Lather, Rinse, Repeat

by Ima1

Summary

Lexa's life couldn't have been going better until her girlfriend, Clarke, dies unexpectedly and she wakes up in the past. She is now forced to repeat her life as she attempts to change history.

And again, and again, and again.

Notes

Hello!
I hope you enjoy this little story of mine, let me know what you think. Comments are more than welcome :D
It’s a random day of junior year. So random, in fact, that she doesn’t even know what day of the month it is except that it’s a Thursday. There are no quizzes today, no assignments due, no approaching midterms. Nothing but one of those rare days at the beginning of the semester where the sun is still shining and hot and she actually allows herself to enjoy the day without putting any pressure on herself to excel.

When she sees her, it’s another random moment. Just a turn of her head while Lexa walks down the path towards the cafeteria, just a glimpse of blonde hair and striking blue eyes that meet her and then, just as quickly, return to the brunette in front of her. Just a moment of appreciation of beauty, perhaps a rapid flash of curiosity, a slight desire to see a smile on her face, wondering if it might make it more beautiful. And just like that, it’s gone. She’s just another face in the crowds, another thing to add to the list of small things that make Lexa smile today. Just another beautiful element of nature.

There is nothing special about it. Nothing that stays engraved in her memory. Just another random day.

She doesn’t even think she might see her again. In fact, she doesn’t even contemplate that she might want to, doesn’t waste one millisecond thinking about any future encounter. Doesn’t think about her at all. She was just another pretty face in the crowd, one that is quickly forgotten.

Lexa enjoys her rare day of feeling no responsibilities, enjoys the sun touching her face and tanning her skin, enjoys the warm grass under her feet, her friends that make her smile, sometimes even laugh.

She goes to class and not once her mind returns to that random moment. She starts getting more assignments, has to prepare for quizzes then midterms, then finals, and repeat. She spends her holidays with Anya and her family, she works at her part-time job, she interns, she graduates.

She meets Costia, falls in love. She’s as happy as can be. She has a job she loves, she works her ass off to be the best in her team, she starts to get more and more responsibilities, more appreciation for her talent and dedication, she gets promoted.
She asks Costia to move in, they’ve been together for one year and she loves her like she hasn’t loved anybody. She works harder, she gets results, she feels accomplished. She builds a career, swiftly making her way to the top. She has her eye on the goal and she will reach it. One day she will be president.

It doesn’t work out with Costia. They love each other but, as time passes, they both feel something is missing. It’s a mutual breakup, as amicable as they can be. It still hurts, though. But, slowly, she moves on. She loses a girlfriend but keeps her best friend.

She still works hard, harder perhaps. She doesn’t have a relationship that requires her time anymore, so she devotes most of her time to her job and she succeeds. She’s one of the best. She gets promoted again. She’s happy.

Something is missing, but she’s happy nonetheless.

Anya forces her to date. Forces would perhaps be too harsh a word for someone other than Anya, but her sister basically threatens to whoop her ass if she doesn’t get back out there. Lexa is not scared of her (she is *not*) but she still relents and dates. They’re okay, they’re not Costia, which is okay, but they’re also not that something that she’s been missing. Still, she dates. It’s fun, something to distract her mind from work, some mindless conversation, and physical connection. It’s nice. The women are nice, they’re beautiful, they find her intriguing and mysterious (their words, Lexa would never describe herself as such) and a couple of them want more than just the physical but she’s not interested. It just doesn’t fit. She lets them down gently; she moves on to the next one.

Anya has been dating, but like, serious dating which shocks Lexa at first. She still remembers the days her sister would have no compunctions about kicking out whichever guy or girl had had the misfortune of falling asleep in her bed. It was funny to watch, she won’t lie. It was as if, for some unknown reason, they thought that Anya would be any less scary after they had slept with her. They were all sorely mistaken. Lexa would often make it a point to be in the living room earlier than usual whenever her sister brought someone home during their college days just so that she could have a nice laugh at the poor sucker’s expense. It usually made her day.

But now Anya is dating. As in, has had a girlfriend (*girlfriend! Anya!* for the past four months and wants Lexa to meet her. Lexa is shocked and makes the mistake of wondering out loud if her sister has been vajazzled. That earns her a swift and powerful punch to the shoulder which leaves her bruised for a week. Lesson learned. Anya in love is not something to be messed with.

Lexa meets Raven and she understands why Anya is so smitten, she has finally found an equal. It melts Lexa’s heart to see the way Anya looks at Raven, how the engineer can stand her own against her sister’s glaring, how Anya lets Raven tease her and only pretends to be angry, but her
shining eyes completely give her away. She doesn’t make the mistake of telling her sister how love-struck she looks though, she’s learned her lesson. (She thinks her shoulder might never recover.)

And then Raven is having a party at her house and Anya is going, of course, and Lexa is somehow dragged along. Something about working too much and needing to get some action and “A good pair of boobs in your hands and a pussy on your face to help you release all that tension.” Lexa really hates the word ‘pussy’ and Anya knows it, and she particularly hates being so crass about sex, but she still reluctantly agrees that it would be good to let loose. It’s been a few weeks after all.

It’s a small party, for which she is glad. She’s not in the mood to deal with throngs of wild people, her college party days are long gone (and those were rare and far between). She’s surprised to see Lincoln there, but apparently, that’s how Anya met Raven; because their cousin’s girlfriend is one of Raven’s best friends.

She gets introduced to Octavia and her brother Bell-something (it’s a weird name, she feels bad after asking him to repeat it twice and decides to ask Anya later), there are Monty and Jasper and Harper and Murphy and she doesn’t try to memorize any names after those but it’s about twenty people, a relaxed ambiance, good music, so, overall, not one of Anya’s worst ideas.

The blonde comes in late. Lexa’s talking to some girl who she thought she could hook up with because she was quite attractive but then realized there was zero going on in her head so now she’s just counting the minutes until it’s polite to ditch her. She notices her coming in and greeting everyone with a tired smile, Raven shouting something about her getting that “sexy Griffin ass ready to party ASAP” (Lexa checks, it is a sexy ass) and the woman flips her off before heading to one of the bedrooms.

When she comes back, Lexa has long since ditched the other girl, whatever her name was, and is now leaning against the wall nursing her only drink for the night and just pleasantly observing the transformation. Gone are the scrubs and messily tied up hair, replaced with some jeans and a mildly revealing top, hair down and light makeup on which accentuates her best features. She looks beautiful in a comfortable way, like she didn’t actually put much thought into her outfit but knows it works for her anyway. (It does, it definitely does.)

She watches as the woman makes her way around the room, properly greeting everyone and spending a few minutes to chat, the tiredness in her face mostly gone and a bright smile in its stead. Eventually, she catches Lexa’s eye and Lexa makes no move to try to pretend she hasn’t been watching. The woman smiles coyly and Lexa smirks in return, watching as she heads to the kitchen to get a drink.

Somehow she’s distracted by Anya, whose drunken brain decides Lexa must hear something right
this moment because it is “sooo important, Lexi!” It’s not. Learning about all the ways that Raven is awesome in bed is definitely not important at that moment, or any for that matter.

But that drunken conversation is all it takes for Lexa to lose sight of the blonde and she can’t help but feel a slight pinch of disappointment. The woman made her… curious. Definitely curious. And curious is probably the best thing Lexa can feel towards another woman, something which she has only felt once before. It’s an elusive feeling.

She decides to take a breather in the balcony after a while of pointless small-talk with Bellamy (she finally got his name), the fresh air feeling good in her lungs after the stuffiness from the heating and booze inside. She’s happy to find a couple of chairs there and sits down, closes her eyes after some time spent stargazing and just enjoys the calm in her head. It’s been some time since it’s been so quiet inside her mind, it’s usually bubbling with concerns. The quiet is good.

“You do realize it’s November, right?” a husky voice drags her back to the moment.

She opens her eyes to find the blonde woman eyeing her bare arms with a raised brow and amusement gracing her lips. She has nice lips. And very pretty blue eyes. Lexa is even more curious.

“I like the cold,” she tells her evenly.

“Still, I can’t in good conscience let you catch a cold,” the woman says as she hands Lexa one of the blankets that she only now notices where neatly folded in the corner.

Lexa’s lips quirk up slightly in amusement but she takes the blanket nonetheless and wraps it around herself.

“You do know that a cold is caused by a virus, right?” Lexa asks her, biting her lip slightly to contain her smile.

The woman rolls her eyes and sits next to her on the vacant chair, blanket tightly wrapped around her own shoulders.

“And you do know that cold temperatures lower your immunity and make you more susceptible to catching said viruses, right?” she retorts in the same teasing tone Lexa had used.
Lexa smirks; her curiosity rises. “Touché. Doctor?”

“What gave me away? The science talk or the scrubs I came in with?”

Lexa’s lips lift gently and she says, “The concern for a perfect stranger.”

The woman smiles and offers Lexa her hand. “Clarke.”

“Lexa.”

“There we go, no longer a stranger,” Clarke says with a grin.

The blunt side of Lexa wants to ask if the ‘perfect’ still remains but, instead, she goes with, “But still concerned?”

“Only if you plan on doing something reckless again,” Clarke warns.

“Hmm, you have some strange standards for recklessness if forgoing a jacket counts.”

“It does if it’s below forty,” Clarke says with mock seriousness.

“Fine, I shall promise not to endanger myself in such grave manners.”

Clarke’s grin brightens and it might have magical properties because it makes Lexa melt a little.

“Much appreciated.”

Lexa gives her a smile and turns back to look at the city view. It’s gorgeous really, perhaps not as gorgeous as her present company but she thinks ogling Clarke might not leave the best impression.
“So you’re Anya’s elusive sister, huh?”

“Elusive,” Lexa says contemplatively as her eyes return to Clarke. “Is that your way of saying antisocial?”

Clarke chuckles and her eyes shine with playfulness. “Your words. But no, just that Anya and Lincoln have been talking about you for ages but we’ve never met.”

Lexa nods because it’s true. She’s also heard about Anya and Lincoln’s new friends a lot over the past several months.

“I work a lot.”

“So I’ve heard. Also sounds like an excuse an antisocial person would make,” Clarke teases her, tongue slightly poking out between her teeth.

Lexa chuckles and gives in. “There’s a small chance that you might be partially right.”

“Well, I’m glad you could make it this time,” Clarke says as she stands up. “Maybe you’ll make it next time as well.”

“I just might,” Lexa says with a smile before Clarke goes back inside with a coyness in her lips.

Lexa could go after her. She could. Part of her desperately wants to chase that woman until she has a taste of her lips and her skin and has her writhing beneath her. She also knows that Clarke probably expects her to do just that.

She doesn’t go.

Instead, she stays for a bit longer in the balcony, breathes in the not so clean city air and focuses on clearing her mind once again. Then, she goes back inside to tell her sister and the others goodbye, knowing that Anya will want to spend the night with Raven.
She catches Clarke’s eyes and smiles slightly as the woman waves goodbye from across the room, and then she’s gone.

She could’ve gone after her. She could’ve tried to hook up with Clarke tonight, she might have even succeeded. She doesn’t want that, though. Clarke makes her curious and curious is as good as it is rare and Lexa wants it. So she waits. There’ll be another chance, she’s sure, and she’ll satisfy her curiosity little by little. Clarke isn’t the type of woman Lexa would have mindless fun with, so tonight was definitely not the night to chase.

Lexa goes back to work, goes back to her routine, goes back to getting her head filled with bubbling thoughts. Clarke is now part of those thoughts. It’s a curiosity she has yet to sate.

Naturally, the next time Anya invites her to do something with Raven and her friends, Lexa agrees, perhaps slightly too eagerly.

It’s just a get-together at Bellamy’s, a barbecue to appreciate the rare sunny weather, despite the cold. Most of the people there she recognizes from the previous party at Raven’s (and Clarke’s — Anya has informed her they’re roommates).

She feels bad for barely having spoken to her cousin’s girlfriend and for only having met her at the last party so she makes an effort to talk to Octavia and she finds that she actually likes the girl. She’s fierce and opinionated and caring and Lexa can see what drew him to her. Lincoln gives her a grateful smile for her approval and she is happy for him. He has the gentlest heart and Lexa has seen him get terribly hurt already, he deserves something nice like this.

She makes a mental note to spend more time with her family and friends. It sits with her the wrong way that Lincoln has been dating Octavia for almost a year and she basically only just met her.

Clarke arrives late again, she apparently had an unplanned shift at the hospital, according to Raven, and Lexa won’t pretend that she isn’t glad she came and that she wasn’t a bit disappointed when she got here and there was no sign of her.

Clarke spots her immediately and sends her a bright smile which does something to Lexa’s insides. Again, Clarke talks to everyone briefly and Lexa watches, until eventually Clarke makes her way to her and sits next to Lexa on the couch, a plate full of food on her lap which she digs into straight away.
Lexa watches with amusement as Clarke eats, moaning appreciatively at the food, and a small smile plasters itself in Lexa’s face. She has no control over her lips whatsoever.

“God, I was starving!” Clarke groans after she’s cleared the plate.

“There’s more food, if you want,” Lexa teases her and chuckles when Clarke contemplates it before shrugging.

“Nah. Later, maybe.”

“They don’t feed you at the hospital?” she asks with a playfully raised brow. Clarke makes a face at that.

“Cafeteria food sucks. I usually have lunch there, regardless, but I knew Bell would make his famous burgers so I thought I’d save some space in my stomach.”

“Sounds like a reasonable plan.” Lexa eyes her dubiously.

“Oh, I’d go hungry for a whole day just for these burgers,” Clarke says with mock seriousness. “Not more than a day, but I’d definitely give it a solid 24 hours of fasting.”

“High praise for the burgers,” Lexa says with a chuckle.

“Don’t tell me you didn’t like them,” Clarke counters, aghast.

“Didn’t try them.”

Clarke gasps dramatically and lifts a hand to her chest. “The sacrilege!”

“I’m more of a pork chops kinda girl,” Lexa adds with a smirk, amused at Clarke’s clear love for food.
“Okay, I’ll let it slide ‘cause those are pretty awesome as well. I might have them for dessert in a bit.”

Lexa can’t help but let out a laugh at that and Clarke looks at her with gleeful eyes.

“I’m glad you came, Lexa. I’ll show you how much fun we can be.”

Lexa is tempted to tell her she only came for her.

She doesn’t need to tell her, though, because, in the end, they spend most of the rest of the afternoon together, talking about anything and everything and Lexa can’t remember the last time she’s laughed so much. Anya shoots her a few befuddled looks which are quickly accompanied by knowing smirks and Lexa does her best to ignore her. It turns out she is enjoying herself very much.

Much to her sister’s amusement, Lexa gets Clarke’s number and they message back and forth until Lexa finally asks her out (under threat of violence from Anya, but that is neither here nor there).

They go on a date, it goes really well, they kiss, that goes even better, they go on more dates, they have sex, glorious, amazing sex, they date and they date.

They are together for almost two years and Lexa is finally complete. She found what was missing from her previous relationships. It’s not something that can easily be explained, if at all, but it is something she just feels.

Being with Clarke just feels… right. She completes her. They complete each other. They have a level of understanding which is unlike anything Lexa has ever experienced.

She’s happy. She’s really, really very happy.

Then her world comes crashing down when two police officers knock on her door telling her her girlfriend died in a hit and run on her way from the hospital.
Chapter End Notes

Don't be sad guys, nobody dies in this fic! Promise! :D
It’s one of those dreams she has sometimes where suddenly she’s just catapulted into a situation and she has no idea how she got there or what is even happening. She knows she’s walking and that it’s sunny and warm and, as she turns her head around, she sees her.

*Clarke.*

Her lungs constrict immediately while her heart is beating faster than ever, threatening to jump right off her chest and she halts completely in her tracks.

It’s not a dream at all. It’s a nightmare.

It’s the worst possible nightmare because she had just fallen asleep after coming back from the morgue to identify her dead girlfriend. She knows this because Anya had all but forced her to lay down and take a sleeping pill and the look of agony on her sister’s face was so close to matching her own feelings that she relented.

So it is undoubtedly a nightmare because Clarke is *dead*, and now she’s seeing her, here, in a dream.

She can’t stop looking, though, even after Clarke has turned away from her again after showing no signs of recognition and is now talking to Raven. (A younger-looking Raven. Odd. A younger-looking Clarke as well. Her sleeping brain works in strange ways.)

Still, she’s locked in place and she stares, absorbing everything and simultaneously begging for this dream to both end and never do. It’s a strange conundrum.

She’s jolted out of her thoughts when someone crashes into her and she doesn’t remember feeling pain like this in her dreams but, hey, this is a strange dream as is. Maybe her grief is manifesting itself in unusual dreams.
Once she takes a second to properly look around she notes that she’s at her old college. Why would she dream of Clarke and Raven in her college, anyway? She now knows that they all went there at the same time but they never met, it was a pretty big campus.

She turns around and Clarke is still there, still talking to Raven, and she decides that, if this is the only way she’ll get to see her girlfriend from now on, then she’ll take it. So she moves forward and heads towards them, stopping just as they turn around and look at her quizzically.

A whispered “Clarke” leaves her lips and she’s so unused to hear that amount of pain in her voice that it stills her, and yet it’s not even close to how she’s feeling on the inside.

Clarke looks at her curiously but shows no sign of recognizing her and Lexa doesn’t stop the tears that come to her eyes at the cruelty of her brain that it couldn’t even let her have this, just a moment in a dream where her girlfriend is alive and well and knows her.

“Uh, you two know each other?” she hears Raven hesitantly ask.

A “Yes” escapes her lips just as a “No” leaves Clarke’s.

Both Clarke and Raven give her confused looks and she ignores them in favor of staring. She is, unabashedly, staring, looking at the love of her life and just taking everything in while she can, because who knows if she’ll ever get a dream like this again. It’s just so vivid.

Clarke almost looks real.

“Uh…well, we have to go, Clarke,” Raven says, her curiosity turned to suspicion now.

She doesn’t have the brace on her leg, Lexa vaguely notes. How odd that she’d picture Raven without it when she’s only ever seen her with it when she’s out of the house.

“Yes. We should go,” Clarke says, her brows furrowed in confusion as if she’s desperately trying to remember something. “Uh… bye.”

Lexa doesn’t say anything. She watches them leave and doesn’t try to stop them because she is too
stunned to chase after her. She knows how those dreams go, after all, she’ll be stuck for the whole
dream chasing something unattainable and she doesn’t have the energy for that.

Instead, she sinks down onto the grass and lets the tears fall freely, people going past her constantly
but all ignoring her and her pain and, before she knows it, it’s dark and the dream still hasn’t ended.

She thinks maybe the quickest way to end this nightmare is to head home, maybe walking with a
purpose will make her wake up. She dazedly makes her way to her apartment off campus which
she shares with her sister and quickly gets into her bed without bothering to check if Anya is home
in this strangely realistic dream. She wonders if falling asleep within a dream works, but she’ll
soon find out.

Well, it worked. Kind of. She did sleep, but it didn’t end the dream. Strangest of it all, she dreamed.
A dream within a dream, how Inception-y of her brain.

She lays in bed for a really long time willing herself to wake up but nothing budges. Eventually, the
hunger is overwhelming and she can’t ignore it any longer. She hasn’t eaten anything since she
started this strange dream but she doesn’t know why she’s hungry because she’s never hungry
when she dreams and she never eats in her dreams. Regardless, she gets up, goes to the bathroom,
takes a minute to note how strange it is that she actually feels her bladder empty instead of the
perpetual fulness of her dreams, and then heads to the kitchen.

Anya comes in while she’s in the middle of devouring her second bowl of cereal and she halts in
her tracks and gives Lexa her typical big sister once-over, her critical eyes taking everything in.

“What’s wrong?” Anya asks, her features full of worry.

She just looks so real. And younger. Why does everyone look younger in this dream, herself
included?

“I can’t wake up.”

“What?” she asks confused.

“I can’t wake up, Anya, nothing I try works. I just can't wake up from this nightmare,” she tells her
between frustration and desperation.

She wonders as she says it if she really wants to wake up, because waking up would involve dealing with her grief, planning a funeral, calling all their friends and family and informing them that Clarke is dead. At least in this nightmare, Clarke isn’t dead. She doesn’t know Lexa, sure, but she’s alive.

Maybe that’s why she’s not waking up; because deep down she doesn’t really want to.

“Lexi, you’re not making much sense,” Anya tells her softly, and that’s two big red flags right there, a testament to just how horrible Lexa must look. One, Anya only calls her Lexi when she’s either drunk or worried; and two, she only uses that voice when she’s trying to soothe Lexa. “Your eyes are all puffy. Did you cry yourself to sleep?”

Lexa nods and looks down, unable to meet the concern in her eyes.

“Why were you crying?”


“I don’t. Will you tell me?”

Maybe dream Anya isn’t aware yet. She’s getting really fed up with her dreammates having memory loss.

“Clarke’s dead, Anya,” Lexa tells her, with an unbelievable amount of effort just to utter those words. It leaves her completely hollow.

Anya looks at a loss, her gaze quickly flickering from one point to another trying to make sense of Lexa’s words. “I don’t… Is he a friend of yours?”

Lexa looks up at her disbelieving. “She! She, Anya, my girlfriend is dead and I can’t wake up from this dream where no one has caught up.”
“Lexi… Girlfriend?”

Then Lexa breaks down completely, a mess of sobs on the kitchen floor while Anya is trying, to no avail, to calm her down, her arms wrapping protectively around Lexa as she runs circles on her back and fingers through her hair until eventually Lexa is only softly crying and the dream still hasn’t ended.

She doesn’t understand.

Usually, when she cries this hard and feels such sorrow in her dreams, she’ll wake up. Crying, with tears running down her sleepy eyes, yes, but she’ll wake up nonetheless. She doesn’t wake up now, which leads her to believe that she maybe is awake after all. Crazy as it sounds (and it does sound one hundred percent crazy).

“An,” she clears her throat after her voice comes out as nothing more than a rasp and tries again. “You don’t know who Clarke is?”

Anya gives her a concerned look, her brows furrowed in confusion. “No, Lexi.”

“What about Raven?”

“Who’s that?”

Well, fuck.

Apparently, she’s in some kind of Peggy Sue Got Married type of situation.

She’s back in her junior year as it turns out. And now that she’s been through it again, she remembers. She’d seen Clarke before they met at Raven’s party. She was just another girl on campus, another random face which Lexa thought was beautiful but forgot about it soon after. She never thought about it again and she had no idea that when she’d met Clarke it was the second time she was seeing her, and she was pretty sure that neither did Clarke because they were always talking about how funny it was that they’d gone to the same college for four years and never ran into each other.
Well, apparently they had, sort of, and Lexa was going to take advantage of that.

Lexa has to deal with a very concerned Anya who barely leaves her side for the next few weeks and looks at her as if she might break down once again at any moment. She tells her some very unconvincing story about still being asleep when the meltdown happened and that everything is fine. Anya doesn’t believe her, obviously, because her sister is extremely perceptive and has the best bullshit meter. But still, eventually, she forgets about it.

Then, there’s the matter of Clarke.

If this is some miraculous do-over, then Lexa wants to take advantage of it and spend the most amount of time possible with Clarke, so she decides she won’t wait six years to meet her again.

There’s still the problem of her coming across as some crazy girl when they first met this time around, so she thinks the best possible course of action is to take it slow.

Now that she knows Clarke’s there, she actually sees her everywhere, even when she’s not looking. Lexa takes this as a good sign and does her best to convey the message that she is, contrary to popular belief, completely sane. She hangs out with her friends, goes to class, studies at the library, has her meals at the cafeteria, and all-around does her best to be in Clarke’s line of sight when she’s looking like a regular person. She has hopes that this subliminal sort of message will get her good results.

Clarke notices her, of that she’s sure. Lexa catches her looking at her often but she’s not sure what to make of the girl’s expression. It’s a mix of curiosity and something that could either be suspicion or interest. Really, it could go either way.

With some subtle probing on Lexa’s part, they end up at the same random frat party in the middle of the semester. Lexa is not usually one for these parties but she’s been doing a lot of unusual things lately to get her girlfriend's attention, so what’s one more odd thing, really.

To say it does not go well would be a terrible understatement.

 Somehow all the pep talks she’s been giving herself for the past months get tossed away as soon as she sees Clarke up close and she becomes some fumbling teenage version of herself that never existed in either reality. It’s ridiculous, to say the least. Luna laughs at her with no mercy and no
matter how many times she encourages Lexa to go talk to Clarke, she can’t get her legs to move. There’s just so much pressure. This is her girlfriend — or future girlfriend — the woman Lexa was prepared to spend the rest of her life with and she came across as completely unstable, possibly stalkerish, and now she can’t take the risk of messing it all up.

Naturally, she misses her chance. She feels like she should have remembered this detail because she knows how the story went the first time. Clarke met Finn in her junior year, they dated for a couple of years, he fucked it up, the end of that chapter. She’s just been so overwhelmed with this whole second time around thing and trying to find a way to get closer to Clarke that she didn’t think to consider the way things naturally progressed the first time.

So she sees Clarke kissing Finn and she kind of throws up a little in her mouth and then she leaves.

In the end, it takes weeks and weeks of thinking and overthinking and reading so many quantum physics books that she’s sprouting theories out of her ears for her to reach a simple conclusion: The Clarke she new, the Clarke she fell in love with, had to go through all those years of dating other people and getting her heart broken and all those other experiences in order to become the woman she met at that party. If one thing went differently, who knows what could’ve happened. Sure, maybe Lexa would be lucky and they would have that many more years together, but maybe they would also screw it up for however many reasons.

So she leaves it be. She watches her girlfriend from afar, watches as she falls in love and lives her life without her. For now.

She meets Costia again after her graduation, but she doesn’t have it in her to be with someone else. She hasn’t since Clarke died and she just can’t get herself to do it. She’s been close, Anya often tries to set her up, take her to a bar to meet someone. She’s never gone further than a kiss and even that left her feeling terribly guilty, both for having kissed someone other than her girlfriend and for having enjoyed it, for having felt the need for that type of human connection she’s been without for years.

Costia flirts with her at first, of course she does, she’s the same woman as before. Lexa is not. She gently lets her know that she’s not interested but they become friends (or remain friends, in Lexa’s case. This is all too complicated for her brain sometimes).

Costia was her best friend before and she’s her best friend now, and Lexa does love her, which is why it breaks her heart to see her friend in an abusive relationship. But it took her a while to see it, she’s ashamed to admit.
At first it was the emotional manipulation, the way Nia would get so jealous of Lexa and make Costia feel guilty for spending time with her, make her feel bad for having a life outside of their relationship, make her tell her where she was all the time, who she was with, what they did, letting her know she had to be home at a certain time, constantly checking her phone and going over her messages and social media accounts.

It’s strange because, were Costia dating a man, Lexa would have seen the signs much sooner, which is a statement to how fucked up their society is. And then there are the unexplainable bruises and the flimsy excuses, and Lexa is helpless and frustrated and so, so angry.

Costia never says anything, though, and Lexa sees her best friend falling into an abyss without being able to do anything. When she catches on to what was happening it is already too late. The day the police call her is the second time in her twice-lived life that her heart completely shatters.

It gets harder to focus on the now after that, to not get lost in another spiral of what-ifs. Because the truth is, Costia’s death is her fault. She may not have wielded the weapon but she put it in her path. Lexa’s rejection of their past, her inability to have a relationship again, is what led Costia to fall into another relationship, one which ultimately cost her her life.

It gets really fucking hard, to be honest.

Her only consolation is the light that she can almost see at the end of the tunnel. She spends her days immersed in her work, even more than the first time around and she is quickly the best because she has done it all before. Nothing changes, she’s the only variable that’s different. It makes life easier in some ways, infinitely boring and hard in others.

Her heart is almost on the brink of exploding the day of Raven’s party. She’s been waiting for this day for six years, six very lonely, heartbreaking years but she has to believe that it was all worth it. And when she sees her, when she looks to the door just before she knows she’ll arrive so as not to miss even a single second, she thinks that it was.

She hasn’t seen Clarke in so long. At first, she kept looking for her after they graduated, but she quickly gave up when the longing proved to be too much. She looks absolutely stunning now, even with dirty scrubs and a tired look on her face. Lexa can’t take her eyes off of her.

She’s nervous, she’s extremely nervous for someone that has inside knowledge of how the whole thing will turn out. She can’t help it. But when Clarke smiles at her, that beautiful heart-melting smile, everything within her settles. She’s right where she is meant to be.
It’s easy, it’s so easy. They fall into each other seamlessly. This time Lexa follows because she can’t not.

She didn’t realize just how starved of human affection she’s been after six years of celibacy and no more than a couple of chaste kisses here and there. And, she’s embarrassed to say, she’s incredibly rusty. She’s a fumbling mess of nerves but they laugh about it — Clarke has always made her feel so calm and at ease. She’s also, predictably, horny as fuck and one touch almost sends her over the edge. It’s ridiculous, it’s embarrassing, it’s hilarious, it’s amazing.

It goes quicker this time. Lexa is not holding back one bit and she’s happy to note that neither is Clarke. Almost as if she knows that they have so much time to catch up on.

They’re the butt of Anya and Raven’s jokes, constantly mocking them for giving lesbians a bad name with their stereotyping (Clarke’s constant protest of “I’m bisexual” perpetually countered by Raven’s “Then act like one!”). They don’t actually care.

They move in together after about seven months, a practical decision seeing as they spend most of their time at each other’s apartments anyway.

Lexa is so incredibly happy that she doesn’t think anything will bring her down. Her relationship is better than it’s ever been, there are almost no unnecessary fights. Lexa already knows everything that upsets Clarke and she’s already been ‘trained’ in her ways and, though Clarke hasn’t, Lexa can’t really find it in her to care. This is her second chance, she won’t let silly things like using coasters or leaving paint splatters everywhere get in the way.

Her job is going spectacularly as well. She’s this close to becoming a congresswoman and she can barely wait. She’s been working for this for so long.

She didn’t think it would happen, but the truth is, it did. Somehow, amongst all the happiness, she forgot.

It’s not until there’s an unexpected knock on her door that dread fills her and she’s immediately catapulted to eight years ago and her brain finally clicks on the date.

She forgot.
How on earth could she have forgotten?

Her hands shake and she’s crying before she even opens the door because she knows, she knows where this is going and she can’t stop berating herself for having gotten lost in all the happiness, for not having remembered that there was a ticking time bomb attached to it.

She doesn’t actually hear them, it’s the same two police officers that came to her last time and a part of her mind that is close to losing it finds the coincidence, or lack thereof, hilarious.

She calls Anya on autopilot. She can’t see the body, not this time. She doesn’t wish it on anyone and especially not on her sister, but she can’t do it herself.

It goes almost the same way, the main difference being that this time Lexa is mostly numb, the shock to her system too great. She takes the sleeping pills diligently, her mind praying and praying that when she wakes up she’s back again, that she gets another chance.

She doesn’t even feel herself fall.

Chapter End Notes

So this was a bit heavy on the angst, but it gets better!

Let me know what you think :D
Lexa comes to much the same way as last time, only she rushes out a breath in relief this time around.

She sees Clarke, and she is momentarily at peace.

She came back. For some reason, she gets another chance, they get another chance. She’s grieving, of course she’s grieving, but she has a goal in mind and she won’t allow herself to get distracted this time. The third time’s the charm, after all.

She leaves Clarke alone. Sure, she watches from the edges (mildly stalkerish but she doesn’t think this counts as such, it is her girlfriend after all), but she never once makes contact. She doesn’t go to any parties where she knows Clarke will be, she doesn’t try to run into her at the library or the cafeteria, she just goes on with her life like she did the first time.

Well, almost like the first time. This time she plans on using her knowledge to her advantage much sooner. If she must wait patiently for her private life to get where she wants it to, the same needn’t be said for her professional one.

It could be considered insider trading (well, technically, it is) but she doesn’t actually care. She takes more business courses than she did last time and she uses all her knowledge of the markets in the future to her advantage. If she must go through all this again, she will do it comfortably. And, she’s happy to report, all the money she’s making makes her more than comfortable.

She almost loses it when she sees Costia, alive and smiling and happy. She missed her best friend so much. Even during the first time, after they broke up, they remained close. Costia was the second person she told about Clarke (Anya was the first but she’s not sure that counts because Anya literally saw it happen) and she and Clarke were really good friends. It was unbelievably hard not having her around the second time.

So she is definitely not letting the same thing happen again. Costa flirts and Lexa flirts back. It’s easy, it’s nice, it’s that warm cup of cocoa that reminds you of your childhood and comes with such fond memories.
She doesn’t feel guilty this time. She’s the only person she’s been with besides Clarke after a
decade and she, strangely, wouldn’t have it any other way. She’s not in love with her, but she loves
her. She will always love Costia, even though she loves Clarke more.

It’s taken many years to realize that one type of love needn’t overcome the other. They can both
coexist. And she sure as hell won’t let Costia fall in with Nia again, she won’t lose her, not this
time.

She likes this third version much better than the second, at least when it comes to the waiting part.
Now she has Costia instead of being alone, and the comfort it brings cannot be easily put into
words.

When the time comes, they break it off, just like they did the first time. And, just like the first time,
they remain friends. She needs this, she needs certain things to remain a constant. Her sister, her
best friend, her parents. She gets her strength from them.

Lexa is giddy with excitement when she meets Clarke again. She barely contains herself but she
pulls through with some smooth lines, if she says so herself, and she wastes no time before finding
her way back to Clarke’s heart and her bed. Not necessarily in that order.

She remembers this time. She knows it’s coming and she’s prepared for it. She knows the day it’s
supposed to happen and she makes sure that Clarke doesn’t leave the house that day. She doesn’t.
Lexa breathes easily for the first time in a while when she wakes up the next day to her living,
breathing girlfriend.

She doesn’t take into account the universe.

Lexa’s not someone that believes in fate or any of that nonsense, which might be ridiculous coming
from someone who’s come to accept these do-overs as a real thing and not a product of her grief-
stricken imagination. Still, she doesn’t really believe in fate.

Fate has a different idea.

They go out to the grocery shop after breakfast and Lexa insists on coming with because she is not
taking any chances. A car comes swerving out of nowhere when they’re walking on the sidewalk
and, somehow, Lexa makes it out alive. Clarke does not.
Lexa sleeps and wishes with all her heart for this to stop.
She wakes up again.

She’s still on repeat.

Lexa wonders if there’s a way to get in contact with whoever is responsible for this colossal bullshit and get them to stop screwing with her. She needs it to stop. She needs for her girlfriend to be alive, not to have died two different ways in two different situations.

Clearly, there’s a problem with the connection because she gets no reply to her demands.

Also, she turns fifty.

How fucking weird is that? She’s fifty years old and also twenty-six. She’d imagined her fiftieth birthday would be spent with Clarke, that they would grow old together. Instead, someone’s pressed the repeat button on her life and she’s stuck.

She decides to celebrate nonetheless, you only turn fifty once right? Yeah right, life’s a prankster.

But she perseveres. That is just the type of person she is. She won’t be thrown down without a fight. She gets back up to fight another day.
She thinks maybe the problem is her.

Much as it costs her, maybe if she’s not in Clarke’s life, this won’t happen.

It’s worth a shot.

She doesn’t break up with Costia. This time she needs her more than ever and she’s maybe being a little selfish and possibly keeping her from the person she’s meant to be with, if there is such a thing, but she’s okay with being selfish for once.

It hurts her more than anything to be in the same spaces as Clarke and not be with her, to see her flirting with someone else, to see her dating Niylah. She’s not sure if it would hurt more or less if she didn’t look so happy. The thing is, she’s seen her happier. That is what perhaps hurts the most.

Her consolation is Costia, always by her side, a constant source of comfort even if she doesn’t know how much she helps Lexa. She wishes her best friend could understand just how important she is, especially considering the pain she puts her through.

Anya confronts her once. Her sister is way too perceptive and Lexa has had many, many years of proof, so it’s a bit ridiculous that she thought she could get away with going unnoticed.

“You have a girlfriend, Lexa,” she tells her out of the blue one day when Costia isn’t with her and Clarke and Raven are laughing in their apartment’s balcony while Lexa watches from the living room couch.

“Your point?”

“My point is, why are you looking at her like that?”

Lexa raises a challenging eyebrow. “At Raven?”
“Don’t try to be smart with me, little sis.”

Lexa huffs out a breath of frustration before she leans back on the couch and pointedly ignores her sister’s gaze while she deviates her eyes from watching Clarke.

“I’m not looking at her any other way than I would any other beautiful woman, Anya,” she tells her with pointed nonchalance.

“You have Costia.”

“I am aware,” she grits out through clenched teeth, struggling to control her temper. “It doesn’t mean I’m blind, and Costia is more than okay with just looking. She knows I love her and I would never do anything to betray her trust.”

There are moments in the dark of the night where she’ll wonder if what she’s doing to both of them is fair, if she’s just using Costia, and she hates herself for it. She wonders if it’s fair to Clarke, for Lexa to use someone else to help distract her. Then she thinks that, if it were the other way around, she would be grateful that Clarke had someone to lessen the pain of her absence, and she manages to sleep a little better.

Any levels her a critical gaze before saying, “Good.”

That’s the end of that but Lexa is more careful from then on to keep whatever look Anya saw off her face. It’s a feat that proves troublesome considering she’s quite sure she oozes love for Clarke, but she’s nothing if not determined.
She failed. She doesn’t even know how she failed, but it happened nonetheless. One minute she’s there, dreading the day and hoping to wake up in the same bed, the next she’s here.

Clearly, staying away brought nothing but pain and no positive results, so no more of that nonsense. She will be with her girlfriend, goddamnit.

She doesn’t so much care for the possibility of screwing up the whole timeline this time because she really just fucking wants to be with Clarke, for however long she gets.

Lexa “randomly meets” her (with extra, *extra* quotation marks) at one of the beginning of the year parties. She all but drags a bewildered Luna with her and almost feels bad when she ditches her for what her friend calls “So your type of girl, it's gross.”

She confidently makes her way through the crowd and she’s pleased to see she catches Clarke’s eye and interest if her expression is anything to go by (it is, Lexa has learned to read her like no other), almost immediately.

This Clarke is so… young, there is really no other way to put it. Barely twenty years old and at the height of her party days. Still, Lexa is hopelessly in love with this and with every version of her.

Clarke is eager to lead them to her dorm and Lexa is equally eager to follow, the brief thought that this doesn’t feel quite right immediately quashed beneath how much she misses her girlfriend after eight years of not even a single kiss from her.

This Clarke is different. She likes things slightly different, is much more eager to take the lead, and Lexa is happy to let her. She can see that Clarke is only just getting comfortable in her sexuality, only beginning to explore beyond the basics. Lexa is more than happy to broaden her horizons.

It’s good, it’s really good for a while. The problems begin when Clarke wants nothing more than hooking up. At first, Lexa was happy to go with it, anything to have Clarke in her life, even if it wasn’t just how she wanted it. But, truthfully, she wants more, and Clarke won’t give her more.
She never thought Clarke could break her heart so thoroughly with something other than her death. It's not worse than her dying, and she won't be as dramatic as to say it is even close, but it is way more painful than she thought was possible.

And the thing is, she doesn’t get it. She doesn’t understand because in the original timeline, and all the subsequent others, Clarke had always had Finn. They had dated, dated, for more than two years. So really, the only different variant is her. Lexa is the one that Clarke can’t commit to, and it not only makes no sense, but it also leaves her completely heartbroken.

Costia is a relief after that, a breath of fresh air in a way she had never needed before. Lexa had never needed Costia to get over her broken heart because Clarke had never broken her heart before.

Who would have guessed, sixth time reliving the same thing, and there were still new things to come.

She’s fearful when Anya starts dating Raven because she knows her time’s up. She’s let go of Costia, it wouldn’t be fair to her to get in the mix of that drama, but she’s still not ready.

Anya takes longer to introduce them because she knows that the Clarke that is Raven’s roommate is the same Clarke that broke her sister’s heart in college. She’s scared and Lexa tells her to “Relax, it’s been a long time, I’m sure we can all be grown-ups about it.” She hopes.

This time, meeting Raven goes differently because they had already met. Were friends even. Of course, Clarke got her in the “divorce”, so they haven’t spoken since.

“Damn, Woods, look at you! And those cheekbones. I should’ve known they’re genetic!” Raven teases her with her usual charm and Lexa is immediately more at ease, her fondness for the girl shining through.

Truth is, Clarke not wanting her in college broke her heart in more ways than one. She didn’t just lose her girlfriend, she lost her friends as well. Not completely, she knew, she’d see them again of course, but it had been nice to have them in her life so soon and at a time when she was still recovering after eight years without Clarke.

That was one of the hardest things about all this bullshit. She not only had to wait for six years for Clarke, she also had to wait the same amount of time for the rest of their friends, Raven especially. Hence why she clung so much to Costia, she was the only one who was always with her for most
“Well, I’m sorry you got the worst-looking one out of the two of us, Raven,” she smirks, earning a well-placed punch to the arm from Anya (damn, the woman seems to be getting stronger and stronger in each time loop).

Raven laughs and, when their eyes meet, Lexa can see the apology in them and she wastes no time with awkwardness and pulls her in for a hug, completely ignoring how uncharacteristic this show of affection is for her.

“Missed you, Woods.”

“Missed you too, Raven.” More than she’ll ever know.

Anya looks at both of them with a mix of happiness and relief and Lexa is, once again, reminded of just how much her sister is in love with Raven.

The meeting with Clarke happens eventually. Not at the same party, Lexa wasn’t ready, but at Raven’s birthday party a couple of weeks later.

It’s... well, awkward is probably the right way to put it, though it doesn’t fully describe it.

The apartment is full of people, which her sister insisted would be for the best, and Lexa is inclined to agree. Clarke looks gorgeous, as ever, and they do a little awkward dance about how to greet each other until Lexa rolls her eyes at their idiocy and pulls her in for a hug.

It’s strange. She loves her so much. She’s basically sure she’s in this maddening loop because of just how much she loves Clarke, and yet she’s still so hurt. She thinks it hurts more because she knows what she was missing, something Clarke will never know. She’s also still incredibly angry at herself for having decided to fuck with the timeline because this mess is entirely her fault.

“It’s good to see you, Lex,” Clarke tells her with a small smile, her face marred with guilt which Lexa is not sure makes her feel better or worse.
“You too, Clarke.”

She doesn’t have it in her for more at the moment, so she goes to the balcony, a place that has come to mean so much to her in that apartment. Here, she feels like herself, she clears her head, gets in touch with her feelings. Here, she meets Clarke, again and again and again.

This time is apparently no different.

“You’re gonna get sick, Lex.”

“I like the cold.” It’s something she’s said more times than she would’ve liked.

“Still, I can’t in good conscience let you catch a cold,” she says as she drapes a blanket gently over Lexa’s shoulders.

Apparently, even knowing each other, the conversation will go the same. She can’t help her next line, almost vibrating with anticipation as she waits for Clarke’s response.

“You do know that a cold is caused by a virus, right?”

Clarke rolls her eyes and sits next to her on the vacant chair, a blanket tightly wrapped around her own shoulders.

“And you do know that cold temperatures lower your immunity and make you more susceptible to catching said viruses, right?”

Lexa feels like laughing at the ridiculousness of the situation. Five times they’ve said the exact same thing. Five times has Clarke given her the exact same eye roll. It would’ve been six if she hadn’t thought that avoiding Clarke last time would’ve kept her alive.

“I’m sorry, Lexa.”

This is new.
Lexa straightens up in her chair but keeps her eyes on the skyline, unable to face those piercing blue eyes which have a nasty habit of disarming her.

“I was stupid and immature and… scared,” Clarke says with a shaky breath.

“Scared of what?” Lexa can’t stop herself from asking because this she needs to understand. Why Finn but not her? She’s been going over and over it for more than four years.

“You.” At Lexa’s single raised brow she continues. “You were so… intense.”

Lexa can’t help but scoff. “Intense?”

“Yes. There you were, looking like that, all confident and just so sure. Of yourself, of your future… of us.”

Lexa has to put in a great effort not to burst out laughing at that. If there is one thing she is not, it’s sure. She knows nothing about this fucking life that keeps using her as a lab rat.

“I wasn’t. Not of everything.” Just of us, but she doesn’t say that because it wouldn’t even be true anymore.

“Well, I wasn’t sure of anything. Not my life or my degree or…”

“Me,” Lexa supplies softly when Clarke doesn’t finish. She has to look away then, afraid of what her face might reveal.

“You said you loved me,” Clarke says with a certain degree of uncertainty, as if the time passed would’ve made the words any less true.

“Because I did.” Do.
“I wasn’t ready for that,” Clarke tells her softly and Lexa looks at her, trying to understand.

