa also knew she couldn't die. Not like this.

It was just a week ago, lying next to Clarke, wondering when the bubble would break — now watching, like a cosmic joke, as the air exhausted from her regulator in hundreds of them around her and kept breathing steady, slow and closed her eyes. Realizing she was no match for the weight hovering above her.

Life for her always seem to be conquering some adversary when her mind flashed to the last weeks of the fifth grade before summer vacation, a few of the alpha boys in her class didn't believe her status, and she came home with a black eye, suspended for a week for starting a fight. She didn't, but Principal Kane didn't believe her after finding the other alphas whimpering and crying, and she was the last one standing. Her shirt torn, and the skin on her knuckles dotted with blood. Some hers, the rest the guys. Three against one and she was the smallest, but not by much.

That was until her mom found out as she tearfully told her that she got cornered and had to defend herself. Her mother calmly explained to the principal that if he didn't allow her daughter back to complete the fifth grade, after being bullied, ganged up by three boys, she'd go to the school board.

Lexa was back at school the next morning, trying to act like everything was normal. Only receiving a few curious stares from the other kids and was shocked when she found a note in her locker. Lexa recalled the moment when her heart thump in her chest when she read the message written in scribbly handwriting. You are very brave. The writer only left her initials. Lexa could tell they were young and a girl, by the hearts and a slight scent covering the note. Peaking around the locker door to see if she could figure out who it was, but nobody was even looking at her. Lexa folded the paper and stuffed it in her backpack and headed to her first class. The note she saved and kept in a lockbox with all her other memories of when she was a kid.
Lexa found she couldn't keep one thought in her mind and wondered if it had something to do with she might die when an idea popped in her head and reached underneath her body and tried to dig her fingers into the lake bottom. Surely the silt and mud could be moved out of the way. Running her hand over the surface, and found that not only did the log land on the rock, but she also did.

Lexa ran her glove covered hands on either side where she could reach, and it was nothing but rock. Fuck. What are the odds? She checked her watch and was down to fourteen minutes and heard her instructor's voice saying, *Keep calm.* She'd try, but it felt like being caught in a car wreck in slow-fucking motion.

She found it kind of funny, things you waste time on when your life may be over in minutes. Funny as in, she really loved scuba diving, picking up the mechanics fairly quickly and planned on continuing learning more when she had the time and explore the lake more thoroughly. It was only moot at this point if she'd even get a chance.

Ever-present was the instructor's warnings drilled into her head of the dangers of scuba diving. Lexa thought it would have been something entirely different, but at the moment couldn't come up with a ridiculous situation. Knowing that if help didn't come in time, she would drown. Yes, it could have been worse if there wasn't this beautiful if oddly shaped rock by her side. She put her palms on the trunk and wiggled a little bit. Nothing would give.

She let her hands float free as an image of a hospital bed, her body broken, and her mate was crying over her flashed into her mind.

Clarke's red-rimmed eyes showed hours of grief and Raven's hand on her shoulder, giving what comfort she could. Anya would be inconsolable, probably blaming herself. Perhaps, they'd keep her on morphine, out of it, and unable to speak to Clarke.

More seconds ticked by, and only morbid images filled her mind yet remained remarkably calm.

The water began to clear if only a little. Seeing more details of what surrounded this area through the blue glow, a few stray air bubbles floated upward and slowed down her breaths. Noticing the bubbles weren't coming from the regulator. It was as if the lake was exhaling.

Another memory of her childhood, recalling the blue plastic diver she had in her first and only fish tank, the one where she kept a single fish, Mikey, the Red Devil Cichlid. The asshole fish, she discovered painfully later, had teeth.
Mikey hated the little diver. The first few mornings, she'd find it floating at the top of the tank gnawed on and disconnected from the plastic air hose. On a lark, thinking he just wanted real friends, she begged her dad to take her back to the fish store and get him a few buddies. Guessing that's why he hated the fake diver so much. But to her childhood horror the next morning, she found Mikey swimming by himself, having dispatched his roommates overnight.

That's when Mom got on the internet and looked up her fish. Giving them grief as they both sat on the sofa, in the doghouse, and she read out loud, The cichlid can reach up to fifteen inches and is known for being the most ferocious and aggressive of the cichlids. Mom relented when Dad took all the blame when he couldn't say no to his little girl because she liked the pretty orange fish.

Lexa shuddered and closed her eyes, cursing herself for bringing up her killer pet fish. Mikey was still kicking it, living rent-free at Mom's restaurant and fed leftover prawns that didn't sell along with his regular pellets. Lexa thought that Mikey would finally get his revenge on her. It did make her imagine what swam below the surface. Only occasionally seeing fish when they were removing the logs. She felt protected wearing her drysuit, but now that she was stuck and fair game for any large creature lurking, and probably wouldn't even see them coming.

~

Clarke rushed behind Anya as she dragged the chain over to the rig. "Why can you just use the one hanging over there?" Clarke helpfully pointed to the one hanging, still attached to the boom.

Anya said over her shoulder, "I know you're trying to help, but I don't feel safe lifting the log without two attached. We can see it can't handle the weight when they are taken entirely out of the lake. I know we usually use only one to lift it to the surface, but this monster is much bigger than the other logs we've removed, and I don't want to take a chance.

"I thought you never take the logs out of the water completely. You just bring it to the shore and then lift them on the truck."

Clarke heard Anya growl and said through clenched teeth, "You would be correct, but good old Fio over there thought he would get cute with the rig and did something foolish."

"What exactly?" Clarke caught Fio sulking and motioned him over.

"He pulled the log all the way out like he'd caught a big fish, and the chain snapped."
"He's not supposed to do that." Clarke started walking towards Fio. "I'm going to kill him."

Anya swiftly grabbed her arm. "No, Clarke," and indicated for Fio to stay right where he was, with just with a look. "Please, I can't worry about you getting into a fight, being pregnant, and Lexa at the same time. Please wait here. I promise I'll bring her up alive."

Clarke looked away from Fio and back to Anya, seeing the intensity in her face. "Okay, for now. I can't make any promises later."

"Clarke." Anya's lightly scolding voice helped lighten the grim mood, as Clarke touched Anya's arm showing her gratitude and stepped away rubbing her nose.

Clarke detected Anya's complex scent through the drysuit, and it had concentrated her odor, and holy cow was it ever potent. Not in a sexual way at all. The one most common and that Clarke used to, Anya needed her mate, another indicated she heightened her sensory control for her muscles, but the last one scared her.

Clarke couldn't find the name to describe the last scent, but it was a failure, perhaps? Could it be Anya believed they could lose Lexa? Clarke watched Anya move with purpose and understanding. Anya admired Lexa, cared deeply about her. Like the stories from her childhood. The bonds between alphas were strong in a pack, and that was how Anya saw Lexa, her leader. So struck with the intensity, Clarke put her hand over her mouth to keep from sobbing like a baby. It was too much as she realized what they both might lose.

Anya helped Gustus, and the guys finally got the heavy chain over to the rig and worked as quickly as they could to get the chain latched security in place.

Anya returned to Clarke, this time, her face held more worry than before. "Can you call Raven for me, and tell her to head this way? Just tell her to drop whatever she's doing and get over here."

Anya's last statement charged Clarke's fear making her voice crack when she answered, "I can do that."

Anya gave her a guarded smile and returned to the water, arranging her gear back on. As she got, chest-deep, she swam to there area where she came up, minutes ago.
Clarke cursed and looked at the time. Anya said Lexa only had eighteen minutes left and didn't know how long it had been. She didn't think to check the time, then remembered her call to 911, she could check what time she called on the phone log.

Lexa had maybe eight minutes of air left.

~

The cold of the lake finally started to seep into the suit without her usual exertion. Ideally, they were in the water no more than thirty minutes at a time. She'd have more than enough opportunity to warm up, as the logs were loaded onto the truck. In total, today, with the six trees they already brought up. Lexa had spent the better part of four hours in the lake. The last one had to be coming up to an hour.

Lexa felt every bit of cold fifty-three degrees of the lake, and it was only getting colder, and the next possibility that would put her life in danger was hypothermia. That she hadn't started to shake was a good sign and checked the time, a little shocked that seven minutes had passed. Lexa figured that at fifteen meters of depth, with the cold and no movement, the air that remained was relative. Knowing she probably less air left.

Anya appeared out of nowhere, patting Lexa on her head. Looking up as she pulled the chain over and looped it around one end of the log, once, twice, then hooked the clamp in place. Lexa watched unable to help as she added a second chain.

Anya rechecked her gauge, and Lexa saw her close her eyes. Lexa waved at her, questioning how much air is left. Anya indicated not much.

Anya gave her the okay sign and shook on the chain and floated out of the way. Slowly the chain grew taut and jerked against the weight. Lexa imagined the rig groaning, trying to lift the weight when blessedly it raised off of her. Anya held her hands and pulled Lexa free, and they started to swim away, when the log shifted and snapped one of the chains, hitting Anya in the back and knocking her sideways away from her.

Lexa didn't hesitate as she reached into the darkness for her friend, catching her before she floated away and brought her head upright and saw blood through the face mask, Anya blinked her eyes until they went shut. Lexa instincts kicked in and held to Anya to her chest, keeping her upright, hoping she was still breathing and made the ascent back to the surface.
It was deeper than she thought and had to take it slowly to keep from getting the bends and found her gauge; she had only seconds of air left. Lexa took one last deep breath of the remaining air and pulled out the regulator out of her mouth and kicked for two people. The weight of both of them slowed her down considerably, wishing she had a hand free so that she could remove the tank on her back, but had no time to waste. Anya's head rested on her shoulder as she got into a rhythm, paddling her legs back and forth, guiding them upward.

~

Clarke pulled her sweater tighter around her body as she trembled and waited on the bench watching the workers, now friends putting all their considerable effort into rescuing her mate. A trust she had in them was without question and glanced at Fio, now standing alone. He was being shunned by their friends, and probably out of a job. But that wasn't up to her; it was up to Indra, who was on her way.

If all of this turn out okay, she would have to check the video feed to see what happened. A precautionary measure Indra put in place, in case someone was injured on the job. And of course, the safety sign near her office would have to be changed back to zero, making her pretty disgusted that this was the only the first week, and they hadn't begun to dig down deep into this enormous task.

The honking of a car horn brought her out of her thoughts, turning to look over her shoulder then stood when she saw Raven barreling over the gravel road kicking up rocks and dust, skitting to halt, jumping out of her car and dashed to Clarke side. Raven caught Clarke before she went to her knees.

"I'm so sorry, Clarke."

Clarke nodded to prevent herself from crying but needed Raven's secure arms to keep her steady and from falling to the ground. "Not that I'm complaining, but how did you get here so soon?"

"I was just down the road on the way to my doctor's appointment and kept going. They changed my appointment when I told them what happened."

Clarke noticed Raven searching for Anya. "Anya just went under, and hopefully, they'll be up soon," Gustus shouted when a chain snapped, causing the rig to rock. Clarke cried out in panic, "No! Lexa, Nooo!"
Seconds ticked by like hours watching as the water grew calm and the loggers quietly working together, trying to figure what to do next. Gustus caught Clarke's eyes and started his way over to her, his head hanging down when Lexa broke the surface, gasping, "I need help. Anya's hurt." Lexa looped an arm around Anya's chest and swam one-handed back to the shore.

Clarke was close to fainting in relief and quickly grabbed Raven to keep her from running into the cold lake. "Stop Raven. The water is freezing. Please think about your baby."

Raven turned and shook her head and cried, "I am, Clarke. But I can't lose my stupid idiot, not like this." Clarke steadied Raven when off in the distance sirens echoed through the mountains announcing their arrival, and workers jumped into the lake and helped Lexa get Anya onto the shore.

Through labored breaths, Lexa explained as she removed her tanks and some of her gear, "Chain broke. Anya...hit by a log." Now on her knees, she helped Gustus carefully removed Anya's gear and neoprene headpiece and checked her pulse, and leaned over, putting his ear to her mouth.

"She's not breathing." Gustus opened her suit and began CPR, and Lexa crawled to her side and waited as he pumped on her chest, counting out loud and check Anya's mouth, tipping her head back, pinching her nose shut. Lexa sucked in a lung full of air and blew into her mouth after the thirtieth compression.

"Breath damn it," Lexa shouted and blew another breath of air into Anya. "Who's gonna give me a hard time when I do something stupid?"

Clarke didn't know how she was still standing, welcoming the muted relief but sensed grief pouring off of Raven. All of this was too much and tore a hole in her heart. Raven was trembling and leaned her head against her saying a silent prayer to Keryon and whispered to her friend, "She's gonna be okay."

Gustus was sweating and quickly removed his jacket and continuing working on Anya as the ambulance and fire truck arrived. Soon EMTs waded into the group and went to work on Anya.

"What's her name?"

Lexa answered as she wiped the blood from her palm on her shirt, "Anya Hunter."
Lexa stayed by Anya and reaching back blindly for Clarke's hand feeling her tug and went to her side.

"Come on, Anya. Breath for me," the young EMT said as he rolled Anya on her side and slapped her back, causing a hacking cough, and a moan followed when her eyes went wide in confusion. Clarke released Raven, and she knelt beside her.

Anya croaked out, "Feels like...freight train...I think...wind got knocked out. Blood dripped down her forehead, and she wiped it away. "Why am I bleeding?"

Lexa looked up to the sky thanking Keryon and started laughing, then stood up and pulled Clarke into her arms.

~

Lexa had removed her remaining gear and sat on the edge of the ambulance in her pair of jeans, tee-shirt, and a blanket around her shoulders she shared with Clarke, being checked out by the EMTs. Anya, however, was spitting mad, laying on the stretcher, having to be rescued after her effort in saving Lexa's life.

Clarke waited by Lexa's side, combing her fingers through her damp hair. It was for her peace of mind needing the tactical contact that her mate was okay. She was still pretty shaken up that she almost became a widow before even saying the vows. Quite afraid, she could have lost her to the depths of the lake. Lexa reflected that back by purring under her breath at their shared connection. More would have to be discussed later what went wrong. Clarke wanted to know everything, and hopefully, her protective mate would share what she experienced, by herself, stuck under a blasted log.

One of the EMTs flushed out Anya's cut that seemed to be caused by her facemask and said, "I can stitch you up here, or if you like, we can take you to your local clinic, and they can do it there, your pick, Miss Hunter."

Anya grumbled, "Go ahead."

Raven stopped him, "No Anya, let Doctor Waters, stitch you up. I have to see her anyway."
Another EMT checked Lexa's vitals then said, "You seem to be okay, Miss Woods. Your pulse is a little fast, but overall other than been chilled, I can release you."

"Thanks, what about my friend? Will she be okay?"

"The blow from the log caused a spasm with her diaphragm. She'll only have a nasty bruise and, of course, the cut to her forehead."

"Okay, thanks for everything." Lexa turned to Clarke. "I need a moment with Anya in private. Can you give me a minute?"

"Go on. I've got to check in with Indra and see what she wants to do next."

~

Lexa climbed into the back of the ambulance and sat down next to Anya. Smiling at Raven and she understood they needed privacy and leaned over and kissed Anya, as Lexa looked away.

Hearing Raven whisper, "I don't know what..."

"Shh," Anya uttered. "I swear, I'm okay."

Raven placed a hand on Lexa's knee. "I'm glad..." Raven's voice broke and brushed, grateful tears away. "I'm glad you're okay, Lexa. Please don't keep her too long. We've got a date at the doctor's office."

"You got it, Raven." Lexa waited as Raven cautiously stepped out of the ambulance and joined Clarke. Now alone, Lexa kept her eyes on Anya's face as she watched Raven.

"Hey."
Anya grumbled, "Hey."

Lexa looked out towards Clarke and Raven standing a distance away then back to Anya. "I'll know I will never live this down." Anya finally looked up at her. Lexa leaned over and put her forehead to Anya's and closed her eyes as she said, "Thank you for saving my life, giving me a second chance. A chance to see Clarke again. A chance for a future where I get to hold my baby."

Lexa felt the hand on her arm and squeeze. "That's are what friends are for, Lexa. But next time, go left, not right."

Lexa chuckled as she leaned back. "Yeah. I think I panicked at the last moment."

"At first, I thought the log crushed you and..." Anya looked away and wiped an errant tear away. "I'm glad you're all right." Lexa was surprised by the emotion emanating from Anya, and just as quickly, she pushed it down. "By the way, I did hear what you said, and yes, still plan on giving you a hard time."

Lexa grinned. "I wouldn't expect anything different from my best friend."

Anya seemed to remember something as she sniffed, leaning back on the pillow. "Now I know why Clarke loves you so much."

"What's that?"

"You have really soft lips."

Lexa made a gagging noise and shook her head as Anya motioned to Raven. "Well, I should get this cut stitched up before I make this any more awkward. Call you later? Later as in tomorrow."

"You bet, and thanks again, Anya." Offering her forearm, with Anya clasping it and holding her gaze in understanding for an extended moment. "I owe you one."

Anya smiled. "Yes, you do." Then gave her a wink.
Lexa and Clarke left the workers to clean up at the lake and deal with the aftermath. Indra explained she needed to review the tapes and requested they take the next few days off and see where they'd go from here. Indra didn't want anyone back in the lake until the proper safety conditions were met, and more training took place. Of course, both Anya and Lexa needed to heal, emotionally and physically, from the ordeal.

Lexa pulled out onto the road and headed for home like nothing happened. Just another day of work and went through the familiar mechanics of driving after the scare of almost dying. Glancing over at Clarke and saw the strain over her face. "You look exhausted, Clarke. Maybe we should stop by Doctor Waters to check you out too." Lexa reached out and placed her hand on her belly, "and the little one."

Clarke rested her hand over hers. "I'm fine, just a little shaky. I only want to get you home and fed."

Lexa couldn't argue with Clarke. She also held a residual wake up call at almost being taken out by stupidity. Before they left, she asked Indra to keep Fio away from her and off the site. Indra said she'd take care of him, but couldn't spare firing him as of yet.

As they approached the turnoff that led home, Lexa announced, "I'm in the mood for a hamburger with the works and big chocolate shake from The Diner, what about you?"

"Not now, Lexa."

Lexa overreacted and swerved, cursing and at the last second and turned onto their road, skidding to a stop.

"My goodness, Lexa," Clarke said as she rocked back and forth.

"Fuck. I'm sorry. Are you okay?"

"I'm fine."
Lexa leaned back and put her hand over her chest. Her heart thumped hard while her whole body surged with adrenaline out of her control. She bent over and rested her head against the steering wheel.

A hand on her bicep, another on her shoulder, and Clarke's calming scent brought her back. "Easy pup."

"I don't know what happened."

"I do. Your body is still feeling the effects. Do you want me to drive the rest of the way home?"

Lexa peeked over at Clarke and found a cheeky smile on her face. "I think I can manage the last few feet.

"Great, because the two of us are starving."

~

Clarke managed to talk her into a romantic bubble bath and promised to join her after she gave a quick blow by blow to Octavia. With her belly comfortably full after finishing off leftovers, she passed on cocktails but did indulge in a little herb outside on the front porch, taking in the wonders of the twinkling stars overhead.

Now here she was, back in the water as the minutes stretched out, appreciating the irony of it all. Lexa pushed the bubbles around in a circle with her fingers and looked out of the bathroom door. However pleasant this was surrounded by all of this warmth and flickering scented candles, covering the room in hues of burnt orange in dancing shadows across the walls, she wanted Clarke.

Lexa sighed as her mind wandered back to being under the water with only her memories to keep her company, but the image of the log that wedged her in place just a couple of hours ago still held in her mind. Thinking it's best to keep this from her folks, no need to make them worry. She got out in one piece, and with this wake-up call, she'd make sure nothing like this ever happen again.

Lexa could hear Clarke coming up the stairs as she kept her eyes pinned on the open door. Her
heart, skipping a beat in anticipation of seeing her. Lexa's quiet and reserved nature just months ago almost didn't seem real now that her body craved to have Clarke as if she were in her rut.

Clarke said from their bedroom, "Octavia asked if we'd like to come by tomorrow if you're still interested in a hamburger with the works."

Lexa had forgotten all about that. "Awesome."

Like a pup denied their plaything, Lexa grew anxious and needy. What's keeping her so long? Lexa's heart became heavy, achingly so, missing her mate.

Clarke finally joined her in the bathroom, taking her time putting her hair up and started removing her clothes, taking forever in Lexa's humble opinion.

"Damn, I forgot my robe."

Lexa's mouth fell open, then stuck out her lower lip and sunk further under the water at having to wait. But a minute later, Clarke returned beautifully naked. The glowing radiance of the room gave her figure a heavenly brilliance seen through the visage of her pregnancy. Her clit stirred as she sat up and held out her hand, guiding Clarke into the water, watching with keen eyes as her mate eased against the other side of the tub and closed her eyes.

"Ahh. I'm sure glad we opted to get the larger tub."

Lexa was mesmerized. It was as if she was seeing Clarke for the first time. Except for the naked part. Lexa spread her legs for Clarke to comfortably stretched out. Lexa still feeling the effects of her earlier indulgence imagined animated birds fluttering around Clarke's hair and putting flowers into her blond curls and offered, "It's also heated."

"Mmm, nice touch, babe."

Now Lexa could relax now that Clarke was near and closed her eyes. Feeling contented, happy, and started to unwind. Lexa's mind wandered back to the lake and shared her thoughts, "It felt odd."
"What's that?"

"Not odd in a weird way. Just strange how my mind coped while I was trapped. I remembered some stuff from my childhood. Silly stuff."

"Good stuff?"

"Yeah, you and the baby at first, then my folks. It's just like how they say, your life flashes before your eyes."

Clarke ran her hands down either side of her legs and said, "Honestly, Lexa. For all you went through today, you are very brave."

Clarke's statement echoed back to the note she found in her locker and lazily opened her eyes, and asked, "What did you just say?"

"That you were brave. I probably would have drowned panicking."

Lexa sat up, now curious. "I never asked you, but where did you go to school as a kid."

"Hmm, well the first few years before we moved, I went to a grammar school in the burbs, just outside of the city, until my mother's job took off and we moved. Why?"

"Which school?"

"I'm sure you've never heard of it, Arkadia Grammar School."

Lexa's heart started pounding her chest at hearing the name. "What grades?"

"First, through the third grade, I believe."
Lexa didn't want to overreact at this wild coincidence but stood up anyway and grabbed her towel. "Don't go anywhere. I'll be right back."

"Lexa, wait." Clarke laughed, "Where would I go, you big goof?"

Lexa didn't answer. She swiftly wrapped the towel around her waist and padded down the stairs to her office. She hunted for the key to the lockbox and found it the small wooden box in the middle drawer to her desk.

Tucked into her old school records, she found the envelope and inside the note. The paper now aged with time, she carefully unfolded, and her eyes focus on the initials. One overlapped the other. C, and G.

"Coincidence, my ass."

Lexa returned to the bathroom with the knowledge that Clarke may have been the note writer and looked at Clarke with wonder.

"You're going to get cold." Clarke pouted, as Lexa smiled and held out the note so she could read it.

"What is this..." Clarke read the note, once, then twice as her eyes focus on the initials. "I wrote that?"

"You tell me." Lexa put the note on the counter and dropped her towel, and stepped back into the warm bubbly water. "It's one of the things I remember when I was trapped."

Clarke sat up, seemingly recalling as she shook her head, and they met in the middle of the tub. "I was eight years old, coming out of my homeroom when I heard some boys saying rude things to a girl and pushed her into a locker."

Lexa remembered it like it was yesterday. "They didn't believe I was an alpha."

"You fought them off like a wildcat, and I was scared they would hurt you. After it was over, I
wanted to see if you were okay, but the teachers showed up and moved us away."

"Why did you leave me a note?"

"Oh, Lexa, because like I said, you were brave fighting all by yourself. Clarke pulled her into a hug. "It was you."

Lexa's heart overflowed with love for Clarke. This young Clarke couldn't have known how much it helped her cope through that rough and often clumsy times growing up, being different from most of the other girls.

"How did you know which locker was mine?"

"One of my friends told me that along with alpha boys, sometimes there were alpha girls and pushed you into your locker, and you guys start to fight." Clarke shrugged her shoulders. "I can't be sure if it quite happened that way, but I do remember that day."

"You can't possibly understand what that note meant to me. Me, at that awkward age of eleven and my body, started to change."

Clarke's eyes twinkled as she said, "That you saved my note, I think I do."

"I sure needed a friend like you, back then."

"Well, this friend needs her woman now." Clarke's breast, hidden by the soap, drew her eyes down. "See something you like, alpha?"

Lexa drew Clarke onto her lap, bringing her soapy-bubbled covered breasts further out of the water. "Now, I do."

Clarke took the time to study her face. Behind her eyes, she could sense her mate's relief. Delicate fingers paused over both cheeks as if Clarke was mapping her future, then pulled her into a languid kiss. Resting her full breasts close against Lexa's smaller ones. Lexa's hand curved around her ass, searching out her cunt, sensing her growing wet. Steam rose around them as she sunk a single long
finger inside, drawing a moan from her omega.

Her clit twitched awake, then extended in a matter of seconds and maneuvered her hand between their bodies and grabbed her cock as Clarke shifted and lifted, inviting her inside. The warm water helped her ease within as Clarke engulfed her shaft.

Lexa breathed in Clarke's scent and held still. Her muscles clung tightly around her. When suddenly realizing what she could have lost at the lake, that could have died never seeing Clarke again. Her emotions welled and slipped out of her control.

~

Lexa's arms around Clarke was her home. Her legs around Lexa's waist kept her grounded. She jogged her against Lexa's taut abdomen, relishing the fullness of her cock inside and the watery friction of her swollen clit against the base of her shaft.

Clarke cupped the back of Lexa's head, and the other rested on her cheek and kissed Lexa's full lips and found them trembling. She pulled back and saw tears caught in the corners of her eyes.

"Hey, I got you. I got you. You're safe, baby. We're home and safe together."

"I don't know what..."

"Shh, just let it out." Lexa silently shed tears against her shoulder and breathed steadily.

"Maybe it's too soon."

"Too soon for what?" Lexa shifted her hips, indicating the obvious.

Clarke pulled back and wiped the tears out of Lexa's eyes. "I need you like this, inside me. Real and alive. Whole. I could have lost you today. We could have lost this together." Clarke leaned back and put Lexa's hand over her belly. Lexa's lips quivered again, and Clarke kissed her cheeks, each closed eyelid. Pouring all the love she had for her mate and squeezed down on her cock.
Lexa captured her mouth with a furious possessiveness, taking what was hers alone. Claiming her as she pulled away and her lips found her mating bite and began sucking. A sign that Lexa needed to feel their connection not only with their bodies but through their souls.

Lexa slipped out of Clarke and brought them to their bedroom.

~

Lexa laid Clarke down on their unmade bed from this morning as Clarke maneuvered her onto her back.

"Let me take care of you," Clarke said as she leaned over her legs from the side and ran her fingers over her chest. Working them down to her cock, gripped the base of her cock, stroking upward as come started to flow from her slit over Clarke's hand. Over and over, slow but firm, it was almost too much, her mind tried to convince Lexa that maybe she didn't deserve this happiness.

"You don't..."

"Shh." Clarke bent over and licked around the head of her cock and found the sensitive spot just behind her shaft, causing Lexa to slam her head on the pillow by the overwhelming throbbing it caused. "Hmm, that's right, just relax."

She did and watched in fascination as Clarke took control. Lexa couldn't stem the flow of tears as peace flowed over her capturing her thoughts when Clarke moaned, tasting her coming release. Had she atoned enough for her past? Should her life be so blessed? Lexa knew hadn't done enough in her life, but maybe with Clarke that could find that peace.

"Hmm," Clarke groaned as Lexa sensed what her omega needed and pulled her up, causing her cock to fall out of her mouth with a mild complaint. Her shaft ached for the warm engulfing contact and looked up into Clarke's eyes as she eased down on her again, filling her cunt. Clarke's legs wagged open and bore down, uttering, "Mine."

"Yours," Lexa replied, holding onto to Clarke's hips and pumped into her. Clarke bit her lower lip, her eyes, half-open. Lexa's body rose upward on Clarke's downward grind. She leaned upward and captured her mate's lips once more. Uttering quiet prayers against Clarke's mouth, pouring all the love she felt for her omega and sensed her knot began to swell.
"Oh, Lexa, I was so frightened of losing you, losing us."

"Shh. You didn't. I'm here." Her knot grew, locking her in place, and on Clarke's tight muscles squeezing down on her, she came with a moan, and Clarke soon followed her.

Their release came swiftly. Lexa was sure that they were both too spent, exhausted, and contented to go any further tonight and let her fingers traced lazy paths up and down Clarke's back.

Clarke shifted to the side and ran a finger over Lexa's parted lips. "I wish..."

Lexa rolled her head over and lifted Clarke's chin gently to see in her eyes. "Wish what?"

"Hmm. That my mother's job hadn't taken us away, and I could have known you back then."

Lexa chuckled, "As pleasant as that sounds now. Do you think that a fifth grader would have hung out with a third grader?"

"Oh." Clarke put her head back down. "I forgot, grades did keep us separated back then."

"True, but maybe it would have been different between us. I get this feeling I would have been your protector and my best friend."

Clarke found her hand and laced their fingers together. Whispering as the sleep began to overtake her, "My best friend."

Lexa pulled the covers over Clarke's back as the night settled over the both of them and her breath even out. Clarke, asleep on her chest, filled her heart to where it spilled over the sides and warmed her soul. Lexa knew sleep would probably be out of reach for her as the day would play over and over.

Lexa was wrong and soon joined Clarke in slumber.
Chapter 15

"What am I looking at?"

Lexa pointed to the blurry image on Clarke's laptop with a ketchup-covered french fry then popped into her mouth. "It's the dark green spot next to what looks like a broken horseshoe."

Clarke wiped her hands and ran her finger over the touchpad and enlarged the lidar image. Now her eyes could make out the blessed rock that saved her mate's life. The three-dimensional picture allowed her to come at it from different angles.

"It looks manmade, like an old-world throne that fell on its back or something," Clarke stated.

"It can't be," Anya said, stealing one of Raven's onion rings. "I know for a fact that Lake Sonchgeda has been here like forever, and given its name, wouldn't you think it would be glowing or something? If, and I mean a big old if, it was manmade, how the heck did it get there?"

Lexa rolled her eyes and closed Clarke's laptop and put it out of the way. "Not a clue. Maybe one day we can visit my lucky rock and get a better look. Next time I'll bring a camera with light."

Clarke bit into her bacon cheeseburger, humming at the tasty, juicy indulgence, causing her to rock back and forth in her seat. Her doctor wanted to watch her weight during her pregnancy but wouldn't pass up the best burger in town with her friends.

"Raven, do you know about the rock with writing that Lexa discovered near our place?" Clarke said around a bite.

Raven opted for clam chowder and exchanged the small loaf of bread and butter, it usually came with, for onion rings. Clarke tried to ignore Raven, adding a ton of hot sauce, then looked away when she dipped one of them into the soup and took a bite.

"Hmm. That she did," Raven answered then licked her fingers.

"And?"
"Artifacts of unknown origins are awesome and probably best to leave them be."

"Are you superstitious, Raven?" Lexa asked.

"No. Not generally," Raven drawled. "But why take a chance and tempt fate, like I almost also did and nearly killed Anya."

"Hush, Raven."

That got Clarke curious. "Oh, yes, please, Raven continue."

Anya groaned when Raven insisted, "I have too, babe. I swear I leave out the embarrassing part." Anya indicated with the wave of her hand to go ahead. "It was a dark and stormy night." Raven paused when Clarke and Lexa moaned.

Anya calmly assured, "It really was, guys."

"So, as I was saying, the weather was pretty shitty, and I was locking up the bar, seeing as the place was dead and started to clean up."

Anya began waving her hands around, "No, Raven. You're starting at the wrong part. In the beginning."

"My so very charming girlfriend is right. I should start when I came to Mount Trikru and met the older man who owned The Blue Ox. Thelonious Jaha. We all called him, Theo."

"Is that the picture you have of the man behind the bar?" Clarke asked.

"You would be correct." Raven pushed her finished bowl aside and started picking at Anya's plate of fried prawns. "The first time I met him was the first day I got here, ten years ago. I was sixteen and lost — no money to my name. Almost willing to do anything to put a roof over my head and food in my belly. Theo convinced me to make better choices, so I stayed after he hired me to keep
it clean and let me sleep at the bar until I got a place to live."

"How does that have anything to do with tempting fate?" Lexa pushed back from her clean plate, holding her fist over her mouth when she started to burp, then felt an elbow in her side. "Excuse me."

"I'm getting to that part. So, anyway, Theo was like a grandfather to me. Yeah, we were culturally different, but with him, with Theo, he made me feel like family until he died five years, and for the life of me, I still do not know why he left me this place. He changed my life and gave me stability in more ways than I was used too. Then strange things started to happen, like hearing sounds." Raven paused and shook her head. "No, not sounds, it's more like suggestions. A feeling when I was in the bar. Like it was urging me to make a better decision, and up to that point, I had never ignored the advice."

"Couldn't that be just intuition, Raven?" Clarke asked.

"Normally I'd say yes. But there was this one time when I didn't listen, and I nearly killed Anya."

"It wasn't as bad as that," Anya stated, rolling her eyes.

"I was there. I know what could have happened." Raven turned back to the fascinated pair. Their empty plates pushed aside. Lexa had put her arm around her shoulders as she sipped on the last bit of her chocolate shake. "I had just broken up with Bellamy because of his cheating. Lexa knows, she was around then when this goofball," indicating to her mate, "started hanging around, always underfoot and wanting my attention. Don't get me wrong. I dearly love Anya, but back then, I was hurting and didn't want to jump into another relationship so quickly with her. I liked Anya as a friend."

"Awe, that's sweet, Raven," Clarke said.

Raven put her hands on the table, mirroring each other and focusing on the space in between seeming recalling that event then looked up. "One night, I'm closing the bar like usual and cleaning up when I get this urge telling me to check the fireplace flue. Now, mind you, I hadn't had a fire in weeks, and I didn't smell smoke and didn't bother to check the lever. I just did a quick look at the fireplace, and I didn't see anything that warranted anything out of place, but I didn't take the ghostly advice and check the flue to be sure. Hell, I didn't think I needed too. I was so convinced and so very wrong."
"You guys need anything else," Echo asked.

"We're good, thanks. Just the check, my treat," Clarke responded. "I thought it was a dark and stormy night?"

"It was that evening, but before that, it had been unseasonably hot. So naturally, a fire was unnecessary. I had no idea that underneath the ashes, the embers from the last fire were still glowing and somebody, I am not sure who, placed logs on the fire grate, and for as long as I've been at this bar, the flue was never closed, ever, I know for a fact I did try to close it at one time a year or so ago, but it was stuck open, and I left it be. I also didn't know that Anya was still in the bar.

"Oh no," Clarke said, putting her hand to her mouth.

"I locked the front door and left for home, but that damn feeling told me to go back to be sure because the closer I got to home, the louder the urgency was telling me you're making a mistake you can't take back. Rather than lay in bed all night and worry, I made a U-turn at my place and went back to the bar. When I unlocked the front door, the bar was filled with smoke, and I found Anya collapsed at the entrance."

Lexa leaned in, "So Anya could have died?"

"And I could have burnt the bar down and probably the town. So, whenever I get this notion to listen, I do."

"Wise words, Lady of the Blue Ox," Clarke said then asked, "So how was Anya embarrassed?"

Anya lifted her chin and said in the next beat, "I peed my pants."

"Oh, no." Lexa laughed then but her hand over mouth, to stop herself.

Then Clarke began to giggle and then looked away, but failing miserably, then got herself under control. "I'm sorry. But you were okay, right?"
"All except my dignity. Raven was a pretty good sport. I wasn't drunk or anything. When I saw the smoke and all of the lights were out, I crawled to the front door and kind of lost it when I found it was locked, then Raven returned and saved my life. Later she helped me clean me up and well..."

"You guys hooked up?" Clarke added helpfully.

"Normally, I used the excuse that I took pity on strays, but one look on her face and seeing fear and Anya's embarrassment." Raven shook her head and closed her eyes. "It touched something deep inside of me. I think I fell for Anya at that moment. This big goof nearly got killed because she liked me, me who I thought was a loser, and how could I say no to this face?" Raven cupped Anya's chin and kissed her.

Anya took a satisfied breath as she leaned back. "I thought for sure Raven would never give me the time of day after I wet my pants," and pulled Raven closer.

"I would like to say it was my guardian angel pointing me in the right direction to save the bar and come to my senses when it came to letting that right person into my heart. Whatever it was, we've been together ever since, and our life has been pretty sweet." Raven leaned back as Anya shifted to rest a protective hand over her belly.

Lexa returned to the original question, "So you don't tempt fate, and you think we shouldn't mess with that rock by my place or the one in the lake?"

"I wouldn't. It seemed to serve its purpose and messing with it to what end, Lexa?"

Clarke tucked her body close to Lexa and said, "I agree. Let's be grateful that for whatever reason it was there, manmade or not it, deserves to be left alone."

~

Lexa had no trouble getting back on the proverbial horse and continued her work at the lake with Anya the following week. Both respected the water with the system that Clarke and Indra put in place. It made for a more efficient way of removing the water-drenched logs.

Today, however, Anya and Lexa were going to try one more time to pull the log that held her in place to shore — using two of the heaviest chains they could find. One on either end and neither
one of them would be anywhere near the log, treading water a distance away as it was lifted from the bottom of the lake. Then they would follow its last journey to shore.

But, before they attempted the lift, Anya followed her down to the bottom of the lake. To see the rock that saved her life. Lexa took her underwater video camera with her as Anya held a bright light, and they spent some time filming it at different angles, trying to get a feel of its existence. As they swam around, they kept their movements controlled as not to stir the slit. Satisfied, she gave Anya a thumb up, and she headed back up. Lexa remained but placed her hand on the rock. Her way of giving thanks for saving her life and made her way to the surface of the lake.

~

At the beach, Clarke waited next to Indra while Gustus worked the rig's engines after Lexa and Anya swam a safe distance away. Anya gave the signal, and Gustus started reeling in the chains. The machinery struggled at first until the log finally breached the surface, and Gustus rotated the boom until the massive tree rested safely on the shore.

Lexa and Anya followed behind and stepped out of the water as they removed some of their headgear. The log was almost thirty feet long. Clarke stood next to it and measured the diameter to be nearly four feet and did a quick calculation in her head and figured this beast must weigh at least ten tons if not more, including the water it held. Clarke visibly shook, thinking of it crushing her mate, but at the moment, it rested, unassuming.

"Hey, you guys, come over and stand next to the log." Clarke motioned for Lexa and Anya to stand on either side of the beast and snapped a couple of pictures.

Clarke saw Indra eying the log and running her hand over the rings and said, "It's got to be two hundred years old. Depending on when it went into the lake."

"You got plans?"

"I do, indeed. I could make a large table out of it. Will definitely use it in some capacity."

"So, you don't plan on selling it, making a profit." Clarke could almost hear the gears turning in Indra's head. She learned early on Indra's love for the forest and the genuine affection for her responsibility in preserving the past.
"Not this one. I can feel the history it holds in its fibers, Clarke."

Clarke touched Indra's arm and said, "I'm sure you give a fitting purpose."

Clarke looked up to see her partner, giving her a wink as both, Anya and Lexa, headed back into the water.

~

Clarke discovered after living for the last six months or so in the mountains that it does indeed get warm. The crisp air now mostly gone, and with summer sun now in full force, she was thankful for the change. After the spring season moved into summer, she found that the wildflowers of red Buckeyes, yellow Coneflowers, and the unique Buttonbush continued to flourish. Her favorite, though, was the wild Bergamot, with its rare lavender-scented blooms that grew just outside of her office.

It brought out the butterflies and bees, busy taking up nectar and spreading pollen from flower to flower. A feeling of peace settled over Clarke's life and wondered how she ever managed to live in the big city. Passing clumps of beauty, undeterred by the slow growth of their town, rising between rocks, dirt, and the occasional open fields that lined the road from their cabin to the lake and enjoyed what the new days would bring.

That view would soon change, at least for today, when most of the town's folk would head up the mountain for the yearly Fourth of July celebrations. Clarke looked over her to-do list for the trip. She needed to bring something for the evening when the air would cool down and remember to bring a bottle of sunscreen they'd both need today so they wouldn't get baked in the sun. Clarke ticked off a few more things, but what couldn't be displayed on that list was her excitement for the journey to the dense forest to see where Lexa worked.

On today's holiday agenda included hanging with good friends, Octavia, and Lincoln's tasty barbeque and watching Lexa compete in the annual lumberjacks games.

Clarke heard Lexa getting out of the shower and waited for her to come downstairs and help her decided what else to bring when her eyes fell the partial list of people to invite for their wedding, the only thing she had accomplished so far. The time had flown by, and they had yet to start planning or even setting a date. It wasn't because either hesitated, as much as they had been hella busy at the lake. Clarke intended to take care of the wedding plans after the work would ease up.
Indra decided to halt the recovery after another month. The logs removed were now sawed into planks and drying in the kiln and was near to capacity. Then Lexa and the remaining crew would join the other lumberjacks working on the mountain until late September, leaving Clarke alone until she returned.

It seemed like the perfect time to have a wedding when Lexa returned. But there was still a chance they would wait until next year when their baby could become part of the celebrations.

"Hey, Clarke!" Lexa yelled from upstairs. "Do you know where my boots are?"

"They're probably in the garage, next to your favorite ax." Clarke chuckled then glanced upward, catching the backside a very naked and wet Lexa returning to their bedroom.

Liking the view, Clarke pulled herself off of the sofa and went upstairs and waited just outside of the bathroom and found Lexa in her favorite pair of worn blue jeans, still topless, barefoot, and combing out her hair. Clarke couldn't help but admire her tanned skin and muscles she had put on her frame these past few months and came up behind her and wrapped her arms around her middle.

"You're not going to wear shorts?" Clarke asked, fiddling with the button on her jeans.

"I brought a pair to change into later. There's a hundred percent chance I'll end up in the water during the log rolling competition. Did I tell you that Anya holds the record for the past two years?"

"That you did." Clarke kissed one bare shoulder blade, finding her girl still warm after her shower as she pressed her pregnant belly into the small of her back. Then Clarke took the comb Lexa offered and proceeded to finish the job of removing the remaining tangles for her girl's thick wet hair, and after a few minutes, she asked, "So you both of you are pretty competitive?"

Lexa began brushing her teeth, yet kept still while Clarke put her hair in a french braided, and said around a mouth full of toothpaste, "It's all for fun."

Clarke finished the end of the ponytail with one of the black silicone bands off her wrist and turned Lexa around after she rinsed out her mouth when she detected something in her voice. "But you want to win this time?"
Lexa wrapped her arms around Clarke's back and sat against the countertop. "I'm there for a good time. It's just everyone is so keen on beating me, as if I care." Lexa pushed off of the counter, giving Clarke a minty flavored peck on her lips and mumbled under her breath something about Anya's long legs, being a cheat, and moved to the bedroom to put on a sports bra and a black tank top.

Clarke knew well enough of the competitive nature of things, especially between alphas. And on this crew of lumberjacks, you couldn't swing a dead cat without hitting one or six, then winced at that old expression. Clarke began undressing and called out, "So all that practicing you've been doing, is for what?"

The blush on Lexa's cheeks gave her away. "Well...I."

Clarke smiled and said as she stepped into the shower, "Just do your best."

~

Lexa wrapped a hand around Clarke's bare sunkissed leg as she drove to their destination. Her girl opted to wear a colorful sleeveless sundress that came up to her mid-thigh, giving room for her pregnant belly to breathe and also showed a bit of cleavage to Lexa's delight. Clarke opted to put her blond hair up, with ringlets of curls around her face, and sported a new pair of dark sunglasses.

As the months passed and Clarke's body began showing signs of her pregnancy, her alpha persona to protect and cherish became part of the change. She began to understand the bond her parents shared. Sometimes it was the unspoken word with a look between them that spoke volumes. But, touching Clarke was altogether different. It was a message from her mother one evening that she made the connection.

It was in her mother's words about her dad; she detected their family bond — that familiar, comfortable sense of home that showed even though the distance in the message. Lexa hoped one day they would be able to impart those same connections to their child.

It was in her mate's presence and the warm skin under her palm, she sensed the peace they shared and gently squeezed her leg causing Clarke to rest her hand over, tangling them together over her lap and heard a soft sigh pass her lips. Clarke held her soul carefully in her hands as if nothing of her previous life mattered anymore, maybe even growing ever nearer to finally releasing the past.
The traffic on the road today would add fifteen minutes, she reckoned. Not that it mattered. Having a day off in the middle of the week did feel a little decadent and planned on enjoying every minute she had with Clarke.

"How much longer?"

"Twenty minutes give or take. We should get there around ten o'clock."

"So tell me about your home away from home."

Lexa squeezed her hand again. "It's the original logging camp of Indra's family and sits at the headstream for Lake Sonchgeda and has a pond there as well. The main lodge was built before the turn of the nineteenth century..." A honk of a car horn behind them stopped her commentary and glanced at the rearview mirror. "Guess who?"

Clarke turned and waved at Anya and Raven in the black SUV behind them and back around when her phone toned an incoming text message from Raven.

Lexa quickly glanced at Clarke checking the message when she said, "Don't blame me for this, but Anya says she plans on kicking your ass again today."

Clarke was about to respond when Lexa put her hand over the phone. "Please don't..."

"I've got this babe." Clarke quickly tapped out a message and sent it off.

"What did you say?"

"May the best alpha win."

Lexa shook her head and signaled to turn left onto the road that would lead them to up the last leg of the journey.

A few seconds later, Clarke read out the quickly returned response, "Famous last words, losers."
Seeing from the corner of her eye, the picture of Anya showing off the prized gold-colored ax in the air she won last year after the log rolling competition. Lexa remembered that she was somewhere in the background, soaking wet.

Clarke huffed and crossed her arms over her belly. "Kick her ass, babe."

~

Majestic trees lined the turnoff, which guided them to the end of the road. It opened up to a view of nothing but sierras, up close as far as you could see. It held a different sort of energy as if the gravity from the weight of the mountains pulled at your soul grounding you to the land and forest.

The first thing Clarke noticed when Lexa drove into the spacious campground was music playing over the speakers located somewhere in the tall trees. The land around, what seemed to be the main lodge, now cleared of trees allowed a field to grow short green grass, lush and inviting, currently being set up with tents for overnight campers — the town's folk who would stay overnight instead of head back after a day of fun.

Lexa made sure they got one of the empty cabins to stay for the night. Being pregnant had that advantage and wouldn't pass up this opportune for the comfort of home and spied off to one side those same row of cabins for the Lumberjacks to live while working the mountain and central to this area was a large fire pit, still smoking. The place was rustic, as they came to a stop in front of their cabin for the night.

"It's bigger than I imagined," Clarke said, looking over her sunglasses up through the windshield to the tall trees around them.

"Hmm." Lexa didn't bother looking as she stayed focus on her and leaned in, her eyes sparkling as her lips sought hers out, leaving her breathless and flushed after a few moments of exploration.

"You punk," Clarke moaned against Lexa's lips and pulled her in for another, longer kiss. Seeking out the warmth of her mouth and couldn't restrain a moan when Lexa's scent rose between them. It was an aggressive scent Clarke remembered from that first night. Her arm around her shoulder, protecting against the unwanted advances of another alpha. Clarke purred against her mouth. "Hmm, if we were alone, I'd drag you into woods or better yet our cozy little cabin." Lexa pulled her tighter as her hand cupped her belly.
"For the love of all that's holy," Anya barked, turning away as she covered her eyes. "I'd say get a room, but you two horndogs would probably do it."

Lexa pulled away a bit as Clarke wiped a smear of lipstick from her mouth; their eyes still focused on each other. "We're coming," Lexa said over one tan shoulder, then dipped her head at the pun when Clarke laughed, and they exited the vehicle.

Clarke drew her in for one more kiss, saying so only she could hear, "I'll be rooting for you."

"I'll try to make you proud."

Raven looped her arm with Clarke's and walked towards the central area decorated in the holiday-themed of red, white, and blue. At the same time, Lexa and Anya grabbed their luggage and put them inside their cabins then took off to joined the other lumberjacks in the competition field roped off from a group of spectators.

"You're not sore about me kidding you guys?" Not waiting for Clarke to answer, she plowed on, "It's all for fun."

Clarke smelled the air as they walked, a little distracted, and patted her arm, "Oh, no, Raven. I'm not mad at all." She wasn't angry or even a little mad. But she did want Lexa to win and didn't want to seem too eager against a different outcome. Plus, they had a morning to fill, taking in this place and guided Raven towards the green field now beginning to be occupied with people on blankets and lawn chairs.

"This place," Clarke paused and closed her eyes, stretched her arms out, and soaked up the rays. "Is beautiful, Raven."

"Hmm-mm. I forgot how lovely it is up here." Raven looked comfortable herself, dressed in a pair of denim shorts and a light lemon yellow sleeveless top that covered her baby bump and showed off her natural skin tone.

Clarke tried to take everything in and pulled out her cell phone and started snapping pictures of everything. The main lodge took up residence just off the main road into the camp. Off to the side of the cabins had a central area were bathrooms, and she supposed a shower for the crew. Overall the place looked like a spacious campground and sensed the vacation vibe this place held.
Oh, look.

Clarke waved at Octavia and dodged a group of lively children dashing towards an area set up for them to play. Following the smoke coming from the grills, fire hissing and dancing when Lincoln laid a slab of ribs over the flames. It sent a lovely scent into the air. Off to one side were bunches of corn on the cobs in their husks, waiting for their turn on the grill, and troughs of ice held covered side dishes under a large open tent. Clarke's stomach growled, but it was too early to eat and grabbed a bottle of water.

"Happy Fourth of July, guys," Octavia said as she came around the grill and gave them both a hug. "I hope we'll be able to take in some of the games today."

Lincoln jumped in, "As soon as these finished grilling, I can keep them warm before the games take off, babe."

"It smells divine, guys."

Lincoln beamed. "That's right. I don't believe you've had our barbeque before."

"Nope, today will be the first."

"We'll make sure you get a bib. The ribs are super juicy."

"I can't wait."

Clarke noticed an area was set up for the children with tiny axes and saws that fit their small hands and overwhelmed Fio teaching the kids how to use the tools. His punishment of a sort, as he wasn't allowed to handle the bigger equipment since his fuck up at the lake. Indra told her that everyone deserved a second chance, and insisted she'd keep him away from her mate. He looked up when she paused and blinked at her nod and gave her a wave then continued with the children's lessons.

It was so different from what she knew of the big city. What he had done earlier in the year would have probably blackballed him from ever finding work again in that field. But, Indra, with her kind heart, understood the long view in the value of people even when they made a mistake. Still, Lexa wasn't quite ready to forgive, but they kept between each other.
Indra's voice came over a loudspeaker announcing the first event. Clarke turned when Raven grabbed her arm and led her to the benches set up to watch the first competition.

Clarke and Raven found seats next to Indra's wife, Grace, and their kids, signaling to her, the universal gesture of gimme the baby to hold. Little Isabelle, with the big green eyes, couldn't have recognized Clarke at this age and quickly reached for her breast to suckle, causing Clarke to laugh as she gently pulled her hands away.

"Sorry, Isabelle, these trouble-makers are reserved for my kid." Clarke grinned at her friends, then added with a smirk, "and Lexa." Causing Grace and Raven to bust out in laughter.

Indra gathered the lumberjacks and, using a microphone, explained the rules for the ax throwing event so all could hear.

"Each competitor will have three rounds of five throws each for a total of fifteen throws. The bullseye is worth five points; the next ring is three, and the outer is one point. On your fifth throw, you will have the opportunity to go for the green clutch — this small circle above the target. It's worth seven points. But, you have to declare you are throwing for this spot, but if land a bullseye or any other ring, it will not count. Do we all understand?"

Clarke studied the leaderboard seeing that the system was set up for the accumulation of points. For each contest, the scores were added to each competitor's totals. Assuming at the end of all of the competitions, the person with the highest totals is the overall winner. A fair system that would allow anyone to take the lead as each event played out.

Clarke settled into her seat, holding baby Isabelle so she could watch the contest. The baby's eye grew wide and tried to reach out her arms then clapped as each lumberjack would take turns in their practice throws as they hurled an ax to the target some distance away.

Clarke practically started drooling when Lexa stepped up to the line and tossed a few practice throws. She was so proficient with the ax she could easily throw it across the distance, hitting the bullseye over and over. Her alpha had mad skills, and it was making the space between her thighs wet, even more so when she noticed the sheen of sweat dotting Lexa's skin.

The Lumberjacks went by the last name first, and Bellamy was first up to the line.
"Watch how it's done, guys," and he promptly landed his throw just off the center of the bullseye with a satisfying clunk and the first five points. Echo pumped her fist and cheered for Bellamy as he gave a grin to his girl and made his second throw.

Bellamy's first throws were consistent, earning him a respectable sixteen points and called for the clutch on his fifth throw to bump up his totals and promptly stuck the ax into the bullseye again for a loss of points. Echo groaned then sat down with a thump.

The next group of lumberjacks was just as competitive. But when Anya stepped up to the line, her confidence poured off of her. Raven leaned in as she looked over the top of her sunglasses and made a small moan. Clarke understood the pull of an alpha. Anya's frame held sinewy muscles that flexed as she readied her to throw. Clarke had to admit she was skilled and took the lead with eighteen points with Raven cheering her on.

Lexa was the last to throw and stepped up to the line. Her first throw landed a lousy one point. Making Clarke ache for her partner as her friends hid their mouths and tried to stifle their laughter at her expense. She shook it off and adjusted her stance. The next three throws earned her a total of fourteen points and called for the clutch. Winning this throw would put her in first place in this first round.

Lexa had yet to look to Clarke while she was throwing, and she figured she might have been too distracting. But unable to control herself, she called out, "You got this, babe."

Lexa turned and gave her a panty-dropping grin, and her body relaxed and shifted to line up her throw and stuck the ax into the green clutch, taking the lead.

The next two rounds had the competitors switching first place with Anya finally passing Bellamy by three points and landing a clutch of her own and taking the lead. Lexa trailed again and needed a solid fifteen points to just tie with Anya, and by her fourth throw, she was six points behind. Clarke watched as Lexa didn't show defeat even with the pressure building. Clarke also understood that she had to call her last throw for the clutch. Hitting bullseye wouldn't be enough to win the first event. Lexa was lucky on her first throw, but on her second attempt, she had missed.

That's when the crowd started yelling her name. Lexa good naturally turned and put out her hands to quiet them down, then lined up her shot and almost released her ax when Anya coughed, drawing a withering glare from Lexa and laughter from the townsfolk.

Clarke felt the pressure keenly and crossed all of her body parts and hid her eyes partly behind her hands as she watched her partner gather herself for her last throw.
Lexa announced her throw for the clutch once more and shook out her arms and shoulders. By this time her mate was dripping with sweat under the heat of the competition and sun with one look back at her, Lexa lined up her throw as the crowd held their breath she released her ax, sending end over end and landing just at the top edge of the clutch.

Anya started to cheer, claiming victory until Indra approached the target. "That's a hit and a score of seven points and a win for Woods in this first event." Everyone got their feet and cheered as Clarke dashed to her side.

"Easy, Clarke. I'm soaking in sweat."

"Like I care. Damn, that was nerve-racking."

"Just wait until you see me climb that." Lexa hooked a thumb over her shoulder to the two trees side by side, stripped of limbs standing upright in the distance.

Clarke's eye grew wide and just shook her head. "Fuck. I don't think I can survive the stress." and leaned her forehead against Lexa's warm glistening shoulder.

Each competitor shook her hand with Anya being last. "Good game, Lexa. It's nice to have a true competitor again."

"Ha-ha," Lexa took the bottle of water she offered. Emptying half into herself and the rest, she poured over her head.

Lexa shook out the water, and Clarke watched the smile grow on her face. Droplets of water clung to her eyelashes that caught the rays from the sun through the trees overhead. Clarke could either shake off the pull her mate was oozing or drag her to her cabin and have her way with her, but reluctantly chose the former.

"Damn it. Okay, time for more sunscreen for you, babe."
Lexa didn't resist her over-attentive partner as she applied the lotion over her shoulders, chest, face, and of course, her ears. The only parts of her body currently exposed to the sun. She was hot and changed out of the black tank top into a lighter color. The bottom half of her would still be warm because until the last competition was over, she'd have to wear her long pants. But dealing with the heat was better than digging splinters out of her legs, should she fall. Then eyed the sixty-foot trees off in the distance, psyching herself up for the next contest.

"I hate heights," Lexa confessed to Clarke.

"Then, why?" Clarke stopped. "You could always drop out. I'm okay with that."

"Nah. I haven't fallen before or anything like that. Plus, the safety harness will keep me from dropping to my death." Lexa cringed when she saw the terrified look over Clarke's face and watched her shut her eyes and shake it off.

"I get that, Lexa. You're the top alpha, and you can't show fear."

"It's not that. Well, not completely because of my status. One day I won't be able to do any of this stuff." Lexa motioned around them.

"So, it's for your pride?" Clarke questioned.

Lexa dropped her arm to her side. "I want to make you proud of me," she admitted kicking at a tuft of grass with the toe of her boot.

They stood under the shade of a pine tree as a cool breeze made the blond curls around Clarke's face shift. Then seemingly out of her control, her girl shook her head and wrapped her arms around her neck.

After a few seconds of silent moments holding firm between them, Clarke said, "You don't have to prove anything to me. You're the top alpha, no matter what. Never forget that."