“For being loved?” Lexa asks disbelievingly.

Clarke shakes her head slightly, her lips twisting one way and the other as if she’s trying to find a way to say what she means.

“Not just any love, Lex.”

“I don’t follow.”

“You… You’ve always looked at me differently. There’s just so much there… I- I wasn’t ready for all that back then.”

Oh.

Oh. Okay. Now she gets it.

Anya and her parents have always told her that she’s an open book to those who know how to read her eyes.

Clarke is right. It was too much. She’s got years and years, decades if she cares to think about it (which she doesn’t), of love for this woman and it was too much to put on a twenty-year-old.

It’s on her, really, she knew Clarke was different, she knew she was younger, more immature, but she still pursued her, she just wanted any little dose of her she could get.

Clarke will never understand it, can never understand, but Lexa is the one that needs to apologize.

“You did nothing wrong, Clarke. I’m sorry.”
Clarke shakes her head and lets out a little laugh.

“For what? Loving me?” And if Lexa didn’t know any better she’d say she looks hurt behind the veil of teasing.

“For my poor timing,” she tells her.

Clarke frowns and looks adorably confused and Lexa can’t control her hand when it decides to move over and squeeze Clarke’s softly.

“I’m not mad, Clarke.”

Clarke smiles at that, relieved, and they go back to looking at the stars in silence.

It takes longer in this loop. They tiptoe around each other, each too afraid to hurt and be hurt. It goes slowly, but it does go.

Raven almost cries when they tell her they’re trying again and tells them how relieved she is at not having to choose anymore. Clarke looks guilty but Lexa kisses her reassuringly and she sees her features relax.

Anya is not so happy about their relationship this time and sends constant threatening glares Clarke’s way. Lexa is 99% sure there were also verbal threats involved but she has no way of confirming it since they’re both tightlipped.

Costia is less friendly towards Clarke as well, having borne witness to the results of their breakup the first time. She’s not as scary as Anya, but Lexa wasn’t aware she had it in her to be so protective of her. It’s nice, she has to admit; it feels good to be so loved. It would be better if her girlfriend and best friend got along like they usually did, but, alas, she can’t be too picky.

But it’s okay in the end. Her heart mends and she’s happy. Clarke is happy too and Lexa is glad to have her Clarke back. It really does make a difference.

She fears this date like she’s never feared anything else in her (very long) life. It’s the culmination
of more than eight years of dread and she’s still hoping for another outcome. She doesn’t want to risk the roads or cars this time so they book time off work and Lexa takes them to a cabin she bought in the woods a few years ago. (Technically, a cabin she keeps buying over and over again, but, details.)

She likes to come here once in a while, to recharge, to think, to wait. It’s safe.

Supposedly.

It’s the stupidest thing ever. It is so ridiculous that Lexa is in near hysterics between laughing and crying because all Clarke did was trip. She’s a clumsy person, she’s always tripping. Lexa is always making fun of her and she always catches her.

Almost always.

Clarke trips and she hits her head on a rock and… that’s it. It’s really fucking stupid and Lexa almost loses it.
Lexa doesn’t want to ever talk or think about loop number seven.

She should probably mention how grateful she is for her parents and Anya and Costia and the rest of her friends and family, though, she doesn’t want to be rude.
Anya thinks she’s gone crazy. Lexa is inclined to agree. She’s still going, though.

“What about your degree? Your future? You’ve always wanted to be a politician, Lexa!”

“I’ve changed my mind,” she counters, though she hasn’t, not really. She just really needs a break.

“Changed your mind?! You never change your mind! For anything.”

“Well, it happened. And, if I change it again, college isn’t going anywhere, I can always go back.”

“But-”

Lexa lifts up her hand and Anya takes it with the finality it’s meant. She’s made up her mind, she won’t change it, no matter how many times Anya tries to get some “sense into her”, as she says, or how many times their parents call after Anya pretends to have given up on it.

She goes.

It’s freeing, really, to get away for a while. She decides a road trip through the country is in order, she’ll figure out the route as she goes. She doesn’t have much money to begin with but she’s already started investing in the stock market as she’s been doing since loop number three so she knows she’ll be alright. Her parents, well-meaning as they are, are hoping that she’ll come back when she runs out of money. They might be waiting a long time for that to happen.

She doesn’t know why she hasn’t done this before to be perfectly honest.

After all these years of living and reliving the same things, she’s glad to see something different, to get away from her routine. From constantly thinking about Clarke and looking for her everywhere she goes in the city. Granted, Clarke is obviously always on her mind, but this way it’s more a subconscious presence than a constant ache.
The last loop almost broke her. She doesn’t think she can keep her sanity without taking a break.

She misses Anya and her friends, she misses Costia too, though it’s still too early to meet her. Still, she keeps going.

It’s been a year of traveling across the country and she’s seen most of what there is to see. She keeps in touch with home with regular phone calls and messages, mostly so that she doesn’t run the risk of having Anya track her down if she goes too long without showing signs of life.

She decides to travel through South America next. She’s always wanted to go and now is as good a time as any to put those language skills to the test.

It’s amazing. Everything is so beautiful, the culture so different yet so familiar at the same time due to all the immigrant communities back in her city. The women are beautiful are well, and she enjoys her fair share.

It was something she’d never quite done before; to allow herself to just let loose and relax, to fully unwind, to live in the moment, to pursue a beautiful woman rather than ignore the desire. It’s liberating.

Gone are the days where she would feel guilty over kissing someone else, over needing the physical connection. She’s come to terms with the fact that she is only human and it’s okay to seek comfort from someone else, to try to keep the loneliness at bay for a little longer. None of them are Clarke, and they’re not Costia either, but that is more than fine with her.

She has love in her life already, they’re just in different chapters of the book at the moment.

She comes back home with a tan, a ton of stories, and a bag full of souvenirs. Anya - stoic, impassive, reserved Anya - almost chokes her to death with a hug. Her parents are no better.

“Were two years really necessary for this ‘finding yourself’ hippy bullshit?” Anya demands, her scorn trying to hide how much she missed Lexa.

Lexa rolls her eyes but smiles brightly anyways.
“I wasn’t trying to find myself, Anya, I just needed a break.”

“What about life?” she asks dubiously, clearly having spent the past two years trying to wrap her head around what could’ve possibly made Lexa want to leave.

If only she knew.

“From your annoying ass,” she teases and her sister punches her good-naturedly.

She goes back to college, much to her family’s relief, but she decides she doesn’t care about appearances anymore and she takes all her remaining credits in one semester. She’s done the courses so many times already she can ace all the exams without even studying. Also extremely beneficial is the fact that they’re always the same. 

Every single time.

Her faculty advisor looks at her like she’s crazy. Her parents give her much the same look. Anya tells her she doesn’t need to prove herself. Lexa proves them all wrong.

She meets Costia during the semester. Usually, by this time she would be working, but it’s okay, it works out like it usually does. Costia is convinced she’s a genius, Lexa tells her Raven is the genius but the joke goes over her head.

That’s another annoying thing about these time loops. She’s got so many inside jokes with herself. If only the people around her knew what was happening, they’d think she’s funny too.

She is funny, dammit, it’s just, usually, life sucks.

Anyways, she laughs by herself, she’s used it.

She’s determined not to have a repeat of last time, or any other time in fact, but last time specifically was a disaster of epic proportions she desperately wishes she could erase from her mind.
She and Clarke take the week off and Lexa is still trying out options that will keep Clarke alive so this time she decides to visit her parents.

It’s a quick forty-five-minute drive and Clarke is excited to have the days off and relax in the country house. She looks really beautiful with the sun catching her hair in the window, sunglasses pulling her hair back from her face elegantly.

“You’re staring,” Clarke points out with a smirk.

“Well, you’re beautiful, it’s your own fault I stare,” Lexa retorts cheekily.

It’s also possibly one of the last images she’ll have of her before something else happens, so Lexa does stare and she stares constantly, always trying to capture everything about her.

“I can’t wait for your mom’s cooking, Lex. Indra’s pies are the best!” Clarke says with a joyful smile, the prospect of good food always making her happy.

Lexa chuckles before saying, “Don’t let my dad hear you, he’ll get jealous.”

“Aw, Gus knows I love his stew, it’s in my top ten. After your mom’s pies, of course,” she adds seriously.

“Of course,” Lexa agrees with a laugh.

One would think after seven times she’d be used to it. She’s not.

A fucking allergic reaction, for crying out loud. Apparently, the countryside has its drawbacks, including an abundance of bugs, which can cause severe anaphylactic shock if one’s allergic, and a hospital that is just too far away.

A fucking allergy.

Lexa is almost 100% sure the universe has something against her.
She promised Costia last time that she’d take her to see the world one day, so she decides now is as good a time as any. She’s also concluded that the last loop was one of the best ones so far in her pre-Clarke time, and it was mostly due to her deciding to let loose a bit more and have some fun. So she’s taking this traveling thing as a necessary part of her repetitive life. It’s a question of mental sanity as much as anything else.

At first, Costia is reluctant to leave her job, but Lexa convinces her to take a sabbatical and the university guarantees she’ll have her job waiting for her when she comes back, so they go.

They choose Africa this time, partly because it’s a beautiful continent and partly because Lexa wants to give Costia an opportunity to connect with her heritage since she knows it’s important to her. She can’t count the number of times over the past decades she’s heard Costia wistfully say “One day…” Always one day. Now is the day.

It’s a mix of incredible and heartbreaking. They focus on the central and southern countries and are mesmerized by the beauty and the people. Nature, the animals, the weather, the cultures, everything is just so different than what they’re used to. The people are usually so friendly and welcoming and Lexa is happy to look at Costia and see a constant smile on her face. It’s also a fun experience, she never got to travel with her best friend before, and they get up to a lot of adventures.

But it’s heartbreaking in the sense that there is so much poverty, so much pain, and misery. She knows they don’t see it all, that they’re sheltered from the worst of it, but there’s no denying that it’s there.

It’s a much necessary wake up call. One she should have had many loops ago but she was too distracted by her own pain to do much more than finance a few community projects here and there. No more.

She’s sitting on buckets of money and she plans on putting it to good use. She knows she can’t fix everything, she knows the problems won’t go away with what little help she can give, and she knows these are not her people, but she has people at home that need help which she can give, and she can also do something here, small as it may be.
Costia helps her choose an organization that works with empowering young girls, giving them a proper education and means to try to make the best out of what life gives them. It’s not much, but it’s a start.

They go back home and Lexa starts working on developing her own projects to help her people. It makes her feel accomplished, useful, like she’s finally making good use of these extra chances at life. There’s also a hint of shame that comes with it, for how long it took her to see that she could’ve been doing much more to help her people. But she’s vowed to keep things going.

For the first time in a long while, she feels happy with her life sans-Clarke. She will feel happier once she’s with her again, certainly, but she is also happy now and that counts for more than she can say.

She tells Clarke about the new things she’s got going on and it’s an exciting conversation, not only because it’s something different that Lexa gets to share with her, for once, but also because Clarke shows a real interest in the organizations and Lexa loves that look she gets when she’s excited about something.

She takes Clarke back to Zimbabwe when she goes to check on her project with the girls. It’s her and Costia’s thing, which Clarke respects, but she still wanted to check it out and Lexa is happy to oblige.

They come back and Clarke is so full of ideas about wanting to build a clinic there and how to get the funding and she works on it for weeks on end.

And then she gets sick. It catches Lexa completely off guard this time. It’s too early, they still have at least 53 days left, but, apparently, parasites don’t really care about timing.

The doctors say she caught malaria there but the parasite can remain in the bloodstream for months without showing symptoms, and, by the time they find out, it’s too late. It’s already in the brain and Lexa loses her.

And it’s not fucking fair. There was still time left.

It’s not fair.
Chapter End Notes

Hang in there, guys. It starts getting lighter after this. Less death talk, more fun :)

Also, that moment when you're staring at your screen for five solid minutes searching for a word which is stubbornly only coming to you in another language...the struggle is real :P
Her time is almost up in this loop and it’s her twenty-eighth birthday but it’s also her hundredth and so Lexa is celebrating.

Who would’ve guessed she’d ever make it to a hundred years old, let alone in a constant time loop that is threatening to make her insane but still manages to make her practically ageless.

She’s like a vampire, minus the fangs and bloodlust.

(Maybe a slight bloodlust for whoever is responsible for this particular brand of torture.)

She also might be slightly more than just a little bit drunk when she loudly proclaims to the dinner table, “Happy hundredth birthday to me!”

Definitely more than just a little bit drunk.

Everyone bursts out laughing and Anya turns to her and makes a move for her glass, which in turn has Lexa frowning and pouting as she protectively holds it closer to her chest.

“I think you’ve had too much to drink, little sis. I know twenty-eight can feel old but you’re not a hundred just yet.”

“Am too!” Lexa stubbornly responds, affronted at their not taking her Very Important Proclamation seriously.

“So is this your way of telling us you’re a vampire, Woods?” Raven asks her through a bout of laughter.

“Should I be scared you’ll try to bite me, babe?”
“Oh don’t even try to hide it, Griffin, you like it when she bites!”

Clarke laughs and winks at Lexa. “Sure do.”

“This is serious, guys!” Lexa insists. If she already said it, then she’s going through with it, she’ll get them to believe her. Why would she lie, anyway? She never jokes about serious things. “One hundred is a big milestone!”

“Sure is, sis, we’ll party like crazy when we get there, canes and walkers and wheelchairs and all.”

“I’m already there!” Lexa pouts, affronted at their mocking when this is some very serious business.

“Okay baby, maybe we can switch you to water now, huh?” Clarke asks her softly as she motions for Lexa’s drink.

Lexa looks at those vibrant blue eyes and relents. She gives it to her because she can't really deny Clarke anything, but her drunken brain is not giving up. She will get the respect she deserves — she’s their elder, dammit!

“I can prove it!” Lexa loudly proclaims with an ill-advised jerk to stand up from her chair, which she immediately regrets and swiftly slumps back down, much to everyone’s amusement.

“Okay, commander, prove it,” Costia taunts her but Lexa takes it a serious challenge.

“Easy!”

Well. Maybe.

She’s a bit too drunk for her thoughts to flow as easily as they usually do so she takes some time juggling around in her memories.
Her eyes widen when she's sure she's hit the jackpot. “How do you guys think I made all that money in the stock market, huh? I knew everything that was going to happen,” she tells them, satisfied with her flawless logic.

“Babe, that just means you’re really smart with numbers, and maybe you shouldn’t proclaim you knew everything that was going to happen in the stock, I wouldn’t want you to go to jail,” Clarke tells her, amused at Lexa’s drunken state which is such a rarity to her.

“Oh, she’d rule prison, though,” Raven snickers.

Octavia nods in agreement. “No doubt. She’d be the boss bitch.”

“More like someone’s bitch,” Anya teases her with that infuriating smirk that Lexa just wants to smack off her face.

“Would not! I’d definitely be the boss bitch!” Lexa proclaims, affronted.

“That’s not the point, hun,” Costia says with her Lexa-smile.

Lexa looks back to her and blinks rapidly, her sluggish brain trying to get caught up. “Oh, right. And the point was…”

“You were trying to prove you’re one hundred years old, somehow,” Costia indulges her with amusement twinkling in her eyes.

“Yes! Because I am!” she exclaims, reenergized in her fight to be taken seriously.

“And how do you suppose you can prove that?” Bellamy asks with a dubious eyebrow up, barely counting his laughter.

“Uh…. Aha!” she shouts too loudly and everyone kind of does a little jump. “You,” she says as she points to her sister, “Fell in love with Raven the first time you spoke to her.”
Anya blushes furiously but rolls her eyes and crosses her arms over her chest. “Everyone knows that,” she mumbles shyly.

“Yes, because you’re so obvious, but… But! You also knew after your first date that you wanted to marry her!” Lexa finishes with a triumphant grin.

Anya sputters, head going from Lexa to Raven, her cheeks flushing even redder and Raven is doing no better, looking suddenly sheepish and pleased at the same time. The looks exchanged between the both of them making Lexa sure it’s a conversation they will readdress later.

“You- I- I never said such a thing!”

“Well not this time, but I got you drunk a few loops ago and you confessed,” she adds nonchalantly with a Cheshire grin, oblivious to everyone’s confused look at her explanation. “And you,” she says as she turns to Costia, “Have the biggest crush on that actress from that zombie show, the brunette with the green eyes and the cheekbones and the pouty lips, what’s her name?”

Costia’s cheeks darken and she mumbles some name under her breath that Lexa doesn’t catch but nods in satisfaction before moving on to her next target, ignoring the confused looks around the table.

“That proves nothing, baby, she’s been obsessed with the show for ages now,” Clarke interrupts her with amusement, causing Costia to look even more embarrassed.

“I love zombie shows, okay? And she’s really hot,” she grumbles, caramel cheeks flushing even darker.

Lexa pauses for a moment to think and then an evil grin comes to her lips. “I know you went to that con a couple of months ago and you had her sign your little fan book with all the lesbian edits.”

Costia’s eyes widen comically and Raven bursts out laughing followed quickly by everyone else.

“No way, Cos! I can’t believe you’re such a fangirl!” Anya cackles.
“Guys… have you *seen* her?” Costia defends herself before turning her glare on Lexa. “One best friend you turned out to be. How do you know, anyway?”

“Because I went with you. Not this time, a few loops ago.” She waves a dismissive hand and ignores the open mouths and confused eyes on her and points to Lincoln. “Panty incident.”

Lincoln’s eyes widen and he looks to Octavia who looks as equally perplexed.

“No,” he says dreadfully.

“Oh yes.”

Everyone gives them confused looks and then there’s a multitude of “Whats” and “What are you talking about” and “What panty incident?”

“Don’t you dare tell them!” Lincoln pleads, mortified.

“How the hell do you know that?” Octavia whispers in a shocked daze.

“Oh, please don’t tell me you two have some spicy panty fetish. Actually, *please* them me that’s the case!” Raven teases, absolutely gleeful in their humiliation and then promptly bursts out laughing at their embarrassment, Lincoln doing a poor attempt at trying to deny it without explaining the story.

“Don’t laugh, Reyes, I know about Finn.”

Raven’s face drops and she looks incredibly pale when she glances at Lexa and everyone on the table turns from one to the other, the mood suddenly sobering up.

“What about Finn?” Clarke asks suspiciously.

“It’s nothing, babe,” Lexa tells her, immediately realizing she shouldn’t have said anything and feeling a wave of guilt wash over her.
*Fuck.* She needs to sober up. Maybe shut up while she’s at it.

What’s the point in all this, anyway? Prove to them that she’s been stuck in a time loop only to have them forget about it in a few weeks when they reset?

Yeah. It’s a useless endeavor.

She takes a long gulp of water to try to get her brain back to normal. She’s suddenly not in such a party mood after all. Not that she really was, to begin with, it was more of a sad event full of self-pity, but still. She’s wallowing even deeper in it now.

“How do you know about that, Lexa? No one knows,” Raven asks her, voice shaky with suspicion.

Lexa shrugs noncommittally.

“How knows what?” Clarke asks, an edge in her voice.

“Finn was an asshole, is all,” Lexa tells her with a reassuring smile. “He tried to hit on Raven but she told him to fuck off.”

She shoots Raven what she hopes is an apologetic look and Ravens nods gratefully but still eyes her wearily. Thankfully, her drunken face can still perform basic communication functions.

“He what?” Clarke exclaims as she turns to Raven for confirmation. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t want to make it worse.”

“How do you know all this, Lexa?” Anya asks her suspiciously.

Lexa groans and rubs her face with her free hand, suddenly exhausted.
“I told you, this is my hundredth birthday. I’ve done all this before. Kind of been stuck in a time loop for a while,” she notes simply.

More than a while, if she’s honest, but that’s too depressing to think about.

Clarke looks at her with a mix of confusion and worry. “What are you talking about, babe?”

Lexa shrugs dismissively. “Just some complicated quantum physics bullshit that I don’t understand the reason behind myself, but has me reliving the same things over and over again. Like ‘Groundhog Day’, only it’s years instead of days. Thank god,” she adds. She would’ve gone crazy for sure by now if that was the case.

“What?”

“How?”

“No way.”

“That’s impossible!” Bellamy exclaims.

“Well, she just proved she knows things she couldn’t otherwise, dummy!” Octavia tells him with a well-placed smack to the head.

“You’ve been repeating your life on a loop?” Raven asks her, disbelief being slowly replaced by her innate curiosity.

Lexa shakes her head and immediately regrets it after the room starts slowly spinning. Fuck, she’s drunker than she thought. “Not my whole life, just eight years. From twenty to now.”

Everyone looks at each other and at her, no one daring to speak for a while. Lexa can almost feel their thoughts, from disbelief to suspicion to confusion until, slowly, it starts morphing into shock and even pity.
“Lexa—” Clarke starts and then immediately cuts herself off, staring at her with open horror.

“Lexi…” and there it is — her sister’s concerned voice. “How long?”

Her voice comes out just barely a whisper she says, “This is number ten.”

There’s a weird collective breath being sucked in, Clarke audibly gasps next to her and grips her hand tightly, her face pale white and tears in her eyes.

It has Lexa swallowing hard and forcing a small smile on her face while she shakes off their response.

“Hey, none of that, it’s my birthday, remember? We’re celebrating tonight!” It’s a weak effort at best, her voice wavering and the attempt at levity all but unsuccessful.

She gets a myriad of dubious looks, until Raven, bless her, breaks the ice.

“Well, you look fucking hot for one hundred, Lexa,” she tells her with a smirk, and her voice is slightly shaky but Lexa pretends not to notice and everyone lets out a little, broken laugh, the mood getting lighter by the second, though the heaviness in the air is undeniable.

“Right?! Thank you!” Lexa shoots her a grateful look and she turns to kiss Clarke softly on her cheek. “Don’t think about it, babe, just be here with me,” she whispers softly in her ear. She can’t have this conversation with Clarke right now or she won’t make it through the night.

Clarke looks at her with her eyes full of tears which she stubbornly refuses to let fall and Lexa kisses her on the lips in appreciation.

“Let’s drink, bitches!” Octavia yells as she pops open another bottle of champagne.

Lexa has never been more grateful for her friends’ ability to overcome almost anything than she is right now.
Clarke looks on the brim of breaking down for most of the night and she doesn’t leave her side, gripping to her like a lifeline. Lexa holds her just as tight. They’ll talk about it later, but she can’t go into it with her when she’s supposed to be acting happy for the party Clarke and their friends threw her.

When everyone’s settled down in the living room after clearing the table, she can practically feel the buzz in the room instead of the relaxed vibe they usually settle on after their dinner parties.

“Okay, just spit it out, everyone,” she says, forcing an amused smile on her face when they all just keep looking at her nervously, as if afraid she’ll break.

They all burst out with questions and Lexa rolls her eyes and tells them one at a time, pointing at each one as they go along the room.

“Is it the first time you tell us?”

“Yes.”

“Is it always the same? In every loop?”

“No.”

“How does it differ?”

“It… depends on the choices I make. Butterfly effect and all that jazz, I guess.”

“What’s gonna happen next?”

She takes a moment to think of what would be harmless to reveal before settling on, “Trump is getting impeached,” resulting in major jubilation across the room. She feels a little bit like a goddess. It’s kind of hilarious when it’s not downright depressing.
“Why?” Clarke asks in a whisper, breaking the circle. She doesn't elaborate on the question but Lexa understands what she's asking.

“I don’t know,” she replies truthfully.

“What happens when one loop ends and one begins? Like, is there a catalyst? A pattern of some sort?” Raven asks, that genius brain of hers working a thousand miles a minute.

Lexa just shakes her head slightly and moves on to the next.

Costia catches on to her need to change the topic and asks her with a smirk, “Am I always as awesome in bed?”

Everyone laughs and Lexa throws her a pillow because that is so not helping, but it does diffuse the tension and soon they’ve moved on to lighter topics.

“Hey,” Raven says as she comes to sit next to her on the sofa a while later when Clarke goes to the bathroom, a nervous look on her face. “Can I ask you something?”

“Go for it.”

“Have you tried doing something about my leg?”

Lexa leans onto her shoulder and pats her good leg gently.

“I would have if I’d known what happened,” she tells her with a soft smile.

“Anyà didn’t…?” Lexa shakes her head and Raven looks grateful for her girlfriend’s loyalty. “I didn’t either? Not even when drunk?”

Lexa shakes her head again. “No, and I never tried to probe. It’s your story.”
Raven nods and bites her lips in contemplation.

“It was a stray bullet. I was walking home at night and there was a robbery and the cops were running after the guy and they came out of nowhere and fired a few shots in the dark and I couldn’t hide fast enough. One of then hit my spine and… the rest you know.”

Lexa takes her hand and holds it tightly and asks her for the details. She hopes there is no next time but, if there is, she’ll try to help her friend.

Chapter End Notes

Guys. This is a clexa story, yes, but it's mostly a Lexa story, about how she deals with this shit situation and what she learns from it. So yes, Costia is an important part of that, but it in no way diminishes Clarke's role in her life or in this story. I do realize that her relationship with Clarke has not been the main focus in a few chapters, but it was on purpose. There is more to Lexa's life than her relationships. That being said, I can guarantee that more than two-thirds of what I've written so far is clexa-centric and I'm still not done writing so there'll be more :D

Also, and not at all related, I'm not particularly happy with this chapter but I've gone over it so many times I just don't even know what I'm reading anymore. Anywho, let me know if it's a disaster or something, I can take it ;)
As it turns out, Raven’s injury is one of those crucial things in maintaining the timeline.

Lexa finds this out the hard way.

Because she stops Raven from getting shot, Raven no longer needs a physiotherapist.

Because she doesn’t need a physiotherapist, she never meets Lincoln, who was supposed to be hers.

Because she doesn’t meet Lincoln, he doesn’t meet Octavia, since they met when she accompanied Raven to one of her sessions.

Because Raven doesn’t meet Lincoln, she doesn’t meet Anya.

And Lexa has no reason to meet Clarke other than to purposefully seek her out.

In short, it’s a clusterfuck.

Lexa decides to be resourceful anyways, because there is no way in hell she’ll spend another loop without her girlfriend, and so she finds a way to accidentally on purpose run into Clarke. It goes well. For them.

When it comes to the others, though, she’s too late to try to play matchmaker. Raven is with Bellamy for some unknown reason that leaves her needing a lot of bleach on her eyes to get the image out of her head, and so Anya is still perpetually single and hooking up with any hot piece of ass she finds and ditching them unceremoniously the next day.

Lincoln ends up dating Luna, which is not as hard to get her head around, but it still looks really weird, and Octavia finds this random dude, cute, but not much going on in his head besides lifting weights and drinking muscle supplements.
It brings a whole other level of pain to see the effects of her actions on her friends' lives. To see the lost potential for happiness, so close within their reach, yet they don’t even know they’re missing it.

Dinner parties with their friends become a strange sort of glimpse into a dystopic reality. It’s not as if they’re unhappy, per se, it’s just that it doesn’t feel right. There’s a permanent sense of guilt corroding her when Lexa catches Lincoln and Octavia exchanging looks filled with curiosity, or Anya and Raven having heated discussions which end with both of them too close to be considered platonic only to pull away with a flash of what looks a lot like longing in their eyes.

It’s just not right. It doesn’t fit.

It’s looking at a picture where the smiles are too fake, too plastic, too artificial to be able to properly hide the models’ real discomfort. It’s living in some strange reality with a corrupt Stepfordd version of each of them. It’s knowing what it should be and not being able to do anything about what is. Except to wait, of course.

It’s the same feeling she had after the second loop, when she saw Costia with Nia and how that turned out. It’s a slap in the face at the consequences of changing something, only this time it wasn’t just her life she messed with.

Not only does it make reality feel inherently wrong, but it also makes her realize just how much people’s experiences shape them, how much relationships with other people affect not only their lives but their essence. We are who we are not only because of our core self but because of our experiences and our connections with others.

Costia was not the same woman without her relationship with Lexa to shape her view on romantic relationships. Anya is not the same without Raven to show her what love really is and that she is a better person for allowing it in her life. Raven is not the same without Anya to show her understanding, support, stability, and self-worth. Lincoln is not the same without Octavia’s brash and vivacious approach to life bringing him out of his shell. And Octavia is not the same without his calming presence to the hurricane that she is. Just like Clarke without Lexa in her life was not the same Clarke who knows that it’s okay to stand up for yourself even if you love someone (especially if you love someone), who knows that she’s loved for who she is, flaws and all, not for some idealized version of herself.

She doesn’t know if their relationships as they are supposed to be originally are the ones for them. Heck, she doesn’t even know if there is such a thing as The One. But she does know that they are better, that they are happier. Maybe they won’t last forever, maybe they will, but to have taken
away these years of contentment from them… It kills her.

In conclusion, she’s really fucking glad that there’s a redo because this one was just pure shit all around.
two chapters updated today :)

Next time Lexa hears someone complaining about getting a song stuck in their head after listening to it on repeat on the radio for weeks on end, she might just stab them in the eye with a toothpick. Try literal decades of listening to the same damned songs.

She can barely turn on the radio these days without getting annoyed at songs she used to love but has clearly gotten over after hearing them constantly for the past almost eight decades.

Also, she’s tired of not having enough movie variety so she decides to move on to other, less explored, movie industries.

For some unknown reason, she kind of really loves Bollywood. Go figure.

If anyone asks, she will deny it till her dying breath, especially to Anya, she’d never live that down.

Of course, Anya would forget it once the new loop came along so, there’s that.

(Maybe she will tell her, just for fun.)
She thinks it’s time for some more traveling. It’s been a few years after all.

She convinces Anya to go with, and they do a European tour and fall in love with everything. There’s just so much history, and Lexa really is a history nerd so it’s kind of as close to a perfect year as it can get.

There’s obviously the pesky little detail of her being trapped and no one being any the wiser, but, fuck it, at least she gets to enjoy this.

And it’s probably the best sisterly bonding time she’s had so far. Fair enough, they do almost kill each other every couple of weeks, but that’s just the way sisters work. Right?

She’ll have so many stories to share with Clarke later, she can’t wait. And she can’t wait to come with her, she’ll have to convince Clarke to get some time off the hospital for that, which will be very hard to do, but she is persistent.
This whole time loop trap is getting really old.

One hundred years stuck in this bullshit. She would throw a party were she not more likely to kill whoever’s responsible for this shit situation.

Lexa considers herself a patient person but this is seriously testing her limits. Somedays she thinks she’s beginning to lose her grip on reality.

She’s finding it increasingly hard to keep track of everything. It would help if she could keep her things from one loop to the other, but it’s not like she can talk to the management and complain.

She’s taken to writing things down, trying to organize everything she remembers as soon as she starts a new loop, but, even with her memory, it’s getting tricky. It is over one hundred years of repeating loops, after all, humans aren’t really meant to live as long as she has.

Whoever thought being a vampire would be cool was sorely mistaken. But, she supposes, at least vampires get to live it continuously, not repeat the same eight-year period, time and time again.

Come to think of it, she wishes she was a vampire, at least that seems like a more bearable curse. (Minus the whole drinking people’s blood and possibly draining them to death thing, but, details.)
It’s official. Lexa has succumbed to the depression that’s been lurking in the shadows, threatening to overtake her for the past century.

There’s no sugarcoating it. It’s bad.

She skips college, works some menial job because Anya forces her to get out of the house and, besides that, does little more than stay home and watch mindless television or read a million and five books. She’s just too tired.

She does make it a point to meet Costia, though if it does more good than harm she’s none the wiser. On the one hand, she knows what happens to Costia if Lexa rejects her; on the other, Lexa is most assuredly not the best company.

Costia is good for her though, as good as someone can be when Lexa is almost beyond help. But there’s a reason why she’s her best friend; Costia understands her like very few do.

It takes a while, longer than it should have, but Costia and Anya convince her to seek some professional help under threat of calling their parents. It’s probably not the best tactic but it does the job.

(Lexa is embarrassed to note that, even at over a century old, she’s still not immune to the whole “I’m calling mom and dad on you” thing her sister does.)

The thing is, what exactly is she supposed to say? It’s not like she can just tell the truth and expect the therapist to let her go back home instead of redirecting her towards the nearest psych ward.

So, she lies. Or at least gives him the safe version of the truth. She’s not sure how much a therapist can help when she’s not being truthful, but they all have to work with the hands they’ve been dealt with, and she has been dealt with one of the shittiest of them all.

It helps. It does, she can’t deny it. Her therapist knows she’s lying, though, which she’s actually happy about otherwise she’d think him shitty at his job. But, no matter how many attempts at
getting the truth out of her, she just won’t crack, so he leaves her alone after a while, though she knows the subject won’t be dropped that easily. Sneaky little things, shrinks. Helpful, but sneaky.

She’s still not one hundred percent okay and she doesn’t know if she’ll ever be, but she gets better on her own rhythm. Some days are harder than others; some days almost make it seem like she’s throwing all her progress out the window, and somedays she is very close to thinking that just putting an end to it herself might make it stop. Then there are days where she’s reminded of what she’s lived through, of how strong she actually is even when it doesn’t feel like it, of how much she can still enjoy. She’s reminded that there is still time to spend with Clarke as well as the rest of her friends and family and that that time is worth all of this.

So yes, sometimes at a gallop, other at a snail’s pace, she gets better.
She finally manages to convince Clarke to drop everything and travel with her.

They set off to Asia on the promise that, six months later, Clarke will return and resume her spot at the hospital. It’s not as long as she’d wish but she can work with it.

They haven’t done this yet. Sure, they’ve traveled here and there over the loops, oftentimes even abroad, but not like this. There were always timelines, their vacations always short-lived due to work constraints. This is nice, though. They just go with the flow, deciding on a whim where to go next. It’s really, really good.

It’s funny how she’s changed over the years. She was never the person to just pack a bag and go, no destination, no guide. If she ever went somewhere, it would be meticulously planned. She didn’t like surprises, didn’t like not being in control of any aspect of her life. Well, truthfully, she still doesn’t, but she’s changed when it comes to certain things.

Whether it’s because she’s gotten used to the craziness that is this thing she’s stuck in, or the fact that she already knows what happens, has already lived through fifteen loops and counting, the fact is that she’s become more relaxed when it comes to just letting go of her tight-griped control and just enjoying the moment.

(Come to think of it, Anya may have been right when she said Lexa was going on some hippy ‘finding herself’ trip back in loop eight.)

Chapter End Notes
Okay, now that all that is over and done with, get ready for the heavier stuff as well as longer chapters with much more detail :) hope you enjoy.
For the first time in decades, Lexa is completely stymied.

She doesn’t understand how, has lived loop after loop, each with its own set of peculiarities, yet this, this is completely new.

She’s twenty-five years old and she can practically recite what happens to everyone at this point in the loop.

She’s with Costia still, though not for much longer, Clarke is in her last year of medical school, Anya is about to get a promotion for the detective position she’s been gunning for since they were children, Raven has just completed her Ph.D. and was recruited by NASA, Octavia and Lincoln are just about to begin their romance, Lexa is on the fast track to Congress and Costia, Costia is supposed to be teaching a class at the University.

Which is why, when Lexa receives a call from Costia telling her she’s in the emergency room, she freezes.

Her brain is running through all the facts stored in her memory looking for a reason to explain it while her blood runs cold, her heart speeds to unhealthy levels and her hands start shaking.

After more time than she’d care to admit trying to get her shit together, she finally reasons that, if Costia called, it means that she’s relatively okay, and she did sound fine on the phone. Not that Lexa can be too sure because her brain short-circuited after the words ‘crash’ and ‘hospital’, but she can’t let herself get in a state just yet.

So she breathes and breathes and by the time she reaches the hospital, she’s still semi-successfully steadying her breaths.

She rushes through to the front desk until she’s directed towards a bed behind a curtain and she’s got her arms around Costia so fast that she barely even registers the state she’s in. It’s only after she hears a soft whimper of pain that she slowly lets go and gets a good look at her.
Costia looks remarkably okay compared to the images Lexa’s mind had conjured up. There’s just a little bruising on her left cheek and a cast on her left arm and that’s about it.

“See? I’m okay, Lex,” Costia tells her with a reassuring smile that has Lexa finally breathing in relief.

“What happened?”

“Just a small collision. There was a dog on the road, the other guy swerved to avoid hitting it and lost control of his car. Hey, it’s okay. I’m fine, see? Just a broken arm,” Costia tells her firmly after Lexa hisses in concern. “Breathe, Lex, it’s over.”

Lexa nods and turns around to try to get herself under control before Costia takes her hand and squeezes it, forcing Lexa to face her again.

“I’m glad you’re okay,” Lexa whispers and kisses her softly, a stubborn tear falling down her cheek which Costia gently wipes away.

“Oh, she’s here,” comes a voice behind her which makes Lexa freeze in her spot.

She knows that voice. She knows it better than anything, waits to hear it with as much longing as she waits to see the face that comes with it.

She turns around slowly, afraid her brain is playing tricks on her and then is effectively frozen in shock again.

This is definitely not how it goes.

It’s too early. There’s still almost a year to go.

Still, Lexa’s suspended in her place, mesmerized by the sight of Clarke when she’s only had her memories to rely on for so long, and she’s, once again, struck by how poorly her memories do
Clarke justice. She’s just so beautiful.

“Hey, doc,” Costia’s voice pushes her out of her stupor and Lexa shakes her head slightly and then her impassive mask is in place.

“You must be the famous Lexa,” Clarke says with a smile, offers her a hand that Lexa takes mechanically.

At Lexa’s lack of response, Costia chuckles and says, “She’s still in shock, doc, don’t mind her. She worries.”

Clarke laughs and Lexa blinks rapidly before forcing a small smile on her face. She really missed that laugh.

“Well, that must mean she really loves you.”

“I should hope so,” Costia teases, squeezing Lexa’s hand playfully.

Lexa turns to Costia and smiles, unbridled. “I do.”

She feels like it should make her feel guilty, proclaiming her love for her ex-girlfriend in front of her current, but it doesn’t. For one, because, at the moment, Costia is her girlfriend and Clarke is only her future. For another, because Clarke has always known Lexa will always have feelings for Costia as her best friend which in no way clash with her love for Clarke. And, finally, because though she does love Costia and always will, she is absolutely, irrevocably, madly in love with Clarke.

Still, it is a strange situation. After all this time, the universe continues to throw her in different scenarios.

Well, at least it breaks the monotony.

“So can I go now, doc?” Costia asks eagerly, clearly fed up with being in the hospital even though it can’t have been that long.
“I think so, my attending just has to come check on you to make sure I did a good job.”

“You’re a resident?” Lexa finds herself asking, though she knows the answer. She wants her to keep talking, wants to hear that voice she’s been craving for years, want to find an excuse for her to stay a bit longer so Lexa can bask in the sight of her face.

Clarke smiles and shakes her head. “Not yet. I’m in my final year of med school, just doing my practicals.”

“But she’s good, Lexa, look!” Costia shows her the cast around her wrist and forearm and Clarke beams with pride at the compliment. Lexa smiles, happy to see them getting along already.

“Well done, Doctor Griffin,” Lexa tells her with a slight teasing undertone.

Clarke raises her brow curiously and tilts her head. “You know my name?”

Damn. Almost one hundred and thirty years of this and she’s still making rookie mistakes because she got caught off guard.

Lexa fights to keep her face neutral and breathes a sigh in relief when she sees her saving grace.

“It’s in the ID card on your lanyard.”

Clarke looks down and blushes. “Oh. Observant.”

“Lexa’s a politician in training,” Costia explains, “It’s basically her job to pay attention to small details like that to charm people over to the dark side.”

Clarke laughs and Lexa rolls her eyes, amused. “I don’t think that’s the point, Cos.”

“I know, baby, you’ll do great things,” she tells her truthfully, with pride in her eyes.
Clarke clears her throat softly and both Lexa and Costia turn to look at her. Lexa can feel her cheeks warming from the way Clarke’s eyes settle on them.

“I’ll go make sure everything is ready for you to go, okay? I’ll be back with my attending.”

“See you soon, hopefully,” Costia waves at her and then turns to Lexa once Clarke has left. “She’s pretty, huh?” she asks with a knowing look.

Lexa stutters a bit and blinks in rapid succession until she gets her bearings. “Yes, she is,” she says with a chuckle. Beautiful.

Costia smiles and hums appreciatively. “See, not so bad when you have to come to the hospital and get hot doctors treating you.”

“I would rather you not make any more trips here,” she tells her seriously, “But yes, it does make it better,” she concedes with a small smile.

“Hey,” Costia raises her hand to Lexa’s cheeks and Lexa leans into it seeking comfort. “I’m okay, it was nothing, just a small fracture.”

Lexa lowers her gaze and tries to slow down her heartbeat at the memories that flash through her head, images of darkening bruises and burst lips and gunshot wounds.

“It could’ve been much worse.”

“Could’ve, but it wasn’t. There’s no point in thinking like that, Lex, it only causes you unnecessary stress.”

“Concern for your safety is never unnecessary, Cos,” she tells her with finality. She cannot have a repeat of what happened the second time around. She already has to face the torment of losing Clarke again and again, she can’t bear to lose another person she loves.
“I know, baby, of course not. But I’ll be as good as new in no time,” she smiles reassuringly.

Clarke comes back with another doctor who gives a cursory look at Costia and her chart and then promptly leaves with a few curt instructions to Clarke, his expression never changing from polite yet detached interest.

“Tough teacher, huh?” Costia asks.

Clarke huffs out an exasperated breath. “You have no idea.”

“Well, I still think you did great,” Costia smiles as she stands up from the bed. No wonder she’s a great teacher, she can make everyone feel good about themselves with an ease that leaves Lexa in awe.

“Thank you. I hope you feel better, Miss Green, and make sure to come back in eight weeks to get the cast removed.”

“Will do, doc, there’s no way I’m keeping this on for longer than necessary, I can already feel it itching all over,” Costia exaggerates earning herself a laugh from both Clarke and Lexa.

“Bye.”

Lexa glances back one more time at Clarke leaving before returning her focus to Costia, her mind trying to multitask her divided attention.

She wonders how this change in the timeline will affect the rest of her loop. Will she see Clarke again before the usual time? Will it change much of how their relationship unfolds? Will it be another loop where everything is fucked up again and she doesn’t get to be with Clarke at all? God, she hopes not. She really misses her.

She finds her legs moving mechanically after Costia practically kicks her out of the house for
hovering.

(“It’s just a broken arm, Lex! I don’t need to be babied and if I see another bowl of chicken soup in front of me you’ll wish both my arms were broken!”)

Pft. Fine.

Lexa can totally not hover if that’s what Costia wants. Jeez, excuse her for worrying about her best friend and wanting to make her as comfortable as possible.

She stops her eyes from involuntarily rolling again in exasperation at her own thoughts and, when she realizes where her feet have led her, she notices that she’s in a coffee shop that she hasn’t been to in years. For good reason.

She usually avoids this coffee shop unless it’s one of those times where she’s feeling particularly down and just needs a glimpse at Clarke. This is Clarke’s coffee shop. It’s where she comes with Lexa after they get together and it’s where Lexa tries not to come to before in case she ruins things unintentionally.

And yet, here she is.

She figures since she’s here already she might as well stay. They do have good pastries, which is the sole reason Clarke has adopted this as her coffee shop because the coffee is not actually that great. Doesn’t make that much of a difference to Lexa though, she’s more of a tea drinker.

Plus, it’s much more likely that them running into each other at the hospital has had a more drastic effect on the timeline than her having coffee at a place where there’s a small chance she might run into Clarke. If she remembers correctly, she’s pretty busy this last year of school and she mostly only comes here on Sundays. And today is Friday, so she thinks she’s good.

Well.

The universe and whatnot.
She takes a sip of her tea, her hands resting comfortably around the mug, the heat feeling nice around her fingers and she hears approaching footsteps.

The thing about living her life revolving around only having so much time with the person she loves the most and having to wait so long to see her is that she’s memorized everything there is to memorize about Clarke, not only because she has spent years and years with her, but because she has spent years and years without her, and she never knows when she’ll lose her for good, so she’s absorbed every bit of information she can.

Information such as the exact sound Clarke makes when she walks. So it’s not a surprise when Lexa lifts up her head to see her walking in her direction, though it is somewhat of a surprise to see her here. It’s not Sunday, after all.

Clarke stops before her table and smiles, making Lexa finally take notice of her own lips and the fact that they are already curled up in a smile she had no control over. It’s just what happens around Clarke.

“Hey, Lexa.”

“Hello, Doctor Griffin,” she says as she contorts her lips into a small smirk.

Clarke rolls her eyes good-naturedly and corrects, “I’m not a doctor yet, it’s just Clarke.”

“Clarke. Care to join me?”

She doesn’t know why she’s asking. Well, she does, of course she does, but this isn’t like their usual encounters and she should perhaps be more careful. Still, she asks.

Clarke’s eyes widen a bit but then she smiles and nods. “Sure. I could use the company.”

“Long day at school?”

“Luckily no, I was actually at the hospital and the attending let us all go home a bit earlier. But I’ve had the longest week,” she adds with a groan.
“At least now you get to decompress a bit,” Lexa tells her sympathetically. She knows how hard Clarke works, how much effort she puts into everything, how much of a toll it takes on her and how much she needs the constant distractions to be able to keep her mind sane.

“Yeah, I need this break. I can’t believe the semester has barely started and I’m already this stressed,” she says. Lexa nods in understanding and Clarke places her order when the waitress comes over. “I mean, I do know. It is medical school after all. But I think I’m still allowed to complain.”

Lexa chuckles and Clarke’s eyes brighten. “I think you are, Clarke. It is stressful.”

“Tell me about it. Sometimes I wish I’d gone with something less stress-inducing. Like art,” she says with a certain wistfulness that Lexa recognizes, though it doesn’t make itself shown very often in future-Clarke. She supposes medical student-Clarke is still having to deal with more effort and less reward than doctor-Clarke.

“You thought about being an artist?” she asks as if it’s the first time.

It’s a curious game she plays, something that Lexa does for her own amusement because, in a life such as hers, she takes every opportunity for pleasure she can get. And this she enjoys doing. She likes asking Clarke the same questions she’s asked before, likes seeing how her responses are mostly always the same, sometimes to the letter and she’ll even find herself saying the words in her head along with her, but she perhaps likes it even more when the responses vary, when little things change or when most of it does. She likes to search for the causes then, think of what changed in the timeline that could’ve caused a different answer, or sometimes it’s just Clarke herself, choosing a different answer to give, choosing a different side of herself to reveal.

“Yeah, for a bit. I’ve always liked painting and drawing and I took a few classes in college but… I guess I just like helping people more,” she finishes with a shrug.

“Do you still paint?”

Clarke nods vehemently and her eyes sparkle like they always do when they talk about art.

“Oh yeah, I’d go crazy if I didn’t. It helps me to clear my mind.”
“It’s good that you found your stress relief.”

“Do you paint?”

Lexa stifles a laugh and shakes her head resolutely. “No, you’re the artist out of both of us.” She hears what actually came out of her mouth a bit too late and fumbles to correct herself. “I couldn’t draw even if I wanted to. Stick figures at best, and even those always come out looking like the work of a three-year-old who’s just started to get fine motor skills.”

Clarke laughs, her eyes crinkling adorably at the corners and Lexa feels her heart do its little Clarke dance.

“I think I need to see that.”

Lexa puts on a serious face and motions with her open hand to Clarke who gives her a curious look. “Pen?”

“Oh! Yeah,” Clarke retorts, eyes sparkling with mirth as she fumbles through her purse for a pen.

The waitress deposits Clarke’s food on the table and Lexa moves it to the side so she has space and pulls out a napkin, looking very focused at Clarke. “Okay. What would you like me to draw? I must warn you beforehand, though, it’ll blow your mind.”

Clarke thinks for a minute, her lips pursing exaggeratedly in thought and then she grins mischievously.

“Me.”

“Oh, come on! I’ll never get even close!” Lexa exclaims in outrage and Clarke’s grin only widens. Lexa huffs out a breath in mock annoyance and gives Clarke her fiercest look. “Game on.”

Clarke laughs as she digs into her food and Lexa pretends to be annoyed at her antics, while she
concentrates on her “drawing.”

“You can try to distract me, Miss Griffin, but it won’t work.”

Clarke raises her hands up in surrender and stifles a laugh with a sip of coffee.

“Et voilá!” Lexa proudly proclaims after a deliberately long time, turning the napkin for Clarke to see.

Clarke bites her lip to stop from laughing and pretends to seriously analyze the drawing with intermittent hums and ‘Ah’s and little thoughtful nods.

“See what I did there with the lines?” Lexa asks seriously and Clarke nods with equal poise.

“Oh yes, fascinating. The way they flow and link with each other. The strokes. The mix of abstract and surrealism. Absolutely fascinating.”

Lexa’s smile grows and grows until it’s a full-on grin and Clarke can’t contain herself any longer and bursts out laughing until there are tears in her eyes.

“Oh my god, this is one of the worst things I’ve ever seen in my life, Lexa,” Clarke manages through another fit of laughter, sparring another glance at the mess of lines that are supposed to look like her but resemble more a two-year-old’s attempt at a circle.

Lexa nods with a straight face, her smile barely contained. “Oh yes, I think it deserves its own award. Would you like me to frame it for you?”

“Definitely,” she nods with mirth in her eyes and Lexa is pleased to see her folding it carefully and placing it in her purse. It always melts her heart a little bit when Clarke does that do one of her abhorrent drawings, but she never fails to do it.

“Well, if you’re keeping one of my masterpieces I think it’s only fair I have one of yours,” Lexa tells her with a smirk.
“Hmm, I’ll think about it,” Clarke says coyly.

“Just letting you know in advance that I won’t take no for an answer.”

“Is that so?”

“Absolutely. I want a Griffin original at my place.”

Clarke smiles brilliantly but then her eyes dull a bit and her smile is not as big or as honest. “Does Costia like art?”

Ah. Well, this is certainly new. She’s never had Clarke in her life at a time when she is technically not available and she didn’t stop to think about it before they went down this road of looks and smiles that can very quickly turn not so innocent.

“She does, actually,” Lexa tells her softly, the reality of the situation making her a bit uncomfortable on Clarke’s behalf. She doesn’t want her to see Lexa as an unavailable woman who flirts with everything with legs, or as someone that she might crush on but has no hope to ever be with. Because she most certainly does. Lexa is Clarke’s, one hundred percent, she’s just temporarily on loan to someone else. She’ll have to fix that soon.

“Have you been together for long?”

Lexa hums and nods. Longer than you’d believe. “Three years.”

Clarke looks down at her mug and plays with the rim. “That’s nice. She is really nice.”

“She’s my best friend,” Lexa tells her honestly, a fond smile gracing her lips and Clarke looks at her with a certain wistfulness.

It’s a thing Lexa has never had to consider, the effect she has on Clarke. Well, she has, obviously; she knows Clarke loves her, or will love her, more accurately, but she’s never had to
wonder how Clarke might react to her if she were in front of her yet seemingly unreachable. She’s never actually stopped to think how much weight their mutual attraction has, the kind of draw she could have on Clarke simply by existing.

It’s fascinating, really, because Lexa is drawn to Clarke like no other and this she has known since the first time they met. It would stand to reason that the same could apply to Clarke, but she’d never been sure until now. Clarke’s withdrawal tells her everything she needs to know.

Fuck. She really needs to settle things with Costia. Soon.

“What about you?” Lexa asks her innocently, trying to ascertain if this detail is the same.

“Oh, uh, single. Yeah. Med school and all, don’t have time to date.”

Lexa nods in understanding, pleased to know the situation won’t be made more confusing with another party involved.

“Do you know which field you’re going into?” Lexa asks her, hoping that the change of topic will get rid of the awkwardness that settled between them and knowing this is a topic that gets Clarke going.

Sure enough, she begins to talk excitedly about how she wants to focus on trauma and how much she’s looking forward to residency and Lexa is happy to see the glimmer return to her eyes, the way she gets so impassioned making Lexa smile animatedly in return.

As far as screwed up timelines, she thinks, this is a pretty good outcome. Things are not ruined, not at all if she’s read the signals right, and she’s not planning on letting them get there.

She will have this, she’ll have her time with Clarke, even if she doesn’t get to have it for long before another reset.

Chapter End Notes
Hope you like this new format :) Updates won't be as frequent, though, but at least once or twice a week.

And just to clarify, there'll be no cheating in this fic!
Lexa gets home after work and Costia has just come out of the shower, her curls still dripping with water that she carefully pats to dry without ruining their form.

“Hey, did you have a good day?”

Lexa nods and smiles gently, leaning over to kiss her on the cheek. “Long.”

“Is that proposal still giving you trouble?”

“They’re just so blinded by money, you know? It’s frustrating when I know they can see the benefits the bill would bring but they refuse to budge because it won’t make them as much money as the lobbies do.”

She releases a groan in frustration and shakes her head to avoid thinking about work. She’s tired of it, it’s been too many years of dealing with the same bullshit, the same power-hungry people, and she’s saturated.

Costia gives her an understanding smile. “Want me to make you some tea?”

“Please,” she says gratefully. “I’ll just shower real quick first.”

The shower helps calm her down and settle her resolve. She’s dragged this decision along for a few days now, wanting to postpone the pain, but if she lets it go for much longer she’ll ruin everything. Time to show her bravery.

When she goes back to the living room, Costia places the tea on the coffee table which she gratefully takes and they settle down on the couch next to each other in soothing silence.
Lexa finishes her tea feeling much more in control of her emotions and places it back on the table, turning back to Costia when she rests against the back of the couch.

“Hey,” she says as she takes Costia’s hand in hers and strokes it gently. “You know I love you, right?”

Costia gives her a small smile and eyes her curiously. “I do. And I love you.”

Lexa nods and smiles Sadly, her thumb maintaining its strokes over the back of Costia’s hand. “You’re my best friend, Cos.”

Costia looks up for a second, her bottom lip trapped beneath her teeth, and when she turns her eyes back to Lexa she can see the added moisture there.

“It’s time, huh?” Costia asks her quietly and it breaks Lexa’s heart like it always does.

It never ceases to amaze her how Costia always just seems to know, as if she knew all along that they were on borrowed time. And she always responds the same way, strong, loving, hurt, caring. It pains Lexa so much to keep doing this to her every time but it has to happen, they’re meant to love each other, they’re just not meant to be together.

Lexa nods and a tear escapes her own eyes, her heart cracking slowly at the hurt she’s causing her best friend. And herself. This hurts them both, it always does.

Costia bobs her head up and down, trying to gain control of herself and she lets out a small heartbroken chuckle that digs a knife into Lexa’s own heart. “Yeah. It’s okay, Lex,” Costia tells her gently and Lexa pulls her in for a tight hug, the smell of her shampoo filling her nostrils pleasantly and Lexa tilts her head to pace a kiss on her hair.

She also always does this, Lexa notes with sadness. Costia is always trying to comfort her, even when Lexa is the one to hurt her.

“I’m sorry, Cos.”
“I know. I am too, Lex,” she says as she leans back and pulls away from Lexa, a tear falling down her cheek which Lexa tenderly wipes. “Best friends, right?” Costia asks with a pained smile.

Lexa nods and pulls her in for one last gentle kiss on her lips before kissing her on the forehead.

“Best friends.”

Costia nods and sniffles a little before getting up and caressing Lexa’s cheek with her good hand.

“I love you, Lex, don’t ever doubt that, but I’m going to need a little space.”

Lexa nods and wipes her own tears. “I understand, Cos. Take as long as you need. I’ll be here.”

Costia leans down and kisses her cheek before going back to their bedroom to get her things and that snaps Lexa’s brain back from the haze of sorrow.

She’s decided long ago that Costia stays in the apartment, she has another one after all, and this time will be no different.

“Hey,” she says as she gets in the room and Costia turns to her inquisitively. “You’re staying, Cos, I’ll go.”

Costia gives her a confused look and shakes her head. “This is your apartment, Lexa.”

“Please, stay, I have another place,” she pleads, fully conscious that this is always the hardest part for some reason, the one that takes the most convincing. “It’s only fair.”

“I can’t make you move out of your own apartment, Lexa.”

“You’re not making me,” she tells her firmly. “I’m offering. It will make me feel better. Plus, it’s almost as much mine as it is yours, you’ve lived here for two years,” she adds when Costia begins to shake her head again.
Costia looks at her dubiously and Lexa moves to take her hand before she can argue again.

“At least stay for a while, and if you don’t want to be here anymore then at least you’ll have time to look for something good instead of just crashing on your brother’s couch.”

“I… okay, but I’m paying rent,” she relents, and Lexa smiles before placing one final kiss on her cheek and leaving.

It’s probably not one of the best ideas she’s had, but Lexa finds herself at Clarke’s coffee shop the following Sunday.

One would think that, after a life as long as hers, she would have mastered the art of patience. Truth is, it has perhaps made her more impatient in some cases.

Lexa is a patient person by nature, that hasn’t changed, but when it comes to certain situations, i.e., anything involving Clarke, she revolves around a patternless cycle of either waiting for her or seeking her out. There’s no science to it besides her heart.

Sometimes she’s just too heartsick to search for her, afraid that a simple glimpse will break her, others she just needs that one look to soothe her heart and give her the strength to wait for just a bit longer.

This is neither. She really just wants to test this out, to see how this unusual situation pans out, even if she runs the risk of ruining it. There’s only so much monotony she can take before the boredom kills her, so she decides to chase this new path and see where it may lead, risk be damned.

Besides, if it screws everything up, she’ll just relieve it again, so what’s the harm?

“You know, I’ve been coming to this coffee shop for years and I’ve never seen you here, yet this is the second time in little over a week.”
She looks up to find Clarke smiling coyly, a glint of amusement in her eyes and her own lips lift up into a smile.

“They have the best croissants,” Lexa points out as if there would be no other explanation.

“They really do,” she agrees. “Waiting for someone?”

“No. Would you like to join me?”

Clarke looks at her for a second, biting her lip in contemplation before nodding and sitting down. Lexa fights hard to keep her amusement from showing, pretending she doesn’t notice how Clarke’s eyes linger on her or how she looks so conflicted. She’s sure Clarke is fighting a losing battle between desire and conscience.

The waitress comes over and takes Clarke's order, Lexa getting a refill on her tea, and an awkward silence settles between them. Well, awkward for Clarke, she’s sure, Lexa is heavily amused.

“So,” she asks to make Clarke more at ease, “How was your week?”

“Awful and awesome,” she replies and Lexa laughs, happy to see Clarke’s eyes shine at her reaction.

“How come?”

“So much work to do, you wouldn’t believe it,” she says with a groan. “But, I also got to see this super cool case at the ER where this guy shoved a Barbie doll up his rectum and when he tried to pull it out it got stuck because her little arms were tearing into the colon and, oh my god, we were all trying so hard to keep a straight face and I almost couldn’t but I did, and then I got to watch the surgery!” she finishes her rant with excitement, her whole demeanor practically vibrating.

Lexa laughs heartily and shakes her head in amusement. She’s heard this story before, it’s one of Clarke’s favorites, but it never ceases to entertain her.

“You have a funny definition of awesome,” Lexa retorts with a wide grin and Clarke chuckles.
“Hey, I got to watch a surgery! That’s so cool!” she says brightly. “And come on, how often do you see people shoving things up their assholes? It was hilarious!” she laughs.

“Please tell me you took x-rays?”

“What are we, amateurs?” Clarke jokes. “I kind of wanted it framed at my house but I’m told it’s frowned upon,” she finishes with a pout that Lexa wants to kiss away.

“I’m glad you’re not allowed, I think it would scar me for life if I ever came across it.”

“Try having the image of a middle-aged dude with barbie legs sticking out his hairy butt forever imprinted in your brain!” Clarke retorts. Lexa makes a face in disgust and they both burst out laughing again, any awkwardness long gone now.

“Well, now you’ve made my imagination go there so you have to replace it with something pretty,” Lexa tells her with a smirk which makes Clarke blush when her gaze refuses to look anywhere but at those vibrant blue eyes.

Clarke clears her throat and looks away, taking a small sip of the coffee now in front of her.

“Yes, well. How was your week?” she asks and Lexa smiles and lets her change the subject.

“Much the same as it always is. People are selfish and greedy and rarely care about others, but the fight goes on.”

“I still don’t get how you like politics,” Clarke tells her, a conversation they’ve had many times before.

“I like helping people, Clarke, much the same way you do,” she states. “If I do my job right I get to fight for people who wouldn’t usually have a voice, I get to make sure their needs are met.”

“Yeah, I get that, and it’s admirable, but there’s just so much to fight against. All the corruption
and the self-interest and power plays. I just couldn’t do it,” Clarke shakes her head slightly.

“Which is why we each have our strengths. I don’t think I could ever do what you do.”

“Oh come on, you’re smart,” Clarke points out and Lexa smiles but shakes her head.

“It’s got nothing to do with intelligence. I just don’t have the stomach to watch people suffer day in and day out, sometimes without being able to do anything about it.”

“I knew you were a secret softy,” Clarke teases her lightly.

“My secret is out.” Lexa pauses before she says under her breath, “I’m also not the biggest fan of blood,” to which Clarke laughs heartily making Lexa blush in embarrassment.

By the time she leaves the coffee shop she feels lighter than she’s felt in years, the realization that she doesn’t actually need to wait another year to be with Clarke making her practically skip with joy.

She doesn’t know what this means for them exactly, is not sure if this budding relationship will be one to last as it normally would, but she’s determined to try it out. She wants to make sure that she doesn’t fall into old patterns and instead makes sure to just enjoy what she has while she has it.

They’ve been having regular coffee dates every Sunday for weeks now, an unspoken agreement of sorts. They don’t actually stipulate a time or try to ask if the other is coming, they just show up and have breakfast together.

Lexa is a fan. It seems Clarke is too because she keeps coming back.

Clarke’s just finished telling her another fantastical hospital story and a moment of silence settles between them.

Lexa can tell there’s something on Clarke’s mind but she waits her out, wondering what could
possibly be keeping her mind in the clouds, a thoughtful look on her face.

“Costia came by the hospital this week,” Clarke breaks the silence with a seemingly casual statement. Lexa knows better. She nods and schools her features and waits patiently while Clarke stirs her over-stirred coffee while chewing on her bottom lip. “I thought you’d go with her.”

“Why is that?”

Clarke gives her a curious look and tilts her head a bit. “Uh, because she’s your girlfriend?”

Lexa hums and nods and takes a sip of her tea which she knows is only making Clarke want to jump off her skin with nerves but Lexa’s kind of enjoying herself.

So she might have become slightly mean in the past decades? Sue her. She’s got to find her entertainment where she can.

“She’s not,” she states nonchalantly.

Clarke blinks rapidly and stutters before managing to get out a hoarse “What?”

“She’s not my girlfriend anymore,” she repeats, taking an admittedly sick pleasure in the many looks flashing through Clarke’s eyes until she settles on faked indifference.

“Oh. Uh, that sucks.”

Lexa shrugs. “It’s okay, it was mutual.”

“Uhm, can I ask why?”

Lexa regards her intently. This she’s never had to do so she’s not sure how any of her possible responses will be taken. Eh, what the hell. She’ll just go for it.
“She’s not the one for me.”

“The one?” Clarke raises her eyebrow dubiously and Lexa simply nods. “You believe in that?”

“Don’t you?”

“I’m not sure,” Clarke frowns in thought. “How do you know she’s not the one, then?”

“I just do,” Lexa says coyly and Clarke averts her eyes at the intensity of Lexa’s gaze.

Clarke mulls over it for a bit and Lexa observes her carefully, curious about this new turn of events.

“You two looked really good together, though,” she says with a furrowed brow. “Like you really loved each other.”

Lexa smiles and nods. “We do.”

“Do?”

“It’s not something that just goes away like that, Clarke. She’s my best friend.”

“I’m confused,” Clarke tells her after a while of looking at her intently with her lips pursed in thought. “You still love her but you broke up anyway?”

“I’ll always love her. Like I said, she’s my best friend. She’s just not the one I’m meant to be with and I’m not the one for her either.”

“Oh, uh,” Clarke runs her fingers along the rim of her mug while she digests the information, an adorable look on her face, “Makes sense, I guess,” she says, though she still doesn’t look very convinced.
“You’ll get it one day,” Lexa tells her with a reassuring smile. Of this she’s sure. Clarke and Costia are good friends and Clarke’s never been jealous of Lexa’s friendship with her.

“I- Yeah. Maybe. I’ve just never had that type of relationship with any of my exes. They’re kind of all douchebags,” she tells her ruefully. “I might have bad taste in partners.”

Lexa chuckles at the irony of that statement. Lexa likes to thinks she is the exception to that rule, but it’s funny to hear Clarke talk about her bad choices when Lexa has been, and most probably will be again, one of those choices.

“Maybe they just weren’t the right fit,” she tells her.

Clarke lifts her eyebrow in challenge. “So you’re saying I just haven’t found ‘the one’ yet?”

Looking right at her, Lexa muses. Instead, she goes with, “You’ll know when you find them.”

“How?” Clarke asks with genuine curiosity.

“I can’t describe it, Clarke. It might be different for everyone,” she tells her gently, a love declaration to an oblivious partner. “For me, I picture my life with her by my side when I’m ninety-years-old, and I picture my life without her, too.” She clears her throat to get rid of the ball of emotion threatening to choke her and averts her eyes. “If they fit in your picture of the future, if their absence makes you hurt more than anything, you have your answer.”

Clarke looks pensive and Lexa takes advantage of her apparent inattentiveness to get a hold on her emotions. Sometimes it all becomes too much for her, all the memories and feelings come crashing at the same time and she almost drowns.

The truth is, she hasn’t pictured their future together in a really long time, not until now, that is. It brings too much pain. She thinks she’s gotten good at dealing with these few years that they have together, but she’s given up on thinking about what could come after because, more likely than not, even if she ever does manage to get out of these damned loops, Clarke will not be with her.

She’s tried and she’s tried and she will keep trying to save her, but she always fails. She doesn’t know why, she can’t find a reason behind all this, the only constant is that she will inevitably fail in her attempts.
“You sound like you’re talking from experience,” Clarke tells her, and Lexa struggles to ascertain the emotions she’s concealing behind those words. She thinks it could be something closely resembling sadness, as if she thinks Lexa could possibly be talking about someone else.

Lexa nods slightly and says, “Something like that,” desperately wanting to reassure Clarke, to reach over and take her hand, to kiss her like she’s been dreaming of doing since they met again. Instead, she takes another sip of tea to center herself and steers the conversation in another direction, afraid that showing her feelings so blatantly might scare Clarke off. She has been accused of being too intense before, after all.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the delay, I was away on holidays.

Fun fact: the Barbie doll story is, unfortunately, very real. There are some images you just can't wipe off your brain and I had to share my pain! ;)
Sometimes, Lexa is sure she doesn’t give her sister enough credit. The woman is like a bloodhound, the perfect fit for the detective position she so craves and will soon get.

She knows this, has known it for long, yet it still manages to always surprise her when Anya’s sixth sense makes its appearance at the most unexpected times.

Like now, when she’s being ambushed, because that is really the only adequate word for this situation.

“So,” Anya slips in slyly when Lexa’s two glasses of wine in and they’re in the middle of watching an episode of Game of Thrones, one of the few things she doesn’t tire of rewatching even after all these years. “Wanna tell me about this new girl?”

“What?” Lexa says distractedly, too focused on the show to pay real attention. First mistake. Never let your guard down around Anya.

“The girl you’ve been seeing lately?”

And honestly, Anya is the devil impersonate, Lexa is sure. She knows how invested Lexa gets in Game of Thrones and how she lets her guard down when it’s paired with some wine and an overtired brain. The sneaky thing did it on purpose!

“Who- There’s no- I’m not seeing anyone, Anya,” she stutters, finally looking away from the TV and paying attention to the precarious situation she’s found herself in.

Anya looks at her, unconvinced, her eyebrow raised in mocking.

“Right. So the one you’ve been seeing every Sunday morning is just a figment of my imagination?”
Lexa pales, racking her brain to try to figure out where Anya got this information. “Yes,” she says weakly.

“Uhu. I see. So, blonde, blue eyes, small but curvy, looks at you like you’re a goddess, you look at her like she’s the stars... Doesn’t ring a bell?” Anya asks her with the look of someone who’s taking way too much pleasure in another’s pain.

Fuck. How?

“Uhm…” she turns back to the TV and tries to act normal. “No one, really. Just a girl.” She fails. Her voice is squeaky, her cheeks are burning. She’s screwed.

“I see, so if I were to join you tomorrow for breakfast, you wouldn’t oppose?”

Lexa spins her head back to her in a state of semi-panic. “What? Uh, why would you? Don’t you have work?”

Anya smiles deviously. “I can always make a stop there during patrol. A little detour won’t make a difference. I’m sure the food must be good if it keeps you going back... Unless it’s all about the company.”

Lexa closes her eyes for a minute and groans, succumbing to her fate.

“Fine. I met her at the hospital when Costia had the accident.”

“Is she the reason you two broke up?” she asks her with a suspicious frown. Regardless of her initial coldness towards her, Lexa knows Anya likes Costia and she wouldn’t approve of Lexa cheating. Not that Lexa ever would and Anya knows this.

“No,” she tells her firmly, which placates her, her features softening and settling for interest. “Costia and I are meant to be friends, that’s all.”

Anya nods and smirks, “And this girl?”
“What about her?”

Anya rolls her eyes in her ‘Don’t be difficult, Lexa’ fashion. “Do you like her?”

“Very much so,” Lexa tells her honestly, unwilling to hide her feelings for Clarke more than she has to.

Anya looks at her for a long time, quietly sipping her wine in that infuriating way she has which makes Lexa twitch with anticipation as to what’s coming.

“I don’t think I’ve seen you this happy in a long time, Lex,” she finally says and Lexa’s smile is unbridled.

“Yeah, she’s quite something. I think you’d like her.” Well, she’s sure of it actually, even if they fight like cats and dogs at times. They have a weird relationship, her sister and her girlfriend, but it’s quite something to watch.

“So should I drop by tomorrow?” Anya teases her. Lexa throws her a pillow and Anya guffaws.

“How’d you find out, anyway?”

“A detective never reveals her secrets.”

“Good thing you’re not a detective yet,” Lexa teases her, and Anya gets that determined look in her eyes.

“Just you wait, little sis. Soon.”

Lexa smiles proudly. “I know. How’s the studying going?”

Anya groans loudly and leans her head against the back of the couch dramatically. “I can’t wait to
get it over with. I can’t see any more books in front of me, they’re infiltrating my dreams!”

“You’ll ace it, then,” Lexa tells her sympathetically.

“Of course I’ll ace it!” Anya tells her with her usual cockiness, “I’m the best. I just really want it to be over so I can get to the really exciting stuff.”

“Tired of handing out parking tickets?” Lexa teases her.

“Har har, you know I’ve been off traffic duty for years.”

“And have apparently been reassigned to following people around,” she accuses her with narrowed eyes.

Anya waves a dismissive hand and gets a handful of popcorn in her mouth. “Totally not how I found out. Now, let's focus on the show, you’ve made me miss half the episode, now we have to rewind.”

Lexa rolls her eyes and refuses to acknowledge her jibe while she rewinds and they settle in again.

It’s been a couple of months since she’s been down to visit her parents so Lexa lets herself to be convinced by Anya (the need for convincing mostly due to the fact she knows what’s coming, her sister isn’t as sneaky as she thinks) and both of them drive to their hometown the following weekend.

It’s a short drive, barely over an hour if there’s no traffic, so they make it there just before lunch, the sun bright and high in the sky.

Their parents greet them warmly and they settle around the kitchen like a well-oiled machine, tasks distributed without a thought as they get on with making lunch.

Lexa quite likes this one of a kind peace that comes with being home, where the rest of the world
just sort of fades away at the door and she’s comforted by the presence of family. The only one missing in the picture is Lincoln.

Thinking of which, “Where’s Linc?” she asks, breaking the momentary silence. “I thought he was coming down as well.”

Her dad chuckles and shakes his head without raising it from the tomatoes he’s chopping. “He met a girl,” he says as a way of explanation.

“What you know him,” Mom says, “he’s a fool when he meets a pretty girl.”

Anya laughs heartily and gives Lexa a sly look. “He’s not the only one in this family,” making everyone else laugh along and Lexa’s cheeks burn.

She narrows her eyes in a half-hearted glare but Anya just brushes her off, her feet dangling from the counter where she’s propped herself as usual and is of no real help to anyone.

“So,” Mom starts and Lexa wants to find a hole to bury herself in. She knows damn well that nothing good comes after a slyly intoned ‘So’. “Is there someone new in your life, Lexa?” she asks nonchalantly as she frets over the stove, as if Anya hadn’t rattled her out yet.

“A pretty girl, perhaps?”

“One that makes you foolish,” Anya chimes in after their dad and she wants to strangle them all.

Lexa lifts up her knife from the onions and points it threateningly at her sister who smiles wolfishly. “Snitch. If you must know, yes.”

“That’s it?” Dad questions, disappointed at the prospect of not getting any more information out of her.

Lexa rolls her eyes in annoyance but she’s not so secretly amused.
“Fine,” she relents after no real fight. There seldom is with her parents, not after all these years. “There’s a girl, she’s beautiful, she’s a medical student, and her name is Clarke.”

“Hey, that’s more information than I got!” Anya exclaims, offended.

Lexa puts her tongue out and their parents laugh which results in Anya glaring at them.

“That’s because they ask me nicely instead of following me around like I’m a suspect.”

“Anya,” their mother tuts in that stern voice that Lexa is sure all moms master and still has an effect on grown children.

“I did no such thing!” Anya defends and Lexa crosses her arms expectantly, fully aware she’s behaving like the younger sister she is who’s just told on the older one. Anya deserves it. “I just happened to run into them during one of my patrols. It’s not my fault you have eyes for nothing but her when you’re with her and didn’t even notice me waving,” she retorts and Lexa blushes furiously.

Their dad laughs and shakes his head at their antics. “Well, at least you’ve found someone, Lexa.”

“We’re not actually dating dad, we just have breakfast together.”

She’s quite positive that they will date, soon, but she hasn’t found the right time to ask Clarke yet. She’s not sure if Clarke will find it too soon after the end of a three-year relationship.

Also, she’s scared that all these changes will make it so something goes wrong, so she’s been more reticent than she would normally be.

Anya snorts. “Yeah, breakfast every week for the past two months or so. Pretty sure that’s called dating, little sis.”

“Two months?” Mom asks, her perceptive eyes narrowing and Lexa is sure this is where Anya got it from. genetics be damned.
“It’s not like that, Mom. We just ran into each other at first. As friends,” she adds placatingly. “She knew about Costia.”

Her mom nods and turns back to stirring the pots, working her miracle with the spices and leaving the kitchen smelling wonderful. “Have you spoken to Costia?” she asks casually but Lexa sees right through it.

This never ceases to make her feel bad, how her relationships affect not just her but her family and friends as well. She knows, logically she knows, that they will all be back in each others’ lives soon, but she still feels guilty for playing this game of ping pong in and out. Introduce them to someone they like, take her away, introduce her again, take her away again. And repeat. It’s not like they won’t ever speak again, but Costia always takes a bit of time to be comfortable around them again and so Lexa is constantly left in this sore spot of her own making.

Honestly, fuck the universe.

“Here and there,” she says. “We’re okay, we’re friends. She just needs some time apart.”

“And you don’t?” Dad asks curiously.

Lexa nods and lies. “Of course. We both do.”

She doesn’t. Frankly, the last thing she needs is more time, she’s got too much of it and would gladly give some of it away, most particularly, the waiting time.

What she needs is her girlfriend and her best friend and the rest of her friends full-time. Alas, the universe is a bitch, and, sadly, not her bitch.

“And you, Anya? Meet anyone interesting lately?” Dad asks casually.

“What is this, inquisition day?” her sister asks with a glare at both their parents who only look at her with amusement. She rolls her eyes and leans back against the wall. “Sure, lots of someones,” she smirks.
“Spare us the details, yongon,” Mom chides, and Dad winces in displeasure at the thought.

“Anya, having someone special in your life is a good thing.”

“I just can’t see myself with anyone, Dad, no one sparks my interest,” she says with a shrug.

Lexa smiles at her own private joke. She knows just how smitten Anya will be when she meets Raven.

“Enough about our love lives, you old saps,” Lexa teases them and Anya sends her a grateful look. “Anya’s exam is in two days, shall we start placing bets?”

Everybody chuckles and Anya is the first one to pull out a fifty and slap it dramatically on the island top.

“Ninety-five or above.”

“Ha, you wish! Eighty-five to ninety,” Lexa says just to mess with her.

She obviously knows how much she’ll get but she finds that making Anya have something to prove always makes her perform better. They’re a competitive bunch.

“I believe in you, Anya,” Dad says with a proud smile. “Ninety to ninety-five.”

“Ninety-six,” Mom states with conviction and Anya beams.

“Quite specific, Mom, don’t you want a little wiggle room in case she flunks? We still have the lower eighties available,” Lexa teases and Anya punches her. She’s going to lose an arm one of these days with the strength her sister puts in those.

“Piss off. Mom’s got my back. Be ready to lose, Lexi-loo.”
Lexa rolls her eyes but laughs along with their parents and, as soon as lunch is done, they happily
dig in.

She still doesn’t understand how she gets so nervous when it comes to this but, the fact is, she
does.

It’s not always a tornado, swirling and swirling in her stomach. Sometimes it’s just little butterflies
flying around in disarray, but it’s always something.

She’s made up her mind though (under heavy threat of bodily harm and perpetual embarrassment
from Anya, but still) and she’s going to ask Clarke out on a date.

The thing is, she usually knows the answer because the circumstances almost always repeat
themselves. Not this time though, hence the tornado in her stomach. It kind of feels like the first
time she did it, except that this has the added pressure of her knowing exactly what she’ll be
missing out on if the answer is not in her favor.

But, she’s come this far so all she has to do now is suck it up and be brave. Consolation price: if
she fucks it up, she’ll just get a redo. At least there’s a benefit to this whole bullshit.

She’s waiting for Clarke at their usual table because they are both idiots who haven’t exchanged
numbers yet after over two months of regular coffee dates. Coffee encounters? Regular breakfasts?
Anyway, they’re both idiots and it’s not like Lexa doesn’t know her number by heart, that would be
ridiculous after almost a century and a half, but Clarke doesn’t know she knows it, and she doesn’t
want to come across as a creepy stalker.

She’s already halfway through her tea when Clarke comes rushing in through the door with an
apologetic look on her face.

“Shit, I’m so sorry I’m late. I stayed up studying till late and then I was so tired I just slept through
my alarm and then I practically ran all the way here,” she rapid-fires as she pulls out her chair and
sits.
Lexa looks on with amusement and places her hand on top of Clarke’s to steady her.

“It’s okay, relax. It’s not like we set up a time or anything. Or said that we’d meet here for that matter.”

“I know, I know, it’s just that we always do and then I didn’t have your number to tell you I’d be late and I didn’t want you to leave and think I stood you up.” Lexa smiles reassuring and Clarke finally takes a deep breath and leans back against the chair. “Hi.”

“Hello, Clarke. I’m glad you made it.”

Clarke smiles bashfully and Lexa’s heart decides it wants to become a dancer. “Me too.”

“I think I know how to avoid this panic for next time.”

“Yeah?”

Lexa nods. “It’s quite simple, really,” she says as she pulls out her phone and hands it to Clarke who takes the hint and grins as she inserts her number and passes the phone back. Lexa calls her, and Clarke saves her number. “See? Easy. Now, coffee?” she asks as she already signaling the waitress.

“Please, I’m in desperate need.”

“Big test coming up?”

“Midterms,” Clarke assents with a miserable expression.

“You’ll do great, I’m sure.”

“Sure, but I might not make it out alive.”
Lexa chuckles and delights herself in watching Clarke relax as she steals some of Lexa’s croissant while she waits for her order, a twinkle in her eyes as she talks about her week.

Clarke hums contently after she finishes her second coffee (it’s such a habit that the waitress doesn’t even ask anymore before she brings her refill) and Lexa looks at her curiously.

“What?”

“Nothing, I’m just finally feeling relaxed,” Clarke tells her.

Lexa smiles, pleased to know she still (or, rather, once again) has that effect on her. “I’m glad.”

“This is my favorite part of the week,” she admits with a blush, averting her eyes.

“Mine too,” Lexa tells her, taking her hand once more, only this time it’s an intimate gesture compared to the first time where it was just a calming one. Both feel equally elating though, and both bring back thousands of memories of her repeating the same gesture.

Clarke looks up and her eyes fill up with joy and hope and Lexa knows this is the moment to just be brave and go for it. This is not one of those moments where one could say she’s got nothing to lose, precisely the opposite, in fact, she has everything to lose, but she’s willing to risk it.

She decides to just out and say it, no beating around the bush.

“Do you want to go out with me sometime?”

Clarke looks at her intently, as if to make sure she heard the words right and she’s not misconstruing anything.

“Like, out on a date?”

Lexa smirks. “Precisely a date.”
“Yes,” Clarke says vehemently, her head bobbing up and down and a huge grin on her beautiful face, her eyes shining with excitement.

Lexa beams. “Great. Friday?”

Clarke nods, “Sure, works for me.”

“Good, it’s a date,” Lexa tells her with a smile. “I’ll call you, okay?”

“Yeah.”

“I have to go now, my sister passed her detective exam and we’re celebrating at our parents’. My mom won the bet on her mark and I’m sure she’ll be even more insufferable than Anya.”

“Oh, that’s amazing! Yeah, go, I’ll talk to you later,” Clarke says, a dazed smile still gracing her features making Lexa’s heart melt at the look of wonder on her face.

Lexa gets up and ponders for a second before deciding to just go for it. She places a quick yet tender kiss on Clarke’s cheek before leaving, her body trembling with excitement after being starved of that type of contact for five agonizing years.

“Bye, Clarke.”

“Bye, Lexa.”
“What do you think?” Lexa asks her nervously.

There shouldn’t be any reason for her nerves, one would think, yet here they are, apparently with a mind of their own.

Clarke is still looking a bit dazed, her mouth slightly parted. She looks really beautiful and Lexa takes another moment to gaze at her, how her simple black dress hugs her curves sensually, a low v-cut showing just the right amount of cleavage, how a slight shiver runs through her body, and she’s immediately grateful for having remembered to bring extra blankets to ward of the early autumn chill.

“Clarke?” Lexa prompts again, and Clarke finally turns to her, shaking her head out of the daze and sending her an apologetic smile.

“It’s beautiful, Lexa,” she says in wonder.

“I’m glad you like it,” Lexa smiles. “I thought after the week you’ve had you’d appreciate this better than a busy atmosphere.

Clarke nods and looks around once again, her eyes hungrily taking in the simple yet beautiful rooftop garden with fairy lights spread all around. Lexa has to agree, it is quite a sight, even for her who’s seen it countless times.

“It’s breathtaking,” Clarke whispers. “I can’t believe you have this on your rooftop.”

“The garden came with the building,” Lexa explains, “Apparently some previous tenant was a
landscape architect and they built this. It was one of the biggest selling points for the apartment for me."

“It’s amazing,” Clarke says with a smile. “I would just spend all my time up here if I were you.”

You will, Lexa muses. Clarke loves to draw here, she can spend hours lost in her art and not even realize the time passing until Lexa has to make her way up here to fetch her or bring her food.

“Hungry?”

Clarke nods vigorously. “Starving,” she says, causing Lexa to chuckle.

“Come,” she points with her head and raises her hand which Clarke takes, the feeling more familiar than she could say, though she’s been far too long without it.

They settle down on the (probably excessive) mountain of pillows Lexa laid out on top of a blanket and Lexa reaches into the picnic basket and hands Clarke her food before getting her own.

Lexa’s lips lift in amusement as Clarke’s eyes open wide when she looks at the food.

“Oh my god! This is my favorite!” she says excitedly, immediately taking an eager bite of her lasagna.

“Is it?” Lexa fakes ignorance and fights to hide a grin, “I guess I got lucky.”

“Definitely! And from this exact place, too. I don’t know what it is but I’m sure they have a secret ingredient.”

Lexa chuckles and takes a bite of her food as well. “It’s one of my favorite Italian restaurants, actually. I often get take away when I’m too tired to cook. Not that that’s why I got it today,” she hastily adds, “I just thought it could be something you’d like.”

It’s also a place that she visits constantly over the years when she’s missing Clarke and wants to
revisit some of the memories the smell and taste of the food bring her.

And a place she fervently avoids when she misses Clarke just so much that any reminder of her hurts.

“You thought very right,” Clarke says with a smile as she happily digs into the lasagna.

“Wine?”

Clarke nods. “Please.”

“So what do you usually do after midterms?” Lexa asks her.

“Party like crazy for the night and then regret my life choices for the rest of the week,” Clarke says with a self-deprecating laugh.

“So I’m breaking your routine?” Lexa asks with a smirk.

“In a good way, my brain and liver cells thank you,” she says. “As does the rest of my body. This, relaxing, is what I usually crave but I always end up cAVING and going to parties with my friends.”

“Happy to take care of your body’s needs,” Lexa says smoothly and is happy to see Clarke’s cheeks flush prettily in the soothing lights.

“Just my body?” Clarke challenges.

Lexa’s smirk turns into a genuine smile. “All of you.”

Clarke’s eyes brighten. “Good to know.”

“So,” Lexa starts in a light teasing tone, “Tell me about yourself, Clarke Griffin.”
It elicits a laugh from Clarke who takes another gulp of her wine before setting down the glass next to her.

“You ask as if we haven’t been having breakfast every week for over two months.”

Lexa shrugs. “Humor me.”

Clarke rolls her eyes playfully but smiles and leans back against the mountain of pillows behind her.

“Okay. Let me see. I was born here in DC, only child, my mom was super busy, you know, doctor and whatnot, but she always made whatever time she had with me count. My dad was also busy but not as much and we liked to watch football games together,” she says with a wistful smile.

Lexa quirks her brow teasingly. “Football?”

Clarke nods. “Ask me anything about the major league and I’ve got your answers,” she says with a smirk.

“What else?” Lexa prompts.

“Had a pet turtle when I was a kid,” she continues with a wicked grin, pausing to get another bite of her food. "And seeing as I fancied myself an artist I thought it'd be a good idea to paint its shell. Poor thing was like a crawling rainbow," she chuckles.

Lexa’s heart soars as it always does when she listens to these fond childhood memories, her mind conjuring up images from the pictures of Clarke she's seen.

"I had a pretty happy childhood actually," Clarke concludes with a wistful smile that quickly turns grim. "Well, until my dad died when I was seventeen. It was a work accident. I took it hard.”

“I’m sorry,” Lexa says softly, caressing her hand.
Clarke shakes her head and smiles sadly. “It’s okay. It was a long time ago. And that’s too heavy for first date material so let’s change topics,” she adds with a dismissive wave of her hand. “Your turn.”

“What would you like to know?” Lexa asks coyly and Clarke rolls her eyes in a very Anya fashion.

“Don’t be difficult, Lexa.” Yes, definitely like Anya which is particularly hilarious because they haven’t even met yet. “I want to know everything,” she says with eager eyes.

Lexa chuckles and pretends to think long and hard until Clarke shoves her lightly on the shoulder and they both let out a laugh.

“Oh, okay, no violence,” she taunts. “I lived most of my life in a small town just outside of DC; my sister is the bane of my existence but I’d do anything for her, though you’re not allowed to tell her that,” she adds with mock seriousness. “She must forever be convinced Lincoln is my favorite.”

Clarke laughs and asks, “And Lincoln is?”

“Our cousin, but he’s basically our brother. My parents died when we were young,” she tells her, and this is something that never gets easier to talk about, though the comfort of Clarke’s thumb rubbing circles around the back of her hand helps. “I was only five and Anya was eight. She’d already lost her mother before that. Same dad, different moms,” she explains at Clarke’s confused look. “We went to live with our uncle and his wife, Lincoln’s parents. We call them mom and dad though,” she adds with a shrug. “They’re our parents.”

“So did little Lexa always want to be a politician?” Clarke asks and Lexa squeezes her hand, grateful for the change of topic.

“Oh yes,” she says seriously. “I knew I’d be president one day, I wrote my victory speech and everything. I was a very determined child.”

Clarke’s eyes shine with mirth and Lexa smiles brightly in return. “I think you still are. Still wanna be president?”
Lexa nods. “That’s the goal, it’s what I work my ass off for.”

“I could make some remark about what a nice ass it is but I think I should leave that for a later date,” Clarke says coyly and Lexa smirks.

“I’m happy to take compliments at any time, Clarke.”

“Oh, are you fishing now? Come on, Lexa, a woman who looks like you shouldn’t have to resort to that,” she teases her.

“You’re right. I should hand them out instead,” she says, locking her eyes with Clarke’s, pleased to see her cheeks getting dark. “You look absolutely stunning tonight, Clarke.”

Clarke blushes even more and gives her a small, please smile. “Thank you.”