"Still..." Lexa let her statement drop when Anya and Raven rejoined them under the shade.
"Getting some pep talk from Clarke?" Anya joked.

Clarke quipped back, "She's the one leading you at the moment, and I..."

"Whoa there omega. I'm just kidding."

"Sorry, Anya." Clarke was, she could tell by the expression her face. The games weren't some life-threatening fight to the death or anything. Still, she could understand Clarke's bias in wanting her to win.

"Hey, listen after the pole climbing event, Lexa, and I'll be on the same side when we compete in the log sawing contest."

Lexa added, "Until the last event, my friend."

"True. I'd sure like to bring home the golden ax one more time before these young pups learn how not to trip over their own feet."

Lexa rolled her eyes, "I hope you're not referring to me."

"Never," Anya said with a grin.

Lexa knew it was for fun, albeit for the bragging right, but the omega under her arm didn't and put out her hand once more for Anya to shake. "May the best alpha win."

Indra's voice announced the next event. As Anya turned around once more gazing at the pair. "Good luck, Lexa."

Clarke gathered Lexa's hand in hers as they followed behind their friends, whispering, "I've got to knock that off."
Lexa kissed her forehead. "Don't worry about it, Clarke. I want to win also, but Anya is a tough competitor."


Clarke nodded her head and sensed Lexa's energy. Sure she was a leader, but that didn't always assure her winning every contest. Lexa turned to leave as Clarke held her hand.

"Be careful."

Lexa squeezed her hand before she released it and left her to find a seat next to Raven near the event.

The pole climbing event was more nerve-racking than the first contest. Seeing her mate in a safety harness was a relief, but still, should Lexa slipped or any other climber did, they could land hard against the pole. Seeing that happen to Quint after a rough fall caused the group of spectators to grow quiet as he was slowly lowered to the ground. Dr. Waters was quickly at his side and treated his scraps and bumps he received and pulled him from the other events.

This competition would have Lexa going against the much larger muscular Tristan. Scoring was by time. Who could ring the bell at the top and come down in record time?

Clarke gave up trying to figure out the scoring for this event. It had to do with converting the time it took to climb the pole and ring the bell into points. The less time, the more points you could score. But, when her partner hooked one foot in the pole and one flat on the ground, with one more check of her harness by the crew, Clarke held her breath.

She barely heard the shot of the starting gun go off, and they were off. Clarke blindly reached for Raven's hand to squeeze and sensed her chest heaving with the effort of just watching her mate go higher and higher. She was torn from being terrified and turned on with the two competing reactions that made her a little shaky.

Lexa reached the top before Tristan and rang the bell, and then unexpectedly, she released the strap, falling in record time and only being slowed down by her safety harness as it hissed all the way to the ground.
Clarke sat stunned into silence the moment Lexa's feet were on the ground and reasoned pretty quickly that this was going to be the last time Lexa ever does this again if she had any say in the matter. Her world went a little hazy and leaned her head against Raven's shoulder.

"I'm going to kill her," Clarke mumbled.

A hand on her face, another patted her hand with an unfamiliar, faint voice saying, "Ms. Griffin?"

She felt a little dizzy and sensed hands over her body and another pat to her face when she opened her eyes, she looks up into Dr. Waters concern face.

"Easy, Ms. Griffin. Deep breaths. Someone get me some water."

"Lexa?"

"I'm right here." Clarke looked over, disorientated. Lexa was now at her side and held onto her hands and was in Raven's grip. "I'm okay."

"I thought you fell."

"I'm sorry. I should have warned you about that."

"Did you win?"

"Yeah, I beat him," Lexa said with a grin.

"Damn, I do remember that," and felt Raven laugh.

Clarke rolled her face towards Raven when she said, "Welcome to my world, Griffin."

Dr. Waters rechecked her pulse. "I want you to stay in the shade for the rest of the day and come
see me later this week."

"You got it, Doc."

~

After the pole climbing competition, Anya was back in the lead as they set up for the next event, her eyes never leaving Lexa moving about and interacting with her friends. It helped to ease the shakiness she felt early and let her mind wander as the two-person crosscut sawing contest started.

Watching Lexa almost moving in slow motion as they set up for the next event. Anya tapped on the log they were about to cut, and then they readied the saw, and a starter pistol started the race.

*Clarke grew to understand the ways of the people of the forest. They were her clan as well, her people whose Commander led them to victory those many months ago. She also learned that Alexandra's life was not always her own, and many a fortnight, she would be required to stay only in the castle in the high forest with the birth of their first child nearing keeping her protected against the unforgiving lands.*

*Now heavy with the heir to her mate's throne, she understood the pull, nay the desire to bring to all of their people some measure of peace as she shepherded goods and food to the outlying lands.*

*Alexandra was that strong leader born out of struggle and darkness in those first new days, shown in the respect and might from other alpha and betas looking towards her mate for strength — guidance and assuring their offspring a bright new future, everyday a new beginning shown through her mate's vision.*

*It made for a constant battle of wits and muscles. Slaying the oppressors and ensuring her followers, Commander Alexandra would lead them into peace, as glad tidings broke within the quiet halls and now beat within the hearts of their people.*

Clarke came out of her daydream, seeing her mate bro-hugging Anya after winning.

~
Lexa quickly walked off of the log onto the dock after sending Bellamy in the water for the third time and eyed the leaderboard as Indra crossed off his name, she was the last of the competitors who stood defeated, saved one. With the points that she and Anya won together, they were tied and watched the grin cover her friend's face.

It must have mirrored her own. It seemed inevitable they would stand together once again and fight, no not fight, this was a competition of who was the best, in this last contest together and put out her hand to Anya.

"You think you got what it takes to beat me, alpha?" Anya questioned, keeping her waiting to take her hand.

"I have what matters, my friend." Lexa looked past Anya to Clarke, waiting anxiously at the shore then back to her.

"You two ready?" Indra asked.

Anya's eyes glinted, not taking them off of hers and took Lexa's hand and squeezed. "We're ready, boss."

Lexa stepped onto the log as it was held steady by Gustus with a long pick pole, and Anya followed behind her.

"Best three out of five, alphas," Indra called out, ready on my mark.

Lexa waited with her arms stretched out as she watched Anya's feet. Her friend stood a few inches taller, and it gave her the advantage each season. But Lexa noticed that with the time she'd spent in the water these past few months, her legs felt stronger and held more muscles than before.

A shot rang out, and they began spinning the log. Watching Anya's feet gave the advantage along with the strength that surged in her muscles and stopped the log suddenly, sending Anya off-balanced as she cursed and landing face-first into the water.

Lexa chuckled. That was first. Knocking her friend off had taken two long years and stepped off the log to began again.
A second time and Anya seemed ready until she tried this trick again. Shifting suddenly and moving too fast in the other direction for Anya to catch up and she landed flat on her back once more into the water.

"Damnit, Lexa."

"You want to give up?" Lexa said, a little out of breath.

"You've got to beat me fair and square, my friend."

"I'm ready whenever you are."

Anya sent Lexa into the water the next to times. Now both of them were soaking wet as Lexa whipped her long hair out of the way and lifted herself out of the water, tossing Gustus help aside.

"Thanks. I got this."

Indra brought them both together and turned off the microphone and spoke in a low voice, meant for their ears only as Gustus stepped away.

"Anya, I've always admired your strength and wit. Your heart beats strong like the warriors of old, and I am proud that you are a member of my crew."

She put her hand out for her friend to shake, then turned to Lexa. "My friend, you keep what caused you grief close to your chest as well as wearing your heart on your sleeve, but in these last few months, I've seen a new determination that wasn't there before. Kindled that fire, Lexa."

Lexa nodded her head after she shook her hand and gazed towards the shore to where her partner was waiting. The hopeful look from Clarke took her breath away.

"I'll do my best."
"That's all I ask from all of my crew. Stand ready."

They both mounted the logs with grit and fire. With and determination, they were battling once more. Lexa held firm with the muscles of her legs and kicked faster, moved swifter as they spun the log quicker as the crowd got to their feet.

Lexa felt her balance shift almost sending her backward and saw the gleam in Anya's eyes and held fast to the log and spun it in the other direction sending her running to catch up in a physical shift of power.

She watched Anya's feet slip and took the advantage to push her momentum in the other direction sending her scrambling to catch up with the swiftly rolling log.

Lexa could taste victory in the last moments when Anya turned and cursed, her feet finally slipping out of her control as she waved her arms in a futile attempt of hanging on then shook her head as she fell into the water for the third time.

Lexa looked up to the sky and stretched out her arms in victory. It was as sweet as they said and did a backflip off of the log into the water with a mighty victorious yell.

～

Clarke cheered her heart out when Lexa jumped into the water after winning, seeing Anya swim towards her and lift one of Lexa's arms into the air, reflecting the spirit of a true competitor.

Raven pulled her into a hug, "Congratulations, Clarke."

Clarke wiped her tears away as the crowd parted as they made their way towards the dripping wet alphas standing next to Indra as she tried to settle everyone down.

"Folk, folks. We have a new champion this year. Give our winner a hand, Lexa Woods!"

Indra handed the golden ax over to her mate, sending chills down Clarke's spine, almost forgetting to take a few pictures, as Lexa held it high overhead, and their eyes found one another.
She pushed past everyone until she stood in front of Lexa. "I'm so proud of you." Forgoing that she was soaking wet, she hugged Lexa and planted a toe-curling kiss on her, causing the crowd to whoop it up once more.

"Let's get you into something dry, Lexa."

~

Lexa and Clarke were sprawled out on a large blanket under a pine tree they were sharing with Raven and Anya after their meal of ribs, hamburgers, and the works. A well earned afternoon of relaxing until the sun would set over the camp.

Planned for the evening would be apple pie and homemade ice cream, care of some old contraptions Lincoln had hoarded over the years. Later, a first for the camp, fire-safe fireworks would be set off on the green lawn, carefully set back from the tall timbers, and with buckets of water nearby.

"I'm stuff," Lexa drawled. Her head rested on Clarke's outstretched legs, feeling her fingers running through her drying hair. Clarke insisted she needed another shower to remove the day's sweat and grime. Now in a soft white tee-shirt that just barely covered her stomach and a pair of light-blue denim cutoffs she felt, perfect. Her life in focus and turned and pressed her ear against Clarke's belly and murmured I love you to their baby and received a kick to her head.

"Ow."

Lexa looked up as Clarke chuckled and ran a finger over a tiny bruise over her collarbone. "She's happy you won today."

Lexa just nodded her head and blinked her eyes shut, and fell into a light nap. Nothing hurt, but she was tired after today's exertion, and her mind wandered over everything and nothing. Bits of memories came in and out of her thoughts and let her mind drift.

It's just the fairy forest folk who leave messages to the lovesick wanderers.
Lexa was running after her mate in an open field green grassy field. Clarke turned to allow her to catch up, then dashed away out of her reach ducking behind an enormous flower as she chuckled and let Clarke have the advantage. Strange small beings filled with glittering light also joined in, pulling at her hands and arms and guided to her waiting mate.

The woodland creatures vanished as they came, and Lexa pulled Clarke into her arms and laid her in the sweet grass and kissed the hollow of her neck, making her way to her mating bond. Whispering promises of forever to her under the open sky and nudged herself inside of her mate and groaned.

A light touch to her face, then another to one ear as she batted it away. The dream dissipated as her eyes came open to find Clarke and her friends staring down at her.

"Did I just..."

Clarke put a finger over her lips, hearing her friends chuckling in the background. "You did." Lexa turned and buried her face into Clarke's belly.

And that’s how the afternoon played out. Quiet talk and laughter with more food and fun until the sun hid behind the tall trees and mountains the evening settled over the camp. Children dashed around the green grass, waving sparklers as the adults kept a watchful eye over them.

Lexa saw in the distance Indra waving her over. She left Clarke and her friends by the firepit and made her way to her side.

"What's up?"

Indra stayed quiet for a few moments as Lexa turned to look out at what had caught her attention — thinking that she just wanted company, and Lexa held any questions she might have had to herself.

"It was not too long ago that I remembered meeting you behind my home right after the new year. You seemed lost in your thoughts."

The memory came into focus of that day. A strange message from a stranger in her pocket, and it was a cold afternoon, her life unsettled, and she carried a heavy shame.
"I do, now that you mention it, why?"

"Do you recall me asking what you were looking for?"

Lexa leaned her head back and looked up the twinkling stars overhead and thought of that day and their conversation about how she measured her life against her failures. She was running away to find herself in the mountains, keeping all of her secrets close to her chest and became somewhat settled but not whole as she had hoped.

"You wondered why I came here — settled in Mount Trikru. You thought I was just going through the motion of fitting in."

"It was true. I was worried you'd give up and leave us. Leave all of your friends that cared about you." Indra's wise face held an expression of mirth. "But, my original question you've yet to answer."

The answer she gave Indra was somewhat honest yet vague as always and remembered like it was yesterday. "My destiny?" Indra nodded her head waiting for her continue. Lexa looked toward Clarke, soaking up the heat from the fire as she rested her hand over her belly. Lexa indicated with a tilt of her head in her mate's direction. "My destiny is wearing my green flannel shirt."

Indra chuckled, and she joined her laughter. "Of course, my friend and congratulation on winning today and for stopping your past keep you from the joy you deserve."

Lexa's breath caught as she blinked her eyes against the sudden wave of sentiment. "Thank you, Indra." Lexa swallowed hard against the emotion that welled up in her throat and left Indra to join her friends again.

Clarke tried to hold in a yawn as she stood between Anya and Raven with their arms wrapped around each other's shoulders and motion with one finger to her.

"Do you mind if I take her off your hands?"

Anya looked at her watch over Clarke's shoulder and opened her mouth to give her grief when
Lexa raised one eyebrow. She shook her head instead and let her pulled Clarke away from them, looping her arm around her flannel covered shoulder and guided her mate to their cabin.

~

The bathroom was tiny, and Clarke was thankful for the toilet, and what Lexa told her by the water was true. It didn't get that warm, but it allowed her to cleaned up. Her skin glowed from the sun's rays and was grateful for the advice her doctor gave her about staying under the shade of the trees. Maybe she should have been a little worried about feeling light-headed before, but since this was the only time it had ever happened, she could easily attribute it to the heat.

She released her hair and comb out the few tangles, seeing that the length was now passing of swell of her breasts and desperately needed a trim another thing to add to list and flipped off the light and found Lexa laying on one of the twin beds. The other held their luggage and fished through the overnight bag and pulled out a jar of shea infused cocoa butter.

"Let me," Lexa eagerly sat, taking the jar out of her hand.

"Is there enough room?"

Lexa grinned and padded the space next to her. "It's just big enough for two."

Clarke laid on her back and watched as her partner lift her shirt and gently pull it off her head. Not wanting her to feel too exposed, Lexa stripped out of her clothes. Lexa massaged the lightly-scent cream into her skin while Clarke tucked her hands under her head and watched her partner, feeling the newly formed callous over her palms.

Clarke closed her eyes, listening to Lexa humming under breath. This was one of her favorite times of the day, other than waking up to next to her partner. As the omega, her feminine persona in reposed allowed her partner to share that connection growing in her belly. Lexa also took time to apply more over her swollen breasts and peeked up through slitted eyes at her partner and saw the intensity her mate's eyes held and caught her chin, recognizing the need in her glinting green eyes. They matched her own as Lexa leaned over, and their lips met, causing her legs to drift open.

Lexa's hand cupped her sex, and a groan passed her lips matching her own as one finger slipped past her panties finding the wetness spilling out of her cunt. Lexa slid them off of her hips and removed hers as well.
The short dark curls covered Lexa's clit as her hand was drawn down to cup her mate. The shift was sudden, and soon her fist was full of her cock, hard and dripping as Lexa's head fell onto her shoulder with a needy groan.

Penetration was out of the question at this stage of her pregnancy — the ache of emptiness now filled with her mate's long fingers as Clarke pumped Lexa's cock as her fingers languidly explored her depths.

Heated kisses cover her face and neck as a sigh passed her mate's lips. She knew that sound of want and released her cock when Lexa laid on her back and invited her to mount her face.

"Surely, I'll crush you," Clarke moaned. But excepted Lexa's invitation and slowly pressed down on her waiting mouth. Their fingers laced together over Lexa's shoulders as she grounded down into her lips. Her tongue parted her labia, causing her to jog down to find the wet muscle flicking against her extended clit.

Her belly kept her from seeing her mate's eyes. Those eyes would bore into her soul. Instead, she imagined them closed as she moved, drinking up what spilled from her cunt over her face and dripping down into her hair.

"Come for me, Clarke."

Clarke pressed Lexa's hands on her breast as she neared her climax and focused on baring down. Her hands clutched the sheets, and at this angle, she could see her eyes. Now open, searching hers. Clarke jogged once, twice when her orgasm that was out of reach came into focus, then Lexa lightly squeezed her nipples, triggering her blessed release. She chanted Lexa's name over and over as she settled, and Lexa helped her onto to back and cooed soft words of love.

As her breath settled down, she opened one eye then the other. Clarke could barely believe what she was seeing. Not able to explain what she was feeling but yet witnessing the love and devotion from Lexa's face as she laid on her side. Her body was glowing with a sheen of sweat covering her muscles and a rock-hard cock in need of attention.

Being pregnant meant finding different positions that were comfortable for both of them. Clarke took her cock into her hand and pulled, drawing her mate further up the bed until...
"Fuck," Lexa groaned as she licked around the head and fell on her back. One hand massaged Lexa's growing knot as she took her deep in her mouth. Already her mate was close to releasing and back off as she blew air over the wet shaft now covered in her mate's pending release. "Please, Clarke."

Clarke chuckled deep in her gut and ran her fingers around Lexa's nipple and sucked on it instead. Then batted Lexa's hand away when she tried to jerk herself off.

Clarke purred against her chest, "Mine," then shifted downward and took her mate's slick coated shaft into her hand and held firm.

"Keryon, please, Clarke."

"Soon, Lexa."

A hand on her chin guided her mouth to her cock. Clarke wiped her tongue, gathering the sweet nectar oozing out of her slit. Once, a moan, then twice, a passionate plea, a third she took Lexa, deep into her mouth down to her knot and sucked. Lexa's body stiffened when she came, surprising Clarke with the release flowing out of her mouth and over her mate's thighs and groin. She continued sucking until hands on her shoulder urged her upward. Clarke released her cock with one more kiss to the tip and laid on her side next to Lexa's exhausted body. Their fingers intertwined over Lexa's belly as their breaths settled into a natural rhythm.

After a few quiet moments, Clarke wondered and asked, "What did Indra want?"

Lexa rolled her head over and kissed Clarke's sweat-soaked brow. "Justing checking bases with me."

"Is that all?"

"She wondered if I found what I was looking for and old conversation we had earlier in the year."

Clarke pulled Lexa closer to her side. "And?" Already knowing the answer to that question, but she wanted to hear affirmation from Lexa.
In the darkness, she could sense Lexa's gazing at her and reached her hand up to cup her face and felt wetness dripping down the side of her face. Lexa's answer released in tears took Clarke's breath away, and murmured a quiet heart-felted, "Oh."
Lexa sat on their rumpled bed, arms crossed over her chest, waiting for Clarke to find something for her to wear in their walk-in closet. It was a day of reckoning of a sort, as in her parents and Clarke's mother would meet for the first time at the babies shower and would be staying with them for a few days.

Her mother insisted on getting the so call lay of the land, of where her daughter and partner were living and where their first grandchild would grow up. Lexa had hoped that the photos she sent would have alleviated their concerns, but honestly, she too was looking forward to seeing her parents. As for Abby, they had a sort of truce and promised Clarke she'd be on her best behavior, but her mate wasn't entirely convinced, mainly because it took Abby up to last week to respond to the invite. A sure sign, Clarke said, she was still upset from her first meeting months ago.

Clarke didn't want a baby shower or needed the gifts for herself, so she asked that her friends focus on Raven since they had most if not all of what they needed for their child. After Raven found out, she insisted that Clarke allow her friends to shower her as well. But Anya was pretty damn grateful because they needed everything.

Clarke poked her head out of the closet. "Are you sure your parents will be okay, staying overnight in their RV?"

"They do this all the time when they on vacation. Plus, we don't have space with your mom sleeping in the baby's room." Lexa grumbled under her breath, "I probably should have added a third bedroom instead of just the one." Lexa had to borrow a twin mattress from Indra's supply from the worker's cabins. No way was she giving Abby their bed this time and had an obvious excuse because of Clarke's pregnancy.

"What do you think about this?" Clarke bit her lip as she jokingly held out a tailored striped shirt and black dress pants. It was flash from the past, the business casual work clothes she had abandoned after moving to the mountains.

Lexa rolled her eyes. "I thought this was informal, plus its still summer. I don't understand why I can't wear what I have on." Two could play at this game as she stood up and modeled her cutoffs and a torn t-shirt.

"Fine, but pick something out that's not ripped at least."
Lexa padded over to her standing dresser and pulled out a pair of khaki shorts and held them up to the striped shirt. Tossing the shirt aside and found an impossibly spotlessly clean white ribbed tee-shirt and a light gray jacket to go over.

Lexa darted her eyes up suddenly and smiled at Clarke's approving sigh. "Hmm, but lose the jacket. How about your shoes." Lexa held up a finger and went to their closet and pulled out her favorite pair of comfortable tan loafers a little worn, but she could buff out the dullness. "Perfect. Now about your hair."

Clarke's anticipation for their families meeting for the first time was palpable as her own. That morning months ago, she had talked with Abby; she detected a feeling of loss from her at not being in her daughter's life. But when Abby found out that she got her daughter pregnant, her tone changed back to one of disappointment. Clarke swore she'd lay down the law to keep the mood calm and frankly wouldn't let Abby talk down to her and said she'd put her mother in a timeout if she pulls anything in front of friends and family. Clarke wasn't sure she would able to stop her mother from flaunting her accomplishments over her parent's simple business of owning a restaurant. Her parents catered to people like this every day, so chances were Abby could think less of regular working people. It's what made Lexa fall even more in love with her.

"Shower first. Join me?"

Lexa drew Clarke into the bathroom with an outstretched arm. Fingers tangled together, then she brought Clarke's hand up and kissed her knuckles.

"What's that for?"

"For being you." Lexa shook her head. She couldn't explain it herself. It was this unknown force of nature as time ticked through the ages that brought Clarke precisely the right moment in her life. Lexa looked down at the joined hands, the swell of Clarke's belly and said, "I can't explain how grateful I am that you came into my life."

Clarke's eyes grew glassy. "I don't think I'll get over it myself. I worry somehow the bloom will fall off of me, and you'll see that I'm pretty ordinary."

Lexa snorted when she laughed and helped Clarke out of her clothes. "Ordinary and Clarke Griffin don't even belong in the same sentence."
Clarke did the same for Lexa and followed her into the steamy shower, letting Clarke wash up first and sat on the shower bench to shave her legs.

It was moments like this; she would etch into her memories of seeing her omega carrying her child. Everything about Clarke's body, from the fullness of her breasts, watching the soapy water run over her belly and dark blond curls below, kept her grounded. Sometimes, Lexa couldn't recall the person she was before. Clarke just brought out the best in her, and it was a relief not always to be hiding from her shame of the past.

"You just going to watch me or join me under the water?"

Lexa stood up and gave her a cheeky grin and wrapped her arms around Clarke's back, and ducked her head to steal a couple of kisses. Time slowed down as her slippery mate cupped her ass and nudged her closer, and her hand reached down to grip her cock.

Clarke stroke her once, making her moan, and second she almost went to her knees on the third, a cellphone laying on the bathroom vanity started to buzz.

Lexa laid her head on Clarke's shoulder and groaned, "Oh, shit, please tell me my parents aren't early."

~

The incoming message wasn't from Lexa's parents, but her mother, who arrived earlier than expected, again.

Lexa made herself busy by making up the twin bed in the baby's room and hauling her mother's luggage to the second floor, keeping out of the way of the storm brewing between daughter and mother. Lexa's parents had made it to town and were minutes away. Lexa's dad said they needed to stop by their local market to do a little shopping first.

Clarke and her mother were at opposite ends of the sofa. Her mood hadn't improved in the time the both dried their hair and got ready for the party.

"I'm trying, Clarke." Clarke stopped herself from rolling her eyes and escalating the tension between them. "You can't be mad that I took time out of my busy schedule to visit you on such
short notice."

Clarke couldn't keep the disappointment out of the tone of her voice, "I sent the invitations out over a month ago, Mom. I wasn't sure you were going to show up until last week."

"Does it matter now that I'm here?"

"It matters that you accept my choices..." Clarke stopped seeing how veering into this conversation could quickly escalate, and Lexa's parents would be here any minute and pushed down her temper. "I'm glad you came."

"They're here," Lexa called out as she dashed downstairs, taking them two at a time to open the door and rushed outside. Clarke was on her feet in seconds and followed her to the doorway and watched as mother and daughter hug.

"Mom!" Lexa lifted her mother and spun her around.

"My goodness, you got strong." Christine held onto to daughter's shoulders and slipped back down to the ground and placed kisses all over her face. "Alex, get over here before I steal all of her kisses for myself."

Lexa's dad poked his head out of the side window of the RV and yelled, "I'm coming, but I need to park first. There's a little car in the way."

"That'll be Mrs. Griffin's rental. I'll get the car keys and move it out of the way for you, Dad." Lexa released her mother and ran past Clarke but not before she excitedly said again, "They're here!" and kissed Clarke on the cheek, forgetting her manners to introduce them.

"It sounds silly for me to say, but you must be Clarke."

"I was going to say the same about you, Mrs. Woods. I can see where Lexa gets her good looks." Lexa favorite her mother with her thick curly dark hair pulled back. Her features gentled over time with only a few soft creases near her eyes and around her mouth from years of joy and laughter.
Lexa's mother smiled when she held out her hands. "Christine," her way of asking for permission and pulled her into a hug. A motherly omega scent rose between them, making her blush under the attention. It was so different from the response she had got from her mother. She sensed something else and pulled back. Tears edged in corners of Christine's bright blue eyes, which Clarke understood and held Christine's hand over her belly, just as the baby kicked.

"Oh my, she's a strong one just like my Alexandra." Christine's reaction was worth all of the sore backs and aching feet she endured over the past months. Tears trickled out of Clarke's eyes as well, and the two women hugged again. A family bond she had missed out her entire life soothed by her embrace.

"Hey guys, let me move, Mrs. Griffin's car out of the way, then I'll show you around."

"Come on inside, and I'll introduce you to my mother."

~

Lexa followed behind her parents as they walked through their home — touching pictures of their family that she proudly displayed in her office, to comment on how beautiful and spacious the cabin was. Her dad marveled over the almost completed sports car in the garage until her mother asked him to start the brisket on the barbeque out back on the patio where people began to gather.

Her mom had taken over decorating with supplies she had brought along with Clarke's contribution and coaxed Abby to help out. Insisting that the mothers' to be, relax. Clarke and Raven were holding court with their friends and lounging on the patio on this bright, beautiful late August summer's day.

Her mother combed her fingers through her hair and commented, "Your hair is so much lighter."

"No, Christine, it's was just like when she was a child and spent all that time outdoors."

"I hadn't noticed," Lexa said and caught her mother's hand and held onto it. "I sure missed hanging out with you guys."

Her dad smiled. "I can see why you'd want to stay here. Not only is beautiful, but your mate is also." He said this just as Clarke walked up beside her.
Thank you, Alex.

Clarke's mother had stayed glued to her side and kept pretty quiet throughout the day. Only commenting on the gifts and was on her best behavior to her relief.

Clarke combed her fingers through Lexa's hair and commented, "All that work at the lake is to blame, but I do like it. Did she tell you what happened to her on that first week?"

Lexa will remember this moment when everything almost went to hell. Clarke meant well telling of her near-death experience to her parent's shock. It was her fault for not telling them when it happened and well...she just forgot.

"Lexa!"

"Mom, I'm sorry I didn't..." Lexa put her hands up to explain.

Then Clarke interjected, "I'm sorry, honey, I shouldn't have said anything."

Lexa caught Abby smirking as she stood back, smiling as she rolled around the white wine in her glass watched the spectacle play out. It irked Lexa to no end but pushed that aside to tell her side of the story to her parents.

Her mom hugged her again and said, "Well, I'm glad everything turned out okay, and you weren't hurt."

"I'd sure like to see that log," Her dad added.

"It sounds like you should choose a better line of work," Abby stated, making the crowd of people gathered to go quiet.

"Mom!"
Anya grabbed Raven to pull her away as her dad looked to her mother and back to Lexa and announced, "Who's hungry?"

~

"I'm so sorry, Lexa."

"It's not your fault," she whispered back.

"How long do you think they'll stay up?"

Lexa rolled her head over the Clarke. "There's no telling. My mom was pretty pissed off at Abby."

"Can you hear what they're talking about?"

"A little."

"And?"

"My mom asked what you were like growing up."

"And what did she say?"

Lexa closed her eyes. What she overheard was painful and needed to keep the hurtful things Abby said to herself. Clarke squeezed her arm, wanting to know and replied, "She told my mom that you were moody, quiet, and was a problem child when she found out you were an omega. It set my mom off. That's when dad left to go to bed. I guess Abby didn't detect my mom's an omega too."

Clarke shook her head and changed the subject, "I love the rattle your dad got for the baby." Clarke reached for it lying on the side table. It was a wooden toy in the shape of a little ax and shook it, and made the beads inside the headpiece jingle.
Lexa was quiet as she listened, and Clarke draped a leg over and her breath evened out. What Abby had said had stuck with her all evening, about her dangerous work. It bothered her, of course. The thought of working the rest of her life as a lumberjack was losing its appeal.

"Clarke."

"Hmm."

"What if your mother is right?"

"About?"

"My work."

Clarke rolled over on her back. "You know I don't care what you do, just so long as you're happy."

"Happy and a tree doesn't kill me."

Clarke stayed quiet but pulled her closer. She listened when the voices died down, and Abby came upstairs and went to bed.

Lexa laid awake when insomnia had decided to visit her tonight. It could have been the excitement of seeing her family, going fishing with her dad tomorrow, or maybe charge by all of the gifts her friends brought for the new moms’. But it was her future that was keeping her awake in the end.

(~

(About a month later)

Lexa woke with a jolt of adrenaline. She pressed a hand over her chest as if she was physically keeping her heart from leaping out of her body. Not sure what could have brought her out of sleep. It was early. Too early to get up as the blurry red glowing numbers of the alarm showed just after three o'clock and slumped back down.
Even her subconscious must have been aware when it rudely woke her from a sound sleep. It brought it home of what the morning would bring and rolled over, placing an arm around Clarke's lower abdomen. Clarke's soothing heat radiated under the sheets, and she burrowed into the embrace, careful not to wake her slumbering partner as Lexa pushed down the dread of the next morning when she would head back up the mountain.

Her mind wouldn't let her rest as it started making notes to recheck her luggage, double-check the air in her tires on her jeep, Clarke's as well. Did she remember to order more propane for the tank outback? Should probably replace HVAC filters and give Clarke the combination to the safe where she kept a weapon safely locked away. Does Clarke even know how to fire a gun?

A dozen more items tried to crowd into her head and tuck her face further into Clarke's neck when she started to purr in her sleep, and it drew her down and her breaths even out. It lasted for about a minute when the cabin creaked, sending another surged through her body.

Lexa rolled onto her back and laid a forearm over her brow. Falling back asleep would be next to impossible as her thoughts coalesced into her responsibility to provide for her partner over their life together and her current job. It had lingered after the baby shower of her future on the mountain if she should continue working long, hard, sometimes dangerous, and sweaty hours outdoors. Sure she was young and healthy. But...but her degrees and computer knowledge unutilized begged her to think about a future. She wished she could accommodate both without putting her life at risk now that they were about to be parents.

Planning for their future had been off, and on conversations, she had with Clarke, and with the work at the lake completed for this year, those late-night talks would have to wait until she got back in early October. A twinge of guilt leaving her mate alone for the next month felt like a betrayal and hated it with every fiber of her being.

Lexa had another reason she didn't want to leave Clarke. In the last week or so, her mate wasn't feeling well, and Doctor Waters determined Clarke was run down. The instructions were to get enough sleep, add more fruit to her diet, and don't forget her vitamins. Maybe take longer walks to increase her stamina.

She planned to spend the week in the mountains and maybe return home on the weekends. Still, she couldn't guarantee Clarke that the work wouldn't keep her busy. She knew that the different days of the week didn't mean anything to the lumberjacks. With quotas to fill and dangerous trees to remove, the days of the week lost its meaning.

Unable to fall back asleep and with no need to wake her pregnant mate, she quietly tried to slip out of bed when she was stopped by a hand on her bicep, pulling at her until she shifted and returned to her previous position, curling her body around Clarke once more.
Clarke's husky sleep-laden voice broke the quiet of the room, "You said, six o'clock and you've got..." Clarke glanced at the clock, letting out a frustrated breath, "Damn baby, you've got hours to go. You can't sleep?" Lexa answered with a nod of her head against her shoulder. Clarke lifted her arm so she could wrap her arm around her. "I'm going to miss you."

Lexa sensed the loss immediately and tucked her face into Clarke's neck, sucking in her scent and hiding the weakness of missing the last few weeks of her pregnancy; she knew it would show on her face. She reached over and felt Clarke's forehead with the back on her hand then moved in to use her lips to detect any heat. Any sign of elevated temperature and she's staying home and sighed when she didn't find any.

"I'm going to miss you too," she said on a choke of words, and now the tears welled up and trickled out of her eyes. Clarke must have felt the wetness and lifted her chin to give her peck on the lips.

"When you get back, we will have to talk about where we want to go from here."

"I can't be a lumberjack forever, Clarke."

"I know."

"I just don't have any idea what I should do instead. This town isn't like a big city where my opportunities..."

"We've both been there, Lexa. It didn't work for us then, and I can't see it changing anytime soon. The competition has to be fierce, and I'm not willing to go back to that. I just wished..." Clarke's thoughts always ended the same. Lexa nodded again and understood nothing was going to be resolved in the middle of the night. "Do you think you can go back to sleep?" Lexa answered with a kiss to her cheek and settled deeper into their embrace.

~

Lexa's soft breaths almost lulled her back to sleep when her bladder twinged and made itself know again. The pressure mounted, and falling back asleep was impossible. It felt like a balloon filling to bursting and lightly pushed at Lexa's arm that added to the urgency around her waist and eased out of bed.
She always had to go, and waddled to the bathroom, sighing when she sat down. Her thoughtful partner added a heated seat to the toilet making for a little reward to her backside in the middle of the night.

A couple of times, she thought she could hold it until Lexa found out her ticklish spot behind her knees, and she nearly wet the bed when the tickle monster began to attack. Her embarrassed partner promised she'd never do that again, and she assured her it was because of her full bladder. Still, she enjoyed the new things they were learning about each other over the past year.

Like, Lexa cries over sappy movies, yet when the hood of her sports car came down her head one day while she was replacing the water pump, she just cursed, rubbed her noggin and left a greasy smear across her forehead enduring her to Clarke even more if it were possible.

Then there was that one morning, Lexa surprised her before they left for work.

It began the day before when she stubbed her toe getting out of bed. The weight of the baby threw her off balance, landing on her hands and knees, causing rug burns. Her naked butt was sticking up in the air as Lexa came out of the shower drying her hair and snickered. Clarke rolled over on the carpet, unable to reach her knees, much less her throbbing toe, and Lexa almost had a panic attack and dropped the towel around her waist.

Clarke being Clarke seeing her partner's perfect, wet naked body and her partially hard cock, was her undoing and started bawling. Lexa pulled herself together, slipping some clothes on, then lead her to the rocking chair to tend to her aching toe and redden kneecaps. After applying the ointment, two tiny bandages, and kisses to her knees, Lexa focused on telling her a story of her childhood when she broke her arm and began to massage her sore foot.

At the time, Clarke thought for sure it would have been climbing a tree, but no. It surprised her to find out that Lexa loved photography as a teenager. She saved up money doing odd jobs and found the perfect camera to take pictures of nature, her favorite subject. Took a couple of classes, but sadly on the way home from school one day, the young Alexandra was chased down by a couple of bigger boys, lost her camera and all of her gear, and got a broken arm trying to fight them off.

The thieves were never found, and her passion waned. Clarke tears dried up, feeling pretty terrible about her poor partner then looked down when heard Lexa chuckling. She quickly confessed she had made up the story, but it made Clarke forget her minor injuries and hit Lexa on the back of the head with the playful tap of her hand.
It was true, Lexa admitted that she loved photography and said she still had all of her gear and promised she'd show the photos to her one day.

The next morning, Lexa surprised her with the keys to a new SUV and swore it was unrelated to her stubbed toe. She had planned this for a while. Teasing out what Clarke liked, her favorite colors, and pointing out car commercials, eliciting more responses from her and now this beautiful car she had only dreamed about was sitting in her spot in the garage.

Lexa explained rather sheepishly she couldn't bear her driving around in her heap anymore, and the new vehicle would be much safer in the winter. Clarke was frankly stunned by her mate's thoughtfulness and had planned on driving her old car until it fell apart, which it was always close to doing. She thought for about a half-second to tell Lexa that this was too much. But the concern on her face stopped anything Lexa was about to say. She pulled Lexa into a hug and felt her sigh of relief. And now her new car had Lexa's parents gift of a baby's car seat in the back. Clarke, being Clarke, remembered her naked semi-hard partner from the morning before and cupped her groin and drug her back inside and treated her surprised and blushing partner to a blow job before they left for work.

Clarke rechecked the clock as she slipped back into bed and dreaded the coming morning as much as her partner. She took care of all of the schedules of Indra's employees, and according to the spreadsheet, she wouldn't be back until sometime in the second week of October.

Doctor Waters couldn't guarantee an exact date of birth of their baby since this was their first child. So if she started to have contractions and Lexa was still on the mountain, there was a chance she'd missed the birth of their child.

Clarke swore to Lexa. She'd cross her legs to keep the baby from coming until she arrived. It was silly, but still held this promise she made to her worried alpha.

The moonlight shining through the skylight fell just across the sheet covering Lexa's back and making the room a lot brighter than a few minutes ago. She indulged herself in these quiet moments when she could study Lexa and combed a few locks of hair out of face — guiding curls over her back.

Her sweet girl had her hand bent at the wrist and tucked it under her chin and thankfully asleep. Clarke could tell by her quiet breaths. She ached to lean in a kiss her worried partner and silently cursed her mother's words. Little did she know at the time that it carried that much weight to cause her partner to fret over their future. It didn't create a strain in the relationship but affected none the less.
That next day after the baby's shower, Abby left in the morning, leaving all of them in peace. Clarke had hoped that her mother could have joined with them, possibly grow into the part of a grandmother. But in the end, she couldn't get past her disappointment in her daughter without saying as much. Clarke lay on her side and watched Lexa sleeping and would miss these quiet mornings they shared and said a silent prayer to Keryon to protect Lexa while she was away.

~

"I can't, Lexa. I just can't do it."

Lexa placed the unloaded gun back into its case and locked in the safe. "It's okay, Clarke. I'm sorry I tried to force you to touch it."

Lexa felt terrible for even showing Clarke the gun. It was just for a safety measure in case a bear, or burglar showed up at the cabin to scare it off. But Clarke insisted no way could she shoot at an animal or a person, and now Lexa wasn't sure she could either, given her partner's love of the creatures of the forest and worried over their child finding it somehow.

"I promise I'll get rid of it when I get back." The thought of their child getting hold of this weapon hadn't been a consideration before she met Clarke and now... "Do you want me to take it out of the home before I leave?"

Clarke drew her into a hug and shook her head. "You don't have to get rid of your gun, just keep it locked up."

"I'll do you one better." Lexa did a quick search on the internet and expressed ordered delivery of a gun lock. "This will make it twice as protected against an accident."

Lexa shut down her laptop and stuck into the outer sleeve of the luggage and placed it with the other baggage near the door to the utility room. She fixed a travel mug of coffee and snagged a muffin for the trip and sat next to Clarke on the sofa.

The air between them was stilted and unnerving. Almost afraid of being the first to say goodbye until they would probably speak later by Facetime. That's all they would have until...

"Damn, Lexa. This is harder than I thought it would be. Not that I'm not grateful that I had you for
the summer, and I understand you'll only be gone for a month. I just know it's going to feel like an eon has passed until you return."

"I guess we should be glad for the technology. In the olden days, I'm sure they were grateful if it was just the Pony Express delivering letters back and forth from loved ones."

Clarke laughed and allowed her imagination to run wild, "My Dearest, Alexandra. I hope, my dear, that my letter will find you and yours in good spirits as I grow ever cautious of your loving return into my waiting arms."

Lexa joined her laughter as it died down, reached for Clarke's hand, and laced their fingers together. She rubbed her ring finger now vacant. Clarke wore her engagement ring on a chain around her neck after her fingers swelled, and it was too uncomfortable to wear.

"Thirty days, give or take."

It held a double meaning, one of her absence and the other of a new arrival. It must have been dizzying for Clarke as she laid her head on her shoulder. "Thank you, Lexa."

"Whatever for?"

Clarke placed both their hands over her belly and said, "For leaving part of you with me."

Lexa ducked her head, hiding her embarrassment of what Clarke was inferring. She felt that connection — that link within her mate that spoke of not just the tying of their souls, but their bodies as well. She lifted her head and opened her arms, and Clarke fell into them and felt the damn break free.

Lexa eyed the clock on the wall and closed her eyes as she said, "I love you, and I'm afraid it's time for me to go."

Her words caused more of Clarke's tears to fall until she shook her head. "I shouldn't let you think I can't handle a little time without you. Just let me know you got there safely." Clarke wiped at her tears.
"I promise, and I'll talk to you every day."

Lexa stood. Clarke followed and watched as she loaded her jeep with all of her luggage and turned back to her mate. "I'm going to make you a promise to come home when I have time off." Lexa pulled her close and left her with a kiss as she held her hand over her belly.

Clarke stood in the garage and watched Lexa coast to the end of the driveway, made the familiar U-turn, and with one last wave goodbye, and she was gone.

The silence was deafening with only the sounds of playful birds twittering in the trees nearby. Clarke glared at them and went back inside. She didn't have time to wallow in self-pity and shook off Dr. Waters' advice about staying in bed for one more day and would go back to work promising herself she'd take it easy. Maybe Raven could join her for lunch and sent her a quick text.

~

I heard that the guys have a surprise for us when we get back to camp," Anya said over a shoulder, taking the lead up the path.

"Oh yeah? What is it?"

"Do you think they'd tell me? Honestly, kid. I have no idea."

Anya turned to the right when they got to a fork in the wide, worn pathway; the left trail led to last year's harvest. It now showed signs of recovery as the forest erased their passing. That's what it was like working in the woods. In the previous years, it allowed her to escape what troubled her, and now it held a different meaning and understanding that could be easily missed by an outsider.

That longing to reclaim once again, its natural wonder and grace. Relieved of the damage trees and overgrowth allowed new saplings to find their footing and grow undeterred by the trees that took up to much space. The smell somehow was different up here, probably due to the elevation and other types of fauna. Lexa was lost in thought and almost walked into Anya's back when she stopped in place.

Anya held up a hand and motioned to her left. Lexa sniffed the air then saw standing not fifty feet away, a doe and fawn munching cautiously at the long sprouts of grass. Lexa brought out her
cellphone and snapped a couple of pictures and sent them off to her mate with the caption. "Got lucky today. New mom and baby."

~

Indra had expanded their offices to include the model of the hotel and restaurant in miniature. Clarke stood over the table and let her imagination wander. Phase one of the project would start today. The framing for the foundation was staked out with orange paint soon would follow with framing, plumbing, electrical. The rest of the infrastructure in stages of construction would start after. Indra's plan was getting as much done as possible before the snows would begin, and honestly, they had months to go before winter would stop their work until the melting of snow in the spring.

Indra hired some talented local workers for finishes and mostly workers from out of town. Construction men and women to work on her project currently, and it was her job to keep track of their comings and goings as they check into her office reporting for work.

Clarke sat down in her chair and blew on the cup of herbal tea just as her cellphone toned an incoming text from Lexa. Her face broke out in a smile at the carefully framed photo of a family of deer. Now she understood where her partner's talent came from in the pictures she'd sent her before. Carefully composed images that spoke of that untapped talent from her partner that set her wheels in motions when a loud, noisy vehicle pulled up in front of the office and heard the door open and shut followed by a crunch of boots over gravel.

The person stomped on the ground outside. She supposed to knock off the dirt as Clarke went back to checked her emails and looked up at the tap on the door seeing the dark floppy hair on the head of a man poking inside and her body react with a jolt of shock. Clarke almost dropped her mug when she saw Finn Collins, her ex-boyfriend. How did she miss seeing his name on the roster?

"Princess?" He said his nickname for her with his familiar joking taunt as he came into her office. "Don't even start with me."

Finn put out his arms with the tilt of his head. "I don't even get a hug." He paused when she saw her pregnant belly and back off only a bit, and with a teasing glint in his eyes, he pressed on, "Oh, please tell me this is my kid."
"You know damn well, we broke up over a year ago, so no, this isn't your child."

The beta put his hands up in defense. "I'm just kidding. But damn you look," he paused to give the once over. Judging her. Grading her, she supposed against the other women he fucked and finally said, "beautiful and..." He stopped speaking when his eyes zeroed in on her neck, and it knocked the grin right off his face and stumbled out, "mated?"

~

The chainsaw felt familiar when Lexa yanked on the cord, and it started on the first pull. Gunning the engine a few times and checked her position of where she'd run if need be, then made her first notch on the side of the tree she wanted it to fall. Then the second cut at a twenty-degree angle to the first cut and backed off.

The last cut a hundred and eighty degrees horizontal to these two cuts, leaving a little hinge of wood. Too far, she'd cut through and possibly get her chainsaw caught, and the tree could fall her way. The tree creaked as it was about to break free, and she shouted out, "Timber," and it landed right between the two little trees in the distance she wanted to save.

Ole Moses and Jack, two large male mules, waited with Gustus nearby. Their job, to haul the cut tree back to the logging road after she trimmed the branches away. The old ways still held strong in the modern world as she zipped through the limbs. One tree down and a dozen or more to go for this first day back.

~

Clarke was seething and unable to release the tension on seeing Finn had caused. It made her a little light-headed and remembered her promise to take it easy, but damn did she ever want a drink. Something stronger than the lukewarm herbal tea now sitting on the desktop, unappealing.

The cursor blinked in front of his name. She found Finn Collins on the roster of new hires in an email. A pulsing irritating reminder of his presence in her world again.

She didn't hate him. Hate held a finality to his kind as a sort of bitterness. She rather loathed his arrogance that was out of proportion of his status as a beta, and of course, her mother loved him, Finn fooled her with his Eddie Haskel impersonation of his over the top good manners. When she first met Finn and saw how it walked through the world, his confidence bolstered by unknown
energy is what attracted him to her in the first place. That lasted all of three months until she wised up to his other qualities of being a jerk to literally everyone he came into contact with and wondered how long he'd last on this job.

Indra may not have known who she just hired, and her good nature, like with Fio, would probably give him a second or even a third chance. Clarke would have to stay neutral and let the cards fall as they always did with Finn, and he'd land on his face, but not admit his mistakes and hopefully move on.

She'd have to tell Lexa. Explain how she didn't know about her ex showing up. She had never told Lexa about her past relationships. Hell, she never thought it would come up, not that she had a lot in the first place, still. Lexa had a right to know and planned on telling her tonight, face to face. Well, at least by Facetime.

A honk of a horn from the highway. "Yes, that had to be Raven." She grabbed some bottles of water out the fridge and met her coming out of her car with lunch, care of The Diner. A couple of turkey sandwiches and a big salad. Her treat to Raven for taking the time to come out for a visit.

"Your lucky this food made it here in one piece," Raven said as she set the bags down under the umbrella-covered patio table, Clarke added to her home away from home.

Raven opened the paper around her sandwich and bit down. Asking around a mouth of food, "Who's the jerk with the bumper sticker that says *Show me your tits*?"

Clarke stopped at mid-bite and eyed Finn's car she was pointing at and covered her face with one hand.

~

One o'clock found Anya and Lexa relaxing after lunch in a cleaned out area now a meadow they just created after the cutting down the trees. The mules were at the far end, chewing on the grasses with Gustus tending to them. He had neutered Ole Moses, and Jack to keep them manageable and didn't require much, even while working, just clean water. He treated them like they were his puppies. Cooing in the ears and giving them treats for the hard work.

"How's Raven?" Lexa laid back in the grasses in her tank top and used her folded up shirt as a pillow.
Anya blew out a breath. "Happy, miserable. But good, I think even after we found out..." she stopped and looked away as she cursed.

Lexa saw the drawn look over her friend's face when she turned back to her.

"What happened?"

Anya's eyes quickly dart to Lexa then shook her head. "I promised to keep this low key."

"A little late for that."

"She's going to kill me."

Lexa waited as the air grew quiet, with just the sounds of nature alive around them. Figuring that's all she'd say, she closed her eyes.

Anya cursed again and said, "Raven's having a tough time with the baby, although you'd never hear it from her lips."

"But, she and the baby are okay?" Lexa sat up and faced her friend.

"You know that betas' can have normal births with alphas like omegas, but sometimes there can be complications."

Lexa was at a loss of what to say and helpfully blurted out, "But, Raven is healthy as a horse."

Anya tossed a pebble at Lexa's head; she quickly dodged. "Thanks for the visual, asshole."

"It's just that Raven seems healthy is what I meant."
Anya laid back in the grass. "I hate that Raven's alone while I'm out here." She closed her eyes and added, "But at least I'll be back for her last month's pregnancy."

Lexa leaned back on her hands and stuff down her disappointment of not being there for Clarke's.

~

The model of the hotel was of a three-story building with rooms facing the lake. The other side had a majestic view of the mountains to the west. Either landscape was breathtaking, as Clarke stood in the open field. She envisioned what was to come now that the foundation was staked out. She strolled towards the beach and imagined Raven and Anya's child playing with her baby. Soft sand between their tiny fingers and splashing in the water nearby. Sandcastles and driftwood in chubby hands would start their imagination of the new world around them.

And none of that would be possible if they left to pursue a future somewhere else. Clarke's soul ached over the thoughts of leaving Mount Trikru. She had a physical connection to this place now. Everywhere she looked reminded her of Lexa and how much she cherished and loved her.

"Penny for your thoughts, Princess."

Clarke rolled her eyes before she turned just slightly to see Finn coming up behind her. He was in a dirty tank top, and it showed off his farmer's tan. A city boy in the mountains wasn't a good look for him.

"You can't afford my time. Not anymore." She turned around and headed back towards her office to close up the place.

He put out his hands again. "Have dinner with me tonight," more of a statement of fact by his inflection than a question.

Clarke held onto her engagement ring and found strength in the connection to her partner. "No, Finn. And don't bother asking me again." Trying to put as much finality she could, in her statement. But something was nagging her about him showing up out of nowhere in Mount Trikru of all places. "How did you find out this place?"

Finn followed back to the office and said, "A little bird told me."
"About the hotel under construction or me?"

He just smiled and left her question hanging in the air, but turned at the last second when he got to his car. "I'll start growing on you again, just wait."

~

Lexa and Anya managed to cut down nearly twenty trees between them. Trekking deeper on this side of the mountain they had ever been. It was untouched by people and sorely needed help at thinning out the trees, making the forest healthier in their removal.

On the way back to Anya's vehicle, she lingered, keeping a little distance between them. After lunch, her friend went quiet. It was unnerving from the usual banter they usually had between them and could only guess it was because of her news about Raven.

A worry that Anya held in her face almost aged her by a few more years. Maybe her mood would change once they got back to camp. Remembering the gang had something plan for them tonight.

As they got back to the base camp, the guys hung around the firepit had already started drinking. Music was playing over the speakers, and someone slapped a beer in her hand. Now she got it. The time they had spent at the lake had made them legions: Lexa, the lead alpha and Anya, her second who saved her life.

It was their way of keeping the hierarchy intact in the respect they were showing. What she wasn't expecting were the girls they brought in for the party. Her eyes caught Chloe across the fire, and she gave her a sexy wink and blew her a kiss. Lexa shook her head, causing the girl to frown and found another alpha to hang on. She sipped on her beer as Anya start on her second.

Bellamy stood on a log and got everyone's attention. "Hey guys, settle down." He lifted his drink and said, "First of all, thanks for not dying." He continued after the cheers died down, "No, really, after I heard about the project and understanding the energy, training, and stamina, the gang wanted to congratulate you guys on a job well done. Lake Sonchgeda holds a lot of history for all of us. And to recover what was lost is a testament for all hard work on the mountain. I'm sure all of our late brothers and sisters lumberjacks are grateful."

"You should try it sometime," Anya yelled back.
"Maybe I should." Bellamy laughed. "Anyway, the guys just wanted to show our respect."

~

Clark had gone to bed early but laid awake waiting for Lexa to call until she pushed herself down further into bed and drifted off to sleep when the phone rang in her hand. Drowsily she put the phone up to her ear, and the voice sounded strain, and it wasn't Lexa, but Raven, and she sat up when she heard her cry out.

_I can't get a hold of Anya._

"What's the matter, sweetie?"

_I think I'm having contractions, and my fucking car won't start._

Clarke got out of bed and started to dress. Raven's way too early for this baby to come. "I'm on my way. I'll call Dr. Waters."

_I already did. Could you try calling Lexa for me? I did just a bit ago and nothing? _Raven began moaning.

"You got it. I'm getting dressed. I'll meet you at your place. Don't you dare have the baby before I get there."

Raven sobbed and said, _I'll try, but it hurts awful, Clarke. I can't lose my baby._

"Hang on. I'm on my way." Clarke called Lexa, and her phone went to voicemail and left a message and sent her a text. "Fuck, where are you?"

~
Lexa was pleasantly buzzed, having only a few beers, but the altitude was a bugger when it came to drinking her regular amount and downed a bottle of water. She gathered Anya up with an arm around her back and hauled her to their room.

Anya collapsed face-first into the bed, and she managed to turn her over and remove her boots and left her pants and shirt on.

Lexa slipped off her boots and reached for her phone to call Clarke and hoped it wasn't too late. She jolted into soberness, seeing the glaring text from Clarke.

She waited for the call to go through and stood up to pace the room. Clarke answered on the fourth ring.

"Lexa?"

"I'm so sorry. I just got back to my room. Is everything okay?"

"No, it's not. I'm heading out the door to Raven's place. I think she's having her baby."

"Is she okay? Is the baby okay?" Lexa's legs went weak and sat down, and eyed her friend snoring on her bed.

"Where's Anya?"

"Dead asleep. The guys had a party for us and..."

"Well, that's just great, Lexa. Anya needs to come back to town immediately. Raven might lose the baby."

"We'll be on the road in less than sixty seconds and meet you at the hospital."
"Answer, answer, answer." Lexa wedged her phone between her ear and shoulder as she put Anya's boots back on her feet, waiting for Gustus picked up.

Hello

"Hey man, I need your help."

You at your cabin?

"Yeah."

I'm on my way.

Lexa slipped the phone in her back pocket and got Anya sitting upright.

"Anya, wake up."

Anya's head hung to her chest and was out of it. Lexa didn't think at the time she needed to keep track of how much her friend was drinking, after all, she's a big girl. But now that she thought about it, Anya was upset about Raven, that and guys showing both of them a good time could have led to her overindulging. Lexa was glad she waved off drinking any more than the two beers she had.

She could sympathize with how Anya felt, but at the moment, she couldn't waste time questioning and lifted her onto one shoulder and turned just as the door came open.

Gustus smirked, "Don't tell me you want me to help you hide a body."
"Not funny, Gustus. Anya's drunk, and I have to her get back to town." Lexa wasn't sure if she should share the news, and Gustus didn't ask.

He flicked the toothpick he was chewing on outside of the cabin. "Say no more," Gustus said, and took Anya from her, carrying her like a child, as she gathered her luggage and both sets of keys. "I guess you want me to drive her truck back to town?"

"Yeah, she might not be back the rest of this season."

Gustus nodded and carried Anya to her jeep, then waited while she opened her passenger door, and he gently set her down. Then Gustus held her in place while he buckled her seatbelt.

Anya fumbled with the strap across her neck. "Whaa shh gonna on, guyss?"

Lexa got her side after she put the luggage in Anya's truck and lifted her head when it drooped to her chest again. "Anya, this may not make any sense, and I'm sorry I have to do this," Lexa pulled back her hand and slapped her across the face.

Anya blinked and drew back, holding her chin. "The fuck, Woods? Shit...oof." She gagged, and they dodged out of the way when she threw up, thankfully on the ground and not inside her jeep.

"Damn, how much did she have to drink?" Gustus didn't wait for Lexa to answer and rushed back inside the cabin and came back with bottles of water and an empty plastic bag from a trash can.

"I'll be right behind you," Gustus said and grabbed Anya's keys she tossed in his direction, then paused next to Anya's open truck door and gave her a guarded gaze. "You better tell her why we're on the way back to town. It might help sober her up." Even without knowing, Gustus sensed the urgency.

"I'll try."

Lexa climbed inside and started the jeep. The time of the digital clock was nearing eleven o'clock, guessing it took longer than the minute she had promise Clarke and figured she'd make up the time on the road. Not sure why it would matter when they have miles to go just to get to Mount Trikru.
She put the jeep in reversed and skidded backing out of the parking place, then slammed it into drive and practically fishtailed on the road out of the camp.

Anya fumbled with the water bottle, finally getting the cap off and took a drink and drawled, "Whatss, are we doing in yer jeep?"