Lexa looks at her intently, her desire rising by the second and her ability to control herself inversely declining. She’s pretty sure she recognizes the look in Clarke’s eyes, is positive she knows why she’s running her tongue lightly over her lower lip, biting it gently. Something still nags at her to hold back, though, nerves perhaps, so she lets the moment linger, their eyes burning, a heaviness in the air.

Fuck it, Lexa thinks, before she throws caution to the wind and claims the lips she’s been craving for over five years.

The kiss is soft at first, gentle in a way that makes Lexa’s heart soar, in a way she’s been needing for so long. Even though it’s technically Clarkes’ first kiss with her, their lips mold with undeniable familiarity, Lexa gently nibbling and sucking on her bottom lip until Clarke has had enough and runs the tip of her tongue over Lexa’s lips, deepening the kiss, their tongues meeting with reverent recognition.

Lexa’s body is electric, her skin burning with need and her heart on the brink of exploding with so many feelings she’s forced to repress. She wants it all. She wants her girlfriend, all of her, and she wants to give herself fully in return. But, she mustn’t. Not yet, at least.

She breaks off the kiss with less gentleness than she would’ve liked and takes a ragged breath to steady herself, her forehead leaning against Clarke’s in her body’s search for an anchor.
Clarke’s eyes are blown wide, her breathing coming in pants as well, and her hand, which somehow ended up on Lexa’s waist, is slightly shaking.

“Wow,” she mutters in a daze and Lexa chuckles, finally recovering from the onslaught of feelings.

“Yeah,” she whispers, looking from Clarke’s eyes to her lips in rapid succession and, unable to resist, she goes in for another kiss.

She’s more grounded now, Clarke has the uncanny ability to both ground her and make her lose control but, after taking the first sip like a thirsty man in a desert, Lexa is more able to center herself. Her hands explore Clarke’s body with the lightest of touches, touches which she knows drive Clarke crazy and would usually result in the demand for more. Now though, Lexa takes it slow and she’s sure Clarke won’t ask for more, not today at least, not until she’s more comfortable.

Clarke’s own hands settle more firmly around Lexa’s waist, her fingers rubbing mindless patterns which make her shiver with delight. It’s curious, relying only on her instinct, Clarke always finds Lexa’s sensitive spot. Always. It drives her crazy, especially when she’s trying to not jump her girlfriend right there because she’s technically not her girlfriend just yet.

“Yeah, okay,” Clarke says while she places soft kisses on Lexa's lips, “I kinda wanted to do that since we ran into each other.”

Lexa chuckles. “Only ‘kinda’?”

Lexa’s wanted to do it since she saw her. The first time, back in the original version. She hasn’t stopped wanting to do it since.

“Definitely,” Clarke says as she pulls her in for a more fervent kiss.

Lexa pulls back after a while, struggling to get her breathing and her body under control, her hands, in particular, seem to want to run wild.

“You can’t keep doing that,” she tells Clarke.
“What?” she asks with fake innocence.

Lexa smirks. How she missed this coy side of Clarke, fully aware of the effect she has on Lexa.

“That,” she points out after Clarke kisses her once more. “You’re way too sexy and when you keep kissing me like that you make it very hard to resist you.”

“And who says you have to resist?” Clarke says in a sinfully husky voice, her eyes dancing hungrily over Lexa’s face.

Fuck if she knows.

Lexa takes that as permission and pulls Clarke to her feet, pulling her in with an arm around her waist and another on her cheek and kissing her passionately. Clarke moans and Lexa finds it exceedingly hard to stop herself from just throwing caution to the wind and taking her right there.

She still has enough control over her brain to pull back and take Clarke’s hand, their fingers intertwined and she leads them back to her apartment.

“The things?” Clarke asks without actually stopping.


Clarke chuckles and they make their way to the elevator, their kisses increasing in desperation as they descend and enter her apartment.

As soon as she shuts the door behind them she finds herself pinned to the door with Clarke hungrily attacking her lips once more and Lexa doesn’t try to stop her roaming hands this time, running them up and down her body firmly, desperate for more contact.

She breaks off the kiss and leans her neck to the side, which Clarke takes full advantage of and starts kissing and nibbling and sucking, driving moans from Lexa and making it hard for her
fingers to work properly. She still manages to unzip Clarke’s dress and looks in wonder as it slides
down to the floor, Clarke taking one step back to get off it completely and giving Lexa an even
better view. She’s wearing Lexa’s favorite lingerie, a lacy set which cups her breast perfectly and
makes her cleavage even more appealing and Lexa struggles not to dive right in.

Clarke smirks smugly and then pulls Lexa back with her, slowly lowering Lexa’s dress straps as
they move into the apartment. Lexa takes the lead toward her bedroom (their bedroom) and by the
time she gets there her own dress is falling down to her hips and she gets it off in no time. Clarke
looks at her appraisingly and it’s Lexa’s turn to smirk at the hunger in Clarke’s eyes before she
pulls her into another kiss which Clarke eagerly joins.

Between moans and groping hands, Lexa soon finds herself pushed back onto the bed while Clarke
climbs in on top of her and Lexa can’t help but smirk with amusement. It’s always a toss-up
between them, and she likes to place bets with herself as to who will end up on top first. She wins,
unsurprisingly; Clarke has practically been drooling over her since they met in this loop.

Lexa’s smirk quickly dissipates when Clarke starts making her way down her neck with more
open-mouthed kisses and licks and nibbles and Lexa is a moaning mess. Fuck. Clarke is really
good at finding all her weak spots.

Clarke loses patience fast and unhooks Lexa’s bra, taking in her breasts greedily and wasting no
time in running her tongue around them until she’s sucking on a nipple and then repeating the
process with the other one. Lexa bites her lip to hold back a moan as she struggles to reach around
Clarke and unhook her own bra, desperately wanting to feel her breasts on her.

Clarke smirks while Lexa caresses her breasts and runs her fingers down Lexa’s abdomen making
her shiver. She looks at Lexa when the tips of her fingers reach her panties and dance around
maddeningly.

“Can I?” she husks and Lexa nods fervently.

It’s all the incentive she needs before she’s gotten Lexa naked underneath her.

“Fuck. You’re beautiful,” Clarke whispers reverently and Lexa smiles, never tiring of that look in
her lover’s eyes.

Lexa pulls her in for a kiss and they both moan at the contact of their bodies pressed together. It’s a
passionate mess of lips and tongue and teeth and Lexa's skin is burning with every touch of Clarke's body on hers.

Her heart is warming up so much it feels like a furnace inside her chest. She's missed this so much. She missed Clarke so much, to be able to touch her, feel her, kiss her, everything. It always drives her to the limit when she finally gets that first kiss, that first touch after waiting for so long.

In a sudden movement that draws a squeak of surprise from Clarke, Lexa flips them over until she has Clarke underneath her and she wastes no time showing her just how much she missed her.

How much she loves her.

She divests Clarke of the rest of her clothing and the first contact between their naked bodies makes her shudder with relief. It's like coming home; finally, after so long, she's in her lover's arms once again, and she could weep with the way her heart is soaring in contentment.

She almost lets "I missed you" slip from her lips so she decides to put them to good use as she places kisses all over Clarke's body, runs her tongue up and down, tasting her and making her shiver with delight.

It's an effort to tone it down, to try to reign in the amount of love threatening to overflow her heart. She doesn't want to scare Clarke off, not again, but she's sure she's got love coming out her eyeballs so she closes her eyes and feels.

She finds Clarke's center scorching and dripping and when she enters her, Clarke practically whimpers. Lexa can't help but open her eyes then and the vision she's given almost takes her breath away. Clarke is just so beautiful, and, like this, wanting and blissful, she's breathtaking. So she says it because she just can't not, and she kisses her again and again while she slides in and out and rubs her clit until she feels Clarke come undone underneath her, her whole body vibrating and tensing until it snaps and they're melded perfectly to each other.
Lexa is about to start throwing people off balconies in frustration when there’s a knock on her door. After she calls out her permission, a familiar head pops in with that distinctive smile and Lexa’s mood is instantly uplifted.

“Hey,” she exhales softly, her own lips curving in their usual smile as she steps from behind her desk and heads over to Costia, giving her a hug. “Missed you,” she whispers into her ear and Costia hugs her tighter.

“Missed you too, Lex.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Apparently saving you from jail with the murderous look you had going on before you saw it was me,” Costia teases her but her eyes crinkle with concern and Lexa realizes just how much these separations take a toll on her. On them. Almost three months apart from her best friend’s constant calming presence and Lexa’s nerves are frayed.

“They’re trying to drive me insane, but I’ll show them just who’s in charge,” she assures her and Costia chuckles.

“That’s right, commander. Do you wanna go have lunch? Clear your mind a bit?”

Lexa nods, a pleased smile on her lips, and Costia breathes out in relief, her features visibly relaxing. Lexa knows just how much this must be hard for her, trying to build a friendship without the romance. It was hard for Lexa too, once upon almost one hundred and thirty years ago, now it’s just as familiar as breathing.

They head over to Lexa’s favorite work-lunch restaurant just a few blocks away, easy chatter flowing between them and Lexa brightens as Costia becomes more and more comfortable around her.

“So,” Costia says halfway through their main course, dragging out the word and Lexa chuckles
with amusement as she just knows what’s about to come out of her mouth. “When were you gonna tell me about your girlfriend?”

Lexa rolls her eyes, pleased to note that Costia’s face is mostly amused, with only the slight bit of pain crinkling her eyes. She’s trying, and trying is the best Lexa can ever ask of her.

“She’s not my girlfriend.”

“Yet,” Costia retorts, echoing Lexa’s thought and she can’t help but smirk.

“Yes, well. Who told you? Anya? Mom?” she asks her, curious to know who beat the other to the punch. It’s usually one of those two when it’s not Lexa herself.

Costia laughs airily. “Gustus. Now spill.”

Lexa’s eyes widen in shock. “Dad? When did he become part of the gossip mill? And there’s nothing to spill, we’re just going on dates.”

“He called to check up on me, asked me how I was handling you dating someone else,” Costia says with a pointed look that is intended to make Lexa feel bad for not telling her herself and serves its purpose. Lexa lowers her head in shame and Costia asks, “Who is it?”

“If this is supposed to be evidence that you’re his favorite, you’ve succeeded. He never asks me how I’m doing” Lexa chimes in with a pout and Costia smirks smugly.

“You know I am. And you’re doing a poor job at avoiding my questions,” she tells her with an expectant raised brow.

“I’m not avoiding anything,” Lexa deflects with a quirk of her lips. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, Cos, I guess I was waiting till we make it official.”

Costia gives her a hard look which makes Lexa feel even more guilty.
“We’re best friends, right? You should tell me these things. It hurts me a lot more when you don’t under some misguided belief that you’re sparing my feelings,” she adds in a softer note which still delivers her point mercilessly.

“I know,” Lexa acquiesces taking her hand which Costia squeezes back in reassurance.

“I want you to be happy, Lex. I want you to love again even if it’s not me you love.”

“I’ll always love you,” Lexa contests firmly and Costia smiles sadly in return.

“I know, I meant romantically. So who is it? Don’t think I’ll give up without all the details,” she adds more lightly and Lexa can’t help but chuckle.

“Clarke,” Lexa says with a soft smile.

Costia looks thoughtful and Lexa is sure she’s trying to place the name until recognition flashes in her face and her eyes brighten.

“The doctor?” she asks, surprised, and then laughs heartily when Lexa nods. “I so knew she was your type! I saw how flustered you got at the hospital,” she teases her and Lexa blushes furiously.

“She’s pretty, okay?” she says as if that’s all there was to it and Costia laughs even harder.

“She’s gorgeous,” she nods in agreement. “And she loves you back?” she asks with a soft smile.

Lexa exhales softly and shakes her head, bemused at Costia’s perceptiveness. “Who said anything about love?” she tries, and most assuredly fails, to deny.

Costia just gives her the look. “I know that look on your face, Lex, don’t play dumb with me.”

Lexa looks down bashfully. “I don’t think she does yet, but it’s heading that way,” she acquiesces with a small please smile, aware that there’s no point in trying to spare Costia’s feelings.
“Good. So when am I meeting her?”

“You already know her,” Lexa points out, amused. Costia just rolls her eyes.

“Yeah, no shit. I meat when do I get properly introduced. I need to do the whole best friend vetting thing. There’s no way she’s getting out of it,” she grins mischievously.

Lexa groans. “No way! I am not letting neither you nor Anya anywhere near her for that conversation,” she says resolutely and Costia just laughs at her.

“Nice try. You have no chance against the two of us, Woods.”

“I know,” Lexa mumbles miserably. “You’re lucky I like you.”

“You more than like me,” Costia smirks. “Now quit being difficult and tell me everything about her.”

Lexa rolls her eyes but starts talking anyway, happy to see the pain in Costia’s eyes slowly fading away.

Lexa is lying in bed, sheets haphazardly thrown around her, her hair tousled as she struggles not to let the pleasure overtake her, Clarke’s body a pleasant weight on top of her to which she holds on greedily as Clarke’s fingers work her up towards release.

She’s this close to an orgasm when she hears the front door open and her sister’s voice yelling out for her and she wishes for nothing more at that moment than for the ground to open up and swallow Anya whole.

Clarke stops suddenly, frozen on top of her, fingers still inside, with a look torn between amusement and embarrassment and Lexa shuffles quickly to cover them up while she yells at her sister.
“What the fuck, Anya? Don’t you dare come in here!”

“No worries, I have no intentions of being scarred for life, little sis, and I need no further confirmation that you’re a total bottom!”

“Am not!” Lexa sputters, outraged, and Clarke bursts out laughing, not even looking mildly intimidated with Lexa’s glare. “You shut up, you know very well that’s not true,” she whispers furiously to Clarke who only smirks.

“Maybe not always, but it is right now.”

Lexa rolls her eyes and decides that she better put something on since Anya shows no intention of leaving. She quickly gets dressed and heads out of the room toward her sister, careful to close the previously open door to her room.

“What the hell are you doing here,” she hisses and Anya only looks at her in amusement. Why is no one intimidated by her anymore?

“You have a party to attend, remember?”

“In an hour,” she points out bitterly, head motioning to her room with the very naked, very sexy blonde in her bed. “Kind of busy at the moment. Thanks for the interruption, by the way, I was in the middle of something.”


“Then why the hell did you think you should interrupt us?”

“Because you’re coming to the party,” she says, arms crossed begging for Lexa to try to argue with her. “You are not getting out of it, little sis. You promised me you’d be there with your new girl so I’m making sure you keep your promises and don’t pull a politician on me.”
Lexa glares at her harder. “I don’t need a babysitter, An, I told you I’d be there.”

“And I’m just keeping you to your word,” she smirks and promptly settles herself down on the couch leaving Lexa fuming with frustration (most of it, admittedly, sexual).

“You’re a little shit, you know that?” Anya just laughs while Lexa stomps off to her room.

“So I take it we’ll have to finish this at another time,” Clarke asks from where she’s still lying on the bed, completely naked to add to Lexa’s demise.

Lexa groans and nods, meanwhile she’s unable to resist and crawls up the bed to place a few passionate kisses on Clarke’s lips. She gets a bit carried away and reluctantly pulls back, heavily panting and pecking Clarke one final time.

“My sister’s an asshole,” she concludes.

“So we better get dressed, huh?”

“Yeah,” Lexa pouts miserably.

Clarke clears her throat pointedly and smirks while she looks at Lexa’s hands. Lexa blushes and mumbles an apology, removing her hands from Clarke’s breasts.

They shower quickly and get dressed, and Lexa notes Clarke is taking more care than usual with her appearance, running her fingers obsessively over her hair in front of the mirror and constantly readjusting her blouse.

“You look stunning,” she reassures her, settling in behind her and resting her hands on her hips.

“I’m just nervous,” Clarke tells her quietly, avoiding her eyes in the mirror.
“I know, but they'll love you,” she says and plants a kiss on Clarke’s neck making her shiver.

“I just wasn’t prepared to meet you sister straight away,” Clarke confesses. “I thought I’d have everyone else at the party as a buffer.”

Lexa turns Clarke around in her arms and kisses her lightly. “My sister is a cunning asshole but she just wants the best for me. And you’re the best,” she reassures her with a smile.

Clarke takes a shaky breath and gives Lexa a quick kiss, then another and then she pulls away, glancing at her reflexion one last time before she takes Lexa’s hand in hers.

“Okay. Let’s do this.”

Lexa smiles brightly and leads the way.

Anya hears their footsteps and leisurely gets up from the couch to give Clarke an appraising look. Lexa feels Clarke tense under her scrutiny and squeezes her hand in reassurance.

“Anya, this is Clarke. Clarke, my annoying, and with the worst timing ever, sister.”

Anya raises a brow in challenge and crosses her arms over her chest, effectively stopping any possible attempt from Clarke to shake her hand in greeting.

“Nice to meet you,” Clarke tells her.

“That remains to be seen,” Anya tells her with narrowed eyes and Lexa glares at her. Anya just shrugs her shoulders and smirks while Clarke shuffles nervously.

“Let’s go,” Lexa states before things get even more awkward.

For fuck’s sake.
This loop is really throwing her into unexpected situations. In all previous ones but two, Anya had always met Clarke first and they were already friends by the time Lexa came along, and in the other two, there had been none of this. Sure, Anya is always a little shit, but this time she’s pushing it. Lexa just wants to punch her.

Alas, she must restrain herself.

Luckily, they drive in separate cars and Clarke relaxes a bit next to her on the drive over to Anya’s, though her hands are still clenching and unclenching in her lap.

Lexa puts her hand on hers to stop the movements and Clarke smiles shakily.

“She hates me,” she states.

“She doesn’t even know you,” Lexa points out.

“And yet she still hates me.”

Lexa rolls her eyes fondly at the disappointment in Clarke’s voice. “She doesn’t hate you. She just likes to be intimidating. It’s her thing.”

Clarke looks at her dubiously but gives her a smile nonetheless. “I think it’s a family thing,” she says.

Lexa gasp dramatically. “I intimidate you?”

“Me, no. Everyone else, definitely,” she says with an eye roll and Lexa can’t help her laughter.

“You might have a point,” she concedes with amusement. “All the more reason to believe me when I tell you it’s all an act. Anya is just being protective, even though I don’t need protection.”

Clarke gives her a small smile and nods, her shoulders relaxing as she leans back more comfortably on her seat.
When they make it to Anya’s she’s already waiting for them in the foyer and they head up together to her apartment, the elevator ride eerily quiet and Lexa just wants to punch someone (Anya, definitely Anya) in frustration.

They get in and Lexa immediately drags Anya by her arm towards the kitchen with promises of bringing Clarke a drink.

“You stop this right now or I swear I won’t talk to you for a month!” Lexa hisses furiously.

“Stop what?” Anya asks with fake innocence with only incites Lexa further.

“That’s two months now! I mean it, Anya, stop it,” she glares.

Anya looks at her intently then breathes out and raises her hands up. “Fine, fine, I promise.”

“Thank you.”

“But I won’t promise not to give her the big sister talk,” she adds mischievously and Lexa just rolls her eyes.

“I would rather you didn’t but I don’t think I have any leverage there.”

“You would be correct. It’s a prerogative,” she says smugly.

“Fine. But now go be a decent person and try to make up for your behavior,” Lexa orders and Anya chuckles.

Thankfully, people soon start streaming in and the mood becomes much lighter with everyone drinking and chatting. Lexa introduces Clarke to their friends (Anya, of course, blundering that one right off the bat when she called her Lexa’s girlfriend, resulting in Clarke stammering and blushing for a solid five minutes) and Lexa is happy to see her relax and enjoy herself.
The last ones to come in are Costia, Lincoln, and Octavia, who have recently started dating. Lexa takes a minute to muse at how differently this is all turning out, with Clarke being the new person in their group rather than Lexa in Clarke’s.

“O! You’re here!” Clarke exclaims as she heads up towards them, engulfing the girl in a fierce hug.

“Yeah, this is Lincoln,” she says meaningfully with a loving smile. “Why are you here?”

“Oh, uh, Lexa,” Clarke says, awkwardly looking from them to Costia, and Lexa moves forward to give her cousin a hug and Costia a kiss on the cheek.

“Octavia, this is Lexa. She’s my cousin,” Lincoln says, trying to avoid the awkwardness.

“So this is Lexa,” Octavia says pointedly with a grin to Clarke.

“Wow, small world,” Clarke mutters.

_You have no idea_, Lexa muses. “And how do you two know each other,” Lexa fakes ignorance.

“We’re best friends,” Clarke explains with a smile. “And Raven too, she’s my roommate.”

“Well, now that the introductions are out of the way, how about those drinks!” Costia exclaims, winking before she makes her way to the kitchen.

“She doesn’t hate me?” Clarke asks in a whisper.

Lexa shakes her head and kisses her sweetly. “No. How could anybody?”

Clarke rolls her eyes and smacks her playfully but the relief on her face is undeniable.

As the party continues, things get a bit rowdier and somewhere along the drunken mass of bodies
Lexa loses Clarke. She decides to go look for her when she realizes that Octavia is dancing with Lincoln so Clarke is obviously not with her.

“Looking for someone?” Luna asks with a knowing smirk as she corners her.

“Clarke.”

Luna’s smirk only grows bigger and Lexa immediately knows that nothing good is going to come out of her mouth.

“You’re smitten,” she points out, rather obviously. Lexa just rolls her eyes and doesn’t bother denying it.

“Pot meet kettle. I’ve seen you look at your boyfriend,” Lexa tells her with amusement.

Luna just chuckles. “So she’s your girlfriend now? I remember you hastily denying it and the girl turning as red as a tomato when Anya mentioned it,” she teases. Busted.

“You know what I mean,” she huffs. She has to admit though, she was quite happy with how pouty Clarke’s lips got when Lexa told them she wasn’t her girlfriend yet. She’s positive they’ll make it official soon. “Have you seen her?” she asks, once again looking around but finding no sign of her.

“Oh yes,” Luna grins mischievously. “Anya and Costia are talking to her.”

Lexa’s eyes widen comically. “Fuck! Both of them?”

Luna snickers and nods. “You’re toast.”

“Where?” Lexa asks already on her way.

“Anya’s bedroom,” Luna shouts as she walks away.
Lexa furiously storms into Anya’s bedroom to find a scenario that had not ever crossed her mind.

Sprawled out on the bed, sharing a bottle of vodka amongst themselves, are her sister, her ex-girlfriend/best friend, and her girlfriend. And they’re laughing. Honest to god, belly-hugging, laughing.

For a moment Lexa wonders if she’s opened the door into some weird dimension.

Stranger things have happened.

“Lexi!” Anya calls out, clearly drunk and smiling like a fool.

“Lex!”

“Babe!”

“Just the woman we were talking about,” Costia says with a shit-eating grin.

Clarke nods, blue eyes wide open in mirth. “Come sit, babe!”

“I used to call her babe, too!” Costia exclaims. “She pretends she hates it but she secretly loves it,” she drunkenly whispers.

The other two cackle and Lexa closes her eyes in mortification. This must be a special type of hell just for her, the three most important women in her life colluding to make her life miserable.

“I know! She pretends to be all tough but she’s a softy,” Clarke loudly whispers back.

“Just put her in front of a pretty lady, she’s a gay mess!” Anya proclaims amongst a fit of giggles which the other two join.
Clarke and Costia exchange a look and Lexa knows nothing good is coming out so she hastily intervenes.

“That’s enough talking about me,” she says as she extends her hand to grab the bottle of vodka but Anya swiftly swats it away.

“My house, my booze!”

Lexa rolls her eyes and groans loudly when all three of them take another heavy sip, wincing as it burns down their throat.

“Hate vodka,” Clarke says with disgust.

“Me too!” Costia happily announces.

“Me three!”

“Jesus Christ, then why the hell are you three drinking it?” Lexa asks in exasperation.

“Because we’re celebrating, Lexi!” Anya says in an ‘it should be obvious’ tone.

Costia nods and smiles drunkenly. “Yes! You have a girlfriend and we approve!”

“We’re not-” Clarke starts then takes another sip of vodka, her cheeks flaming red.

Lexa is too elated to hear their approval to care about much else. “I’m happy you approve, now stop hogging my girlfriend and getting her drunk.”

“Your girlfriend, huh?” Clarke asks timidly and Anya and Costia start snickering again.

Lexa rolls her eyes at their antics and leans forward to help Clarke off the bed. “Yes. My girlfriend,
if you’ll have me,” she adds softly, suddenly a bit timid.

Clarke smiles brightly and nods vigorously until Lexa pulls her in for a kiss, earning themselves groans from the other two.

“Gross!”

“Get a room!”

Lexa laughs and flips them off before taking Clarke’s hand and leading her out.

“Come on, I want to show you how much I appreciate you being my girlfriend,” she says coyly and Clarke’s eyes brighten with hunger.

“Yes please, let’s get out of here.”
Lexa gives Clarke another side glance while still trying to focus on the road but her girlfriend is making it difficult.

After a while, she’s had enough and she moves her right hand from the steering wheel to Clarke’s thigh, effectively stopping her bouncing with a firm grip.

“You’re nervous,” Lexa points out, sympathetic to the situation that has repeated itself more times than she would’ve cared for.

Clarke decides to compensate for her inability to bounce her legs by wringing her hands within each other constantly, huffing out breaths every few seconds.

It’s driving Lexa insane.

“Clarke,” she says more sternly than intended. “Please, it’ll be fine. Try to relax, okay?”


Lexa tries to hold in her laughter but the eye roll is unavoidable. She does kind of have an unfair advantage.

“And my parents will love you as well. Anya and Lincoln already do.”

Clarke huffs. “Lincoln likes everybody,” she says dismissively. “And I’m pretty sure Anya just likes me because I introduced her to Raven.”

Lexa smirks. That had been a sweet thing to watch, and she will make fun of her sister forever.
Hard-edged, no-nonsense Anya completely smitten at first sight. Not that Raven was any better, but she did show more game, otherwise those two would have been doomed.

She’s always wondered how they’d met, what Anya’s first reaction to Raven had been. Now she knows, and it was priceless.

“You know she liked you before that,” Lexa points out. “You charmed her and Cos at that party with your stories about me.”

Clarke grins mischievously and Lexa can feel her exasperation grow. “More like they told me lots of stories about you, commander,” she teases, and Lexa is pleased to see her attempt at distraction is working and Clarke is beginning to relax, though she is not pleased with what those two troublemakers might have told Clarke about her.

“Remind me to bump up ‘kill Anya and Costia’ to the top of my to-do list, will you?”

Clarke laughs and raises a hand to caress Lexa’s cheek.

“They were sweet stories. Mostly,” she teases. “And now I’ve got lots of dirty secrets about you.”

“Oh, and you think your mom and Marcus didn’t have anything interesting to tell me?” she asks challengingly. “Or Raven and Octavia?”

Clarke groans loudly. “Fuck, I should’ve never left you alone with either of them for even one minute.”

“I know secrets, too,” Lexa grins smugly.

Clarke leans back against the headrest and looks out the window, her shoulders finally relaxing and Lexa is struck with just how beautiful she is, like this, with the low light of dusk shading her face, her eyes sparkling, her lips red from nervously biting them. She’s stunning.

Lexa lives for these moments. Sometimes it feels like all the hardship she’s been through, all the heartache and the repetition and the loneliness, it’s all worth it for this. For this moment of pure
bliss where her breath gets taken away and she feels infinitely lucky to be able to witness even one moment of Clarke like this.

She squeezes Clarke’s hand with more force than recommended, almost as if unable to contain the amount of love pouring out of her.

Clarke squeezes back and looks at her quizzically.

“I love you,” Lexa tells her reverently and Clarke sucks in a breath. Her eyes widen and water and Lexa watches, mesmerized, as her smile slowly gets bigger until it brightens her whole face.

Lexa loves this. She loves seeing the look on Clarke’s face every time she tells her she loves her for the first time. It’s always the same look, stunned, surprised, relieved, ecstatic.

“And I love you,” Clarke whispers, bringing their joined hands to her lips and pressing a delicate kiss to the back of Lexa’s hand.

The house is chaotic, unusual in and of itself in the Woods family, and made worse by Anya and Clarke’s relentless banter.

Those two get along like fireworks, Lexa muses, enchanted by their rapid-fire back and forth which gets them both progressively more rilled up and which they thoroughly enjoy.

Lincoln just shares her look of fond exasperation, and their parents have a confused look on both their faces as they look from one to the other, Clarke comfortably nestled in Lexa’s arms in the small couch, and Anya sprawled out across from them in the armchair.

“What are they always like this?” Mom asks with an amused eyebrow raised.

“You haven’t seen anything yet,” Lincoln says from where he’s settled comfortably in the other armchair. “Be glad neither Octavia nor Raven is here, the four of them would drive you insane.”
Lexa chuckles and they all look on in amusement, Anya and Clarke apparently oblivious to the rest of them in their fervent discussion.

“Are you insane?” Clarke half-yells out, her arms moving in even more agitated patterns and Lexa moves back a little, afraid she’ll get smacked on the forehead by accident. “There is no way the Arkers will lose the game, they have the better team!”

Anya snorts derisively. “Weak children is more like it, they stand no chance against the Grounders!”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about. They won the past five games.”

“And against which teams? Anyone could’ve beaten those, it’s not exactly a show of superior skill. The Grounders, on the other hand, won against worthy adversaries.”

Lexa groans, finally paying attention to the conversation instead of just their animated gestures and realizing they’ve ended up talking football again.

“It’s Christmas, you two, we don’t discuss sports rivalries during the holidays,” she interrupts their arguments only to be faced with two red-faced blondes glaring at her. “Fight about something else if you must. How about politics?” she suggests excitedly. Now that is something she’s interested in.

Both of them groan in displeasure and roll their eyes in an identical manner. It’s almost as if they’re sisters.

“No one likes boring shit like that except you, you dork,” Anya tells her and Lexa throws a pillow at her face.

“Hey! It’s not boring! The future of our country depends on having educated people who make informed political decisions instead of just following the loudest person or not voting at all,” she says, crossing her arms in annoyance.

“Sorry, babe, gotta agree with Anya there. It’s boring as hell,” Clarke tells her and everyone lets out a laugh.
“Hey look, they agree on something!” Dad points out with a smirk.

“Only when they’re teaming up against me,” Lexa grumbles with a fake pout.

Clarke chuckles and pecks her lightly. “Don’t be a grumpy pants, Lex, we all love you.”

“Yeah, but we love to tease you more,” Anya smirks.

“I’m pretty sure I forgot to buy both of your gifts, you’ll have to wait till next year” Lexa threatens and they both gasp dramatically.

“You wouldn’t!”

“You’d to that to your favorite sister?”

“You’re my only sister.”

“And I’m the favorite,” Lincoln says smugly and Anya gasps even louder when Lexa nods her assent.

“Behave, children,” Mom orders with an amused smile.

“Well, I’m glad you fit right in with the family, Clarke,” Dad tells her, and Lexa feels a surge of pride and happiness in her chest.

Clarke blushes and smiles bashfully. “Thank you, sir.”

“I told you, it’s Gustus.”
Lexa sends him a grateful smile and his eyes twinkle with pride.

“Are you sure your family is okay with you spending Christmas with us?” Mom asks her for the second time.

Clarke nods. “Yes, this year my mom’s got the Christmas shift at the hospital and Marcus is spending it with his mother. I’d probably just end up getting a shift at the hospital as well if Lexa hadn’t invited me.”

“Well, we’re happy to have you,” Dad tells her and Clarke beams.

“Thank you.”

“And this way you won’t miss Mom’s special apple pie,” Lexa nudges her with a smile. “I know it’s your favorite dessert.”

Clarke gives her a surprised look and then smiles fondly. “Sure is. I kind of want to just skip ahead to the food part,” she jokes and everyone laughs heartily at her enthusiasm.

They call it a night soon after, Clarke’s eagerness for the next day amusing to all of them. It’s not like their family doesn’t enjoy the holidays, they do, but they’re not nearly as effusive as Clarke is.

Actually, neither of them lives life as effusively as she does. It seems to be a Woods trait.

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Lexa nestles closer to Clarke, one arm strewn around her belly as she rubs mindless patterns with her fingertips, delighting in the goosebumps it elicits in her girlfriend.

“Did you enjoy the holiday?” she asks sleepily.

“So much,” Clarke tells her and places a kiss on her head.
“Told you my parents would love you.”

Clarke chuckles huskily. “I’m not sure if they love me yet, your family does have a tendency to keep a very stoic face no matter what. You are all very hard to read,” she says, poking Lexa’s side pointedly.


“Liar. But I’m starting to get a better read on you, rest assured. It’s all in the eyes,” she says knowingly.

“Is it?”

“Oh yeah, dead giveaway. Especially your heart eyes,” she says smugly.

Lexa raises her head in outrage. “Heart eyes? I do not make heart eyes.”

“Oh yes you do, babe,” Clarke tells her with a smirk. “Everyone can see it, you’re totally weak for me.”

Lexa sputters, utterly offended. “That’s— That’s so… Very much true,” she finishes, unhappily relenting.

Clarke just laughs heartily and pulls her back down for a kiss.

“I’m not complaining, I love it that I can see how much you care for me in your eyes.”

“I can’t help it, you’re very lovable,” she mumbles as if it could ever be a bad thing.

“Thank you for my presents,” Clarke says after a beat of silence.
“I only gave you one, Clarke.”

“Yes, but I’m sure you also nudged the others in the right direction,” she tells her, amused.

“Maybe,” Lexa hides her smile with a well-placed kiss on Clarke’s neck.

“How did you know I’d like your parents’ gift?”

Lexa furrows her brow as she remembers which one that was. “The concert tickets?”

Clarke hums her assent and starts racking her nails over Lexa’s back, making her shiver.

“They’re your favorite band,” Lexa says simply, the mindless pattern of Clarke’s nails making her eyes flutter closed and she can feel herself starting to drift off. It was a busy couple of days, with way too much food added to the mix, and the comfort of her own bed always makes her relax into oblivion in an instant.

“They are,” Clarke says thoughtfully, but Lexa is already falling asleep and doesn’t really catch her tone.

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Anya groans loudly in exasperation and then gives Lexa her most frightening glare. Little does she know, Lexa has had well over a century to become immune to it, so it really doesn’t deter her from continuing with her ‘Time to Embarrass my Sister’ moment.

Oh, sweet, sweet vengeance.

“So then, this poor scorned girl decides that the best way to get her revenge on my lovely sister is to seduce her again,” Lexa continues with her story, unperturbed by Anya’s fierce glares.

“I will kill you.”
Or death threats.

“I will come into your house at night and cut you up piece by piece and I’ll feed you to the wolves so no one will ever find even one tiny piece to remember you by.”

Lexa just laughs wildly while Clarke and Raven’s eyes widen comically before they let out nervous laughs.

Lexa keeps going, eyes sparkling with mischief. “So then this girl managed to sleep with Anya again, no big surprise there, there was a lot of alcohol involved,” she tells them between laughs. “But then my genius sister’s brain ended up located somewhere much further down her body and she let the girl sleep over after what she’d done to her the time before.”

“Oh no,” Clarke ominously says, trying to contain her laughter at what she’s already imagining happened.

Anya is hiding her face behind Raven’s shoulder, the two of them comfortably sat across from them on the couch at Clarke and Raven’s apartment.

“Please stop,” Anya begs, trying to change tactics.

“No, no, keep going!” Raven interjects and Anya gives her an outraged look.

“Traitor,” she grumbles with narrowed eyes, her cheeks blushing, and they all laugh again.

“You brought this on yourself, big sis,” Lexa teases her before she goes forward with her torture. “So then when we woke up in the morning, guess what we found?” she asks them, her grin barely contained.

Anya groans again, even louder this time and hides her face in her hands. Raven chuckles and looks at her fondly but then looks back at Lexa, eagerly expectant.

“All of Anya’s underwear was spread out over the different balconies of our four-story building,” she tells them with a sudden fit of laughter when she remembers the image, a stunt she watched in
everyone loop but still doesn’t know how the girl pulled off. “And all her clothes were strewn around the bushes out front!”

Everyone bursts out laughing mercilessly, and then even harder at Anya’s miserable, absurdly red face.

Raven is wiping tears from her eyes and then goes into another fit of laughter when Anya weakly threatens to break up with her.

“Oh my gosh, this reminds me of that time Octavia stole all your panties, Rae,” Clarke says which elicits another round of laughter from them, only this time Raven is sending the death glares and Anya is looking very smug.

“But at least Octavia did it on a dare,” Lexa points out, still shaking with laughter. “This girl did it because she thought my dear sister would change her bachelorette ways for the power of her magical vagina.”

Clarke gives her a peculiar look but laughs again and Anya glares further, then looks embarrassed at Raven’s smug look.

“I guess only one person has that magical power,” Raven haughtily says, wiggling her eyebrow with that trademark cocky smirk of hers, and they all burst out laughing again at Anya’s puppy love face.

“No, no, no! I’m telling you guys, this will definitely work!” Raven excitedly assures them, though the dangerously tipping beer bottle in her hand and her determined drunken look make Lexa seriously doubt it.

Clarke lets out an amused laugh and shakes her head vehemently.

“Nope, not falling for it this time, Raven.”

“We all know how your ideas turn out, Reyes,” Octavia points out with a knowing smirk.
Lexa nods with a grimace. “Very true, we wouldn’t want a repeat of the physics lab fiasco.”

There’s a collective shudder around the group before they all break out laughing again.

Raven looks up at them indignantly. “Hey! I can’t believe you told her that story, Griffin! You’re ruining my reputation,” she grumbles, and Octavia pats her clumsily on the head while smirking.

“Don’t worry, babe, everyone knows you’re a genius.”

“A dangerous one,” Lexa adds with a grin.

Clarke puts up her hands in surrender when Raven keeps glaring at her. “I didn’t tell Lexa that story, Rae! Promise.”

Oh. Oops.

There’s clearly too much information in her brain, too many versions to keep up with. She’s getting sloppier as the years go by.

“There’s clearly too much information in her brain, too many versions to keep up with. She’s getting sloppier as the years go by.

“Anyaa,” Lexa quickly supplies, glad that her sister is distracted by an arm wrestle with Bellamy (which she is obviously winning) to be able to crumble her lie.

Raven pouts dejectedly. “Damn it, can’t even get my own girlfriend to defend my honor. It was one time!”

“And a destroyed lab which cost more than we care to know,” Clarke teased her.

“And a destroyed lab which cost more than we care to know,” Clarke teased her.

“And glorious photos of you with no eyebrows for posterity.” Octavia’s grin is wicked and Raven gasps in shock, obviously unaware of the incriminating evidence.

“You didn’t!”
“Oh, I most certainly did.”

“Blackmail material,” Clarke teases her with fake innocence.

Raven groans and grumbles about backstabbing friends and girlfriends as she makes her way over to Lincoln, her newly-proclaimed best friend, and leaves them to a bout of laughter.

Clarke groans loudly as she places her head on her hands to hide her embarrassment in a move which Lexa finds adorable, pulling out a small smile from her lips.

“Please stop, Mom. I’m begging you, if you love me you’ll put me out of my misery.”

Lexa and Abby exchange amused grins as they witness Clarke’s dramatics.

“I’m not doing anything,” Abby raises her hands up, voice high with fake innocence.

Clarke removes her hands from her face only to point her with a glare.

“I’m quite sure there’s like a rule or something about parents not sharing embarrassing childhood stories with their children’s significant others.”

“On the contrary, my dear, the rule is that we must absolutely share them. It’s like a rite of passage.”

“Well, please stop, I’m pretty sure one story was good enough for your little bonding moment.”

Lexa’s smile widens and Abby’s grows more mischievous.
“I think not, I at least have to tell her about the time you decided you’d wander off into the world to be a traveling artist at the meager age of nine.”

Clarke groans even louder and hides her face behind Lexa’s shoulder.

“Please make her stop, Lex. I can’t handle this torture.”

“And why would I do that, Clarke? I’m very much enjoying these stories,” she smirks.

Clarke pokes her hard on the ribs and raises her head back up to glare at her, cheeks red with embarrassment.

“I’ll be sure to ask your parents for some incriminating stories on your part.”

Lexa raises her hand to her chest exaggeratedly. “You wouldn’t!”

“Would too.”

Lexa smiles cheekily and shrugs. “I think it’s worth calling your bluff, I know pictures of little you running away with your pink backpack and paint kit are worthy of a few embarrassing stories of me.”

Clarke looks at her curiously and Abby bursts out laughing, making Lexa refocus her attention on her.

“That’s exactly how it happened!” she delightedly tells them. “It was the most adorable thing, she was so determined that Jake and I just let her pack up and watched her walk out the door. She made it as far as the backyard and decided it was the perfect place to camp out and paint the landscape.”

Lexa laughs heartily and her heart threatens to break out of her chest when Clarke leans her head softly against her shoulder and takes her hand, love spreading through her so warmly it almost burns her from the inside out.
“I need to see this painting,” Lexa says, fingers softly running through Clarke’s arm.

Abby gives them a fond look before agreeing and Clarke groans again as her mom heads up to fetch the painting.

“I hate you,” she grumbles with a smile.

Lexa grins widely and caresses her cheek.

“And I love you.”

Winter is finally over and Clarke has been pestering her non-stop about heading out to her parents’ house to see the mountains properly. She’s so excited about painting them that Lexa is not even the slightest bit reluctant to make the drive down, though she does put on a bit of a fight, just for show. She does have a reputation to uphold, after all. She can’t just make it obvious how weak she is for her girlfriend, how one look at her face makes her want to agree with everything she asks for.

She’s not quite sure Clarke is convinced. Whatever.

Mom and Dad are walking ahead of them on the trail while Clarke, Anya, Raven, and Octavia are immersed in some heavy discussion which involves a lot of dangerously moving limbs, and Lincoln and Lexa follow quietly behind, enjoying the feeling of family and nature. They’re both quite similar in personality, more pleased with watching their loved ones have fun than actually actively participating all the time.

It all happens quite quickly.

One moment, Lincoln is swatting his arms around, muttering about annoying bugs in the Spring, and the next Lexa’s eyes dart forward to see Clarke starting to hyperventilate and everyone around her starting to panic with worry, not knowing what is happening or what to do.

Lexa is by her side in a flash, backpack already open as she digs through it, a reassuring smile on her face trying to calm her panicking girlfriend.
“Easy, easy, love. Just breathe,” she tells her soothingly after she injects her thigh with the EpiPen, one hand running through Clarke’s hair and the other up and down her back while her breathing regulates.

“What…?” she hears one of the others mutter in shock.

“Allergy,” Lexa and Clarke reply in unison, Clarke’s voice still hoarse and scratchy.

Clarke looks at her with wide grateful eyes which immediately take on a confused glint.

“How did you know?” she rasps out.

Lexa just smiles slightly and shrugs her shoulders nonchalantly.

“Lots of pesky bugs in these woods, I’m always prepared.”

Clarke’s confusion slowly dwindles and then she gives her a small, grateful smile.

“Thank you.”

Lexa is finishing up the last minute details when she hears Clarke’s key opening the door and an immediate smile graces her lips.

She looks around one last time, making sure everything is in the right place and nods approvingly to herself. Candles, check. Dinner in the oven, check. Curls falling primly over her shoulder, check.

“Hey, babe.”
Lexa turns around to greet her and is happy to see a joyful smile on her face as Clarke takes in the apartment.

Lexa has a weakness for candles and, though Clarke often teases her about the excessive amount of candles she has (as if one could ever have too many candles! Pft, ridiculous), Lexa knows Clarke enjoys it when she sets the mood with them.

“Hey,” she presses a soft kiss to her girlfriend’s lips. “You look beautiful,” she says as she looks appreciatively at Clarke’s high-waisted black pants and the blouse that makes her cleavage pop just so, enough to make Lexa go wild but not too much as to make her want to rip her clothes right off.

“Thank you. And you look stunning as always, you know that dress makes me all kinds of weak,” Clarke teases in a husky note as her eyes rake up and down Lexa’s body. “You’re not playing fair, Woods.”

Lexa smirks seductively and leans closer to press another more passionate kiss which Clarke quickly intensifies.

“I don’t intend to play fair, love. Happy six months anniversary.”

Clarke’s smile brightens and she pulls Lexa back in, kissing her hungrily.

“God, you’re too hot for this world. You’re killing me,” she jokes.

Lexa’s grin widens. “Come,” she holds out her hand for Clarke to take and tilts her head. “Let’s get some food in you, you’re going to need a lot of energy for what I’ve got planned,” she says with a coy smile which makes Clarke hungrily bite her lower lip.

They finish eating and Clarke immediately gets up from the table and pulls Lexa up with her, whoLets out a little, amused chuckle as she’s led towards the bedroom.

“Couldn’t wait to get your hands on me, huh?” she teases coyly.
“I told you, you’re killing me looking like that.”