"It's Raven, Anya."

When Lexa got to the highway, she flipped on her overhead lights and stepped on the gas. Behind her, dust clouded the red tail lights of her vehicle but managed to see the truck's headlights behind her through the mess.

"What?"

Lexa slowly enunciated, "Raven started to have contractions and called Clarke. She on the way to the hospital."

"Why?" Anya put her hand up to her mouth and gagged again. Lexa quickly gave her the plastic bag and rolled down the windows.

Anya heaved between her legs a few more times then wiped her mouth with a tissue Lexa offered. "Damn, don't think I'll forget you hitting me, Woods." She rinsed out her mouth and spat out of the window several times.

"Sorry about that. I needed you to snap out of it."

"Hitting me won't make me any sober." The message finally resonated with Anya, and she moaned, "Oh no, Raven." She fumbled around and pulled out her phone. "Shit. Raven must have called me a dozen times. Fuck me. Drive faster."

"I'm already over the speed limit, and I don't want to kill us before we get to the hospital."

"Fuck! Raven's at the hospital?"
Lexa darted a look at Anya as she tried to make sense of the news. Feeling sympathy for her condition, knowing she's going to feel like shit when the reality gets through her confusion.

"Where's Clarke?"

"What? I told you..."

"No. Call her!" Anya fumbled with her nav system until Lexa batted her hand away and brought up Clarke's number. She answered on the second ring.

Lexa, are you guys on the way?

"Yeah. We just got on the road. Anya is..."

Anya leaned as far as the seatbelt would allow and yelled, "Clarke, where's Raven?"

I'm still on the way to your place. Raven's at home waiting for me. Please hurry.

The hospital was in the town over from Mount Trikru, and it would take at least an hour just to get there. "Hey, babe. We should get to the hospital in Mount Weather in about an hour and a half."

Clarke was silent as was Anya starring off in the distance through the windshield, muted it seemed by the possibilities of losing a child and maybe Raven in one fell swoop.

Please get here as soon as you can and in one piece. I'm sure the doctors will do everything they can, Anya.

Anya cleared her throat, "Be there for Raven and tell her...tell her I love her."

She knows, Anya. But I'll tell her, first chance I get.
The call ended, and Anya continued her silence. Almost in a daze.

"You're not going to call Raven?"

Anya didn't answer right away and glanced at her wiping at the tears caught in her eyes.

"Not like this. Not drunk off my ass."

"You couldn't have known, Anya."

"Still did I have to do three shots and beer on top of that."

"It was four shots, but I see your point."

"I need to sober up."

Lexa got an idea and hunted for Lincoln's number on her nav system and called him.

"Who are you calling?"

"I'm calling ahead to The Diner and see if I can get Lincoln to fix you something when we pass through town."

Anya sniffed and, after a while, said, "You're a really good friend, Lexa."

Lexa held her smile in check. It was a nice thing to say, but at the moment, she needed to focus all of her energy on getting to town as she held quiet prayers for Raven.

~
Clarke found Raven leaning against the front door of her place as the harsh outdoor light reflected down on her. Not sure how Raven was still standing. From what she understood, contractions were unpleasant even when your baby was on time. She looked up when Clarke pulled into the driveway and quickly got out of the car and ran towards her friend as she almost went to her knees.

"I got you."

"I hope you brought a blanket." Raven cried out, "Oh, damn, here it comes again."

Clarke held onto Raven, sensing the waves of pain going through her where she painfully gripped her hands, whispering the words she promised she'd say from Anya, then felt her relax after a few minutes.

"Are you bleeding?"

"I don't think so. My water hasn't broken. But I feel this baby coming."

"Got it." She didn't have a clue, but held Raven around her back and guided her to the passenger door.

"No. In the backseat. I need to lie down. Wait, don't forget my hospital bag and purse."

"Of course."

Clarke retrieved her stuff and set it inside on the passenger's seat and was thankful she left the baby seat in the garage at home while she helped Raven to get comfortable in the back, then grabbed the blanket and tossed it over her legs.

"Doctor Waters will meet us at the clinic."

"Great, just great. Why did I think this was going to be easy?"
Clarke pulled up to the highway and waited for a line of cars to pass. "Why the hell are these people up at this hour?"

"How the fuck should I know?"

"It was a rhetorical question, Raven."

"Sorry, sorry. I knew that."

When it was clear, Clarke peeled out onto the road. The speed limit, be damn.

Raven rocked back and forth and yelled, "Fuck, Griffin. Get me there in one piece."

"Sorry." Clarke eased on the gas. "What's it feel like?"

"Like having heat cramps but much worst. I don't think my body can handle much more."

The beta waves pouring off of Raven was fear and panic caused by the pain and accelerated the car faster down the road. Clarke was almost certain she wouldn't be able to handle a baby coming too early, also. Raven was about thirty-two weeks along, she believed, a preemie and baby would only be about three or four pounds. Clarke had read the literature and knew the risk as she was sure Raven also did. Time is what the baby needed — more time in utero.

She needed to take Raven's mind off of her pain and the what-ifs. But her mind was a complete blank when her thoughts tripped onto that one evening, Lexa came to bed worried about having a baby when they had just found out. They both were getting tons of spam directed at parents-to-be with what to buy and the occasional issues of firstborn baby disorders, that set her off — something she certainly couldn't bring up to Raven at the moment.

Lexa's irritation came to boil saying, how in the hell did they know they were having a baby because as far as she could remember, they hadn't searched on the internet about babies and had only sent texts to her mom and dad, but somehow the internet knew. Clarke's concern at the time was getting past the first few weeks when they held the secret from her friends, not knowing at the time that Raven and Anya were sharing the same joy.
"Talk to me, Raven."

"I don't want to lose my child, Clarke. Is that what you want me to say?"

Clarke cringed and shook her head, "No, of course not. I'm on your side here."

"Ow. Fuck. I know that, Griffin. Talk. You said to talk about something. How can I take my mind off of this?"

Clarke quickly looked at Raven in the back seat as she held onto her belly, worry etched across her face.

At a loss of what to say, she thought her Raven's mentor. "Tell me what Theo would say?"

Raven sniffed then laughed. "He'd say you got this girl."

"Great advice."

"I really wish I felt that, and I knew why this was happening. I've done everything the doctor has asked, I haven't had a drink and get enough sleep, take vitamins like I'm supposed too even though I hate swallowing pills. Why, Clarke? I don't want to lose my baby."

Clarke felt that deep in her soul and pushed down her fear for Raven and looked up just as the blue and white Mount Trikru Medical Clinic signage came into view and saw the doctor waiting at the entrance.

"We're here, Raven." Clarke waved at Doctor Waters and parked by her vehicle.

The doctor opened the back door and crawled inside with her equipment. "How we doing, Raven?"

"Lousy, and in a lot of pain."
"When did it start?"

"A couple of hours, I think. I thought it was indigestion until the waves of pain started shooting through my belly and down my legs. I'm having my baby?"

The doctor didn't answer right away as she checked Raven's abdomen and then heart with her stethoscope and counted her pulse. "You're at a hundred and twenty pulses per minute. I need you to calm down if you can. I can't give you anything for the pain, and I do think you're having this baby. I'm going to start an I.V., and once we get to the hospital, we'll do a complete evaluation and decided where we go from here."

Dr. Waters swabbed clean Raven's arm and placed the needle in her vein as Clarke opened the other door and stood helplessly nearby and asked, "What are you giving her?"

"It's a tocolytic drug that will slow down Raven's contractions. We used to suppress premature labor. We'll have a wait a few minutes to see if the dosage will work. If not, I'll increase the amount. Take slow deep breaths, Raven."

Clarke found her purpose as she waited behind and let her lean against her chest and stomach. Holding onto Raven's hand, she could feel the stress easing.

Dr. Waters felt around Raven's belly and rechecked her pulse. "How are you feeling now?"

"A little better, Doc."

"Great. Okay, Ms. Griffin. Take it easy on the way to the hospital. Remember, Raven isn't in a seatbelt. I've called ahead, and they will be waiting when we get there. Where's your partner, Ms. Hunter?"

"She's on the way."

The doctor set the I.V. on the grab rail and checked the line for any kinks. She patted Raven one more time and said, "Let's just see if we can delay your baby from coming for a few days. Ms. Griffin, I'll be right behind you, but if Raven starts feeling worst on the way to the hospital, don't hesitate to call me on my cell."
"You got it."

~

Anya had slowly worked on the burger after a quick stop at The Diner. Lincoln had waited for them to arrive in his robe and scruffy beard looking exhausted, with a bag of what he called his hangover special for Anya. When Lexa called ahead, she had hoped they were still up, they weren't, but Lincoln said it was no problem and would get out of bed, have it ready when they got to town.

"How are you feeling?"

Anya put the remained bits back into the bag and wiped her hands, and noisily slurped up the remaining soda Lincoln also provided.

"I'll live."

"Good because we're here." Well almost. The road that led to the Mount Weather Hospital was so different than home. Modern lights blinked over the massive parking lot that was about half full. Lexa pulled into a parking lot and looked for her mate's car and didn't have any luck finding it and found a parking place. Anya barely waited for the jeep to come to a complete stop and jumped out of the vehicle before she shut off the engine.

Lexa and Gustus followed behind her, and he handed back Anya's keys as she asked along the way for directions and found Clarke sitting in a chair in the almost empty waiting room. Her worried eyes found hers and didn't call out as she got to her side, she just leaned over as she sat down, pulling her into a hug causing Clarke to let out the tears she had been holding in.

"Hey, I got you."

A nurse took Anya down the hallway leading to where she supposed Raven was, as Gustus removed his baseball cap, took a seat, and gave them a bit of privacy.

Lexa combed the hair out of her eyes. "How's she doing?"
Clarke sniffed and wiped her nose. "Doctor Waters was able to slow down her contractions."

"Well, that's great news."

"Yeah, but she'll still probably have her baby early."

"But the baby will be okay, right?"

"It's hard to say at this point. The doctors haven't told me a thing about her condition. It's just what I've read about early births. A child..." Clarke choked on her words, "she could have long term health issues."

"Listen, maybe you should go home." Lexa checked the time on the wall next to the television running an old black and white movie. It was after one o'clock. "You need your rest. I'll have Gustus drive your car back home."

"Not before I find out how she's doing."

Lexa leaned over and kissed Clarke's temple, "Of course. Let me find out. Wait here."

~

Lexa didn't hesitate as she went down the same hallway as Anya, leaving Clarke alone with Gustus. A first for both of them. She patted the seat next to her, and he nodded his head as he got up and plopped down beside her.

"Thanks for helping out."

"Least I could do." After a few quiet moments, Gustus cleared his throat and said, "I'm sorry about Raven. I didn't know."
"Lexa, didn't tell you?"

"No, ma'am."

"Please, we're friends. Gustus, please call me Clarke."

The hospital's public address system filled the silence between them, with the cacophony of phones ringing and the nurses coming and going down the long hallways. At a loss of what to say, Clarke tried to focus on the muted television and attempted to make sense of the closed caption for the old movie playing when Gustus cleared his throat again.

"It happened to me and the ex with our boy." He whispered, "Though we didn't make it to the hospital in time." Gustus held on his cap, twisting tightly between his hands.

Clarke gasped, "I'm so sorry, Gustus."

He leaned back. "It's okay. It was a long time ago. I have Old Moses and Jack to keep me company now. Those are my mules."

Clarke smiled, thinking that this must be the most extended conversation they ever had.

Gustus had a rugged look, keeping his beard tight to his face and hair shorn close on the sides but a little long on top, it currently showed a line around the back of his head where the baseball cap he always wore left an impression. Now that she could see his face, he was handsome in his way. Surprised he didn't have someone special in his life.

"Does it make a little nervous being in a hospital?" Clarke had to ask, but she could quickly tell he was by his beta scent.

He breathed, "Can't hide anything away from you, omegas." His smile tempered the statement. "A little. It just reminds me of that day is all."

"Do you want to step outside? We shouldn't be too long. I'm sure."
"I'll be fine, Clarke."

Clarke looked up when Lexa returned. Her face didn't give away any information and didn't sit this time. She stuck her hands into her front pockets, looking lost. "Raven's resting for the moment, and it looks like they've halted her contractions for now. But they're going to keep her, probably for the next few days. At least until the baby is born, then..."

Clarke reached for a hand wedged in her pocket and drew her back down by her other side. "Can we say goodbye, at least?"

"I'm afraid not, Clarke. The nurses got pretty pissed off when I got back there until they found out I was a friend. Raven's resting anyway."

"How's Anya?"

"Shell-shocked."

Lexa looked that way as well. Clarke to get up out of the chair, when Gustus and Lexa got up on either side of her and treated her like she would break.

"I'm fine, both of you. Let's get home. But I insisted that you wait till morning before you head back to the mountains. Lexa looked like she wanted to complain but ducked her head instead.

~

Gustus took the sofa and let Lexa know they'd have to head back early, saying he needed to tend to the mules, and of course, she had to get back to work. Clarke was asleep in her arms in minutes, and even though she was exhausted, the events over the past few hours wouldn't let her sleep.

She was grateful to be holding Clarke but said she felt tremendous guilt having her back in her arms this way. Because of Raven's emergency, it felt so damn unfair.
It was unnerving to see her friends at their most vulnerable, recalling Anya in the hallway, as she nodded her head and signed papers as everything was explained to her. Medical and very private choices of the possibilities yet to come.

It was when she handed her keys back to Anya that she held up her finger for her to wait as Doctor Waters finished explaining everything and eavesdropping what she wasn't meant to hear. It caused a few nurses to question who she was when Anya shooed them away and then drew her into a hug. Lexa's arms came up slowly and patted her back when Anya whispered, "I don't know if I can handle this."

Lexa squeezed her back and said what her mother always told her in times of uncertainty, "Keryon will only give you what you can handle, leave the rest to her to sort things out." She thought that maybe Clarke could come back and be there just in case...)

Lexa didn't continue the thought; she just held Clarke tighter and pushed down her tears that threatened to fall for her friends.

~

Clarke didn't hear Lexa get up and leave, but felt her missing presence when her alarm went off and ran her hand over her empty side of the bed. She didn't want to get up, but work couldn't wait and got up despite how tired she still felt.

She found hot water heated for her tea and a note left by Gustus, thanking her for the accommodations. She found Lexa's message in the bathroom.

Babe,

I'm so very proud of you and your strength. I know you felt bad because of our friend's crisis that we got another precious night together. You shouldn't beat yourself up, that things happen the way they did. Not when it comes to the unknown.

As I watch you sleeping, carrying our child, I can't imagine a more beautiful sight. These memories I will keep close to my heart. Please don't be mad that I may have taken a few pictures of you before I left.
Clarke smiled after she parked and saw wildflowers she admired, now in a bouquet attached to the front door of her office. The smile turned into a frown when she read the unsigned note, she could tell by the handwriting, it was Finn wishing her a great day. Clarke was amazed at the outrage she felt and was close to confronting him but tossed the bundle of flowers instead. She found herself overly sad about their demise. It left her with a stain of anger that he took that bit of joy of seeing this beauty torn away by his unrelenting attention that would have to be confronted.

His comment that a little bird told him telling about this place found her calling her mom.

Hello, dear. It's so good to hear from you.

"Mother." Clarke couldn't keep the anger out of her voice.

Is everything okay?

"You tell me."

I don't understand.

"You sent Finn Collins here, didn't you?"

Finn?

"Yes. Don't act like this is news to you."

Are you saying that your ex is there, in Mount Trikru?
Clarke peeked out through the blinds. "Yes, Mother."

*Her mother was silent for a moment, seemingly to collect herself. Clarke, I...I haven't told anyone where you went.*

She released the blinds and paced the office. "Finn indicated, in so many words, something different to me."

*What did he say exactly?*

"I asked him how he found out about this place, and he said a little bird told him." Clarke was feeling a little doubtful now that she said this out loud and cursed to herself when she remembered she had forgotten to tell Lexa.

*I didn't tell him, Clarke. I promise you. Hate me all you want, but I wouldn't...* Her mom cleared her voice. *I'm sorry you would think I could do this to you. I know you are happy and I've tried in my way...* Her mother hesitated for a few moments then her voice broke when she said, *I've got to go, Clarke and I am truly sorry that you'd think I could ever... Then the phone went silent.*

Clarke's anger with her mother dissipated into thin air and turned into confusion and plopped down into her chair. She didn't have time to say anything to clear the air between them. Still, it left her with questions. She hadn't been imagining the way her mother was treating her relationship with Lexa. But, if her mother didn't send Finn her way, what was his game? She didn't have time to ponder when Finn poked his head into the office then drew his whole body the remaining way inside.

"Good morning, Princess."

Clarke didn't look up as she peeled off the sticky note she had on his file and sat back in her chair. *"Your social security number came back as belonging to another person. Do you care to explain yourself?"

Finn went a little white in the face and asked, "You can't use the number I gave you?"
"That's not how benefits work. Do you have your card with you?"

"What's the number you got?"

"I need to see your card, Finn."

"Just tell me what it says, babe."

Clarke glared at him holding his gaze when he snorted and reached in his back pocket and pulled out his wallet and searched for a bit then flipped the card on her desk.

"Feel free to check it out."

Clarke used the eraser from her mechanical pencil to turned it around and checked it against his information. Someone had made a typo and transposed the last two numbers. Cursing under her breath as she corrected the mistake and gave him back his card.

"You wanna have lunch with me, Clarke?"

Clarke's temper came to a boiling point and stared him down. "What part of no, don't you understand? What part of me leaving you after you hooked up with Becky, or was it, Sandra, no it was Emily was hard to comprehend?" Clarke began to feel the waves of exhaustion hit her over last night's turmoil, and this distraction didn't help. Clarke stood up and moved around her desk. He backed up as she continued, "You know I don't care about you or why you're here, but you're one more statement into crossing a line into harassment that will get you fired. And it's Ms. Griffin! Not Princess, babe, or Clarke to you." Finn was outside of the office by this time and opened his mouth to speak, and she slammed the door shut in his face.

A rush of angry, righteous omega hormones surged through her body, making her vibrate. It also made her a little dizzy and would have laughed at Finn's hound-dog expression if her mind didn't fall back on a more pressing issue, her friend, Raven and sat back down and called Anya. It went to voice mail, "Hey Anya, just calling...you know. Um...call me. Let me know if there's anything I can do. I can be there with you if...um when... Just let me know." She hung up and stared at her phone in disbelief of her mangled message. Her next call was to Lexa.
Lexa didn't take the news about Clarke's ex, working with her too keen. She didn't quite snap at her as Clarke calmly explained he'd probably be working on the hotel until the fall, or when the first snows would come. Still, did the tree in front of her have to take the brunt of her anger?

"Give it a break, Woods," Bellamy said, laughing at his pun. She looked over her shoulder and past him to Gustus, who rolled his eyes and waited while she cut down the blasted tree.

"Yeah, yeah." Lexa made the last cut and moved as it fell in front of her. The crashing sounds of limbs breaking shook the ground.

She hadn't gotten word yet how Raven was doing or the baby. But suppose no news was good news and had to keep working through the worry. But compiling on was this guy, Clarke's ex in the background that almost caused her to get hurt when one of the trees she was taking down, exploded into shards of splinters and released the chainsaw that was stuck in the tree, as she dodged one way and then the other scrambling away. Gustus caught Lexa and pulled her by the back of her shirt as the old rotten tree now lay in pieces on the ground.

Her heart crept up to her throat as she caught her breath and held onto Gustus's hand as he kept her steady, and her heart began to slow down.

A tree, coming down like this, didn't happen often and had only heard about the phenomenon called the barber's chair, from the older retired lumberjacks. Lexa guessed now she could count herself lucky she lived to tell the tale but would have to keep this from her mate.

~

Lexa took a shower after dinner and called Clarke as soon as her butt hit the bed.

Hey.

"You sound exhausted, as I feel."

Long day and I miss having lunch with my friend.
"Me too. Have you heard from Anya?"

*She sent a text that they were in a holding pattern for the moment.*

LLEXA picked at the comforter she was laying on. "Sorry for snapping at you earlier about your ex."

*Don't be. I didn't take it that way. I might have made my relationship with my mother worst if it's possible.*

"What happened now?"

*I might have accused her of sending Finn to break us up. But from the way she denied it, I'm almost sure she didn't. Finn... Clarke paused as Lexa held onto every word—pushing down her anger of not being with Clarke to fend off unwanted advances. It's an alpha thing and felt a growl growing in her belly. *Once upon a time, I had really bad taste in partners.*

That caused Lexa to chuckle and ease up on her anger. "You just hadn't met me yet."

Clarke joined her laughter. *If we weren't miles away, I'd show you how much I appreciate the difference.*

Clarke's sultry laugh caused Lexa's clit twitched but didn't extend. "I miss you."

*Me too, Clarke.*

Lexa laid back on her pillow and talked to Clarke until late into the night. She woke the next morning when the camp started to rise, with her phone almost dead. She cursed and got out of bed, grabbed her gear, plugged in her phone, and joined the line of hungry lumberjacks waiting on breakfast.

~
Clarke pulled into the garage and left the large door open in anticipation. It had been ten long days and nights, and her mate would be home soon. Thankfully the day fell on a Friday and had the weekend off to reconnect. She grabbed the bags of groceries from the backseat and made her way inside. She opened the windows, up and downstairs to let the light in and air out the cabin.

Even though it was still October, the daylight seemed to go on forever, and her pregnancy as far as she could tell was right on schedule. Her due date was tentatively on the twentieth of this month, two weeks away, but it was just an educated guess on her doctor's part. She caught her image in the mirror in their bathroom and ran her hand over her belly. Shaking her head, thinking she'd be pregnant forever, and it seemed she grew a size larger since she last saw Lexa.

Clarke spoke with Raven but only briefly. They were able to stabilize her pregnancy and had hoped to come home in a few days. It just depended on the baby. Raven joked that this kid was going to be the spitting image of her mate, telling her that Anya tended to be an overly prompt person. She explained when they first started to date, Anya would arrive anywhere from five minutes to a half an hour early, and Raven would have to make her wait. Raven chalked it up to Anya's desire to connect with her, be with her. An alpha's purpose to protect an unclaimed mate. Raven shared that she treasured the honest, primal nature Anya invoked because no one up to this point in her life had ever given a damn about her, the way Anya did.

Clarke felt that. Sensed that connection with Lexa when she reacted to her scent that first time and responded with the ancient custom of marking your chosen mate over that long winter night when their bodies joined to create this blessing growing in her belly. Clarke shivered and planned on showing Lexa tonight how much she missed her.

The mountain air cooled down the cabin and turned on the fireplace and lit a few the candles that seemed to be everywhere. Something Clarke had done during the time she was alone. It gave her a sense of Lexa's presence. The light it gave off was the fire in her alpha's eyes; it's what she clung to while she kept the home fires burning. Clarke shook her head at how corny it sounded in her head and began dinner when the cellphone lying on the kitchen countertop started to ring.

~

Lexa tapped on the steering wheel to the beat of the music blaring through the speakers as she pulled into the side road leading home and saw Clarke waiting for her by the open garage door and coasted to a stop.

Lexa jumped out of the jeep and pulled Clarke into a hug. "Damn, I missed you."
Clarke clung to her desperately. "I missed you too and wished we had time."

"What happened?"

"I just got a call from Anya, and something is happening with the baby, and they have to induce labor. Raven is having her baby tonight. Anya needs us to be with them."

"Do I have time to changed?" Lexa was still in her work clothes and had hoped to take a shower before dinner.

"Of course."

Lexa grabbed her laundry bag and held Clarke's hand, tossing the bag into the utility room when she got inside. "Come with me?"

"I can't. I was starting dinner, and I have to put everything away and close up the cabin."

Lexa released her hand, saying, "Give me five minutes." She dashed upstairs stripping as went and put her hair up and took a quick, however, luke water shower. A towel was waiting for her when she stepped out onto the rug and found Clarke waiting in the bedroom.

Clarke tossed a pair of clean blue jeans on the bed along with fresh socks, underwear, sports bra, and a flannel shirt. She watched Clarke move around the bedroom, seemingly at a loss as she dried off and dressed. When Clarke turned, she was crying.

"Hey."

"I'm sorry. I just thought that the baby would have more time."

"She's not gone yet." Now Lexa began to worry.

"What I didn't tell you before. Dr. Waters had to call in a heart specialist when she's born. The baby is going to have surgery."
"I don't understand. I just thought she was going to be early."

"I don't either, Lexa."

The news changed everything and followed Clarke to the garage and took her keys from her as she helped her mate into her SUV.

The drive to Mount Weather hospital was somber and quiet as was the long trek down the hallways into a family waiting room that was near Raven's delivery room for new mothers'.

"Hey," Lexa said to Anya coming out her Raven's room.

"Glad you made it in time."

Clarke pulled her into a hug as Anya reached out to catch Lexa’s hand. "How's she doing?"

"Braver than me." Anya released Clarke. "Do you guys want to be with us when Raven gives birth?"

"Are you sure?" Clarke rubbed the outside of Anya's hand.

"Positive. Come say hi to Raven, and the nurses will get you prepared. I've already let them know you'd both be here." Lexa hesitated, not sure she wanted to intrude in private event between parents. "Don't wuss out on me now, Woods," Anya said with a tired smile.

Lexa followed behind Clarke and Anya and waited by the door as her eyes took in all of the medical devices humming around the room. Raven was propped up in bed with wires attached to her chest and an I.V. in her arm.

Clarke was already by her side, hugging her when Raven's eyes caught hers. "Don't tell me you're afraid of hospitals?"
Lexa cleared her throat of the emotions welling up at seeing her friend in this state. "I'm good."

"Well, come over here and give me a hug."

Clarke moved out of the way, and Lexa leaned over and gently hugged her. "Sorry, Raven."

"Don't be. We're still in the game." Lexa leaned back and saw the determination in her friend's face.

"I can see that." Lexa stood up when a nurse came into the room and started to bustle about.

"Are these the two friends who will be joining us today? If so, I need both of you to come with me, and I'll get you prepared."

Clarke let Lexa go first into an adjacent room where paper gowns were waiting for them. She fumbled with the plastic bags as Clarke by rote pulled open the bags and started to dress.

"I don't..."

"Don't be scared."

"I'm not. It's just that hours ago I was in the mountains cutting down trees and now I'm here about to see new life being born. It's a bit overwhelming."

"Do you faint at the sight of blood?"

"I don't think so. It hasn't happened yet." She pulled on the scrubs over her clothes as Clarke did the same.

Clarke handed her a cap for her hair. "I'll help you." Clarke fussed for a bit and sensed her hands shaking.
"I can do this." Lexa pushed her hair into the cap as she watched Clarke did the same. "I look..."

"Scared, frightened. Can't keep your body from shaking?"

Lexa nodded her head. She didn't think she could keep the jitters out of her voice either as she whispered, "A little, Clarke." Shame colored her cheeks, which drew Clarke to cup her chin.

"You're not alone. Anybody would feel the same."

Lexa pressed her hand against Clarke's, then tangled them together and joined her friends in the delivery room once again with Doctor Waters.

~

At the last minute, Anya gave Lexa her camera and asked to film their baby's birth discreetly. She sensed Anya and Raven's determination not to give up. Not let what they were dreading become a reality and see this child into the world and given a fighting chance.

The tiny baby was delivered happened in minutes. Anya held her for a few moments imprinting her scent, then cut the umbilical cord then brought her to Raven to hold and kiss. The viewfinder on Anya's camera grew blurry as tears streamed down both her face and Clarke's. The baby was measured and weighed and took to surgery as they waited. She didn't open her eyes or cry. It made Lexa a little weak in the knees, and Clarke pulled into the changing room as Raven expelled the afterbirth, and after they cleaned her up, they joined them once again in another part of the hospital.

Clarke's curious nature caused her to check out the doctor's notes on the baby's condition. The condition was called *patent ductus arteriosus*. PDA for short. A congenital heart defect common in premature babies where a vessel connecting the pulmonary artery to the descending aorta fails to close. Lexa shook at thinking they would have to crack the baby's chest open until Clarke calmly explained that most do not require open-heart surgery but instead use a catheter inserted into the femoral artery to close the opening. Usually, they would take a wait and see approach, but in this case, the outside doctor's consultation decided on not waiting.

A specialist was brought in because it was such a delicate operation. Tiny thin veins that would be navigated by a highly skilled surgeon with years of experience. Anya confided in her that Indra's group insurance covered all of the expenses with the hospital stay for Raven, and every other detail
was a great relief to hear.

"Have you guys come up with a name?" Lexa asked.

Raven tiredly joked, "I wanted to call her Anya, Junior, until she put the kibosh on that.

"I like Raven," Anya said stubbornly.

Clarke laughed and said, "How about Raean? Sort of a combination of both of your names."

"Rae for short," I like that Anya said. "What about you, Raven?"

Raven adjusted herself in bed and rubbed the bandaged that covered the where the I.V. needle had been. "Or Annie. Hmm, Raean Reyes-Hunter. It does have a ring to it."

~

One hour grew into two and Clarke, and Lexa excused themselves and headed to the hospital cafeteria to have a quick bite. Nothing was appealing, with the nervous energy that this place invoked. Still, Lexa managed to wolf down her sandwich and chips as she worked on a bowl of soup.

Lexa finally looked up after she dropped her spoon into the bowl. "You have questions?"

"About?"

"My ex."

Lexa sat back and said, "Not really, but if you need to get this off of her chest." Her alpha's eyes immediately dropped to said breasts. Clarke smiled when she saw where Lexa's eyes were focused. "Do they hurt?"
"Not really." Clarke pushed the half-eaten bowl of soup as a side and nibbled on the crackers. "Finn Collins. He was a guy I met through friends from college."

Lexa held up her hand. "Wait. Listen, I don't think it's necessary to explain him to me. He's an ex. Nothing more. Right?"

"Absolutely. A mistake among many I made trying to find my place in the world."

"Tell me what happened with your mom."

"I practically tore her head off, blaming her for sending Finn here to break us up. Not that he would ever stand a chance and the way she denied...I believe her." Lexa reached out and tangled her fingers with hers. "I should call and apologize."

Lexa smiled and helped Clarke out of her chair. "I'd say she had it coming. Had your mom not acted so keen on fighting us at every turn, you wouldn't have reacted that way. Cause and effect, Clarke."

Clarke looped her arm with Lexa and headed back to Raven's room. "How do you get so wise?"

Lexa leaned her head against Clarke's. "I got it from my mate."

Clarke laughed as they wounded their way through the long hospital hallways, almost getting lost until they came to the correct hall and saw the doctor still her scrubs going into Raven's room.

"Oh no," Clarke said as they hurried to her room and waited outside until the doctor was finished. Through the windows, Clarke couldn't judge the outcome of the baby's surgery. Anya held Raven's hand. Looking down at her, then to the doctor, and pulled her mate into a hug. "I can't wait."

Clarke barged into the room as the doctor turned, and her mouth came open, "Mom?"

"Hello, Clarke. I was just telling Raven and Anya that their baby is going to just fine."
Clarke shook her head as the tears she had threatened to fall. She pulled her mom into a hug, and they broke free.

"Shh, it's okay, honey. I'm so sorry for everything." Abby reached out for Lexa's hand and pulled her to them. "I'm so sorry to both of you. I was so very wrong about everything. I hope you both can forgive me."

Clarke pulled back, and for the first time in her life, she could recall, her mother had tears in her eyes. "Why didn't you let us know you were the surgeon?"

"I didn't know it was Raven and Anya's baby until I got at the hospital and didn't know you'd both be here. I wish I could stay for a few days, but I have to head back home." Abby went back to Raven's side. "She a sturdy baby. I have no doubt she'll be able to come home with you two in a few days. She just needs to be monitored for infection. If you like to see her again, she's in the NICU unit."

"We do, Doctor Griffin."

"Please, call me Abby." Abby pulled off her cap and tucked into her pocket as Anya helped Raven up and into a wheelchair. Clarke and Lexa waited behind until her mother turned and motioned to them to come with them as she smiled, "I've heard I got sway in this hospital."

Clarke couldn't stop trembling as Lexa kept her steady. She felt her heart overflowing with emotions — joy and happiness for her friends and a newly found respect for her mother. Lexa just smiled ear to ear as they waited outside the windowed room with her mom as a nurse gently place the baby in Raven's arms. Anya glanced towards them and gave a thumbs-up as Raven cooed over her baby, and her eyes came open for the first time and smiled.

Lexa whispered in her ear, "Cause and effect, Clarke." Clarke reached out blindly and found her mother's hand and squeezed — overjoyed from discovering a new connection to her mom.

Chapter End Notes

If you'd like to see what a Barber's chair looks like, please check out the video. The tree explodes about 1:10 in the video (no one was hurt)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9O7H9qWdquk
Lexa walked in a slight daze down the long hospital hallway, being guided by her mate through the automatic doors to the parking lot. Her mind occupied in what she had just witnessed over the past few hours when an urge to protect surged thought her and draped an arm around Clarke's shoulders as the cool evening settled over them.

Watching Raven and Anya's child being born was probably the most beautiful thing she had ever witness, even with the blood and the uncertainty. The baby didn't cry, which worried everyone as she was whisked away for surgery, not a few minutes old and nameless. Later, when the tiny baby was placed into her mother's arms and Anya proudly beamed, she felt a little envious if only for a split second and held Clarke a little tighter.

"Lexa?"

"Hmm?"

"Something on your mind?"

"Sorry. I was just thinking." Lexa tried to remove her arm but was held in place, captured by Clarke's hand.

"About?"

"Babies."

"Not having second thoughts?"

Lexa jolted in response: "On the contrary. I think I'm falling in love with the idea of being a parent."

That drew a chuckle from Clarke. "Remind me of this conversation when your changing dirty diapers and are up all hours of the night feeding a grumpy baby."
Lexa replied in a quiet, sincere voice, "I'm looking forward to whatever is thrown our way, Clarke." That comment earned her a kiss on the cheek.

Lexa released her and beeped the doors open and help Clarke get into the vehicle, then jogged around and jumped inside and started the engine. Clarke worked at her seatbelt, pulling it out as far as it would go, struggling to fasten it.

"Let me get that." She took it out of her hands, clicked into place, then backed out of the parking spot.

"That was so unexpected."

"What's that?" Lexa looked both ways as she pulled out of the hospital parking lot and got into the turn lane for home. Exhaustion, her old friend, poked at her making her yawn.

"My mother."

"You're not having second thoughts yourself?"

"Not at all. First time I felt that kind of energy from my mom."

"Maybe she finally understands what she was doing made you not trust her."

"Maybe," Clarke admitted. "Whatever the reason, I'm not going to discourage any attempt by her to reach out. We've already missed out on so much that..."

"Listen, I don't have a lot of experience in family issues like you had with your mother, but I could sense the change. Abby was..." Lexa paused, remembering Abby's hug goodbye with the whisper until next time. "It felt...like acceptance. By the way, how are you feeling?"

"Happy, tired, glad your home. Not necessarily in that order." Lexa reached for Clarke's hand, instantly the warmth with their connection eased into her fingers.
"Raean is a cutie," Clarke breathed around her a yawn of her own.

Lexa squeezed her agreement in the fingers tangled with hers. "And tiny."

"Yeah, she's just a little over four pounds. Staying inside of her mama for a couple of weeks longer sure made a big difference."

The baby girl was shockingly little and no bigger than a shoebox — tiny fingers and feet with strands of light brown hair on her head covered with an equally tiny beanie, and her body curled up as if she was still inside of Raven. Lexa had the same overwhelming urge to sniff the infant, as Anya did. A throwback from the instincts of being an alpha, she supposed. Witnessing Anya's natural reaction as she imprinted the baby's scent into her senses could be where the jealousy was coming from, that, and a need to protect the issue of the love she held with Raven.

Soon they both would be experiencing what she could only dream about at this moment — it felt like it would be her birthday or Christmas and every other wonderful thing happening all at once when a thought reared its ugly head. What if she's a lousy parent? What if she makes the same mistakes that Clarke's mother did? Abby almost missing out in what she could only guess is the most important thing in her daughter's life.

Lexa swore to herself, to Clarke and their unborn child, she would do her best. Still, it would be impossible to have doubts. Lexa shook it off and concentrated on the drive home.

~

The only lights came from their vehicle and the occasional cabin set off of the treelined road. The town where the hospital sat was a few thousand feet lower than Mount Trikru, and she started feeling the change and cracked her jaw with another yawn to release the increasing pressure.

Up, up they went through the winding road until it somewhat leveled out, and the night's sky came into view. Clarke lowered her backrest to get comfortable, causing Lexa to blindly reached behind the passenger's seat and finding a blanket and used one hand to lay it over Clarke's legs.

After a few miles through the winding road for home, Lexa sensed an unease from Clarke. "What's bugging you?"
"My ex. Now that I know it wasn't my mother that sent him here, I still can't figure for the life of me how found this place."

"Does it really matter?"

"Not really, it's just like an itch that needs to scratch. I'm almost certain that Finn is loving holding this over my head. That he knows something, I don't. Like a damn secret that if I'm not careful, some unknown trouble is going to throw a wrench our lives."

"Over my dead body, Clarke."

Clarke shivered, "Don't even go there, honey. One scare in a lifetime is enough."

Lexa nodded her head and focused on the road as she mentally zipped her lips shut. Whatever need she may have thought of telling Clarke about the tree that exploded the other day, she'd keep to herself. No need to tell Clarke and make her worry when she's got more important things on her mind.

~

As they drove into Mount Trikru, someone had taped Plus One on the population township sign. Earlier, Clarke sent out a text blast to their friends about the new arrival and guessed that someone decided to let everyone else know their town grew to one more overnight.

Pumpkins for sale became a familiar sight again. Even though there weren't the traditional groups of trick or treaters visiting each home, given the distance between the cabins in Mount Trikru, children made their costumes. They would parade them down the main street on Saturday before Halloween giving the town's folk a chance to hand out candy. Lexa couldn't wait to see their little child dressed up and wondered what would be her favorite character.

Lexa sniffed the air as it shifted and detected a hint of arousal from her mate. Clarke had drifted to sleep under the blanket, and her omega scent seeped into her senses. It woke up her alpha who stretched out its limbs, and shook off the time apart.
Lexa's focus became of her mate. Of Clarke, of just thinking about her. A relief to be near her omega. The familiar ache between her legs began to grow as she hissed under her breath then pushed down her need that could quickly propel out of her control. It was too late as her clit shifted once then twice, and she began to extend. Lexa sensed a movement then held still as a hand found it's way into her lap and stroke her over her jeans.

"What's this?" Clarke purred.


"Don't be. I'm quite flattered by your..." Clarke paused and moved her seat upright. "attention."

"You don't have to..."

"Don't even say that, Lexa. I understand what you need. I feel it too, even being big as a house."

"You're not."

"Fat?"

"Not even a little."

"Hmm." Clarke left it at that as Lexa turned into the side road and over the bridge, then stopped in place as glowing eyes greeted them. In the yard, the outdoor lights lit up a brown bear lingering near the front door. Just to the side, two smaller bears looked their way as the mother jolted when Lexa hit the horn, and mama bear took off into the bush with the little ones hot on her trail.

"Holy shit, Lexa."

"I'm sure I scared them off." Lexa waited for a minute before she opened the garage door, then coasted inside and quickly shut the door.

Clarke giggled as she made a mad dash for the utility door but was easily caught by Lexa. She
buried her nose into her omega's neck, finding her mating bite and kissed the surface.

"I missed you."

Two hands found her ass and pulled her closer. With the baby between them and her height, it was impossible to get any closer without contorting her body.

"Let's take this inside," Lexa murmured against Clarke's neck.

~

They spent the next hour or so in bed just kissing, reacquainting with quiet wishes, and patching the gap of time spent apart. Each kiss, each caress stoked the heat between them — warm lips, wet tongues, and sweat-soaked bodies, heated to bursting to a flame.

Lexa felt a kiss under her chin and Clarke's naked body next to hers, along with a warm slippery hand on her cock slowly stroking her harder. Another hand found her shoulder pushing her on her back as Clarke continued to take care of her need.

Unable to protest, Lexa pushed down her alpha's desire to dominate as Clarke edged over and licked the head of her shaft clean causing more to leak from her slit, what she missed covered Clarke's fist.

Clarke whispered, her eyes focus between Lexa's legs, "I almost forgot how big you are. How you push inside of me and stretch me, filling to bursting." Clarke's voice broke, "Imagine my hand is my cunt and your pumping inside me." Clarke pulled a long groan from her when she gave a few quick strokes.

Lexa couldn't speak, the words caught in her throat over Clarke's bold, raw statement. Clarke ran her hand up and down her cock, not to tease or bring her to climax too soon. It was a slow reacquainting stroke to set her soul on fire.

"I missed seeing your beautiful tone body." Clarke focused a moment on her face, her eyes blinking shut as she took the head of her cock into her mouth. Lexa slammed her head against the pillow and fisted the sheets when she began to work up and down her shaft.
Lexa's hand broke free of the sheet and cupped Clarke's cheek as her omega applied her talented tongue over her length.

"Clarke."

"Hmm." That vibration against her was almost her undoing as her knot began to swell. Clarke released her cock and licked her way down to the swollen needy bulge. Clarke kissed and caressed the firm surface as her hand massage the ache making her shaft swell harder.

Clarke shuddered then without warning, climbed over her body and pushed her cock to her abdomen, and rubbed her swollen clit over the rigid surface.

Lexa's hissed at the seeping wetness coating her cock and burned the vision of Clarke's closed eyes, biting down on her lower lip as she concentrated. Clarke's full breasts, swaying to her focused movements.

Hooded eyes caught her gaze. "I missed this. I missed us."

There was no turning back when Clarke was in such a state, needing to be close. It was when they were apart and talked over the phone, Lexa falteringly asked if being intimate while she was pregnant would harm the baby. Clarke reassured, she would be okay. Still, Lexa had doubts but was beyond stopping Clarke at this point when her omega lifted her body, and Lexa guided her cock near her entrance. Lexa was uncertain if she should allow her omega to take all of her thickness and length, given her heavy pregnancy when her mate uttered, "I'm soaked enough to take all you inside."

"Are you sure? Ahh...fuckkk yeah," Her answer grunted out as she almost sat upright when Clarke's cunt slipped around her, and she seated on her cock.

Tight, wet, and incredibly intoxicating, Lexa reeled in the motion her omega was setting. Clarke braced her hands against her shoulders as she began to sleekly and firmly fuck her. Lexa met her downward grind, nudging upward and pulling a whimper out of her pregnant omega. On her back, she was only able to assist a little and held onto to Clarke's hips as she found her rhythm.

One remaining lingering doubt raised its head. "Clarke, are you sure I won't hurt the baby?"
"Shh, I'm...concentrating. Besides, the baby is asleep, and I need your full attention. But I don't think I can take your knot." Lexa smirked and finally let go to enjoy this precious moment between them.

Clarke set the pace as she held on. Lexa wanted to touch Clarke everywhere and brushed her thumbs over dark, rose-colored nipples. The sounds of wet flesh met her senses as Clarke ground out her pleasure with each downward grind.

"So close now, baby."

Lexa held herself on edge, gritting her teeth and begging her knot not to release until Clarke fell over into bliss. She reached under Clarke's belly with her thumb, finding her swollen clit. Swiping across the throbbing bud and adding to Clarke's pleasure as she cried out and ground down firmer. Through their connection, the walls of Clarke's cunt squeezed down impossibly tighter as she started to shake through her climax, begging Lexa to fill her. Out of her control. Lexa let loose as she lifted her hips off of the bed and surged her release into her mate.

Lexa leaned up, finding Clarke's lips and kissed her joy into her mouth. Grateful breaths, tinged with laughter as sweaty foreheads met. Lexa brushed the sweat soak hair out of Clarke's eyes and kissed her once more.

Clarke tried to lift off of her. "Can you..."

"Of course," Lexa shifted and helped Clarke on her back and slipped out of her. That's when she saw the tears caught at the edges of Clarke's eyes.

"Hey, now. I know I'm a little rusty," Lexa tried to joke it off and adjusted her cock off of her leg, leaving a trail of their combined fluids behind.

Clarke's tears turned into wet laughter as she wiped them away and moved the hair away from Lexa's neck and breathed in her scent. "These are pregnant orgasmic tears." Clarke laughed, pulling on one of Lexa's nipples and leaned back, asking, "Is that even a thing?"

"It is now," Lexa said, joining her laughter and held her omega until they fell into a contented sleep.
Lexa's sleepy eyes met the morning sun reflecting through the windows. Confusion muddled her mind of where she was and stretched out of her body when she became aware, this was home, and the warm body next to her was Clarke.

Flat on her back asleep and adorably snoring without a care in the world.

The tides of thoughts filtered into her mind of things to do today, ticking off a mental list of chores that sorely needed attention. Somewhere in the cabin, a sound took her out of the list-making and imagined the noise to be something else. Perhaps, one early morning in the near future, she'd hear the pitter-patter of sock-covered feet coming down the hallway to their bedroom and seeing a bright baby's face peering up from the side of the bed. Lexa would drape an arm over the edge to give their child the way to climb unto the bed.

Clarke would tuck the baby in the middle where the gentle tickle game would begin. Their baby's laughter would fill the room and start their day. The baby would reach for Clarke's breast, and the next vision is of her mate holding their child as she began to suck. Sleepy eyes shut and their baby, living in the only world she understood.

Lexa sighed and rolled her head toward the clock. Hating that is was already Sunday morning, and they would only have a few hours together and would have to head back up the mountain for a few weeks, and timber cutting season would be over.

Lexa uttered a quiet, "Fuck."

"Hmm, what is it?" Clarke sat up in bed, her head a mess of blond curls and in a daze.

Lexa rubbed her back. "Nothing lay back down, and I'll get breakfast." Clarke started to protest as she cut the complaint short with a kiss. "I'll be right back."

Clarke's protest died on her lips, watching Lexa stumble out of bed and hunt for her robe, shuffling
into her slippers and towards the bathroom then downstairs. She ached in all of the right places. A comfortable throb still lingered between her legs from last night.

She reached for her top and slipped it over her head when the urge hit her. One quick trip to the bathroom, and she was back in bed, surprised that she lasted the night without having to go, what she wouldn't give to have all those nights like that and sleep through to the morning.

It was a slow dawning of awareness that her life would be changing, and sleep would probably become a distant friend — days of worrying over the baby of things yet to transpire. Her mate away for the season working the mountain, and she would be practically raising a child on her own, and Lexa would lose out on all of the firsts.

But, maybe not if her job kept her at the lake for a few more seasons. Hopefully, Lexa would get to see her grow from an infant into a toddler, still, in the fall, the mountains would call her again.

Tears edged her eyes as a daily frustration of being alone, becoming a real possibility. Downstairs the presence of her mate filled her world as she bustled in the kitchen and humming coming from her lips what she wouldn't give to share every morning not to be alone.

It brought her back to the conversation they had earlier in the year. That Lexa didn't want to be a lumberjack forever, but living in the mountain couldn't offer up any work for someone so young and highly skilled.

The smell of coffee brewing and bacon cooking drifted into the room. Clarke smiled as the memories of the winter they spent together poured into her mind. Those cold wintertime days, well before Clarke even had the inkling she was pregnant, they would spend the entire day in bed and talked, make love, and shared quiet hopes.

They lived in a bubble of joy, surrounded by snow, and it felt like they had all the time in the world.

Clarke tried to remember when she became aware of Lexa's existence. It had to be when their eyes met in The Diner. The alpha tried her best not to stare, but she was charmed when she caught her eyes drifting from her breasts to her unmarked neck and Keryon her scent. One accidental touch on her hand and the alpha became disoriented, confused, and excused herself from the table. Clarke smiled at the memory of Anya's smirk and encouraging conversation and the invite to the bar that night.
Knowing Lexa, as she did now, Clarke was almost sure the even with her protest, there was some unknown thing planted between them that just needed time and tending.

"I hope you're hungry."

"Smells wonderful..." Clarke's words died on her lips as Lexa came in with a tray and placed it over her lap. "Where did you find the flowers?"

"My secret."

Lexa added cinnamon to the french toast, and the hot sweeten coffee complimented the applewood-smoked bacon. All a treat, she rarely indulged while pregnant.

"Hmm," Clarke said around a mouth full of sweetness. "You're spoiling me."

"Hardly." Lexa sipped on her coffee and snagged a piece of bacon from her plate. "I want to see if I can tackle some chores before I leave later today," said Lexa as adjusted her pillow as she sat back.

"It's only Saturday, sweetie."

Lexa jolted upright and almost spilled her coffee. "Damn, you're right."

"Disappointed?"

"Are you kidding? I've got you for another day or so, and I'm not going to waste a precious moment with you, chores, or not."

The smile on Lexa's face was breathtaking as she leaned over and kissed her and stole another piece of bacon from her plate.

~
Something was bugging Lexa. It wasn't the small leak under the kitchen sink she fixed, nor the large empty paper wasp nest she knocked away from the back porch. It was a nagging feeling of being watched while she was sweeping the outdoor deck. After seeing the family of bears around the property the night before, she decided to hook her handgun to waist just in case they got more unwanted visitors. Bears usually showed up when they were hungry, and why the trash can was kept inside a locked shed and yanked on the lock, checking it was still secure.

Lexa stopped sweeping and slowly turned her head when a twig broke in the nearby forest somewhere out of her sight. She sniffed the air, smelling something out of place. It had the stench of a fading smell of something unfamiliar and did a quick scan of her property. Another snap in another direction, and she reached for her gun. But it was too soft to be someone sneaking around when her eyes caught the colorful motion of a blue jay, mimicking the sound of a hawk.

A lesson remembered from Anya over one summer. She taught her that these birds frequently imitated various hawks. After it settled on a high branch overhead, it began its whisper song. A soft, quiet mixture of clicks, chucks, and whirrs filled the air for the next few minutes, entertaining her with an unprompted concert echoing around the trees.

"Lunch is ready."

Lexa turned and saw the light from the sun gathered around the smile, covering Clarke's face. I drew her like a moth to a flame. Lexa cleaned the remaining debris from the outdoor table and helped her set up the meal.

"I thought you'd like a taste from home. Homemade tomato soup with thick toasted bread with melted cheese."

"You must have talked to my mom."

"You're smarter than the average bear," Clarke joked. "We've been in contact. Christine wanted to let you know that they could be here in a moment's notice when our baby's due."

"Your mom and my family?"

"I guess it would be the same set up as before, although my mother insisted she'd sleep on the sofa since the baby would be in the nursery."
Lexa dipped the sandwich into the soup and took a bite. Closing her eyes as memories flooded her mind of a time when she was fifteen, and her hormones were raging. To deal with the changes, her mother brought her focus back and comforted her with food. It had the effect of taming her budding alpha persona for the moment and took her mind off of the growing urges she would have learned to control.

"Hmm. Reminds me of home."

"Your mother believed, even with my pregnancy, it would be hard for you to abstain from..." Clarke hesitated as a color came to her cheeks.

"Sex?"

Clarke chuckled. "Hmm."

"And food would keep me satisfied?"

"I suppose. I didn't tell Christine it was me who would be the instigator most of the time." Lexa visibly shook, thinking of her mother talking about their sex life with Clarke. "So, I see your packing?"

"Hmm?"

"Your gun."

"Oh yeah, I wanted us to be safe just in case we had some furry visitors again."

"You would shoot a bear?"

"Only in self-defense. But yeah, I'd let off a few rounds just scare them off first. Maybe they'd get the hint. I think it's best to leave the trash inside the garage until I get back in a couple of weeks. I
"You're really that worried?"

"Hell yeah, I'm worried."

Clarke worked at the last of her sandwich and wiped the bowl clean. "Make sure to remind me to send your mother a thank you for her recipe."

"Hmm." Lexa did the same with her bowl and sat back.

"Got any more chores left to do?"

"Nope. You have my complete attention for the rest of the day," Lexa said as she reached across the table and found Clarke's hand.

"How are you feeling?"

Clarke turned her hand upright as Lexa ran her fingers over her palm. "Tired most days, happy I have you home even for a little bit. Any thoughts on your future working on the mountain?"

"My true feelings?" Lexa paused and contemplated what that would mean. Finally, stating, "I would hate to leave Indra and the gang to tackle getting this town in shape for its future without the help she needs. Sure being a lumberjack has lost some of its interest, but it's not why I took it up in the first place."

"Why is that?"

"It's a respectable job. I sweat and work with good people, and at the end of the day, I'm not worried about what I've done has impacted someone in a bad way. I like giving back. Still worried about your ex?"

Clarke sighed, "It's like that old song, finding a black fly in your chardonnay. Ironic to be living in
this beautiful town and hate that it puts all these ideas in my head that he's out there plotting. Something I didn't mention early, for some reason, when I submitted his time into our system with his correct information, I found a hold that garnished some of his wages. He's wasn't forthcoming as to why."

"Was he pissed when he saw his paycheck?"

"No, Finn didn't react when he saw the check was smaller. I didn't ask him why either. None of my business."

Lexa leaned back and closed her eyes, soaking up the rays from the sun. "I feel sorry for him."

"What?"

"Imagine meeting the most wonderful woman in the world and not being smart enough to keep her."

"Sweet talker." Clarke squeezed her hand. "Your mother asked again."

"About?"

"Baby names."

Lexa scrubbed her face. "I know, I know. I didn't realize how difficult it would be to come up with a name for our child."

Clarke combed a curl of hair around Lexa's ear. "We've only got a few weeks left to decide."

"I've narrowed it down that I want it to start with the letter C."

Clarke chuckled, "That's helpful."
She stood up and started to gather the dishes when Lexa took them out of her hands. "Uh, huh. Let me."

~

It was the outdoor lights coming on that woke Lexa out of a sound sleep. She turned to check on Clarke then back to the windowed door of their bedroom. The quiet unfamiliar humming coming from outside made her sit upright in bed and listen, thinking maybe her mind was playing tricks on her.

A loud noise outside quickly changed her mind and slipped out of bed and into her shorts, tee-shirt, and found her robe as she hunted for her boots. Out of caution, Lexa opened the safe and took the lock off the weapon, check the ammo, grabbed her cellphone, and headed downstairs.

Lexa wasn't expecting when she opened the front door was a man sitting on the porch smoking a cigarette, along with an almost empty bottle of liquor next to his side.

"Who the hell are you?" Lexa took a step outside and flanking him from behind.

"Where's Clarke?" He drunkenly drawled over his shoulder as he flicked the cigarette out into the yard.

"I asked you who you are?" Lexa held the gun on him and sized up her opponent when he staggered to his feet, catching himself by the railing.

"Where is she?" The man ran his hand through his dark hair hanging in his eyes when suddenly he lunged for Lexa, sending her against the door and sprawling inside the entrance. Lexa's blinked her eyes in shock, and as the gun went skidding across the floor and landing at Clarke's feet standing at the foot of the stairs.

"Lexa!"

Lexa quickly had the drunk guy on his stomach and pushed a knee into his back and dial 911 one-handed.
"Hand me my gun, Clarke, and please go back to bed. I'll handle this."

"Let me up, your fucking asshole."

"Finn?" Clarke picked up the gun by the handle with two fingers and handed it over to Lexa.

Lexa looked towards Clarke then down to the prone man as her anger started to build and pressed the gun into his back, warning him to stay still. He held out his hands to the side and stopped squirming.

The operator coming on the line broke her out of her rage, *What's your emergency?*

"I've got an intruder in my home."

*Is anyone hurt?*

"No, ma'am." Lexa gave the address, and she stood up, kicking Finn until he turned and leaned up against the wall next to the door. "Don't move. I won't hesitate to shoot if you try anything."

*Excuse me?*

"Sorry. Could you let the sheriff know I'm holding the intruder at gunpoint."

*I'll let them know. I'll see if a deputy is close to your place.*

"Thanks, he's not going anywhere." Lexa hung up and got to Clarke's side. "You should go to bed and let me take care of this."

"He's just drunk. Are you sure we should get the sheriff involved?"

The alpha in her bristled and bit back her comment toning it down to a grumble, "I'm positive,
Clarke," and kissed her temple.

Finn watched their interaction when it must have of dawn on him through his alcohol-hazed brain, who the alpha was standing over him and looked towards Clarke. "This is who got you pregnant, an alpha woman?"

Clarke didn't answer but sensed the omega's anger building. Lexa sized the man. He was an inch or two shorter and carried an extra forty or fifty pounds on her and why he was able to catch off guard. Finn laid his head against the door frame, eying Clarke, making Lexa's blood boil.

"Eyes on me," Lexa warned.

Finn ignored Lexa and said, "I thought my luck had changed when I found you again, Clarke. But, I guess I had it all wrong, had you all wrong. I wanted you back." Finn finally looked towards Lexa as hate-filled his eyes, "You fucked this thing, a god damn alpha woman?"

Every childhood taunt, every bully who challenged her status as an alpha reared its ugly head. A reminder of the lingering prejudices that some people still held, but the hate he focused on Clarke caused Lexa to lift the gun in her shaking hand and pointed the barrel at the man's head when a rush of Clarke's calming scent filled her senses.

"Please don't shoot him, Lexa."

Lexa waited, unable to move, unable to rationalize what was happening when her mind pictured shooting the man and blood spilling across the threshold of their home. Her life in tatters. Everything she'd worked for, gone, including Clarke and their baby. Another surge of Clarke's scent filled her scenes and lifted her finger off of the trigger. Willing the man to keep his mouth shut when the air grew still, and Finn closed his eyes, and his head drooped, and fuck if he didn't start to snore. All the alcohol he drank must have kicked in, and he passed out.

The tension drained from her hand and lowered the weapon. Clarke pulled Lexa into her arms when the shaking started and guided her towards the sofa. It the distance sirens echoed through the mountains, then a flurry of flashing red lights filled the yard coming from sheriff's car as it pulled into the driveway.

All uncertainty Lexa felt growing up as an alpha came roaring back into her life and remembered the angry faces of young alpha males challenging her to a fight. The sporadic taunting she faced.
But all of those things she had gone through made her the person she is today. Through it all, she persevered with confidence, secure in herself and madly in love with Clarke, she had thought it all in her past, until this late hour when this nothing of a man brought it to her front door.

~

Late in the day on the following Monday at the office had Clarke seething. After days of trying to figure out how Finn Collins found his way to Mount Trikru. Who could have possibly pointed him to this town? She landed on the culprit. The person now grinning at her from the screen on the computer.

Coming to this conclusion started when she remembered putting together the webpage for jobs in this area. Specifically, to lure construction workers to Mount Trikru. Their sleepy small town currently didn't have a lot of attractions, which was one of the things Indra wanted to change, so she decided to incorporate this year's Fourth of July picnic as an incentive. She collected photographs, and of course, she included the pictures of the Lumberjacks games.

The one where Lexa stood soaking wet, grinning ear to ear holding up her golden ax with Clarke by her side stood out prominently on the home page.

"Fuck me."

The little bird was Clarke herself, and Finn knew all along. It was a simple mistake on her part that she forgot and was probably due to her pregnant brain why she didn't remember. That he took advantage, irked her even more.

After his overnight stay in jail, the most he could be charged with was trespassing. Clarke overheard him confessing to Indra as he begged for his job, saying that he ran into a little trouble and needed to get back on his feet, and sorry that meant he was hiding out from bill collectors.

It was easy to conclude at this point that Finn finding her living in Mount Trikru was an unfortunate accident and nothing more.

Indra fired him on the spot for stalking one her employees, saying with the warning to leave town and never return. She effectively banned him from Mount Trikru. Since everyone and their cousin knew who he was, it wasn't hard to shun Finn, and he left without complaint.
Thus, ending this chapter in her life.

Lexa, however, was still upset about what she almost did. Swearing to Clarke had she not been there, and she could say for sure if she wouldn't have shot Finn and probably destroyed her life.

The whole situation came out of left field. The hurt her mate had suffered occasionally through her childhood with self-doubt, and the old prejudiced she lived through as a young alpha-girl was a stupid reminder of how cruel children and adults could be. Clarke made it her mission to assure Lexa he was entirely alone in his opinion, and nothing he or anyone else thought made any difference in their lives.

The hug Lexa left her with before her last trip up the mountains assured Clarke that she was going to be okay. His hateful words forgotten, like the man himself.

~

Almost two weeks had passed, and the flurry of activity downstairs filled the cabin with excitement. Lexa's parents surprised Clarke with an early but welcome visit that prompted her to call her mom and begged her to come out and spend a couple of days with them before the baby was due.

To let both families see Clarke in her full pregnancy and enjoy these peaceful, reflective days before they became parents. To share some of their secrets of parenting and maybe get more stories of young Alexandra from her folks.

Clarke leaned over the balcony and called out when she heard the rattled of pots and pans, "Christine, are you sure I can't help you out down there?"

"Positive, my dear."

Clarke could hardly contain her happiness knowing Lexa was due back any moment, and she'd have her all to herself until next year.

A car horn outside announced another guest as Christine called out, "Honey, your mother is here."
Clarke took a quick look out over the open balcony doors and waved to her mother. Abby waved back as she got out of the rental, getting pulled into a hug by Lexa's dad. She looked in wonder and saw the same surprise over her mother's face.

"I'll be right down, Mom."

Clarke tossed the last throw pillow on their bed and checked herself in the bathroom mirror. She let her hair down in soft curls around her face and down her back, finishing up her makeup and tied off the pale yellow long tee shirt just under her belly and looked up an into the mirror. The grin on the face staring back at her reflected her all the joy her heart couldn't contain.

~

Lexa rechecked the cabin bathroom finding a pair of dirty socks under the sink and shoved them in with the other filthy clothes inside a plastic bag. She zipped up her toiletry kit and put it into the suitcase, locking it closed, then hauled it to her jeep and put the last of her luggage inside.

Laughter spilled over the camp caused her the look over her shoulder at a group her friends lingering by the firepit sensing Gustus was the ring leader of the pack and caught a grin across his face as he approached her.

"You look like the cat who caught the canary. What's up?"

Gustus cleared his throat and waved the lumberjacks over and pulled out a package a few inches longer than her hand, a surprisingly heavy wooden box.

"We all pitched in."

Lexa pushed down the blush that threatened to cover her face as she started to open the gift. "Damn, you guys didn't need to..." Her words caught in her throat, inside the wooden box was a perfect replica of her golden ax, baby-sized that had a place for an inscription, she supposed it was for when they got around to finding a name for their child. "Her first ax." Lexa chuckled. "It's perfect. Thanks, guys."

Gustus waited while each of her friends shook her hand and finally looked up into his eyes.
"Bring it in, Pal." Lexa opened her arms as Gustus scooped her up in his arms and hugged her swinging her around like she was a small child. "Okay, okay. I'm getting dizzy."

Gustus laughed as he said as he sat her down, "Sorry, my friend. We can't have that before your child is born."

Lexa gave him a sidelong glance. "You know, the baby's going to need an uncle since neither Clarke or I have siblings. You up for the job?"

That caught Gustus off guard, but he lifted his chin to say, "It would be..." Gustus choked up then looked away. Lexa felt his emotion like a tangible thing when he turned back and said, "It would be my honor, Lexa, and please tell Clarke I wish you all nothing but the best."

"You bet."

She left him standing near her home away from home as she pulled the jeep out and onto the road, taking one look back through the rearview mirror and catching Gustus with the biggest smile on his face she had ever seen.

"Yup, he's going to make a great uncle."

~

Clarke tapped her cellphone against her leg, then looked at Lexa's message once more and checked the time. Lexa's text said she was minutes away, and the anticipation of seeing her had Clarke anxious like a small child too excited to wait inside like an adult.

A honk of a horn had her giggling like a school girl when to her surprise, Anya and Raven arrived early and pulled into their driveway, making her wave like a maniac seeing her two friends and immediately starting searching for Raean.

Raven called out passed Anya's open door, "Give me a minute to get the baby."
Clarke pulled Anya into a hug when she stepped down out of the truck. "Damn, you look great, but a little tired."

Anya rubbed her hand across her chin. "Yeah, thanks. I didn't realize that such a small baby would be so much work."

"Gemmie," Clarke drawled, waiting with her hands out as Raven stepped up into the cab and unstrapped Raean from her car seat. The baby yawning made Clarke swoon. "She's adorable, guys."

"I fell in love with her the moment I saw her, Clarke." Raven tucked her baby close to her chest and kissed her forehead. "Hey, stinky pants, come meet your Auntie Clarke."

Raven gently handed her baby over to Clarke, lifting her hands away and held her with one arm under her body, moving the soft white blanket covered with tiny bunnies away from her face. "Hey, sweetie." Clarke couldn't resist running her nose over her face and kissed her forehead. The baby followed her movement, mimic her smile, and blew a bubble.

Raven wiped it away from the towel she had over her shoulder, saying, "Sorry, she just ate."

Anya looked around. "Where's Lexa?"

"On her way, she should be here..." Clarke rocked the baby back a forth then looked up when Lexa jeep came into view and smoothly coasted to a stop. A smile on her face seeing what Clarke was carrying covered her face matched the one she knew was splitting her own.

"What have we got here?" Lexa pulled Raven and Anya into a hug then moved past them. Her eyes focus on Clarke's face then down to the bundle in her arms. "Can I?"

Clarke filled to busting as she placed the tiny baby in Lexa's arms. "Let her head rest on your arm."

"I think I got it." The baby looked up at Lexa as her eyes went wide and reached for her finger and promptly stuck into her mouth. "Don't worry. My hands are clean, guys." Stopping the protest, Clarke could sense coming from Anya.
Clarke rubbed Lexa's back as they moved towards the door and called out over her shoulder, "You guys coming?"

"They have no idea what they're in store for," Raven said behind their backs causing Anya to snicker and grabbed the baby's travel bag.

~

"So, what's it like?" Lexa was working on her second beer and leaned against the kitchen counter as everyone gathered around Raven and the baby in the living room.

"That first few days, I was afraid to hold Raean. Afraid my might break her. I soon found out just how resilient this little kid is. She's a fighter. Did you know they have a simple saliva test for a baby to check their status if they don't present as alpha at birth? Leveling the playing field. Not that it matters to me, but..."

"But what?"

"Raven insisted because she wants nothing but the best for our child, and we found out that's she's a little omega."

"Congratulation, that's so awesome."

Lexa remembered how Clarke suffered as a teen not being prepared when she found out she was an omega when she presented going into heat as a young girl and the shame the system put her through, keeping her home to study and not distract the other students.

"I'll have to tell Clarke about this. So Raean is going to have a better time of it when she gets older."

"That's what we hope."

Clarke motioned to Lexa, and they joined everybody in the living room. Lexa found her spot on the sofa, next to Clarke as Raven put the baby in the portable carrier. Her dad followed her movements
as she put her arm around Clarke's shoulders and another on her belly. Clarke covered her hand as she talked to her mother and caught his eyes gleaming at her.

"Alexandra, I see you've put on some muscle." He reached over and pressed on her bicep.

Lexa lifted her arm and flexed for him. "That's from dragging a heavy chainsaw around ten hours a day, Dad."

"You should check out her butt," Clarke said, making the room grow quiet and a blush to cover both of their faces.

"Oh, damn. You two haven't changed a bit," Raven said, causing everyone to laugh.

Clarke gave Raven a look then charged ahead, "Christine, how did you come up with Lexa's name when you found out you were pregnant?"

Christine looked at her husband and reached for his hand. "Alexandra wasn't our first child. We were having a little boy, Alexander, but I had complications and lost him in my third month."

"I'm so sorry to hear that."

"It wasn't meant to be, but for my little Alexandra, I knew the moment I saw her what her name should be." Christine closed her eyes, seemingly to remember. "She came out red-faced and squalling, almost angry to see the world. It was when Alex started cooing at her she quieted down. It seemed only natural to name her after her father."

"Plus, it's an awesome name," Alex said. Pride covered his face as he looked towards his daughter.

"I'm not saying that it can happen that quickly for both of you. You'll know."

"I'm sorry to admit we haven't come up with one name we both like," Lexa stated.

Clarke added, "The most she told me the other week was she liked the letter C. It's not much to go
"Sure it is," Anya said. "There's, Carrie, Charlie, Charlotte..."

Raven continued, "Ceci, Chloe..."

"No," Lexa quickly said. "Not Chloe."

"Catherine, Coraline, hey, what about Christine?" Raven asked.

"Oh, no," Christine said. "I insist you pick another name. Abby, how did you come up with Clarke's name?"

Abby ran her hand over her daughter's hair, "A book I was reading at the time. Plus, I thought it was a cool name for a girl."

"I like it," Lexa said as she kissed her girl's cheek.

"You're not naming my child after me, honey."

Lexa stuck out her lower lip, causing everyone to laugh.

~

_The weight of carrying the heir of Alexandra's kingdom filled the princess with trepidation and delight. Happiness unknown to her before became a living breathing manifestation of the love she held for the Commander._

_Her lover was deeply asleep by her side as she leaned against the pillowed surface, unable to sleep, and watched the moon as it waxed between the curtain swaying in the night's breeze._
Her baby kicked inside her belly just as Alexandra stirred in a dream, fighting against a foe, she supposed. Her spirit to protect ever present even in slumber. It brought her back to the moment their eyes met almost a year ago, virginal and untouched until that one night, Alexandra took her as her mate.

Piercing her vale and placing her seed inside her to prosper. Her lover spent days with her in her heat, and it was only a matter of time to see if this union would be blessed. Within weeks she made the announcement to Alexandra, and the stoic warrior went to her knees and professed her love, life, and honor for now and through eternity.

The baby moved again, pulling a gasp and cry from her lips. A steady building ache made her cry out again, "Alexandra." Another stronger renting pain. "Oh, Keryon, please wake up."

With each sharp pain in her gut, announce that their baby was coming.

~

Clarke stirred then cried out, sitting upright in bed. Her body felt like she was ripping in half. She started panting as she was brought out of her dream and clutched at the bedsheet and then pushed on Lexa's shoulder as wetness gushed between her legs.

"The baby is coming." She reached for the bedside light through the pain and cried out, "Lexa, please wake up!"

Lexa was faced down then stirred. Blinking against the brightness and leaned up on her elbows, "What's wrong?"

"My water broke."

"Huh?" Lexa turned and pulled the sheet away, seeing the wetness beneath Clarke's backside as she moaned in pain. "Fuck, she's coming."

Lexa dash from the room, pulling on her robe and called for Abby as she raced down the stairs. Clarke heard her front door come open, and the muted shout to her parents, and just as quickly, Lexa dashed back upstairs and was by her side as Abby stumbling into the room. One hand holding her doctor's bag and pulling her robe closed.
"Let me check you out, Sweetie."

"Mom, it hurts."

"I know. It's natural, but try not to push just yet." Abby got her stethoscope out and ran it along her belly as Lexa got on the phone and called the doctor and started to pace the room. Soon, Christine and Alex were waiting just outside of the bedroom, and Lexa waved them to come inside.

"I don't think we have time to get you to a hospital. The baby has already turned and dropped. Christine, please start boiling water. Alex finds some blankets and put them in..." Her mother looked around and then pointed towards their large bathroom. "Put them in there."

"You got it."

He looked around as Lexa called out, "In the hallway closet, Dad. Sorry to wake you, Doctor Waters, this is Lexa Woods. Clarke is having contractions. Her mother is a doctor, and she doesn't think there time to get her a hospital." Lexa paused, listening. "Yes, her water broke." Lexa paused again and asked, "Abby, the doctor wants to know how many minutes..."

"Clarke, do you know?"

Clarke shook her head and said, "Minutes, I think. Oh, damn, here comes another one."

"You heard that? Okay, will be upstairs, and the front door will be unlocked."

~

Lexa wasn't quite prepared to feel her mate's pain as a physical thing as she panted through each contraction. The grip Clarke had on her hand was going to leave a mark and said in her ear, "You're doing great, Clarke."

Everything she had ever done in her life up this moment pales in comparison as she held Clarke up
from behind as she sat a few blankets on the bathroom floor giving birth to their child.

"It hurts, Mommy."

"I know, sweetie," Abby assured, soaking a towel in hot water and laying it across Clarke's abdomen. "You're close. I can see the crown of the baby's head now."

Lexa looked up and into her mother's face, hovering just outside of the bathroom. A camera in hand, catching all of these precious moments she was sure they both would find later, of what's happening now, only a blur.

Clarke cried out, tearing a hole in Lexa's heart, and she pumped out as much soothing scent her body could produce. Abby wavered a little reacting as well, but Clarke's grip on her ease a bit.

Abby lifted Clarke's chin. "On the next contraction, I want you to push continually. Lexa, keep Clarke upright and put your shoulder into it."

"Ow, ow," Clarke cried out, and tears filled Lexa's eyes, sensed all the pain she was baring.

"A little more. Good, good. You're doing good, Clarke."

Lexa whispered into Clarke's ear, "I love you, Clarke."

Clarke cried out one long groan, and with a rush of movement and blood, the baby slipped out of her and into Abby's hands. Dr. Waters arrived just in time to suck out the liquid in the baby's mouth and nose as she let out a wail and took her first breath.

Clarke laid down as Lexa's instinct took over and crawled to where their child was laying in Abby's arms and took her out of her hands and pulled the baby close to her chest and inhaled. Lexa shut her eyes as a mist of understanding filled her heart, and pulled the baby close, let her scent imprint on her soul. The unmistakable aroma filled her senses. Clarke had given her a little alpha girl.

"She beautiful, Clarke." Lexa wrapped a warm blanket around their baby and handed her to Clarke when she sat up.
"Camryn, Lexa?" Clarke looked up with uncertain eyes, asking if the name was okay.

Lexa looked at their baby and into Clarke's eyes as she kissed the top of her head and smiled, loving the name immediately. "It's perfect, Clarke."

The baby blinked and let out a tiny growl as Clarke began to purr and calmed her immediately and settled the child against her chest.

Lexa laughed through her tears and cut the umbilical cord after the doctor clamp the ends off. Pride and affection filled every part of her. Lexa felt herself fall deeper in love with Clarke and had more than enough to spare for their baby.

~

Camryn Griffin-Woods. Six pounds, two ounces, nineteen inches long. Light brown hair and dark blue eyes (subject to change). Born at half-past two o'clock on the 20th of October, the birth certificate read. Clarke laid the document on the nightstand and adjusted the baby in her arms.

Downstairs, Lexa was winding down the excitement with their family and accompanying Dr. Waters to her car. It was well after four o'clock in the morning, and everyone needed to rest after the activity. The baby was quietly sleeping on her chest and had yet to be fed. She wanted her first attempt to be when Lexa returned.

"You're a few days late, Sweetie." Clarke cooed. Camryn yawned and tried to put her fist in her mouth. "Someone's hungry, I think."

Lexa returned and sat next to Clarke and tickled the baby under her chin. "Hey, there, little cub."

"I think I'm going to try to feed her. Can you get me the pump so I can express my other breast for later?"

"No problem, but wait for me." With purpose, Lexa quickly retrieved the item from the baby's room and started to read the instruction.
Clarke opened her top and moved her nipple to the baby's mouth, and immediately felt her suck. "Wow, that's different."

Lexa cupped the baby's head and put her arm around Clarke's shoulders and ran a finger over her tiny ear, "I know this ear and look she's got your dimple in her chin."

Clarke agreed, "But, those lips are yours."

"You think?"

"Positive."

They watched in interest as the baby suckled her breast when Lexa whispered, "I need to thank you, Clarke."

"Whatever for?"

"For her." Lexa leaned over and kissed Clarke's cheek. "For being a perfect mother."

"I've got a lot to learn."

"We both do," Lexa corrected.

Clarke reached for Lexa's hand and tangled their fingers together. Her heart spilled over all the love she was feeling coming from the baby blinking up her from her breast and Lexa next to her side and let the tears she had held a bay, break free.
Clarke was exhausted and ached everywhere, but it couldn’t stop the miracle she was witnessing. She moved the baby to her other breast, realizing she had jumped the gun when it came to expressing her milk with the pump, forgetting at the moment with all of the excitement that the first milk she gave was the colostrum. It was full of all kinds of good things for their baby, that and her breasts wouldn’t be producing a whole hell of a lot of milk for the first few days at least. After a few minutes, Camryn pulled away, and she brought the baby up to her shoulder and gently rocked her as she padded her back.

“How did you know what to do?” Lexa asked, reaching out to tickle a tiny foot.

“All the baby books and videos your mother sent me plus Raven gave me a few tips.”

“Let’s see if I can get her to burp.” Lexa was on her stomach, two fists holding up her head as wonder covered her face when the wobbly newborn kicked her legs and then settled as Clarke work up a very tiny burp. “There it is. Good girl.”

Clarke continued to rock the baby, quietly humming while her mate crawled up beside her and caught her, making a face when the baby turned in her direction.

Clarke cupped Lexa’s chin and broke the news, “I’m afraid she won’t be able to see you right away, sweetie.”

“Are you sure?” Lexa twisted her lips into a frown.

“Hmm, I’m positive. Give it a few weeks, and the baby will be able to see things a little more clearly.” After another satisfying burp, Clarke laid the infant on her back. “Can you hold her while I clean up?”

“You bet.” Charged with something to do, Lexa took Camryn on a tour of their bedroom, pointing out the rocking chair and various items in the room.

Clarke let her be and finished washing up and got back into bed watching as Lexa took her back to the bathroom and told the story of her birth. The baby began to fuss and whimper, making Lexa quickly bring her back to Clarke.
Lexa’s eyes grew watery, and with a blush covering her cheeks, she mumbled, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make her cry.”

“You didn’t. Camryn’s going to cry all the time. But, check her diaper. She might need to be changed.”

Lexa looked down at the baby then forlornly up to Clarke. At a loss, she laid the baby on the bed by her knees then raked her fingers through her hair.

“I have no idea what I’m doing.”

Clarke lifted one end of the diaper and peeked inside. “Nope, she’s good.”

Lexa reached down and let the baby grab her finger. “Where did you say those baby books were?”

Clarke indicated to the lower shelf of the nightstand. Lexa retrieved the books and turned on the lamp. Clarke yawned and settled on her side with Camryn.

Lexa pushed her pillow up to rest against, then placed the baby into the crook of her arm and started reading out loud. Clarke opened her mouth about to stop her, given the newborn had no idea was she was saying, but changed her mind and watched instead. She wrapped her hand around her abdomen in an attempt to soothe the lingering pain while Lexa’s quiet voice had the effect of putting both of them to sleep.

~

A tug on her nightshirt followed by a whimper woke Lexa from a sound sleep. She opened her eyes and looked down at the baby still asleep in her arms, and the book she was reading, a whimsically titled, *How Babies Work: Your Complete Guide in The Operation, Trouble-Shooting, and Advice on First-Year Maintenance* laid face down on her lap. The cry came for Clarke.

Lexa combed the hair out of Clarke’s eyes when they came open. “Hey, let me get you something for the pain. Where does it hurt?”
“Everywhere,” Clarke’s voice trembled.

“I’ll get you a heating pad and some pain meds. Maybe you need something to eat.”

Clarke worked on sitting upright, reaching for Camryn. “I need to check on her. She might need to be changed.”

“Let me try.”

“Are you sure you can handle that?”

She leaned over and kissed Clarke. “No, but I’m going need to learn how.”

Lexa gave the baby to Clarke, and she moved the blanket away from her head. “I need to see her face.”

She ran her hand along Clarke’s legs. “Did you have a nightmare?”

Clarke kissed the infant, causing her to yawn. “I misplaced Camryn somewhere in the house and about lost my mind looking for her.”

“Did you find her?”

Clarke reached for Lexa’s hand. “She was with you up in the mountains cutting down trees, for some damn reason.”

Lexa finished the connection and tangled her fingers with Clarke and chuckled. “I’m afraid she’s too little for that.”

“I heard you guys get up. Is it too early to see my grandchild?”
Lexa looked over when Abby poked her head inside. “Not at all,” she indicated with a wave and went to the bathroom to retrieve the items for Clarke but kept watch.

Abby ran a finger along the baby’s ear, then looked up into her daughter’s eyes. “I’ll bet you pretty sore.”

Clarke hummed her agreement, “I ache everywhere, Mom.”

“You’ll forget the pain soon enough, and you will be back to normal in no time. Even though I’m not your doctor, my recommendation is to sleep when you can, but try and get up and get your blood flowing. It will aid in stimulating a healthy recovery. Just don’t overdo it.”

Lexa watched from the bathroom as Abby nuzzled and cooed over Camryn. It caused a smile to cover her face, and pride filled her chest. That’s when she realized that she was staring at three generations of Griffins. One she had a part in making.

Lexa looked down at her cellphone when it lit up with a silent alarm, blinking when she registered it was nearly ten o’clock. Her mind was still on lumberjack time and would have been up for hours already working in the forest, and felt a little guilty for oversleeping.

Lexa went back to the bed and handed Clarke a couple of pills and a glass of water. Then she went to her knees and plugged in the heating pad and laid it on her lap.

Looking up from the side of the bed, Lexa asked, “What are you in the mood to eat? Coffee, toast. A couple of eggs...”

Clarke smiled. “Surprise me? But damn, do I ever crave coffee. I’ve missed that.”

Lexa leaned up and kissed Clarke, then moved a little lower and kissed her daughter.

“Be right back.”
“Lexa?” She turned on her heels and lifted both eyebrows. “Don't forget, she needs to be changed.”

“Oh, right.” Lexa went back to the bed, as Clarke put her legs over the side.

“I’ll go with you. I don’t want to miss this.” Lexa took the baby from her arms and held out her hand and helped Clarke stand as she slipped on her robe. “Mom, can you meet us downstairs?”

“I’ll get the coffee going,” Abby replied as she left their room.

~

The sunlight streaming through the two windows on either side of the baby’s crib created a glowing spectacle of newness. The wallpaper over one wall held adorably drawn pictures of baby animals, and clouds, covering the floor, a soft fluffy carpet was where a second rocking chair rested. Clarke had kept the room pristine with everything in its place after they had set everything up for the newest member of their family.

Clarke laid Camryn on the soft surface of the changing table, and the baby’s half-lidded eyes were drawn to the colorful mobile turning slowly over her head. A tiny hand moved in an attempt to reach upward as a smile covered her face, immediately that hand went to her mouth and rocked side to side.

“I thought you said she couldn’t see?”

“Not anything clearly at first. Her eyes are barely open.”

“But she’s smiling at all this cuteness.” Lexa indicated to the soft stuffed fluffy lion, raccoon, and other animals twirling overhead.

“Moving objects. The baby can see, light and dark.”

“Oh.” After a beat, “Is Camryn creating memories?”
Clarke chuckled. “She’s not even a day old, and no, that would be impossible. I take it you didn’t get too far reading about babies.”

Lexa nudged Clarke with her hip. “I fell asleep.” Lexa watched as in seconds Clarke had the dirty diaper off, the little bottom cleaned, and a new one fastened in place. Clarke wavered a bit, and Lexa steadied her.

“Easy, Clarke.”

“I probably need to sit down.”

“You should have let me take care of her.”

“And miss out on all of the fun. I’m okay. But I think my mother is right. I need to rest, but can I do it downstairs?”

“Of course.” Lexa held out her arm as Clarke scooped up the baby, wrapping her in a blanket and led them to stairs, seeing the happy faces of their families waiting down below.

Clarke whispered, “don’t forget to grab the heating pad.”

~

It was a slow-building irritation, and self doubt that Clarke couldn’t stop festering and competing for attention in her brain.

First, it was her mother’s overly attentive, however kindly correction for everything she was doing with her baby. She took her meaning that Clarke had no idea what she was doing, and her mother was right.

Then it was Christine urging her to feed the baby, even though Clarke thought for sure Camryn wasn’t hungry. But, being a mother surely, Christine knew better.
She dearly cared for Alex, but her protective nature when he approached her child caused Clarke to hold back a growl deep in her belly. Clarke felt terrible for her overreaction.

Lexa was proudly oblivious, which annoyed her even more when she had been nothing but supportive.

Nobody was sensing what Clarke was feeling. It happened slowly over the few hours after lunch, and everyone’s excitement over the baby caused this unnameable thing to dwell deep inside of her gut. Overwhelmed, tired, and her life’s essence seemed to drain away from her every time she someone asked how are you doing, do you still hurt, what can I get you. She wanted to scream at everyone to leave her alone and let her sit quietly and enjoy her new baby.

Her mother called from the kitchen, “Are you sure I can’t...”

Behind gritted teeth, Clarke snapped, “Mom. Thanks, but I’m good. I just want to sit still and...”

Finally, Christine got the hint and butted in, “I think Alex and I should head back home tomorrow. I’ve got a restaurant to run, and I’m sure you want to get into a routine with your little one.”

Clarke saw the wink that Christine gave her mother and immediately felt terrible. They had every right to want to spend time with their first grandchild.

Following that theme, her mother stated, “You just reminded me that I’ve got to check with my staff and see when my next surgery is scheduled.”

Clarke wanted to cry. She loved her family, but it was too much. She wasn’t prepared for everything she needed to know when it came to raising a child. It was so simple when she carried Camryn and thought she had time to figure out how to be a mother when her tears began to flow. Both older women caught her sniffles, bringing them to her side.

“Clarke, what is it?” Christine asked.

“I...I don’t know.”
Clarke looked towards her sleeping baby, not two feet away from her resting in her carrier sitting on the coffee table.

“You don’t think that both of us don’t know what you’re experiencing?” Her mother prodded.

“I feel...”

“Drained, alone. Want people to stop asking you questions that you’ve answered minutes before?” Christine guessed.

“It’s not that bad.” She shook her head, unconvincingly.

“I’m sure your mother would agree with me.” Clarke sensed the need to hold both of their hands and ground her into this moment. “Being a mother is a twenty-four, seven job. Sometimes it will feel thankless. Until that one moment, your child sees you for the first time.”

Abby chimed in, “or the first time she smiles at you.”

Christine went on, “your baby's crying, and you hug her, and those tears dry up and forgotten in seconds.”

“My world completely lit up the first time you called me Mama, Clarke.” Clarke’s lower lip began to quiver, bringing a couple of ahs, there, there, from both mothers.

Christine ran her fingers through her hair. “My dear, you’ve got an opportunity to form a young mind from the very beginning. All the love and knowledge you pour into your child will feel one day like it wasn’t enough. But, I’m here to tell you, you and my daughter will both be wonderful parents. Despite what you might be feeling right now.”

“What if I make mistakes, and she hates me?” Clarke felt her mother’s hand tighten in hers.

Her mother wrapped her arm around her shoulders and leaned her head against Clarke's. “You hold on tight, Clarke. She’ll understand why later you only had her best interest at heart.”
“I love her so much. I...”

The utility door came open, bringing Lexa and her dad chuckling behind her.

“Hey, guys, what’s up?” Lexa’s eyes fell on Clarke's tear-streaked face and rushed to her side. Both mothers moved, dragging Alex along until they were all outside, leaving the two of them alone.

Clarke fell into Lexa’s arms. “Shh, I’ve got you.”

~

Lexa drugged her dad into the garage to show him her other baby. Telling him, she needed to find a shop where she could get the sports car painted and finally enjoy all of her hard work.

Her dad, however, had other intentions. “You’re mother has been worried about you.”

“Oh, yeah. How long?” She lifted the hood and latched it open in place.

“The moment you were born.”

“Is this about, Clarke?”

“It’s about both of you.” Lexa motioned to the two stools next to her workbench, feeling a fatherly speech coming on.

“Lay it on me, Dad.”

“'I did everything wrong when we first had you,” Alex confessed.
“I doubt that.”

Her dad just smiled as he turned side to side on the stool. “I never knew when you were hungry or needed to be changed. I left that all up to Mom, me being an alpha an all. I always thought that Christine had it under control, and I almost lost her.”

Shocked by this revelation, Lexa looked up and into her father’s eyes. “You mean divorce?”

He lowered his head as he fiddled with one of her screwdrivers. “Much worse than that. Your mother warned me that she’d release me from our bond if I didn’t pull my weight.”

“Dad.”

“I know, I know. We both were young, and after losing your brother, I was confused and hurt, and Christine got pregnant in her next heat.” He lifted his chin and put the tool back on the workbench. “She did that for me, for us. When you were born, I was ecstatic, but I still didn’t understand what it took to be a parent. Your mother taught me how.”

“Are you afraid, I’ll do that with Clarke?”

He looked towards all of her toys in her garage. “I’m not saying you should give up your hobbies, Alexandra, but Clarke is going to need you. You need to help without asking your mate what and how to take care of your child.”

“I guess when Mom sent Clarke those baby books, they just weren’t mean for her.”

“I think your mother hoped you’d pick one or two of them up and check them out.”

“I get it, Dad.”

“Keep Clarke’s best interest at heart when raising your daughter. They both come first.”

“I’ll try my best, Dad.”
“I know you will.”

With her car forgotten, she felt a need to be with Clarke and lead him back inside. “So, how serious was Mom?”

His voice sounded like he was eighteen again, “your mother had my duffle bag, and Nintendo packed and sitting on our front porch when I got home from work.” Lexa busted out in laughter.

~

Lexa held onto her mate and released a soothing scent hoping to alleviate Clarke's distress. She kissed her temple, keeping her steady. She didn’t need to read a book to figure out what was wrong. Lexa had a pretty good idea of what Clarke might be experiencing. Emptiness, perhaps or maybe doubt.

“What can I do to make you feel better, Clarke?”

Clarke sniffed and wiped her face into her flannel shirt. “I miss carrying Camryn. Knowing she was safe and untouched by the world.”

“She’s safe here with us.”

Clarke leaned back and wiped the remaining tears away. “I know, it’s just that...”

“What?”

“I’m afraid I’ll make a bunch of mistakes with her.”

“Clarke, you reminded me earlier that she’s only a day old.”

Clarke smiled and took in and released her breath when the baby woke, stuck her fist into her
mouth, and started to fuss.

“Someone’s hungry.”

Lexa lifted Camryn into her arms and kissed her. “Hey, baby girl.” She handed her to Clarke, as she opened her shirt and got the infant into a comfortable position in her lap. The baby latched onto her nipple as her little hands began to knead her breast as she sucked.

“You certainly do know what you are doing.”

Clarke leaned her head against Lexa feeling her whole world right itself again. She could do this.

~

Lexa stirred the simmering beef stew her mother prepared right before they packed up the RV and headed back home. Abby had followed them out of the driveway just as an early Autumn rain began to fall, and Clarke had held up Camryn’s hand in her first attempt to wave goodbye.

Clarke came up behind her, wrapping her arms around her waist and leaned her head against her back, and hummed, “I missed being able to hug you properly.”

Without the baby between them, Clarke's belly wasn't completely flat, but the difference was noticeable. “Was it worth the wait?”

Lexa could sense Clarke contemplating her answer when she replied, “Everything I did put me in the right place with you. To be in this town and now have this beautiful child with you. Yeah, it was pretty damn worth the wait,” Clarke drawled.

Lexa tapped the spoon clean and placed on the ceramic rest between the burners on the stove and covered the pot with the lid, then turned into Clarke’s arms. “How would you feel about inviting Anya and Raven over for dinner tonight?”

Clarke leaned her head against Lexa’s chest, then tucked her face into the opening of her shirt and placed a kiss on bare warm skin. “Raven is dying to see the baby. I’ll ask them.” She tried to move
away, but Lexa held her in place.

“We could wait a day or two.”

“We could, and Raven would probably kill me if she knew we were even discussing whether or not.” Clarke paused. "It’s okay. I want to see them and Raean."

Clarke reached around Lexa to grab her phone, with the sweetest confident smile she hadn’t seen in a while.

“I’ll get us some wine,” Lexa said.

“You do that, hot stuff.” Giving her wink. “Hey, Rae. What are you guys doing?”

~

Clarke grew anxious, waiting for their friends to arrive. To give her head some space, she bathed Camryn and now was in her room trying to decide what she should wear, torn between the light blue onesie with lambs or the outfit from Raven, the one covered in little cubs.

She held both sets up to a bare bottom Camryn. "Which one, sweetie?" She didn't respond, of course. "How about the one your Auntie Raven got you." Then the baby smiled and kicked her legs. Clarke smiled back. "Great choice, you'll probably grow out of in a month or two, and we want to get proper uses out of all of your clothes."

"They're here," Lexa called from downstairs.

"We'll be down in a second."

After slipping a new diaper on and dressing Camryn, she came to the railing and saw that Lexa had finished setting the table then open the door after the persisting knocking.

"Let me see her." Ayna was inside of the house in seconds and looked around.
Raven called from outside, "Hey, need some help here."

Lexa pushed past Anya looking up at Clarke then over her shoulder at Raven outside, then frowned.

Clarke laughed. "Camryn isn't going anywhere, guys."

It was a competition, of a sort, with Raven and Anya both anxious to meet Camryn while Lexa shook her head and took over for them and removed Raean out of her car seat.

Clarke held Camryn up to her chest, watching her friends clamoring to be one to hold her first with Raven pushing Anya out of the way and getting to her first.

"Hey, cute stuff." Raven removed the baby from Clarke's arms and cooed. "Damn, she's heavier than my little girl."

"She was a little over six pounds at birth." Clarke reached out and rubbed her back, immediately feeling the loss of her holding her baby.

"Still, she's heavier," Raven hummed and carried her infant into the living room. "Something smells delicious."

Clarke followed behind her, trying to keep her omega protectiveness at bay when her friend turned and saw the concerned expression over her face.

"You got that look, Clarke."

"What's that?" She tried to hide her embarrassment and seem unconcerned.

"It's the same look Anya got at first." She kissed Camryn's forehead. "Overprotective. I get that."
Caught in the act, Clarke blushed and put some distance between her friend and decided to play the host and take it off of Lexa's shoulders. "Can I get you guys anything to drink?"

~

Raean poked her tongue out as Anya held her to her chest, gently bouncing her up and down and side to side, facing outward so both could watch as she struggled to change Camryn's diaper. The first time for Lexa.

"Need help?"

Lexa looked at them sideways. "If I can rebuild a car, I can certainly change a diaper. Is that why you followed me up here?"

It had been a running joke all night, mainly from her friend, and for some reason, she hadn't gotten around to this task before. Clarke always knew when the baby needed to be changed and didn't wait or ask her for any help. (Something she needed to remedy in the immediate future, as in this moment.)

"Yes and no. Don't get me wrong. Raean and I do enjoy finding out there's one skill you don't possess. Don't you agree, sweet baby girl?" Raean gurgled.

"Ha-ha. Hand me a...never mind." Lexa pulled out a couple of wipes as she gently lifted her infant by the feet and cleaned her little bottom. "So, what's the other reason?"

"Have you talked to Indra?"

"No." Lexa stopped then corrected herself, "Yes, I told Indra about Camryn. That's all. Why?"

"Nia's back."

Nia Azgeda was her bosses' nemesis in the form of her older step-sister, only related by marriage and had left Mount Trikru after getting pregnant, raising a son, and her mother passed away. Lexa had only heard rumors from Anya and Gustus. Indra never brought her up.
"Is she causing trouble?"

"Not that I'm aware, yet. Raven saw her son, Roan, the other day. He came into The Blue Ox for a drink. Raven didn't live in Mount Trikru at the time. I don't think he wouldn't remember my girl."

"Maybe he's looking for work."

"A little late in the year, don't you think? Not that I believe they're back for that purpose. I heard they have some money."

"So, Indra did tell you why they're back?"

"No. I saw the viper sniffing around the new hotel construction."

"What makes you think Indra told me anything?"

"Because you're her first, and you need to know if conditions are changing."

"You sound like we're going to war." Lexa finished with the diaper and pulled down her outfit and snapped it back on.

Anya walked around the room. "Maybe Nia's thinking of expanding her fortune. Maybe Nia thought she'd come down here and see what was ripe for the picking — prime property around here." Anya moved the curtain away from the window, looking out into the darkness. Giving Lexa the impression that someone was lurking down below. Anya turned back towards Lexa. "Old folks that have been here for years may want to sell if the price is right and hell, by next year, Nia could own half of our town."

"You've been thinking about this a lot."

"Indra hasn't let on. I got all my info from Raven. The former owner, Theo, knew all of Mount Trikru's dirty little secrets before passing them on. Plus, it doesn't hurt to have a bar. You know
how people like to talk. Raven's said that Theo told her, it was a wish of Nia's, to own this town
make it her little fiefdom where she could be Queen and make all of the rules. But the claim of the
mountain is by blood, that Nia's lacks."

"She's that bad."

"The worse."

Camryn began to fuss. Her face, screwing up, turning red, and the waterworks started.

"Hey, hey. Don't you like my first attempt at changing you into a clean diaper? You're going to
give me a complex." Lexa tried to joke with the baby. It didn't work. She picked her up and rocked
her up and down a few times while spinning slowly around the room. It did little good.

At a loss, she looked toward Anya. "Any ideas."

"She's a baby. They cry. But, my guess. She's sleepy and were keeping her awake."

"Ah." Lexa zipped her mouth shut but made a bee-line for the door, followed by Anya.

They were nowhere near finished with this conversation about Nia.

~

Clarke put a pot of coffee on and brought out a beautifully laced, home-made peach pie and
whispered, "Who wants a slice?"

All of their hands went up.

Clarke worked over half an hour to get Camryn quiet again, and that started Raean to whimper
then cry with her. Anya plugged both her ears up with her fingers when Lexa had the idea of laying
the two of them in the same bassinet next to the sofa. It surprised everyone when at last, the two
babies sensed each other, quieted down, and remarkably fell asleep.
Clarke commented she had read that listening to another heartbeat can relax a baby to sleep. Everyone was grateful to have some peace. But, Clarke's nerves were on edge, from baby's distress and the news about a person called Nia.

Clarke poured everyone out a cup of coffee as Raven began her tale.

"It was one of the main reasons Indra came back to Mount Trikru. She used to work for Nia in the big city, and after her dad got sick and died, everything was left to her." She took a bite of the pie and hummed, "Yummy." She looked around at all of the expectant faces. "Give me a moment of joy before I start this story."

"Raven," Anya whined.

Raven gave her look, then took her time savoring a bite. "According to Theo, Nia's mom was a sweet lady, and Indra's dad, Isaac Forrester, was from a long line of lumberjacks, but before that, Indra's people were explorers. A couple of generations or more of Isaac's people helped found the town — this whole area at one time only had one trail. But I'm talking ancient history well before there was a logging industry. Now that I think about it, that rock you found up behind your property, Lexa. It could be from the first settlers."

"I did a little research and asked Indra what she thought," Clarke said. She took a sip of coffee. "They're called, talking stones, and even though at first I assumed someone brought them there and left them there on purpose, it was more likely the people who settled here found that rock in that location. They don't all have inscriptions, some are stacked or indicate a direction; in this case, it carries both, not the stacking of course."

"Have you made out what it says?" Anya asked.

"Not yet, but I almost certain it was Indra's people, but the language they used wasn't English, Indra called it..." Clarke paused as her mouth tried to wrap around the strange word. "Trigedasleng. In fact, the name of this town, Mount Trikru, is from that language, translated it means Tree people. Same goes for Lake Sonchgeda, The City of Light."

"Too bad the language died out, it sounded pretty cool," Lexa said.

"Thing is, it didn't. Not completely. Indra has the history of this land kept safe. Handed down,
generation to generation, and she's going to let me help her to translate it into English. She's dying to know what it all means."

Raven finished her last bite of pie and washed it down with her coffee. "So, you'll be working on this through the winter?"

"Among other things, yes. But go with your story."

"Oh yeah. Nia Azgeda. That was her name before she bonded. They both were betas. Her partner died and left her with a modest fortune. He was also a son of a later planning member of this town, but his claim was much smaller and why she's probably back. Theo said it was a war back then who would own the land, and Indra's people had a better stake, arriving a full generation before anyone else. I can only guess this could be a reason why she's back to dispute Indra's hold and start the conflict all over again, even though it's settled. I think if she sues, she could stop the hotel construction for years, maybe even bankrupt Indra into giving her half if not more stake in this town. Also, her claim can only be by her son's."

The dread of what Raven said hung over the group, and Clarke felt like crying like her baby.

Anya sat back and crossed her arms over her chest. "So if Roan weren't interested, Nia's claim wouldn't hold any weight?"

"Possibly," Raven said. "But, if he weren't interested, he wouldn't be snooping around like his mother."

~

Lexa was on her side on the carpet with the two infants on a soft, comfortable blanket. Both baby girls found her fascinating. It didn't stop Lexa from trying to get them interested in one another, drawing a look from Anya. Raven was with Clarke in her office going over the stuff, Indra had sent her about their earlier conversation.

"So..." Lexa paused and whispered, "Have you guys hooked up since Raean was born?"

Anya blinked her eyes. "Are you asking me if I've been with Raven? I can't believe what I'm hearing."
"I'm just curious. Like when is it safe?"

"Horny?"

"I'm not...that's not what..."

"What?"

Lexa was already too deep into the conversation to back out and confessed, "Clarke winked at me earlier and called me hot stuff, and I wasn't sure if that meant it was okay with her that we could, you know."

In all seriousness, Anya said, "Six months, Lexa. You have to wait for six months."

Lexa's mouth fell open, and she rolled onto her back, putting her arm across her eyes, mouthing silently, six months.

Anya started chuckling. "You could have just looked it up or better yet asked, Clarke."

Lexa lifted her arm. "Why the f' are you laughing? You're in the same boat that I'm in." Anya laughter grew louder, drawing both of the infant's attention in her direction.

Anya's laughter died down as she wiped her tears away. "It's more like six weeks. Damn, you're gullible."

Lexa rolled over and covered the baby's ears. "Language."

~

Clarke searched for the file holding the photos from that hike earlier in the year. "Next time reminded me to label these folders."
Raven rested her hand on the back of the chair as she looked at her sideways. "Are you talking to me?"

"Sorry. No. That's a mental note for me. Ah, here it is."

Clarke clicked on the file bringing it open and a dozen or more pictures of that day many months ago sprang into view.

"Zoom on that picture." Raven pointed out. Clarke moved the cursor and expanded the picture by double its size and moved around the image of the rock. Then settled over the writing. "I can't make out anything."

"It's because it's in that other language, I'll bet." Clarke sat back and turned the chair around to face Raven. "We've got a long winter ahead of us, and this is going to take some time."

"What are you thinking?"

"That I've got a baby and Lexa to look out for, and I don't have any expertise in language. I majored in business in college."

"Maybe I know someone."

"Who?"

Raven smiled. "We both know him."

"Who?"

"Lincoln. He was born and raised here, but he went to university on a scholarship, for language studies and ancient history."
"How did he become a cook?"

"He loves Octavia and loved this town. He decided to stay when he hooked up with her. You know how this town has its pull. You must have felt it yourself." Clarke turned slowly in her chair, smiling over why she stayed. The tall brunette alpha in the other room. Raven slapped her forehead. "I know that look. Yeah, Lexa's pretty special too."

"Busted."

"Okay, I probably should get my girls home." Raven moved as Clarke stood up. "Oh, shit. I completely forgot we got something for Camryn."

~

Lexa was a little jealous she hadn't thought of getting Raean a birthday gift, like Raven and Anya, so thoughtfully did for their baby. It was a gift certificate for the first fifty dollars into a savings account in her name. She completed the paperwork at the bank and was now waiting with Clarke in the doctor's examination room with Camryn.

It was the day before Halloween and Camryn's first check-up with the doctor. Their baby was just over a week old, and Dr. Waters insisted since she was birthed at home, to have her come in to check on her progress.

Camryn laid against Clarke's shoulder, her eyes wide open, staring in her direction. Lexa was addicted to gazing at her child. Every moment was precious to her.

"You don't want to miss the next thing she might do?" Clarke inquired, catching her staring at the baby.

"I missed her first hiccups when I had to go to the market. So yeah."

"It was only that on time. I'm sure she'll do again in the future."

A knocked on the door was followed by the doctor. Everyone looked in her direction.
"Great reaction from your baby."

Lexa beamed, sitting up straight and stupidly said as she hooked a thumb in her mate's direction, "She gets it from Clarke."

The doctor ignored what she said as Lexa's face grew crimson. Clarke brought the baby over to the examination table, and the doctor propped her up on her little butt, holding her under her chest with her hand so she wouldn't tip over.

"Can I remove her outfit?"

"Let me," Clarke said. She quickly had her onesie off, leaving Camryn in her diaper.

The doctor placed the stethoscope on her chest, causing the baby to fuss and pull the cold device away. "My, she's got a strong grip. I'm sorry, sweetie. I should have warmed that up." She blew on the device and then held it to her chest, listening for a few minutes. Then laid her on her back.

All Lexa could hear was she's got a strong grip making pride grow in her chest. The rest was a blur until it got time to weigh the baby, and her ears pricked up.

Lexa had no control over what Camryn ate since all her nourishment came from Clarke. The doctor placed the baby on the scale and watched as the numbers settled on six pounds five ounces.

"She's a little light on weight. Has she been eating okay?"

Alarmed, Lexa stood up and went to Clarke's side. "She eats at least seven times a day and night."

"Hmm, I don't believe that's enough. I wonder. Do you have a system?"

Clarke reached out blindly for Lexa's hand. "I just feed her when she seems hungry."
"And your producing enough milk?"

Lexa put her arm around Clarke's shoulder. "I think so. It was slow going a first."

Dr. Waters's face grew slightly serious. "I want you to put Camryn on formula and see if we can get her on a more regular schedule. That's what I mean about the system. Maybe your partner can help you out." Lexa pushed down the dread of failing somehow and felt Clarke's grip tighten in her hand. She knew what was coming next as Clarke sniffed. The doctor reached out and rubbed her mate's arm. "Hey, having a child is new to both of you, and you're doing okay. Let's just see if we can put a pound on our girl before our next visit."

"I don't want to force her to eat if she's not hungry."

"It could be the milk your producing isn't enough. It sometimes happens with first-time mothers. It doesn't mean your failing. Let's try laying off more than one cup of coffee a day and eating healthy."

Lexa felt her protective nature rear up, and boldly declared, "I provide for my mate and child, Doctor Waters."

The doctor looked in her direction and stepped back. "I'm not saying you're not. Let's back up a moment and take a breath." The doctor lifted Camryn to her shoulder and rubbed her back. "She certainly does feel like a strong baby, given her lack of growth. I want to take a blood test to check on any underlying issues. No cause for alarm, just a precaution. I'll send you off with instructions and have her back here in say, two weeks?"

~

Camryn's cries started to die down when they got to the jeep. The needle in her leg shocked the baby into tears and making Clarke's heart sink when the doctor drew a vial of blood, and now the only thing that sort of settled her was a pacifier. The baby would have to wait until they got back home to feed her. Clarke wanted to kick herself for not being able to express any milk for her and sensing the doctor may have been correct, at least about that, but mumbled, "I think the doctor is full of it. I hate the idea of giving her formula."

"I wouldn't mind helping feed Camryn," Lexa said. "I mean, if it's okay with you."
Clarke wanted to cry not being able to provide enough milk to satisfy her baby as Lexa pull out of the parking lot and headed towards the market. They had bottles at home but dreaded feeding her child with something store-bought, fearing all of the chemicals that may be in the formula would be bad for her infant.

That's when Camryn pulled out of pacifier and began wailing. Clarke released her seat belt and turned to comfort her infant.

"Hey. I know that nasty needle hurt your leg and gave you an owie. Mama will fix when we get home."

Clarke felt a little dizzy and turned back into her seat. Her body broke out in a sweat and grew hot. That's when she noticed something different going on with her body.

"Lexa? Please pull over."

"I'm almost at the store."

Clarke breathed through the discomfort as Lexa got the parking lot and found a space to park the jeep.

"Something is different." Clarke looked down, and through her clothes, two wet spots appeared and grew. "What the?"

"Is that milk?"

Clarke smiled, relieved that her body started to react to her baby's crying. "Can you get Camryn for me?"

"You bet."

They spent the next half-hour while Clarke nurse Camryn. Her little cheeks bulged as she drank her fill. It drew a few curious townsfolk, passing by, but generally giving them space.
"Do we still need formula?"

"I don't think so. Let's give this a day or two. I don't like the idea of giving Camryn formula, not yet."

Clarke wiped Camryn's mouth clean after she had fallen asleep, and Lexa placed her back into her car seat and made the short trip home. She sent a quick message to the doctor, informing her that she will continue to feed her child naturally.

~

It was early Halloween morning — like two in the morning.

Baby o'clock.

Lexa held the bottle while her infant fed. Another first. The doctor returned Clarke's message and agreed that if she was producing enough milk, that her baby would be just fine. She rushed Camryn's blood work through, and she didn't show any underlying issues. A relief to both of them.

Now that she could help take care of Camryn, she could watch her infant as she nursed, weaving an invisible connection to her daughter.

"We'll put some weight on you."

That was concerning, but given the baby's growing appetite, she didn't think she would have any problems for now on. She could only hope. The doctor's visit was a scare for both of them.

Camryn wrapped her tiny fingers around one of hers, binding her even closer in Lexa's heart. After the bottle grew close to empty, dark blue eyes shut, and the baby grew still. Lexa removed the nipple from her mouth and wiped it clean with the cloth, then moved Camryn to her shoulder and worked at getting her to burp, rubbing her back lightly as Clarke had shown her earlier and soon she felt a tiny burp from her child.
Lexa stood up and turned to go back upstairs, catching Clarke watching.

She whispered, "I hope we didn't keep you awake."

"You didn't. Did she do okay?"

Lexa showed her the empty bottle, leaving in the sink and followed Clarke to the nursery. She carefully laid the infant in her crib and covered her with a blanket. Clarke turned on the baby monitor as Lexa reached out for her hand and moved back into their bedroom.

Both collapse on the bed, lights were turned out and held Clarke until both fell asleep.

~

Lexa stood next to Anya as the townsfolk started to gather on one side of the main street of Mount Trikru for the annual Halloween parade.

"I see Raven opted to stay home, like Clarke."

"We couldn't get Raean to sleep until late last night. She was pretty fussy, and Raven just got to sleep herself. I'm heading over to the bar to take over for the day for her, and just to let you know, Raven is thinking of hiring a part-time manager slash bartender. If you happened, know anyone."

"I'll keep that in mind."

Anya indicated with her chin in the far distance the children starting to gather.

"Did you bring your..."

Lexa didn't wait to answer and help up her camera and a bag of treats for the kids. "I'm ready. I sure wish our babies could be here."
Anya smiled. "Me too. I was hoping..." Anya stopped as the words caught in her throat.

"I know, Anya."

Clarke stayed home with Camryn and would miss out on the Halloween parade but promised to take a bunch of pictures. She wasn't feeling great, and the baby was too young, and her immune system not sufficient enough to be around strangers. It would be next to impossible to keep people away from wanting to see their baby.

Lexa nudged Anya when she saw Indra with her family leading the parade. She slowly greeted each group of people as they marvel over her children's costumes. She hoped that afterward, they could meet with Indra and hopefully find out what was going on in their town.

"Delightful crowd we have today. Don't you think, Roan?"

Both alpha's head darted towards the direction of the voice a few people down from where they stood. Anya poked Lexa in the side as she whispered, "I see them."

The closer that Indra got to her step-sister, their voices quieted down. Lexa couldn't help herself from wandering down to where they stood — waiting until her boss was directly in front of Nia. Indra looked over Nia's shoulder, and with an almost undetectable gaze, she shooed Lexa away, and she made her way back to Anya.

"Real slick, ace."

"Hush."

"Did you hear anything?"

"I didn't get a chance."

"Indra, my dear. So delightful to see you after so many years. You remember my son, Roan?"
"Please to meet you again." Indra turned as her wife, and their children got to her side. "You haven't met my wife, Grace, and our twins, Isaac, Ivan, and little Isabell."

"I see you named one of your sons after your father." Nia looked at her children then reached down to hold Isaac by his chin and moved his face side to side. He pushed her hand away and ducked behind his mother.

"Doesn't look anything like him."

Lexa could sense Indra's anger from where she stood. She whispered under her breath, "I hate her already."

"Get in line," Anya responded, then handed the little witch and goblin at her feet some candy. Lexa snapped a couple of pictures as the line continued, and Indra and her family were next.

"Indra, I think..." Lexa was cut off.

"Not now, Lexa. The street has ears. I'll call you later."

Lexa nodded her head as the kids held out their open bags asking for candy. She didn't see Nia and her son leave, but in the wake of their presence, it left an ominous dread over the day.
"I'll talk to you later," Lexa said over her shoulder to Anya as the parade wined down and followed behind the remaining stragglers on her way to find her jeep. Her boots crunched over the gravel pathway and stopped as trick-or-treaters dashed in front of her while their parents trailed behind them. Her immediate thought, which she now understood was incorrect, was all that sugar they consumed had amped them up. Not true said the baby books she finally got around to reading. Their animation was because of the day and nothing more.

She swung the orange plastic pumpkin still containing the remaining candy and brought it to her chest and hunted for a piece of gum, but found a mini-snickers instead.

"Sweet."

She ripped the package open with her teeth and popped the candy into her mouth. Then willed herself not to chew but merely let the chocolate covering the sweet chewy caramel covered nugget inside to melt. To savor every bit of the milk-chocolate goodness, then be rewarded with the nutty middle, for her self control.

A tone from the cellphone in her back pocket and promptly began to chew.

"Damn it."

The message from Indra read, **Please meet me at The Blue Ox. ASAP.**

Startled with the sudden change of plans, Lexa's paced increased as she walked to where she had parked her jeep.

It was outside of one of the oldest buildings in town. Mount Trikru's original general store. With its dark aged wooden railing out front. The place a traveler once tie off their horse or family left their wagon to get supplies. It no longer operated as a store but was converted some time ago to a museum of the history of this town.

Inside the storefront windows held the tools of her trade from the past — history pitted within rust covered the jagged, two-handed saw as well as axes and objects made out of lumber taken from the forest. Lexa stepped onto the large wooden plank porch and peered inside. She had only visited
once before when she first got to town and never took an interest in all of the old stuff. But inside the ancient building held memories within the dust and artifacts. She wondered what mysteries they might contain. Maybe, just maybe, there was something inside that might help Clarke with her new project.

Before she had time to step away, the elderly owner noticed her and waved her inside. Lexa cursed under her breath and checked the time and figured she could squeeze in a short visit and pushed the door open, causing the bells at the top of the door to cheerfully jingle her presence.

"Afternoon, explorer." The woman sitting to the right of the door grinned as she stated, "That's what my papa told a stranger who wandered into our town. Of course, I had to keep up the tradition."

Lexa remembered this conversation from her first visit. "Happy Halloween," Lexa said and held out the orange plastic pumpkin and offered her some candy.

"What a dear. I can't believe you came all the way over here, just for me, but I am diabetic." She looked up, expectantly. "You wouldn't happen to have any sugar free?"

Sorry, I don't. Just the regular stuff for the kids."

"Shame." She paused and took a hard look at her and sat back. "I remember you. You came in about a year ago. It seems like yesterday. Now don't tell me your name. I never forget a face."

It was more like three.