Clarke pulls Lexa in against her and kisses her passionately while reaching back to start unzipping her dress. Lexa wastes no time in popping open Clarke’s buttons, leaving her bra visible and her pants easier to get rid of.

Both now in their underwear, they fall on the bed in a mess of desperate kisses and wandering hands.

“Stop teasing,” Lexa breathes out as Clarke’s hands continue to get closer to where she wants them only to go away the next minute. It’s driving her mad.

Clarke chuckles and pays her no mind, lowering her lips to start kissing her down her neck and breasts and stomach until, finally, she raises Lexa’s hips gently to remove her panties and Lexa moans out in relief when her mouth reaches her.

She feels maddened by pleasure, losing all control as Clarke’s tongue takes and takes and then she’s adding two fingers in her while she swirls her tongue on her clit and then she’s coming with a loud moan, breaths coming out in pants as she comes down from her high, a relaxed grin on her lips.

She tugs Clarke up when it’s too much and kisses her deeply, a loving look on her face.

“Fuck me, that was amazing.”

Clarke chuckles and smirks smugly. “I just did.”

Lexa swats her playfully. “Don’t gloat,” she tries to glare but has no energy.

Clarke’s smug smirk only grows, challenge clear, and Lexa wastes no time flipping them around and having her way with her, oh so slowly until Clarke is a whimpering and begging mess beneath her, shuddering in pleasure when Lexa finally gives her what she wants.

They lay in each other’s arms lovingly, relaxing in their shared bliss, when Lexa remembers the
other part of the plan for the night. With a quick kiss on Clarke’s lips, she swiftly gets up and goes to the living room, coming back with a small, wrapped package.

Clarke raises her brows curiously. “What’s this?”

“Just a gift,” she casually says, biting her lower lips with her eagerness. “It’s not an anniversary gift or anything,” she rushes out when she sees Clarke’s guilty look. “I know we agreed on gifts only for our first year, but this is just something that I saw the other day and I knew you’d like it. Purely coincidental that I’m giving it to you today.”

Clarke smiles shyly as she sits up in bed and eagerly unwraps the present. Her eyes open wide when she opens the small box and she gives Lexa a wondrous look.

“How…?”

Lexa smiles gently and shrugs noncommittally. “I guess I just knew it’s something you’d like.”

Clarke nods with a beautiful smile and kisses her. “Thank you.” Then she focuses her eyes again on the contents of the box and her brows start to furrow, her lips slowly turn down in a firm frown and her eyes take on a determined glint.

Lexa is left staring at the transformation in a confused daze.

“What’s wrong?” she asks worriedly. “You don’t like it?”

“I love it,” Clarke reassures her, but her face doesn’t change. She lifts her head up and squares her shoulders as if to face some sort of battle and she turns back to Lexa with those fierce eyes. “We need to talk.”
‘We need to talk’ is never the preamble to a good conversation. Lexa has lived long enough, dated enough woman, and seen enough movies to know that what comes after those four words is never good.

Lexa racks her brain around what might have caused the sudden change in Clarke’s mood but she comes up with nothing. She bites her lips nervously and looks at Clarke with concern.

“What’s wrong?”

Clarke’s brows furrow further and she sits up a bit straighter, wrapping up the sheet around her and Lexa suddenly feels very naked for this conversation. She gets up and puts on her pajamas to quell the sudden vulnerability.

“Nothing is wrong, per se,” Clarke starts tenuously. “But something is definitely going on and I need you to be honest with me.”

Lexa looks at her, wide-eyed, and she sits gingerly back on the bed.

“What are you talking about?”

Clarke runs her hand through her hair and huffs out a breath, then she gestures to the open box on her lap.
“Like this,” she points out, eyes looking intently at Lexa. “I’ve wanted this since I was a little kid. It was the last item on the collection that I was missing and I’ve been looking for it for ages but I’ve never found it,” she says, glancing briefly at the vintage football card and then turning her piercing gaze back to Lexa. “And there you go and just ‘find it’, and somehow know it’s something I’d like. How does that even work?”

Lexa blinks, momentarily stunned.

_Damnit._ Clearly, she fucked up badly and got the loops mixed up.

“I just thought it was something you’d like, Clarke, it’s pure coincidence that you were looking for it,” she says, trying to look innocent and confused. “I didn’t even know you had a collection.”

She’s lying through her teeth and she tries to keep her gaze even but she knows Clarke is not buying it.

_Fuck._

“Bullshit. You _knew_, I don’t know how you knew, but you somehow did,” she insists. “And this is just the tip of the iceberg in the pile of mysterious things Lexa Woods somehow just _knows,_” she tramples on.

“I don’t-”

“No.” There’s a ferociousness in Clarke’s eyes that is rarely directed towards Lexa and it makes her falter in her arguing. “Don’t try to lie to me. You may not want to tell me what’s happening, and I can respect it even if I hate it, but don’t try to make me sound crazy. Please.”

Lexa turns her head to the side in shame and then sets her shoulders as she prepares to face Clarke’s onslaught because she knows she’s nowhere near done.

“Okay.”
“My favorite foods,” Clarke starts accusingly and Lexa just swallows hard but maintains her gaze. “The exact way I like my coffee, since day one, without even having to ask me. My favorite restaurants. My favorite band. You were the perfect girlfriend from day one, you do everything right.”

“And that’s somehow proof of...?” Lexa trails off uncomfortably.

She doesn’t even know why she’s not coming straight out with it, why she’s choosing to try to keep up the lie. Maybe it’s because in the rare occasions when she’s chosen to share her particular situation with someone, it’s been her choice, not because she’s been found out.

She’s never been found out. She really is becoming a mess with all the various details scrambled around in her brain.

“You know me,” Clarke vehemently states, unwavering in her conviction that there’s something more going one. “You know things about me that I’ve never told you. You know things about our friends.”

Lexa just stares at her, heart racing in her chest and the adrenaline is making her breaths shallow, her palms sweating. She tries to keep her traitorous body in check with steadying breaths but she’s not sure she’s very successful.

Clarke waits for her to say anything but when no response is forthcoming, she just prattles on.

“The first time we met, at the hospital. You looked at me as if you’d seen a ghost,” she continues in a slow, firm voice. “I thought I just reminded you of someone but... Now I’m not so sure. I go to that coffee shop every single week and yet I never saw you once, and then, suddenly, there you are, every Sunday like clockwork.”

Lexa avoids her eyes for a moment, swallowing her guilt. When she turns back it is to face a scrutinizing Clarke who holds her gaze challengingly and refuses to let go.

Lexa clears her throat, compelled to say something even though she has no idea what. She kind of wishes she had any experience with this particular situation, but, sadly, her very long curse couldn’t even help her out with this one thing.
“I have been to that coffee shop many times over the years, Clarke,” she tells her shakily. Too many times, actually. “I just happen to avoid it at certain periods.”

“Why?” Clarke asks, eyes narrowed in suspicion.

Lexa’s lips form in the smallest of wry smiles. “It brings back a lot of memories.”

Clarke blinks, processing, her lips pressed into a firm line. “At Christmas, you knew things about me that I’d never told you,” she says, sheet protectively covering her naked torso and her arms crossed in front of her chest more firmly. “You knew details of some of my childhood stories you had no way of knowing. You knew about my allergy even before I did,” she continues to list, voice getting lower with each blow, eyes searching Lexa’s as if daring for an objection or waiting for a hint. “You laugh along at some of our college inside jokes as if you know the stories behind them, and then you actually do know some of them.”

Lexa’s eyes remain on Clarke’s but she purses her lips slightly, waiting for the kill shot.

At this point, she is equal parts nervous and proud. Excited even. Nervous for the possibility that Clarke might get angry with her, might break things off; proud of how smart and intuitive her girlfriend is; excited to finally have something that breaks the monotony after her initial fears start to dwindle.

“Two options, really,” Clarke finishes inquisitively. “Either you’re some psycho stalker who’s been playing a really long game, which, please tell me is not the case,” she adds and Lexa can’t help but chuckle weakly. “Or… Or I don’t know how to say the other option without sounding completely bonkers.”

Lexa lets her smile grow then, slowly spreading until her eyes are shining with mirth and Clarke’s expression turns from suspicious to curious.

“Say it,” she gently prompts, curious as to what Clarke’s brilliant mind came up with.

Clarke chuckles slightly and shakes her head, suddenly looking the most unsure she’s been all night. “Psychic?”

Lexa bursts out laughing then, both at Clarke’s unusual timidity and at the fact that psychic would
probably be a much more plausible explanation than reality.

Clarke looks at her, confused and wearily amused, while Lexa calms down and wipes out a few tears from her eyes, the adrenaline crash leaving her an emotional mess.

“Sorry,” she says through a few final laughs. “I’m sorry.” She looks at Clarke and then laughs again before she takes a few deep breaths to calm down. “Okay, I’ve got it now,” she declares with a final steadying breath, still trying to keep the laughter from bubbling out by pressing her lips tightly together.

“So I take that as a no to the psychic option?” Clarke asks with a certain degree of amusement added to her confusion.

“No,” Lexa tells her with a firm shake to her head and a few more giggles. “No. Not a psychic. Though I think that was the most logical conclusion, yes.”

“What then? ‘Cause there is something, right? I’m not crazy,” she probes with a sudden level of insecurity. It’s almost as if Lexa not trying to deny anything anymore left her a bit unbalanced, like she was gearing up for a fight which never really came.

Lexa nods and her smile turns slowly sour.

“Yes, there’s something,” she whispers softly. “You’re not crazy but I think you might question my sanity if I tell you the truth.”

“I mean, psychic was pretty out there, I don’t think you can beat it,” Clarke jests weakly, a concerned look in her brows as she takes in Lexa’s mood change.

“Oh, I think I can,” she tells her wryly. “Think ‘Groundhog Day’ on a larger scale.”

Clarke’s brows furrow in confusion. “The movie? About repeating the same day over and over again?” Lexa only nods sadly and she watches Clarke’s face transform before her eyes.

“That’s—“ Confusion.
“No, that’s not—” Denial.

“How?—” Curiosity.

“But then—” Acceptance.

“Oh god.” Grief.


Lexa turns her face away then, unable to be faced with her fate anymore.

She’s seen all these emotions play out on Clarke’s face before and it never gets easier. Somehow, while Clarke knowing makes her feel less alone, it also makes the full reality of her situation crash into her like a tsunami, unforgiving and merciless in its destruction.

“How long?” Clarke asks hoarsely and Lexa looks up to see that there are tears in her eyes.

Lexa swallows hard and whispers brokenly, “Too long.”

“Lexa. How long?” she demands more firmly.

Lexa bites her lip hesitantly. It gets harder to answer every time. It’s not like time is moving backward, after all.

“One hundred and twenty-five years,” she tells her, sorrowful, lips trembling as she tries to keep it together.

Clarke’s eyes widen momentarily and her mouth parts in shock before she surges forwards and then Lexa doesn’t see anything at all, just a flurry of blonde hair on her face and strong arms wrapped around her and then she breathes out a shallow breath which somewhere along the way
turns into an empty sob as she breaks down in her girlfriend’s arms.

They hold each other for a long time, Clarke’s quiet crying drowned out by her own brokenness, until Lexa finally begins to calm down with the help of Clarke’s gentle stroking and soothing words.

Lexa finally scrambles free from Clarke’s arms and, embarrassed, makes her way to the bathroom to wash her face with some cold water, the sight of her reflection in the mirror making her wince.

She goes back to the room and gets back on the bed, Clarke’s open arms already waiting for her, and then she’s wrapped around in her protective embrace.

“Can you tell me what happened?” Clarke gently prompts, fingers playing gently with Lexa’s curls. “Only if you want to. No rush.”

Lexa swallows hard and sighs heavily. “I’m stuck, Clarke. I’m just… stuck.”

It’s the best explanation she’s got, really. Just about sums it all up.

“How is this happening? What is happening?”

“I… It’s an eight-year loop, give or take a few weeks. It always starts the same.” She pauses, takes a deep breath, her mind flashing memories of that same moment on repeat. “I open my eyes and I’m in college and I see you.”

“Wait? We met in college?” Clarke interrupts.

Lexa shakes her head, going into practical mode as it makes it easier to recount the story. It’s almost automatic.

“No, not originally. But there was one time when we were twenty, in our junior year, where you were talking with Raven on campus and I was walking across from you and our eyes locked. Just that. That’s where I always come back to.”
“I don’t even remember that…”

“I wouldn’t expect you to,” Lexa says wryly. “I didn’t even remember it myself the first time around. We were both convinced when we met at your place that it was the first time we’d seen each other.”

“Met at my place?” Clarke asks, confused, tilting her head to look at her.

“Yes,” Lexa nods, then sits up to be able to face Clarke properly. “The first time around, the original version, as I like to think of it, we met at a party at your apartment. Anya was dating Raven and she forced me to tag along because she said I needed to get a social life.”

“Sounds like Anya,” Clarke snorts.

“Actually, she told me I needed to get some pussy,” Lexa tells her, shaking her head dejectedly and Clarke laughs lightly, though it sounds too broken to be anything but a poor attempt at levity.

“Now that is definitely an Anya thing to say.”

“Unfortunately,” Lexa frowns in displeasure. “But yes, I went with her and then we met and… fell in love,” she adds with a fond smile.

“But?”

“There is always a but, isn’t there,” Lexa comments dryly. “But there was an accident and— Well, then I woke up back in time.”

It is never easy to talk about or to think about Clarke’s death (deaths, rather) but it is even worse to have to tell her.

“An accident,” Clarke says, concern in her eyes. “And… Did you die?” she weakly asks, lips quivering once again.
“No,” Lexa tells her, eyes suddenly unable to face hers.

How many times has she wished that she was the one to have died instead of Clarke?

Way too many to count, that’s for sure.

“I did,” Clarke says in sudden understanding and Lexa sucks in a sharp breath at the sudden flash of memories that hit her like a truck. A blanket being pulled back, skin so pale and blonde hair matted with blood. A smile in one second, gone the next. A gasp of shock. A struggle for air. A quiet last breath. A desperate plea for help. Too many times, too many repetitions of the same inevitability.

Lexa’s silence speaks a thousand truths.

“How?” Clarke asks, truly morbidly curious.

Lexa winces and closes her eyes. “Hit and run.”

Clarke is silent for a while, her fingers tapping on the back of Lexa’s hand in a way that is almost hypnotizing.

Lexa hates this, she hates the absolute loneliness that comes with being the only one to know the type of personal hell she’s stuck in, but she hates, even more, having to talk about it with the woman she loves with all her being.

“Is my death always the culmination of the loops?” she suddenly asks, and Lexa finally opens her eyes to see that unique brand of scientific curiosity in her lover’s face. “I’m assuming I always die, right? By your reaction when you saw me at the hospital.”

Sometimes Lexa thinks Clarke is too brilliant for her own good.
“Yes,” she tells her, trying to muster all the detachment she can to allow her voice to pass through her vocal cords. It’s a poor job at best.

“And do I always die the same way?”

Lexa swallows hard. “No.”

“Does it change for any particular reason?” she asks, head tilted to the side as if she’s trying to solve one particularly hard case at the hospital.

“In a nutshell? It changes because of me.”

Clarke nods in understanding. “You try to change things but I still end up dead? Only I die some other way.”

Lexa winces at the matter-of-fact tone in her voice and Clarke immediately looks apologetic, hand squeezing hers in remorse.

“Yes, that’s basically it.”

“I’m sorry, Lex. I didn’t mean to be so callous. I guess it just hasn’t hit me fully yet.”

“It’s okay. You’re always like this,” Lexa manages a small smile.

“When you tell me?” she curiously asks and Lexa nods in confirmation. “So you’ve told me before.”

“Twice. I… Well, truthfully, the first time I was drunk and it was an accident. I was just hysterically excited about my hundredth birthday,” she says wryly. “The second time I was just feeling… I needed you to know.”
“Your… Your hundredth birthday?” Clarke questions weakly, eyes wide in realization as she finally catches up to how long it’s truly been since Lexa’s been stuck in these revolving loops.

“Not physically, but it still counts, I guess. I get a weird sort of kick out of celebrating another quarter-century for some reason,” she chuckles dryly, her tone too hollow to her own ears. “It’s admittedly dark, even for me, but…” she finishes with a half-hearted shrug in a poor attempt at lightening the mood.

“So. Wait. Then that means you’re…”

“One hundred and fifty-three years old. Raven tells me I look hot for a centenarian,” she jokes weakly and Clarke gives her this pained little smile which is quickly replaced by horror.

Lexa watches in a mild state of panic as Clarke’s eyes start filling with tears and, after a moment of hesitation, she pulls her into a hug, comforting her love while she desperately sobs in her arms.

“Jesus, Lex. How is this— How can you just—” Clarke weakly musters in between ragged sobs and Lexa’s heart splinters painfully. “How do you do this? How do you still have the strength to keep trying?”

Lexa swallows her tears and kisses Clarke’s head.

“For you,” she tells, pouring her whole heart out with only those two words. It’s two words which summarize her whole existence. Clarke looks up with big, watery eyes and Lexa holds her face gently in her hands. “I would do anything for even just one moment with you, Clarke. All of it, all the waiting, all the pain, it’s all worth it for that first glimpse I get of you, for the few years that we get to spend together, happy, in love. I don’t mind if have to go through waiting for you to fall in love with me over and over while my love for you remains steady and unwavering because I know that, in the end, we’ll get to be us.”

Clarke looks at her, a look of pure adoration on her face, and Lexa feels like she’s completely bare before her gaze.

“I… Well fuck, I think you’ll forever win best girlfriend points if you keep making declarations like that,” Clarke jests with a watery voice, bringing her hand to softly caress Lexa’s cheek. “I stand no chance.”
Lexa chuckles softly and kisses her. “I do have years of trial and error to fall back on, my love,” she teases and Clarke rolls her eyes fondly.

“No, but, seriously. I don’t really know what to say…” she tells her, brows furrow in thought. “This might be kind of the biggest love declaration ever, I sort of feel like I should be thanking you for loving me over and over again or something,” she says, and Lexa is uncomfortable with the fact that she doesn’t sound like she’s entirely joking.

“No,” Lexa tells her firmly. “Loving you was never a choice I had to make. I just do, there’s no way around it. You’re everything to me, Clarke. In fact, I’m thankful for your love every day. For you giving me the strength to keep going, for having something to live for.”

Clarke’s eyes water again and she looks at Lexa with so much unguarded emotion that it’s almost too much for a moment.

“Okay. So we’ve established that we’re both two hopeless saps,” she jokes with a small smile. “What else is there to know?”

Lexa laughs softly and kisses her again.

“How about we rest for the night, huh? The questions will still be there tomorrow.”

Clarke caresses her cheek lovingly and Lexa closes her eyes at the feeling.

“You’re drained,” she whispers, and Lexa nods in agreement. “Yeah. Let’s just sleep.” She leans back and pulls Lexa with her, positioning them until she’s got her whole body pressed around Lexa’s and a firm hand around her waist. “Fair warning, I will hold on tight to you for the whole night,” she whispers in her ear. “I’m not letting you go, Lex. I’m right here.”

Lexa closes her eyes and takes a shaky breath, lips quivering with emotion and she falls asleep with tears running down her cheeks.

Chapter End Notes
Let me know what you think :)
I wrote this long ago and now I'm not sure I love it. Eh, anyway, the next one should be better though no less angsty...
Lexa holds her teacup protectively in her hands, both to have something to do with them and because the warmth is deeply comforting.

Breakfast was weirdly polite, as if they were both strangers walking on eggshells trying to make light chit-chat while avoiding the heavy topics. It was disconcerting, to say the least, but at the same time a welcome reprieve before they immersed themselves in years and years of anguish.

But now Lexa is cozied up in the corner of her couch, feet tucked under her, while she waits for Clarke to come over. Because she will come. She could practically hear all the questions running through her girlfriend’s mind while they ate.

After waiting for what feels like forever, heart beating rapidly in anticipation, Clarke finally plops herself across from Lexa with her second cup of coffee in less than an hour. It’s a terrible habit, Lexa distantly notes, but this is not the time to bring up that issue.

“So,” Clarke drawls out and then stops, contemplating.

Lexa chuckles nervously and echoes her. “So.”

“I have questions,” Clarke tells her, mouth twisting in uncertainty. “If you feel like talking.”

Lexa nods. Truthfully, she doesn’t, but this is not really about her, is it? Lexa has had this conversation before, has answered Clarke’s questions, has been dealing with her pain for decades on end, while Clarke has not. Not this Clarke, at least, and this Clarke needs answers, needs to quench her curiosity, needs to put that beautiful brain of hers to work so that she feels like she’s doing something, so she feels like she’s helping. Lexa knows this, knows her, so she swallows her
own discomfort for the moment.

She sits a bit straighter, body subconsciously preparing to face off her demons, and motions with her hands. “Go ahead.”

Clarke straightens up as well as if she only now caught up to what she’s about to start. She takes a heavy gulp of the coffee before setting it on the table, twists her hair up in a bun and folds her hands on her lap.

“Oh. Okay. Uh. I don’t really know where to start so I’ll just start asking random questions, okay?” Lexa nods softly and Clarke’s forehead creases in concentration. “Alright. So the first time, I died from a hit and run, you said. And the others?”

Well, fuck. Lexa could almost laugh if her face didn’t involuntarily flinch in pain but it’s uncanny how that is always the first question Clarke asks and always with the same bluntness.

Okay then, ripping off the band-aid it is. At least the worst part will be over first.

“Different ways,” Lexa starts slowly. “Mostly cars, it seems to be a theme for some reason. Unfortunately placed rocks. Infection. There was the bug allergy, which is why I always carry an EpiPen with me. Gunshot, the one time, fucking religious fanatic,” Lexa spits out angrily.

Clarke just keeps looking at her intently, almost detached, as if Lexa is talking about someone else.

“That it?”

Lexa winces. “No. There was loop seven,” she concedes, tone final. She has no particular desire to relive that nightmare. It took her over fifty years to be able to surpass her trauma and set foot in the ocean again, and she still refuses to watch any shark-related movie. That is the one memory she would give anything to erase.

Clarke seems to sense her resolve to not discuss it further and moves along.

“Okay. So you always try something new and I end up dead regardless?”
Lexa swallows dryly at the hard truth hitting her straight in the face. “Pretty much.”

“Planning on giving up anytime?” Clarke asks with a pained twist of her mouth as if her brain is trying to joke but her body is rejecting it.

Lexa shakes her head and reaches for Clarke’s hand. “No.”

Clarke’s eyes narrow and she shifts a bit in her spot, inching closer to Lexa. She chews on her lower lip with her head tilted and Lexa feels suddenly very exposed.

“You sure about that?” Her voice is gentle, no accusation behind it, but Lexa still feels the sting. “I would understand.”

“I’m never giving up on you, Clarke.”

“What about on yourself?”

“What about me?” Lexa asks wearily, more uncomfortable with this turn in the conversation than she’s been so far.

“I know you, Lex. Maybe not as well as you know me,” she adds with a small smile. “But I do think I’ve come to know you quite well, and you always have a plan for everything. What’s the plan in case you can’t stop this?”

Lexa looks away then, unwilling to face Clarke with this weakness. Because she’s right, Lexa does have a plan, but it’s not something she’s proud of. She hadn’t made up her mind the last time Clarke had asked so she didn’t feel too bad when she lied to her because it wasn’t technically a lie. But she can’t do that now.

“It won’t happen for a while still,” Lexa turns to her and tells her quietly, and Clarke sucks in a sharp breath.
“When?”

“After I turn two hundred.”

“Lex…” Clarke looks at her with pained understanding and Lexa just really doesn’t want to keep talking about this. She feels raw, exposed, the weakest side of her bared for Clarke to see. “I understand, I do. Believe me, if the roles were reversed I probably wouldn’t have waited this long but… I still wish you wouldn’t,” Clarke whispers softly, her eyes glistening with unshed tears.

Lexa shakes her head dejectedly. “Two hundred years is way more than enough for one person to live, Clarke. Besides, I still have forty-seven years left, you don’t have to worry about it,” she adds in a poor attempt at reassuring her but Clarke’s face only contorts further in sorrow.

“This me, you mean,” she counters achingly. “Because if we can’t change anything this time you’ll be doing it to another version of me.”

Lexa turns away at that, a sharp pain in her chest at the reminder that whatever action she plans on taking in the future will not only affect her life but also Clarke’s and the rest of the people who love her.

“It might not even work,” she says after a while in a placating tone, desperate to get out of this conversation. “Maybe I’ll die, maybe I’ll just start again. How can I even know if it works?”

“You don’t know, but you wish,” Clarke whispers, a tear breaking free and rolling down her cheek.

Lexa closes her eyes and takes a ragged breath, anguished at the pain she sees in Clarke’s eyes.

It’s a decision that took her literal decades to make, but it’s one that she has no intention of changing her mind about, no matter the pain it causes her love. After all, the pain Clarke is feeling now is only in anticipation of the anguish she imagines she’ll feel in a later loop, but Lexa has no intention of making her go through that. If, and when, she decides to try to end her misery, it’ll be after she loses Clarke, never during their relationship. She could never be that cruel.

“I’m tired, Clarke,” Lexa explains with a heavy sigh that makes her feel as old as she truly is. “I live in constant expectation of the years I get to spend with you when I finally feel whole. I push myself for you, for these few years that we have together, and I will continue to do so, but
everyone has their limits. I can distract myself with new things, visit new places, learn new things, but there comes a time when it’s just enough,” she says with a despondent shake of her head and a weariness that reaches her bones. She feels exhausted; like all the years are catching up to her, almost as if her body finally decided to act its true age. “We’re not meant to live forever, my love, and, maybe, if all else fails, my death will mean that this madness stops and you get to live.”

“Live without you,” Clarke wipes angrily at a tear to fix her with an angry glare.

“We’ve had more than a lifetime together, Clarke,” Lexa tells her with a worn smile.

Clarke shakes her head, brow furrowed and lips twisted. “I’m not sure it counts if I can’t remember it.”

“It counts to me. I remember.” Lexa’s voice sounds tormented even to her own ears and Clarke squeezes her hand.

“I’m sorry. I understand, I do. I just can’t imagine a life where you won’t be there to share it with me.”

“Hopefully you won’t have to,” Lexa tells her.

Clarke hums and is quiet for a long moment, brows crinkled in thought.

“If it happens, though, if you get that far…” Clarke starts and then stops herself as she takes in a deep, broken breath and lets out a little sob. She futilely wipes down her cheeks and then continues in a wet voice, “Don’t meet me, okay?”

Lexa balks at this, feels as if a brick has been thrown at her chest and crushed her heart in the process.

“You… What?”

Clarke must not catch her tone because she just shakes her head, crestfallen, and looks at her pleadingly. “I can’t do it, Lex, I don’t think I can have you and then lose you.”
Lexa flinches and quickly removes her hand from Clarke’s grip, balling it up in a fist on her lap as she struggles to control her surging anger.

“Like I’ve had to do,” she remarks harshly, too hurt to be able to properly assess where Clarke’s coming from. “You would deny yourself this to avoid the pain of losing me? You don’t think our relationship is worth it? Even if all you’re left with are the memories? You think it’s better not to have it to begin with if it’s just gonna end in pain?”

Clarke looks taken aback then, glances up at Lexa and her eyes widen when faced with the hurt in Lexa’s face.

“No, Lex, I didn’t mean…”

Lexa purses her lips and the look on her face is enough to stop Clarke from continuing.

“Then what did you mean, exactly? That all of what I’ve done is not actually worth it? All the pain I’ve been through to be with you… I should’ve just left it, huh?” Clarke shakes her head dismally and Lexa cuts her off before she starts to speak again. “It was worth it, Clarke. To me. Regardless of what happens, you are worth it. I would hope that I was worth it too, but… apparently not.”

Clarke just shakes her head vigorously and tries to reach forward but immediately retreats when Lexa turns away.

“Lexa, no! That’s not what I meant!”

“I understand what you meant, Clarke,” Lexa shakes her head sorrowfully as she stands up and puts some distance between them. “It would hurt you to see me dead and you think if I’m already planning on dying than I might as well not cause you that pain. Correct?” she adds and Clarke looks away in shame. “Yes, well, guess what, Clarke? I have watched you die more times than any person should have to. I’ve had you die in my arms, watched you take your last breath, and still, I put myself through the same thing again. And again, and again! I have been through hell and back. Fuck, I’m still living it! And I would do it again. For you! Because you are the most important person in my life, because loving you is worth all the pain, because I would give everything just for one more moment… even if it’s the last.”

Lexa feels the tears streaming down her face and she wipes at them furiously, outraged that she’s
showing even more weakness, revealing just how broken-hearted she is. Her mouth turns down in a wretched sob then, as her repressed thoughts come bubbling up and her deepest and darkest secret comes out amidst a torrent of barely repressed whimpers.

“Because I have begged and pleaded and prayed for your death to be the one… For it to be the last time I have to lose you, so that all of this fucking thing will stop, even if it means I lose you!” she confesses, and she’s crying harder, her words hard to come out yet unwavering in their outpour, practically with a will of their own, and Clarke just stares at her, blue eyes dark with pain and so full of tears.

"Lex..."

“I am willing to lose you, Clarke, so that you stop suffering, even if it means I live the rest of my life without you. But never… never have I wished for us to never have met. Never.”

Lexa feels completely hollow. Never has she told anyone this, especially not Clarke. She barely even acknowledges it herself, the thought that she would rather Clarke die for good than continue watching her die over and over again too shameful for her to deal with, but it’s there, a constant presence in her subconscious, a permanent prayer to a deity she doesn’t believe in.

Lexa bends forward, hands on her knees, as she struggles to control her breathing. Then she straightens up and pointlessly wipes away her tears before she heads for the door without sparing Clarke another glance.

“Lexa, please— Where are you going?” Clarke asks in a panic as she jumps from the couch after her.

Lexa stops with her hand on the doorknob but doesn’t turn around.

“I need a moment,” she grits out through clenched teeth, her voice a watery mess. “I just need to calm down. I’ll be back.”

And still, after all of this, she will be back. Perhaps she’s gained more wisdom in her old age, or perhaps she simply cannot stay away from Clarke even when her heart is shattered.

It’s a toss-up at the moment.
Clarke doesn’t protest when Lexa leaves, she merely hears her sobs when she closes the door. And Lexa’s heart breaks further because of course it does. She hurts for both of them.

She practically jogs up to the rooftop, closing the door behind her with a loud thud. She needs several gasps of fresh air before her lungs stop feeling so constricted but then she realizes she’s not winded from the stairs, she can’t breathe because she’s sobbing uncontrollably.

She can’t understand... she just can’t. Sure she understands the logic behind what Clarke said, but the emotions? No. She doesn’t understand them and she can’t accept it.

Never, not even once, has Lexa wished for them not to have met. And never has she doubted Clarke’s love or the fact that they belonged together. But now... Well, a small part of her can’t help but wonder exactly how strong that love is.

Lexa clumps down on a lawn chair, vaguely aware of her legs moving her there, though the path was followed mostly by muscle memory than anything else because she can barely see anything except a giant blur behind the tears. She holds up her knees and hugs her legs, leaning her head on her knees while she just... cries. For a really long time.

It’s cleansing, in a way. She hasn’t broken down like this is in over a decade, not since her period of struggling with depression. She feels a bit lighter, tear by tear, as if all the sorrow that’s been weighing down on her is slowly draining away.

But she still hurts. Deeper than she thought it would. Maybe it’s because she’s just so done with this torment, or maybe it’s because she hasn’t experienced this before with Clarke, has barely had a fight with her in almost a century, actually. Or maybe it’s because she hates the little voice that whispers in her ear that perhaps her devotion to Clarke isn’t equally reciprocated.

She wants to quell that little voice, reach into her brain and twist whatever nook that thought came out of, but now it’s out there and there’s no trying to stuff it back. It has nowhere else to go but to float around her head, mocking, torturing, pitying.

She shakes her head viciously, almost physically sweeping the nagging thoughts away, and wipes away her tears, her breathing finally regulated.

No, she won’t let herself think like that. Not after everything she’s lived through, not after
everything she’s been through with Clarke. Maybe this Clarke is still not too sure about her love for Lexa, they’ve only been dating for six months after all, but she knows, knows in a way that reaches inside her life a knife and just twists, that Clarke wants to spend the rest of her life with Lexa, however long that may be.

The sun is high up in the sky when she finally pries herself off the chair and heads back to her apartment, face puffy from crying, and she is infinitely glad she doesn’t run into anyone on her way down because she’s sure she’s never looked so scary in her life.

She opens the door quietly and is faced with Clarke on the couch, almost as if she didn’t move, head turned up to look at her in shock.

“You’re back,” she states in half-wonder, her voice hoarse and broken.

Lexa nods and heads for the kitchen, busying her thoughts and her hands with making another cup of tea to soothe her nerves.

Clarke just remains rooted to her spot and, when Lexa is finished, she heads back to the living room to face her.

“You came back,” Clarke repeats, still in a stupor.

Lexa resists the urge to be petty and point out that this is her apartment, and instead says, “I said I would. I just needed air.”

Clarke nods and looks at her with those big eyes, her lower lip trapped beneath her teeth in a mess of nerves.

“I’m sorry, Lexa,” Clarke starts but Lexa interrupts her with a raised hand.

“Before you say anything, know this. No, I don’t plan to keep on living after my two hundredth birthday, but I never said anything about trying to end it right on my birthday or even while we were together. I would never do that to you.”
Clarke’s eyes water at the mention of her death but she holds in her tears and nods.

“Okay. I’m sorry. I never meant to upset you like that.

“Did you mean it?” Lexa feels compelled to ask, her voice betraying her vulnerability even as she tries to sound detached.

Clarke looks conflicted for a second before she shakes her head and answers. “No. I would rather have you and then lose you than never have you at all. I just don’t think I could handle it if you planned on… on killing yourself while we were together.”

“I don’t.”

Clarke nods and looks repentant. “I really am sorry, Lex. I can’t even begin to imagine what you’ve gone through and to know that it’s all because of me and you still make it a point to be with me…” She runs a hand through her hair and offers Lexa a soft, apologetic smile. “It’s a bit overwhelming how much you love me. In a good way, though. I… I just hope that I’ve loved you the same. I hope that the… past versions of myself, or whatever you call it, have shown you as much love as you show me.”

Lexa’s chest tightens at that, the flash of a memory she works so hard to repress surging forward as it tends to do at her weakest times. She winces at a jab of pain that is almost physical and has to look away.

Clarke notices and reaches with her hand to touch her but then seems to think better of it, still unsure where Lexa stands, and retracts it, letting it hang limply on her lap.

“What is it?”

“You did love me the same way, Clarke,” she whispers, afraid to voice the statement in the present tense for fear that Clarke’s feelings aren’t exactly the same.

“I do love you, Lexa. You have to know that.”
Lexa just nods weakly and wipes a tear from her cheek.

It’s too much. This woman standing in front of her is the same woman she’s been in love with for almost one hundred and thirty years, but she’s also not. Not yet, not in the one little detail that haunts Lexa, a perpetual nightmare in what should be a happy memory.

With tears uncontrollably falling down her cheeks Lexa just looks at Clarke helplessly, not really knowing what she needs. Only she does, deep down she does. She needs her, the Clarke who left her heart shattered into a million pieces after her death with one simple object.

But that’s not remotely fair, is it? That Clarke died, over and over again, and this Clarke is not there yet. Maybe she’s changed things so much that she’ll never be. And that thought brings with it a new wave of anguish and Lexa begins to, once again, weep.

God, she’s a mess.

She tried keeping it together for so long, desperately clinging to the notion that Clarke wasn’t dead, not really, that she had another chance. Fervently holding in her tears with feelings of guilt for crying over something that wasn’t actually lost. Not really, right? Clarke was alive, again. Only she had no memories. Then Lexa would work hard to create and recreate those memories and that version of her girlfriend only for her to lose her again.

And repeat.

Even during her depressed years, she would avoid thinking about that one detail that, try as she might to deny it, changed everything. She would feel guilty and she would repress it, redirecting her tears to some other pain instead. She has a big repertoire of things to cry about, after all.

And now… Fuck, now it just comes blurring out of her mouth with no control.

“You had a ring,” Lexa whispers between broken sobs, eyes pleading with Clarke to understand. This Clarke, younger and still in the beginning of their relationship. This Clarke, who said that she might prefer to never meet Lexa at all than to lose her, even if she says she didn’t mean it like that.

“What?”
“You had a ring,” Lexa repeats and Clarke just gives her the same confused and pained look. “An engagement ring. You were going to propose to me and then you died and they gave me a box of your things at the morgue and there it was. My engagement ring. Only it wasn’t really mine, was it, because you never actually got a chance to ask. Which is why I still think of you as my girlfriend even though…” Even though she wants nothing more than to think of Clarke as her fiancée, as her wife. But she can’t, because that Clarke, the one that is ready to take that step, that Clarke always dies before she gets a chance to ask, and Lexa avoids with all her might thinking about that little diamond ring that has haunted her since.

Chapter End Notes

Well. So that happened. Lexa kind of lost it a bit there, we couldn't expect her to always be reasonable and under control.
On the bright side, it can only get better from here on! I think.
Clarke sits there in stunned silence while Lexa struggles to not be overwhelmed by the flood of memories that twist her insides in a mix of sorrow and longing.

As the silence stretches on, the tension in the air becomes so heavy it’s almost its own being. Lexa imagines Clarke’s brain as a T.V. channel without signal with the rainbow image and the constant beeping sound. It’s a comical thought obviously brought on by her own surreal state of mind.

She’s probably lost her wits somewhere along these past twenty-four hours. Or the past one hundred and thirty years, more like.

“I shouldn’t have said that,” Lexa says when she’s gotten herself under control, her tears finally subsided, her voice cutting through the silence though not the tension. “That wasn’t fair to you.”

“It’s okay,” Clarke says, a contemplative look in her features.

Lexa shakes her head. “It’s not, actually. That’s something that another, older version of you wanted. It’s not… I shouldn’t have put that on you.” She pauses and swallows hard, unable to meet Clarke’s eyes. “I don’t expect you to want that. I don’t want to make you feel like you owe me something or… or feel bad if you don’t want it.”

It hurts more to think that this Clarke might never want her like that, but that is the risk she always takes when she tries to change something. There’s always a consequence.

Clarke shakes her head at Lexa’s words and takes her hand, interlocking their fingers. She can feel a small spring of hope growing inside her at the touch. Maybe she didn’t just totally fuck this all up.

“I know. It’s okay, Lex. Really.” Her voice is calm and reassuring, but Lexa is still struggling with her loss of control and the implications it has.
“I didn’t plan on telling you that,” Lexa lowers her head and bites her lip. “It just slipped out.”

“I can understand that. These past twenty-four hours have been an emotional rollercoaster.”

Lena chuckles wryly and Clarke smiles reassuringly.

“Tell me about it.”

“For the record,” Clarke starts, her voice gentle and soothing and her head dipping to search for Lexa’s eyes, “I can definitely see why I would have bought a ring.”

Lexa’s mouth opens and closes repeatedly while Clarke looks at her with amusement. “You… you do?”

Clarke nods and smiles softly. “Yes. Remember what you told me back when we first met, about knowing who the right person is for you?” she asks and Lexa nods numbly. “Well, there really is no other person I can imagine being old and wrinkly with.”

Lexa is sure she looks stupidly foolish but she can’t help the small, wondrous smile that slowly grows on her lips.

“Really?”

Clarke smiles brightly and nods. “Yes. I love you, Lex. And I do think you’re the right one for me. I’m definitely not at the getting married point, yet,” she adds with a smirk and Lexa chuckles nervously. “We haven’t been together for long and I’m still young and I need to finish school and get comfortable in my job… But, yes, if there was one person I could see myself getting married to, it’s you. You just have to be a bit patient,” she finishes with a shy smile and Lexa grins widely, abandoning all reticence and leaning forward to kiss her passionately.

“I think the past century and a half has proved just how patient I am,” Lexa jokes and Clarke chuckles.

“I still can’t believe I’m dating someone older than my great-grandma,” Clarke teases her and Lexa
gasps in offense.

“You did not just—!”

Clarke just laughs heartily at the horrified look on Lexa’s face and Lexa shakes off that disturbing thought, a smile slowly creeping up on her lips at the mirth in her girlfriend’s eyes.

“I’m sorry, babe, but you have to know that I’ll just keep on making jokes about your age, now.”

Lexa glowers at her but it’s hard to keep a straight face and eventually she cracks. She shakes her head in dismay. “I shouldn’t have told you anything.”

Clarke just laughs again and then smirks smugly. “You didn’t, I figured it out!”

“Well, that’s more a reflection of my slip-ups than it is your perceptiveness,” she grumbles with a mock pout. “I should’ve let you think I’m a psychic.”

“Just admit it, babe, you’re getting sloppy in your old age.”

Lexa gasps again and Clarke’s eyes shine with humor. “I have a fantastic memory, thank you very much! I’d like to see you try to keep up with all the different versions I’ve lived through.” She crosses her arms petulantly and Clarke just laughs harder.

“Fine, fine, oh great one. You’re magnificent!”

“Thank you,” Lexa says, pointedly ignoring the mocking.

Clarke’s laugh echoes through her and it fills Lexa’s heart with so much love she’s not sure she can contain it all. They can get through this, they can overcome these obstacles and be happy, be able to make jokes about it. It’s a great feeling. And Clarke looks so beautiful with her eyes shining with mirth.

Clarke’s laughter subsides and she pauses, her demeanor taking on a slightly more serious note.
“How do you do it, though? It must get very confusing.”

Lexa nods and lets out an exaggerated sigh. “You have no idea. But I keep journals with everything I can remember, to help. Whenever a new loop starts I just write everything down.”

“Wow. Impressive. Can I see?”

Lexa hesitates. “I don’t think you should…”

“Do you have some deep, dark secrets written down?” Clarke asks, a single brow raised in teasing.

Lexa smiles and shakes her head. “No, not really. But there are things I don’t think you should know. Sometimes, one small thing causes a lot of changes, and you knowing can have unpredictable results. I mean, me telling you all of this will certainly change a lot of things, but at least it’s more controlled.”

Clarke hums in understanding but then gets this mischievous glint in her eyes. “I think you just have this long list of girlfriends you don’t want me to know about,” she teases her lightly and Lexa laughs.

“Not quite,” she says with a shake of her head.

Clarke’s eyes flash and she runs a dismissive hand through her hair. “Oh? So there are some?”

Lexa looks at Clarke trying to read her face and she’s amused to see a hint of jealousy that’s she’s trying to hide with her playful tone.

She decides to go for honesty, she’s not ashamed of her actions, after all.

“Yes. I have lived quite a long life, Clarke, I haven’t exactly been celibate. Though there are far fewer women than you might think.”

Clarke’s face turns serious and she swallows hard. “Oh. Yeah, I can understand that,” she says then
she bites her lip in contemplation and asks after a pause, “And Costia?”

Lexa tilts her head and smiles gently. “What about Costia?”

Clarke hesitates, her hands twisting and turning on her lap betraying her discomfort. “Is she… one of those women?”

“In a way.”

Clarke eyes her with confusion. “What do you mean?”

“The others were meaningless distractions,” Lexa explains with a shrug.

“And Costia is not?”

Lexa shakes her head. “No. She’s my best friend.”

“So she was your girlfriend?” Clarke asks cautiously. “Every time?”

Lexa nods. “All but one.”

Clarke’s brow furrows. “And why is that?”

Lexa’s lips purse at the sharp pain the memory of that second loop brought. The first and worst time her changes brought with them disastrous consequences.

“It was the first time there was a reset. I was shocked and elated that I’d get a second chance with you and I didn’t want…” She trails off and waves her hand aimlessly searching for the right thing to say. “It felt wrong to even consider being with someone else, it felt like cheating. So I didn’t. I turned down Costia’s flirtations and we became just friends while she dated someone else and then… It didn’t end well. Everything has a consequence,” she finishes grimly.
Clarke frowns slightly and tilts her head. “So you started dating her after that?”

“More like continued with the original timeline, but yes. She is my best friend.”

“I don’t…” Clarke shakes her head minutely and her frown deepens. “People don’t usually have a relationship with their best friend, Lexa, especially not over and over again,” she says sounding both confused and disapproving.

Lexa resists the urge to point out that people are also not usually stuck in her situation, but such is life. Instead, she puts on a visible effort the lower her hackles and looks at Clarke quizzically. Clarke shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

“Tell me, Clarke. If you were in my position, would you have chosen to remain single every single time while you waited for me?” She doesn’t ask it out of malice, only nudging Clarke toward the answer she knows to be true.