The woman was one of the oldest omegas she had ever seen in person, ever. She was in the winter of her life and had aged reasonably well, but it was apparent that life must have taken a toll. Her face lined by history within the wrinkles, and her hands were rough and not as delicate no doubt they once were before. Lexa glanced at the picture over the woman's shoulder. A black and white photo, probably taken sometime in the fifties, maybe sixties when she was in her the spring of her life — she could readily see the resemblance. The younger version of the woman was gorgeous with long light hair, and what was most likely an alpha in front of her, dashing in her cropped dark hair with her bangs hanging lazily over one side of her face and eyes that looked to be blue and wearing a white tee shirt with the rolled-up sleeves. They were straddling a Harley, soft tail. The brunette had her arm possessively wrapped over her shoulder and across her chest. A whole life existed within that eight by ten.
"Your name is Alexa?"

Lexa blinked out of the distraction. "Close. It's just Lexa, and I'm afraid I forgot your name."

"Jessie." Lexa extended her hand to shake. "I've seen that look before."

"What's that?" Lexa's eyes drifted further inside the shop, finding it more intriguing than the first time.

"Well, I hope it's to inquire about your town. Maybe I have a few answers for you. Or tell you a story or two."

Lexa smiled. "You read my mind. I'm wondering if you have any books or pamphlets on Mount Trikru, like any secret history you may know that you could share?"

"I think I've got just what you need. Just wait right here." Jessie worked to stand up from the padded rocker and turned down the volume of the television she had been watching. Jessie came from behind the counter with a limp. That's when Lexa noticed her cane.

"Wow, that's beautiful. Did you make that cane yourself?"

Jessie held up the object. "No, that wasn't its original purpose. I'm using it temporarily until my leg gets better, it's a part of my display. I was just too lazy to go out and pick one up at the market. Here, go ahead and look it over. I can manage."

Jessie made her way back about halfway into the museum and passed out of view. Lexa gazed down at the cane, finding it was more like a shaft, and the designs carved into each length held depictions of early life in this town. Inspired, Lexa pulled out her cellphone and took a few pictures to show Clarke later.

Jessie hobbled back and pushed a book flat against Lexa's chest and reached out and took her makeshift cane out of her hands.

"I might have spoken too soon." She shuffled back to her place behind a counter and sat down with
The book Jessie handed her was just what she was looking for. "You must be a psychic, Jessie."

"I thought it might be what you were looking for." Jessie looked up eagerly. "So you interested in buying?"

"You bet, how much?"

"It's one of a kind."

"Awesome." Lexa waited expectedly for the price and reached for her wallet.

"It's kind of expensive."

"I'm sure I can handle the cost."

"That's if you're sure."

Lexa paused, uncertain as to why Jessie was playing this cat and mouse game with her, then flatly asked, "How much?"

Jessie, Lexa found out, was a flirt. Lexa usually found it to be an irritation from other people that weren't Clarke. In this case, she'd give Jessie the exception and yes because of her age. It was kind of nice to find out that someone this old still had a little spark left and would have to explain to Clarke that she made a friendly date to meet up. But this time, she would bring Clarke and Camryn, just in case the Jessie got the best of her again.

On top of that, her wallet took a hit for the overly priced somewhat thin book.
No matter, Clarke would get a kick out of this place and the owner as she opened the jeep door and got inside and rumbled the vehicle to life, and almost back out when she noticed a piece of paper tucked under that windshield wiper. Lexa put the jeep back into park and removed it. She felt chills as if eyes were on her. It triggered a scent to alertness, gazing around at what had given her that sensation.

Nobody was even staring in her direction. Just families, milling around the main street of their town. Lexa shook it off as she opened the folded paper. A sudden wave of adrenaline surged inside of her as she read the big, bold font.

I know who you are.

She flipped over the paper and found the back was blank. Lexa stepped out into the road, gazing up one side and down the other. She recognized most people by first their names, and nobody present knew her secret, only her closest friends. Lexa shoved the paper into the bottom of her front jean pocket and left for the bar.

This new problem caused her to imagine a sword dangling dangerously over her head as she made the short trip over to The Blue Ox and parked her vehicle next to Anya's truck. Lexa pulled out her phone to text Clarke telling her that she'd have to break her promise and would 't be home after the parade now that her plans had changed. With her curiosity peaked, plus Indra being her boss, she couldn't tell her no. It wasn't an excuse, per se, just the plain facts plus she wanted all of the gory details.

"Hey, babe, last-minute change. I'm meeting with Indra at the Ox."

The screen on her phone showed Clarke had read the message, and three little gray dots appeared and pulsed and just as quickly disappeared. Okay, she's not going to respond when they reappeared.

"You coming?" Anya tossed over as she got the steps.

Lessa held up a finger and Anya waved her off and unlocked the bar and stepped inside, when Clarke's message arrived.

Okay.
Lexa pursed her lips as she stared down at the text, trying not to read too much in the simple, yet brief note. The delay in answering was concerning.

"You're not mad?"

No. Why? Should I be?"

"Indra wanted to talk."

I figured. Have fun. We'll see you later.

Lexa smiled at the picture she sent of Camryn asleep on her chest.

"I miss my two favorite human beings in the world. I promise I won't be late."

~

The bar held a chill since the fall weather fell early this year over the mountains. Lexa put herself in charge of heating the place and stacked a couple of logs onto the fireplace grill, using the striker to light the paper underneath on fire. She bent over and blew, making it spark then catch, producing smoke drawn up the chimney by the heat it created.

"You want a beer?" Anya called over from behind the bar.

"Sure," Lexa said as she straightened, even though it was early afternoon it felt like old times with her friends.

"Make it two, on me," Indra said as she pulled off her coat and hung it on a rack next to the door.

Anya turned on the lights to the neon sign hanging over the bottles of alcohol covering the back wall. It matched the one hanging outside of the bar, and it created the ambiance of what use to be her home away from home.
Lexa sat down next to Indra, taking a long draw of beer then wiped the beer mustache off of her upper lip.

"So, I guess you both want to know what's going on," Indra started.

"Do we have anything to be worried about?" Anya took the words right out of her mouth.

Indra drew in a breath, shaking her head uncertain. "I would love to tell you both no. But, honestly, I'm not quite sure."

"Have you kept in contact with Nia over the years?" Lexa cringed after receiving a glare from Anya and a slight shake of her head.

Indra didn't hesitate to respond, "There was never any need or love between us. After my father passed..." Indra paused the smiled sadly. "Nia wasn't fond of Dad. Resented the marriage and this town, said that we were stuck in the past."

Anya leaned both hands against the bar and asked, "How did they meet? Your dad and Nia's mother, if you don't mind me asking?"

Indra sounded tired as she began her story, "She was my late mother's childhood friend. They grew up in the same city about a hundred miles or more further north from here. My mother could have been her sister in how much they resembled each other's fair features. My father happened to go to the same college as the two inseparable friends, and he dated Nia's mother first, broke up, and Dad fell in love with Mom. My stepmom immediately met and mated with another alpha on the rebound, and she had Nia about a couple of weeks before I was born. Their bonding lasted about ten years, and that was about two years after my mother passed with a sudden illness, they got together again and rekindled their love but had no children together but us two. Figure it was enough since we were both a handful. There was always something odd about what happened to her first bonding, and she wound up shunned, and her bond with her mate broken. Despite whatever it might have been, I genuinely enjoyed having her around. She had a sweet soul. But I never learned my step-mother's secret."

"What was your stepmom's name?" Lexa asked.

Indra's smile held a remembered memory. "Her name was Marian." Indra downed half of her beer
and rolled the remained liquid around the glass and changed the subject, "I don't know what Nia has planned or for that matter, her son, Roan."

Anya didn't look up as she wiped at a nonexistent stain and said, "I saw them hanging around the new hotel construction."

"I've heard," Indra's voice was flat yet held suspicion. "They've also been spotted all over town.

That's when Lexa remember the note and reached into her pocket and slid it in front of Indra. "I found this on my jeep after the parade." Eagerly adding to the suspense.

Indra read it and shook her head and chuckled as they both pulled out the same pieces of paper. Their notes read the same as Lexa's but had business cards attached.

Anya joked, "You're a dork. I'll bet you thought it was..."

"I did," Lexa admitted and just kept her face from burning as bright as the neon sign behind Anya. She took Anya's note and read its completed message. The business card was from a realtor with the same messaged as a hook she recognized when she teetered on going into real estate for a half-second. I know who you are. You were me ten years ago, stuck in a rut when I decided to sell my property. Let me show you how I can help you out. It gave a name, not Nia or Roan, and it wasn't from anyone in the town she knew.

It was a relief for Lexa but still felt unnerved. Too many odd coincidences and her unease she sensed earlier, she wasn't going to ignore. Too much was at stake.

"Nia got pregnant right after high-school and left after her mate died from a logging accident on the mountain. He was last of his kin. With the small inheritance from his family, Nia was able to leave like she always wanted. And along with his life insurance, she started a business of her own. She was pretty successful, ruthless in fact. I was bored of this town at the time, it seemed to be dying and left myself, and since Nia was the only person I knew well, I began to work for her until Dad got sick and I came back. I had about all I could take in the big city and knew I could make this town into a respectable place to raise children. It's been years and a lot of work and help from all you young pups." Indra paused and sipped at her beer. "I'm sure both of you want to know what will happen next, and I can you give some assurance that the plans for our town will continue as for the rest, I honestly haven't a clue. I've got a lot of my money tied up in construction, running a mill, and the mountain. I feel like I'm juggling plates, standing on precariously on the edge of an abyss. I wish I knew what she had pl..."
The door to the bar came open, bringing a few townsfolk boisterously inside this early afternoon. As the door started to shut, it was stopped in place with a boot on the end of a partially hidden jean covered leg, it waited for a beat when it was shoved open, and Nia's son, Roan stepped inside.

Indra acknowledged her step-sister's son as Lexa kept an eye on his movements and detected an odor of a dull beta as he sat next to Indra on the other side. His presence, however, dampened the energy in the room like a moist, smelly towel in need of a wash.

"Auntie," his acknowledgment of their relationship held layers of meaning.

"Roan," Indra answered back.

He made Lexa's skin crawled. Anya didn't give away any reaction and placed a napkin in front of him.

"What'll you have?"

"Vodka, Stoli." Arrogantly stating, "leave the bottle."

"I don't know where you come from, but if you want the whole bottle, you pay upfront."

Lexa caught Anya's warning scent as she stared him down and, for a moment, thought they were going to come to blows. A record for Anya when she was pissed off and fur would go flying. She absolutely knew what that was like, having faced her temper once or twice before they became best friends.

Roan sat back and then put out his open hand in response over the empty glass, indicating to fill it. He didn't verbally answer as she poured him a shot and put the bottle back behind the bar. Muttering under her breath, "I didn't think so."

Roan sipped his vodka, leaning back, rudely rocking his head side to side when his demeanor changed his accent, "First time, I in a room of so many fine alpha ladies."
"Roan, mind your manners," Indra barked out, "and stop talking like your trying to be cast as an east-european actor, with a bad accent and damn son, I'm your mother's age."

Wow, Lexa murmured a chuckle under her breath as she took a drink of beer, turning back towards Anya, who rolled her eyes. She moved down the bar with a grin covering her face and waited on the other patrons.

"Meow," Roan mocked. His real voice took a tone of a regular joe, asshole that immediately grated on her nerves, and could sense it was her turn for his unwanted attention when he purred, "That's what you lady alphas growl-like, amirite?" He looked past Indra and coyly in her direction. "I know you want a piece, my exceptional ass. What'd you say, tall dark and..." Roan stopped speaking as he leaned back to gaze at her as Lexa sent out a dangerous scent that overshadowed the angry pheromones that Anya possessed. Her warning indicated she was completely capable of ripping him apart; another might leave his body parts buried all over the mountain. Indra shuttered, and the room went silent. All the while, Lexa tipped her head back and emptied her glass.

Anya filled up another a mug with a blonde ale, one of her favorites, and slid it down the bar, and it landed flawlessly in front of her. (A very old trick the two had practice for over a rainy weekend with nothing else to do and getting both of their ears pulled by Raven at the mess they made with the spilled beer and broken glasses.) The moment finally came; they could put all those hours to use. She sure wished Raven was here to see this.

"I see we have a lot of work cut out for us." Roan down the remaining vodka and tossed a twenty on the bar. "Add that to my tab, tall drink of water. You owe me the difference."

"Hey, listen up, asshole." Anya almost went over the top of the bar when Indra put up a hand to halt her.

"Keep your money, Roan. The drink is on me, and inform your mother I'd like to a word with her at her earliest convenience." She tucked the twenty into his open palm. "She knows where I live."

"I came here to extend an invitation myself. I will let my mother know." With a smile like a cat who ate the canary, Roan turned and began to whistle as he casually walked out of the bar. Lexa shook her head, who the fuck does this?

"He's a peach," Anya said.

Lexa chuckled and only finished half of her beer and pushed it to the over to the edge. "You will keep us informed?" Lexa paid for her drink and stood up.

"I will."

Anya added, "Let me know if I can help you out in any way."

"Me too."

"I let you both know. Now go home and be with your family, Lexa." Indra turned to Anya and asked, "Are you here all evening?"

Anya nodded and began washing the dirty glasses, "I'm afraid so. But I am looking for a part-time bartender. If you have anyone in mind, just let me know."

"How about Gustus? Have him come in and work a couple of days a week and give you a break?" Lexa suggested.

Anya looked at Lexa like she a sprouted something from her head. "Damn, that's a great idea. I'll give him a call."

Lexa wagged her eyebrows and headed for home and heard Anya calling her a dork on the way out of the door.

~

Clarke laid her phone on the surface of the sofa and kissed her sleeping daughter on the soft dark hair covering her head. She was tempted to reach out and touch her baby's long dark eyelashes, she favored from Lexa, but that would probably wake her. Instead, she ran a thumb over the tiny cleft in her chin. She felt a welling of emotion from that simple gesture — finding another deep connection to her little one.
She shifted Camryn, making the engagement ring on the chain around her neck fall over her baby, and it drew her eyes down to gaze at her hand. It didn't seem as swollen as before.

"I wonder."

Clarke pulled the chain from over her head and removed the ring and looked inside the band, leaning backward as she read the inscription.

It sent her back to when she first held Lexa in her bed, sleepily wrapping her betraying body around the reluctant alpha as she tried to shift away, and pleaded, Don't go. Her fear was rejection, and Lexa would pull away completely. Her heart soared when she didn't, and they ended up making sweet, sweet love all night.

Clarke grinned stupidly, who was she kidding. That was night the hottest, most intense sexual encounter she had ever had — erotic and messy with a lovely mixture of laughter and a few tears.

They didn't know it at the time, but now she felt in her soul that it was that first night when they created Camryn. The timing was spot on and made what they had together, so pure, so intense that their love was unbreakable. She loved everything about Lexa, even stuff that used to annoy her about other lovers in her life. Not so with Lexa. Clarke chuckled, thinking of how truly blessed she was to have landed in this town after the shitty way she got here.

She kissed her daughter again, "You, my love. You are our future." Clarke looked inside of the ring at that the words that read, My Destiny

Warm thoughts fill her heart of that night they shared. So uncertain was the alpha that night at first, unsure perhaps. Clarke could only guess that maybe she was afraid of getting hurt, but sometimes if you're lucky like they were, you let down your guard, and that right person comes into your life.

And Lexa let her guard down indeed. Spreading her open and filling her deeply. Keryon. Clarke could feel her cheeks grow warm, remembering every intimate detail of Lexa pumping inside of her. Clarke shook her head out of her daydream. She shouldn't be thinking about mating so soon after giving birth. But, still, someone as special as Lexa giving her everything she needed in her heat, as they opened up a shared connection she thought was only possible on a page in a book or film. True happiness was real to them in this living and breathing world. How could she not think about how they got here, and the baby sleeping in her arms.
Clarke pushed the ring onto her finger and slipped on with ease. Elated because the weight she'd gain with Camryn was a worry. She placed Camryn in the crib and tiptoed up the stairs and stepped onto the scale in the bathroom.

Clarke twisted her lips into a frown. She'd only lost about twelve pounds, that was mostly from the baby and afterbirth, maybe a little more from her body adjusting to her modified diet.

She lifted her shirt and gazed at her stomach, running her hand over the surface. It wasn't completely flat, to her disappointment. That would take some time and a hell of a lot of crunches. But all of the lotion Lexa applied to her abdomen surely had made a difference, and she didn't have any stretch marks she could see. It could have been because her child was so small, and omega's bodies are built differently. They were made to carry multiple babies and had more elasticity within their skin. Whatever the reason, she was pleased that she'd be able to get her body back into shape, just about the time she could be intimate with Lexa. Next time she'd make sure she was up to date on her birth suppression. Even though Camryn wasn't planned, the outcome was loved with all of her heart.

Her mind, however, shouldn't be there to mate according to the books. It was something about how an omega's focus is on the care of a newborn that didn't allow her primal urges to neglect her responsibilities — a deeply held throwback from old and why the pressure to mate was so intense in her heat. After submitting to the alpha, they, in turn, would protect their offspring with their life. These early days spent with her daughter creating a bond will eventually allow her more time with Lexa, later.

Clarke sighed longing for Lexa. Silly, when they had only been apart a couple of hours. Whatever the books she had been reading on how her urge to mate would curtail, didn't seem to be working. If it wasn't for being tired and all the blood her body was still messily expelling, she'd have Lexa right on the sofa, of course, after they put their daughter to bed in the nursery.

She liked thinking in those terms. Of the primal urge, she felt when she was with Lexa. She made her feel comfortable in her skin, the first she'd felt that way in her life. But bonding with Lexa comfortably was weeks away, if she were honest with herself.

Maybe time adjusting would allow her to work on her projects and headed back downstairs and into the office. She grabbed her laptop, note pad, and pen, and went back to the living room to check on the still sleeping baby.

Clarke got comfortable on the sofa and opened Indra's email. Grateful that her boss had scanned all of the paperwork from the history of her family with a note saying these go back more than two
hundred years. Clarke cracked her fingers and opened the first file. She adjusted the values until the words in Trigedaslang became readable, all but the meaning.

The first line read: Teik Ai Gon Trigeda.

"Oh, brother."

Clarke got comfortable and scrolled down the page as her eyes fell on the letters ai, which appeared throughout the manuscript and made a notation on a fresh sheet of paper of her note pad, Could Ai mean I, me or my? Then typed the same question in a text to Lincoln and sent it off.

Her mind tried to make out patterns within the script when she received a quick reply from him.

It's possible. That would be my first guess.

Clarke laughed, charged with his response she wrote, "One down and thousands or more to go.

I have some time off next week, and ai could come by and help you out. Plus, I'd love to see your baby.

Clarke chuckled at his usage of the word and typed back, "Perfect. Let me know what day works for you."

Clarke's eyes fell on the word trigeda and sound it in her mouth. "Tri--," When inspiration hit her, she already knew Trikru mean Tree people and added in the notes Teik I/Me/My gon tree geda. She closed her eyes and ran the words around and practiced sounded out the first word.

"Teik, tike, Take." Perhaps if she added that word and sound it out again, "Take me gon tree geda." Could it be? "Take me to the tree." Clarke shook her head. No. Geda is probably plural, more than one. Many trees is a forest, duh. She was surrounded by trigeda and sounded out what could be what it said, "Take me to the forest?" With a question mark, because that didn't logically didn't make any sense to start the page. But, written in the olden days and who knows, perhaps it had more meaning back then. She made a note to ask Lincoln. She could always change this later and went to the next line.
Lexa stuff the book for Clarke into the reusable bags filled with groceries and removed it from the backseat. She shut the garage door with the remote attached next to the side door and crossed through the utility room into the kitchen. As she swung the bags on the counter, she eyed Clarke perched at the end of the sofa. Her reading glasses rested on the edge of her nose, and her face reflected deep concentration on whatever was on the screen of her laptop.

"Hey babe, I'm home. Sorry I was late."

Clarke answered by raising a finger in the air then made a few notes on a pad of paper next to her computer.

"I'll put these away," and added, "I sure missed you guys today."

"Hmm, mm," Clarke mumbled and resumed reading.

Lexa smiled and fabricated a story, "You missed the Blue Ox that was in the parade."

"I'm sorry I missed it."

Lexa started putting away the cold things in the freezer. "Yeah, it was quite a sight with its horns on fire, made quite a scene." She watched Clarke blink then look up over her glasses.

"What did you say?"

Lexa busted out laughing. "I'm kidding you. What are you working on?"

"Come see."

Lexa picked up the book and held it behind her back as she approached Clarke and sat down. She pulled the book from behind her back and handed it to Clarke. "I got this for you."
"That's so sweet." Clarke stopped working and wrapped her arms around Lexa, and leaned in to smell her neck. "Give me a moment to ground myself. I've gotten so caught up in translating. Or trying too." Clarke pulled back and asked, "Are you upset?"

Lexa blinked and tried to remember what...ah. "Not at all. Well, that's not entirely true. It was just an incident at the bar, nothing you need to worry about."

Clarke pulled Lexa back with her to lay on the sofa cushions. "I will if you don't explain. My brain will naturally create a story if you don't elaborate."

Lexa gathered Clarke's hand in hers and noticed the ring back on her finger, and it made her all warm inside. "I told you that Indra wanted to meet and the bar, and before you ask, she'd didn't tell us anything about why her step-sister was back in town. It was just a little of their history. But her nephew, Roan, showed up, and he's..." Lexa paused, trying to find the right words to describe him. "Obnoxious and full of himself. He tried hitting on me. That was the second time that happened today."

"Who was the other?"

"The lady who runs the museum in town." Lexa immediately sensed Clarke's ire and clarified as she chuckled, "She's probably eighty years old. I want you to meet her. I stopped by her place and got this book for you. She's also offered to give us more history to Mount Trikru if you're interested."

Camryn woke with a sneeze, causing both to stare at one another, expecting the baby would start to cry. The baby smiled instead, and Lexa leaned over and pulled her out of her rocker.

"Bless you, Camryn." Lexa turned to Clarke. "I'm glad I didn't miss her sneeze this time. But could she be coming down with something?"

Clarke put her hand over the baby's forehead and shook her head. "She isn't warm."

"That's a relief."
"Neh, neh," Camryn uttered as she started to fuss poking her tongue and wagging her head side to side in seemly irritation.

"I think she hungry, Clarke. I could feed her if you've expressed."

"I did early, but my breasts are full again. Might as well get it from the source." Clarke let out a tiny moo, causing Lexa to chuckle again and handed her daughter over to her.

Lexa watched in amazement, this feeling she got every time her omega opened her shirt, and their baby began to nurse and went back to the kitchen and put the remaining groceries away. They had plenty of time later to discuss all of the news she found out.

~

Lexa held Camryn upright against her shoulder as she slowly stirred the liquid in the risotto. The herb chicken was baking in the oven, and the salad she prepared earlier was cooling in the refrigerator.

It was her turn to take care of the baby while Clarke took off to Indra's place. Telling her, she wanted to look at the original documents she had been working on, and it couldn't for some reason wait until later and promised she'd be back before the timer went off on the oven and checked the time. Clarke had forty minutes to get back.

The baby wasn't asleep but kept her head against her shoulder, seemly observing the action. Camryn's neck muscles would take some time to strengthen and enjoyed this little bonding moment with her daughter. She detected her scent and closed her eyes, and tried to make out what her daughter was sensing.

It was too faint and overwhelmed by the smells from their dinner cooking.

"Maybe one day I'll know what you're thinking, Camryn."

The baby gazed at her, and Lexa got the distinct impression she understood her name. It had to be impossible and looked at her daughter in the eyes and slowly said her name, "Hey, Camryn."
Lexa felt a kick against her, and the baby smiled and poked her tongue out. She tried it again. "Hey, sweet Camryn." This time she didn't react, but to closed her eyes.

Oh well. The baby isn't even two weeks old. What did you expect?

Lexa went back to stirring the rice dish and waited on Clarke to return.

~

Clarke couldn't stop shaking on the drive home. She didn't mean to overhear the conversation and was in shock as she drove the short distance back to their cabin. Too much information was revealed and was dying to tell Lexa. She knows now why Indra's step-sister was back. It was to claim half ownership over the town. The woman said she could prove she's her half-sister by blood that she shared the same father and handed her a legal request of her DNA to prove it.

Indra was cowed into responding and easily gave up a sample as Clarke waited quietly in her office and witnessed all of this passively through the slight opening of the door. But, Indra was clever and asked to take her sample of hers in kind and have it checked with an unbiased DNA processing lab and would agree to carve up half of the town if it proved Nia was her father's daughter.

Everything was at stake — this town, their stability, over a tiny bit of matter. Clarke wondered if it was worth her time in translating this history, but it would take weeks for the DNA results to get back. Sometime next year and there was nothing to do but wait.

Nia and Roan wouldn't stay the winter and would go back to their home and return at a later date so she could divide the town to her liking.

Her plans she gave away by stating she'd start with all of the old rickety buildings on the main street and create a strip mall. Maybe bring in a big box store. Meaning that every little business would suffer and probably closed down. Nia's goal is to destroy their town and make it into a nightmare of too many people, crime, and poverty for the people of Mount Trikru.

Clarke felt sick and pulled over the side of the road. One to calm herself the next moment, she was out of her SUV and retching in the dirt.

"Well, damn," Clarke said, wiping her mouth as she returned to her vehicle. Edging out onto the
empty road and sped towards home, to Lexa and their child. Maybe they should make plans to move if things turn in Nia's favor. Clarke didn't think this town was big enough to handle being ripped apart.

~

Clarke laid in Lexa's arms quietly, listening to her explain Indra's history as her mate twisted then released her hair over and over between her fingers. Lexa's explanation helped her understand the dynamic between the siblings but also felt a little intrusive. Lexa didn't believe for one minute that Nia was related to Indra by blood, just after spending that short amount of time with her son at the bar.

He sounded rude and was about to say something when Lexa edged over and kissed her. Properly with an intense purpose that took her breath away.

Lexa tried to pull away with a lazy smile on her lips when Clarke pulled her down and shifted her hips apart and whispered, "I know we can't go all the way just yet."

She didn't say another word. Lexa wiggled her hips in place between her legs and kissed her once again. Slow with a langue exploration finding peace within each other breaths. Maybe, trying holding onto what they had and ignore what was coming in the future. It didn't last very long when the baby monitor lit up.

Lexa's forehead fell between her breasts and, in defeat, let out a little frustrated growl. "I'll go," Clarke said, pushing on Lexa's shoulder.

Lexa leaned up. "Nah, I'll check on her. Go to sleep. Camryn was probably hungry." She left her with a kiss and hopped out of bed.

Clarke checked the time, and it was nearing midnight. They hadn't got into any routine for feeding the baby, and the instinct to provide, the books said that would rise in her mate happened naturally over the short time Camryn was with them.

She heard Lexa cooing at the baby and heading back downstairs, talking sweet little nothings, washing away the dread that was trying to take up residence in the back of her mind.
Clarke turned on her side and shut her eyes, settling comfortably into the mattress. Seconds ticked by, and she refused to open her eyes, less the time on the clock would mock her attempt in falling deeply in slumber.

Sleep. It used to be a simple concept. But Clarke laid awake worrying until Lexa returned and stay awake long into the night.
"Ugh." Clarke put both hands on the cushion of the sofa and crawled on top. She flopped over on her back with a sweaty groan.

She laid still resting her heart and stared up at the vaulted ceiling overhead and counted out the wooden planks lined up expertly from one end to the wall to the other. Seeing Lexa's perfection in her handiwork in the design helped get her breath under control.

Her stomach muscles ached from this first day's new attention, yet somewhere deep inside, it remembered that active girl she used to be. Clarke's goal was getting back into shape by doing a hundred crunches before she had a bite to eat, something she used to do with ease but only managed to do a measly thirty when her stomach muscles screamed for her to stop.

Clarke gazed up to where her partner was likely still dead asleep. Half wishing she was snuggled up in all of her warmth and spicy alpha scent but reminded herself, the pain she's feeling now was worth the benefits later and hoped she didn't wake Lexa with her morning exercises.

Lexa had been an angel, taking over most of the nightly duties caring for Camryn. She went as far as to bring the baby to their bed when they were out of her expressed milk and laying their child between them to nurse. Practically doing all of the work at getting Camryn in the right position and all she had to do was sleepy let the baby suck, while Lexa held the little cub in place.

During this nightly ritual, Lexa cooed and sent out a calming scent to relax both of them. Her loins ached from the love radiating from her alpha. She planned on showing her just how much, once her strength returned to normal, and she felt more like herself again.

In the morning, is when she felt most recharged, and why she snuck out of bed and started the trek back to tone and healthy body.

The literature on breastfeeding helped decide to ween Camryn from feeding directly from her and to a bottle with her expressed milk. Clarke chuckled a moan as she pressed down on her tender nipples, she wasn't sure how much more her breasts could take and could now accept that maybe she was too quick to dismiss using a bottle more often because of how her chest ached at times. Maybe Lexa had a solution for that also since her treatment on her pregnant belly with lotion had successfully kept her from completely losing her smooth, unblemished skin. Also, eating Lexa's healthy diet didn't hurt either.
She may have been a little vain at the idea of getting back into shape so soon, but after diving down into the internet looking for safe exercises she could do after giving birth, the before and after pictures were inspiring. Heck, they were downright frightening. Clarke wasn't quite ready to just let her body go after all; she was only going on twenty-seven in a few days.

Women of all ages, of all types betas and omegas alike, almost killing themselves trying to get back the body they once had after giving birth, but half of these people must have had bigger babies or more one, so yeah maybe she's not that bad off, but still. Clarke tapped her fingers over her belly. There was a layer of fat that wasn't there before covering the muscle. It wasn't horrible, but she just wanted her old body back.

Clarke sniffed the air, turning her head as she caught a whiff of the fragrant candle resting unlit on the coffee table. For some curious reason, it reminded her of what today was — an anniversary for the Woods-Griffin clan. It would mark Camryn's age at one-month-old.

Clarke ticked off in her head the baby's milestones. For one, she'd already grown out the first things she wore, which Lexa stashed away after cleaning and tucking into a keepsake box. Clarke didn't think Lexa would be able to part with any of the baby's first things. At least not yet, when all of this was so brand new to both of them. When she suggested that they donate them, Lexa's lower lip came out and gave her look with those beautiful green eyes, that had Clarke closing the box, and letting her keep them safely stored away with a kiss to her grateful smile.

Another thing that caught Lexa by surprise was when Camryn began to track their movements. For real this time. Just like she told her when she was barely a day old. Now, when Lexa rattled her wooden ax, the gift from her father, the baby almost started to babble and reach out to grab, causing the most precious surprise smile to cover her alpha's face and looked at her in gratitude.

It was fucking priceless.

Camryn's reflexive kicking became a little more controlled, and once on her stomach, she tried lifting her head. Their child was thriving, and it ached that soon their little one would grow out of this stage and be lost to time. Clarke was grateful that Lexa had to foresight to document the baby's progress with videos. But there was nothing like cuddling Camryn now when she was so very, very young and tiny, that wouldn't last forever, Clarke was sure they would both surely miss once she passed out of this stage of her young life.

So far, Camryn had been the best baby, sleeping most of the time she wasn't feeding or held, and it gave her moments like this to work out and give her mind a moment to focus on herself. Unfortunately, it always fell on what possible future may be lurking around the corner. Clarke sighed at what was still on their minds, the news of a potential upheaval of this town.
Indra decided to put the people of Mount Trikru on notice and not keep what was a family matter to herself. Raven called her after they got the letter and gave her a little more of the inside story she recalled from her late boss, Theo.

Theo kept the stories, written down, and safely hidden away, told him from the people of this town who frequented his bar when they needed someone to listen to their troubles. Joking to Raven that he knew there was a novel in there, somewhere and would change the names to protect the innocent if he ever got down to serious writing. Theo, unfortunately, never got around even to start when he died after a sudden illness.

In the beginning, when Raven talked this out, she suspected it could include knowledge he might possess about the secret of Indra's step-mom. He would have got it from the source, Isaac, Indra's dad. He used to be a regular at the bar. Clarke's heart sunk, hoping she wouldn't hear what everyone feared was true that Indra and Nia were blood siblings.

This ongoing conversation had Raven remembering some of Theo's last conversations and hinted at what she would find in his papers. But, none of which she could recall in the documents she had in her possession mentioned stories about the people of this town, but only of The Blue Ox and transfer of ownership into her name. But Theo was a cagey old guy, and Raven grew convinced that there might be other papers hidden somewhere in the bar.

Raven had completely forgotten about them until this mess started and began to hunt for them, then gave up. Raven chuckled, remembering when she decided to do some overdue cleaning under the bartop. She found a loose panel next to her secret stash of the good liquor and tried shoving it back in place and accidentally knocking it free, causing all of the town's secrets to come spilling out.

Pieces didn't start to fall in place at first, which added to the mystery. Theo wrote his letters in a coded script, she couldn't break but was sure that somewhere in these notes might be what Isaac had told him. They could hold all of the answers, the very thing that now has this town on the brink of destruction.

Late last night, Raven called after Lincoln explained the simple alphabet code, and she read to Clarke when she found in an Isaac passage; he had confided in Theo that he might be Nia's father. The reason the two had broken up early in their relationship wasn't mentioned, but that it was Marian's idea to break off. It was enough to send Clarke into a whirlwind of panic until Raven explained they hadn't decoded the entire message and hold off before pulling up stakes.

Lexa drew her aside, telling her they'd get through anything thrown at them or the town. It was decided among the four of them, to keep this new knowledge a secret from Indra and wait for the
DNA test that wasn't due back until late February.

Clarke sent out a quiet prayer of hope of what remained hidden. The remaining yellowed documents were too blurry, having been the recipient of a spill or two over the bar and reeked of dried beer. Lexa blushed without explanation, confusing her when her mate put her head down and said she had something to do in the garage that very second, for some damn reason.

Clarke turned her head when the light on the baby monitor went on and pushed herself off of the sofa. She started the coffee maker and trudged upstairs to the nursery to find her baby yawning and wiggle into a smile when she poked her head over the railing.

~

Lexa adjusted her seat then the rearview mirror when she heard Camryn make quiet sounds in her car seat seemingly happily contented for the change of scenery. Clarke called it her pre-babbling stage. Curious baby sounds, Lexa tried to glean some meaning.

They had both fussed over how to strap Camryn safely in when an exasperated Clarke asked her to let her do it since she had the done it the first time and Lexa sat quietly next to the baby to distract her while keeping an eye on how Clarke expertly got her locked in securely.

Lexa worried that straps might be too tight, but Clarke assured her, better to be tight than have their child flying all over the backseat if they were in an accident. That was enough to convince her that Clarke was correct. The baby was okay and didn't seem to be bothered at being in the contraption.

She backed Clarke's SUV out of the garage, turning until they were facing towards the road and headed towards the bridge connecting them to the rest of the world. Clarke had enough of the cabin and needed to get out before she started another project out of boredom. She's been stuck in the house for over a month and had a bad case of cabin fever. It was also an excellent time to take Camryn on her first trip to town. One where she wouldn't get poked by the doctor with a needle and make a better memory.

Lexa checked the road as she pulled out and headed to the market to pick up an assortment of sugarfree sweets, with the intention, to coax more information out of Jessie as Clarke pulled out her phone.

"I'm going to let Raven know that will be in their neck of the woods today after we stop by the
museum." Clarke paused, "I'm not going to jealous of my rival, am I?

Lexa chuckled as she accelerated the vehicle down the road. "I told you she's not my type."

"I'm sure every omega within spitting distance of Mount Trikru would think that you are their type, Babe." Clarke rubbed her nose like a fighter. "But they'll get a knuckle sandwich if they lay a hand on you." Raising her fist and punched the air. Clarke was kidding, of course, and appreciated the sentiment and felt the same for her girl.

"I promise you, Clarke, you have nothing to worry about."

"Darn it. Raven and Anya have plans today. So that's out for hanging with them today."

"Too bad. Maybe another day." Lexa pursed her lips and focused on the road, hoping to keep the secret she had planned for months from slipping out.

Camryn grunted from the backseat and recalled the conversation she had with her while Clarke was in the shower.

(Lexa wandered into the nursery from a prompt of the baby monitor. Standing silently at the door and watched the baby unseen through the bars of her crib while Camryn babbled to herself, fascinated with her hands. Tiny snippets of time etched into her mind of these quiet moments of their child filled her with wonder. Unable to resist, Lexa stepped into her line of sight, edging closer, causing Camryn to smile and kicked her legs straight in anticipation of being picked up. It was when the baby reached out, that broke Lexa's resolved and lifted her to her chest.

"You're such a clever baby, Camryn. I'll have you know that you've already got me wrapped around your little finger."

Lexa picked up her hand and kissed the fingers — amazed at the tiny perfect fingernails already in need of a trim. Clarke had kept her hands in cotton gloves when she slept to keep her from accidentally scratching herself. Even though they were soft at this stage, they were perfectly capable of doing a little damage.

Lexa turned the baby around in slow, bouncy circles. "Can you keep a secret, Camryn?" The baby made a small, Eh sound that she took that as a yes.
"In two days," Lexa said, whispering into a tiny ear. "Your mom's having a birthday, and I've got something planned for her today as a surprise, and you can be in on the secret." Lexa could feel Camryn smiling against her cheek, then she kicked her in the chest, causing Lexa to chuckle. "All you have to do is be your adorable little self."

Lexa kissed her tiny sweet lips, feeling a welling emotional tide fall over her. She fell hard when she first saw her baby and holding like this – communicating in small whispers filled the remaining empty spot in her heart that wasn't occupied by Clarke. She turned to the open door and saw Clarke almost ready and asked what the heck she was doing. Lexa told a little white lie and said she was just telling Camryn she was going on a trip to town.

Clarke put her arms around the both of them, enjoying the moment together, and then they got Camryn ready for her big day.)

Raven, Anya, and their guests should be arriving at their cabin about now, to decorate for Clarke's Birthday. A surprise party, two days early. Her birthday was falling on Thanksgiving this year and wanted the day to be just Clarke's day and not overshadowed by a holiday plus their friend's other plans.

Clarke found her hand resting on the divider between them, tangling their fingers together. It was silly how one simple gesture could make the day appear even brighter.

~

Clarke wrapped a blanket around Camryn after removing her from the car seat and followed Lexa up the old wooden plank steps and waited as she went to open the door, and it held fast.

"It's locked, Clarke."

"You're kidding." Disappointment laced her comment as Clarke leaned over and stared inside.

Lexa put both hands up against the window and pressed her face against the glass, fogging it up with her breath. "The lights are still on. I wonder where Jessie could be?" The museum hours were nine to five, and the time was after eleven. Lexa wiggled the handle again. "I'll check in the back. Wait here." She watched Lexa jogged down to the alley and went around to the back.
"I wonder where Jessie is Camryn." The baby blinked and laid her wobbly head against her shoulder.

Clarke turned and gazed over the old main street. She hadn't ventured into this part of town since arriving, just passed through on the way to the mountain where Lexa worked.

She inhaled the chilled pine-scented air, and it was apparent that the fall had settled firmly over Mount Trikru, it reminded her of the first time she coasted into this place. Lost and alone, feeling the weight of the world on her shoulders. Now it was home, and everything about this place holds a special place in her heart.

She turned at the rumbling sounds coming from down the street when a car came closer it coasted in place next to her vehicle. Dr. Waters was driving and waved, getting out of the car and went to the passenger door to help an older woman out of her seat. From Lexa's description, she must be Jessie.

"Let me help you out of the car, Grandma."

"I'm perfectly capable of standing all on my own, Luna."

"I'm afraid you'll fall again, Nana."

Clarke gave Dr. Waters a sympathetic look when Lexa came around the corner, and Jessie sat back down, a little winded.

"Oh goodness, you're back, Alexa. Could you help me with the steps? I'm afraid my granddaughter isn't as strong as you are." Luna rolled her eyes and stepped back.

"It's just Lexa, Ma'am. Sure. Let me help you out of the car first." Lexa got on the other side as the doctor helped lift Jessie onto her feet and guided her up the stairs.

"I am sure paying the price for being out of ADA compliant," Jessie quipped as she made the rest of the distance to the front door, assisted only with her cane, and let everyone inside.
"I told you, Nana, I'm working on a solution. I just wished you hadn't mess with Billy's old motorcycle. It could have killed you. You're lucky you only twisted your ankle."

"I was only moving a few boxes around and tripped over the kickstand. Stop making a bigger deal out of it than it was. I wasn't trying to start the dang thing."

Dr. Waters leaned over and whispered to Clarke, "My late grandparent, Billy had a Harley, and I'll bet you, Nana was trying to start it."

"I'm old, not deaf, Luna. So what if I was."

Luna ran her fingers through her hair in frustration, shaking her head at the apparent on-going subject these two bickered about in the past.

Clarke could already see the gears in Lexa's head, making plans to build a ramp for Jessie in the future. But hearing about a motorcycle added to the gleam in Lexa's eyes and knew of her love of working on greasy mechanical things.

As they all moved inside, Lexa went back to the vehicle to retrieve the candy. That's when Jessie noticed the Camryn's head poking out beneath the blanket.

"Oh, my." She took a step. "Oh, my sweet Keryon." Jessie's eyes lit up and hobbled over to where Clarke was standing and gentle cupped Camryn's head. "What a beautiful baby."

Clarke unexpectedly blushed at the compliment. "Thank you."

Lexa joined them inside and got to Clarke's side. "Jessie, I'd like to introduce Clarke Griffin, my mate, and our daughter, Camryn."

"The attractive ones are always taken." She gave Clarke a wink.

Her smiled held a twinkle that spoke to Clarke. She was only kidding but drew an exasperated
"I not dead yet, Luna. I can still look." Jessie turned to Clarke. "Can I hold her?"

"Of course."

"Oh my, thank you. I haven't held a baby in years."

Clarke waited as Jessie got behind the counter and sat down. Clarke put their Camryn in her arms and stepped back. "Lovely place you have here, Jessie."

"Hmm."

Jessie couldn't take her eyes off of Camryn as she cooed over her. Lexa leaned over the counter, smitten with their child as well. "We brought you some candy. Sugarfree this time."

"What a dear. Just put the candy on the counter." Jessie began rocking the baby and hummed quietly, "I'm sure you didn't come all this way just for me, again."

"We did. I hope you don't mind, but yeah, we to want to pick your brain about the town."

"Ask away."

Lexa started, "You've heard Indra's step-sister, Nia was back in town?"

"Hmm, I have. A nasty lot, that Nia person and her son. She came in the other day and said they wanted to tear down my home and this place. Vile people."

"What do you know about her?"

"I knew her mother quite well. Marion was a dear sweet lady, as was Indra's mother before her,
Isabelle. You know she died so young, so tragic, broke Isaac's heart. But years later, when Marion came back into his life, he began to flourish again."

"I've got to get back to work, Nana." Dr. Waters turned to Clarke. "I'll see the three of you soon, I hope?"

"The first week of December for another check-up," Clarke said. "Take care, and have a Happy Thanksgiving."

"You too and Nana, please don't get into any more trouble. I swear to Keryon," Luna mumbled as she left out of the door.

Jessie turned back to Clarke and Lexa, "If you want to know my take, Nia's is out for any money she can squeeze out of our town. That girl has always tried to live outside of her means. I may be out of date with modern things, but I do keep up on the gossip like anyone else, and I'd bet my good leg she's no more related by blood to dear sweet Indra than bears can fly."

Clarke smiled as she listened to Jessie, convinced after spending the next few minutes hearing her rant about Nia and Roan, that she didn't know any more than they did and politely wandering deeper inside of the museum feeling the nostalgic vibe to the place.

She found an old picture album and spent some time flipping through the pages and finding black and white photos of the town and recognize a few landmarks. Hearing Lexa laugh broke her out of her stroll down memory lane and wandered back to the front of the store and overhearing Jessie explain how disputes where handled by fighting them out physically between opposing sides.

"Say, Jessie. You wouldn't happen to know any Trigedasleng?" Jessie had, by this time, handed Camryn back to Lexa when she grew fussy.

"Only curse words, I'm afraid."

Clarke chuckled. "You'll have to teach me a few when I come back to visit."

Jessie picked through the candy and found a cherry lollipop and stuck it into her mouth. "You're too pretty to swear, plus you've got this little impressionable mind to protect."
"So any final thoughts on our problem," Lexa asked.

Jessie rocked in her chair, seemingly contemplating an answer. She pulled the candy out of her mouth and gave them a curious message, "Papa once told me that your best friend could turn on you, your family as well, the only thing you know for certain, life is a journey, not a destination, plan your trip accordingly."

~

"What do you think Jessie's father meant?" Clarke asked.

Needing to kill time, Lexa talked Clarke into strolling down the main street. It was also an excellent opportunity to break out Camryn's stroller drawing interested townsfolk to get a good look at the newest member of their town as they oohed and aahed over their baby.

"Not sure. I get the first part, but I don't think you can plan for the unexpected unless you know where you're going." Lexa shrugged her shoulders and went back to the first. "But, what we're doing right now, Clarke. Taking the time to enjoy each moment together. Even that very rough time in the beginning." Lexa stopped and turned to Clarke. "When you ran away in that snowstorm, my heart almost stopped. I knew then my life would have lost all meaning if..." Lexa's voice trailed off, shaking her head.

Clarke reached for Lexa's hand. "You let me back in, babe. You picked me up when I was at my lowest." Clarke added, "and frankly, it was a stupid thing to do."

Clarke stopped in front of a seasonal shop that displayed the upcoming holiday. Christmas was in full glory and walked through the open, inviting doors.

"Smells like Christmas."

They stopped in front of a Christmas tree, trimmed with glowing lights and ornaments that Lexa will swear later she distinctly heard the baby make an ooh sound. Lexa went to her knees, drawing Clarke with her.
Lexa's heart was about to burst with joy at seeing the baby's face and eyes sparkle and glow with color reflected from the lights and reached out to grab. Clarke's face mirrored the same wonder covering Camryn's.

"The question you asked me before, Clarke. It's about moments just like this with you and Camryn. They are priceless to me."

Clarke squeezed her hand, then as her eyes caught something in the tree, she stood up, reaching for a wood ornament. It was an inch-thick circular natural pinewood ornament still edged with tree bark. On the front was an adorable brown bear cub waving its bear paw and the message read, Baby's First Christmas, 2018."

"Let's start with this one."

She held it out to Lexa to see. Lexa turned and found a basket, and they spent the next hour picking out Christmas decorations for the coming holiday.

~

Lexa's eyes watered as they both breathed through their mouths on the way back home and rolled down the windows to help air the car out. All of the excitement caused Camryn to fill her diaper, and changing her into a clean one in the back of the vehicle ended up being an awful idea. It filled up the cabin of the car with her deadly noxious fumes. Her crying didn't help the situation, either.

"It sure as heck makes an unforgettable memory," Lexa joked and turned on the AC's fan to help move the air out of the windows.

"Ha-ha, Lexa. I'm dying here." Clarke was practically hanging her head out of the window.

"I'm with you, babe."

"She'll need a bath when we get home."

"Yeah, of course." Home, oh shit, where everyone is waiting.
Lexa made the turn to their road and drove over the bridge and into the empty driveway. She wasn't sure where everyone had parked and tried not to look too carefully for anyone inside. Lexa was certain their friends must be running around the living room, trying to find a place to hide at this very moment just as her heart was trying to beat its way out of her chest in the building excitement.

"I'll get the baby."

"Let me." Lexa smoothly added, "I need to learn how to get her out of the car seat by myself."

Clarke tossed the messy diaper into the outside bin for that purpose and to gather the shopping bags. Lexa shushed the still whimpering miserable baby and followed Clarke inside. The cabin was still for about a two seconds after Clarke put her stuff down on the dining room table when suddenly their friends jump up behind the sofa, the kitchen island, and from upstairs and all in a chorus shouted,

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CLARKE!!"

Clarke let out a blood-curdling scream, startling Camryn, who followed her mother, and she began to wail.

~

Soft jazz played in the background as quiet laughter and talk filled the cabin. Clarke was overjoyed with the birthday party after her initial shock, telling everyone with a laugh, as she blushed and said she might have peed a little when she was startled and excuse both of them with a need to take care of Camryn and to give time for Clarke to freshen up.

Clarke's real reason for leaving before the party got started was to draw Lexa into the bathroom and proceeded to make out with her leaving her breathless, and when she pulled back, her girl was crying happy tears. No one in her entire life had ever given her a surprise party, and she genuinely was overwhelmed. Lexa wished her a happy birthday and let her touched herself up. She took Camryn into the other bathroom. After bathing the baby, Lexa put her into a new outfit just for the occasion. A secret purchase that Clarke hadn't seen yet. The tiny white shirt read One Month Old. She finished it off with a cap and took their child back downstairs to join in the festivities.

Later, it had become a standing practice to put Raean and Camryn together in the same crib.
Nobody questioned why it worked at keeping the babies contented, but still, it took some effort to get them quiet from all of the energy coming off of the adults.

Uncle Gustus's face lit up when he held Camryn for the first time and commented over and over how much she looked like the both of them. His deep laughter when the baby tugged on his winter beard was infectious. Clarke decided to keep it down to a minimum of people holding the baby. She thought it might be too much stimulation for one day.

After everyone had left, Raven thought it might be entertaining if she brought Theo's papers to the party. They were dated, so Clarke helped get them in order and laid them among the dips and chips, leftover pizza, and last slice of birthday cake.

Clarke was drawn to the dried beer stain notes as Anya got on her phone and searched for a trick to reveal hidden messages. Each time she thought she had a solution, it was quickly knocked down by Raven. It was when by sheer luck that Lexa decided to light more candles, and made out a word that before wasn't legible on a paper that Clarke was holding.

"Check this out. This part isn't written in code." She took the paper from Clarke and turned down the pendant lamps hanging over the kitchen island and held up to the candle. The warm light reflected through the document made the words somewhat understandable. She wondered, albeit with a silly notion, if the vanilla sandalwood scent had a hand in making the words appeared, but didn't say it aloud.

"Just closed up the bar. It's January now, bitterly cold, and my good friend Isaac just left. Jessie and Billy offered to give him a ride home. In his condition, after losing his wife to a sudden illness, I didn't want to lose my good friend in his grief, over the side of the mountain in the nasty storm that fell over Mount Trikru in the last hours. Earlier, we had sat around the fire and talked about the old times, drinking a fine aged whiskey that I had saved for a cold day like this and drank to Isabelle's memory.

Lexa went through the pages until she saw Isaac's name again. Clarke proceeded to locate the rest that went with his story.

I haven't spoken of my friend in a while, and another year has come and gone. But in Isaac's pain, Keryon saw fit to bless my friend with another soul from his past. Her name is Marion, and she brought with her a beta girl named Nia. The young child is bright and has a sunny disposition and will make a fine sister to Indra. Ah, Isaac. Lost one love and found another, now he can move on. I may lose him as a regular patron, but it's worth to see my old friend back once more.
"Well, that doesn't explain what happened to Nia later in life," Raven said. "Read on."

Lexa picked up another beer-stained page and continued,

**Some mysteries should not be left unexplained in bonding.** After spending energy on this story, and investing the time, I am still left wanting for more. Even by determination and effort, this one has yet to be revealed to me keenly by Isaac. Either he is ashamed or unsure. One thing is certain, Marion will not tell him who is the father of her daughter, but his mate keeping this secret from Isaac has left a growing tension in his family.

"This must be years later," Lexa explained, rubbing her fingers along the top of the page to try and read the date. But it was lost to time and hops.

It is after hours of lamenting explanation and grief, Marion finally revealed to Isaac, that Nia was the product of an assault from someone she trusted. The girl has suspicions, and it's starting to show in her disposition. They've decided not to tell her, for fear it will destroy her already fragile nature. It has begun to cause damage to the relationship she has with Indra.

I will not write of this again and will keep my notes safely hidden away, not by Isaac's instructions, but by propriety and spare the young girl's shame. Every child is a gift, but it might be difficult to explain to one so young the origins of her birth.

Lexa's voice trailed off, and the room grew silent, except the sudden crackling of sparks from the candles as a myriad of emotions fell over everyone's face.

"Well, that takes Indra off the hook," Anya said, reaching for Raven's hand and tangling their fingers together.

"If Nia knows, then why put everyone through this?" Clarke questioned then looked away, no doubt her mind running over what must have been a terrible event in Marion's life.

"Maybe she doesn't believe it's true." Lexa tried to feel sorry for the Nia but was failing in her attempt. "Two wrongs don't make a right."

"We will have to tell Indra," Clarke whispered.
"I know." Raven buried her face into Anya's neck and mumbled, "I vote that we make Lexa do it."

"What?" Lexa's mouth fell open the moment the baby monitor went off the split second after they heard crying.

Clarke laid her head against Lexa's shoulder. "I hate to end the evening on a sad note, but..." Clarke's voice died off as they all trudged upstairs to see to their crying babies.

~

"Is she asleep?" Clarke muttered from under the sheet.

"Just." Lexa crawled in next to Clarke, wrapping her arm around her waist, pulling her tight to her chest and buried her face into the back of Clarke's neck.

"It's nearly three."

Lexa peeked through the messy blond hair to the digital clock and watched as the minutes pass. By the troubled breaths against her hand resting next to Clarke's face, she could tell sleep was eluding her as well.

Camryn's curiosity kept her in the nursery and spent some time rocking her back to sleep. It took longer as the baby became aware of her surroundings and gazed around the room, not quite ready to go to bed. Lexa didn't think that she's moving into her testing phase. That was months away when Camryn might start cry to get attention. Clarke explained that they would have to let her cry when it's apparent she doesn't need her diaper changed or given a bottle. It hurt to think of allowing her to cry, but tonight wasn't the case. She just needed to hold Camryn as her eyes explored her room.

She could only attribute her reaction to wanting to protect the people she loved most in her life. Lexa was incapable of pushing down away this side of her response. Her alpha persona wouldn't allow her to ignore that part of her being. She purred under her breath the entire time she held Camryn and listen to the baby as she tried to mimic the sound. Lexa rocked her until she finally fell asleep and stood up to place her back to bed. She took one last look of her daughter before she dimmed the light. One day Camryn would be an alpha woman, and her duty would be to protect the ones she cared for, and one day she'd have to teach her how.
The news about Indra's sister kept her awake and whispered, "Why was I elected to break the news to Indra?"

Clarke kissed her palm, then turned slowly in her embrace and said through her sleep-deprived voice, "I could go with you."

Lexa's lip moved into a lazy smile at her generosity but pushed down the need for someone to hold her hand and break the news to Indra. "Thanks for offering and as appealing that sounds, I can handle telling my boss her step-sister is the product of a rape."

That word hung in the air between them and breathed a regret that they had pried into Indra's life. Lexa closed her eyes, remembering that Indra had told the entire town of what was happening. The information they held was something no one, but Indra needed to know.

"How can we be sure?"

"We don't. But I'll tell Indra what we found, and she can do with it what she wants. But I'm going to wait till after Thanksgiving. No need to drop this bomb on her tomorrow."

~

Lexa waited until late Saturday to visit with Indra and stayed until the light faded into night. She tried to beg off from intruding on their dinner, but Grace and the children insisted she stayed and had leftovers from Thanksgiving, turkey wild rice soup.

On the way back home, Lexa pushed down her lump in her throat of seeing Indra's eyes fill with tears and cry for the first time in her presence. It was unnerving seeing Indra reeling off balance after giving her the disturbing news. She hated that they had pried into her life, and cursed their curiosity for being those kinds of people.

Indra was skeptical in the beginning, but slowly as she read Theo's papers, having it all of it laid out made her recalled the change to her step-sister over the years and remembered when Nia's disposition began to change. She became angry all the time and said this information explained the shift of their close sisterly ties that turned her into a stranger. That's when Nia wanted to leave, what she called, this sleepy old town and its people. Indra was almost sure Nia would have told her if she knew. But, before Lexa left for home, Indra had changed her mind after spending the
evening mulling over the information. If Nia found out, it might explain why she left.

Indra decided she wouldn't tell Nia and let the DNA test speak for itself. But she did want to try and reconnect, somehow, a relationship with Nia and her son. She didn't have a clue where she should start but thanked Lexa and the gang for the information.

~

The cabin was quiet when Lexa stepped inside and saw all the lights were out, except one in the kitchen over the stove and one lonely lamp next to the stairs. The clock ticked just passed nine, and Clarke must have gone to bed early, waiting for her to return home. Lexa filled a glass with water, turned out the lights, and padded upstairs to check on Camryn first.

The crescent moon nightlight near the head of the bed reflected down over Camryn's face and saw that Clarke had left a pale blue pacifier in her mouth. She was still sucking and must have been dreaming. A smile spread over her face and bent down to kiss her forehead and smooth out her dark hair that stood up like stems of newly planted grass. Her sucking stopped, and Lexa pulled the pacifier out of her mouth, setting it on her changing table and waited for a moment to see if she would wake, she didn't.

Lexa walked back to their bedroom and placed the glass of water on the nightstand and noticed their bedroom lit with scented candles and one lamp on the nightstand. It pulled her further into the room and turned to see Clarke lounging on the bed. Clarke lowered the magazine she was reading then tossed it carelessly on the floor. She was wearing the gift Raven gave her for her birthday.

The deep maroon babydoll lace lingerie was holding on for dear life as Clarke's breasts spilled over the top. It matched the color of her lips, and to add to Lexa's delight, Clarke let her blond hair spill in curls over her shoulders. Clarke's eyes warmly gazed down to her crotch.

"Clarke...ah..fuck," whatever question was on the tip of her tongue, vaporized into thin air, moaning as her clit gave a heavy jerk, and all the blood rushed to her groin. She extended in seconds to her full length, almost going to her knees. That hadn't happened in like forever and left her gasping for air and opened her eyes to see a cocky omega grinning at her.