“I…” Clarke looks down at her hands and frowns in thought, clearly displeased with the idea, then concedes, “I don’t know. But I don’t think I’d have a three-year relationship with someone.”

“Maybe you wouldn’t. What about if not doing it resulted in her death?” Lexa asks softly, willing her to see her side.

Clarke’s eyes widen in shock at that and she tenses up. “What?”

“What about if those three years of companionship were part of the reason you kept your sanity?” Lexa continues rhetorically. She shakes her head and smiles wryly. “It’s been a lonely life, Clarke. Surrounded by people, yes, but I’m the only one who knows what’s happening, the only one who remembers. I won’t apologize for seeking comfort in my best friend’s arms when I have to wait for you, for needing her love to help me feel a little bit less alone.”

Clarke looks pained, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. “I’m so sorry you have to go through that, Lexa.”

Lexa takes a deep, slightly ragged breath because it always hurts to remember just how alone she feels. She runs a hand through her hair and gives Clarke a small nod. “Me too. And yes, I know it’s selfish, Costia deserves someone that loves her completely, but I do love her and I believe she’ll
find that person.”

Clarke’s brow is still furrowed but she sighs in acquiescence. After a long pause she says, “I… I get it, I guess, I just don’t get why it has to last that long or be that serious.”

Lexa smiles gently. “That’s okay, you don’t have to get it or even to agree with it, but just think about it this way. On average, you and I are together for only two out of the eight years I’m forced to relieve. That means I have to wait for six years. Sixteen times six years, so far. That’s…” she does the mental math quickly and notices Clarke’s eyes widen as she reaches the same results. “Ninety-six years. Do you really think I should spend that time without her?” she prompts softly, without a bite, only wishing for Clarke to see things from her perspective. “That’s almost a century that I could’ve spent alone, going insane, but instead I choose to cut that time in half and have some company.”

Clarke winces at the thought and swallows hard. “Shit.”

Lexa laughs wryly and nods, running her hand through her hair. “Indeed. It is a shit situation and it’s by no means ideal. But that’s the one thing I’ve learned with all of this: there is no such thing as the perfect scenario. Life is messy and unfair and sometimes it’s okay to have things for yourself.”

“I know that. I know you’re doing the best you can. And of course, you’re allowed to have good things in your life that don’t involve me. It’s just…”

Clarke trails off, waving her hand aimlessly and then letting it fall limply on her lap. She bites her lip unsurely and Lexa can fell her starting to understand her point.

Lexa touches the back of Clarke’s hand with her fingers, running them in circles in a way that she knows will calm her. The effect is almost immediate and she sees Clarke take a breath, her lip now released from its punishment. Lexa offers her a sweet, pacifying smile and gets an uncertain one in return.

“I’m not hurting Costia by being with her, because I love her. And I’m not hurting our relationship,” Lexa says, pointing back and forth between the two of them, “Because, technically, we haven’t even met during those years. And my love for you is not affected in the slightest by my love for her. She’s my friend, Clarke, she’s been there for me when I needed her all these years, she’s been there when…”
“When I’m not,” Clarke finishes for her and Lexa nods. They pause for a while and Clarke just looks at her. Apparently what she sees in Lexa’s face must convince her because her smile is more assured this time. “Yeah, okay. I think I get it now. I mean, I’m still a little bit jealous,” she adds with a self-deprecating chuckle, “But I understand.”

Lexa smiles gently. “Thank you.”

Clarke rests her elbow on the back of the couch and leans her head on her hand, a playful glint in her eyes. “Guess I should send Costia a gift basket or a flower bouquet as thanks or something, huh?”

Lexa chuckles, relieved, and rolls her eyes fondly. “She’d be clueless as to what it’s for, but it would be amusing.”

“Yeah. ‘Thank you, Costia, for loving my girlfriend for almost a century.’ I can see how that might a bit confusing,” Clarke adds wryly. “Did you ever tell her what’s happening?”

Lexa nods and leans her head on her arm resting at the back of the couch, mimicking Clarke’s position.

“Once. I told all of you. I was really drunk,” she laughs, her cheeks blushing with embarrassment.

“How did she take it?”

“Devastated, like all of you. Made me promise I’d talk to her whenever I needed.”

“Did you?”

“In a way, yes. I never told her again, I didn’t want to... Sometimes it’s worse when others know. But I do talk to her when I just need to get it out. Takes a lot of metaphors and sometimes blatant lying but... it helps.”

Clarke holds her hand and rubs her thumb over her knuckles.
“I’m glad. It’s good that you have her. I can’t say I completely understand your relationship, probably never will, but I’m happy that she can be there for you.”

“Me too,” Lexa says softly. “It might not be all that different from what you have with Raven, though,” Lexa teases her and Clarke’s eyes widen in shock.

“What? How do you know— Never mind,” she adds when Lexa gives her a look.

“I must say, all of you are particularly easy to get information out of when you’ve got a few drinks in,” Lexa says with a smirk.

“I can’t believe you’re just collecting info on us!” Clarke gasps.

“Hey, I have to have fun somehow!” Lexa defends herself, laughing at the outrage in Clarke’s face.

“By getting us drunk and ready to spill our secrets?” she asks with a raised brow, arms crossed over her chest.

“In my defense,” Lexa starts with her hands up in surrender, “I don’t particularly go probing for the sordid details. I just don’t stop you guys from sharing. And I might do some gentle encouragement,” she adds mirthfully and Clarke swats her arm, thoroughly unimpressed.

“You’re a sneaky little shit! That is so unfair!”

“Absolutely,” Lexa grins without even trying to deny it. “But I have a lot of fun learning about all your stories.”

“I cannot believe I told you about Raven,” Clarke grumbles.

“Oh no, Raven did. I think you would rather take that secret to the grave.”
“You would be right! There is no way I would come out alive if Anya finds out about our…
arrangement when we’re both single,” she says with a horrified look on her face and then audibly
gasps, eyes bulging out in fear. “Oh god, does Anya know?”

Lexa laughs heartily at her girlfriend’s distress and shakes her head, causing Clarke immediate
relief.

“Not yet, at least. I think Raven is too fond of you to see you die by my sister’s hand.”

Clarke buries her face in her hands in mortification and groans loudly.

“How are you not upset about this?” she asks Lexa without lifting up her head, her voice coming
out muffled.

“Babe, I’ve had over a century of seeing you with Finn,” she adds and can’t help the surge of anger
that comes over her whenever she thinks about how he treated Clarke. Clarke frowns, seemingly on
the same wavelength. “Learning that you and Raven have a friends with benefits agreement was
the least of my concerns.”

Clarke raises a dubious eyebrow. “Seriously? Not even a little bit jealous?”

Lexa chuckles and shakes her head in amusement. “Raven is hot, I was impressed you got some of
that,” she says lightly, trying hard not to burst out laughing at the shock in Clarke’s face. “I’m not a
jealous person, Clarke. I have no reason to be, I know you love me. Besides, it would be very
hypocritical of me to be jealous of you sleeping with other people when I’m doing the same,” she
points out and Clarke makes a face at that, nose wrinkling comically.

“Nope, not thinking about you sleeping with other people, Lex. In my head all you did was kiss.
Maybe second base, tops,” she says with a vigorous shake of her head and Lexa laughs heartily.

Clarke is so unnecessarily jealous. If only she could truly realize just how much Lexa loves her she
wouldn’t be bothered in the least by any of the other women.

But it’s still quite amusing to watch.
“Of course, Clarke. Whatever makes you feel better. But just so you know, you’re the best lover I’ve ever had,” she adds with a smirk and is pleased to see Clarke’s smug expression at her compliment.

“Of course I am, I’m awesome.”

“That you are, my love,” Lexa smiles genuinely and Clarke grins in return, leaning forward to press a loving kiss to her lips which quickly turns into Clarke laying on top of her, one hand firmly gripping Lexa's waist and the other slipping under her top and inching closer and closer to her breast.

Lexa sighs when she feels a thumb graze over her nipple and her own hold on Clarke’s waist tightens, instinctively bringing her closer to her body. Clarke deepens the kiss and Lexa eagerly follows, nibbling gently on her lower lip just the way she knows it drives Clarke crazy.

Clarke moves over to her neck and starts kissing and sucking and nibbling her way down to her collarbone while her hand moves from Lexa’s breast down to her belly, inching closer to her center while the grind of their bodies makes Lexa burn with need.

After a particularly impatient complaint from Lexa, Clarke just chuckles and kisses her soundly while she finally lowers her hand and touches her. Lexa moans her approval and slips her own hand into Clarke’s underwear, moaning again when she feels her arousal.

Their pace speeds up quickly, an undeniable need to feel close to each other driving their motions to near desperation. It’s raw and instinctual and needy, and it’s clearly more than just physiological need.

It’s a pursuit of comfort, a quest to reaffirm that connection that they’ve had since day one, a need to reassure the other. Clarke in particular, Lexa distantly notes with certain amusement, seems particularly intent on proving a point. As if all the biting and the sucking, which will surely leave a mark, as well as the roughness with which she’s taking her, are meant to somehow prove that Lexa is hers and only hers.

It’s a ridiculous thought because Lexa is inherently Clarke’s and she has been since that first time, but if this is what Clarke needs then Lexa will willingly give herself to her.

(And it’s also very hot. So there’s that.)
Clarke enters her almost unapologetically, demanding in her quest to please, and Lexa moans in appreciation, only vaguely aware of her own fingers’ movements on Clarke. Soon they’re both panting and grinding frantically and Lexa can feel that Clarke is close but is holding back, waiting for her. Lexa lifts her hips and finally gets the extra pressure she needs when Clarke’s knuckles touch her clit and then she’s coming and bringing Clarke crashing down with her.

They lay there heavily panting, Clarke’s body a pleasant weight on top of her, and Lexa closes her eyes in relaxed bliss. Her fingers run mindless patterns on Clarke’s back, distantly amused by the fact that they’re both still fully clothed in their rush to feel each other closer.

Clarke raises her head up and smiles languidly then lifts up her hand to softly caress Lexa’s cheek and run her fingers through her hair. Lexa smiles brightly in return and tilts her head to press a kiss to Clarke’s palm.

“I love you,” Lexa whispers and Clarke’s eyes brighten up at that, as though she was just waiting for confirmation.

“I love you, too, Lexa.”

Clarke shifts a bit on top of her and then her stomach grumbles loudly and they both burst out laughing.

“Come on,” Lexa says with a soft smile and she pats Clarke to get her to move off her. “Let’s wash up and get some food in your stomach.”

“Hey, you can’t blame my stomach for ruining the mood,” she jokes, “The last time we ate was breakfast and I’m pretty sure it’s almost dinner time.”

Lexa chuckles and kisses her, then untangles herself from Clarke’s reluctant body.

“The mood was most definitely not ruined. Now get your sexy ass in the shower with me and then we’ll order in your favorite, deal?”

“Do I get to have some fun in the shower?” Clarke asks, wiggling her eyebrows seductively.
Lexa just rolls her eyes fondly. “If you can make it there in three seconds.”

Clarke sprints up towards the bathroom and yells, “Deal! Now hurry up!”

Lexa laughs heartily and quickly follows after her.

Chapter End Notes

Ok, so the heavier stuff is finally out of the way. Lots of fluff coming up ahead :) Please let me know if there's something you really hate (or even mildly hate) or if there's anything I should definitely avoid doing. I really don't want to fall into the trap of making great characters into useless fools just because they're in love and I hope I'm not doing that to Lexa. I hope I've been able to affirm that yes, she's madly in love with Clarke, but she's also a strong woman who lives her life in her own terms and stands by her choices.
Anyway, hope you like it :) (but please let me know if it's shit! ;) )
“Interesting hobbies you picked up over the years?” Clarke asks. She’s lying on the couch with her head on Lexa’s lap while Lexa plays with her hair.

Lexa feels slightly shy but answers the question anyway.


“You’re too cute. Something else? There must be.”

Lexa shrugs. “Languages, I guess, though I’m not sure if that counts as a hobby,” she adds. “I just like to learn useful things and I have had a lot of time to do so.”

Clarke gives her a mock annoyed face. “So that’s why you’re so infuriatingly good at everything! And here I thought you were just super smart, but you’ve clearly been cheating all along!” she exclaims with an exaggerated huff.

Lexa chuckles warmly and eyes her girlfriend fondly. “I am super smart,” she retorts with a cocky smirk. “I know how to use my time wisely.”

Clarke rolls her eyes but smiles proudly. “Most interesting place you’ve been to?” she asks.

They’ve been doing a lot of this recently. Just being with each other, enjoying each other’s company, with Clarke probing Lexa about her very long life. Lives. Whatever.

Clarke hasn’t actually gone back to her apartment in almost a week, ever since their anniversary turned into all that. They actually had Raven banging on her door and threatening to break it down (which Lexa was 99% positive she would) to make sure that Clarke was safe because neither had answered their phone in twenty-four hours.
For the past week, they’ve just been going to work and school and coming back here, and Clarke seems particularly distressed whenever she has to be apart from Lexa. It’s the adjustment phase, Lexa tells herself, she just needs to feel that Lexa’s alright.

Which she is. Surprisingly so. Or perhaps not that surprising given that she’s had a hundred and twenty-five years to come to terms with her current predicament.

In fact, she’s probably doing better than average. She’s got Clarke with her, loving her, and she’s able to be herself, completely unrestrained, without having to worry about revealing too much (which she is clearly not that good at anymore), or thinking whether she’s supposed to know this or that already, or pretending that she’s not absolutely, madly in love with her girlfriend.

If it weren’t for the annoying little detail that this might all come to an end in a little over two years, she might just say she’s never been better.

But, as it is, they don’t know how this loop will pan out, so Clarke is still reluctant to leave her and she spends most of their time together asking her all sorts of questions, getting lost in all the little details about Lexa’s life so far, both with and without the previous versions of Clarke.

Lexa hums in thought and apparently takes too long to reply because Clarke pokes her hard on her ribs.

“Ouch. It’s hard to choose just one, Clarke. I’ve seen a lot of wonderful things.”

Clarke rolls her eyes and Lexa smiles, amused.

“Just pick one, little Miss perfectionist.”

Lexa narrows her eyes and pretends to be affronted at the nickname but lets it go quickly.

“Well, I wouldn’t say it’s the most interesting place, but there’s this glass bridge across a mountain in China where the floor cracks when you walk on it. Not for real, just a visual effect, but still. That was… quite an experience,” Lexa says with a small shudder at the memory.
She’s not actually afraid of heights, but she didn’t know that small detail about the bridge and Anya convinced her to go with her on it and then managed to get some very incriminating footage of Lexa squealing and clutching the rail in fright.

It was not fun. Not in the slightest, and she got Anya back for it, the little shit.

(Too bad the Cloud doesn’t work between loops. Someone should look into that. It’s a hot market for it at the moment.)

“A glass bridge?” Clarke asks with a confused frown.

Lexa hums and smiles. “You’ll see. It won’t be finished for a while yet, but we can go when it is. Though I’ll watch you from a safe distance while you go,” she adds for good measure. “The view is incredible.”

“So the big bad commander was scared, huh?”

Clarke laughs in delight at her fear and Lexa tickles her as payback until she’s begging for mercy, panting for air with a grin still on her lips.

“Not scared,” Lexa pouts. “It’s just an experience that’s not worth repeating,” she says with superiority. Clarke is not fooled in the slightest.

“Sure, babe, sure. But I don’t think I should go on it, just in case the cracks become real,” she adds lightly and Lexa’s eyes widen at the thought, and another, more visceral, shudder runs through her.

“No, you’re right, better not. We can’t take any risks.”

Clarke’s grin dwindles to a small smile and she raises a hand to cup Lexa’s cheek.

“We’ll figure it out,” she says softly. “But it doesn’t mean I’ll just stay in my little glass house, Lex. I wanna live, experience the world, for as long as I can. I just don’t need to take unnecessary risks. Like scary glass bridges. Or skydiving.”
Lexa nods and gives her a small smile before she kisses her hand.

“We’ll go anywhere you want, baby.”

“We’ll come up with a list.”

“Yes. And I also know about your fear of heights so you don’t have to come up with reasons to avoid it,” Lexa teases her and Clarke gasps in outrage.

“I am not scared!” she says as she scrambles to sit up and face Lexa. “It’s the falling I’m not a fan of. I could totally go to that bridge, I just would rather not fall from the sky,” she says petulantly with her arms crossed.

“Whatever you say, Clarke,” she smirks and leans forward to peck her lightly.

Clarke huffs in protest and grumbles about freaky girlfriends who should learn to mind their own business and not spend decades snooping around and Lexa laughs heartily at that, pleased to see Clarke taking all this information so well.

“You love me,” she grins and Clarke rolls her eyes but reluctantly smiles.

“Yeah, yeah, I suppose.”

Lexa raises an eyebrow, amused. “You suppose?”

“You are kind of nice to look at and moderately pleasant to be around,” she unenthusiastically concedes and now Lexa’s other eyebrow rises.

“Oh, is that so?”

Clarke shrugs. “I guess you’re kind of okay in bed,” she says half-heartily and Lexa mocks offense,
eyes setting challengingly as a slow smirk starts on her lips.

She hums as she gets closer to Clarke, who determinedly avoids her eyes while she tries to bite back a smile, and Lexa’s smirk grows as she lifts up a leg to straddle her, leaning forward until she’s almost touching Clarke’s lips, but not quite.

“Kind of okay, huh?” she breathes out, and Clarke takes in a sharp breath, her eyes flickering up and down from Lexa’s eyes to her lips.

“Uh huh.”

Lexa closes the distance but doesn’t let her lips touch Clarke’s for more than a second before she’s pulling back, smirking smugly at the disappointed huff that leaves Clarke’s lips.

She brings her fingers to skim under Clarke’s top, running her nails on her stomach, delighting in the shiver it elicits. Then she brings her fingertips higher until she’s skimming the underside of Clarke’s breast and watches, immensely pleased, as she bites her lips to contain a moan.

She leans back in but dodges Clarke’s lips at the last minute and goes for her earlobe, nibbling lightly while her fingers tease Clarke’s nipple, until, finally, Clarke loses the battle and lifts her hands up to hold Lexa’s hips firmly, pressing her closer to her until there’s barely any space between them.

With a smug smirk, Lexa watches as Clarke struggles to close the distance between them while she keeps teasing and pulling back at the last minute until Clarke groans in frustration and Lexa chuckles before allowing their lips to meet.

Clarke’s grip on her hips tightens and Lexa brings her free hand up to hold her neck, pressing them closer. Her heart speeds up as Clarke’s hands rise further up, holding her waist greedily while her thumb skims the underside of Lexa’s breasts. A small whimper leaves Lexa’s lips and it’s Clarke’s turn to smirk into their kiss.

Unwilling to let her win (oh who is she kidding, it’s a win-win situation for both of them, but it’s fun to play) Lexa pulls back only to lean back in again with renewed fire, teasing Clarke with her tongue and starting to grind her hips slowly on her lap.
Clarke’s hands begin a frenzy of touching her and trying to take her clothes off, settling for massaging her breasts under her top when Lexa refuses to budge and disconnect their lips.

With a quick movement, Clarke brings one hand down to touch Lexa’s center and she releases a gasp into her open mouth, eyes closing in pleasure as Clarke’s fingers start circling her clit. She brings her lips back to Clarke’s, hips still grinding down in circular patterns which become increasingly frantic.

When Clarke enters her, Lexa almost bites down on her lip, and Clarke’s free hand grips her waist firmly to keep her in place. She slowly adjusts her movements to Lexa’s, who’s quickly become unable to keep on kissing her, too lost in pleasure. She comes with a quiet moan, biting her own lip and then kissing Clarke passionately.

Lexa comes down slowly, hips still gyrating as she enjoys the last of her orgasm, a blissful smile on her lips. Clarke looks at her dazzlingly, that awe-struck look on her face which Lexa so loves. It brings another type of warm feeling to her chest and she leans in for a soft kiss, delighting in Clarke’s soft lips.

She hums contently and then smirks teasingly. Clarke watches her with expectation, eager for her turn, but Lexa is feeling particularly mischievous.

She gets off her lap, infinitely amused at the shocked look on Clarke’s face when she starts to casually fix her clothes and walks away as if nothing is amiss.

Clarke gasps. “Oh, you little devil!”

Lexa just stops at the entrance to their room and looks back over her shoulder coyly.

“Oh? I thought you’d be pleased to know you were right. I’m not that good of a lover after all, am I?” she asks with faux sweetness, blinking innocently and giving Clarke her wide eyes and pouty lips which she knows she can’t resist.

Clarke’s eyes narrow and she gets up in a flash. “You little shit,” she says with a grin while she chases after her and Lexa runs to their bed with a yelp, laughing heartily when Clarke catches her and falls on top of her on the mattress.
“You love me,” Lexa says with a coy smile and Clarke grins brightly.

“More than anything.”

Clarke opens the door to her apartment and Lexa follows suit, only to release a little squeak in horror at the sight that greets them.

There, sprawled out on the couch, is her sister. Her very naked sister, being thoroughly dominated by an equally naked, strap-on wearing, whip-holding, Raven.

Lexa’s brain freezes.

Raven and Anya freeze, both wide-eyed and open-mouthed.

Clarke bursts out laughing.

There really is a first time for everything, even after more than a hundred and fifty years on earth.

Lexa really wishes there wasn’t a first time to see this.

“Oh my god,” Clarke says in between hysterical bouts of laughter.

Lexa quickly closes her mouth, which she only just now realizes had parted in shock, and turns around, already traumatized by the image which feels like it’s been permanently imprinted on her brain, but still determined not to have any more evidence of the fact.

“And then she accuses me of being the biggest bottom,” Lexa comments dryly, eyes raised to the roof in silent prayer for a memory potion as she shakes her head dismally in silent horror.

Clarke laughs even harder then and Lexa’s own lips form into a reluctant grin, the hilarity of the
situation quickly surpassing the embarrassment of having seen her sister in *that* position.

Lexa peeks over her shoulder only to find a completely red-faced Anya scrambling for the bathroom and a smug-looking Raven casually unstrapping the dildo and picking up their clothes.

“Hey look, turns out you do live here after all,” Raven casually remarks, smug smile still plastered on her face.

Clarke just shakes her head in amusement and quirks up an eyebrow.

“I can see you thought otherwise,” she teases her.

Raven laughs and winks, leisurely taking the dildo and the clothes with her on her way to the bathroom where she has to convince Anya to open the door.

Lexa gives the couch a side glance and winces, gingerly making her way to the loveseat and praying with everything she has that it hasn’t been abused for unholy purposes.

Clarke laughs at her face and her visible discomfort and she plasters herself comfortably next to Lexa, casually throwing her legs on her lap.

“This a first?” she teasingly asks and Lexa groans loudly.

“Unfortunately,” she says with a dejected shake of her head. “Not the first time I’ve caught Anya having sex, mind you, she always chooses the most inopportune places and has zero care for my mental well-being,” she adds with a shudder when she thinks back to all the times she’s walked in on her sister. “But she’s usually topping whoever she’s fucking. This…” Lexa shudders again and shakes her head vicariously to try to get rid of the image as well as the sounds Anya was making.


Someone has to start working on memory wipes. ASAP. Lexa will pay them whatever they want.
Clarke just laughs heartily again and wiggles her eyebrows obscenely. Lexa groans again and swats her lightly on her legs before she starts softly massaging them.

“So I’m gone for two weeks and this is what I should start expecting?” Clarke yells out when it’s been a good few minutes and they still haven’t come out of the bathroom.

Lexa raises an eyebrow and eyes her evenly. “You know they’re fucking again, right?”

Clarke’s eyes widen momentarily as if she’s forgotten who she’s dealing with, and then bursts out laughing again.

“Of course they are,” she says with an amused shake of her head. “We kind of interrupted their big O.”

“Please don’t,” Lexa begs with a wince, eager to stop thinking about it.

Clarke chuckles, having way too much fun with her misery, and then relaxes further into the couch, content with the massage Lexa is giving her.

Some fifteen minutes later the bathroom door finally opens and out comes Raven, cocky smile still on her face, followed by Anya who is acting as if nothing happened as they sit down on the traumatized couch.

Lexa is more than willing to accommodate that.

Clarke is clearly not.

“Nicely done, Rae,” she teases with a salacious wink, leaning forward for a high-five which Raven, obviously, smugly returns.

Lexa groans loudly, the only sound that wants to come out of her mouth today, apparently. Anya just narrows her eyes but then pretends Clarke didn’t say anything.
“Good to see you back, Griff. I was starting to think you had moved out without even bothering to tell me,” she jokes, though Lexa can hear the slight tinge of hurt in her words. Apparently so can Clarke.

Clarke smiles fondly and shakes her head. “Not getting rid of me so soon, Rae, I can’t deprive you of my sexy ass just like that.”

Raven laughs and Anya glowers. “Watch it,” she warns, only making the two roommates laugh even more.

“Don’t worry, Anya, your ass is just as sexy,” Clarke retorts with a wink, earning another high-five from Raven.

Anyah’s cheeks darken and she huffs in annoyance, though her eye roll is secretly fond.

Lexa groans. Again.

“That’s my sister you’re talking about. No more talk of sex or of sexy body parts while I’m here, I’ve been traumatized enough,” she begs with her eyes closed. What did she ever do to deserve this torture?

Clarke and Raven just laugh while Anya grunts in agreement.

“Well, I’m starving,” Raven announces, clearly on the verge of making another lewd remark and so is Clarke, which is why both Lexa and Anya quickly swat their respective partners before they can say anything else. Great minds think alike, it would seem.

“Let me guess,” Clarke starts and Lexa sends her a warning look only to receive an innocent one in return. “You don’t have any food at home?”

“Aw, you know me so well, Clarkie,” Raven coos, her injured leg laying over Anya’s lap, who’s taken to massaging it, mirroring Lexa’s movements.

Clarke just rolls her eyes fondly and shakes her head. “What would you do without me, Rae?”
“Hey! I’ve survived two weeks without you, thank you very much!” she says indignantly.

Anya clears her throat pointedly and raises an expectant eyebrow.

Raven huffs and crosses her arms over her chest, pouting.

“Fine. Anya made sure I ate properly,” she mumbles under her breath and Lexa smiles fondly at the loving look on her sister’s face.

Anya smiles, pleased at the acknowledgment, and Raven’s pout quickly turns into a happy grin.

“So, pizza?” she eagerly asks and they all chuckle at her excitement.

“For the best roommate in the world,” Clarke solemnly announces. “Pizza!”

Lexa’s chest feels so warm with love, even with the awkwardness of the last couple of minutes. She’s got her girlfriend, fully aware of what Lexa’s going through, she has Anya looking happier than ever, and she has her friend, looking absolutely content.

If nothing else, these are the moments she lives for, the moments she cherishes in her heart at the best of times and holds on to at the worst. Minus awkward sexual encounters, which she can certainly do without. But these are the people that keep her going.

“So what brings you two lovebirds out of your cocoon?” Anya asks while Clarke is on the phone with the delivery service.

Lexa rolls her eyes. “Look who’s talking,” she says pointedly and delights in Anya’s visible blush. “We just wanted to hang out with you guys. And it’s not like Clarke is living with me.” She shrugs and Anya just gives her a look.

Raven snorts. “Yet.”
Lexa’s lips involuntarily contract in a pleased smile.

“Ugh, gross, little Woods! Keep that lovey-dovey look out of this living room,” Raven teases her.

“Who’s being lovey-dovey?” Clarke asks, relocating back in her seat.

“Lexa, obviously!”

“It’s always Lexa,” Anya adds, and Lexa sends her a glare but refuses to stoop down to her level. She’ll get her revenge soon.

“Yeah, you two are disgustingly in love, it hurts my eyes to even look in your general direction!” Raven says, making an exaggerated show of glancing their way and having to shield her eyes with her hands. “It’s like I’m being infected by nuclear love-rays or something.”

Clarke rolls her eyes. “Just look in the mirror first, Raven.”

“Whatever,” Raven says with a small smirk. “Anyway, you staying the night or what, Griff?”

It’s said no nonchalantly that anyone who didn’t know Raven might think she doesn’t actually care, but neither Lexa nor Clarke is fooled. They share a look and Lexa smiles encouragingly, squeezing Clarke’s leg gently in reassurance.

It’s the first night in two weeks that they would spend apart and, though she would like nothing more than to be with Clarke all the time, she knows that they can’t ignore their friends. And Clarke needs this, she needs to feel normal and be with her friends, laughing and joking around instead of looking at Lexa and constantly being reminded of her little situation. (Understatement of the century, probably.)

She knows Clarke is nervous, reluctant to leave her for fear that something will happen, and they’d spoken about it at length over the past few days. Lexa tried to reassure her that everything will be fine, that they still have time, that she can’t stop living her life because she’s afraid. And that it’s really not healthy to be so codependent. Not only is it not good for their relationship, it’s also not good for Clarke’s mental health.
It was a really long talk. But she thinks she might have made her case if the small nod Clarke gives her is anything to go by.

Clarke smiles and turns to Raven. “Yeah, you bet your ass I’m staying. And we’re having girls’ weekend, I’ll send a message to O.”

Raven’s smile is a sight to behold.

“Hells yeah!”

“Which means you two better enjoy your pizza before we kick you out for the rest of the day!” Clarke points to Lexa and Anya who pretend to be offended.

“Hey! We’re girls too!”

“Damn lesbian relationships,” Clarke says with an exaggerated eye roll, making them chuckle.

Raven swats her hand dismissively. “Whatever, you don’t count in this case. It’s best friend time, you two go have sisterly bonding time or something,” she tells them.

Anya raises an eyebrow and looks over at Lexa who just shrugs.

Sisterly bonding time it is.
Clarke started her residency a few months ago and so far being an intern is killing her. Both in a good and bad way. Lexa is furious at how much they are overworked and has half a mind to storm into the chief’s office and demand proper work conditions on behalf of her girlfriend and her colleagues. Which she obviously won’t do because Clarke is a big girl who can take care of herself. (And also because Clarke would kill her if she even suggested it.)

But it’s also great to see Clarke so happy and fulfilled again. She really does love working at the hospital and taking care of people. It’s part of her nature; she just can’t see anyone in pain and she shoulders the responsibility for making them feel better. It’s one of the reasons Lexa loves her so much.

So with all the added stress in Clarke’s life and considering the more recent developments in their relationship, Lexa has decided that Clarke needs a much-deserved break from the stress. Which is why she’s currently trying to get Clarke to wake up early on a Sunday morning.

She’s failing. Badly.

“Come on, Clarke,” Lexa tries again, pressing a few light kisses to Clarke’s cheek in the hopes of waking her up.

Clarke just swats her away and grunts before turning her head around and pulling up the sheet to cover her head.

Lexa chuckles, amused. “Clarke, my love, you have to get up.”
“No,” comes a muffled response.

“Yes,” Lexa says as she kisses Clarke’s head. “I have a surprise for you and you have to get out of bed to see it.”

“Hate surprises.”

Lexa laughs at her girlfriend’s grumpiness. “You’ll like this one. Now come on, up!”

Clarke finally pulls off the sheet from her head and huffs grumpily as she sits up in bed, piercing Lexa with the fiercest glare she can manage. Which, to be fair, is a nice attempt, A+ for effort, but the hair all over the place and the bleary eyes and the adorable pout on her lips really do dampen the effect quite a bit.

Lexa just grins lovingly and pecks her on the lips.

“You’re beautiful. Now go get ready.”

“Hate you,” Clarke grumbles as she gets up from the bed.

“I love you, too,” Lexa retorts with a wide grin. “Now be quick about it, I’ve made breakfast already.”

That seems to perk Clarke up a bit and she at least makes it to the bathroom without further complaints.

Lexa shakes her head in amusement and heads back to the kitchen, busying herself with reading the news on her iPad while she waits for Clarke. Today she’s chosen to see what’s new with Bhutan, a break in the monotony of basically being able to predict the national news word for word.

Some twenty minutes later, Clarke sits on the island without a word, half-hearted glare still in place.
Lexa chuckles fondly and places a plate full of pancakes and fruit in front of her with a cup of coffee and watches, amused, as Clarke’s face morphs from scowling to grinning.

“Best girlfriend ever,” Clarke lovingly proclaims as she digs into the food.

“You know it,” Lexa adds with a playful wink.

“So where are we going?” Clarke asks through a mouthful of food.

Lexa takes a sip from her tea and smiles cryptically.

“It’s called a surprise for a reason, Clarke.” Clarke’s eyes narrow but Lexa pays her no mind. “None of that will work on me, my love, I’ve had decades of practice at being unaffected by your cuteness,” she says. It’s obviously a lie. If anything, she’s become even more susceptible to giving in to Clarke’s pleading, but she’s staying strong this time.

Clarke huffs but gives up, and Lexa breathes easier and grins widely.

Lexa finishes her breakfast with a smile on her face while she looks at Clarke grumpily devouring her food. When they’re finished, they get ready to leave and Clarke finally has a tentative smile on her lips, though she’s still regarding Lexa with a certain amount of suspicion.

She really isn’t a fan of surprises, which Lexa knows but still finds incredibly amusing to mess with.

The drive over is relatively quiet, and Lexa can practically feel Clarke’s nervous energy. She parks the car and leans over to place a soft kiss on Clarke’s lips, gently caressing her face. Clarke looks at her lovingly and Lexa smiles brightly back.

“It’s a good surprise, I promise.”

“Okay, okay,” Clarke relents with exaggerated sacrifice, putting on a smile before she heads out of
They’re in a quiet neighborhood on the outskirts of town and Lexa watches Clarke take it all in with a warm feeling in her chest. This is her baby, a project she’s been working on for decades, improving it with every new loop, and of which she feels extremely proud. And to have Clarke here, finally sharing it with her, it’s just the cherry on top.

“Okay. I see houses,” Clarke says, a slight tilt to her tone indicating that she doesn’t quite get where the surprise is.

Lexa chuckles fondly and leans against the hood of the car, wrapping her arms around Clarke’s waist and bringing her close, Clarke’s back against her chest. She rests her chin on Clarke’s shoulder and kisses her playfully on her neck.

“Yes, babe. Your observation skills are flawless,” she teases, and Clarke swats her playfully.

“So, is this what you wanted to show me?”

Lexa hums and bites her lip to contain a smile. “Yes.”

Clarke groans when she doesn’t say anything else and starts tickling her. “Lexaaa, tell me!”

Lexa laughs heartily, places one more kiss on Clarke’s cheek and looks happily at the houses before them.

“I built these,” she says, motioning with her head to the row of six identical houses.

Clarke twists her head around in surprise, looks back at the houses and then at Lexa again. “What? Really?”

Lexa nods, a small, pleased smile on her lips. “Yes. It’s my special project. They’re prefab, really quick to build and relatively inexpensive compared to regular houses, but they’re quite sturdy and have great insulation and are fully furnished.”
Clarke gives her a fond look, seemingly amused at her gushing. “Okay. So you built nice houses.”

“Well, not me alone, obviously. I hired a crew.”

Clarke chuckles and leans more comfortably against Lexa. “Yes, babe, I gathered. So what’s so special about them?”

“Why don’t you come in and have a look?”

Lexa giddily relinquishes her hold on Clarke’s waist and heads back to the trunk of the SUV to fetch some of the groceries she’d packed up while Clarke was still asleep. Clarke’s eyes widen at the sight of all the grocery bags but she refrains from asking any questions, apart from letting out a surprised “Wow” at the sheer quantity of bags. Lexa smiles and Clarke helps her carry some of the bags and follows her into the first house.

They get in and Lexa watches Clarke take it all in, the simple yet cozy feel of the house with its soft colors and wooden surfaces.

They head over to the kitchen and deposit the groceries on the floor.

“So this is it,” Lexa says, hands motioning to the first floor, which is an open plan. “It’s simple but it works. The bedrooms are upstairs but we’ll have to be quiet because I’m not sure if they’re occupied.”

“Okay… So what is this exactly?” Clarke asks, eyes glistening with amusement and a playful smile on her face.

“Public housing,” Lexa tells her, beaming.

Clarke cocks an eyebrow. “Huh?”

“For the homeless,” Lexa quickly explains, her brain too excited to realize she didn’t actually
explain much. “Well, former homeless, because now they have these houses.”

Clarke looks at her in a mix of wonder and awe. “You built houses for homeless people to live in?”

Lexa bobs her head up and down vigorously and excitedly takes Clarke’s hand to lead her upstairs, huge smile plastered on her face.

“Bathroom here,” she says, opening the door to reveal a dorm-style bathroom with four separate shower stalls.

“Toilets in here,” she points to another door with a similar arrangement.

“Three bedrooms in each house,” she motions for the other three doors, and carefully opens one to reveal two sets of bunkbeds, empty beds neatly made, a few personal belongings here and there, locker-type wardrobes on the opposite wall. “Looks like they got out early today, probably enjoying the sun,” she notes. It’s an unseasonably warm day for October, the sun bright and warm and inviting and they’d passed by lots of people on their way to the parks.

Clarke just stands there, looking from Lexa back to the room with awestruck features.

“What do you think?” Lexa timidly asks. She knows Clarke usually likes it, has been here before many times, but somehow showing her project to this Clarke is now making her a bit shy.

“I… I don’t even— Just, wow. I think that’s all I’ve got,” she says. She shakes her head, opens and closes her mouth a few more times and then shakes her head again. “Nope. I’m sticking with wow.”

Lexa laughs, elated, and pulls Clarke in for a kiss.

“Get it, Miss Woods!” a voice hollers, and they break apart, Lexa laughing, Clarke embarrassed.

“Hello, Aden,” she smiles at the teenager who’s clearly just woken up, hair still disheveled from sleep, towel hanging carelessly over his shoulder. “Did you have a good week?”
“Got the job,” he replies, trying to play it off casually but she can see how he straightens up a bit, chest puffing out proudly.

Lexa’s smile grows until she’s positively beaming with pride. “I knew you’d get it!”

He ducks his head, hiding a smile, and waves a dismissive hand. “Yeah, it’s whatever. We’ll see how it goes.”

“You’ll do great, I believe in you,” she tells him and he blushes slightly.

“Okay, okay, keep making out with the hot lady while I head for the shower.”

Lexa laughs and Clarke joins her. “This is Clarke Griffin, she’s my girlfriend. This is Aden, Clarke.”

“Hey, Aden, nice to meet you,” Clarke says with a smile.

“Oh, it sure is,” he drawls seductively and Lexa merely pins him with an arched brow, causing him to chuckle. “Alright, I’m off. See ya, Miss Griffin, bye, Lexa.”

“Bye, Aden. Behave,” Lexa tells him, unable to quell her protective side but knowing that he’s a teenager with no responsible adults in his life and will likely do as he pleases.

They head downstairs and back to the car for the rest of the groceries, distributing them to the rest of the houses. They see a few more people, some having breakfast before leaving for their day, others already on their way out, and all of them having some sort of comment or another toward Clarke, mostly by pointing out how lucky Lexa is. Lexa is inclined to agree.

They walk back to the car when they’re finished but somehow end up sitting down on the sidewalk rather than getting in.

“So,” Clarke starts, a small smile on her lips. “You built houses for the homeless so that they’re no
longer homeless,” Clarke says and Lexa beams with pride. She nods excitedly.

“I did. It’s not a perfect solution, but they have proper shelter and regular meals and showers and a place to keep their belongings safe, or as safe as it can be, I guess,” she rambles on and Clarke’s smile grows with her amusement.

“Just a little help then,” she teases and Lexa chuckles.

“Sure. No big deal.”

“I mean, it could totally be better,” Clarke continues, her eyes shining with playfulness. “I’m sure you could’ve come up with something better than a warm bed and a steady meal and a hot shower, Lex.”

Lexa pretends to think hard about it and then lets her face crumble. “Damn. I really could’ve,” she says with a pathetic pout.

That breaks the dam and Clarke laughs heartily, her eyes glistening with adoration.

“Gosh, you’re such a dork and I love you so much,” she tells her and Lexa blushes bashfully.

“You like it then? Good surprise?”

“I love it. This is really amazing, Lex. You really did something special here,” Clarke tells her and leans over to press a fervent kiss on her lips.

Lexa smiles proudly and tucks a stray strand of hair behind Clarke’s ear. “You helped.”

“I did?” Clarke asks.

Lexa nods. “A bunch of things were your idea actually. The annual fundraising. The deal with the supermarkets and restaurants to get their left-over food which they’d otherwise throw away at the end of the day. The art classes.” Clarke’s eyes brighten up at that and Lexa presses another kiss to
her lips. And, because they look particularly kissable today, she does it again. “Maybe you wanna do a few of those when you have time?”

Clarke excitedly nods. “I’d love to. Looks like I’m the actual brains behind this operation, huh?” she teases her smugly and Lexa swats her playfully. Clarke wiggles her brows playfully. “I’m full of good ideas.”

“You have your moments, rare as they may be,” Lexa says with a mocking smirk and Clarke gasps in faux outrage.

“Oh, you’ll regret those words, Woods,” she threatens menacingly before attacking Lexa with her ticklish fingers, causing her to squeal and laugh until she has tears rolling down her cheeks.

“I yield! I yield!”

Clarke’s face looks positively striking, cheeks flushed, eyes shining, smile bright, and Lexa just spares a moment to bask in all the love she feels for this woman.

“You did something really amazing here, Lex,” Clarke tells her, awe and pride in her voice.

“I wanted to do something to help,” Lexa explains, settling comfortably in Clarke’s embrace, her arm coming to rest around Lexa’s waist and Lexa’s head leaning on her shoulder. “I spent too many years wallowing in my own problems, I’m ashamed to admit. It’s not like I just sat back and did nothing,” she adds, “But I didn’t do enough. So I wanted to do this, to try to help where I can. It’s not perfect but it’s something, you know?”

It’s one of the few things that make her feel consistently good about in this whole mess of living and reliving. Here, dedicating some time and resources to helping people, she can forget a bit about her own troubles and focus on being useful.

It’s a dire change to the great many moments of feeling absolutely useless and helpless that characterize most of her existence.

And it’s also why she felt a bit shy about talking to Clarke about it before now, about showing her this side of herself. It feels a bit like opening herself up even more. Which, strange as it may seem, sometimes she struggles with. Sometimes she feels as if the more she relives these loops, the less
open about herself she is. Sometimes it’s as if there’s so much to hide that she doesn’t even know where to begin to share.

But now Clarke knows and so Lexa doesn’t feel as vulnerable about sharing these parts of herself. Well, for the most part.

“It’s really great,” Clarke says, and Lexa breathes a little lighter at the approval.

“Yeah. At least, I think it is. I mean, you saw Aden, he got a job! That’s amazing! And hopefully he’ll get stable in the job and save up enough to get his own place,” she says with a proud smile.

“I’m sure he will.”

Lexa nods in agreement. “It’s really hard for people to get decent jobs without a home address, you know? So I give them that and it makes their lives easier, helps them get back on their feet until they can go off on their own.”

“And if they don’t want to leave?”

Lexa shakes her head slightly. “Most of them do. I know that that’s how a lot of people think, that they use that excuse to not help people out. ‘If you give them free stuff they’ll never wanna do anything for themselves,’” she says in a fake deep voice. She rolls her eyes and Clarke chuckles.

“That does sound like a lot of the politicians I’ve heard.”

Lexa groans and rolls her eyes for good measure, just to show how much that notion irks her.

“It’s not true. Maybe for some, yes, but not for the majority. People want their own space, they want to build their own lives. And it’s not like they just stay here and do nothing the whole day, they all go out looking for jobs or something, and they all contribute to the house with whatever they can. It’s their house, they have the responsibility to keep it clean and organized, to make sure that no one steals anything.”

Clarke hums. “Yeah, I did wonder about that.”
“They have a little house committee, and every house has a leader who’s responsible for keeping everyone in check and letting me know of anything they need.”

Clarke lifts up her chin, kisses her, and smiles fondly at her. “That sounds like a very Lexa thing to do.”

Lexa rolls her eyes but can’t help but agree. “Hey, it works. They treat it like their own house, which it is, even if it’s temporary. I’ve yet to have a problem apart from the occasional argument between roommates,” Lexa adds.

“Seems like a good system, then,” Clarke concedes and Lexa beams with pride. “I noticed that a lot of them are just kids,” she says.

Lexa nods sadly. “Yeah. A lot of runaways from abusive families. A few foster kids who aged out and were just tossed out by the state. And some LGBT kids whose parents kicked them out when they came out.”

It breaks her heart whenever she looks at those kids, sees how amazing they are, and tries to imagine how someone can have children only to reject them because of who they love or how they identify.

Clarke gets an angry look on her face, her protective instincts kicking in as they always do when it comes to defend those who can’t.