Clarke gave her a throaty chuckle. "Hey there, Lumberjack. How about you take your pants off, 'cept leave your flannel shirt on and open."
"But, I thought?" Lexa lifted one foot and removed a boot and tossed it next to the closet.

"No thinking, Lexa. Just do as I say and come'ere." She kicked off the other in the same direction.

Lexa's mind went into overdrive, trying to figure out how she could obey Clarke and get her pants off without seeming overly eager, like some young pup. The parts of her brain still working knew she had to take off her shirt to remove her sports bra first, then leaving her shirt open as Clarke requested when she slipped it back on. One hand went to the waistband of her jeans and tugged, catching the soft sounds of the buttons releasing from the old worn blue denim and withdrew herself from her pants. She smirked, seeing Clarke's eyes laser focus on her cock then made a show of bending over and pulling off her pants.

One knee followed the second onto the mattress and tumbled cock heavy with a laugh between Clarke's open thighs. Clarke pushed on her shoulders until she was upright and rubbed her fingertips over her abdomen when she got to her knees. That's when she noticed her girl and gone all out and painted her nails the same seductive color as her lips.

Her eyes slammed shut when Clarke's hand brush by her shaft. Lexa really wanted to feel her hand move a little lower, but let Clarke set the pace. They had all night...Lexa paused and groaned when she ran her smooth polished nails over her thighs — avoiding her need extending out in front of her at the moment.

"I'll ask you later how everything went, for now, I think we..."

Lexa cut Clarke's sentence off as she leaned down and softly kissed her lips. Tasting a bit of sweetness, judging from the empty plate on the nightstand, Clarke had eaten a piece of pecan pie waiting for her to return.

"Hmm, your lips taste sweet and..."

She stopped speaking when Clarke moved away from her mouth. Lexa's arms fell to her sides and watched as she wrapped her lips around her nipple and twisted the other playfully with the other. It was an aggressive move on Clarke's part, and it wasn't possible to stop her girl from running her tongue over and around the hardening bud.

Her cock grew harder, causing Lexa to push against the tiny gap between Clarke's breast, sighing in relief at the brief contact of skin against heated skin.
Clarke's eye fluttered open and smiled around one redden nipple and bit down with a gentle nip, and just as quickly released. "I've realized over this past year, and when we first got together that I completely neglected these treasures."

Lexa cupped her breasts. "They're practically nothing next to...fuck."

Clarke removed her hands ran her tongue around her breast, proving her wrong when she sucked a good portion into her mouth. Lexa reeled from the site of her omega hungrily sucking and wasn't sure how much more she could take. The head of her cock drip over Clarke's breast, leaving a trail, as her knees began to shake from the strain of holding her alpha back.

Clarke giggled and gave a kiss to each stiff nipple leaving a smear of lipstick as evidence of her teasing. Please that she had flustered Lexa, she playfully growled and nudged her backward and stretch out beside her. Her lips never left her mate's and moaned when her hand inadvertently brush by her shaft, but not taking purchase.

Lexa ran her nose into the place between Clarke's jawline and shoulder, finding her mating scar and licked the surface before running her teeth over the ridges and lightly biting down.

Clarke's faltering breaths and hissing, stimulating her need to pull her legs apart and push inside of her, but the calm, rational side of her persona purred and needed to map with her tongue over the dips and valleys her chest, currently covered in fabric.

She missed this part of their relationship, asking, "What about your..."

Clarke uttered between breaths, "I stopped spotting a week ago, and I won't be in heat for months...doctor put me back on suppressants."

Lexa chuckled from Clarke's voice, spilling out with desire, kissing her way around the swells of her breast. She went to removed her top, but Clarke's hands went to the bottom of her babydoll hem, keeping her stomach covered.

Her reaction had Lexa blinking in confusion and drawing back, watching Clarke's face for a reason. Then she asked, "Is it okay if I take your top off?"
Clarke kept her arms pulled tight around her body and shook her head. "I feel like I'm cursed. I want to be with you, and I thought I could keep this on for now. My body..." Her voice trailed off as her eyes began to glisten.

The change in Clarke's demeanor surprised Lexa and leaned away. Not quite sure what was bothering her mate. Lexa remembered that she really hadn't seen Clarke naked since giving birth and searched for the right words to assure her.

Overwhelmed with the lost look covering Clarke's face, she did the only natural thing she could and bent down to kiss Clarke's quivering lips. Lexa could tell by her scent that words alone wouldn't assure her mate, yet she had to try.

"I shouldn't have eaten that piece of pecan pie," Clark mumbled through her tears.

"Babe."

"I know I just had a baby, and I shouldn't expect my body to go back to normal right away."

"Clarke."

"And if I repulse you, we can wait until later, when I'm back in..."

Lexa pressed her lips to Clarke's, effectively cutting off her words, then pulled back. She lifted one of Clarke's hands, running a finger over one painted nail. "Was this to distract me?" She dropped her hand to the lace. "And this?"

Clarke looked away caught in her misdirection. "I just thought it might be easier for you to have sex with me if you didn't see my hideous body."

Lexa snorted, drawing a glare from her mate. "I'm sorry. It's just that. Damn Clarke, I'm so in love with you. I frankly adore you. You're the mother of my child, how could you think that anything could change between us when we have all of this?"

Clarke didn't seem convinced, and she pushed further, "Can I?" Lexa asked again if she could lift
her top, and her mate let her hands fall to mattress. Lexa shifted the material away, keeping her eyes focused on Clarke's face, then let them drift down to swells of her breasts and then to the pale skin of her belly that she kept hidden.

Lexa kissed a spot next to her belly button, heating the surface with her breaths, then ran her hand over the surface. The layer of fat that now covered her mate's belly was, in her opinion, adorable and worked to find the words to make Clarke feel comfortable in her skin.

"Not that it should matter, Clarke..." Lexa ran her hand over her stomach again. "This is all normal; once you regain your strength, we could work together on staying in shape."

Clarke's tears spilled over. "You do think I'm fat?"

"What? No, no, Clarke."

Words were not going to work, and she quieted Clarke's tears with kisses over her belly and moving up between her breasts until she was eye to eye with her omega.

"Let's start this over again." Lexa stood up and started to fasten the buttons on her shirt.

"Wait! No. Don't get dressed. I love seeing you naked." Lexa's cock twitch and Clarke's eyes could help but gaze over her length.

"Just as I love seeing you. It works both ways, Clarke." Clarke sat back on her knees with a charming pout making Lexa chuckle, and it finally drew a smile on her face. Lexa could see Clarke working it out with what she wanted and this bout of shyness. "I'll make a deal with you." Lexa kissed her nose. "I'll keep my shirt open, and you can take off everything but one item. Fair is fair."

"But, I'm only wearing two things." Clarke's fingers edged her the top of her lacy underwear, then smiled at the proposition. "I believe I'm getting the better deal." She slipped off her panties, then fell onto her back and spread her legs, bringing Lexa to her knees.

Like a force of nature, the scent coming from Clarke's dark blond curls had her burying her face into the heated space and draped her legs over her shoulders and held on tight as the first long swipe of her tongue had Clarke's back arching off of the bed.
Clarke jerked into her face and softly moaned. Lexa's goal wasn't to let Clarke come yet. Releasing too soon would make her overly sensitive and avoided her clit for the moment and concentrating on the flesh on either side, sucking and licking around her opening.

Lexa got lost in the texture and her omega scent. Her mind tried to reckon with the pure sensual pleasure of her tongue taking long swipes across soft tender flesh, the seat of all of Clarke's joy bound into a tiny space that fit comfortably in her mouth. Nails dug into the back of her head, drew her eyes up to past the lace to Clarke's face to see the desire forming from silent whispers across her lips. Lexa bucked into naked air, hissing at the lack of contact against her cock. But the clit twitching against her nose and Clarke's willingness to let go prompted Lexa to swipe her tongue over the tiny bundle of nerves and lavish it with kisses, sucking the swelling bud into her mouth.

Clarke came, gushing over her mouth and chest, leaving trails of wetness dripping over her mouth, down her chin, and trickling to her stomach. Lexa licked up the slick covering the sides of her legs. She nudged her nose over the bundle of sensitive nerves as her tongue sought out the source of Clarke's scent. Her cock swelled harder and stiffly rose to her belly.

~

Clarke draped an arm over her eyes, as tears leaked out. Her body jerk now and again from her release. It was over too quickly and lifted her arm to gazed down at the alpha kneeling between her legs.

Lexa's eyes were closed, and it gave her this quiet moment to watch as she kissed her mound, now and again. Perhaps, lost in the moment hanging between them.

"Hey, you." Clarke reached down and moved a bit of hair covering her face.

"Hey." Lexa's eyes now opened stayed focused between her legs. Her voice held thick with desire as the dark aperture of her eyes, swallowed the green of her iris. Her alpha was still hungry, and eating her out wasn't going to be enough to satisfy the need waiting behind her gaze.

Clarke swallowed and felt utterly exposed under her stare, even partially clothed. She silently thanked Lexa for letting her set her own pace yet showing how much she still desired her. She felt a little silly at insisting she kept her top on when it began to be a barrier between them.
Lexa's eyes took on a predatory gaze as Clarke edged backward, and her mate crawled with her until her head hit the pillow. Lexa's shirt hung lazily over her broad shoulders, and her slick covered her chest and sculpted abdomen. Her eyes were drawn to Lexa's cock, hanging heavy and thick between her legs. Clarke trembled and slipped the lingerie away from her heated skin before Lexa ripped it from her body.

A pleased look covered Lexa's face as she uttered, "You got me all wet, omega." Her voice was teasing, yet sent shivers over her body. Heat radiated over her skin as Lexa glided her body between her legs. Her hands pressed down into the mattress, kept her hovering enticingly out of reach when she edged slightly downward and rested her cock on her naked belly.

Clarke grew fascinated, watching as her head of her shaft pulsed beads of slick. It pooled then ran over the sides of her stomach. Lexa bent down and captured her lips in a heated kiss, blending their tongues with her taste thick in her mouth and groaned when Lexa slipped a long finger inside of her.

Lexa pulled away breathless and rested her forehead against Clarke's, feeling her up and around until she couldn't take it anymore and reached down between them and tried to push her cock down to her entrance.

~

It was a clarion call to the first time they mated as Clarke's hand stroked her cock and rubbing herself over the lengthened surface with her swollen clit. Lexa growled against Clarke's mouth, her scent wafted around her and pushed her face between the space of her neck and shoulder. The alpha functioning part of her brain sniffed, finding its source and sunk her teeth into the surface of her scar. The bite wouldn't break the skin, but to hold on as she worked her cock between Clarke's legs and pushed forward against her opening.

Her drumming heartbeat, valiantly pumping more blood to her cock, extended it longer, thicker against Clarke's cunt. Pushing forward and bringing a stinging grip to her shoulders, and Clarke's nails bit down. Lexa guided her cock up and down, edging inside an inch or two and pulling away as Clarke's hold became frantic.

The next stroke had her sinking deeper inside, against the tightness sucking her forward and eased backward once more. They fell into the mating ritual of giving and taking, stroking deeper on each thrust. It was this raw, and primal need that had her giving her soul to the omega wrapped around her body.
"Take me," Clarke said in her ear.

Lexa smiled against Clarke's neck, uttering the truth, "You're so tight Clarke," and bit lightly under her ear as she pulled back.

"Don't stop, Lexa."

Lexa urged was slam inside and seat completely into her mate. Take what was lying underneath her. She tossed that thought aside went slower, edging the tip just inside again. The tiny gasp from Clarke caused her to lean back and watch her face for the reaction when she pushed deeper inside.

"Fuck me, Lexa."

Clarke opened her legs wider and lifted her hips, meeting her halfway as she pushed deeper inside. Two hands on her ass, urging her to keep thrusting, pulling a growl deep in her throat, had Clarke's hands falling away and felt the tension inside of her mate ease, causing her to slip completely inside. Her brown curls pressed firmly against Clarke's dark blond patch then stilled her hips.

Lexa held Clarke's gaze as she eased back and pushed forward once hearing her mate grunt. It urged her to increase her pace. Warm, wet, and incredible tightness engulfed her shaft. Lexa removed the part of Clarke's clothing covering her breasts and arched her back until her mouth found a redden nipple at her lips and sucked – surprised when warmth oozed into her mouth and pulled away. Tasting the milk met for her child, almost, almost made her blush and whipped her long hair over her shoulders as heat covered her cheeks. Clarke hissed then smiled, understanding that this part of their connection would have to wait until Clarke was no longer nursing.

Slick sweat covered their bodies, in a tangle of heated love as she drove over and over into her mate. Clarke's hands were everywhere, over and around her body, desperately clinging as if they were to part, somehow. But, Lexa drove harder, deeper as sounds of wet flesh filled the room.

Lexa held her climax at bay as her knot began to swell, her goal would be for her mate to find her release first and surged forward once more, but finding the muscle around Clarke's cunt opening for her to accept her tie, too tight, but they were close.

Another thrust and Lexa growled against Clarke's increasing tightness, and she couldn't push inside. Praying Clarke could make room for a more of her, and she thrust harder, when a blinding white-hot tightness, scorched her soul as her knot seated, overwhelmed by Clarke's pussy closing
around her, she held her breath as her mounting climax came to its zenith. The tight ring held her in place as muscles spasm around her cock as Clarke came first.

Lexa released her breath with a grunt, the moment her cock jetted streams of come thickly inside Clarke. Her body jerked with each pump of her hips, the last thing she heard before sleep took her, was laughter tinged cries filling her ears as Clarke held her tightly and rocked both of them in her embrace.
Clarke swayed Camryn back and forth as she stood next to the living room window, killing time. She had them both dressed and ready for the moment when the weather would clear.

(Clarke thought that living in the mountains meant that the seasons were somewhat the same, then say, in other parts of the country except for that first bitterly cold winter she experienced when she first arrived. Clarke assumed it would always be cooler throughout the year mainly because she had fixed into her mind that traditional seasons belong to the other parts of the country.

Clarke had felt that perfect spring day when she visited the west coast on a working weekend. When she stepped out onto the balcony of her hotel room that looked over San Diego Bay, she was greeted by a myriad of early birds catching the worm. Smelling the mild sea breeze had her wishing to escape for the day and dip her toes into the Pacific Ocean as she walked along the sandy beach.

A few summers back, she spent a ten-day vacation in Florida where the sky was wide open for the sunbathers to feel the sun's radiance and relieved she'd pack sunscreen and a big floppy hat to wear when the temperatures reach into the upper eighties.

Then there were the teeth chattering, cold walk on many a wintery, blustery, snowy day that had her bundle head to foot on her way to the office in the city, making her wish at times she lived closer to work.

But Lexa told her that Mount Trikru felt different this year when the leaves started to turn. More full of life, she said. It was almost perfect according to her mate, and Clarke had fallen under the forest's spell and had to agree...until a cold breeze brought the rain right after Thanksgiving that hadn't stopped for days. It had soaked through her mood. Clarke was getting bored of the gloom and thought a trip to Mount Weather to do some Christmas shopping would lift her spirits.)

Clarke watched Camryn still very blue eyes as she gazed out at the downpour battering against the window, hoping she saw the wonder in the rain and not her mom's frustration of being stuck in the cabin. The weather report indicated a break in the rain was coming and had the diaper bag and her purse waiting on the kitchen counter for the moment it stopped.

Lexa wanted to go with her and put on her best pout when she told her no. Firmly, Clarke explained that she had a system, and that meant going alone. Mainly because she knew it would be next to impossible to keep any gifts she got for her mate a secret with Lexa hovering over her shoulder. Besides, Lexa had Billie's old Harley to work on to keep her busy.
It was why Clarke decided to would be better to take Camryn with her, knowing the baby would grow hungry during the day and didn't want to mess her up now that she was on a pretty good schedule. But really, the fact was, she wasn't quite ready to spend any amount of time separated from her infant, and Lexa would be too busy working on the bike. And no way did she want her left alone in the house unsupervised or with Lexa in the garage, with the cold wind whipping up the rain.

At last, a shard of brilliant light pierced through the clouds. Clarke blinked her eyes and shaded them against the sun when it finally pushed through the rain clouds and hugged Camryn. "I guess that's as good as it's going to get. Let's go, sweetie."

~

Clarke found Lexa next to the baby blue motorcycle leaning on its kickstand in front of the sports car on the far side of the garage. The alpha had put her hair back into a long thick braid and wore a baseball cap, catcher-style to keep the stray hairs out of her eyes. Usually, she found the style obnoxious, but it looked sexy on Lexa and chuckled to herself, knowing that if she lingered, it could easily work her up into dragging her bewildered mate back inside the cabin for some early afternoon fun.

"You're not going to take the bike completely apart, are you?"

Lexa looked up from an old dog-eared manual in her hands. "Don't know yet. I couldn't get it to start and thought I should try and tune her up first. Jessie was just happy that I removed Billie's baby from the back room of the museum. She said it was taking up too much space. But, honestly, I think she didn't want the bike to turn to rust."

"Then, if it doesn't start?"

The gleam was efficient in Lexa's green eyes when she wagged eyebrows, that she wanted to tear the engine apart to see how it worked.

Her mate had sat through countless videos on the internet of home mechanics taking cars apart and other assorted mechanical things. She watched the process of cleaning and putting them back together in pristine condition, much like her sports car, and much like she wanted to do with Billie's old motorcycle.
Black neoprene gloves covered Lexa's hands, and her tools laid out over her workbench seemed ready to do that very thing when Clarke noticed a smudge of grime on her face.

"You're going to be covered with grease from head to foot before I get back home," Clarke clicked her tongue and removed a baby wipe from the diaper bag and cleaned the smear off her cheek.

The alpha leaned into her touch as her eyes sparkled and removed her gloves and stood up to stretched, then leaned forward with the motion and kissed Camryn on her head, then Clarke's lips and wrapped her arms around both of them.

Clarke soaked up the heat radiating off of the alpha's body, and blinked her eyes against her pull as a quiet whispering hope, filled one ear, "Are you sure I can't go with you guys today?"

Clarke wrestled with Lexa's request for a moment then stubbornly stuck to her original plans. "Hmm, positive. But didn't you tell me that Anya was on her way over?"

Lexa stepped back and rubbed the back of her bare neck, with a slight grin covered her face. "Yeah, any minute now." The unspoken desire hung between them, yet Clarke was able to withstand her pull this time.

"Well, then I'll leave you to your fun and grease." But not before Lexa slipped a long finger into her front pocket and tugged her close. Nudging her nose against hers and leaving her little breathless with her kisses.

"Whoa." Clarke hesitantly pushed Lexa back with one hand on her chest, foreheads still touching. "You keep that up, and I'll never leave. I need to get on the road before the rain starts up again."

One last kiss and Lexa released her and said with a drawl, "You'll miss me today."

Clarke shook her head yet agreed, "Probably. But it's still going to be just the two of us today."

Lexa playfully stuck her tongue out while she got Camryn secured in her car seat and set the diaper bag behind her. It had all the essentials she'll need for the day and waited as the vehicle synced with her phone. Clarke pulled out of the garage and stopped while she searched for some
Christmas music to listen to on the way, then looked up as Lexa wiped her hands with a red shop towel and motioned for her to roll down the window.

"Don't tell me you want to fill me up..." Clarke chuckled at the slight blush covering Lexa's cheeks and continued, "or check under my hood."

Lexa gave her a lazy grin as she got to the vehicle. "You keep that up, and I won't let you leave." She leaned in and kissed Clarke once more and handed her a bottle of water she had tucked under her arm. "Let me know when you're on the way back home, and I'll get dinner started. Drive safe."

"You got it, babe."

Clarke focused on Lexa shoving the red cloth into the jean pocket covering her firm denim covered ass, making her way back to the bike. That one action almost had her putting the car into drive and pulling back into the garage. "No, you've got shopping to do. You can play with Lexa later," Clarke scolded herself and pulled out onto the road and didn't make to The Diner before she was passing Anya on the way to their cabin. She blinked her high-beams back at Anya as she made the turn for Mount Weather and settled into the long drive over the mountain.

~

Anya pulled in behind Lexa's jeep and stepped down from her truck and greeted her with her typical cheerful banner, "Hey, asshole."

Lexa grinned, shaking her head, meeting her at the edge of the garage. "Did you pick up the stuff at Jasper's garage?"

Anya grunted a response and pulled out the cardboard box from the cab's backseat and shoved into Lexa's hands. "Jasper found this old box on one of the shelves in the garage bay. Apparently, the previous owner kept Harley parts." Long fingers reached into the box and pulled out a quart of oil. "Got the other things you needed."

"Great, and thanks. Let's get started."

"Where's Clarke going alone?"
"She's not alone, Camryn is with her." Lexa sat down on a short stool and ratched the bolt off the oil pan and shoved a container under the motorcycle to catch the dirty used oil. "And she's going to the mall in Mount Weather. Clarke took the baby to do some Christmas shopping. What's Raven up to today?"

Anya slapped on a pair of gloves and shoved a toolbox next to the bike on the other side and sat down. She sprayed degreaser over the engine and worked a brush over all of the bolts and grooves and began to clean out the muck. "Home, sick with Raean. I think she caught a cold that's been going around."

Lexa leaned back. "You're not contagious?"

"Do I look sick to you?"

"Nah, but I'm keeping my distance."

Anya smirked and said, "Listen, smartass. If I am, you're already contaminated."

They worked in relative silence, a habit they got into when they work in the mountains cutting down trees. A look or a familiar grunt to each other as they communicated without words and somehow was able to keep the silence between them yet get the job done. But something was different with Anya's demeanor, and the subdued scent told her that something was on her mind.

"What's bothering you."

Anya looked up, and Lexa tried not to laugh in her face. Her friend already had a smudge on one cheek in the shape of a crooked question mark. "I was just wondering how Indra's doing. Have you spoken with her since you gave her the news about Nia?"

"Clarke did a few days ago, but it was for work on the hotel and plans for next year. She did say Indra seemed withdrawn and kept their conversation on business."

Anya nodded as more silence hung between them until it was broke once more, "I just wished we hadn't of pried..." Anya's voice trailed off.
Lexa had to agree. It stayed on her mind days afterward and hoped she didn’t ruin the relationship she had with Indra.

"I feel that same, Anya."

Anya sighed as she stood up and picked up the Harley manual laying across her workbench and skimmed through while Lexa worked on removing the spark plugs.

~

A light rain started back up when Clarke passed the Welcome to Mount Weather sign, albeit a little slower pace behind the line of vehicles. It wasn't until she saw the orange mesh barrier fixed to poles along the highway she understood why the traffic was creeping along.

"It might take a little longer to get the mall, baby girl." Clarke took a quick peek at Camryn when the traffic came to a complete stop.

Then turned back to watch the highway workers run a long stretch that same mesh along the roadside, seemly to be fussing with each other as their voices carried over the now standstill traffic. Finally, a workman signaled, and the vehicles began moving again. Clarke gave a friendly wave to them as she passed by what looked to be small mudslide that started to take down a few small rocks from the side of the mountain. Clarke wasn't sure how in the world the flimsy plastic would hold back the rocks but figured the workers must know what they're doing, as they rushed back to their vehicles and out of the rain.

~

"Yes, about time." Clarke pumped the air with her fist when she finally found a parking place on the lower level, dissipating the frustration that the lousy weather certainly didn't keep shoppers at home.

She took the elevator to the first floor of the mall, humming along to the elevator music when it came smoothly to a halt. Clarke waited for the doors to open, then pushed the stroller out into the climate-controlled gallery and stopped. Her immediate reaction was awe, taking in the sights before them. After a second or two, Camryn kicked her legs, causing Clarke to chuckle, "Okay, okay. Here we go."
The first thing that hit her was the competing smells. Her senses were overwhelmed with the aroma of cinnamon buns baking and a lovely perfume she detected as she passed a pretty, young woman at a fragrance kiosk spraying a customer's wrist. The scent of holiday candles almost had her stopping by the boutique store and made a mental note to swing by later as she lingered at the open door taking in the charming animated Christmas display then continued down the mall as she oriented herself.

Clarke wandered deeper inside and found the modern structure opened up to lively interior — the two-story structure looked to be several blocks long, and the middle of the mall was open to allow shoppers a view of the stores on the second floor.

The mall contained an atrium with large exotic palm trees stretching up to the overhead windows, and an enormous aquarium filled with fish situated at the center hub. It seemed out of place for Christmas, but a nice touch to the mall. She imagined that in the summer, all of this would fit right in.

Clarke stopped and took the baby out of the stroller so she could see the colorful fish up close. Camryn blew a bubble and reached out to grab the large fish darting by, bringing surprise laughter from Clarke. "They're behind the glass, sweetie." Clarke adjusted Camryn’s beanie, sensing the warmth of their connection when she noticed from her periphery, someone watching them.

Clarke turned to see a young girl, an alpha-girl by her scent, who worried a camera in her hand. "Would you like a picture with your baby next to the aquarium?" she quickly added, "I only charge five bucks...I can print them out, and you could be on your way."

"Do you work here?"

"No, umm, sorry. I don't." The young girl looked down and mumbled, "I just needed to make some extra cash for Christmas." The girl shrugged her shoulders and turned to leave.

"Wait." Clarke adjusted Camryn in her arms. The young alpha stopped in place and looked back at them. "Sure, why not. You can take our picture."

"Are you sure five dollars isn't too much?"

Clarke smiled to reassure her. "It's no problem."
Clarke stood next to the aquarium while the girl adjusted her settings on her instant camera and snapped a couple of pictures.

"All done. Just let me know which one you like, and I'll print it out for you. It won't take very long," she assured. The girl held the camera out so Clarke could select from the screen the one she liked the most.

"I like the second one the best."

"Great, just give it a minute or two, and I'll have your photo printed in no time."

She put Camryn back in the stroller and said over her shoulder, "My name is Clarke, and this is Camryn. What's your name?"

"Jules. I tried to find work at the mall, but they already hired enough staff for the holidays, plus they said I was too young."

"What's too young, Jules?"

"Fifteen, I guess. I'm going on sixteen at the end of the year."

Clarke admired her ambition and looked through her wallet, bypassing the five and pulled out a ten and handed it to the young budding photographer. "Keep the change, and good luck."

Jules looked down at the ten in her hand then back at Clarke as her face lit up with new energy. "Thank you, Clarke, and have a happy holiday. You and Camryn."

Clarke smiled warmly as the girl turned and found another customer wanting their picture taken. She checked the photo once more and had to admit it was well composed and was sure that Lexa would adore it and wondered if she could find a card shop that sold frames, deciding this would make an excellent stocking stuffer for her mate.

Charge with the holiday spirit, Clarke continued on her way and passed a row of parents and children waiting to have their picture professionally taken with Santa and Mrs. Claus. At the same
time, young teenagers dressed as cheery elves kept them entertained standing in line. She was tempted for a half-second until she saw the length of the line and continued further into the mall.

Clarke checked her shopping list on her phone and looked for a map of the stores. Her previous searches at home gave her the advantage of planning the shopping day with ease. Their parents were first on her list and spotting the store and walked with a new purpose.

~

It was late into the afternoon when Clarke finally stopped for lunch then sipped on the remaining soda in the mall's bustling food court. She hadn't been to this place before, and it took some time to familiarize herself with its layout. The conveniently covered parking lot allowed her to make a couple to trips back to the SUV to put the presents she had brought in the back and free the both of them to wander the mall unencumbered with the bags.

The new environment held Camryn's interest at first, but an hour or two into shopping, she fell asleep. Clarke fed her once in the women's bathroom lounge, and quick diaper change had her back at the car and on their way home. Before she pulled out into the now pouring rain, she sent a quick text to Lexa.

"Hey, hot stuff. I can't wait for you to tune me up. Lol. It's just after four, and I'm just leaving the mall and should be home in an hour, depending on the traffic. Camryn and I send all of our love. xo"

Earlier, just as a precaution, Clarke sent a text when she got to the mall to let her know she had made it. Not even sure why, but it made her feel better that Lexa knew she got to her destination safely.

All-day long, her eyes and ears were filled with the coming holiday and put her in a great mood for when she got home. Please, that she was able to find presents for the Reyes-Hunter family, her mom, and Lexa's folks. But it had been shopping for Lexa that had her flustered.

Lexa didn't need a lot of clothes but got her a few new things anyway, and her toys consisted of tools and games she had no clue about, but it was when she walked passed a jewelry store, a beautiful sterling silver and gold necklace caught her eye.

It was made for the alpha in your life, the advert said and rolled the stroller inside and spent the
next half hour looking at the jewelry, but unable to settle on just one piece she left empty-handed. That's when she spotted an out of the place store that catered strictly to the alpha women.

The storefront windows held black and white posters of a well-known alpha woman model on the French Riviera – her hair slicked back, and a noticeable bulge in her trouser, with just her suspenders covering her petite breasts. Another picture had her stripped down to a brilliant white tank top and underwear that left nothing to the imagination.

Clarke smirked, proud that her alpha was more gifted than the woman displayed. Still, she had to admit the woman was hot and pushed Camryn inside and drew the attention of a beta woman with dark hair, styled into a bun, glasses on the tip of her nose, and a no-nonsense attitude.

"Welcome to Pour Mon Alpha."

"Thank you."

"What a beautiful baby. Are you recently mated?" The woman pushed her glasses back on her face to better look at the fading red mark on her neck.

Clarke resisted the urge to touch the scar and didn't feel comfortable talking about herself to a total stranger and answered with a brief, "Hmm. I'm looking for something special for my partner."

"You've come to the right place. Is it for the office or something..."

"I'm not sure. This coat is nice." Clarke fingered the material of a leather jacket.

"Lambskin. Very soft and treated for the weather. What size is your mate?"

Clarke's eyes grew wide and released the material when she saw the price tag. Lexa would have a fit if she put down over a grand for the jacket.

"I think I'll keep browsing."
The beta just kept herself from rolling her eyes at Clarke and attached herself to another customer.

Clarke didn't want to seem rude, but the prices were outside of her budget. She wandered to the back of the store to the clearance rack. She hated that she felt obligated to purchase something, anything when she saw a long-sleeve dark green henley with a reduce price. Still expensive, but the quality was worth it and found the second one in black.

"Would you like to have these gift wrapped?"

Seeing the gleam and hope in the beta's eyes had Clarke nodding. "Sure, why not."

~

Lexa kicked the utility door shut with the back of her boot just as her cellphone simultaneously vibrated against her butt and rang with the sound of Camryn laughing.

That was a surprise for both of them. Camryn wasn't due to learn how to laugh until she was at least three, maybe four months old, so Lexa quickly recorded the event to keep it as one of her firsts. Clarke, without her knowledge, surprised her one day. Having snuck her cellphone away and fixed it to be her ringtone, then texted her.

Lexa chuckled and sat laden down reusable bags on the counter and read the message from Clarke that she was on her way back home.

"Beat you to it, babe. I've got dinner practically on the stove."

Well, not quite. Initially, dinner wasn't going to be a difficult affair. Lexa figured Clarke would be too tired for anything elaborate, and she'd fixed leftover homemade tomato soup and grill cheese sandwich. Clarke's personal favorite ever since she whipped it up months back.

After working with the bike, which still wouldn't start after hours of work, Anya put her greasy hands up in defeat. Saying maybe with some fresh eyes tomorrow, they'd figure this beast out. After cleaning up a bit, Lexa remembered they had a list of stuff they needed desperately at the market. With the rain, they pushed out the shopping day until Camryn was down to one box of diapers, and she couldn't put it off any longer.
The shopping cart was almost full when she saw they had a special on Italian sausage. She quickly adjusted the menu to a pot of her mother's recipe for spaghetti sauce, garlic bread. Of course, she'd have opened a vintage bottle of wine to serve, and you couldn't have all of that without something sweet to eat. That was in the form of a freshly baked cherry pie from the pastry counter.

Lexa unpacked the groceries and planned what to do first to have the meal ready about the time Clarke and Camryn go home.

～

"About time," Clarke said as she tapped on the steering wheel.

They were halfway home according to the miles on the road sign for Mount Trikru they just passed. Unfortunately, like every scary movie, it found Clarke and the baby on the deserted mountain road with the only light coming from her vehicle. Darkness had fallen over the surrounding forest even though the sun hadn't completely set, not that she could tell with the storm raging.

When the traffic had thinned out, Clarke realized she hadn't passed anyone coming her from the other direction for a while. She felt the solitude with only the company of the Michael Buble singing a cheerful Christmas song and the baby babbling from the backseat as the movement of the windshield wipers kept the beat.

*Oh the weather outside is frightful*

*But the fire is so delightful*

*And since we've no place to go*

*Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow…*

The crash of lightning lit up the surrounding forest just as a ferocious roar of thunder spontaneously shook the car. A collision against her side of the vehicle sent them spinning out of control, causing everything to slow down, a split second later, the explosion of the airbag hit her face and chest. Her brain registered with a jolt of adrenaline they were going over the side of the road when they crash through the metal guardrail. Clarke instinctually pressed down hard on the brakes as she gripped tight to the steering wheel. But it did little to stop the momentum of the vehicle, and she lost the battle of the wheel's traction against the rain and mud.
A startled wail from the back seat jolted Clarke to her core after the car came to an abrupt stop. Clarke's mommy instincts kicked in and reached for Camryn. She quietly cursed when she found the angle she was in made it impossible to touch her. The seatbelt kept her from moving freely and was wedged between her car seat, the steering wheel, and the deployed airbag.

Clarke fought the urge to panic. She wasn't stuck, more like angle downward, and thankfully not that steeply. It still had the effect of making moving difficult to reach her cellphone in her purse that flew somewhere on the floorboard. The car was no longer running, but the battery still worked. One light was out, probably smashed to smithereens when she struck the rock that kept her stuck in one place. The remaining headlight lit up the rain, pouring down over the boulder her vehicle crashed into.

Clarke blinked from the stinging chemicals and worried over the effect on her daughter. Her crying was intensely frightening and needed to get to her.

"I'm right here, Camryn. It will be okay." Clarke hated to lie to her baby, but she said it for herself as well. They've got to be okay. It took several moments for the rush of adrenaline and the rapid beating of her heart to bleed off and figure out what the hell just happened. She felt disorientated, trying to remember the moments before the crash and where they were. She hadn't passed out yet felt off-balance trying to recall.

Clarke put the car in reverse, turning on the rear camera, and big drops of rain covered the lens. "I can't see a bloody thing." She pressed on the brake to illuminate behind her, and it did nothing but washed out the screen to a blurry blob of red and shifted the vehicle back into park.

"Just f'ing great. I have no idea where the hell I am."

Clarke tugged at her seatbelt, giving her the slack she needed to reached down for her purse then stopped when she remembered the nav system should have hooked up the cellphone to service. Lexa's cell number was the first on her list and hit the green phone icon.

It wouldn't dial out. "Fuck." Clarke tried it once more, and it started to ring and disconnected and dropped the connection. The nav screen gave up the ghost, blinking once and went dark. "Ooh, this is even better." Clarke braced herself, and released her seat belt, and reached down on the floorboard, and felt around for her handbag and caught the edge with her fingers, and pulled it towards her.

Of course, the long strap caught on something under the seat, and she had to lean practically on her head to pull it free.
"Let it go," Clarke said with a huff when the strap broke, and she fell back against the car seat with a huff. "God damn it, not my favorite purse."

Clarke reached blindly inside feeling for her cellphone, making it light up when she held it upright. "Thank you for not being broken." She leaned back and told Camryn, "Now we're getting somewhere."

The baby's cries even out to a sniffling whimpering, and Clarke tried to open the door, and it wouldn't budge. She leaned back and called Lexa, closing her eyes and waited to hear her sweet voice. After a few seconds of silence, she checked her connection. Her phone was down to one bar and not nearly enough to travel through the mountains.

"Damn it."

Camryn reacted to her voice, causing her crying to start up again, urging her to find her way into the backseat. Clarke tossed her purse in that direction and awkwardly made her way back until she was sitting beside her baby and cupped her cheek. Camryn grabbed for her hand and tried to put one of her fingers into her mouth.

"Are you hungry? You're probably scared as me." Camryn sucked harder. "I know, I know. But before I feed you, let me check..." Clarke stopped speaking and shook her head. Communicating with her daughter kept her grounded, but the baby couldn't possibly understand what she said. Clarke ripped the airbag away that deployed across the passenger window, and opened the door, and was showered with rain and just as quickly shut the door.

Clarke wiped the droplets off of her face. "Well, at least we can get out of the car. But I'm not sure that's a good idea right now. Camryn continued whimpering until she unbuckled her from the car seat and wrapped her in a blanket. She removed her breast from her shirt and urged her baby to suck. It gave her time to think of how she was going to get out of this pickle.

Clarke reasoned that even though the car was broken, including the heater and it was going to get cold, it was probably not a good idea to leave the shelter of the vehicle. It was keeping them dry and relatively safe, and she wasn't sure she could scale whatever embankment they slid down, in the rain and mud, carrying her child. She immediately dismissed any notion of being a hero and getting herself in a worse mess they're currently trapped in.

Clarke hummed as the baby fed and tried every so often to call Lexa. Her cellphone was at a
hundred percent by the time they got the mall, and now it was down to thirty-three percent. Clarke laid head against the back of the seat and sighed, thinking of her mate and needing her to make everything right again.

Are you sure I can't go with you guys? Wishful hope shown in her very green eyes.

Clarke blinked as a wave of guilt washed over, remembering Lexa's request and her stupid insistence on taking Camryn alone with her. She shook her head and nervously started to hum as the baby nursed, wide-eyed, and as confused as she felt. She tried remembering how far from home they were and wondered if the mudslide earlier had anything to do with their predicament. It didn't seem like anything at the time. It was pointless to look out, yet she did anyway.

Dread rose from a dark place as worry became a focus. Clarke had no way to contact her mate and not sure she could climb back up the cliff or how far they even travel down the embankment. For all that she knew, she was dangling over the edge of the mountain. Any moment the car could continue to slide down into an unknown fate. Lost forever and never see her child grow up – never see Lexa's face again.

Clarke took in a sucking breath and pushed down the fear. "One thing at a time. We're not lost yet." She rechecked her cell phone, and now it had no service. She contemplated tossing it out the window as she stuck into her pocket. Camryn stopped nursing, and she brought her up to her shoulder and quietly hummed as she rubbed her back and listened to the storm raging around them.

It began to dawn on Clarke that it could be over an hour before Lexa would know something was wrong when that didn't arrive at home from shopping and sent out a quiet plea to Keryon to let her mate know that they were in deep trouble.

~

Lexa cringed when she heard under Anya's breath when she spoke to Raven in the background she shouldn't have let Clarke go alone in this weather.

_When did Clarke send you her last text?_

"It's going on almost two hours. Every time I call Clarke's cellphone, it goes to her voice mail."
Lexa paced throughout the downstairs as worry filled every fiber of her being. She had made dinner and at the one hour mark had everything ready, proud she’d pull off the flavor her mother put into her meals — a little dash of distinctive spices and a big heaping of love.

*Have you called the police?*

"And tell them what, my mate hasn't come home yet from shopping? They'll think I'm overreacting."

*Listen, Lexa. This is your family we're talking about. Fuck what they might think.* Lexa could hear the worry in Anya's voice. *I'm heading over to your place and fucking call the state police. They handle these types of situations and check the roads on their websites, in this weather anything...*

Anya's voice, which had grown in volume trailed off, but Lexa's mind filled in the rest. Clarke was on her way home, and if something had changed, she would have let her know.

"I'll call them right now. Call Gustus and let him know."

*I'll do that, and I'm on my way to your place.*

Lexa search for the state police phone number when her heart jolted at seeing the incoming call from Clarke.

"Clarke, where are you?"

*Lex...ba..nection.*

"Say again?"

...*ear me?*

"Fuck, I can't understand what you're saying."
"Do you know where you are?" The phone went silent, and Lexa tried calling Clarke back and immediately went to voice mail. "Clarke? Clarke? Can you hear me? Tell me where you are."

~

"I think Mama heard us, Camryn." Clarke's tears of relief started to well up at hearing Lexa's voice, even when the call disconnected before she could tell her what had happened. She wasn't even sure Lexa could make out what she was saying. But at the least, Lexa knew that they were in trouble. She had to know, Clarke convinced herself. The problem was how to tell Lexa where they thought they were. The phone lit up with a voicemail from Lexa and quickly listened to her messages. Drawing support and courage, Clarke selected the map icon. Surely it could give her general location.

She hit the locate my car indicator. It took an achingly long time until it finally highlighted in a tiny blue car icon somewhere along the highway she had traveled. Clarke closed her eyes and tried to recall the last road sign she passed. But, the side roads weren't always noted but did recollect crossing an old sign for pumpkins still for sale about a half-mile back.

Clarke captured the screen of the map and texted the picture with a message of where she thought she went over the road. It took a seriously long time to send until the screen went black, and prayed it got through.

The vehicle seemed to vibrate against pounding rain as the minutes dragged on with the constant noise of what sounded like buckets and buckets of water pouring down on them. Clarke focused on what was important as she watched Camryn's face when an ugly thought invaded her mind of the possible life her daughter would never experience, the torrent drowning out every good thing that wouldn't happen. Clarke couldn't see clearly as her eyes filled with tears and hugged her to her chest.

Another crash of lightning filled the expanse. The boom of thunder rumbled through Clarke's bones until they were surrounded by darkness once again. The baby wouldn't fall back to sleep, as she gently cooed to her. The one headlight kept the area lit, but it was barely enough to see her sweet face and felt the world fall on her for the decision to bring the baby with her on the trip to go shopping that could have waited.
"I'm so sorry, Camryn." Clarke pushed her face into the baby's neck and sobbed. Crying for herself and the baby experiencing her first car crash and cried harder.

Surely, Keryon wouldn't put them together on one lonely night in the dead of winter and create this beautiful baby just to have it violently ripped away; life couldn't be that cruel? But it is, bitterly, terribly so.

The guilt of going alone caused a new wave of tears to fall when Clarke sensed Camryn's scent had changed. Her baby was sending out her best attempt to connect with her. Clarke pulled back and wiped away the tears that covered the baby's cheek.

"I love you so much, little girl." Camryn smiled and stuck out her tongue, completely undoing Clarke's sadness and kissed her forehead. "We're sure going to have a story to tell Mama when she finds us." Clarke tucked them under the blanket and shut her eyes as her mind began to wander.

(Camryn at six months old, and her baby teeth start to erupt from her gums. Lexa worries over her crying, finding cooling solutions to the pain of swollen gums. Chill bananas are her favorite, given in small portions.

Now when they say her name at seven months, the baby looks in their direction, seemingly understanding the sound of her name.

The baby is heavier and taller and has grown entirely out of all of her clothes at eight months. She's learning how to crawl. The noises she makes are beginning to sound like words, drawing delighted laughter from her mate.

At eleven months, Camryn can sit upright without falling over and begins to reach for toys and promptly put in her mouth.

A year-old and she takes her first step...)

Clarke's mind stopped straying, no longer able to keep the worry at bay and couldn't quiet the shivering against the fear of falling into a wooded abyss when she sensed the ground growling underneath them.
The overhead lights from Lexa's jeep fought to shine through the downpour as she searched for Clarke's car on the mountain road. The news report stated that an early-season storm was covering the eastern part of the country and unfortunately had settled firmly over the mountains. The red alert on her weather app called it a bomb cyclone, and it had caused an unusual amount of destruction along the Atlantic seaboard, and a few lives were lost. She cursed herself for not paying more attention at the time when the storm had initially arrived at Mount Trikru.

Lexa pushed down her growing fear when doubt in the form of a devilish Anya hoisted her way onto one shoulder and whispered into her ear. You should have never let your omega go alone. You should have insisted that you go with her. Why didn't you push harder? The alpha had to agree, but logic who reminded her a lot of Raven sat on her other shoulder, filing her nails and calmly told her, Clarke is completely capable of taking care of herself and your baby. She had every right to go shopping alone.

Lexa shooked them both off, wrestling with her competing thoughts, and finally settled the dispute that she couldn't blame any of this on her mate.

Each mile passed with no evidence of a broken-down car or crash in sight. Lexa sensed the distance between her family to expand further apart. Each one of the hours she spent working on the stupid bike and preparing dinner felt like a physical wall; every minute was a brick she had laid down while her mate and child were in trouble. An ugly thought raised its head that she could lose her family and quietly groaned when a fissure slice through her heart.

Lexa angrily wiped away the wetness that formed in her eyes. She had no idea up to this point in her life that this challenge, this test she must carry as a parent and partner until this very moment. It made her feel exposed, naked in her failure.

See anything? Anya's voice came over the open line on her cellphone.

Lexa pushed down the dread so it wouldn't show in her voice, "Nothing yet. I'm coming up to Mount Weather's sign."

Roger.

Lexa focused on the road ahead and had taken the lead of a convoy of vehicles from home. From Mount Weather, the state police were doing the same thing coming from the other direction. Lexa checked her phone for a text from Clarke, every few minutes, and it stayed stubbornly silent.
Anya's voice came through again, *Maybe Clarke decided to walk home.*

Lexa bit back her comment that they should have found them by now and flatly stated, "The police sent out an Amber Alert for Camryn, including a description of Clarke's vehicle and what they were wearing. I hope she stayed in the car, though. I hate for Clarke to be walking in this weather."

Her head started to throb with a growing headache when she saw lights coming from the other directions in the distance. "Hold up. I see the police. The strobing red and blue lights came from the single police car managed to illuminate the surrounding forest.

*I see it.*

Lexa pulled over and jumped out of the jeep and waved down the police cruiser as she looked desperately inside. The backseat was empty, and another hole tore open in her heart.

"I called you about my family, Clarke and our baby, Camryn."

The officer dressed for the weather in his rain gear, put on his trooper cap as he exited his vehicle. "I'm afraid we didn't see any accident on the side of the road. It's clear from here back to Mount Weather, 'cept for this awful weather.

"That can't be."

Anya leaned over so only she could hear, "Maybe she got picked up by a passerby." Lexa turned angrily to rebuke Anya, but she continued, "Check your phone, maybe Clarke was able to..."

Lexa sucked in a breath and pushed down her irritation and saw that a text from Clarke had just come through. Lexa shook her head at her message. Not sure how this was going to help. "Clarke says she passed a sign that had pumpkins for sale about half a mile back right before the accident. Did you see anything like that, Officer..."

"Martin. No. I'm afraid I didn't notice, not in this weather."
"Maybe we passed the sign going the other way." Lexa jogged back to her jeep and stopped in place when she thought her eyes were playing tricks on her. With all of the lights covering the roadway, it lit up the mountainside to the left and saw the torn away orange mesh that hung against broken poles. It was right there in front of all of them this whole time. She followed the debris of rocks covering the roadway and to a small section of the metal guard rail broken away and looked over the side. Her heart jerked wildly in her chest and cried out when she saw Clarke's car, "Oh, no, no, no."

Lexa slipped as she made her way down the muddy ravine, falling on her ass to where Clarke's SUV rested against a boulder at the edge of another drop-off.


Lexa slipped to halt and placed her hands on either side of her face and peered into the driver-side window, seeing the deployed airbag, and tried to open the door. It held firm from a boulder resting against it.

She wiped away the smear of mud covered the passenger window, and closed her eyes as all the anxiety drain from her body and opened the door.

"Hey, hey."

"Lexa?" Clarke's voice filled her soul with relief when she said her name.

Lexa crawled inside and wrapped her arms around Clarke, and the baby safely covered in a blanket. The pain that tried to take hold of her heart dissipated as the rain washed away the rest.

"How did you find us?"

"Pure dumb luck." Lexa's body started to heat up and radiate towards her chilled mate.

A call from over her shoulder, "Lexa, we've got to hurry."
"Are you hurt?"

Clarke sank into her warmth and said, "I don't think so."

"Is the baby okay?"

Clarke's voice sounded tired but relax, "She's fine. This sweet thing has been quite the little trooper in all of this mess."

Lexa felt the back of her eyes sting and kissed Clarke and choked out against her lips, "I wish that I..."

Clarke cupped her cheek. "Hey, pup. We're both okay. I was just a little scared." Clarke started to move and said, "Can you get the car seat?"

"We don't have time, Clarke." That was from Anya worrying over Lexa's shoulder.

Lexa kissed Clarke once more. "We've got to get you guys out of here. 'Now, Clarke."

She left out what could have said to her mate, that she sensed movement under her feet with no time to explain. Lexa took the sleeping baby and stuffed her into her flannel shirt, so she was close to her chest and pumped out more heat then buttoned her inside her coat.

The wind and rain whipped around them as she held the baby to her chest and gripped firmly onto Clarke's hand and helped her out of the vehicle. They passed by Jasper crawling on his chest and under the car to connect a couple of heavy chains to the SUV's axle. A line of strangers made a chain of bodies, reaching down with guiding hands to help them from the dropoff. That was until Gustus rushed down to meet them and lifted Clarke onto one shoulder and carried her up the muddy trail.

"Whoa," Clarke said with a surprised huff. Her purse and the diaper bag dangled from her hands.

Lexa couldn't see her face but knew it must have mirrored the smile on her own. Gustus had lifted Clarke unto his shoulder like she was a small child and turned at the top of the road and held his
hand for Lexa and pulled her onto the roadway and placed Clarke carefully on the ground.

"Get this little lady and your child into your jeep, Lexa. We'll take care of her car.

"Thank you, my friend." He nodded and rushed down to help Jasper.

Lexa wrapped her arm around Clarke's back to sense her whole like that baby sleeping against her chest, less this was all a figment of her imagination and that she just didn't find her mate and child hanging precariously over the side of the mountain. She led them back to her vehicle and joined her inside and in hush tones removed Camryn from her jacket and gave her back to Clarke, and turned up the heater.

"Stay here while I see to your car. I've got a ton of questions for you."

Clarke grabbed her arm. "You're not mad at me for putting the baby in danger?"

Lexa stammered and touched Clarke's chilled hand on hers. "Not even a little bit. I was..." Lexa paused and leaned her forehead against Clarke's. "I'm just glad we found you both."

A yell caught her attention and gave Clarke a quick kiss. "Wait here."

Lexa jogged back to Anya's truck and watched as the wench struggle to pull Clarke's SUV from the incline. Mud splashed over her legs, making her step backward and watched in shock after Clarke's mangled vehicle rested at the edge of the road, down below the large boulder it had slammed against, gave way, and tumbled with roar down into the unknown.

"Step back, everyone," Officer Martin yelled as more of the side of the roadway started to give way, carving the pavement away like it was nothing. "Move, move!"

Anya continued to back up her truck, pulling the damaged SUV until rested in front of her jeep and was clear of the crumbling road.

Anya jumped down, and Lexa asked, "Do you think it drivable?"
Anya checked the frontend. "Nope, I think the axle is bent, and the front of the car is all smashed up."

Jasper joined them and started to removed Anya's wench. "I can haul her it back to my garage for the night until you decide what you want to do with her."

Lexa looked towards Clarke and what she would have wanted. "I think Clarke would appreciate it if you bring her car back to our cabin. We'll deal with it later."

"You got it, Boss."

The highway began to fill with cars trying to get passed, but the road was too damaged. Officer Martin's night just got a lot longer as he leaned into his shoulder and radio into his dispatch the mudslide, and at the same time, he signaled to the traffic building behind him to stop. Gustus grabbed a few red flares from the truck of the police cruiser and lit them up. Then jogged back to assisted Jasper attaching chains from his tow truck to Clarke's vehicle.

"I'm going to get my family home," Lexa said over her shoulder as she was leaving, but was stopped by her hand on her arm.

"Listen, I can tell you're still upset." Lexa started to shake her head in denial. "Yeah, I can still smell your fear. Everything is okay. Clarke's car can be replaced."

"I could have lost everything." Lexa motioned to the side of the road.

"But you didn't, my friend." Anya pointed with her chin to her jeep. "They're safe and warm like you should be. Go on and will get the car back to your place."

Lexa looked to her friend and sucked in a breath when Anya put out her hand to shake, and out of her control, she wrapped Anya in a hug, and she whispered, "Thanks for everything."

Anya bro hugged her for a second then pushed her away toward her jeep. "Go on, asshole. We'll see you in a bit."
Lexa shook her head as she playfully shoved her back and headed towards her family.

~

Camryn startled awake after Lexa shut the jeep door. Her whimper quickly changed into crying and soon into a wail. "My goodness, Camryn. Shh, baby girl. Everything is okay. Mama found us." She only cried louder, breaking Clarke's heart. She brought Camryn to her shoulder and began to purr. Quietly at first, finding the rhythm in her throat. The baby calmed and wrapped her little fingers around Clarke's thumb and settled. Clarke whispered into a tiny ear, "That's my girl." Clarke felt her connection to her daughter grow stronger.

Clarke continued humming, watching in awe when the part of the road gave way. She shook her head and shut away what almost happened to them if they hadn't been rescued in time. Her eyes fell on Lexa, and by their invisible connection, her soul still firmly united with her. It wasn't the heat from the jeep that was keeping her warm. It was the drenched and exhausted woman, making her way back to them.

"I'm sorry, Clarke. I think your car is totaled."

Clarke shook her head. "No, I'm sorry, Lexa. I shouldn't have gone shopped on such a lousy day."

"You couldn't have known."

"But still..."

"No, Clarke. I beat myself up, trying to find you both. I don't want you to feel like you did anything wrong. Shit just happens." Lexa turned her vehicle around and started for home.

Clarke felt the need to change the subject stated, "Camryn got to see her first fish today."

"Oh, really?" Lexa tossed her a confused look and nervous chuckle.
"Hmm. It was orange." Both giggled that turned into a burst of laughter with her at her absurd attempt.

~

The traffic thinned out the closer they got to the turnoff for home and found that a detour was set up to prevent vehicles and big rigs from taking the road they were on.

"I guess the road is going to be closed for the foreseeable future," Clarke said.

"It's happened before. You'd be surprised at how fast the engineers will be able to repair the road.

"Really? I wondered what the workers were setting up when I passed them on the way to the mall."

"What's that?" Lexa paused, "Wait, was it the orange mesh?"

"Hmm, mm. I didn't think it would work at the time. I guess I was right."

Lexa shook her head. "They should have closed the road. They're certainly going to hear from me and pay the deductible to replace your vehicle."

Camryn stirred against Clarke's chest and turned her head toward Lexa and reached out with a tiny hand.

"Someone wants you to hold her."

"It's against all of the rules, but..." Lexa gladly took the baby and held her the rest of the way home.

~
Clarke ran her finger down the bruise ran from her shoulder, through her breast and stopped on her hip bone. "I didn't even feel that. Owe. I feel that."

"Lay down, and I'll get something for it after I take a shower."

"Wait."

Lexa turned and received a peck on her lips. Clarke tasted a hint of wine on her lips. "Thanks for a wonderful dinner. I'm stuffed."

Lexa kicked off her house shoes and said, "You should have left room for dessert."

"Maybe later, as in tomorrow."

Camryn was asleep, hopefully for the night. Fed, burped, and given a bath right before she was put down. Comfortably and safe in her bed.

Clarke was too, 'cept for the burping part, and if by a kind of osmosis, she let out a burp.

The call to her mom when reasonably well and promised she'd let her know if she was still feeling sore in a couple of days. The bruise seemed to be the only concern. It was an ugly reminder until Lexa gently scolded her; it was a badge of courage. Whatever that meant.

Lexa asked if it was okay to light up. She felt the need to calm her nerves. She only took one hit on the back porch and stuck to wine for the rest of the evening.

All of the presents were hiding in Camryn's closet with a stern warning to Lexa. She'd better not look for them. Lexa got a little choked up and then blew it off like she'd got something in her eye.

Clarke felt that. Felt that deep bone ache scare they shared over the what if. That if held a lot of meaning. The whim of fate could have changed everything. The what if they got was just a little warning, this time.
They'd get back to normal in no time and wagged her legs open when Lexa exited the bathroom with only a towel wrapped around her hips that barely covered her erection. Her silly mate, after her shower, now wore the baseball cap from this morning backward over her wet braid hair.

"I think you said something about needing a fill-up."

Clarke blinked in surprise, then laughed. "After you lube me up." Indicating to the bruise covering her chest.

"Looks like your chassis needs a little TLC."

Clarke smiled, going along with her, "Yeah, I do. Got pretty banged up."

Lexa sat next to her and applied the healing cream until she complained, "I would feel better if you crawl on top of me," anding cheekily. "Easier to get to my engine."

Lexa chuckled, "Are we going to keep this up all night."

It was Clarke's turn to laugh as she reached under the towel and wrapped her fist around her harden shaft, and pulled her close to her mouth as the material fell away.

"That's up to you, babe," Clarke said with a wink and swiped her tongue over the head of her cock.
Chapter 23

Throughout the evening, Lexa couldn't stop letting her gaze linger over Clarke soothing their daughter. All the while, her mind processed a new appreciation for everything Keryon had blessed her with this night.

~

Lexa stepped out of the steamy shower and bent over to wrap a towel around her wet hair and caught a glimpse of Clarke through the partially open bathroom door. Her mate seemed lost in thought. From the strands of blond hair, she curled around one finger to the softness of her face, not showing the fear from earlier, but of contentment. Maybe it was a serenity of a sort. Lexa shook her head for lack of the right word. No matter, Lexa was in awe of her mate's courage despite the terrifying accident.

The state police stopped by to take Clarke's statement and photograph the car; Jasper had dropped off earlier. After they left with a promise of a detailed report of the accident forwarded to their insurance company, Clarke immediately set about removing the Christmas presents from the back of the totaled SUV. Clarke asked her not to look inside the bags and insisted she didn't need any help. Lexa promised she wouldn't cheat and put her head down and focused on unlatching the baby's car seat from the wrecked car.