“Some people are just fucking assholes who don’t deserve to be parents.”

“Absolutely. But then all these great kids wouldn’t have been born,” Lexa says, probably more aware than anyone else about the intricate links between consequence and causality.

“That’s true.” Clarke smiles and kisses her head. “I’m proud of you, Lex.”

Lexa grins widely and nestles closer. “I’m glad you liked it.”
“Well, I’m fairly certain you knew I’d like it already,” she teases, “Plus, how could anybody not?”

Lexa chuckles. “I did have some inside knowledge, yes.”

Clarke hums and then a slow, playful smile grows on her lips. “So, out of curiosity, and this has been on my mind for some time now, just how loaded are you?”

Lexa bursts out laughing then and so does Clarke, her eyes shining with playfulness.

Lexa gestures around to the houses in front of them. “I think it’s quite self-explanatory.”

Clarke chuckles and pokes her ribs playfully. “No shit, Sherlock. But I’ve been to your family’s house and you work for the congresswoman, which all point out to you being comfortable in life but not this comfortable.” She cocks up and eyebrow and purses her lips in mock thoughtfulness. “Are there some secrets I should know about? Are you taking bribes?” she adds with an exaggerated gasp and laughs heartily when Lexa swats her arm.

“Smart-ass. No, as a matter of fact, I have never taken a bribe,” she says with an eye roll. “I convinced a few politicians and companies that it was in their best interest to help out their community,” Lexa says with a satisfied smirk.

Clarke chuckles brightly. “Oh, I bet. They’re all about the votes.”

“Most are, sadly,” she agrees with a nod. “And I’ve also made some smart investments,” she adds with a noncommittal shrug.

Clarke’s eyes widen comically. “Oh? As in, investments with a certain level of knowledge that one would only have if they had some way of knowing what would happen in the future?”

Lexa smiles cryptically. “Maybe.”

Clarke’s laugh is like music to Lexa’s ears, so light and free, and she looks at her like Lexa’s some kind of amazing creature.
“Oh my gosh, of course you did! I don’t know why that’s even surprising, but it is. Mostly because you’re just so… you!”

Lexa raises an amused eyebrow at that. “So me?”

Clarke nods, eyes shining with mirth. “You’re amazing, funny, intelligent, caring, protective. And you’re also a giant stickler for the rules, babe.”

Lexa chuckles and Clarke smiles widely. “I’ll have you know I’ve become much more comfortable with breaking the rules in my old age,” she jokes.

“Oh, so it took time, did it?”

“Definitely,” Lexa nods. “You used to tease me all the time about it.”

Clarke looks at her with fondness radiating off of her. “I wish I could remember,” she wistfully says.

Lexa just hums, conflicted about her response. Of course she wishes Clarke could remember all the good times they have shared, but she is also really glad that she’s not aware of the repeating time loop or of the fact that she’s died sixteen times so far. But today is a happy day, so Lexa doesn’t want to say anything that can turn the talk toward depressing topics.

“So you think it was worth waking up early on a Sunday?” Lexa asks her with a joyful smile.

Clarke smiles widely and nods before pressing a loving kiss on her lips. “Absolutely.”
Clarke is cuddled up against Lexa on the couch while they watch some mindless T.V. and huddle under the blankets for warmth when the door opens and all hell breaks loose.

“Alright bitches, it’s party time!” Octavia yells out in excitement.

“Y’all better stop fucking like bunnies and prepare for some socializing.”

Lexa’s wide eyes meet Clarke’s amused ones. “I should never have given Anya my spare keys,” she says dejectedly.

Anya shrugs while she follows in after Raven. “As if that would’ve stopped Raven from breaking in.”

Raven smirks. “Very true, babe.”

Lexa, who has witnessed first-hand Raven’s breaking in abilities, just huffs out an exaggerated breath. Raven winks at her, the little shit.

Clarke folds up her legs to make space for them to sit but refuses to budge from Lexa’s arms. They watch in amusement as Octavia jumps in next to Clarke and all but drags Lincoln down with her, who has so little space to sit that half his ass is on the arm support.

Anya and Raven throw themselves on the loveseat and Costia takes an armchair before placing the huge bag she brought on top of the coffee table. She starts taking out packet after packet of chips and dip, organizing everything neatly before casually leaning back and relaxing on her chair.

Lexa stares, mesmerized by the clear forethought in what looked like an impromptu visit up until a few seconds ago.

“Okay then. You guys came prepared.” Clarke chuckles and Lexa just raises an eyebrow at
“We got tired of you two ditching us,” Costia says with a pointed look at them and Lexa is half surprised at the comment coming out from her mouth instead of Raven’s, and half-embarrassed to the point her ears feel unnaturally warm.

“Yeah, this whole honeymoon phase you two have going on without even being married is reaching a whole new level of disgusting.” And okay, now that’s the Raven she knows and loves.

Anya nods seriously. “Something had to be done.”

“Be glad it was forced movie night,” Lincoln says, his voice coming out huffy as he’s still trying to get comfortable. He eventually gives up with a sigh and picks Octavia up bridal-style and sits down with her on his lap. Octavia shrieks, Lincoln pats her head and shushes her. “Anya was considering other more… creative methods.”

Lexa and Clarke groan collectively.

“Alright, so let's pick something to watch,” Octavia says with a level of excitement that leaves Lexa dazed with how incongruous it is with the relaxed Sunday afternoon they were having. Octavia giddily jumps out of Lincoln’s lap and returns with a dvd collection from her bag placing the huge stack on the coffee table. “We’re going old school.”

She spreads out the DVDs on the table and everyone starts animatedly discussing what they wanna watch.

Lexa thinks she can’t really be blamed for not paying any attention to the conversation loudly occurring in her living room. Not when her girlfriend is leaning comfortably in her arms, gazing at her with bright, amused eyes. Not when her lips look oh so inviting that Lexa can’t help but lean in and capture them in a soft, lazy kiss.

It goes to show how much their friends were invested in the movie choice that none of them let out their usual groans of complaint when they start kissing in front of them.

She, admittedly, gets lost in the feel of Clarke in her arms for a bit, and so when the pillow hits them right in the face she’s violently startled.
“Hey!”

“Movie time,” Raven says, and Lexa’s glare is proven utterly ineffective.

Clarke chuckles at the look on her face and pecks her one more time before they face the movie already playing on TV.

It takes Lexa a while to place it. It feels familiar — she thinks she’s watched this movie a long time ago. The problem is that a long time, in this case, means that is was definitely over a hundred years ago, probably even during the original version.

She recognizes the main actor, Bill Murray she thinks, and a fuzzy memory starts bugging her at the back of her mind as his grumpy character delivers the weather report.

When Clarke sucks in a sharp breath Lexa’s mind catches up at lightning speed and she immediately reaches over for the remote and switches off the TV.

“Hey!”

She doesn’t really pay any attention to the shocked protests, the sound of her friends’ voices more background noise to her sprint toward some suddenly life-saving fresh air.

She thinks she opens the balcony door a bit too violently but she needs air and the only thing she can focus on is one breath in, one breath out. In. Out. In. Out. Repeat.

She feels a gentle hand on the small of her back and the shock of the touch sends her jumping regardless of the light pressure.

Arms wrap strongly around her waist from behind and Lexa allows the familiar scent of lavender to drift over her until her heart comes to a manageable rhythm.

She didn’t realize she was shaking until Clarke gently holds her hands and Lexa looks down to see
Clarke’s shaking because of hers.

Clarke doesn’t say anything and Lexa is infinitely grateful. She understands her, understands what Lexa needs, and so she simply lets herself be the comfort that Lexa craves.

She thinks it’s been a long time but, admittedly, her concept of time might be a bit warped at the moment. All she knows is that her body has finally stopped shaking and her breathing is as regular as it’s going to get and her heart is no longer hammering in her chest. And she’s now feeling the cold like a slap to the face.

“Gosh, it’s freezing.”

She thinks her voice sounds a bit hoarse but it could be worse, and Clarke doesn’t comment, merely chuckles lightly.

“It is March in DC, babe.”

Lexa turns around then and the face she meets is one full of understanding and compassion and pain and Lexa closes her eyes and rests her forehead on Clarke’s and whispers a “Thank you.”

“Anytime. Better?” Lexa finds her eyes again and sees them reflect waves of concern and so she puts on a smile that is only partially forced and nods.

“Yes. Let’s go back in.”

Clarke gives her a searching look to make sure and Lexa’s smile turns more genuine before she presses her lips softly to hers in a quiet assent.

They go back in and are met with the curious and concerned eyes of their friends and Lexa puts on her best air of nonchalance before sitting on the couch again and shrugging.

“Hate that movie.”
The concern and suspicion don’t leave their eyes and she can practically feel Anya itching to get to her even though Lexa refuses to take her eyes away from the suddenly very interesting dip spread on the coffee table. She thinks Clarke gives them one of her trademark back-off glares because when she raises her eyes again there’s a general effort of effusively fake enthusiasm as they all resume their fighting about which movie to choose.

Lexa slumps back onto the couch, suddenly feeling the years catching up to her at warp speed, and she closes her eyes for a bit. She opens them again when she feels Clarke’s hand on hers and sees her tentative smile.

Lexa smiles back and is pleased to note that it’s even less forced this time.

She leans into Clarke, lets herself relax fully, and wills her brain to focus on the now, to let the presence of the people she loves soothe her and distract her and, after a while, she finds herself chuckling at the antics of the two detectives trying to go undercover as two white women.

Clarke has asked her again and again to recount the day they met this time around and Lexa has had to repeat it so many times she thinks it might be a day she will definitely never forget even if she gets dementia.

Clarke is on a mission.

She’s got it in her head that this loop is different because something happened to make it so, and that that might mean that there’s a bigger chance of figuring out just what the hell is happening that has Lexa trapped.

Lexa is... Well, she’s indulging her and going along with all her questions and requests for recounting, but the truth is that she is simply quite exhausted, has lost hope of figuring it out a long time ago, and doesn’t actually believe that anything different will happen this time.

Which is not at all to say that she is giving up on Clarke. Definitely not. That, she will never do.

But it does mean that she just doesn’t have the energy to go looking for something that has stubbornly and defiantly evaded her for well over a century.
She doesn’t want Clarke to feel the same as her though, doesn’t want to see the hope disappear from her eyes, and so she goes along with it, even when it pains her to relieve so many memories as Clarke’s questions get progressively more obscure and often a lot more morbid.

Well, the world is about to be faced with the full force of Clarke Griffin on a mission.

Unfortunately for Lexa, this time Clarke’s mission involves giving Lexa herself a very specific task: Lexa needs to ask Costia what the hell happened to make her end up at the hospital.

This has been identified by both of them as the crux of the matter. The one event that was completely out of the ordinary and which set out this whole different set of events in this loop.

Lexa knows this, has known it in fact since she was called to the hospital on an otherwise supposed to be ordinary day, but she just hadn’t gotten around to giving it much thought.

Well, her girlfriend is having none of that.

Lexa has officially been kicked out of the house (a house she owns, thank you very much, and where Clarke isn’t even moving into till next week) and been sent to Costia’s.

Lexa huffs out a petulant breath as she rides up the elevator toward Costia’s apartment (hers also, technically) and she knows she is possibly being slightly childish but she was very much enjoying a rare day where Clarke is home from her hectic schedule at the hospital and Lexa has no work to do and she really doesn’t think it’s too much to ask to be allowed to spend the whole day in bed with her girlfriend.

Clarke disagrees.

Has she mentioned the thing with Clarke and her missions?

She rings the bell.
Costia opens and greets her with a smile, ushering her in, and Lexa soon finds herself comfortably sat with a glass of homemade iced-tea and a plate of cookies which she distinctly remembers rejecting but has been forced on her regardless.

Has she also mentioned that she apparently has a type and that it involves bossy women?

Lexa finishes her first cookie under Costia’s watchful gaze and downs half the tea before Costia deems it sufficient to give her an approving smile. Lexa rolls her eyes but basks in the comfort of that generous smile and leans more comfortably on the couch.

“Okay, spill,” Costia says after she finishes telling her all about the new course she’s teaching at the university and all the ideas she has for a field trip with her students. “I know there’s something on your mind.”

Lexa smiles and nods. She takes another bite of her third cookie (they are really great, okay, it was inevitable) to buy herself some time and then decides it’s about time she just comes right out with it.

“This will probably sound really out of the blue,” she says, and Costia’s eyes twinkle with curiosity, “But do you remember what happened the day you had the accident and broke your arm?”

Costia looks at her as if that was the last thing she was expecting but quickly flashes her a knowing smirk.

“The day you met Clarke, you mean?”

Lexa rolls her eyes but can’t help her own smile. “Yes.”

“I don’t know, Lex, it was just another regular day.”

Lexa itches with the need not to press too much because she can’t give herself away but she also needs to know.
She wasn’t particularly into this idea to begin with but now that she’s here she feels like there might be something to it and she can’t just leave without knowing if she’s right.

“Just try, Cos. Please. It’s important.”

Her face must show something that convinces Costia she’s quite serious because her friend straightens up on the couch and frowns in thought.

“Uh, alright. Well, it was a normal day, from what I remember. I went to get lunch with you at work,” and Lexa nods because she remembers this too. “Then on my way to the university I…” She pauses to think and Lexa looks at her, urging her on. “I was going to take the usual route, but then I remember having to take a detour because 6th Street was blocked, I think there was a maintenance sign or something.” She frowns in concentration and then nods, seemingly satisfied. “Yeah, pretty sure it was some kind of maintenance. So I took the long way around and I had to go through this quiet street that I’d never been on before so I was a bit stressed, trying to make sure I wouldn’t get lost. Then I saw the dog running around the sidewalk but it was just playing along until all of a sudden something flew across the road and then the dog came running after it. And then the other guy had to swerve to avoid crashing into it but he ended up crashing into me instead. And that was it,” she finishes with a shrug.

Lexa’s thoughts are flying at the speed of light, furiously trying to find a connection, an explanation, but no matter how many wires she intercepts nothing truly fits, nothing explains that sequence of events besides the obvious — fate.

Costia used to have lunch with her all the time when they were together and she used to take the same road to Howard University. Lexa herself has been on that road countless times and not once has it been blocked.

She doesn’t know why it happened, but she has a feeling that it happened for a reason.

There’s the familiar sensation at the back of her mind of strings being pulled here and there, all with incredible precision, all deliberate. She feels like a puppet, and not for the first time.

It all seems like a stack of dominoes falling neatly into place. Blocked road, car crash, hospital, Clarke.

She doesn’t know why though, and that is the fundamental question.
A part of her wants to disregard it; it doesn’t matter why, so long as the end result is favorable to her. But she just can’t help her curiosity. And what if in the next loop it doesn’t happen? What if she gets this extra time with Clarke and then she has to be content with a gift that will quickly be taken away?

Another part, the part that life has forced her to bury so deep within her that no light reaches it, that part is starting to dig its way back out and is making Lexa hope. And hope is an incredibly dangerous thing.

Still, without any control over it, there’s a small bud growing in her chest, taking more and more space with its light, and it’s taking Lexa all she has not to let it overtake her whole.

The universe is not that kind. The exact opposite, in fact.

Lexa has been stuck for a hundred and twenty-six years and she has conclusive proof that the universe is heartless and uncaring.

But still, that growing bud of hope persists.

Maybe Clarke was right. Maybe this time will be the one.

“What’s this about, Lexa?”

Costia’s question brings Lexa out of her swirling thoughts and she shakes her head to clear her mind. She puts on a neutral face and smiles genially.

“Just curious.”

Costia arches a brow and pins Lexa with her most unimpressed look. Clearly, Lexa’s losing some of her abilities to control her facial expressions. Either that or Costia has become incredibly good at reading her. She thinks it might have something to do with not being impaired by love goggles anymore.
“Uh huh. And now the real reason?”

Lexa tries not to squirm in her seat under her friend’s penetrating gaze. She looks away and focuses her attention on the plate of cookies on the table which suddenly look incredibly appealing.

She takes one and nibbles lightly, chewing carefully while she buys herself some time.

Costia waits quietly and intensely, a fountain of endless patience, the only thing giving her away is the constant tapping of her foot which is only serving as a glaring tick-tock to Lexa’s ears.

“I just… wanted to remember what led us to meet Clarke?”

She winces at what her brain came up with and avoids Costia’s eyes, guilt surging through her.

“Right.”

Costia’s voice is suddenly tight, her arms crossed over her chest and Lexa wants to smack herself upside the head for having brought this up.

It’s not a topic they talk about. Ever. Costia accepted their breakup graciously like she always does and she made an effort from the beginning to be friendly toward Clarke, to act as if nothing was wrong, but Lexa knows it hurt her. She knows that, though she tried her best to make the timing work, to not jump immediately into a relationship with Clarke, Costia is not stupid. Much like the rest of her family, she connected the dots. And, as much as Lexa tried to compensate for it, it did bring a certain strain to their friendship that wasn’t there in all the previous loops.

Lexa feels the sudden tension creeping up on them, making the air heavy with the strain of a topic they had always skillfully skirted around. She clears her throat and places a gentle hand on Costia’s thigh, careful to pay attention to her body language in case the touch is unwelcome.

It isn’t. Cosita heaves out a breath and uncrosses her arms and Lexa gives her a sorrowful smile.

“Did you leave me for her?”
It hits Lexa like a vicious slap.

She knows, she knows that it’s something that’s been on her mind. She knows that technically it’s true. Knows that it’s her fault for having caused Costia this pain, something she never wanted to do. But she also knows that this was a fluke. That this timeline is all sorts of messed up and yes, she did break up with Costia sooner that she would have because she met Clarke earlier and she couldn’t just not try to be with her, but the fact remains that they would’ve broken up regardless.

They broke up regardless of Clarke the first time around, and so that’s the version she focuses on when she answers her.

“Cos… no.”

She hates lying. She absolutely hates lying, but it’s become an essential part of survival for her. And if she must lie to protect her best friend’s feelings, then she will. Every time.

Besides, she tells herself she’s not technically lying when she’s thinking about another version of their lives and replying to that. Even if she’s the only one that knows it.

Costia lets out a small breath through tight lips but nods, tears shimmering in her vibrant brown eyes.

“Oh, okay. It’s just… The timing you know? I guess a part of me was always left wondering.” She shakes her head ruefully. “I know we’re not… we’re meant to be just best friends. I know that, I feel it, but it would hurt more if you broke up with me for another woman rather than just… yeah.”

Lexa swallows hard, guilt making her insides burn with acid. She hates this. She absolutely hates all of this. She hates putting that type of doubt on Costia that was never there before and has clearly taken a toll on her self esteem because she understands the difference, of course she does.

It’s one thing to break up because you mutually agree you’re just not the right fit but it’s another to break up because of someone else, even if the first reason is still as valid. It’s not the same at all, and Lexa hates that she made Costia — her self-assured, beautiful, confident best friend — even the tiniest bit insecure.
The lie comes out corroding through her insides but she forces herself to think of that first time and ignores the pain.

“I promise. It wasn’t like that.”

She doesn’t stay long at all after their chat takes that turn, and the guilt is still eating at her when she’s lying in bed at night. For the first time ever, she’s grateful that Clarke has a night shift and isn’t there with her.
Clarke is still on a mission and is clearly disregarding Lexa’s, admittedly sour, mood. She’s been researching during pretty much any free time she has, furiously reading page after page of every possible book in the library with even the smallest mention of time-travel or time-loops, including science fiction novels and obscure conspiracy theories. There were also all the hours spent online browsing site after site of even more dubious conspiracy theories trying to find something that even remotely resembles Lexa’s situation.

Oh, she’s found stuff, alright. Considering the vastness of the internet these days she was bound to find something. The problem is pretty much everything turns out to be absolutely bogus theories from tin-foil hat wearing weirdos.

So now Clarke’s decided to call in the big guns, as she put it. In other words, Raven.

“You guys want me to search for what?”

Lexa sighs. This is a bad idea. She told Clarke as much. Clarke told her to fuck off. Literally.

Raven looks at both of them like they’ve lost their minds and Lexa is inclined to agree with her. On the one hand, there’s Clarke looking slightly frazzled and with way too much energy, her blue eyes almost maniacally vibrant and her body practically thrumming with energy. On the other hand, there’s Lexa, wishing she could just go back home and forget all about this crazy idea which is bound to turn out fruitless and only make her fall harder into despair.

Because, try as she did to avoid it, the stupid hope Clarke had was contagious and it had gotten to her. Lexa tried to nip it right in the beginning but it didn’t work. Now, months later, she desperately fights with herself not to let that feeling grow.

She can’t afford false hope. She just can’t. She doesn’t think she’ll survive it.

And she really, truly, doesn’t want to burden anyone else with this knowledge. She doesn’t need a repeat from loop ten where all her friends, sister, and girlfriend treated her like she was about to break. Granted, it had been only a few weeks until the reset, but it had been enough.
It’s hard enough to have Clarke share the burden with her, she doesn’t want anyone else involved.

(It’s also simultaneously incredible to share it with Clarke, it makes her feel lighter and stronger and more loved than ever, but she does wish she’d never put her sorrow on Clarke’s shoulders.)

“We need your awesome skills, Ravs,” Clarke says without missing a beat, shamelessly buttering her up.

“To research time-loop cases in real life? Like the groundhog movie Lexa hates?” Her tone suggests she’s heavily questioning their sanity and Lexa would tell her she’s lost hers a long time ago if only that didn’t make it worse.

“Yes, please.” Clarke’s smile is bright and effusive and Raven turns befuddled eyes toward Lexa who helplessly shrugs and tries to hide her wince in a poor attempt at nonchalance.

She really did use to be a much better actress.

Growing old is getting to her. But, to be fair to herself, she thinks everyone sort of reaches the prime of their skill set and then declines. She guesses she has an excuse, then.

“You’re serious?”

Clarke nods, an innocent smile still plastered on her face. “Yup!”

Raven turns to Lexa again, confusion plain in her eyes, and Lexa gives her her best smile and nods.

“Okay…” Raven says hesitantly

It takes Raven significantly less time than either Lexa or Clarke were expecting. Especially compared to the literal months it took Clarke to come up with basically crazy nonsense.
By the end of the week, a still suspicious Raven calls them and they head over to her and Anya’s place, Clarke practically jumping out of her skin with anticipation.

Thankfully, Anya is not home, and Lexa really hopes that Raven hasn’t said anything to her about their little research project because the last thing she needs on top of a suspicious Raven is a suspicious Anya.

They settle down nervously on Raven’s office, a wall of computer screens greeting them, each showing their own web page, and Clarke whistles appreciatively.

“This is why we called in the professionals, babe,” she tells Lexa with a smile. Her returning one is weak at best, but Lexa pats herself on the back for the attempt, anyway.

“You bet your sexy ass I’m the best,” Raven counters with her trademark smug smirk.

“So what did you find?” Lexa gathers the courage to ask, fighting as hard as she can to keep her face neutral and not let the torment of emotions swirling within her show.

Raven gives them one last studious look before she turns around and gets into full-on Raven mode.

“Alright. So, I don’t think you realize the amount of conspiracy theories there are on the internet.”

“Oh, believe me, I wish I didn’t,” Clarke says with a solemn shake of her head at the memory of all those hours poured over her computer trying to filter through all the bullshit.

“Yeah, but you only scratched the surface, Clarkey, I’m talking full-on deep web chatrooms full of theories, one crazier than the other.”

Clarke and Lexa share a look before they turn their eyes back to Raven and her rapidly scrolling fingers. Raven pulls out page after page and spreads them all across the four computer screens and then animatedly starts talking.

“Alright, so I ranked them in three categories: Completely fucking bat-shit crazy, moderately
crazy, and less crazy though still crazy as fuck.” Clarke and Lexa chuckle nervously at her terminology and keep attentive eyes on the screen. “So for these, I really think there’s nothing even remotely possible to it,” she says as she points at the screen furthest to them and opens tab after tab of sketchy-looking websites and strange chatrooms. “They’re basically all about aliens or secret government projects doing experiments on us. Like I said, bat-shit crazy.”

Raven minimizes all the tabs and moves on to the next screen. Clarke takes Lexa’s hand, her skin clammy and her hand vibrating with anxiety. Lexa squeezes her reassuringly but she’s too nervous to offer proper comfort.

“Next up, the moderately crazy. This whole chat room is full of people claiming to have traveled in time, to the past and future.” She pulls up another string of tabs and thread after thread of conversations, one more outlandish than the other. Which, to be fair, who’s Lexa to judge? She’s pretty sure Raven would put her case neatly among the fucking bat-shit crazy ones. “There’s also ‘evidence’” she says with sarcastic air quotes, “About time-travelers among us.” Her scoff tells them exactly what she thinks of that.

“Anything on time loops?” Clarke asks with exaggerated casualty and Raven gives them another look before returning to the screens.

“Right here with the moderately crazy.” She minimizes all the tabs about time travel and pulls up a string of new ones. “Whole bunch of chat rooms of people claiming they’re stuck in a loop. A lot of Groundhog Day mentions, as one would expect. This one even claims to have been the inspiration for the movie,” she says with a snort. “Says he was stuck in a loop on Groundhog Day and has been fighting the studio for copyright for years.”

Lexa squirms uncomfortably in her seat. Clarke tightens the grip on her hand and gives her a shaky smile.

Raven pulls up another tab, a simple looking website. “This one is a sort of suicide note,” she says, a sad look passing over her face. “The guy claimed he was stuck in a loop, repeating the same week over and over again for over a year.” Lexa feels a cold shiver running down her spine and her breath hitches on her throat. This could be it. “He said he did everything he could think of to change it but nothing worked so he was going to try to kill himself to see if he could finally get out of it. Here’s the obituary,” she says as she pulls out a government certificate. “It’s sad that he didn’t get help for his mental illness.”

Lexa is frozen in place, her eyes focused, unblinking, on the death certificate.

Her heart seems to stop before it starts beating incredibly fast, blood rushing at full speed through her body to the point where the only thing she can hear is the beating of her heart in her ears.

That could be her.

*It would work.*

A delirious part of her is pleased being belief to know that it would work. The part that is so absolutely done with all this bullshit is so profoundly glad to know that there can be an end to it.

She can have peace.

After her two hundredth birthday, if she’s still stuck, she will have her peace.

As she registers this, she also realizes that she’s not alone. There are, or were, others out there who went through the same thing.

Before she knows it, there’s that small, uncrushable feeling fluttering around in her chest again. *Hope.* Maybe one of them figured it out. Maybe she’ll have a chance.

She distantly hears Clarke’s voice; she’s asking Raven questions, it seems. She thinks Raven replies, though she’s not too sure, still too stunned with this discovery, still trying to absorb the fact that she’s not alone.

*She’s not alone.*

She almost can’t believe the amount of happiness and utter relief she feels at finding that out. She’s been alone for so long, a loneliness that corrodes and leaves her hollow, that is barely placated by anyone, not even Clarke. She’s been carrying around this insurmountable weight on her shoulders making her feel worse than Atlas on her best days, but now she finds out that there have been other people carrying it with her.
It’s a joined struggle. Maybe with their help she’ll come out of it alive. And moderately sane.

“… she’s Russian but I got it translated and it says pretty much the same thing. The only difference is that she says she was stuck in a two-year loop for forty-something years. There’s the death certificate also.”

It’s a strange thing she’s feeling. Sadness beyond belief at the thought that her fellow trapped souls in the time continuum had been driven to their breaking point by a cruel world. But also a peculiar sort of happiness, that they were finally free, that they finally got to rest in peace, whatever that truly meant.

She hopes she gets the same relief one day, one way or another.

“Then there’s this lady in Brazil. If you ignore the obvious craziness, she seems like a sweet old lady,” Raven says, pulling up yet another tab. Lexa is barely listening let alone looking at it. “She basically wrote a self-help page. Says she was stuck in a loop decades ago for almost sixty years but she finally managed to get out.”

“How?” The words are out of Lexa’s mouth faster than she could process what Raven was saying. Clarke asks the same at the same time and Raven pauses and looks at them, brows frowning in suspicion.

Raven turns back around to the computer slowly and scrolls down the web page. Lexa’s heart is hammering away in her chest and Clarke is vibrating next to her, though both keep their eyes steadily on the screen, their attention zeroed in on one thing only.

“Let’s see. Uhm…” She reads it quickly before translating. “She says the time loop was triggered because her son died and she had to figure out why it was happening and then stop it.” She turns back to face them, her face letting them know exactly what she thought of it. “Like I said, this is all crazy talk.”

“She’s alive,” Clarke says, ignoring Raven’s comment. The awe in her voice echoes Lexa’s own feelings and she can see the hope blossoming within Clarke. “She’s alive, Lex.”

Clarke’s eyes are shimmering with tears and there’s a bright smile on her face and Lexa thinks she definitely lost the war against her racing heart because there’s certainly a colossal surge of hope
growing inside her.

“She’s alive.”

“Okay, that’s it!” They both turn to Raven, startled with the loud reminder that they’re not alone. “You two better tell me what this is about right now.” She crosses her arms determinedly and pins them both with her fiercest glare, and Lexa’s not gonna lie, it’s quite intimidating. She’s sure Raven’s been picking up a thing or two from Anya.

Still, she swallows and focuses on slowing down her breathing and keeping her facial muscles under control.

“There’s nothing to tell, Raven.”

The look Raven gives her in return could blaze her on the spot. Lexa refuses to budge though, she’s got literally a century and a half of experience with dealing with intimidation techniques.

“It’s just some research, Raven. For a book we wanna write,” Clarke says and Lexa commends her on her effort even though she’s usually a much more skilled liar. It’s the emotional rollercoaster though, no one could be expected to not be affected.

Raven arches a perfect eyebrow and glares harder. “You sure that’s the answer you wanna go with?”

Clarke visibly gulps. “Yes?”

Lexa facepalms. There goes their effort.

“Raven,” she says, voice quiet but sure and Raven’s eyes soften at the seriousness she must find in Lexa’s face. “You’re our friend and I can’t thank you enough for this help and I really don’t want to lie to you. Please don’t make me.”

It’s all but an admission, she knows. Raven is the smartness person she knows and, even if she weren’t a genius, Lexa’s sure she would’ve put two and two together. But she also knows that
Raven’s mind is incredibly scientific and this, all this talk about time travel and time loops, is about as uncorroborated as it gets, the type of fringe science that’s relegated to sci-fi movies and books and hidden corners of the deep web. Raven would never believe something like this without proof and at the moment she has no proper proof because Lexa refuses to give it to her. All she has is very good material for an inference, and that would never satisfy Raven Reyes.

Raven’s eyes widen and Lexa can practically see the wheels turning in her head. But, like she predicted, Raven doesn’t say anything. She nods and turns back around and, though she’s visibly burning with curiosity, she doesn’t ask any more questions.

There is one more case that sounds like hers and not completely bonkers and her heart constricts at the thought of the pain these people must have gone through. This one is a recount of the deceased’s story from a family member who couldn’t understand how it was possible.

Quickly, the relief that she’d felt at the knowledge that she could, in fact, die, was starting to fade.

Three out of four dead. Three out of four had been unsuccessful.

Those aren’t particularly good odds, not at all.

And not to mention that Lexa has been stuck the longest out of all of them, by more than double the time.

Hope is being nipped at little by little and she finds herself starting to sink back into despair.

What if she can’t do it?

What if she can’t figure it out?

What if she loses Clarke for good?

What if she’s forced to put an end to it?
She’s been stuck for a hundred and twenty-seven years. And it’s not like she hasn’t been trying to fix it, to find a solution, to figure out what she’s supposed to do differently. She’s changed everything so many times, keeps trying different things to see which one will work, only to have Clarke die on her again and again and again.

What if she can’t find an answer?
As therapists go, Titus is an alright one. Of course, it’s not like Lexa gives him much information to work with, but she thinks he does alright with what he has. He did help her the first time she had to see him so, regardless of her baseline uncertainty towards shrinks, she does like him.

It’s why she keeps coming back.

She never truly realized how much she actually needed someone to talk to. Sure, in code and metaphors, but talk she did. And he listened. It helped her, having a comforting presence who was a constant throughout her years with and without Clarke.

She doesn’t usually need him as much as she does now, though. She usually sees him a few times a year, more to keep in check everything that bottles up within her. But now she feels on the verge of breaking again, too close to losing it for her liking, so the appointment is set hastily and Titus looks alarmed to see her.

And possibly also alarmed by the state Lexa is in.

(She got a glimpse of her reflection in the elevator mirror on her way up to his office — she thinks she could’ve auditioned for any horror movie and gotten the job on the spot.)

She paces.

It’s not something she usually does, and certainly not something this version of him has ever seen her doing, but now she finds herself pacing in front of the large window, sightless eyes on the horizon.

It doesn’t seem to help gather her thoughts though, more like she’s trying to run after them in a perpetually endless chase. It’s exhausting.

Titus is quiet, patiently waiting for her to collect herself, and Lexa kind of wishes he’d snap at her and tell her to get her ass down on the chair and talk.
Well, sometimes her subconscious sounds an awful lot like Anya.

Thinking of her does seem to do the trick, though, and so she takes a deep breath and heads for the couch, gingerly sitting on the edge as if preparing herself to bolt at any moment.

Titus notices, obviously, but, apart from a small look at her posture, he says nothing, merely smiles gently at her. Waiting.

Lexa’s eyes fidget from one side of the room to another, apparently taking over what her legs are no longer doing. They finally settle on a small electric waterfall, something that’s always brought her calm, the soothing sound of the water trickling down gradually settling her stray thoughts.

She inhales slowly, holds it, exhales slowly. Repeats. And again. She finally looks at Titus and finds him looking at her proudly, as if he’s happy that she got herself under control using his techniques. Lexa gives him a slight tilt of the lips in return.

“I’m struggling,” she says, and is shocked at how hoarse her voice sounds considering she hasn’t uttered a word in more than an hour.

“What’s bothering you?”

Lexa sighs heavily. Here come the mental gymnastics.

“I feel stuck,” she says, not for the first time. It’s something he’s heard her say many times before, even in this loop. “I’m scared. I— I found someone that’s in a similar situation and they found a solution but I’m scared I won’t be able to do the same.”

Titus, to his credit, looks as unfazed as always by her strange and vague comments.

“Why wouldn’t you?”

Lexa sighs. “I’ve tried. I’ve been trying for a really long time. Too long. And I just can’t seem to
“Get it right.” She pauses, a flash of painful memories threatening to come and she shakes her head to get rid of the images. “I’m not sure I know how to.”

Titus looks at her for a long time, probably trying to figure out what the hell she’s talking about and how to help. Maybe also silently willing her to keep talking. He does that a lot.

“Maybe you can ask that person for help?” he asks when it’s clear she’s not going to say anything else.

And yes, she has thought about it. Actually, the thought hasn’t left her mind since that day at Raven’s.

She had half a mind to head straight for the airport and go find the woman, even if she had to track across all of Brazil on foot to do so.

But then logic superseded and, truthfully, so did fear.

What if, even with her help, she won’t be able to do it?

As twisted as it is, she feels better knowing that she’s failing unaided than thinking she might fail even with the help of someone who’s been through what she’s going through.

“I’m scared that I run out of reasons for failing.”

The look Titus sends her is too understanding, too penetrating, as if he can see her wide open, can see exactly all her flaws and cracks, and so she turns back to the waterfall where she won’t feel her soul being peeled back before his shrewd gaze.

“At some point you have to choose which one is better, Lexa. Getting lost in the safety of those failures or reaching out for help and taking a chance.”

Well fuck.
Ain’t that the whole point.

She’s gotten used to failing, gotten used to Clarke’s death. It sounds horrible to think it, but it’s true. It’s like a comforting blanket of certainty, the only thing she’s become sure of in her life. At some point, she will try to save Clarke but she’ll fail, and then it’ll all start over again, and that… there’s a certain comfort in that that she’s gotten used to. That she uses to cope.

It’s truly fucked up.

God, it’s a miracle Titus hasn’t sent her to the looney bin. If only he knew the truth, she’s sure she would’ve had a new address long ago.

Lexa swallows and takes a deep breath before facing him again.

“What if even with help I fail?”

He smiles at her gently, supportive, encouraging. “Then you try again. And again.”

She closes her eyes. She’s tired of trying. So, so tired.

On the bright side, there’s only so many loops left until she reaches her limit, so perhaps Titus is right. She can try a few more times.

She nods weekly. “Yeah. Okay.”

Lexa’s been on edge all day.

Or, more accurately, she’s been on edge for weeks. Today though, feels like everything that has been piling up for months — years, decades — is about to spill out of the tight box she tries to shove everything in. She feels this close to losing it. This close to losing control.
She was extra snappy with everyone at work, even more than she’s been lately, and she knows she’s being terrible company for Clarke who had a tiring shift and came home looking like she needed a week of sleep to recover.

Lexa thinks something must have happened, that maybe she lost a patient. Usually when it’s a child she gets this look in her eyes and Lexa just knows.

Which is why today is definitely not the day for Lexa to be just about to lose it. Not when Clarke needs her.

It is, however, the situation they find themselves in.

It’s tense.

Lexa snaps and Clarke snaps back, angry and hurt that Lexa’s temper is being directed at her, unjustly to top it off, and Lexa gets it, knows that it’s obviously not Clarke’s fault and she shouldn’t take her frustrations out on her but she just can’t help it.

They barely talk after a few too many snappy remarks and the tension coils around the room like a live wire. They have dinner in almost silence and they clear the table and do the dishes with a permanent undercurrent of frustration between them and then Lexa finally snaps.

Clarke says something, Lexa’s not even sure what, but next thing she knows she’s pressing Clarke’s back against the island and is kissing her, hard and unforgiving, hands strong and demanding on Clarke’s hips as she lifts her on to the counter.

Clarke lets out a little yelp but she returns the kisses just as passionately and Lexa is not even sure where all this is coming from, all that she knows is that she needs to feel in control and her body is just acting automatically.

She kisses Clarke like she needs her, like she’s the one thing keeping her from drowning. She grabs Clarke’s legs and hooks them around her waist, bringing their bodies closer with a quick move. Clarke lets out a huff with the sudden movement but then she starts grinding on Lexa’s stomach which only acts as an incentive for Lexa to keep going, to ease her tongue into Clarke’s mouth and savor her, to fight for dominance in a battle that is won quickly yet still leaves her needing more.
She pulls back slightly when the fog in her brain clears a bit, when the suddenness and possessiveness of her actions sink in, when the out of character nature of her actions flares sharply in her brain.

Clarke whines a bit but Lexa forces herself to raise a purposefully gentle hand to cup her cheek and looks her in the eye.

“Is this okay?”

Clarke nods and kisses her again but Lexa needs to make sure of one last thing before she gives in completely.

“You’ll tell me if it isn’t? If you want me to stop.”

“Yes.”

Lexa kisses her again. Harder even, her teeth biting down hard on Clarke’s lower lips and soon moving to her neck. She sucks and bites harder than she’s ever done and she’s sure Clarke will have a myriad of bruises tomorrow but right now she doesn’t care. Is actually turned on by the thought.

She unfastens Clarke’s bra in seconds, quickly divests her of it and her shirt, leaving her topless, and Lexa’s hands immediately take advantage of the situation, eagerly taking her breast in one hand while she takes care of the other with her mouth, sucking and licking and biting until all she hears from Clarke are moans and pleas for more.

She makes her way back up to Clarke’s neck, leaving another set of bruises on the other side while her hand swiftly unbuttons Clarke’s jeans and makes its way to her center.

Fuck. She’s dripping and Lexa gets rid of that last little bit of restraint which was holding her back. She enters her mercilessly, rough and fast and the sounds Clarke releases only drive her further. Her body is moving of its own accord and she doesn’t even know how she’s close to her own climax when there’s no pressure to meet her furious thrusts besides the seam of her pants. But still, it seems to be enough.

Clarke’s moans have turned to screams and Lexa’s pace only gets faster, her palm hitting her clit
with each thrust and it’s no time at all until Clarke screams in ecstasy.

She is breathless and flushed and there’s a dazed look in her eyes and Lexa kisses her again, fierce and demanding and still pleased with the moans she draws out from her.

Lexa tugs Clarke until she gets off the counter, directs her wobbly legs toward the bedroom and doesn’t stop her mouth from ravaging her until she lets Clarke fall limbless on the bed and quickly strips off her own clothing.

Clarke’s eyes are hungry, even through the post-orgasm haze. She licks her lips and bites them in that sinful way which drives Lexa mad and so it’s no question at all that Lexa’s on her as soon as she’s fully naked, kissing and biting and touching everything in her path.

There’s something tugging at the back of her mind though, some deep primal pull mixed with the need to drive herself over the edge on her own terms. She doesn’t actually know what she needs, only that this isn’t enough.

It’s Clarke’s whine that plants a thought in her mind. When Lexa raises her head from her center and looks at her, Clarke is sprawled out on the bed, arms stretched above her head.

Lexa blinks and, before she knows it, she’s gotten up and off the bed and returns with a silky scarf. She swallows, suddenly hesitant now that she realizes what she wants to do, and looks to Clarke for permission. Clarke nods, eager and a perhaps tiny bit apprehensive, but Lexa trusts her to say something if she doesn’t like it.

Lexa wraps up both her wrists together and ties them up on the headboard, loose enough that they won’t hurt. She reaches the bedside table and pulls out the strap-on, putting it on under Clarke’s expectant gaze.

It fills her with a surge of power, knowing that Clarke is letting herself completely at her mercy, seeing how eager she looks for it. Clarke’s wet and waiting and Lexa’s previous haste is gone and replaced by a steady steeliness and she takes her time, thoroughly enjoying the way Clarke squirms and moans and begs for her touch.

When she finally enters her — when she finally decides to enter her — she does it tortuously slowly, hips driving in and out in precise, controlled movements.
Eventually, she decides to speed up, driven by her own instincts as the base of the strap-on hits her clit rhythmically, and she takes immense pleasure in seeing Clarke absolutely lose control while Lexa has all of it, in hearing her screams and feeling her body quake and convulse and somehow that, along with the small pressure on her sensitive clit, is enough to drive her over the edge just as soon as Clarke collapses under her.

She falls on top of Clarke, flustered and breathless and her heart hammering in her chest in tandem to Clarke’s. She unties Clarke’s wrists without really paying attention to her task. Clarke’s fingers start playing lazily with her hair after a moment and Lexa feels herself slowly uncoiling, a gentle warmth spreading through her chest as the tight ball of stress eases out of her.

“Feel better?” Clarke’s voice is hoarse but her tone is soft and Lexa lifts up her head a bit to meet understanding eyes.

She hums and kisses her slowly and shoots her a smile that is both embarrassed and grateful. “Yes. Thank you.”

Clarke smiles and kisses her forehead. “Anytime, babe. Wanna talk about it?”

Lexa moves her head back to the comfort of Clarke’s shoulder and lets out a noncommittal noise.

It’s not that she doesn’t want to talk about it. More like she doesn’t truly understand it herself. She’s not usually like this. She’s never been this dominant, never felt this need to be fully in control. She’s taken charge plenty of times, enjoys it as much as she enjoys Clarke doing it, but it was never like this. It’s almost as if she wasn’t fully herself.

“I don’t know,” she says, when it’s the only conclusion she comes to. There’s a helplessness that she hears in her own voice and it startles her. She doesn’t like the sound of it at all, but she likes feeling it even less, and the fact that what she hears is not even a fraction of what she feels leaves her slightly unmoored. “I just needed it.”

Clarke hums softly and presses a kiss to her hair. “You’ll figure it out, Lex,” she says, and Lexa thinks she doesn’t mean this at all.
Lexa sits down on the soft bench, the old familiarity of it bringing echoes of times long past. She welcomes the memories, sometimes; others, not so much.

She hasn’t been here in a while — almost two years, actually — and she’s not sure what brought her back.

There’s a nostalgia to the place, ghosts of scenes lived and un-lived, erased from all memory but hers. It brings a sense of longing, of grief, of fondness.

It’s her life summed up.

She touches the ivory keys with a sort of reverence, hesitant to give in, craving the release that will come with it when she does.

She presses softly, only a finger first, then the other, and the rest fall as if with a mind of their own, running in patterns long-ingrained and almost forgotten. Almost, though never quite. It’s muscle memory, and that doesn’t truly go away.

The sound of the piano fills the room, the soft, melancholic tones her fingers have settled for surrounding her in wave after wave of emotion.

She loses herself in the moment, in the feelings, lets go of her jumbling thoughts. This is not the place for them. Here, she doesn’t think. She feels.

The sad song reminds her of grief, almost like the one she’s been carrying for so, so long. She lets it consume her, lets it flow out of her and pour into the next song, and the one after that. She doesn’t stop to think of the next song to play, her fingers just automatically flow into the next melody as if it’s one continuous symphony.