Clarke made several trips inside while Lexa feigned trouble removing it, hoping that her ploy was convincing enough to stay close to Clarke in case the totaled car began to bother her. When Clarke was on her last bag of goodies, Lexa lifted the seat out of the vehicle, and set it inside the garage. She checked the glove compartment and center console for the rest of Clarke's stuff when her eyes strayed to the floorboard and saw what looked to be the back of a photograph and picked it up. She only caught a glimpse when Clarke snatched it out of her hand.

Lexa asked with a chuckle where did it come from, and Clarke's reaction was an exasperated quip, You'll find out later, punk, but did leave her with a quick kiss on the lips to soften the blow, and held the picture to her chest and out of her sight. Clarke's lips, hell her whole demeanor was if nothing had happened, and she bound to keep it that way.

Lexa grinned, remembering how Clarke had teased before leaving for the mall and got an idea. Out of Lexa's control, or maybe it was knowing that her beautiful semi-naked omega was waiting, her body reacted by pumping blood directly to her groin.
Lexa wrapped a towel around her waist and towel-dried and combed out the knots in her long hair, then weaved it into a braid. She smiled at her attempt to hide her swelling cock and slipped on the only other accessory, the baseball cap she wore earlier. She flicked off the light and exited the bathroom with a smirk to her grin.

"I think you said something about needing a fill-up." It sounded lame, but seem to work by the surprised look covering Clarke's face.

Clarke's eye sparkled, and giggled in her attempt at being sexy, "After you lube me up." Pointing to the angry bruise slicing through her chest.

Lexa grimaced and rubbed her chin, giving her a wink. "Looks like your chassis needs a little TLC.

Clarke tightened her lips to stifled a chuckle and fell into her part with ease, "Yeah, I do. Got pretty banged up." Her cock reacted to the subtle shift of Clarke's beautiful breasts when she eagerly moved upright in bed and gave her room to sit next to her.

Lexa warmed up the arnica healing cream in her hands then applied it carefully over the bruise. Clarke squirmed under her light touch and said with the cutest pout, "It would feel better if you crawl on top of me," then cleverly added, "easier to get to my engine."

Lexa chuckled. "Are we going to keep this up all night?"

Her laughter cut off when Clarke giggled again and edged her hand slowly under the towel and enveloped her fist around her cock.

The towel fell away when Clarke leaned up. "That's up to you, babe." Lexa held still when Clarke licked over the head of her shaft.

Lexa growled and shifts with Clarke's motion to straddle her body, being careful of her bruise, and let her have her way. Lexa's brain short-circuited when Clarke pulls more of cock into her mouth and whimpers. Lexa glanced down, concerned that she had hurt Clarke. But the expression on Clarke's face wasn't anything close to pain but of something more profound.

She reluctantly pulled out of Clarke's mouth and met her halfway, cupping her face with both hands, pressing her lips against hers in a calm reverence. The distance erased, the connection still
intense like the first time they kissed. They breathed the same air as time seem to halt, and the world fell away to this room, and their bed.

Clarke's scent wrapped around her body and felt it tugged her down to the seat of her desire but held firm against the pull and sat back on her knees. Another quiet moment hung between them as she memorized the softness of Clarke's wet lips, to the blown irises looking back at her under dark lashes. Their eyes met in an understanding of what they almost lost.

Clarke glanced away under her intense gaze. "No fair," she gently complained.

"Let me take care of you." Lexa broke her own rule and uttered, "I'm not the one who almost..."

"Shh, Lexa. Less talking more..."

Whatever complaint Clarke had died on her lips when Lexa raised off of her and crawled downward. Her cock stiffening in reaction to her omega's complex fragrance saturating her senses. Lexa lifted Clarke's legs over her shoulders, parting her thighs, coming within licking distance of her sex and inhaled. Her shaft shivered in reaction, as she nudged her labia apart with her lips and nose and licked slowly into her mate.

"Vroom, vroom," Clarke mumbled while she sucked and flicked her tongue over her clit, then chuckled into her wet core when her lust-filled brain registered what her mate had muttered. Clarke shook against the vibration of her lips and looked down just as Lexa raised one warning eyebrow and brought one hand up to tangle with hers.

Lexa licked around her opening and watched Clarke through a patch of dark blond hair as she bit down on her bottom lip, focusing on her pleasure. Clarke panted and wagged her legs wider and rubbed wickedly against her mouth. Lexa's felt that urgency in her belly and wrapped her arms around Clarke's legs to keep her in place, and worked at finding the sweet spot, the one place that intensified her pleasure.

"Oh, right there, Baby."

Clarke chased her mouth and tongue, sending a powerful jerk into her hips and bucked into the mattress. Lexa held on tighter and licked the threads of slick covering her mouth and edged back the hood of Clarke's clit and sucked until it grew red and hard. Clarke shook and begged her as she reached down and tried to drag her upward, "Lexa, please."
Lexa's cock stiffened, hearing her mate's plea and released her clit and wiped her mouth across Clarke's thigh as she crawled forward, drawing the omega's legs further apart and filled her in one sure thrust and held still above Clarke.

Lexa winked and whispered, "Mine."

Clarke reached up and removed the baseball cap and tossed it somewhere over her shoulder, and pulled her down to her breasts. "Come here, Lover."

~

Slitted eyes gazed down at her as Lexa slid in and out. Clarke memorized every expression over her beautiful face. Her mouth hung slightly open in awe, as the muscles of her abdomen occasionally jerk and imagined what Lexa was feeling, thinking, being inside of her so intimately.

Warm, musky lips and tongue licked into her mouth, and she knew love. A deep aching love that would have destroyed Lexa had the outcome had been any different. A sob ebbed up, and she tried to swallow it down before Lexa noticed, but the alpha was keen to hear and feel her distress and stopped thrusting.

"Shh. It's okay, Clarke. You're both safe."

"I am now." Clarke pushed a lock of hair behind one ear that had fallen out of her braid. Her finger traced Lexa's kiss, swollen lower lip, and whispered, "Mine."

Lexa kissed her hand before she left it to drift out of reach and began to sense the tickle of her climax rise. Her mate must have felt her squeezing her thick cock and pulled her legs around her body, and Clarke finished the motion and hooked her feet together around Lexa's hips.

Clarke pulled Lexa down and met her lips and tongue, surging in their connection and squeezed down when her climax began. She pulled a grunt from Lexa, and her mate pushed steadily until her body excepted her knot, sealing it inside and cried out when she rolled into her orgasm.

Lexa soon followed and groaned when she began to empty inside of her, and after several more
short thrusts, her hips slowed down until she grew still. Clarke ran her fingers lightly over Lexa's back, drawing circles and heart-shaped patterns as Lexa's kisses against her neck turned into soft breaths and even out. They stayed connected until Lexa became soft and slipped out of her and shifted her weight off of her and drifted off to sleep.

No more words were needed tonight. Their bodies spoke in the only language they needed. Clarke soon followed her mate in sleep, but not after she sent a quiet prayer of thanks to Keryon.

~

"I'll be just outside if you need anything," Lexa said, adjusting Camryn in the sling strapped to her chest. At just over two months, she had about doubled her weight, and by her length, Camryn was pushing to be tall as Lexa if not taller. (Christine had kept a detailed growth chart on Alexandra and sent her a copy. Clarke was over the moon at keeping track of their child and how she compared to Lexa at the same age.)

_Her currently extremely silly and envious mate._

Clarke knew Lexa was stalling, ever since she found out that Lincoln was coming by to help her out translating the rest of Indra's papers. Lexa had made several trips inside for water, then a snack she claimed was for Anya. Her next tactic was taking the baby with her outside in the garage. Lexa took her time putting Camryn in something warm upstairs in the nursery and could sense her listening to them discussing the work.

Clarke pursed her lips to keep from laughing out loud the last time Lexa came back in the cabin and heard Anya cursing from the open utility door.

"Are you sure she's going to be warm enough?" Clarke asked.

"I've got her bundled head to toe, plus I'm pretty warm myself." Lexa exaggerated by puffing out her chest.

It was all Clarke could do and not roll her eyes at her mate's display of prowess. "Okay. We'll still be working on all of this." Clarke indicted to the papers in front of her. "Kind of want to finish it up today."
Lexa looked down and worried the sling over her chest. "Sorry. I won't bother you guys again."
Clarke smiled, lifting her eyebrows questioning whether this was true or not. Lexa smiled back at her and bent over to kiss Camryn to hide that same smile on the top of the baby's head and left.

Lincoln chuckled at her mate antics. "Don't tell me that Lexa is jealous of little old me?"

"Well, you're not old and certainly not little." Clarke nudged his side. "Damn, when do you have the time to work out? You're a solid as a rock."

Lincoln rubbed his scruffy jaw, causing his bicep to bludge. "I work out with Octavia in the morning before we open up the restaurant. We've got a small gym set up at our place that we're thinking of converting to a..." He stopped abruptly, confusing Clarke, but just as quickly, he turned back to the papers saying, "Hey, let's see if we can get through the next few pages before Lexa finds another reason to come back inside."

"Of course. I know I'm also keeping you from your day off."

Clarke looked at the papers strewn across the table but couldn't help but noticed how Lincoln had easily changed the subject. It happened so fast she wondered if she had imagined it.

A log in the fireplace popped in the momentary silence, and it drew her attention to the numerous cinnamon cranberry candles scenting the space and to the decorated room.

Clarke had to admit Lexa could have felt a little left out as she continued to take in the inviting living room and up the stairs to their bedroom. Everywhere you looked was like every cheesy Christmas movie you'd find on Netflix. Clarke bit her lip to hide her smile at the resemblance, wondering if they had gone overboard.

Clarke couldn't help wanting to make their first Christmas together right. The setting was perfect in their beautiful cabin and new family. Life was pretty damn sweet, and not to enjoy what they almost lost would seem ungrateful.

Lexa was eager to help, and soon they were taking trips all over the hill and dell to search for holiday decorations. The days were filled with laughter, and chocolate chip cookies dipped in hot cocoa and good friends. They invited Anya and Raven to go exploring for Christmas trees behind their property. The two lumberjacks were dressed, armed, and ready to cut down the perfect holiday tree.
Camryn and Raean were dressed for the cold and strapped to their mother's chest on their first adventure. During the trek up the mountain, Anya and Lexa took turns educating both of them on the care of the forest taught to them by Indra, saying that finding the right tree and removing it from a location would benefit the forest health. Clarke didn't miss Anya mumbling under her breath to Raven, the fact it was free for the taking.

When at last they had finally decided on the ideal tree, Lexa fussed over trying to find the right angle to cut it down. Lexa squatted to get a better look and went to her knees, almost becoming hidden by the boughs, when her spectacular ass caught Clarke's attention and grinned like an idiot. The flash of Raven's camera surprised her out of a stupor, caught redhanded gawking at her mate. Anya silently nudged her to take another picture with the unsuspecting alpha. Off the top of Clarke's head, she posed behind her Lexa by spreading her arms like the Will Smith meme. Anya snorted, probably loving the thought of torturing her later.

When Clarke was sure they had everything they need, they spend an evening decorating and dancing to contemporary holiday music, with the giggling baby between them. They took a ton of pictures and started a digital scrapbook to sent to the folks later.

A log shifted in the fireplace, causing a spray of ashes, brought her out of her musing. She looked down at the papers in front of them. Making up their tempory work area, was her laptop, their notes, and Indra family history laid out over the coffee table.

Lincoln practiced reading in a Trigedasleng accent or what Clarke believed was accurate; she honestly had no idea. Clarke told him the words sounded ancient, like from some lost civilization. His voice held a long-forgotten time and explained the history of Indra's people who forged this land and founded a town, making a life here.

What became from just a lark to learn about Mount Trikru, transformed into a gift for Indra and her family for Christmas. Indra had a rough patch after breaking the news to her step-sister Nia, of what had happened to her mother. Nia dropped her lawsuit, embarrassed over of her lack of claim at taking over the town, but Indra offered her an opportunity to be apart of her family once again. Indra included a stipulation, only improvements, and no destruction of any older buildings in Mount Trikru that contained the heart and history of this town. Nia acquiesced, and Indra set her and Roan up one of her cabins, near the hotel under construction.

"You ready?"

Clarke moved her fingers over her keyboard. "Ready."
Lincoln read from the manuscript, "Shof op. Tri-de ste set yu op. Hasta mema." Then translated, "Be quiet. The trees are listening. To remember." He dictated the rest in English, correcting the grammar while Clarke type it into a word document on her laptop,

*I pray, the forest covering this mountain will always retain our memories.*

*Messages within the bark held histories of scented scars from heavily crowned bucks scraping their antlers to mark territories in their coming ruts. It called to us to linger, and each new fertile season we remained, the forest grew lush with abundant fruit, nuts, and animals to sustain our people.*

*The trees became our protectors as they reach up to the heavens and produced massive timbers, generously giving up their journey to the sky to provide our people with a place to take shelter. When summer's seasonal thundering storms threaten their very existence, we established our mission upon the mountain.*

*Our purpose on this sacred earth is to shepherd this realm that shielded and provided us with subsistence, a place we can finally call home. The forest will forever carry our history within the soil, rocks, and trees of this land as we become its caretaker. It was the forest covering this land where our blended people became one tribe and founded our homestead and became the people of the woods.*

*They say that the trees will always remember, and as its people, we shall continue this promise.*

*Our names are Isaac and Sarah. The legacy we leave to our children and their descendants to come will be the forest guardians from which we take our surname.*

Lincoln's voice trailed off and looked away. His scent had fixated on a painful memory. Clarke wasn't sure what upset him and tried to make a joke about it, leaning against his shoulder and softly kidding, "Not bad for just a cook."

He chuckled sadly and said, "Thanks." He waited for a beat. "Octavia and I lost our baby earlier this year." He smoothed out the paper over the coffee table to break the tension and dabbed at his eye with his thumb. It tried to play it off when he drawled, "He was only a few weeks along, so it's not like it should hurt. Right?"

"Oh no, Lincoln. I'm so sorry."
He placed his hand over hers, resting on his arm and seemed to make a decision. "I know I can trust you, and I'm almost certain that Octavia wouldn't mind." Lincoln turned back to Clarke with a blinding white smile. "We're expecting again."

Stinging tears welled up in her eyes and reached for a tissue. "That's wonderful news. How far along is she?"

"Almost nine weeks." He paused. "I don't mind if you tell Lexa, but I don't think Octavia would want anybody else to know until we were sure the baby is okay."

Clarke made like to lock her lips with a key and mocked, throwing it away and hugged him when the door to the garage opened again and quickly shut. This time Lexa didn't come inside the cabin.

Clarke pulled back and shut her eyes, shaking her head as she stood. "I think I better go check on her."

"No problem. I'll make a short-cut for you to finish the rest."

~

Anya had just told her over and over that she should trust Clarke, and she truly did. They were mated, and the living breathing embodiment of that love was currently wide awake, mouthing her fist, strapped to her chest. It was that stupid itch she had to scratch when she came up with another reason to go back inside.

When she saw her Clarke hugging Lincoln, it was too much to witness, and before she did something she would regret, she handed Camryn off to Anya, strapped the motorcycle helmet on her head, and rolled Billie's bike into the driveway. She used the force of her whole body down through her booted foot and kick-started it to life. It rumbled for the first time in years while she revved the engine and adjusted the mirrors. Lexa didn't say a word to Anya and rode the Harley over the driveway, paused at the highway, looked both ways, and turned right onto the road that led to the mountains and away from Mount Trikru. Away from home.
"Hey, you got the bike started."

"Yeah, we did finally," Anya said, bouncing the fussy baby and quickly passing her over to Clarke.

They stood at the edge of the garage and looked out. Camryn watched Clarke, with confusion covering her tiny face.

"Did Lexa say where she was going?"

Anya shoved in her hands in her coat pocket and shivered. "Nope."

Clarke cuddled the baby closer to her chest. "She's upset?"

Anya offered her coat. Clarke silently declined. "That would be my guess."

They shared a significant moment of quiet eye contact. Anya broke first and pleaded with her eyes to leave her out of it. Alphas were like that. Either you got open and helpful ones like Lexa or the stoic and shy types like one standing next to her looking for a way out. Lexa could be a contradiction at times and why Anya didn't need to say another word. Lexa was her responsibility, and whatever is bothering her mate, she'd deal with her later.

"Are you hungry?"

"Starving."

"Come inside, and I'll make some lunch."

Clarke was mad. She was seething. Upset that her mate reacted stupidly over something she thought she saw. What was most irritating, she couldn't talk it over with her friends. It would make a bigger deal out it, than what Lexa did by leaving abruptly.

She would have texted Lexa that everything is okay, that she didn't have anything to be worried about when she noticed her stupid lovely idiot had left her cellphone charging in its station.
Lexa didn't get far.

Her better judgment wouldn't let her. She spotted a place to stop and drove into the driveway next to the hotel under construction and parked next to Clarke's office. She booted the kickstand in place and dismounted the bike and put the helmet on the seat.

She didn't move but to put her hands on her hips and breathed in the chilled air, swiftly exhaling it into a cloud of steam. She shouldn't be this upset, there was no reason, yet here she was a couple of miles from home without a word of why to Anya and her mate.

She felt something missing, and out of habit checked her back pockets.

"Fuck!" More steam escaped Lexa's mouth.

She looked up to the mountain clouds and ran the embarrassing fact over in her mind. She left home without a phone or her damn wallet.

She felt naked as the humiliation followed her along the path that led to the lake. The only sounds that kept her company were her boots crunching over the leaves covering the way and stopped just at got shore and blew out a frustrated breath.

"You're an idiot, Woods."

She agitated a bullfrog at her feet, making it croak loudly at being disturbed. The creature turned to glance up at her, and for some reason, didn't see her as a threat. It walked to the edge of the water in a huff and leaped into the lake, making a sloppy splash.

"Disgusted with me too, bro?"

Lexa breathed in the cold air and shivered. She only wore a thin quilted vest over her flannel shirt
and a beanie. It was okay in the garage with the heater, but in this weather, you needed a heavier jacket. Even the cold seeped through her thick jeans.

The ground still saturated with moisture from the storm that passed slowly over the mountains a week or so ago. It had diluted the smells of the forest, tamping down the forest scent. Winter was always like this, where everything seemed to be held in suspension, waiting to burst free the moment the season past into spring.

She started trembling against the chilled air seeping into her body, and pulled the beanie further down over her ears and crossed her arms over her chest. She sniffed the air and realized why the forest was less pungent. The colder the atmosphere gets, the fewer particles are moving about. A forecast that snow is coming. Maybe that's why they say smells like snow.

A grin covered her face at the thought of waking up to white Christmas until she remembered why she was standing out in the middle of almost nowhere. Lexa wanted to call what she was feeling, jealousy, but that wasn't right, or was it? The aggressive part of her persona, the one she kept caged, began scratching to be set free — she left instead of starting a fight with Lincoln. Though taking a ride to cool off meant she stupidly left her omega and child with two alphas.

She absolutely without a shadow of a doubt and on her baby's life trusted her friends. It didn't change the fact she felt irritated and threatened, even a little annoyed. Her mate wasn't in heat, yet grew bothered at the attention she was receiving. Earlier, when Anya hugged Clarke, a little too long made her look away, but the heavy pheromones oozing from Lincoln was the reason she kept checking on Clarke.

Lexa kicked at a rock at her feet, dislodging it where it had laid for god knows how long. She picked it with the idea to toss it as far as she could and maybe warm up when she heard someone clearing their throat behind her.

"Penny for your thoughts."

Lexa shut her eyes, recognizing the voice, Roan. She tossed the rock into the deep, ignoring his question. She turned to see him standing, not thirty feet from where she sulked. Lexa didn't feel like talking or answering his question and just gave him a lift her chin in response.

"I didn't take you for someone that rode motorcycles." Roan moved to stand next to her and dragged the next part out to aggravate her even further, "too butch."
She didn't have time to look away when he hocked up a loogie, reared back, and launched into an arch about twenty feet away landing with a nasty plunk in the lake. Lexa clenched her jaw biting back a disgusting remark she had on the tip of her tongue. Be nice, he's Indra's nephew, and he's going to be living here for now.

"It's not my bike. I just tuned it up for the owner and took it for a spin."

"I see I was correct."

The mood she was in got worse. But she had all the control to either let Roan upset her even more or just simply leave, and she wasn't ready to go home yet, and he was just the distraction she needed at the moment.

She turned to Roan with the question that had been on her mind the first time they met. "Why are you like this?" She clarified when he raised his eyebrows, "You're always trying to get a rise out of someone, even a total stranger."

Roan seemed to feel her statement like a physical blow but quickly recovered. "Because. I'm an asshole." He sounded like he was almost proud.

"Is that true, or what you want people to believe?"

Roan looked away and found a rock of his own, but didn't toss it in the lake. He worked at removing the dirt and sand that covered its surface. He looked up at her and said, "I've never been able to stay in one place long enough to make friends. It was just easier to keep people at a distance, knowing nothing would ever come of it," then quietly, "of me." He stuffed the rock into his coat pocket when he stood up.

"But, if you're staying in Mount Trikru, you've got know you have to do better, Roan." Lexa didn't understand where this scolding was coming from. She didn't know Roan or his mother well enough even to care. But, that they were apart of Indra's family and living here for the foreseeable future, she would have to get used to their presence in town.

"That's going to be a hard habit to break."

"That you recognize is a start. You shouldn't burn all your bridges, Roan. Give Mount Trikru time
to break through your walls."

"Sounds like you've had the same experience."

Lexa wasn't about to get into it with Roan. She didn't trust him well enough to share her past. That she had opened up to her closest friends fulfilled the emptiness she once felt.

"My advice," she paused when he snorted. "Stop trying so hard to make people hate the first impression of you."

"You hate me?"

"No, I don't hate anyone, but I do find you irritating, Roan. I mean, if that's what you're going for, you're succeeding. If not..." Lexa felt exhausted and cold, trying to work up the emotion to care about him. The urge to go back home started to mount.

"I should be nice?" Roan physically shuttered then smirked. "Hell, I guess it wouldn't hurt if this place is going to be my home."

Lexa used this opportunity to leave. "It's your choice, Roan. I'll see you around."

*Home*. That word played over in her head as she made her way back to the Harley, sure-footed, and chilled to the bone.

~

Clarke laid out a spread of ingredients to make sandwiches, with an assortment of chips and various sodas on the kitchen island. Anya played peek-a-boo with a giggling Camryn on the sofa while Lincoln worked on creating a shortcut for her to complete the translation for Indra.

Anya whispered to her that the bike only had about a quarter of a tank of gas so that Lexa couldn't get far. Plus, she said Lexa was madly in love with her making Clarke shoved her out of the kitchen with a relieved chuckle.
She felt a tingling connection to Lexa before she heard the motorcycle rumbling into the driveway. She hid her smile and set another plate out for her mate.

"Can you guys get started while I check on Lexa?"

She didn't wait for an answer, wiping her hands dry, and made a beeline to the garage.

"Hey, good looking."

Lexa dismounted the bike, dropped the helmet on the ground, and walked into her arms. "I'm sorry for being a jerk."

"You weren't..."

"I was jealous of Lincoln," Lexa mumbled into her neck.

Clarke smiled into her chest. "Well, it didn't help that you saw us hugging, but it was for a good reason, I promise."

"You shouldn't have to explain." Lexa buried her face into her hair and felt her ribs expand, taking in her scent.

Clarke leaned up and kissed her chilled, flushed cheek. "It's a secret, and you have to promise you won't tell anyone." Lexa waited for her to continue, but she could see the ache still lingering in her mate's face and something else behind her eyes. She paused and softly stated, "Octavia and Lincoln were pregnant earlier in the year, and they lost the baby."

Lexa's expression swiftly changed to regret. "Oh, no."

"It was tough on both of them, but they tried again when Octavia came into heat and..." Lexa hugged Clarke before she could finish.
"They're going to be parents like us?"

"Hopefully, but as he said, Lincoln wants it kept quiet until they know the pregnancy is stable."

"I'm an idiot."

"Not quite, you just didn't have the whole story. Come inside. I'm starting lunch. You've got to be starving..." Clarke rubbed Lexa's arms, "and freezing. Maybe we're going to have a white Christmas after all. Smells like snow."

Lexa nodded through her shivering. "I was just thinking the same thing."

Clarke wrapped her arm around the cold woman's body and led her back inside the cabin.

~

Their friends left hours ago, dinner was eaten, dishes washed, and the baby asleep in her crib next to the sofa. But, Lexa still seemed edgy, and Clarke was determined to bring her out of her funk. Lexa had returned to the garage to polish up the bike; a surprise for Jessie for Christmas was planned, and she needed to finish up the work on her project before she sought her out.

Clarke decided to leave a few pages untranslated for Indra and her family to finish up. Hoping it could be a project to let them learn the language of their ancestors. She selected the proper vintage font that suited the text of the time and filled the printer with an antique stationary paper she found on the internet, mirroring the copies of the originals.

She did a quick spell check and left the grammar as is and pressed the print button on her laptop. In the office behind her, the printer whirred noisily to life. Clarke cursed quietly and darted her eyes towards Camryn and waited. She blew out a breath, relieved that it didn't wake her. She closed the office door and pulled her robe closed and tip-toed towards the garage to right Lexa's world.

All night she had a notion on the tip of her brain but couldn't put it together but did recall a conversation she had with Christine some time back, one of a personal nature involving syncing their mating cycles and how lucky they had been. When they met and mated earlier in the year, they just happen to be ready to breed, and if Lexa had used protection and her suppressant had been up to date.
Clarke looked toward the sleeping baby. She truly, truly loved Lexa with all of her heart and soul, but it was when her eyes first fell on her daughter, her heart expanded to bursting and sensed what true love is. Camryn may not have been planned, yet the outcome made them beyond blessed.

Christine explained, having experienced it herself with Alex when Alexandra was months old, sometimes they fell out of sync. It could be why her mate could be antsy and irritable. Clarke recalled from her sex education classes a million years ago that omegas had heats. But female alphas displayed what you could call their cycles in mood swings, and their cocks would extend and stay semihard ready to mate, and if Lexa was nearing, it could be why her scent had grown more intense around their friends.

It's not like they couldn't get pregnant any other time of the year, it's just heats between mated pairs were more intense on a deeper level. Clarke had never experienced this need to join so fully with someone, hell the most she initially thought she'd get out of hooking up with Lexa was a new fuck buddy.

It was more than she could have dreamed.

Clarke shivered when she recalled their first time. No wonder Lexa was in a state and had to be coming into it soon. Her heat wasn't due until sometime next year after she finished nursing Camryn, and her body recovered fully from giving birth, but it hadn't stopped their natural attraction towards each other. Clarke shimmied out of her pajama bottoms to surprise her mate, just in case what she suspected was true.

Lexa had closed the garage door, and the heater worked at warming the area, making the transition comfortable; after all, this was one of Lexa's favorite places, no reason not to keep it pleasant. Clarke couldn't find any reason not to make a few memories here as well.

The air smelled of cleaning solution and detected what she assumed was polishing wax. "Still working on the bike?"

"Finishing up." Lexa looked up from where she was sitting and saw the want lingering as she pulled her gloves off.

"Maybe you can take me for a ride."
Big green eyes looked up at her concerned. "Right now? It's too cold, Clarke, and we can't leave the baby."

Clarke ran her fingers through her mate's hair. "I wasn't exactly talking about taking it out on the road, Honey."

"Huh?"

Clarke held her hand out and drew her upright. "Get on the bike."

"I don't understand."

"Just do it for me."

Lexa shook her head, clearly confused but did as she asked. Clarke put out a hand, and Lexa helped her onto the bike, lifting her leg over the tank and sat facing her.

Lexa chuckled. "You've never been on a motorcycle before, have you?"

"Nope, this is my first time. Does it have a name?"

Lexa wrapped her arms around her back. "It's a 1960 Harley Davidson Panhead Duo Glide, but Billie called her, Lucky."

"Mmm, it does sound like a fast bike." Clarke had no clue, and she'd asked her about the Lucky part later, right now she had a woman to get off.

"It could be. Lexa reached around her to hold the handlebars and lifted the bike until rested upright. "It's really stable. I can support the bike because my feet are resting firmly on the ground."

Clarke leaned over to gaze down, wrapping a hand around her waist then scooted closer. The movement caused her plush robe to part at her hips. Lexa's reaction was almost immediate.
"Where are your bottoms?"

Clarke giggled and hooked a thumb over her shoulder. She didn't miss Lexa straining against the material of her jeans between her legs and didn't have time even to think when Lexa's lips sought out hers.

Deep in Lexa's chest, a growl began to rise, sending warmth and thrill. She cupped her chin and held onto the back her neck and sunk her tongue into Lexa's eager mouth. The grip on her waist grew tighter, and the cock straining between her legs threatened to rip a hole in Lexa's jeans.

Clarke released her face and edged her hands down to rescue her cock from the confining pants, which required her to scoot backward. Lexa didn't help but just smirked at her attempt. Clarke unzipped her fly and pulled her free, causing a surprised hiss from Lexa.

"Better now?" Clarke said in all seriousness combing the hair back from her face.

"Not even close, Omega."

"How about this?" Lexa was hard, already dripping, and ran her hand up and down her shaft. She could feel her pulsing need. "I'm ready for Jolly Ole Saint Dick." Lexa groaned at her pun.

"I'm not sure if that's wise, Clarke," Lexa mumbled half-hearted into her shoulder.

"Yet, I'll bet it will help your mood."

Lexa leaned back. "What mood?"

"The funk you've been in." Clarke tried to figure out how she could climb further onto Lexa's lap to mount her when the bottom of her slippers found the footrest and rose upward. "A little help, please."

Lexa grumbled, "I'm not in a mood." Yet she positioned her cock under her opening. Clarke held
onto Lexa's shoulders and slowly eased down.

"Sure, you're not." Clarke felt every pulsing inch of Lexa's cock stretching her open. It was so very hard to breathe being this full and took in a shaky breath. "You've just been irritable for hours, and I'm here to make you feel better."

~

Lexa needed to thrust, but that would probably cause Clarke to go flying off into her workbench, and she'd probably drop the bike. Neither was an option. She smiled at Clarke when she closed her eyes now firmly wrapped around her cock and suck in a trembling breath.

She felt that at the base of her shaft and a throbbing need beginning to swell. Lexa had told Clarke a little white lie, but she was too proud to admit she was right. She was in a mood, but it felt selfish on her part, considering it's not like Clarke ever deprived her of sex. Hell, more than half the time, her omega initiated it.

"Baby, you feel so good inside of me. So thick and tight, I can hardly move."

Lexa appreciated the compliment, she truly did. "Clarke, you don't have to..."

Her words trailed off when Clarke ground her clit into the base of her cock, and wet trails pooled around her shaft. Clarke found her lips once more cutting off, hell wiping out what she wanted to say.

"Have you ever fucked on a bike before?" Clarke asked against her lips.

"No, ahh, damn, Clarke." Her omega almost had her flat on her back, and she had to use all the muscles in her legs to keep the bike upright and fought back for control, succeeding, and leaning Clarke backward over the tank. She gripped the handles to keep her steady them and snapped her hips forward a couple of times.

Now her omega was in the right position with Clarke's legs wrapped around her waist, and her feet flat on the ground gave her the leverage to pound into her mate.
Clarke grunted against her thrusts with every breath. Being with Clarke in this way felt primal and fleeting thought of being out on the road, and her omega behind her clinging hungrily on her back and rubbing her hand over her leather-covered harden shaft filled her thoughts.

"Fuck, yeah." Lexa ground deeper, making Clarke groan and wrapped her legs tighter around her back. Another fleeting thought of Clarke on her hands and knees and taking her from behind. Her mind flashed back to earlier in the year and mating Clarke in front of the fireplace. Her hands on her hips and Clarke's beautiful cunt wrapped around her cock. They had fucked until their knees gave out.

Clarke grew so tight around her she could barely move in and out of her.

"I'm close, Lexa."

"Me...ahh, too."

It was going to get messy. The rational part of Lexa's brain still functioning begged her, not to tie with Clarke despite how much the alpha in her needed to claim her omega. Clarke grabbed her face and proceeded to pepper her face with kisses right before her lips found hers once again.

Each stroke into Clarke, urge her to push and push until her mate was caught and tied to her body and they grew close to coming when the baby monitor resting on her workbench flickered to life when Camryn started to wail.

Lexa pulled back from Clarke's lips and looked to the monitor and then down into Clarke's worried face. "I'm sorry, Clarke. I can pull out."

"Don't you dare."

"But..." Lexa could sense herself going a bit soft at hearing her child cry until Clarke's seductive scent sent her over the edge. Lexa groaned and pushed deep into Clarke's silky cunt and exploded into her mate with a sloppy, pulsing orgasm.

Clarke's laughter caught her by surprise and pushed her upright. "I'm so glad you didn't tie..." Clarke hesitated, and out of control, Lexa felt her the base of her cock swell as her cheeks grew red hot when a second orgasm hit her, and knotted her mate.
"Oh shit, Lexa!"

"I'm...so...sorry." Lexa's voice trailed off as she emptied into Clarke.


"Close your eyes, Jessie."

"You won't let me fall, Alexa?"

"Of course not." Lexa held her tongue from correcting the older woman. Jessie has yet to remember her real name and looked to Clarke for aid.

"Let me help," Clarke offered and held onto to Jessie, and they guided her down the newly built ramp just outside of the museum.

Lexa cleared her throat and said, "Open your eyes, Jessie."

"What? Oh my." Jessie released Clarke's arm and turned towards Lexa and cupped her chin. "What did you do?"

Concerned colored Lexa's thoughts until laughter spilled from Jessie and wobbled unassisted towards the motorcycle gleaming in the Christmas Eve's morning sun. Clarke's hand found hers and tangled with her fingers and squeezed.

"I remember the day Billie took me on my first ride, Alexa."

Jessie reached out and placed her hand on the grip to steady herself and stood a little taller. Lexa sensed Clarke tense and turned to see one lone tear coming down her cheek. Lexa wiped it away with a leather-gloved finger.
"Happy tears." It wasn't a question, but Clarke responded by lifting her chin and nudged her towards Jessie.

Lexa waited while Jessie took her time admiring the bike. No doubt, she had hundreds of memories to draw on. Lexa looked back toward her mate, now having a few of her own burned into her mind she'd made with Clarke. She didn't have to explain to her what Lucky meant.

"My granddaughter is here."

Lexa glance over at the vehicle pulling in next to her jeep, carrying Dr. Waters, and Clarke's former coworker, Echo, at the wheel. Lexa caught Clarke staring slack-jawed at the new arrivals and whispered, "I didn't know they were friends." Echo let her car idled for a few moments, then leaned over and kissed the doctor. Lexa shared a look with Clarke, who just smiled and shook her head and heard her whisper, "Looks like love is in the air."

"Nana, I brought your leather jacket and old helmet," Luna said, exiting the vehicle.

Lexa caught Clarke, giving Echo two-thumbs-up behind the doctor's back when she exited her car.

"Merry Christmas, Clarke."

"Merry Christmas, Echo." Clarke adjusted Camryn to the side and hugged her ex-coworker. "Congratulations."

Echo smiled brightly and looked toward Luna. "Yeah, it's new to both of us. I guess you heard about my cheating, no-good loser, gaslighting ex-boyfriend."

They continued their conversation away from earshot, and Lexa turned back to Jessie, watching as the doctor slipped on the well-worn leather jacket on her grandmother's shoulders then struggled to put the helmet on her head.

"You're doing it wrong, Luna." Both tried with little success.

"Nana, just put your hands down and let me do it."
Lexa stepped in and offered, "Let me try. I've got some experience."

"I'll bet you do," Jessie quipped and rested her arms at her side. Lexa slipped it on her head and latched the buckle in place.

"There you go."

Jessie's face was a little squished inside the helmet, but it didn't seem to bother her.

"Let's start her up."

Jessie clapped her hands, and a smile crossed her timeworn face when the engine roared. Clarke and Echo joined them and helped get Jessie seated on the back of the bike. Lexa mounted in front and put her helmet on, and felt Jessie's arms circle her waist.

Clarke covered Camryn's ears when Lexa revved the engine and waved when she started slowly down the main street. Lexa planned on taking Jessie for a ride to show off the Christmas lights throughout the town and meet up with Clarke at The Diner afterward. The crisp sunny Christmas Eve morning wouldn't last and why the early ride was in order.

Lexa wondered if she was sensing from the arms around her waist that Jessie wasn't concerned with Christmas lights or the holiday, a couple of minutes into the ride, but of long-ago memories of her deceased mate, Billie. When Jessie laid her head on her back, it confirmed her suspicion.

Dr. Waters texted a couple of black and white pictures of the bike was first purchase and a single color photo showing it off in its metallic blue and white glory. The summer's brilliant sun rays bounced off the chrome with Billie and Jessie sitting atop. Young and vibrant and holding a new baby and a future ahead of them.

Lexa's heart grew a little bigger being apart of these new memories for Jessie and hoped to make more for her in the coming New Year.

~
"Do you two want to join us at The Diner? Lexa said she'd bring them by after the ride."

"We'd both love too." The doctor turned to Echo, "Could you wait in the car? I need to tell Clarke about Nana."

"Say no more." Echo shivered and rushed to the warmth of her idling car.

"What's up, Doc?"

"Please, call me, Luna. I considered both you and Lexa, our friends." Luna reached out and held both of her hands and squeezed. "I want to thank both of you for taking an interest in my grandmother these last few weeks. It's meant a lot to her." Luna shook her head and chuckled at a memory. "Your mate is all Nana could talk about when she took Grand mama's bike to repair."

"Believe me, Lexa was over the moon being able to work on a classic motorcycle with Anya."

Clarke followed Luna's gaze as she looked at Echo's encouraging face, waiting in the car and then back at her. "There is no easy way to tell say this. My Nana has stage four cancer."

Clarke gasped and put her hand to her mouth. "Oh, no."

"I'm ashamed to say as her doctor after we got the diagnosis late this summer, I couldn't talk her into any treatments. She refused to spend her remaining days worrying for a cure she knew would never come. She's tired of this life and wants to move on and be with Billie." Luna pulled a tissue from a pocket and blew her nose. "She's not wrong. The specialist wasn't sure it would help this late because cancer has spread to every part of her body. Nana has asked to make her comfortable, which we've been managing. She held off taking pain meds today so she'd be awake to see the bike one last time."

Clarke felt her heartbreaking. "I'm so sorry, Luna. Is there anything we could do to help?"

"We appreciate what you've already done." Luna sniffed and wiped the tears away. "You'd think I'd run out of tears."
"Do you mind if I asked what will happen to the museum?"

"I know it was a concern because of the trouble Indra was having. But don't worry, it stays in the family. Maya, my niece, will take care of it now. She mentioned meeting you."

"Yes, when I first arrived." Clarke could hear the motorcycle in the distance and wondered how Lexa would take the news. "I'm glad Lexa was able to take Jessie for a ride today. Maybe another time?"

Luna shook her head. "I'm afraid this is her last ride."

Embarrassment colored Clarke's cheeks. "Of course, you know what's best."

The clouds choose that moment to block the sun and drop the temperature. Luna held onto Clarke's hand and squeezed them once more.

"Thank you for today and for taking an interest in my Nana. And please convey all our thanks to Lexa."

"It was our pleasure, Luna."

She left Luna with a hug and see you soon and returned to the jeep and waited for the vehicle to warm up.

Camryn fussed after she got her in her car seat. Clarke reached over to move the blanket away from her face, and she grabbed her finger and mouthed it. She replaced it with a pacifier and cupped her face.

"How am I going to tell your Mama about Jessie?"
Lexa stirred out of sleep and burrowed further into the warmth of Clarke's toasty warm body. She pushed her nose into the nape her neck when her ears picked up a faint sound of traffic in the distance. She fought to ignore the outside noise and snuggled deeper into the covers when she lost the battle, and yesterday began to play over in her head.

Lexa recalled her confusion when Jessie told her she'd see Billie soon, and Clarke pulled her aside and explained why. She did the only thing responsible and hid her shock and sorrow to keep from spoiling Jessie's day.

She enjoyed taking Jessie on the ride around town and even more cherished when Clarke told her the news. She'll always remember the hug that Jessie left her with when they parted and her request to watch over Billie's bike after she's gone. Lexa had no intention of keeping the motorcycle, knowing it belongs in the Waters' family but promised to keep it running.

The spent the remaining day dropping off presents to all of their friends with the last trip to Indra's place to deliver Clarke and Lincoln's gift for the family and toys for the children.

Indra gathered her children around her and read the message from long ago and explained their curious questions about their ancestors. They had no idea existed.

Clarke pulled out pictures of the rock she'd taken this year, and they all tried to decipher the carvings over appetizers. It was Grace and Indra who helped the children figured out the inscription, and it revealed Indra's ancestors' names Isaac and Sarah and the date of their deaths. It was a memorial to her family, and somewhere around this part of the mountain, probably on the land Indra's home sat were the first settlements. Nia was impressed with Clarke's work and asked if she'd help her understand her family's heritage. A promise from Clarke she'd try.

Lexa's eyes flickered open when the baby monitor lit up. She blinked a few times at the light shining in her face and focused on the time. Camryn managed to sleep a solid three hours when Clarke stumbled back into bed sometime after two. She would only have a minute or two before Camryn would start to cry. An early morning ritual, they had taken turns to see to their daughter. Clarke was sound asleep and didn't have the heart to wake her after a night of a restless and cranky baby.

She left Clarke with a kiss on her messy blond head and stumbled out of bed and into her robe. Lexa scrubbed the sleep out of her eyes and stopped in place when she saw the decorations and smelled the hint of winter pine and remembered it was Christmas morning.

Lexa stood at the top of the stairs and looked down into the living room and remembered how she
used to treat the day. For her, it was like any other day of the year. No decorations and the only way you could tell it was Christmas were the presents her parents sent and opened them the moment they came. There was no point in waiting for Christmas day when it had lost all meaning to her. Her life was a drab and colorless world. Bouncing from one person to the next and not needing anyone permanent in her life.

Then one day, everything changed when Clarke brought color back into her world. She quietly stepped back to their room and leaned against the door frame and watched her sleep in the dim light.

Through all of Clarke's loss and regret, she still had room for her. She helped Lexa understand her private wounds. Clarke was her touchstone, and she alone grounded her, and together they were able to heal one another.

The baby stirred her out of her thoughts and continued to her room. Camryn's eyes were still shut but wiggled inside her swaddle sack. Lexa smiled at how Camryn looked like a little yellow butterfly moving inside. Lexa wasn't sure about keeping their child confined at first when Clarke had used the swaddle blanket to Lexa's horror. Camryn wasn't able to move her arms at all, and she looked like a tiny loaf of bread. Raven turned them on to brand she used, and Lexa purchased a dozen in different colors.

Lexa unzipped the swaddle. "There you go." Camryn squirmed and stretched, coming out of the confining space. "Merry Christmas, sweet baby."

Camryn's eyes slowly blinked opened once then close and yawned. She smiled at hearing Lexa's voice and continued to squint when her eyes came fully open. Lexa loved this time of the morning, especially the first sight of their growing baby and the possibility that Camryn recognized her voice.

Lexa kept her voice quiet. "Let's get you into a clean diaper."

She used Clarke's technic and had Camryn cleaned and dressed in a new diaper and fluffy bright white onesie in no time.

Lexa carried Camryn to the window and moved the curtains aside. Outside, the snow fell, causing wonder to cover Camryn's face. The baby cooed and kicked her legs. Lexa caught Camryn's hand, reaching for the falling snowflakes and kissed it.
"Maybe later."


The smell of fresh coffee woke Clarke out of a sound sleep and rolled over to curl around Lexa. She reached under the covers and moved her hand back and forth over the cold empty spot. Clarke opened one eye to see her mate had left her to sleep some time ago. It seemed too early to be up. According to the time just after seven, the sun should have risen, yet the room was still dark.

A blanket of white obscured the overhead window and couldn't see the growing morning sky. That's when it hit Clarke and sat up in bed. Her eyes strayed to the balcony windows and saw snow piled up against the balcony doors.

"It's Christmas!"

Clarke thanked Lexa for taking care of her daughter and for letting her sleep. They both had a rough night after a day of entertainment. They'd experience this before and attributed Camryn's restlessness, to too much stimulation.

Clarke peered over the balcony and found Lexa asleep with Camryn face down on her chest. Lexa had covered them both in a blanket, and it was a perfect scene she needed to capture. The living room radiated Christmas, from lights on the tree to the fireplace warming the room.

She laid her cellphone down after snapping a couple of pictures, and her eyes strayed to the coffee table. Christmas Eve, she let Lexa have one present to open, and she immediately dug into her stocking and pulled out the first gift Clarke had got. The picture from the mall sat facing them on the coffee table in its new frame.

She knelt quietly and watched them sleep. Both of their mouths were partially open, and the resemblance struck Clarke to her core. She could see her mate in her daughter's face and reached out to place on her hand over Camryn's back to feel her warmth.

The baby stirred, and for the first time, lifted her head. Her sudden intake of breath woke Lexa. She put her finger to her mouth and pointed to Camryn.

"Merry Christmas, Lexa. Look at what your daughter can do."
Lexa's sleep-filled breath mumbled, "Another first."

Camryn couldn't quite look at Lexa and laid her head down and smile at Clarke, then screw up her face and spit up all over Lexa's chest.

"Yuck, Camryn." Lexa grimace, "I feel something warm on my belly beside what she just puked all over me. I hope it isn't pee."

Clarke giggled and took the baby out of arms and led the way upstairs. She turned to see Lexa holding her sleep shirt away from her chest, trying not to gag.

"Are you up for a bubble bath with Camryn and me?"

"I sure need one now, thanks to your daughter."

Lexa mocked that she was angry until Camryn's lower lip poked out, breaking her mate's resolve and made a funny face. Camryn's expression changed into a toothless grin.

"Nice save, Ace."

~

The living room floor was littering with wrapping paper, bows, and ribbons. A stack of games and new clothes were shoved to one side and watched Lexa walk around in her new Uniwear and a black henley. The underwear was form-fitting for an alpha woman's body and had an almost invisible slit in the front. A thick band around the waist sported the label in a classy black font. It's what most famous alpha women wore that could only be found overseas. But, when she got an email from Pour Mon Alpha, she special ordered several pairs and paid extra to have them delivered before Christmas.

Lexa surprised her with several new comfy sweaters and clothes to lounge around the house. But she kept hidden, one last gift. She removed a tiny box hanging among the branches of the Christmas tree and laid it on her lap. "One more, Clarke."
Clarke's immediate thought was Lexa had got her jewelry until she opened the box and saw a set of keys.

"Is this what I think it is?"

Clarke didn't wait for Lexa to answer and rushed to the garage.

~

Lexa managed to coax the dealer to get Clarke's new SUV at their place by Christmas and followed Clarke into the garage, hopping on one foot to pull on her sweatpants.

"Ooo, Lexa. I love the red bow."

"I know it's not really a Christmas gift, but I knew you were missing not having your car to get around town."

"No, Lexa. I love it, and the new color and I love that it's paid off."

Lexa grinned. "Me too. There's something inside."

Clarke was hit with the new car smell and leather when she opened the door and sat in the driver's seat. Taped to the steering wheel was a Christmas card.

Her laugh cut short when she opened the envelope, and two checks fell out. One was made out to Camryn Griffin-Woods in the amount of a staggering fifty thousand dollars and gasped when she saw the other in her name doubling that amount.

"Lexa?"

"It's from the county for pain and suffering. I thought you'd like to put Camryn's away for college
and as for the rest. I know we can find a way to put it to good use."

"I have a few ideas."

Lexa leaned in and kissed her. "I know you will. Merry Christmas, Clarke."
Clarke rolls her eyes and shakes her head at Lexa when she points to the time on her watch. She holds up a finger to give her a minute.

Are you dressing the baby warm enough for the cold weather?

"Yes, Grandmother," Clarke teases her mom. "She toasty warm in the outfit you sent for Christmas." Clarke reaches over and tickles Camryn's cherub cheeks. "The baby blue goes great with her eyes."

I thought they might. At least for now. You should start to see some changes in the baby's eye color fairly soon.

Lexa gives her the hurry up motion. Clarke silently mouths to her to give her a minute. Lexa pretends she's going to leave with the baby. Clarke shakes her head again. Lexa immediately stops in place and plops down on the kitchen barstool.

"Listen, Mom. Lexa's giving me the stink eye to get off of the phone. We were just heading over to our friends' home for an early New Year's Eve dinner when you called."

Lexa gives her a wounded look and crosses her arms across her chest.

Speaking of which. My ride is here. Have fun, and Happy New Year. Kiss your two babies for me.

Clarke chuckles at her mother's harmless jibe at her mate. "Okay, I will and Happy New Year. Love you."

Surprise, I'm still here. Sorry for the delay. 2020 has been a bastard of a year. Thanks for sticking around.
"About time." Lexa stands and rushes to help Clarke with her coat.

"Why the hurry? It will only take a few minutes to get to Anya and Raven's place."

"I want to leave before the road is covered with snow."

Clarke pulls her hair free from the back on her coat. Concern coloring her voice, "Will we be able to get back home?"

"A couple of hours won't make a difference. We'll leave before the snow really begins to fall."

"Then there isn't any rush." Clarke stands in front of Lexa and adjusts her black leather coat over her shoulders. For good measure, she leans up on her toes and kisses her lips. "That's from Mom."

Lexa's green eyes sparkle as her urgency bleeds away and wraps her arms around Clarke's back, holding her in place. She kisses her back, letting her lips linger.

After a quiet moment, Clarke pulls back. "What's that for?"

"For putting up with me. Sorry, I rushed you. I just wanted to show off your brand new car."

Clarke hides her embarrassment under a gentle smile and puts out her hand. "Okay. Lead the way." She follows Lexa to her SUV and hands the keys over to her after she gets Camryn secured into place.

"I suppose you want to drive?"

"Can I?"

"You're about to bust. Of course, you can drive."
The gleam was evident in Lexa's face that she didn't need to ask. But something wasn't sitting right with Lexa's enthusiasm. Maybe it was nothing, and she didn't need to worry. Clarke did grow uncomfortable with the thought of showing off the expensive vehicle to their friends. Lexa had wealth, and she did by their bond. Their friends, however, just got by with Anya's working overtime at the mill during the winter season and Raven's bar, sometimes struggling when the cold weather kept most folks at home.

Hell, it's not like Lexa even needed to work fulltime. The cost of living in this area wasn't even close to how it was in the city. It was just with their large cabin and now with the new car mostly paid off and the settlement she and the baby received, showing this off to Anya and Raven, who most of the time seemed to be coping, made her feel...well she wasn't quite sure what it was but didn't seem right. Which honestly wasn't like Lexa to show that kind of enthusiasm, although neither one of their friends put voice or complaint.

"Listen, Lexa."

"Huh?"

Lexa pulled out onto the highway and flipped on the wipers to remove the light dusting of snow that began to fall.

"Maybe we shouldn't tell our friends about the settlement we got."

Lexa glance in her direction. "Why not?"

Clarke hesitated, knowing this was the hard part, explaining her reservation at the moment. She didn't want to insult Lexa, yet. "I guess the only way to say this is the truth, and what I'm thinking."

"You've got me worried. Did I do something wrong?"

"No, you didn't. It's just your wanting to share that we just came into a lot of money when our friends aren't that well off, might seem," Clarke paused, "crass, insensitive, and maybe a little materialistic."

"Ouch. I hadn't thought of it like that. Are you sure?"
Clarke reached for Lexa's hand resting on the gear shift. "Put yourself in their shoes." Lexa tangled her fingers with hers. "I think it easy to forget how blessed we both have been. Maybe there is a solution."

"What are you thinking?"

"Well, we could share our good fortune instead."

Lexa drove in silence and turned on the headlights, and Clarke waited. Maybe she said too much and was overthinking this whole thing. Lexa breathed out and stated, "Perhaps, but I don't see how without insulting them."

Clarke thought back to the first time she visited Raven and Anya's home. She was surprised how they were able to cram all of their combined lives into such a small place. A one-story, two-bedroom, one-bath with Raean's crib shoved to one side in their bedroom, and the other room was stuff with boxes from their previous life. "I've got an idea. How about if we offer to help them expand their home like they did with our place?"

"What if they don't want to expand?" Clarke gave her a look that said quite the opposite. "Yeah, of course, they would. I guess it's up to us to talk them into it."

"Neh-neh," Camryn cooed from the backseat giving them her two-cents.

Lexa chuckled. "I guess it's up to the three of us then."

~

"How long have you lived here?" Clarke asks.

"Five years, give or take," Raven says from the kitchen. "I bought the place with a loan from the bar."
Lexa's attention is drawn back to Anya, bouncing Raean on her knee.

"So like I was saying, the doctor gave Raean a clean bill of health in her last checkup. I just wished it would have come sooner. The medication she was on has almost wiped out our savings."

"I had no idea." Lexa was so glad she took Clarke's advice and didn't overshare the information about the money they just got from the settlement. "I thought all of that was covered."

"You'd think so, but the bill came later said differently. I'm just glad they let us extend the payments to this year."

"Is that why you're working overtime at the mill?"

"Partly."

"Anya, could you set the table?"

"I can do it," Clarke offered as she tried to hand Camryn off to Lexa.

"No, you three are our guests."

Anya puts her daughter in Lexa's arms. "Hold her, will ya?"

Clarke joined the two of them on the sofa and leaned over to whisper, "I had no idea they just were getting by."

"Me, either."

Raean stretched her short arms, albeit quite out of her reach for Camryn, cuddled against Clarke's breast catching Lexa's attention. "She's so cute."
"Who do you think she looks like the most?" Anya said from the small dining room.

"Raven," They both said in unison.

"Toldja." Raven nudge Anya in the side when she put a dish on a hot plate. It turned into them hugging and sharing a quiet moment.

Anya pulls back from kissing Raven. "I love that our daughter looks just like you."

"Aww." Clarke whispers to Lexa. "So, do you have an idea of how we can broach the subject?"

"Just leave it to me, Clarke."

~

Lexa rubbed the sore spot on her leg, where Clarke kicked her several times to start the conversation during dinner. She couldn't find the right moment to bring it up then saw her opportunity when Anya rose to take out the trash to the garage. Deciding it'd be better when they were alone.

Old cardboard boxes, who saw too many seasons were stack against the far side of the garage. Anya's workbench held most of her tools. The rest took up residence in her truck. The one-car garage could only handle Raven's sedan, while Anya's much larger vehicle was outside on the driveway collecting snow.

Anya caught her staring. "I keep meaning to do some spring cleaning, but the year got away from us again. Raven and I haven't found the time, with work and the baby."

An opening...

"Thanks for having us to dinner."

"No problem."
"Listen, Clarke, and I were discussing..." Lexa paused when Anya stopped, ready to be hit with bad news. "Could we help you guys out? And I know how lame that sounds before you say, no."

"Help out how?" Anya's expression was unreadable.

"Remember when you helped us with the addition to our cabin for the baby's nursery?"

"Yeah." Anya still didn't give away any reaction.

"Well, I have a CAD program on my computer and..."

Anya wasn't stupid and began to put it together. "You want to make our place bigger?"

Encouraged, she continued. "Yeah. Like, consider it payback for saving my life last summer at the lake." Lexa mentally patted her back for coming up with a reasonable excuse on the fly.

"You saved my life, Lexa. Or did you forget?"

"I didn't, not really, and you saved me first." Lexa could sense her slow building of anger.

"I take it your mate is saying the same thing to Raven, behind my back."

Lexa blanched, holding out her hands. "Listen, it's not like that."

"No, you listen, Lexa." Anya took a breath and looked away and began to arrange her tools, laying haphazard over her workbench. "I appreciated you're concern, but this is my responsibility to take care of my family the best way that I can. I can't take your money, Lexa."

"I..." Lexa gave up without a fight. "I'm sorry, I offend you." Clarke is going to be so disappointed in her not being able to talk Anya into their plans.
"No problem. Raven's got dessert for us."

Lexa followed Anya with defeat carrying heavily on her shoulders. It was a split second later when Raven rushed into her Anya's arms.

"Clarke has some good news for us."

Lexa hid her smile and went to Clarke's side for protection when Anya glared in her direction.

"Oh yeah?" Anya said.

~

Raven and Anya's voices rose as their argument grew heated and only stopped when the babies started to cry. Clarke felt terrible as did Lexa and apologized on the way out. They didn't make it to midnight to wish them a Happy New Year.

"Well, damn it," Lexa uttered. "I can't believe I let you talk me into ruining my relationship with my best friends."

Clarke shrunk under Lexa's anger. "I'm sorry."

"I don't know how in the fuck.."

"Language..."

"Damn, Clarke. Not now."

"I said, I'm sorry."
"No, no. It's all my fault. I should have put my foot down when you brought it up. I thought you didn't want us to show off our wealth, but it's exactly what I did."

"I don't understand how sharing is bad. Like when did helping out our friends turned into such a horrible thing?" Clarke was angrier at the circumstances than with Lexa's attitude at the moment. However, Lexa's anger was getting on her nerves.

"How in the world can I fix this?"

Clarke had to correct Lexa even if it might make her angrier, "How can we fixed this?"

A subtle shift, then a pause as Lexa expelled a frustrated breath of air. "Clarke, I'm sorry for yelling. It's not your fault for wanting to help out our friends."

"Time."

"What?"

"Let's just give them the time to work this out between them. From Raven's perspective, she was completely on board. And I know the cost of materials can't be that great. Just a couple thousands of dollars. The labor is free, right?"

"It's like you think Anya will change her mind. She's more stubborn than Raven."

"You wanna bet?"

That got a chuckle out of Lexa. "Ten bucks says Anya won't give in."

"A hundred, says Raven will prevail."

"Shake on it, Griffin."
Clarke took her hand and shook it. "No time limit on the bet?"

"No, let's give it a week."

"Deal."

~

Clarke put a towel over her shoulder and placed Camryn against it and rubbed her back. She reached out with one hand and opened her laptop, resting on the coffee table and stared at the screen. Clarke glanced at her messaging application in the dock as she patted the baby's back. It remained frustratingly empty. A week had come and gone without the regular exchanges from Anya or Raven. She closed it and sat back and concentrated on bring a burp up from her daughter.

Both of them had sent separate messages of thanks for a lovely dinner and sorry for the misunderstanding, and looking forward to hanging out again real soon. Only Raven responded, *Glad you could join us*. No mention of when they would speak or see each other again.

Lexa was especially irritated with Anya. Her best friend, time and again was almost always first to lend a hand to any number of their friends, be it shopping for Gustus who couldn't make it to the store when he came down with the flu, to the latest helping her with Billie's bike restoration and a list too numerous to recall.

Lexa left hours earlier to try and meet up with Anya at the mill, unannounced with the goal to break the wall of ice that formed between their friendship with the hope of repairing their relationship.

Clarke would have started a rough design, but without the dimensions and where they could expand would be a waste of her time.

She wondered, though, could it be she just needed something to do, just anything? She recalled being pregnant over almost the entirety of last year and was busy up and until Camryn was born. Then it was settling into Lexa's home and routine of being a mother that she craved something else to do.

She loved her daughter dearly, but she had time to tackle other projects, and just sitting around the
"Shoot, Camryn. I'm so bored."

~

Lexa pulled in next to a semi-trailer parked alongside the vast warehouse holding the machinery that shaped the logs into usable lumber. Surrounding the open yard were humongous trees stacked in huge high piles, air drying before milling. She put on her hard hat, eye protection, and safety ear protection before headed inside the noisy lumbermill in search of her friend. She had brought lunch for both of them, a way she hoped to get back into Anya's good graces.

She walked passed the large kilns slow-drying the ancient tree that had pinned her place last summer, along with the more pricey specimens that were Indra's favorites and were apart of the materials for the new hotel's interior finishings.

The delay in drying this monster was due to the logs they had already salvage. The tree was sawed into planks and remained in water and stored under plastic tarps to keep the warping down to a minimum.

It was trial and error to get the extraction of water out of the trees. To quickly and the boards would warp and turned them into ordinary firewood. A complete waste of its value. It was a delicate balance that Indra fine-tuned and seemed to be working with the efficiency born over time and patience.

Lexa waved at her friends, greeting her with surprise at her appearance. She had spent the first winter working at the mill and decided it wasn't for her but knew her way around. It was dangerous, dirty and dusty with sawdust, and cold, so very, very cold. She was glad she didn't have to suffer when all she wanted was to be home, warm, and safe.

Lexa could see Anya in the distance, loading a log onto the debarker and waved when she glanced in her direction. Anya lifted her chin and motioned with her hand to give her a few minutes. She nodded and lifted the bag, holding lunch, and waited under the propane heater to stay warm. It only helped if you were in the vicinity, but ten feet in any direction, the cold fell on you, and only keeping moving kept you from freezing in one place.

The air carried the heavy scent of new lumber and intense odors of tree sap. Lexa watched Anya
load the trees onto the machine and wondered how to repair their friendship. It was the longest amount of time Lexa had spent wondering how badly she might have fucked up their relationship. Anya parked the loader and made her way over to where she was now sitting.

"What brings you out here?"

Lexa indicated the bag in front of her. "I owed you a lunch."

Anya looked like she wanted to object until Lexa pulled out the carefully wrapped burgers and fries she picked up from The Diner.

"Thanks."

Lexa tossed Anya a bottle of sanitizer she caught one-handed and squirred out a blob and rubbed her hands together. She began on her burger and dipped a couple of fries into her ketchup and took a sip of soda to wash it down.

"I haven't changed my mind if you planned to ply me with lunch."

"I..."

Anya gave her a hard stare and said, "I hate being one of your projects."

Lexa let Anya's comment roll off of her back. "You seem to forget how much you do for our town. It's time we pay you back." Anya looked like she wanted to object and took another bite of her burger. Lexa pulled out a folded piece of paper from her coat pocket and tossed it at her chest. It fell almost landing in the heap of ketchup in front of Anya.

"I made a list."

Anya shook it open and glanced down as she ate. She snorted a few times, then grew quiet, flipping over the paper and finding the list continued. She gave it back to Lexa. "So, I like to help out. It doesn't mean anything."
"You should have seen the look on Jessie's face after the ride on the Harley with me on Christmas Eve. It was..." Lexa paused, shaking her head. "Not possible to put a price on a memory like that without your help."

"So, I helped you tune up a motorcycle, no big deal."

"It was a big deal to our late friend, Jessie." Lexa plowed on even though Jessie's passing was just days after the ride. "Or the many times, you've...nevermind." Lexa decided to pull out her winning hand, how Anya pushed her to go out with Clarke, despite her trepidation, and said, "I wouldn't have had the courage to put my heart on the line with Clarke if you hadn't of pushed me. How could I go through the rest of my life and not somehow show my best friend how they changed my life for the better..."

"Okay, okay," Anya said in frustration.

"... and have this hanging..." Lexa paused. "What?"

"I said, okay."

"Okay, to what?"

"Your stupid plans, you idiot."

Now out of steam as confusion, then understanding hit her over the head. "Oh."

"Yeah, oh." Anya took another bite of the burger and said, "Your food is getting cold."

"Yeah." Inside her brain, Lexa was doing backflips and high-fiving Clarke. "Great." Then Lexa remembered. "I thought you said you hadn't changed your mind."

"I lied. Deal with it." They ate in silence for minutes until Anya asked, "Aren't going to tell you partner in crime?"
"I'll tell her when I get home." Lexa felt pride in her effort, helping her friend change her mind. It made her head swell a little bit, and had to ask what she said, convinced her to change her mind.

"I have to ask, what did I say persuaded you?"

Anya snorted. "Well, it wasn't your lame attempt at guilt. Raven and I decided last night. I just haven't got around telling you yet."

Lexa shook her head, having been tricked by her friend. "Jerk."

"Asshole." Anya tempered the remark with a wink.

~

Lexa returned home with some rough measurements, along with half-baked ideas. That turned into a dinner, two lunches, and a few arguments later when they finally worked out a plan and design.

It was Anya's idea to move Raven and the baby into their place during construction. Which meant Lexa would have to bunk with Anya at their home, to Clarke's annoyance. Lexa explained, they'd be up too late at night trying to complete the framing and roof, and once the walls were up, she'd be home at night. That never happened, and she only saw Lexa once or twice during that first week just to drop off laundry and pick up some fresh clothes.

Of course, that initially sparked rumors in town that both couples had broken up and instead of clearing the air, because as Anya said, _Who the fuck cares what people think... the delay in the project began to frustrate everyone. Until the explanation came after the permits were pulled, materials were delivered, and the talk died down. But it was fun to see the alphas look at each other and cringe thinking that people in town thought they were hooking up. A lot of gagging and saying *no fucking way* denials, followed by a heavy makeout session with their mates, was in order._

The plans were to widen the garage since it was off of the hallway where the third bedroom and new complete bath would be built. The additional rooms meant the home would expand to almost two thousand square feet, and full nine hundred more feet of room to expand — modest in comparison to their cabin, but plenty of space for them to grow.
(That first morning, Lexa snuck out of bed early by Clarke's groggy irritated estimation when she found her side of the bed slightly cool and heard the shower running. Clarke fell back to sleep and woke a bit later when she got up to use the bathroom and heard Lexa in the other room.

Clarke pushed down the growing separation and closed her eyes to listen just outside of the nursery, Lexa speaking in a soft voice to their child. She was cleaning and changing their daughter, and was hesitant to disturb their quiet moment together.

They disagreed the night before about the sleeping arrangements. Instead of resolving it, they both went to sleep on their side of the bed. They were firmly entrenched in their positions.

"It's your job to give you mom all the love and kisses when I'm away, little cub."

"Heh, eh, eh," Camryn said, trying to communicate. *A new development.*

"That's right. Especially at night. And I promise I'll call every single day I'm gone."

It grew quiet, causing Clarke to peeked around the door frame. She caught Lexa, holding herself up by one hand against the changing table. It was quite the contrast. Lexa was back in her gear, thick work pants, and a dark flannel shirt. Red suspenders, she probably didn't need to hold up her pants and work boots and Camryn in soft light-colored onesies covered in tiny baby animals.

Camryn grew fascinated with Lexa's thumb and reached out to curl her tiny fingers around and pulled it to her mouth. A myriad of emotions raced over Lexa's profile. It was seconds later when the baby's face screwed up as the tell-tell sign she was unhappy, and her face blossomed red.

"Oh no, don't do the boo-boo face." Camryn whimpering changed into a crying fit. "Hey, hey. It's okay." Lexa picked her up to soothe her. Clarke chose that moment to enter the room.

"Sounds like she doesn't want you to stay away either." Clarke didn't hide her lingering disappointment and took her daughter from Lexa's arms and left the room.

"Clarke, wait."
"You've got to go. We won't keep you."

"Please stop."

Clarke paused when she got the stairs and turned, causing Lexa to back up. "We've talked about this. It makes more sense for Raven and Raean to have a nice bed to sleep in and away from all of the noise and dust, and if I'm staying away for a few days, it'll make this project go quicker."

"But it's not like when you're working up in the mountains, and you're hours away. It's just a few minutes from their place." Quietly and with a pout, "It's not fair."

Lexa looked at Camryn and then into Clarke's eyes. "I know, but where would Raven and Anya sleep with Raean and all of their stuff?"

Clarke closed her eyes and blew out a breath. Lexa was right. She was just upset she wouldn't get a blow by blow account of the progress. Plus, she was looking forward to taking care of Lexa after a long day's work.

"I don't like it. But I do understand." She pulled Lexa by her suspenders. "I'm going to miss you."

Lexa wrapped her arms around them. "Feeling's mutual, but with the tight schedule you made up, today will pack everything up and open up the walls and mark off the floor plan. Then tomorrow will set up the framing. And don't let me forget to pack and first aid kit." Lexa looked towards the second bathroom. "I hope I'm not forgetting something."

Lexa followed Clarke down the stairs with a duffle bag filled with her stuff. Just outside, she could hear Raven announcing her arrival with the sound of her horn.

Clarke turned to Lexa. "Gotta go?"

Lexa checked her watch. "Yeah, I said I'd be there early."
Lexa's eyes held hers, then shut when she leaned over and kissed the top of the baby's head. "Maybe you and Raven can find room for them somehow."

Clarke held on to Lexa for a few seconds, plans where starting to form in her mind. "Maybe."

Lexa kissed her. "I won't object."

Clarke watched from the front window, Lexa pulling out of the driveway.

"This kind of backfired on us, baby-girl."

Raven came through the front door and asked, "You talking to me?"

Clarke laughed. "No, I was talking to my daughter. I keep forgetting she doesn't have a clue why her Mama isn't going to be around."

Raven gathered Raean and brought her to where Clarke was standing with Camryn. She moved the curtain away and watched her mate wave as she left. "Well, what do you want to do first?"

Clarke snorted. "I haven't a clue."

"Well, I'm starving. I'll make breakfast.")

~

Three weeks later.

Lexa opens one blurry eye, lifting her head from her pillow and tried to focus on the hands on the clock hanging next to the tv on the far wall. She cursed silently at the early hour. Her body ached all over, and one nostril was completely shut with congestion. She had been trying to fight a head cold for days, with the chilly days, and some late nights it had finally taken hold.
She rolled over onto her back, hoping the change in position would help the snot stuck in her left nostril clear. She waited until she felt a movement, then mucus started to drain into her sore throat, immediately realizing it was a mistake to be on her back. She quickly sat up on the sofa and let out a string of hacking nasty coughs.

She heard Anya moaning from her bedroom, "Shut the fuck up. It's too damn early."

But that just made her cough worse and grabbed a bunch of tissues, and spat out what came up with another groan. There was no point in trying to go back to sleep when her body was screaming to do that very thing. Lexa wrapped her blanket around her shoulders and stumbled into the kitchen. She washed her hands and splashed the cold water on her face, and went through the motions of starting the coffee as though she was healthy or she passed out. Lexa hunted for a pot and filled it with water and put it on the stove and turned the burner on high. Hoping the steam would help clear her head and stood, wavering a moment, then leaned against the counter for support and waited.

Her thoughts turned to Clarke and worried she was going to be angry at her for working until she got sick. It would be a first in their relationship. Lexa tried to remember if she's just not recalling another time, and if she had, the memory was gone. She used the little exercise to take her mind off of how bad she felt. But her mind was blurry with the throbbing pain wishing she had remembered to bring aspirin.

The coffee pot started to drip and sniffed. The aroma of coffee brewing couldn't get past the blockage. Soon the pot of water began to simmer, and Lexa leaned over and let the rising steam cover her face.

A tap on her shoulder and Anya handed her a jar of vaporub and set it into the pot.

"And old trick I learned from my mom. Feeling worse?"

Lexa nodded and croaked out past her scratchy throat, "Much. Ugh."

"I'm calling Clarke."

"Nooo, she'll kill me," she groaned.
"Pal, you can barely stand. Go sit down, and I'll fix you some tea. I think I've got some pain meds. You got a headache too?"

"Thanks. A slight one, yeah. I think it's from coughing so hard." Lexa was too weak to complained and stumbled back to her makeshift bed on the sofa. She tried not to show her shock when Anya stuck a thermometer in her mouth and pushed her down against her pillow.

Her eyes followed Anya and watched as she made her tea and called her mate. Her eyes grew heavy and scratchy and shut them for a few seconds.

Another nudge and the thermometer vanished from her mouth. "Good, you don't have a fever. So I doubt you have the flu. I put some honey in the tea, and Clarke will be by to pick you up shortly." Then she dropped a couple of pills into her hand.

Lexa took the pills and fell over onto the pillow, and Anya covered her with her blanket. "Thanks, Doc."

"Ha-ha. I've called in some favors to help for the next few days until you're back on your feet. So don't worry about this place, while you get better."

Lexa grunted and sat up and blew across the top of the mug and took a sip. "Hmm, thanks." The warmth of the tea and honey soothed her throat and sighed. "Sorry about getting sick."

"Couldn't be helped. I'll be out in the back if you need anything. Oh, and try and not make my family sick," she said with a crooked smile. Anya was surprisingly pleasant. She didn't get her the usual grief and wondered if she looked as bad as she felt. Lexa shut her eyes and prayed for Clarke to show up soon and take her back home.

~

Clarke turned to Raven sitting on their bed, putting on her sneakers. "You ready to go?"

"Just as soon as I get the baby into her jumper. Is it still snowing as hard?"
"It's letting up. The weather report says, will get some sun later."

"I hope. Oh. Do you know you snore?" Raven paused to put her other shoe on, then added as she shook her head, "like a lot?"

Clarke chuckled. "Lexa loves that about me."

"That's because she's a saint."

"Whatever," Clarke tossed over her shoulder but smiled, though Raven was correct about Lexa. Her body just naturally fell deeply asleep after taking care of her baby, and Lexa didn't have the heart to wake her when she would snore. She'd just pulled her into her body, and their connection would settle deep into her soul, and her mind could rest. But now that her bed partner was Raven, they kept their distance.

Except for that one morning, she woke up and found a snuggly Raven tucked into her shoulder, and a hand cupped around her breast. She gentle removed her hand and moved away from her friend to her grumbling protest.

Three weeks into the construction and what had been planned had changed. Lexa and Anya would stay the remaining time at their cabin to both Raven and Clarke's delight. But Anya's early morning call that Lexa was sick with a cold might have changed their plans. Still, Raven helped her drag Camryn's bassinet into their bedroom and set up a Raean in her daughter's crib and a bed for them in the baby's room. It was a tight fit, but everyone was willing to put up with as long as they were together.

The logistics were getting Lexa and her jeep back home. Raven suggested taking her sedan, and Clarke could drive Lexa back home in her vehicle, keeping the babies and Raven from coming in close contact, just in case she was contagious.

"Let's stop at the market on the way?" Raven suggested.

"Good idea. I've got a recipe from Lexa's mom to fight off a cold. Wild rice chicken soup."

"Sounds yummy."
"Quit checking your watch, sicko," Anya called from over her shoulder to Lexa standing in the now completed two-car garage, her bags at her feet. She looked towards the ice chest and considered sitting for a moment, but decided in her clogged head to just stand. Gustus and everyone else was in the back. She could hear them putting up sheetrock with the drills screwing into the material in repetitive sounds over and over. It felt like they were pounding into her head and stagger for a moment. At this pace they were setting, it was probable they should have most of the work finished after she gets over her cold.

Lexa just glared at Anya, who, for some reason, decided to wait with her, but at a distance. Lexa tried to help clean up, and she shoved her away, saying she'll just make things worse and to cover her mouth with she coughs. She wasn't about to get sick and spread her germs to everyone else. Then everything went sort of fuzzy around the edges. Seconds later, a hand on her arm just kept her from sinking to her knees, followed by Anya guiding her to sit down.

"Damn, Lexa. Please sit before you hurt yourself."

Lexa moaned, "Sorry. So sorry, I wanted to help you out, and I got sick, and it's not fair to you ."

"It's okay, Lexa." Raven's car rolled into the driveway and parked in front of them. "Hey, Clarke is here."

Lexa looked up from where she was sitting with her head in her hands, and her eyes found Clarke's. The worry was evident, and immediately summon up the strength and stood.

Clarke wasn't prepared to see her mate waver when she stood as they drove up. It was all she could to wait until Raven came to a complete stop and run to Lexa.

Lexa fell into her arms and just held her. "Hey, there."

A muffled reply was all she could hear, "I don't very feel good."
Clarke smiled into her shoulder. "I heard. Let me get you home, okay?"

"'kay." A sniffle then a rumbling cough.

"Just to let you know, Clarke. I've been telling Lexa to take it easy, and she wouldn't listen. Maybe you can get her to slow down for the next few days."

"I'll do my best, and thanks for calling me."

Anya gave Raven a silly grin and made a face at her daughter through the window. Raven rolled her window down a bit. "I'd kiss those lips right off of your face, but with Lexa sick, I don't want a take a chance."

"I guess I'm not coming home any time soon."  

"Give it a few days, and if you're not sick, then you better bring that sweet ass back to me."

Anya reached inside, tangling her fingers with Raven's gloved ones. "You stay away from typhoid Lexa."

"I heard that," Lexa said as Clarke got her into her jeep.

~

"Achoo."

Lexa woke to a sneeze, then groaned when she tried to swallow. Still, a little disorientated until her body recognized the softness of her bed. Whatever lingering scent from what Clarke might have left couldn't break through her clogged sinuses, and damn was her throat ever sore.

She looked around the familiar room and found a lukewarm glass of OJ on the nightstand and took
a sip, wincing at the painful tenderness of her throat. "Ow."

Her mother's words came back to her when she was a child and worked on finishing the rest and did so until the liquid began to soothe her throat.

Clarke had left their bedroom door ajar and could hear Camryn crying from the living room as her mate attempted to soothe her.

Her heart thudded in her chest, aching to see her baby and summoned her strength to sit upright in bed and listened.

"I'm sorry, sweetie. I know you can smell her, but Mama can't hold you right now."

"Eh, eh, ma..ma."

And there at the edge of her hearing, she caught her daughter's first word. Cold or no cold, she jumped out of bed, tripping on her slippers she worked them on her feet and went to the railing. Through sudden tears, she saw Camryn pointing a tiny finger in her direction.

"Clarke, did our daughter just speak?"

"You heard her?"

She couldn't without sounding like a blubbering idiot and nodded her head instead. As much as she wanted to spend these precious moments sharing with Clarke their daughter's firsts, she kept her distance. Camryn objected and started to cry.

"Maybe you should get out of her line of sight, babe."

Sadly, Lexa agreed, but not before her nose started to tickle with an uncontrollable sneeze.

"Aaachoo."
Both babies started to laugh.

Hysterically at her.

Silly baby giggles that she continued to trigger by her sneezing.

Clarke and Raven were in tears, making her sneeze over and over for their enjoyment. Lexa felt her heart grow several sizes at being the first thing the children truly enjoyed untainted with the vagaries of the world.

Lexa wiped her happy tears away. "Okay, okay. Glad to be your entertainment."

"Do you need anything?" Clarke asked as she rose and set Camryn by Raven to watch. She didn't have to respond as Clarke ascended the stairs and followed her into their room.

~

Clarke is a little taken aback when Lexa falls into her arms. After a moment between them, she utters quietly, "I want to marry you."

Struck silent, Clarke sensed the weight of the ring on her finger and whispers, "I want to marry you too. Maybe we can start planning."

Again, much quieter, "Maybe," Lexa sniffs, then embarrassed by her weakness, pulls away and reaches for a tissue and blows. "I feel like I'm letting everyone down."

Clarke lifts the covers and guides Lexa back into bed. "Because you got a cold?" Lexa didn't answer but to pick at a piece of fluff from the comforter. Clarke lifts her chin and gazes into Lexa's troubled, green eyes. Then shut her eyes as she leans over and kisses her forehead.

Lexa gave her a stupid grin when she pulled back. "My mom use to do that."
Clarke kissed her again, saying with a smile she hoped would alleviate her troubled partner's worries, "No fever." Lexa kept quiet and continued to pick at the comforter until she placed her hand on top stilling her movements.

Lexa finished the movement and tangled their fingers together, then brought Clarke's hand and kissed her knuckles and said in a voice barely above a whisper, "You'd really marry me?"

Clarke could sense Lexa's doubt like a living breathing thing. This insecurity was new and was so out of character for Lexa; she hesitated before she answered. Christine had warned her about Lexa's objection to getting sick — recalling the account of a young Alexandra and her inflamed tonsils.

(Lexa was seven, stubborn, sick with a sore throat, and refused to stay in bed, making her condition worse. Christine regretted what she told Lexa next, that if she didn't listen to her, she'd lose her voice permanently. Well...it did the trick at getting her back into bed and scaring the young alpha when she did lose her voice to a case of temporary laryngitis.)

"Where is this coming from, Lexa? You know I'd marry you in a hot minute."

The silence stretched between them when Clarke thought she wasn't going to answer. Lexa finally spoke, "How about late spring?"

"I think we can work around our schedules and make that happen if you're sure."

Lexa slipped further down into the bed. "I'm sure."

"How about we hold our wedding down by the lake? Under a clear sky, near the hotel, that I'm almost certain will be complete by then. We could get Lincoln and Octavia to cater. Camryn might be just starting to walk by then..." Clarke's voice trailed off after Lexa shut her eyes. A tiny smile work it's way on her lips. Clarke ached to kiss them but settled on placing one on her forehead.

~

Raven placed the babies on a blanket in front of the fireplace and looked up when Clarke returned to the living room.
"How is she?"

"Miserable. Say, do you wanna help me plan a wedding?"

Raven's eyes lit up. "Do I? You damn straight, I do. Where do we start?"
A bird just outside the open balcony door began to whisper its morning song—a soft conglomeration of clicks, chucks, and whirrs. *A blue jay*, Lexa's sleepy mind reckoned. It started slow, with a few chirps easing her back into a light slumber when another bird in the distance joined in its call.

Lexa stretches with a yawn, kicking off the sheets covering her legs. Her groggy mind studied the dimly lit room. *Curious*. Why is she lying in this strange bed all alone?

A light breeze moves the curtains as it slowly begins to dawn on where she is and the possibility of a warm first day of Summer. Lexa runs her hand over the empty side of the bed. The place Clarke should have been sleeping. A bit annoyed at her absents.

Lexa rolls over onto her side and wraps an arm around a pillow to get comfortable again. She knows it's only a matter of time, she'll have to get up, but snuggles into the pillow and tries to ignore her brain starting to wake up. It's quiet for a few moments until more birds join in the dawn serenade.

One eye comes open. Sleep will elude her now when thoughts from last night come to the surface and smiles, no amount of tipsy pouting on her part changed Clarke's mind with the sleeping arrangements.

Clarke chose to keep the traditions for their wedding. That meant they stayed the night in separate rooms at the new hotel. Lexa couldn't see her bride until she meets her at the altar later today.

Indra insisted on giving them a professional tour of her place when choosing a location for their wedding. A short of dry run to work out all of the kinks before they go live on the internet on selling wedding packages—one of Clarke's ideas.

All that remained was unboxing the furnishings for the rooms that were not occupied by their wedding party. One of the many jobs Clarke was responsible for as the new manager. The trailer
that Clarke managed the construction was gone and in his place, a welcoming treeline parking lot.

Indra named the place, *Forrester's Inn*. Unlike traditionally smaller quaint inns, this place felt modern but rustic, with interior hallways and room service. It had a central bar with a restaurant, swimming pool, and a view to die for.

Lexa glanced toward the open curtains that looked out over the lake. The sun had yet to rise but could feel within the walls of her room the building becoming alive with activity. She could just hear muted talking and the occasional door opening and closing down the hallway and items delivered to Clarke's room next door.

Last night they held the rehearsal under the scented pines near the lake with Indra, presiding as the Ouspika. A word taken from the old papers, Lincoln and Clarke, had translated. She explained it to be more in line with the ancient tradition of a scrivener, one who kept official records. And in her case, the authority to marry couples.

She stirred from a quiet knock at her door. A muffled voice, "Honey, are you up?"

*Mom is up early.*

She yawned her response, "Yeah. Give me a second." Lexa pulled on her robe and opened the door. Her mother handed over a very fussy, teething baby to her.

"She wants you." Camryn laid her head on her shoulder, sticking a thumb in her mouth. "Hopefully, your wife-to-be will want my full attention now and..."

"And Camryn needs mine. Where's her..."

"Everything she'll need for today is in her diaper bag. Do you have her outfit?"

Lexa pointed to her garment bag hanging in the closet. "Of course. I packed it with my stuff before we left the cabin."

"Clarke has planned everything down to every detail. I'm not sure what she needs me for."
Lexa could sense her mother's subtle unease and opened the other arm. She fell into them with a sigh. "Hey, hey. That's just Clarke's nature. I'm sure they'll be plenty to do once this day starts."

Camryn pats her mother's cheek, making her chuckle. She playfully kisses the baby's palm. "Camryn takes after you."

"Maybe you can help me with my hair after I get cleaned up."

Her eyes lit up. "After all these years, you'll let me style your hair?"

"Sure, but nothing too crazy."

"I know just what to do." Mom raised on her toes and kissed her once on the lips and for good measure on Camryn's.

"I'll get us cleaned up and call you when I'm ready."

"Thank you, Alexandra. You've made me and your father so very happy."

~

Camryn rested on her back, sucking on a bottle while crystal blue eyes, under long curly lashes, watched her with unshed tears. Lexa's heart broke a little and leaned over and kiss her forehead to check her temperature.

"You're a little warm."

A clue Clarke taught her that came from teething. She had no idea it could cause a fever. Clarke was in charge of dispensing meds, so there wasn't a chance they would overdose the baby, so Lexa got a wet washcloth instead.
Camryn knew the drill and dropped the bottle, kicking her legs as she grabbed the cloth and immediately stuck in her mouth.

"That's my little cub."

Lexa went back to the note she had been working on since they started planning their wedding. A callback to how they first met. *Speak from the heart and keep it simple*—a little advice from Dad. She took a breath and started to write.

I remember the day so clearly from last year when everything changed for me. You couldn't have known how profound and timely your message you left for the forest to consume, became my whole world. Your pain revealed, exposed, touch me to my very soul. My world was dark and didn't have a reason to get up in the morning.

"Ugh, no, you idiot. It's not supposed to make her miserable." Lexa wadded up the note and tossed towards the trash can and got a fresh piece of paper. Lexa crossed her legs and nibbled on a blueberry muffin, waiting for inspiration.

Camryn's fussing got her attention.

"You didn't like that either?"

Tears streaked down the sides of her face. The baby rolled over onto her belly and crawled her way to Lexa's lap. At a loss, Lexa got an idea and lifted Camryn and blew a few raspberries on her bare stomach, eliciting a bout of giggling. Lexa continued blowing on her belly until it gave Camryn hiccups.

"Oops." Lexa put Camryn on her shoulder and rubbed her back. "I know, I know it hurts. I swear you'll never remember this when you're all grown up." Camryn, at eight months, had sprouted four baby teeth making her gums very tender and sore.

Lexa looked around the room, trying to find a distraction. "Think, think." She eyed the bathroom. "Ah, I know what to do, and this will kill two birds with one stone."

Lexa went into the bathroom and filled the tub with warm, sudsy water. She stripped out of her robe, removed Camryn's diaper, and showed her the bubbles. Her crying stopped immediately. She
began to coo and tried to wiggle out of her arms.

"Hey, wait a minute." Lexa carefully eased herself into the water and put the baby into the safety ring by her feet, Clarke had recently purchased. Camryn promptly began to splash the soapy water and forgot about her sore mouth.

Relieved, Lexa reached for her cellphone and opened the camera app. "Hey, Camryn." The wet baby looked up from staring at her soapy hands and gave her a toothy grin. Lexa snapped a couple of pictures and sent them off to her mate with a message.

"Camryn approved."

It was quickly followed by a text back from Clarke.

*I love this. Miss you guys.*

~

"Damn, I love that kid."

She was about to step into the bathtub when she got Lexa's text but stopped to changed her home screen to Camryn's picture then sank into the warm, bubbly water with a sigh.

It had been only a few hours since she saw Lexa and missed waking up next to her this morning. Clarke laid away for hours dealing with her daughter after she pushed Lexa out of her room, regretting having to be the adult in this situation.

*Damn girl, you'll see your family in a few hours, just chill your ass.*

It hit like a ton of bricks—*my family.*

Clarke's mind flashed back before they met, struggling with the loss of losing herself to shame and the guilt. She wanted nothing more but to fade away. She didn't deserve anything after what she'd
caused. What she ended up doing was finding her purpose, the love her life, and stopped blaming herself. Much like Lexa had.

It felt good to be at peace, real peace with Lexa.

Clarke slipped further into the bubbles in the bathtub and closed her eyes, and her thoughts quickly turned back to her mate. She chuckled, remembering. It took all of her considerable willpower to resist Lexa's drunken attempt at cheating to spend the night with her. What would it hurt? Lexa's hair fell over her eyes, leaning against the door as she scented with her alpha guile and peppered her lips with sweet kisses. It wouldn't have hurt, not really, but she wasn't going to tempt fate. One night wouldn't kill them. It would make tonight all the other nights they had together precious.

Painful as it was, she pushed Lexa out of her room and sent her on her way right before the clock struck midnight. That lower lip sticking out almost, almost made her change her mind.

"Can I come in?"

*Raven.*

Clarke's instinct was correct. She'd left the door unlocked, just in case Raven showed up early.

"Sure." Clarke slipped further under the bubbles to hide her breasts and nether region.

Raven pushed her way inside, relaxed on the toilet seat, and started filing her nails. Clarke could see under the robe she was still in her pajamas.

"Did you get any sleep?"

"I got a little. But I feel pretty wired. How is Anya going to handle standing next to Lexa today all dressed up?"

Raven snorted. "You'd think a big ole strong alpha, like Anya, wouldn't be afraid of crowds, and usually that would be the case. Obviously, she doesn't have a problem competing in front of a crowd at the fourth of July festivities, but this is entirely different." Raven chuckled. "Anya said
she'd just imagine everyone is naked."

Clarke shook with laughter. "Well, I hope so since she's Lexa's fos."

Raven rambled on about how hanging the wedding decorations went as her mind wandered.

The word felt strange on Clarke's tongue. Indra explained the name came from the olden times. When alpha warriors often died in battle, and their fos would take care of the mated widow. To keep them safe and in their care until they found another mate or died of a broken heart. Yet others endured the loss to their dying day. Indra assured everyone with a playful wink that it still holds for today, and well, there wasn't another word for your best friend standing by your side as you wed you mate for life.

A naked Raean pushed the bathroom door open, squealing when she saw Raven. On a mission, the baby wobbled, arms outstretched to keep her balance over to where her mother sat and crashed into Raven's legs, and mouthed her bare kneecap.

Clarke chuckled at the exhibition.

Raven cupped her daughter's head. "Damn, kiddo. How did you get away from Anya, and where is the diaper I just put on you?"

"Is this something new?"

"The walking, yes, also being naked. Raean has developed this habit of removing her diaper when she's alone in her nursery. Thank you again, by the way. Anyway, with this heat we're having, I think she prefers to be naked all the time. I think she saw Anya walking around in the nude at home and figure out how to get out of her diaper."

"Smart kid. Maybe we can put the babies in the pool after the wedding."

"Great idea."

"Hey, Raven, have you seen our daughter?" Anya called from just outside of the door.
The baby turned at hearing her Mama and wobbled out of the room. It was followed by Anya laughing. "Where is your diaper, you little punk?"

"I'm coming." Raven finally looked at Clarke. "Don't stay in here all day. We've got to you ready for your special day."

"I won't be long, and thanks for everything."

"You bet."

Raven had been vital in helping her plan the wedding. It's what started her proposals she made to Indra for the hotel. She surprised herself at how much she enjoyed planning her wedding, which led to other ideas she introduced.

Sure, at first, Indra thought the hotel would attract visitors seeking a vacation spot, just feet from the mountain and lake. But this town also had a chance to grow and help refurbish its infrastructure with the new income this place would inevitably create. The ripple effect would slowly move through the village with new jobs and opportunities for the young and season folks alike.

Usually, the town's young people left to find their luck in the big city. But now, with the chance to stay and raise a family. The potential was priceless. Clarke smiled at being a small part of keeping this town vibrant.

Not only would the hotel and surrounding areas become a holiday spot for the town, but a place were couples could join together under the beautiful sky that covered Mount Trikru. It also assured a place their children could grow at a slower pace than they did. Allow them to enjoy and learn about nature by working in the forest. For the others who couldn't be lumberjacks, keep to the traditions that the founders had envisioned.

Clarke held her breath and submerged under the water until the motion of the bubbles stilled. She hadn't done this in over a year. To shut out the world and keep her thoughts from consuming her. She tried it again to see if it felt different. If possible, to see if the pain she had still lingered. She smiled, rising out of the water. It was gone, replaced with nothing but happiness.

~
"Last pictures for now."

Monty, Clarke's professional photographer friend, posed Lexa on the bed cross-legged, making like she was brushing Camryn's hair with a tiny brush. Her mother was behind her, pretending she was doing the same to her hair. He had them dress in white terry-cloth robes while Camryn wore a white cloth diaper.

"Ms. Woods, if you could just turn slightly in my direction."

"Alexandra," Her mother corrected.

"It's just, Lexa. Sure, no problem."

The baby turned to look back up at her and gave her a sweet toothy grin. "Lexa, if you could look down at Camryn and smile back at her. Ah, perfect." Monty took the shot. "I'll let you finished getting ready. Later, when you come downstairs, please ignore me." Off Lexa's confused look. "I want to take candid photographs of your party. I've learned from past experiences that my subjects tend to miss a lot of small moments. I want to make sure those memories are captured for you and Clarke."

"Got it," Lexa said.

He paused as he packed his equipment. "I've never seen Clarke so happy before. She was lucky to find you."

Lexa couldn't hide her blush and lifted her chin, smiling as she said, "I'm glad you could be here for Clarke."

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world. It was great to meet you both," Monty said as he left.

"Alexandra, honey. Are you sure you want your hair straightened? It looks so pretty with the curls."
"Clarke's never seen me before like this. I want to surprise her."

"If you're sure. I was hoping I could draw it up and off your face. You know it's going to be hot today." Her mother lifted her hair and piled it on her head."

Lesa shook her head, pulling her hair out of my mother's hands. "Not now. I can always pull it back later." And this was why she didn't let anyone touch her hair. It was easier to keep it simple and out of her way while working. Slap on a hair tie, hard hat, and be done.

"It does look nice, though." Her mother knew not to push too hard on the subject and worked the flat iron over her hair. After a few minutes. "Does it have to be completely straight?"

"I'm sure you did your best."

Mom lifted her hair, letting it slip through her fingers and fall gracefully over her back. "Now that I pulled out most of your curls, your hair reaches the middle of your back."

"Really?"

Her mother gave her a hand mirror. Lexa turned around, running her fingers through her long hair. It was silky and shined with the sunlight beaming through the window.

"Clarke's gonna have fun with this," Lexa joked.

"I'm sure she will."

"It looks."

Her mother held her breath.

She met her mother's eyes in the mirror. "It's perfect, Mom. I love it."
'I wasn't sure...'

"Thbpbpthpt." Camryn gave her opinion, making a sloppy raspberry for the first time, giggling as she fell over onto her back.

"Oh, you think you're funny." Lexa picked Camryn up and rapidly kissed her bright pink lips over and over.

"How did she learn that?"

"I'm afraid that was me, trying to get her mind off teething."

"Babies are very impressionable."

"No kidding."

Lexa turned at the knock on the door as she flew Camryn around the room like she was an airplane. Another trick to keep her mind off of her mouth, Lexa discovered by accident. "That should be Raven to help me with my makeup."

"You're full of surprises today. I thought you hated that stuff."

"Normally, you'd be right. I did wear a little makeup when I worked in the city. It's just so unnecessary now. You thought I wouldn't on our wedding day?"

Mom opened the door to let Raven inside. "Hi, sweetie." She turned back to Lexa with a bright smile as she left. "To answer your question, Alexandra. I wasn't sure. You're full of surprises today."

Raven placed her case on the bed and put her hands on her hips, sizing Lexa up. "You don't know how long I've waited to do this."

"Oh, brother." Lexa hid her face in Camryn's chest, groaning when the baby pounded on her
victim's head. "Ow, not the hair." She moved her attacker away. "I did ask for this, didn't I?"

Raven just laughed. "Yes, yes, you did."

Camryn added, "Thpbpbthpt."

Raven darted her eyes to Camryn. "Did you..."

Lexa nodded.

"Oh, Clarke is going to kick your ass."

~

Clarke released her breath and turned around to face the standing mirror in the corner of the room.

"Not bad, Griffin."

Clarkes white wedding dress radiated the romance she had envisioned. She lightly brushed the sweetheart neckline and spun around to let the classic a-line silhouette flow around her body, sensing the light breeze over the open scoop back. She prayed that the beaded shoestring straps which were doing all of the heavy lifting, holding up her breasts would persevere. Clarke ran her hands over sheer, organza bodice, sensing its lightweight design. The remaining features over the dress held white floral lace appliques along the hemline coming to life over layers of tulle continuing to the back of the slight train.

Its fit was perfect.

Raven had created a rocking soft romantic low updo for her hair with tendrils of curls framing her face. Her makeup styling was on point with a smokey eye and red lipstick to highlight her cupid bow lips.

Now all she had to do is wait.
Clarke took a sip of the white wine spritzer Raven sent up to her to calm her nerves when laughter from outside drew her to the balcony door. Through the clear glass railing, friends and family started to gather around the swimming pool. A novelty for Mount Trikru. Usually, everyone just jumped in the lake to cool off. It was Grace, who suggested having a pool to add to the luxury of the hotel. It wasn’t a hard sell to convince, Indra.

She found a handsomely dressed Gustus in the crowd and met his eyes. He tipped his head, and she fanned herself in mock approval. Gus turned around then bowed from the waist, making her laugh. That’s when she noticed he had brought a guest, a woman she’d never seen before. Clarke gave him a thumbs up. The mystery lady reached for his hand when someone out of eyesight signaled to find their seats.

Clarke turned back to the room when she heard Lexa exiting next door. Minutes. Just minutes now, she’d make her way down. She heard rustling as a leather-wrapped object pushed under her door. Was it? It was the same material she’d had used to hold her notes she left in the forest when she first arrived.

Clarke rushed to opened the leather covering and found a handwritten note from Lexa. She imagined hearing Lexa’s voice as she began to read the message:

I know you. I listened about the journey that led you here as it did for me. We found each other near the high mountains covered in pine, oak, and walnut trees—vast swaths of land, giving up its bounty.

You opened up your life and shared your love with me. You blessed us with a beautiful daughter and gave me a reason to embrace joy; I thought only belonged to others. Together we taught each other that we deserved to be loved.

I have so much more I want to tell you, to share with you and after today, I have a lifetime.

I love you, Clarke,

L

"Lexa." Clarke reached for a tissue and carefully dapped the tears that well up in her eyes. Careful not to smudge her makeup. She wanted to run after Lexa and show her how much she loves her also. She smirked.
"Well, you certainly can show her later tonight."

~

The air smelled of roses and peonies while perfumed guests lingered as Lexa stepped out of the hotel with a curious baby in her arms. Lexa rotated Camryn around to face the excitement, causing her head to turn every which way. She followed the main group of people past towering white columns on either side of the pathway heading towards the gathering. Attached at the top of the poles were thick white ribbons draped over the path with flowers gathered over the center at its peak. She took her time to let Camryn take in the site as she slowly approached the aisle leading to the raised dais.

She took a breath and started to walk among all of her friends. Buddies from the mountain, a few guys from the mill. Hey, who's that with Gustus? Echo and Luna looked gorgeous. She wasn't sure if she was supposed to talk to her friends yet and just nodded a greeting instead.

Still, Lexa tried to ignore the attention she received, although carrying her daughter helped take the eyes watching her to the baby. Camryn wore a formal outfit for the first time. Tiny light gray pants that went down to her knees, with a bowtie and suspenders that matched, over an off white short-sleeved shirt, and had the start of a mop of curly light brown hair on top. Ooos and ahhs and look at the tiny alpha girl. She's gonna break some hearts. Camryn looks just like Lexa, followed them down the aisle as she searched for her parents.

She nodded at the complements and stopped when she got to Lincoln, Octavia, and their little one in her arms, baby Aurora. "Camryn looks adorable, Lexa."

"Thanks. So does your little girl." Aurora wore an ivory-colored dress with a tiny flower band around her head. Camryn found the little omega fascinating and kicked her legs as if that would get her pony closer. Lexa moved Camryn out of the way and said, "Thank you both for catering. I know you guys have been busy with this little one."

"It was our pleasure," Lincoln said, rocking his baby.

"Thanks again. Wish me luck," Lexa quipped and continued down the aisle to where her parents sat. Raven was giving last-minute instructions to her Dad about her daughter. She chuckled, seeing Raean was currently trying to wiggle out his arms. There was too much stimulation for her to sit still.
Lexa handed over Camryn to her Mom and removed the diaper bag off of her shoulder. Her mother set the item aside and gave her a one-arm hug. "I can't tell you how proud we both are and happy you found Clarke."

"You look amazing, Alexandra." Lexa reached for her father's hand. He pushed it away and pulled her into a hug, then pulled a rose boutonniere out of a box and attached it to her lapel. She tried to ignore Monty as he kept a discrete distance away, taking pictures of them. Raean spotted Camryn and squealed, reaching out for her partner in crime.

They had developed over the months a kind of symbiotic relationship, that thankfully soothe their offtimes cranky disposition. Lexa's parents helped by sending out comforting scents to the babies.

"I think we can manage them now," Her father said. They put the two kids between them on one seat, and that seemed to calm them down.

"Thanks, Dad. Good luck with these two."

She continued up the dais and stood next to a very quiet and somber Anya. Out of the corner of her eye, she caught Anya pulling at the collar of her shirt.

Lexa whispered out of the side of her mouth, "You look uncomfortable."

"It's just a little tight, Assh..." Anya caught herself. She looked towards Raven a few feet away on the other side of Lexa. "I promised Raven I would be on my best behavior. You look very nice."

Lexa tried not to laugh. "I know that pained you to say."

After a few moments, she sensed, Anya couldn't help herself. She muttered, "You're making some of the betas and omegas swoon."

Lexa ignored the comment and avoided the eyes watching her and looked towards her parents and next to them, Abby, who just arrived. Her smiled beamed in her direction, giving her the slightest of nods, Lexa returned a smile.
"Where did you get your Tux?"

Lexa self-consciously adjusted the sleeves of her shirt. "Pour Mon Alpha."

"Expensive place?"

"Not too bad." Lexa lied, of course, it was pricey.

She sensed Anya's interest as she gave her the once over. Lexa wondered if it was giving her ideas. Lexa brushed off a non-existent piece of lint on her lapel at her attention.

Lexa was attired in a distinctive suit for alpha women styled for weddings; a tailored light gray tuxedo, vest, and a crisp white shirt. The additional item she wore around her waist was a silver shimmering brocade sash, a throw-back to an alpha's virility. It was to sanctify the bride to her and complement the elements of Clarke's wedding dress. Although she hadn't seen the dress on her mate, she was...

Lexa watched the domino effect in motion when Indra joined them on the dais giving a signal to Raven. Raven changed the music with her cellphone she had hooked up to the sound system and then motioned to Abby. Abby rose and gathered Indra's twins, Issac and Ivan, with her.

The job they eagerly took on was to toss rose petals on the pathway in front of the bride. Her friends stood to honor the bride, and everyone waited quietly as strains of Pachelbel began to float over the crowd.

Lexa could hardly breathe when she saw Clarke in the distance exiting the large doors of the hotel. The music grew in volume when she stepped into the pathway holding on to Abby. She could sense her soon to be mother-in-law giving her words of encouragement until their eyes met when she stopped at the beginning of the aisle. Abby kissed Clarke after giving her the bridal bouquet and released her arm. Clarke clasped the flowers in front of her and slowly began moving towards her, never leaving her gaze.

"Wow," Lexa uttered.
Whatever wrong thing she had ever done in her life was brushed away by the sheer wonder of the vision of her mate approaching. She may have thought she never deserved this joy, this miracle, but this was real as the sun shining and the earth beneath her feet.

~

Breathe.

Step.

Clarke wanted to remember everything. She tried to take in the wonder of the day. It soon got thrown out of the window when she saw Lexa waiting for her.

Breathe.

Step.

She cast her eyes towards Raven discreetly, giving her a thumbs up and just held herself from waving like a maniac back, then trained her focus on Lexa's makeup, her clothes, and my goodness look at her hair. She fell in love with Lexa all over again as she reached for her hand she extended towards her.


Words caught in her throat. Her first reaction was to pull her mate into a hug but moved to stand in front of Indra.

Indra began, "What a beautiful first day of Summer." The crowd behind them indicated in the affirmative within her cadence. "Friends, guests. Today is a time for joy and celebration of two souls who desire to share with you the ultimate commitment of their bonding.

A little over a year ago, I met Lexa on the mountain trail behind her cabin. I remember the cold as the snow started to fall around us. I could sense her lost at her place in our town and asked Lexa what she was looking for. She said simply, My destiny."
Clarke looked towards Lexa and returned her smile.

"I sensed that Lexa believed that she didn't belong at times and that she often felt like a stranger among friends. When she looked out towards our town, I asked her what did she see? After a moment, she began to realize this place was her home and more under the surface, a safe place to plant her roots.

I met Clarke soon after and saw the potential in her enthusiasm and honest love towards our people, this place and our friend, Lexa. She has been a vital part of the new growth of our town, and I am eternally grateful for all of her hard work. Mind you, this was during her pregnancy and new baby, and not once did she wavered in her attitude and spirit. Thank you, Clarke."

I did that. It felt good to know she finally made a positive difference. Clarke nodded to Indra.

"As I look out at my family and friends today, I see not only what is, but what could be, and what we all bring to Mount Trikru, our destiny."

"Lexa, will you please take Clarke's hand."

Clarke handed Raven her flowers and turned towards her mate.

Lexa cleared her throat. "Clarke Griffin, I offer my life, soul, and my last breath to you. In front of all my friends, my family, I commit my life to your happiness. I promise to listen and work through any difficulties that might arise. My purpose, to give you joy, security, and my love for all of the remaining days of my life."

Indra indicated to Clarke, her turn to speak.

"Alexandra Woods. Lexa, my love. I accept your offering, and to you as well, my life, soul, and my last breath. I commit my life to your happiness. I promise to listen and work through any difficulties that might arise. I will hold fast to your joy, security, and render to you all of my love until my dying breath.

Indra cleared her throat. That was her signal to Raven and Anya to hand her their rings. Anya made
like she had lost Clarke's rings until Lexa playfully growled, making everyone laugh.

Indra held up their rings. "We give each other tokens of our affection and symbols of our love. We carry these symbols on the finger that leads to our heart. To feel the connection when we are apart and to remember."

Indra handed Clarke's ring to Lexa. She took them and studied them for a moment as she held Clarke's hand.

"Do you promise to love, cherish Clarke for all of your days, Keryon blessed you with?"

Lexa held her eyes as her tears threatened to fall "I do." Lexa slipped her rings on her finger and blew out a shaky breath.

Indra gave Clarke, Lexa's ring. "Do you promise to love, cherish Lexa for all of the days, Keryon blessed you with?"

"I do." Clarke's hands were shaking as she slipped the ring on Lexa's finger.

The moment hung like joy, sparkles of glitter, and everything wonderful until Camryn responded, "Thbpbpthpt."

That cause everyone to burst out laughing until Indra quieted everyone down and improvised, "Lexa, I believe your daughter is saying kiss your bride."

Lexa held her eyes for a brief moment and moved closer to kiss her.

The kiss was sweet, so very sweet, and holding all the promises they made to each among their friends and family. Clarke detected Lexa's scent in that kiss and responded with one of her own, making her kiss deepened.

The world around them disappeared for a moment until reluctantly, Lexa pulled back. That's when Clarke noticed Christine trying to quiet Camryn down when their friends being to clap.
"Lexa, can you grab our daughter?" Clarke uttered. She got no reaction, so she nudged her side, snapping her out of her trance.

"Right." Lexa stepped down and took their daughter from her mother and held the baby between them.

Camryn settled for a bit, now that she could see the crowd. Then she squealed at the attention, causing more laughter to see what she'd do next.

Clarke didn't want her daughter to get too overly stimulated and motioned to Raven for her bouquet. She lifted into the air. "Who's ready to get this party started?"

~

Clarke checked on Camryn asleep in the bassinet next to their bed then joined Lexa on the balcony, stretched out on a lounge chair. The sun had set hours ago, and the nearly full moon decided to give them a show.

She settled between Lexa's open legs and tucked her arm around her back. The light from the pool below lit up the trees, casting its glow among the forest. Clarke smiled at the contrast of the pool planted among the wilderness.

It was a hit with the babies and adults alike.

("Hurry back," Christine shooed everyone upstairs after Monty finished up their shoot. They were slowing making their way back to their rooms to change out of their wedding clothes and into something more fitting for a barbeque.

*It was Raven's idea to change things up when they were planning the wedding meal and offered the alternative of a barbeque instead of a formal gathering inside the hotel. Raven insisted, "Food always tastes better grilled over an open flame." Clarke experienced first hand Lincoln's expertise an agreed.*

Clarke couldn't keep her hands from cording through Lexa's hair as she deepened her kiss. They
had found a spot to be alone down an unoccupied hallway. Lexa couldn't wait to get back to their rooms and ask for a kiss. Minutes passed when Camryn kicked Lexa's stomach, wanting attention.

"Ow, ow. Okay, Camryn, Geez."

Lexa snuck another kiss then laid her forehead against her new wife, whispering, "If we keep this up, I'm afraid I'm going to have a permanent bruise on my sternum from our daughter.

Clarke wiped the smear of lipstick away from Lexa's lips. "She's probably hungry, aren't you sweet girl?"

"Neh, neh." Camryn, now having the attention she wanted, and a new victim leaned over for her mother's breast and mouthed her skin. That's when she noticed her tears and took the baby from Lexa's arms.

She kissed her forehead and found it warm. "Darn, she's a little hot, Lexa. Change and meet me in my room."

Lexa soon returned in summer gear, easily distracting Clarke in her flipflops, shorts, and a form-fitting sports bra.

"How is she?" Lexa laid beside the baby and tickling her belly.

"She's better. Now that she out of her clothes." Clarke made a note on her cellphone, the meds she just administered, and tossed it next to her mate. "Could you put her in her swim diaper?"

"Cool. I love these things." Lexa stripped the baby down to bare skin, removed her soiled diaper, cleaned her bottom, and replaced it with blue diaper with aquatic swimming turtles.

With Lexa distracted entertaining Camryn about how much fun she's going to have, she changed out of her wedding dress and into a one-piece vintage aqua floral bathing suit.

She got an idea. "Could you stand one more picture of us?"
Lexa looked up as a grin spread across her face. "Dress like that, I'm not sure if we're going to make it to our own party."

Lexa rose and took Clarke into her arms. Clarke's arms went around her back, cupping her ass. "And who could blame them?"

Their kiss turned heated until she pulled away, pushing at Lexa's chest. "We better stop."

A knock at the door. "I hope you guys can wait till later to fool around."

Anya

"We're coming," Clarke said, making Lexa snort.

~

Suits and dresses quickly changed into swimming trunks and bathing suits. Camryn and Raean divested of her outfits, splashed around in the wading pool under the shade of an umbrella and having the time of their lives with all of their grandparents in attendance.

In the distance, Lincoln worked his magic over the grill. Ribs and burgers were cooking as the day grew filled with laughter, stories, good food, and dancing. A day they wouldn't soon forget.

~

Lexa kissed the top of Clarke's head and chuckled.

"What's got you tickled?"

"I was just thinking about your story. The one you wrote about the sylvan warrior. Seeing you dressed like a princess today reminded me."
"And?" Clarke sat back to gaze into her face. After Camryn was born, she hadn't looked at her story in months.

"Well, I was wondering why the Commander hasn't taken her Princess to bed and how does their story end," she said with a wink.

Clarke mused off the top of her head, "Oh, that's because the Commander's campaign against the southland's uprisings kept her away from her mate and young heir, Camryn." Clarke, firmly adding, "Their tale never really ends."

"Really?" Lexa snuggled down, indicating her interest. "Tell me more."

"Mmm. At first, the Commander's coalition threatened to break apart, and outland leaders called her away, just as her mate was about to deliver her heir.

She would calm one uprising, just to have another surge in its wake. Something unknown to the Commander was keeping the people on edge, and she was determined to find out what the mystery kept secret from her could be."

"Dragons?"

Clarke laughed. "Not in this realm. No, the Commander found out someone was undermining her orders. Marauders were stealing from the supply wagons—sowing distrust.

Wise, was the Commander who sought the knowledge of the ages, held bound in manuscript keep in the high tower. Within the pages, existed answers still relevant in her time.

Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer."

"Who was her enemy?"

"She hadn't found out, not yet. The Commander kept keen observations on the methodology of the
theft. How and why if you will, and later, the Commander set a trap and waited.

For a week, the Commander cloaked herself in rags and hid herself and her troops among villagers. A caravan of food that was due to arrive was late. They rode out to find one of her ministers taking the allotments for himself. It was Titus."

"Who the hell is that?"

Clarke sniffed her distaste thoroughly into her acting. "Nobody of real importance. He was her minister of propaganda. And old holdout from the Commander before her. As her rule began, she slowly moved his day to day duties down to mere presence in the gallery. No more overt messaging to instill fear among her people. His time was ending, so..."

Lexa sat up, almost dislodging Clarke from her lap. "So, this asshole tried to ruin the whole thing?"

"Worse than that, Titus tried to assassinate the Commander."

"What? After all, I have done." Lexa laughed. "I mean Commander Alexandra."

Clarke wanted to wrap this up and stood, pulling Lexa off of the lounger and back into their room.

"True. Plus, the Commander grew angry because it kept her from seeing her daughter, who was nearly a month old. Her arms we aching to hold her mate and child. To say she was pissed off is putting mildly and well when she found it was Titus."

Clarke passed her finger over her throat with the accompanying slicing sound. "Off with his head."

"No mercy in my kingdom?"

"Not to traitors, no, my love."

Lexa bent over and kissed her daughter. "Sweet dreams." She joined Clarke in bed and turned out the lights.
After a quiet moment, one in which by now Clarke could tell Lexa was thinking. She sensed her rubbing the new ring on her finger.

"What happened next?"

"You mean when the Commander finally returned to her kingdom?"

"Yeah."

"Well, the princess felt the Commander returning before she heard her footfalls. The Commander found her mate nursing her heir and fell to her knees in front of them. Grateful, in completing her duty to unite the clans and finally seeing her daughter for the first time. It was love at first sight.

Alexandra ordered her advisors she was not to be disturbed and spent the next few weeks reacquainting with her new family."

"Did they live happily ever after?"

"I wouldn't write it any other way, Lexa."

Lexa snuggled close to Clarke. After a short time, her breathing even out. She thought for sure Lexa was asleep. It was a busy day, after all.

"Clarke?"

"Hmm?"

"Thank you for that."

Clarke had to think for a moment and asked, "What for?"
"For being you. For telling me a happy story."

"It's not quite over."

Lexa turned to face Clarke in the dimly lit room. The lights from the pool below danced across the ceiling. "I know we probably shouldn't with the baby..."

Lexa left unsaid, what Clarke could sense within her scent. Pure desire. During the time they laid in bed, Lexa grew hard and wanting.

Clarke whispered, "Later that evening, when their child was fast asleep, the princess boldly mounted her mate." Clarke climbed on top of Lexa in much the same way and positioned her cunt over Lexa's extending cock.

Lexa groaned against Clarke's lips and licked inside her mouth. "I've missed you, my Princess."

Without removing her lips from Clarke's, Lexa rolled them over and eased inside of her. Clarke uttered against her mouth, reeling in the joy of their connection, "You're home now, my Commander."

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