She remembers thousands upon thousands of moments that flash through her mind following the rhythm of the keys. Of laughter and joy, of kisses and soft touches, of playfulness, teasing, happiness, love. There’s the face of the woman she loves, over and over again. Each time so similar
yet always so different.

Sometimes she wonders if she’s in love with the same woman or if she keeps falling for every single version of her.

There’s a warmth to that, to always falling for the same person, for every little difference that shapes them. To know that, no matter what, she’ll fall in love with Clarke. There’s also a pain, a longing, for all the other versions she’s lost, for the women who have shared so many things with her, whole lifetimes, and to know that this current version of Clarke is not them, does not remember anything except what Lexa may choose to make her relieve.

It’s all quite a bit too much.

The melody changes, seemingly unbidden, and her fingers fall more harshly on the keyboard, the notes heavier and stronger. Demanding, imposing.

She needs to keep going. She can’t keep wallowing on what she’s lost. She has to move forward, she has to allow herself to make new memories with this other version of Clarke, she has to let her heart fall in love again and again and again. She has to let go of the things she’s lost.

She’ll never make it if she doesn’t.

And there’s so much more to live for, as well. Even if a lot of it feels like simply reliving the same repetitive things.

The song shifts, slowly, hesitantly. The happier notes come out as if shy, as if unsure of their place, but one by one, little by little, they start to take more and more space until they have mostly taken over and the melody becomes joyful, almost playful.

Lexa smiles.

Her fingers move sluggishly at first, the song coming out from a long-forgotten recess of her brain, but then they become more confident and she starts to hum under her breath, starts following the song and adding variations that used to be sung by another, huskier voice.
The pain is there — the knowledge that the Clarke who sang this with her, who created this playful superposition of melodies, is gone forever — but it’s muted, as if it’s being blanketed by a hesitant hope.

There’s a nostalgia also, a fondness, a longing. And when she allows herself to remember fully, to feel, she senses a calm that has been eluding her for months — years — spread over her. It brings with it joy, and Lexa smiles when her fingers play a chord which always made Clarke slip and then rapidly attempt to correct her mistake. She finds herself singing along and falling into that same slip, laughing even as her fingers keep going into the next chords.

She sings through her laughter, her cheeks sore from smiling, and the song sounds choppy and unpracticed but so, so joyful.

When her fingers hit the last of the chords, softly, so softly, Lexa has a foolish smile on her face and thousands of happy memories surrounding her like a warm and familiar blanket.

“I didn’t know you could play.”

Lexa turns around, startled, and it’s to find Clarke leaning hesitantly on the door with a kind of wondrous smile that makes Lexa blush and bite her lip.

“I haven’t in a while,” she says softly.

Clarke’s smile is wobbly when she asks, “Why not?” and Lexa shrugs, self-conscious. “I didn’t even know this was here,” Clarke continues when Lexa shows no signs of replying, waving her arm at the expanse of the room which is empty from everything save a grand piano right in the middle.

Lexa hums.

Clarke steps closer, hesitantly, and Lexa makes space for her on the bench.

“Is it yours?” she asks quietly.
Lexa nods. “The piano is too big for our apartment,” she says, though she’s not sure it’s an explanation at all given Clarke’s confused and curious look.

Lexa can very much understand why because this is literally next door to their apartment and she could have very well simply broken down the walls to double the apartment, but she didn’t and she doesn’t intend to.

“And you own this flat as well? Right next to ours?” At Lexa’s nod, Clarke gives her the same quizzical look she always does when this conversation comes up. “Why?”

“I like to have a place that’s just… empty.” She turns back to the piano and her fingers start playing softly, mindlessly. “I like having a space that’s just for me, just to… to let go, I suppose.”

“Is that why there’s no furniture?”

Lexa hums and keeps on playing, softly enough that it doesn’t drown out their voices.

“How come I haven’t heard you play yet?”

Lexa tilts her head and purses her lips in thought. “I only come here when I need it. But sometimes I need it and I can’t make myself come.” She shrugs one shoulder and adds quietly, “Too many memories.”

The melody grows sharper, more pointed, and she’s distantly amused that she doesn’t know this one, but it sounds vaguely familiar, like a loose combination of bits and pieces from various songs. She always does end up composing new things when she’s distracted, for some obscure reason.

Clarke touches her almost gingerly, and Lexa leans into it gratefully.

“Have you been unable to make yourself come lately?” she asks, slowly, as if afraid to go too far. Because she knows. Lexa knows she does.

Lexa’s been trying and failing to fight with all these feelings lately, ever since Clarke decided to ask Raven for help. And it’s been months and months and Lexa is still struggling, still unable to
move one way or the other, and Clarke has been incredible and supportive and understanding but Lexa can see the helplessness and the contradictions in her eyes.

Clarke is the type of person to move forward, no matter what, no matter the obstacles. And Lexa used to be like that, once upon a very long time ago. But she’s changed, and she’s become hesitant where she was brave, and morose where she was pensive, and so she simply can’t force herself to jump off the cliff from this limbo — either in one direction or the other.

“I’ve needed to come for a while,” Lexa says, and that’s the only reply she can give at the moment. Clarke seems to understand her unsaid words though, she always does.

“I didn’t know you could sing either,” Clarke says, curiosity and something else layering her voice.

Lexa smiles ruefully. “I can’t very well. Not like you.” She shrugs, “I play.”

From the corner of her eyes, Lexa sees Clarke turning to her. “So that song you were singing?”

“Ah, yes. Yours,” she replies, a fond smile gracing her lips.

The chords change, her fingers supplying her with a repeat of the last song she played. Clarke tilts her head and when Lexa looks up she’s got her eyes closed, body swaying to the music.

Clarke starts humming then, following the melody, hesitantly at first, then more and more confident. Lexa has to contain a hysterical laugh when Clarke blunders it where she always does but there’s a feeling spreading through her which is just too great for words.

“Will you teach me?” Clarke asks, even as she keeps humming and adding her own variations.

And Lexa smiles, slow and wide, and she sings for Clarke like she’s done a thousand times before.

Lexa knows Anya and Costia have something planned and that they’ve dragged Clarke into it.
She sighs.

Last year it wasn’t so bad because Clarke had just found out a few months before about the whole Lexa being practically a vampire thing and also it was the first of Lexa’s birthday that they spent together as a couple. In this loop, that is. As such, most everyone had acquiesced to let the two celebrate as they wished, which consisted of an extremely relaxing week away in Cancún where Clarke made fun of Lexa for being so old (but also cried for the same reason).

This year, though, Lexa just knows that there will be no escaping her sister and best friend’s machinations. Which makes her want to groan.

The thing is, she doesn’t hate celebrating her birthday. In fact, she quite used to like it, not particularly for the attention she gets, which is definitely why Clarke likes it, but because it’s always a day where everyone clears their schedule and the whole gang gets to hang out together. It’s nice.

The problem is that, as old as she is, it kind of loses some of the fun to have as big a party as she thinks they’re planning. It just gets to a point where it’s all a bit depressive.

She does like celebrating the quarter centuries though, and she had a kick-ass party for her hundred and fiftieth which was a lot of fun even though it was missing Clarke and the rest of their friends.

But the in-betweens? Meh. They all kinda jumble together.

However, she’s seen how excited everyone is for her “twenty-seventh” birthday, so she’s determined not to be a spoilsport. It’s tough. Lately, Lexa has been comparing herself more and more with an old person and finding the similarities very striking. And oddly fitting.

One day she laughed herself silly when she thought that they would have to come up with a whole other term for her because cougar does not even begin to cover the age difference between her and Clarke.

And then she promptly shut that thought down before she started to feel too much like a pervert.
So, it’s with a steely determination to act as young as her biological years that she gets off the elevator and schools her features into neutral ones so as to be properly “surprised”.

“Surprise!”

Lexa’s ears echo and she lifts a hand to them and starts to complain about the noise before she remembers she’s not supposed to act like an old woman — she had just had this discussion with herself — and puts on a smile instead.

There’s a chorus of “Happy Birthdays” and hugs and kisses and Lexa handles them all with as much grace as she can until she’s finally free of the throngs of people and reaches Clarke, who’s coyly waiting for her by the end of the living room.

Clarke smirks. “Happy birthday, Lex. Surprised?”

Lexa chuckles and kisses her softly, shaking her head. “So surprised, love. I didn’t have the faintest idea.”

Clarke laughs, joyful and melodic, and throws her arms over Lexa’s shoulders pulling her in for a tight hug. “Happy hundred and fifty-fifth,” she whispers, pulling back with a knowing smirk, and Lexa’s returning smile is the most brilliant thing.

“I’m old as fuck,” she laughs, feeling light and free for being able to share it all with Clarke.

“Tell me about it, it’s bordering on illegal,” Clarke teases, biting her lower lip to keep from laughing.

Lexa gasps in fake outrage and pinches her bum lightly. “Illegal is how sexy you are when I have to wait at least a few hours to be able to fuck you,” Lexa counters evenly, her lips contorting into a smug smirk when Clarke’s pupils dilate with desire.

“You don’t play fair,” Clarke says with a pout.

Lexa kisses it. “Neither do you, not when you look like that and make me wait. It’s positively
torture,” she says, letting her eyes purposefully rake over Clarke’s red dress, tight in all the right places and with just the right amount of cleavage to tease her with.

Clarke laughs, eyes glinting with mischief, and kisses her again.

They’re interrupted by Anya and Raven hollering at them, as if they have any grounds to judge, and they part unwillingly.

Lexa flips them off, earning herself two matching fake-outraged gasps and laughter from the rest of the group, and then goes to their room to change into more comfortable clothes.

When she comes back, everyone is heavily entertained by a seemingly exhilarating game of beer pong which has been elevated to the next level by Raven’s typical engineering skills — the cups forming a standing pyramid and a catapult on the table to put the ball on instead of throwing it with their hands. And it’s not beer at all, but a revolting mix of every type of liquor they have in the house.

She watches, amused, as Raven all but demolishes Bellamy, though he doesn’t seem at all perturbed.

Anya cheers wildly before deeming that Lexa, as the birthday girl, has to have a go, and so it goes that Lexa is once again completely sloshed on her birthday because she absolutely sucks at catapulting non-beer pong.

“I thought your old age was supposed to give you an advantage in life,” Clarke says in between teasing laughs.

Lexa glares. Or tries to. Everything is kind of fuzzy, with or without her narrowing eyes.

“It’s the game of the devil, Clarke. Of course I lose every time.”

Clarke’s laugh rings in her ears but Lexa is too drunk to be bothered by it.

She’ll just… yes, she’ll just sit right here on this comfortably looking pillow.
Which is a bit farther than expected and she kind of tumbles a bit, but then thinks she does a pretty good job of covering it up, if she says so herself. She pats the seat next to her invitingly and then pulls Clarke down to it for good measure.

“Ouch. How come I get the floor?”

Lexa looks at Clarke and takes a while to process her words. She looks down, sees a fuzzy brown thing, and then arches a questioning eyebrow.

Clarke huffs out a laugh and proceeds to make a lot of movements before she reseats herself and is suddenly on Lexa’s level.

“Oh.”

Clarke laughs and pinches her cheek. “Yes. Oh. You really are blind without your contacts.”

Lexa touches her eyes. “I took out my contacts? Why?”

“Apparently so they didn’t get any of the ‘devil’s evil concoction’ on them,” Clarke says, voice full of mirth, and Lexa nods in agreement because that makes total sense. She’s smart like that.

“I told you it’s the devil’s game. Why’d you make me drink that, Clarkey?”

“Hey, don’t blame me, that was all Anya’s fault.”

“I should’ve been a single child,” Lexa grumbles, leaning against the cool wall. Ah, much better.

“I heard my name followed by some horrific blasphemy.”

Lexa glares at her blurry shape. “Worst sister ever.”
Anya laughs and plops herself on the floor. Raven follows suit and lies with her evil genius head on Lexa’s lap.

Lexa thinks it’s a good revenge to start pulling on Raven’s hair but then she touches it and it’s too soft, so she grudgingly starts playing with it instead and resolves to save her revenge plans for later.

“I can’t even believe how weak you are, little Woods. The party barely started and you’re already sloshed.”

Lexa does pull on her hair, then, and Raven yelps but then keeps on laughing.

“I’ve never even seen you this drunk before.”

Lexa smiles. “Of course you have, silly, you just don’t remember,” she says, patting her on the face for good measure.

“I’m sure I would’ve remembered,” Raven says with a laugh.

Anya’s blurry shape moves a bit and then she’s leaning her head on Raven’s belly and now Lexa can see her much better.

“Hey, why am I excluded from the cuddle pile?” Clarke complains. Lexa looks at her and she’s pouting, so she kisses it away and pulls her down as well so her head is next to Raven’s on Lexa’s legs but facing the other direction.

“There, better,” Lexa says, and proceeds to play with both their hair. “Anyway, the point is, I’m never playing catapulting devil pong ever again. And I mean it this time,” she says with a pointed glare to Anya.

Anya laughs and Raven says, “But this was your first time, Lexa, you have to at least give it another try,” and Lexa shakes her head vehemently.
“Fifth, and never again. I’m serious now,” she adds with a pointed finger at Anya and Raven and then Clarke is moving a lot bellow her and poking her leg with her bony fingers and Lexa frowns. “Hey. Save the fingering for later, babe. And that’s not the proper spot either.”

Anya snorts out a laugh and Clarke groans in exasperation for some reason that completely escapes Lexa at the moment but Raven sits up suddenly and almost bumps her head on Lexa. Instead, she lets Anya’s head fall on the floor with a heavy thud and Anya releases a string of expletives which Lexa is very impressed by.

Raven doesn’t pay her any mind.

“What do you mean, your fifth?” She asks, her face suddenly very close to Lexa’s.

Lexa’s eyes cross a bit and she frowns, trying to remember what prompted the question.

“She means beer pong,” Clarke says cheerfully from her lap. “Right, Lexa? Your fifth time playing beer pong.”

There’s more leg poking which makes Lexa swat Clarke’s hand away and boop her in the nose. “Naughty. Stop it.”

“Is that what you meant, Lexa?”

“Hmm? Oh. Nope. Devil’s pong is what it should be called with all that poison inducing concoction and the impossible angles.”

“Hey, how come you’re sloshed as fuck and you still manage to use all the fancy words?” Anya asks, hand rubbing her apparently sore head.

Lexa smirks. “I’m not the Commander for nothing, An. It’s my superpower.”

“So where’d you play the game before? Did some else—”
“Raven. She’s drunk.”

Lexa frowns. Clarke never interrupts people like that. She pats her cheek to make her happy and shakes her head at Raven.

“Who would even come up with that besides you?”

“Lexa, stop. Let’s get you to bed,” Clarke says, all of a sudden already up and pulling Lexa with her.

Which is so not a good idea because that devil concoction is swirling in her stomach rather viciously and trying to make its way up.

Nope. The floor is way better.

“Come on, Lex. Up you go.”

Lexa shakes her head. Then slower because that also didn’t help. “No, no. Am gonna vomit if I get up. Haven’t vomited in seventy-three—”

“Lexa.”

“Seventy-four?” She nods. “Seventy-four years—”

“Lexa.”

“Can’t break my record now.”

“Lexa!!

Lexa looks at Clarke. She frowns. Why is she shouting? Clarke never shouts.
“Don’t make me require a hearing aid yet, love, I’m doing well enough as a secret old person,” she whispers. Then puts a finger to her lips in a shushing manner and smirks at her own joke.

“What?” Raven says.

Anya snorts. “You’re completely sloshed, little sis.”

“The Old Commander. No! The *Timeless Commander,*” Lexa says, finding it the best name for her superhero alter ego and breaking out in giggles.

“*Lexa.* Let’s go to bed. *Now.*”

Lexa squints up at Clarke and frowns at the hands tugging her arms up kind of painfully. “Bony fingers,” she says with a pout.

But Clarke just huffs and leans down to pick her up from under her arms and then snaps at Anya to help, which she does with a lot of evil smirking.

Lexa glares at her and she wants to complain about all the moving around because she certainly doesn’t want to break her record — it’s a matter of pride! — but then she thinks that Clarke must be very determined to get her to bed and she’s all for that endgame, so she dutifully follows along, making considerable effort to put one foot in front of the other and not throw up.

When they get to the bed, Lexa gingerly lies down and eagerly waits for Clarke to join her. She frowns when Clarke sits on the edge of the bed still fully dressed instead of naked and by her side.

“Don’t I get birthday sex?” she pouts. She was very much looking forward to that all day. It’s the best part of her birthday.

Clarke runs a hand down her face and exhales heavily.

“Fuck, Lexa. I don’t think you’re gonna be too happy tomorrow.” Which is not a reply at all.
Clarke shakes her head and Lexa frowns again. “Just sleep for now, alright? I'll tickle your back like you like.”

Well, she does like it, and if she’s not getting sex she thinks it’s possibly the second best thing to fall asleep next to Clarke. So she does just that.
Naturally, Clarke was right. Lexa is not best pleased with herself the next morning. At all.

There is, of course, the irritating fact that she had completely lost her filter and had just blurted out things she was very much not supposed to say out loud to anyone but Clarke.

But that’s a minor fact compared to the colossal hangover she’s suffering, courtesy of the devil’s concoction.

It’s all Raven’s fault. And Anya’s. And also maybe Lexa’s for being an idiot and agreeing to drink that poison.

Gosh, she’s too old for this shit.

Definitely too old to know better by now, especially considering the four other times she’d been foolish enough to play that evil game. Not to mention the fact that three of those are responsible for some very disgusting bodily reactions.

Well, at least her record still stands. For now.

With the way she’s feeling at the moment, she’s not sure how much longer she’ll be able to hold onto it.

With considerable effort, Lexa sits herself up and gladly drinks the glass of water her beautiful angel placed on her bedside table, along with a couple of painkillers. When the world doesn’t feel like it’s tilting anymore and her insides don’t seem to want to revolt against her, she gingerly gets up and heads for the bathroom.

After a blissful shower which leaves her feeling much more like a real person, Lexa is semi-ready to face her stupid life choices.
One of which is calmly waiting for her in the living room, looking as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened.

Lexa stops, tilts her head, and decides that she definitely needs coffee to deal with it, never mind that she hasn’t had coffee in years and the taste of it is revolting. It’s just one of those situations that certainly merit the presence of extra caffeine.

When she comes back, coffee mug securely in hand, with lots of milk and sugar to help disguise the taste, she takes a seat on the corner of the sofa opposite Raven, who just gives her her trademark blinding smile.

Jesus. That smile is way too bright for the level of hangover she’s achieved today.

She glares.

“Clarke?”

“Already left for work. She left you a note,” Raven says, far too cheerfully.

Lexa silently bemoans her girlfriend and her demandingly selfless career choice — Clarke shouldn’t be helping other people right now, she should be saving Lexa from their friend’s claws.

“She let you in?”

Raven waves a dismissive hand. “Pft. As if I needed her.”

Lexa only has the energy to glare, and even that is done half-heartedly. The fact that her friend just picks her way into her house at her own discretion seems like too much trouble to be upset about at this precise moment.

“Hmm. So, what?”

“I have questions,” Raven says, a gleeful look in her eyes which reminds Lexa of too many
moments where she’d get overly excited in the pursuit of some new thing that sparked her interest.

Lexa herself has been the focus of that look, and she doesn’t particularly care for being so again.

She groans inwardly. It’s her own damned fault, anyways. She teased the dragon with a big ass juicy steak.

Lexa waves a hand in a welcoming motion. “Ask away,” which has Raven arching a brow in surprise.

“Really? Just like that? I thought I’d have to fight harder.”

“Eh. You chose your attack time wisely,” Lexa relents. “I’m way too hungover to care.”

And Raven smirks smugly, little wiggly eyebrows dancing in accordance. “I’m a total genius.”

Lexa snorts. “Evil genius, as I’m currently proof of.”

Because Lexa’s words are deadly true, Raven’s grin widens maniacally. “So, my questions. I have loads of them.”

“What, did you write down a list or something?” Lexa teases.

“Ha ha. So funny. I don’t need to write it down, it’s all up here,” she says, tapping her temple. “So, numero uno. Just how old are you?”

Lexa almost chokes on the disgusting coffee. “Straight for the kill, huh?” she says, clearing her throat with a shake of her head.

“I’m not wasting time letting you string me along with nonsense,” Raven wisely counters. Which would certainly be a valid point were Lexa not so hungover. As it stands, she’s pretty much forgotten about her very good reasons for being reluctant to have anyone but Clarke find out about her peculiar situation this time.
“Right. Good tactic.” When she pauses for too long Raven looks at her expectantly and Lexa smiles. “A hundred and fifty-five, as of yesterday.”


Lexa gives her a sympathetic look but shakes her head. “Unfortunately, no.”

“But— But! But you can’t be— You— You look exactly your age! I mean, maybe even a bit younger but certainly not— That’s impossible.”

Lexa considers her with a tilted head. “I thought you’d already drawn your own conclusions, after last night.”

“I did. I mean, yeah, but… No way.” Raven shakes her head, disbelieving, and Lexa wonders if she was actually hoping for Lexa to tell her that it was all a misunderstanding coupled with a heavy dose of imagination.

“So what was it you came up with,” Lexa asks with an indulgent smile. Maybe the coffee isn’t so bad for her after all, it certainly seems to be dosed with a lot of patience.

“I… well. There was the whole other times you’d played the game thing, which I’m sure I invented cause no-one else is that cool, and I’d never seen you play before. And then you said you hadn’t thrown up in seventy-four years, which could’ve very well been your drunk ass messing with us, but then when you add that crazy-ass internet search you had me running last year it just… Yeah.” Raven shrugs, looks at Lexa piercingly, as if willing her to give her the answers, then narrows her eyes in determination and says, “I know something’s up.”

Lexa considers her for a long time and then hums noncommittally.

Ravens groans and raises her hands to the air. ”I don’t fucking know, Lexa, this is all completely insane!”

Lexa lets out a breath which could be a laugh in another situation. “You have no idea,” she says with a wry twist of her mouth.
Somedays, when she’s feeling particularly depressed, she wonders if this isn’t all a symptom of a mental breakdown and she’s not actually stuck in a psych ward somewhere not dealing with the death of her girlfriend.

Raven looks at her and Lexa thinks she heard the lace of despair Lexa was unable to filter through her voice because her face takes on an expression of horror and Lexa knows that it finally clicks for her. That it stopped being a puzzle she was trying to figure out and became something **real**.

“Shit.” Lexa nods and looks down at her completely unappealing coffee. “**Shit, Lexa.**”

“Hmm. Yup.”

She takes another sip — it’s vile, but she swallows it anyway. She doesn’t feel better in the slightest.

Somehow she thinks her malaise isn’t at all related to the hangover anymore.

She feels Raven scoot over and then the atrocious coffee cup is no longer in her hands, for which she’s very grateful. She doesn’t think she could stomach it anymore. When Raven pulls her down to rest her head on her lap, Lexa follows gladly.

Raven starts braiding her hair and Lexa sighs, her eyes falling blissfully shut, enjoying the feeling of gentle fingers on her scalp.

“So… Is this one of those time loop thingies you guys were interested in?” Raven asks, uncharacteristically hesitant.

Lexa starts to nod then grimaces when it pulls on the braid Raven is working on. “Yeah.”

Raven lets out a whoosh of breath. “**Fuck. Like, for real?**”

Lexa sighs. “For real, Raven.”
“Well, that’s…” Raven trails off, her fingers pausing in their ministrations, and then she seems to shake off her stupor and goes at her task with renewed vigor. “Shit. I’ve got a million and five questions now.”

“And you can pick my brain later, I promise I’ll answer you,” Lexa says. Then with a small smirk, “I’m actually positive I know most of your questions already, though, we’ve had this conversation before. Or close to it.”

“What? Really?”

She remembers a birthday where she was drunk, though not quite as much because she had refused to play that horrid game then — and wasn’t she so much wiser in her youth? — and all the questions she was pestered with for the rest of the night, along with the rest that followed for the weeks after before everything reset again.

She doesn’t find it so amusing all of a sudden. “Yeah,” she says with a heavy sigh.

“Lexa…” Raven’s voice is oddly cautious and Lexa winces. “You’re not alright, are you?”

Lexa opens her eyes and finds Raven looking at her intently, concern visible in all of her features. She looks at Lexa like she’s afraid she’s gonna break before her eyes and Lexa knows then that she’s been doing a terrible job of keeping it together lately. Raven doesn’t even ask more questions to sate her insatiable curiosity, which is a red flag right there; instead asks if Lexa’s okay as if she has any chance of replying positively to that.

No, no, she’s not okay at all and she hasn’t been in a very long time.

She closes her eyes again because it’s all a bit too much and there’s a tear that falls down her cheek much to her dismay and which Raven wipes away.

“What can I do?” Raven asks. Cautious, hesitant, as if her question might open the very box where Lexa laboriously throws every one of her dark thoughts into.

Lexa’s voice feels wet and sticky and thick but she forces out the words anyway. “Help me find
that lady. Please. The Brazilian one. I think… I think it’s time I get some help.”

Raven cups her wet cheek and she sighs out an, “Oh Lexa,” and Lexa knows that she’ll do anything she can to help because that’s the type of friend she is.

Somehow, after weeks of searching and some more of planning, Lexa ends up going to Brazil with Clarke, Anya, and Raven.

Clarke because, how could she not? That wasn’t even a question.

The other two, however, were very much not part of the plan. Not that she had any concrete one to start with but, had she any, it wouldn’t include them.

Raven tags along because she insisted that they would need her awesome skillset and none of them can speak Portuguese and, “No, Lexa, you learned European Portuguese, it’s not the same, dude, they speak with a weird-ass accent. You definitely need me.” Which, alright. Lexa can concede the point, even if it is reluctantly.

But then Raven insists that she needs to, “At least tell Anya, even if you don’t wanna tell the rest of your family. She’s your sister, Lex. You need her to know.” Which was very much harder to accept because she doesn’t want to tell Anya and see that look on her face again and have her calling her Lexi like she’s the most precious and fragile thing, and she knows that she won’t make it out of that conversation without breaking down and falling into her big sister’s arms crying like she hasn’t done in over a century, but… But.

Raven does have a point and maybe she really does need her big sister and so she does tell her and her reaction is exactly what she was expecting and Lexa cries like the little girl she used to be and so does Anya. But then, when Anya recovers enough to realize that Lexa had told Raven and Clarke first, the punch to the arm that Lexa was dreading doesn’t come. Which is, of course, a relief.

Only for that to be immediately thrown out the window when she’s literally jumped on and gets her ass kicked by her furious sister in between bouts of “Were you even planning on telling me if Raven didn’t make you?” and “I can’t believe you kept this from me for years, Alexandria!”
Yeah. It’s bad when she gets the Alexandria card. Lexi sounds suddenly much more appealing.

So, anyways, they do make it to Brazil, some more bruised than others, and layovers are a total bitch, but they eventually get to Caruaru and go in search of a woman who, according to Raven’s research, is called Maria Queiroz. Lexa doesn’t voice her doubts at the veracity of that because Raven is very convinced that she’s the one and, well, she’s kind of the expert. It’s just that, even after over a century on this planet, Lexa still doesn’t really understand computers that well and everyone uses a fake name, so can they be sure this is the woman they’re after?

But she wisely keeps her mouth shut.

They do find Mrs. Queiroz relatively easily. It’s a small town, they have her general address, and a few well-placed questions here and there lead them to a quiet neighborhood where an old woman greets them and looks incredibly confused at the sudden invasion of gringas on her front porch.

Unfortunately, it turns out that this is not the Maria Queiroz they’re looking for because her name is actually Maria Queirós and so they have to start over again.

Lexa refrains from making any comments. Instead, she calmly sits down by the hotel pool next to a lip-biting, side-eyeing Clarke and waits for Raven to finish typing away on her laptop and doing a bunch of calls and coming up with a solution.

Lexa thinks this is very mature of her considering her life is pretty much on the balance, give or take fifty years.

Two days later and Lexa says goodbye to the wonderful pool and the nice tan she was working on and they rent a car towards Recife, where the real Maria Queiroz is supposed to be.

Well.

Lexa keeps quiet again when they meet a Maria Queiroz — this time certainly with a ’z’ — who is barely twenty and is definitely not the one they’re looking for, and she keeps quiet while she waits by yet another lovely swimming pool next to a nail-biting, furrow-browed Clarke, and goes back to working on her tan. It’s coming along very well.

But Raven is sure that the woman is here, and so this time she goes out with only Anya early in the
morning the next day and they come back into the hotel suite just after sunset with another Maria Queiroz. This one in her sixties but with a surprisingly youthful appearance.

Lexa keeps quiet as Raven goes on and on about how this Maria actually did live in Caruaru at the time she put up the website but decided to move to the beach for her retirement, which certainly explains all that confusion.

Lexa doesn’t say anything, just looks and looks and looks and she feels Clarke’s shaking hand on her at one point, tight tight tight, but she can’t do anything other than look.

The woman is alive.

She’s alive and well and she even moved to a new city for her retirement, and she’s got a few wrinkles around her eyes and mouth, expression lines, like she spent a whole life laughing. And Lexa wants that. She wants the wrinkles and she wants the laughter and she wants to look in the mirror and see the time change, she wants to know what it feels like to look as old as she is — although, maybe not that old. But she wants that.

She wants to be free.

And then Maria’s eyes focus on her, sharp and intuitive, and her gaze softens, it takes on a certain pained look mixed with a lot of compassion. Like she knows. Like she knows just by looking at Lexa, just by looking into her eyes.

So when she asks, “Are you the one?”, Lexa finally finds her voice and she whispers a shaken “Yes.”

She distantly notes that Clarke, Anya, and Raven have fallen quiet, that there’s a heavy hush surrounding all of them, but she’s not truly aware of what they might be doing or what’s really happening until Clarke hugs her tight tight tight and kisses her cheek for a long moment and tells her that she loves her and that they’ll be down by the bar if she needs anything. She thinks she nods, she’s not so sure.

Maria sits, and Lexa follows suit in a sort of numb daze which makes the woman smile at her softly.
“You understand me, right?”

“Yes. Though Raven tells me my accent is hard for you to understand,” she says, the words falling out of her tongue slow and rusty.

Maria chuckles. “A bit, yes, but my father-in-law was Portuguese, I’m used to it.”

Lexa nods because she can’t seem to find any words to use.

“Tell me about your life.”

Lexa snorts out a humorless laugh. “I don’t think we’d have time for that.” She looks at the woman’s shoes, pink and flowery and pointy; much easier to look at that her too-understanding face. “It’s been… long.”

“How long?”

“I turned a hundred and fifty-five a couple of months ago.”

Maria gasps out a whispered “Virgin Mary,” and Lexa looks up expecting to find the familiar horror she’d seen on Clarke’s and Raven’s and Anya’s faces recently. Only she doesn’t. It’s worse, so much worse because this woman actually lived her life like Lexa’s doing now, she lived through the horror of living and failing and living again and again and again and she knows.

Lexa’s lip quivers and tears flood her eyes. “Please help me,” she begs, her voice coming out more desperate than she’s ever heard it. “Please tell me what to do.”

Maria sighs and moves over and, next thing Lexa knows, she’s crying in the warm arms of a woman who should be a complete stranger but somehow feels like the very opposite.

Her tightly packed dark box comes catapulting out of the most hidden corners of her mind and she is suddenly overwhelmed by feelings that she’s been holding back for so long, even from herself, and they wreak havoc on their path to the surface.
All the strength she forces herself to have, even in the moments she lets herself break down — because it’s never fully, she can never let it be fully or she’ll never come back from it — leaves her and she’s unmoored and adrift in a turbulent sea of despair.

She’s been strong for so long — had to be strong, had to keep going — that the sudden loss leaves her disoriented, lost, utterly unbalanced.

She needs Clarke, dammit. She needs her to hold her and hug her and make her forget for just one minute. But she can’t, right? That’s the whole point. That when she looks at Clarke it doesn’t matter that she loves her with her whole heart because she can never forget about her dying over and over and over and leaving Lexa alone and stuck. It’s not her fault, can never be her fault, but Lexa can never forget when she’s with her.

“I can’t do it anymore,” she says, when she can finally manage to make the words come out, broken and empty as they are. “I can’t hold on for much longer. It’s too much. It’s too much.”

Maria hushes her softly and holds her tighter, balancing Lexa from side to side as if she’s a child in distress.

“I’ll be over soon, Lexa, you’ll see. I’ll tell you how I stopped it and you’ll do it yourself, alright? You’ll be fine. You’ll be free soon.”
It’s easier said than done, Lexa thinks. Actually, the list of things that could fit in that category only seems to get bigger as she grows older.

Anya promptly punches her arm when she voices her thoughts, and so Lexa wisely keeps her doubts to herself after that.

Apparently, she’s supposed to keep a positive attitude or something. It’ll be fine, they say, you can do it, Lexa. Easy peasy, even.

Lexa, repeatedly told that she needs to “Snap the fuck out of your funk,” in Raven’s eloquent words, decides that perhaps there might be some merits to those wise words.

“I’m sorry, what?”

Clarke pauses with her spoonful of cereal halfway to her mouth, eyes still half asleep, voice huskier than usual.

Lexa stares at her in awe for a bit, still not used to how beautiful she finds Clarke even after all this time, sleep-addled or not. Then she blinks and repeats her question.

“Wanna go on a holiday?”

Clarke puts the spoon back on the plate, uneaten. Lexa spares a moment of sadness towards her next bite which will be considerably soggier, but Clarke doesn’t really care about those details, so she supposes it’s fine.

“Didn’t we just come back from Brazil?”

They had, five days ago in fact, but Lexa doesn’t see her point. “That wasn’t a holiday.”
Clarke raises an eyebrow. “You spent most of your time by the pool in a five-star hotel getting ridiculously tanned. I’d say that’s the definition of a holiday.”

Lexa waves a dismissive hand. “We were otherwise preoccupied trying to find Maria Queiroz with a ‘z’ and saving me from certain madness. I think it’s time for a proper holiday, just us, no quests, no concerns.”

She taps Clarke’s cereal bowl with her nail to get her to go back to eating because it’s making her stomach curl looking at those fruit loops getting mushier and mushier. Clarke easily obeys.

“That sounds nice, Lex.”

Lexa smiles. “And Anya and Raven, of course. And Costia.” Clarke’s eyebrows start to go up and her lips curl in amusement but Lexa ignores her. “Lincoln and Octavia too. And Bellamy, if I must,” she adds with an exaggerated sigh.

She likes her love-hate relationship with him, mostly because it’s fun to make him think she only tolerates him because they share the same friends. It did use to be like that at first, but Lexa has long since come around to actually liking him. So he gets an honest invitation to the trip.

“I see,” Clarke says slowly, before eating another spoonful of gross cereal with blueish milk. “So, like a group vacation.”

Lexa nods. “Precisely.”

“And where would we go?”

Lexa shrugs, gets up to go fetch the globe which she keeps for this exact reason from the living room and puts it on the island when she comes back into the kitchen.

“What do you suggest?”

“How about we spin it?” Clarke pushes the empty bowl away and pulls the globe towards her. Then she pauses and says, “Or should we wait for everyone to be here to decide?”
Lexa waves a dismissive hand at the suggestion. “Eh, they’ll be happy so long as it’s a free vacation. You spin it.”

Clarke looks at her with giddy eyes and immediately spins the globe as fast as she can. Then she closes her eyes and puts her finger on it, making it stop.

Lexa leans forward to see and Clarke tilts her head to read better.

“Are we going to the middle of the ocean?” Clarke asks, a cute little confused frown on her brows.

Lexa lifts her finger off the globe and hums. “We could, I suppose, though I wouldn’t recommend a yacht with Lincoln involved, it’s not pretty. How about we go to the nearest island?”

Clarke leans closer and squints like an old blind woman. Lexa holds in an amused chuckle. “New Caledonia?”

Lexa smiles widely. “Perfect.”

Raven whistles appreciatively. “Holy mama!”

“Nice digs, sis,” Anya says, before going off to claim one of the bedrooms with faux disinterest. Lexa knows very well that she has a weakness for top beach destinations and this one certainly meets all the requirements.

“This is so cool, Lexa!” Octavia is practically bouncing up and down and it looks like only Lincoln’s arm around her will stop her from lifting off. "I can't believe we get to stay here for two weeks.”

Lexa chuckles. “I’m glad you like it. There’s no free cancelation policy,” she deadpans.
Clarke catches the glint in her eye and laughs heartily.

Costia drops casually onto one of the white couches and looks around the room appreciatively. “So you really mean to tell us you’ve never taken a bribe, congresswoman?”

Lexa raises an eyebrow at her teasing tone but ends up shaking her head with a chuckle. “I don’t know how many times I have to tell you guys, I’m very good at making investments, that’s all.”

Lincoln sits on the couch with a heavy exhale after Octavia escapes his arms to go explore the kitchen. “My little cousin got the best marks in business school, Costia,” he says with a proud note to his deep voice. “Little genius that one. And she won the lottery when she was like twenty,” he adds as an afterthought.

Raven lets out a “Ha!” Before promptly shutting up at Clarke’s piercing stare. “Oh yup, so lucky. And a total genius,” she agrees, spinning around the room with her arms open. “I mean, you’d have to be to pick this place.”

“Hey! I picked it!”

Lexa kisses Clarke’s cheek. “You picked a spot on the ocean, my love.”

Clarke smacks her lightly, mock offended, and Lexa goes off to take their bags to their bedroom with a laugh.

“Don’t bother putting us in the same room, Woods! I’m getting a divorce!”

“Can’t divorce me till you marry me,” Lexa quips back without turning around.

She finds an empty double room easily considering only Anya has claimed another one. It’s exactly the perfect combination of a big bed, light beach colors and an amazing view of the beach. The en suite is big and luxurious and Lexa cannot wait to take advantage of that bathtub with Clarke.

When she makes her way back to the living room, everyone is sitting comfortably on the couches,
exhausted from a long trip.

“Why aren’t perfect holiday destinations closer to home?” Bellamy complains, feet dangling off the armchair he’s decided to sprawl himself sideways in.

“Because otherwise, it wouldn’t be a perfect holiday destination, dumbass, it’d be just another beach we ruin with pollution and greedy capitalism.”

Bellamy flips Octavia off. “It would just be nice not to have to travel for so long, is all. My neck is killing me from the plane.”

“That’s just cause you’re an old man, Bel,” Clarke jokes, and he flips her off as well.

“We can take a nap and then head off to the beach,” Lexa suggests.

“Napping is for the weak,” Anya dismissively proclaims. She gets up from the couch and drags Raven along with her. “Let’s go for a swim.”

Raven’s gleeful look soon turns lewd and they all groan.

“It’s a public beach, guys, at least make sure to go far into the water,” Costia says with an amused shake of her head.

Octavia snorts. “You know very well they won’t.”

“A little bit of an exhibitionist streak on those two,” Clarke adds.

Lexa shudders. “Please don’t remind me. I’m here to relax, not get even more traumatized.”

Lincoln pats her leg with his foot to console her. “I hope you brought earplugs.”
Lexa groans and hits her face with a pillow. “I shouldn’t have invited any of you. Just you, Clarkey,” she says, head poking out a bit from under the pillow.

Clarke smiles and starts playing with her hair. “’Tis the price we pay for being generous friends, darling,” she says in a horrible posh British accent.

Lexa snorts.

“Stick to the medicine, Clarke,” Octavia says, throwing a pillow at her.

Lexa’s own pillow gets dislocated and falls down on her lap. “Such violent tendencies, Octavia.”

“Y’all are ridiculous.” Costia shakes her head in amusement and gets up to take her bag to her room. When she comes back they’ve somehow descended into a pillow fight. Costia places both hands on her hips, raises her eyebrows menacingly, and says, “Those pillows better not get damaged.”

They all freeze and nod sheepishly. Costia harrumphs, nose in the air, and makes her way to the open kitchen.

“I’m starting on lunch. Y’all take all your bags to your rooms and get cleaned up or whatever. You’ve got thirty minutes. And someone go tell the two lovebirds before they accuse me of starving them.”

Lexa smiles as she watches everyone scramble up from the couches towards the bedrooms. Clarke kisses her before announcing she’s going to take a little nap and to call her for lunch.

Lexa makes her way to the kitchen and bumps Costia with her hip softly. “Need help?”

Costia hums. “You can get to peeling those,” she says, pointing towards a bag of potatoes.

Lexa nods and gets to work quietly, listening to Costia sing under her breath. She has a beautiful voice, but for some reason she’s always shy to properly sing in front of others, even Lexa.
By the second song, Lexa has joined her before she realizes that she’s started to sing out loud, and both of them start harmonizing and dancing around while they peel potatoes and dice onions.

“You’re different,” Costia says after a while, when another song comes to an end.

Lexa pauses and lifts her head up. Costia very studiously focuses on dicing her carrots like a pro, expression radiating casualness if it weren’t for the slight tension in her lips.

Lexa hums noncommittally and returns her attention to the never-ending mountain of unpeeled potatoes. “In what way?”

She sees Costia shrug from the corner of her eye. “Just. Your mood’s been all over the place lately. Or for the last year and something months, more like.”

Lexa freezes for a second before forcefully continuing with her job. “I guess.”

Costia turns to face her for a beat but Lexa doesn’t peel her eyes off her task. “Yeah. Anyways, you’re different now. A bit more… I don’t know. Settled? Happier?”

Lexa hums and finds a smile making its way to her lips without her permission. “Yes, I suppose I am, a bit.”

Costia laughs at her non-explanation. “I guess that’s as much as I’m gonna get, huh?” she asks in a mix of fake and real exasperation.

Lexa bites her lip to hide her amusement. “Maybe.”

Costia chucks a bunch of carrot peels at her face.

“Hey!”
Costia just shrugs casually and smirks. “One of my best friend prerogatives. I get to throw trash at you when you’re being an asshole.”

Lexa sends her a very ineffective glare which only widens Costia’s smirk.

She huffs and semi-successfully gets the carrot peels off her hair.

“I’m reconsidering your best friend status just because of that.” If her hair turns orange she’ll have to take some revenge. Ginger hair does not suit her one bit.

“Yeah, I think you already have,” Costia says, suddenly somber and eyes back on dicing the carrots.

Lexa puts the knife down and turns to her, brows furrowed in concern.

“Cos?”

Costia shakes her head and gives her a wan little smile. “You don’t tell me anything anymore, Lex. We barely spend time together just the two of us, and even then I know you’re hiding things from me. Which is fine, I guess, it’s not like we have to tell each other everything, but just… You used to confide in me, you know? When things were bothering you and whatnot.” She sighs and shakes her head, then waves a dismissive hand, all the while keeping her eyes fixed on the board, fingers diligent in their chopping. “Never mind, just ignore me.

Lexa swallows and takes a step closer. When Costia doesn’t stop her ministrations, she leans back against the counter facing the opposite side, arm touching Costia’s.

“I have been a terrible friend, you’re right. And I do have reasons but those are just weak excuses in the end.”

She sighs, runs a hand through her hair, then remembers they’re cooking and it’s probably not best to get hair all over their food and ties it all up in a loose bun.

“Something…” She pauses, frowns, bites her lip. Then groans in frustration. “Something is
“Are you sick?” Costia asks immediately, leaning back and finally looking at Lexa.

Lexa shakes her head rapidly. “No, no. Nothing like that. Well, maybe a bit like that, I suppose,” she adds once she thinks about it. She’s not dying, which is what Costia means, but she will, maybe, possibly, if this shit-show doesn’t end. If she can’t fix it.

At Costia’s widened eyes Lexa immediately rephrases. “That’s not what I meant, Cos. I’ll tell you, alright? Tonight? We’ll go for a walk on the beach or something, just the two of us, and I’ll explain things.”

Costia eyes her semi-suspiciously. “You promise?”

Lexa nods solemnly. “Promise.”

It feels better, in the end, to have more people know about her little time-problem. She’d been resistant to it for quite some time, especially after her hundredth birthday and having to deal with weeks of coddling and concerned looks.

But it’s not like last time at all, actually. It’s… nice. Weirdly nice.

After her talk with Costia, she decides that she should probably tell Lincoln — he is her favorite cousin after all — and he can’t keep a secret from Octavia so she gets roped into the conversation as well. The only one she doesn’t tell is Bellamy because, while she does like him, they’re still not that close.

She was expecting gloomy holidays after dropping that bomb, but the result was surprisingly the opposite. They’d all decided that Lexa needed a proper break to relax her brain from all the stress, and so they made their best efforts into creating one of the most memorable holidays she’s ever had.

And she’s had quite a few, which is saying a lot.
When they get back home, Lexa’s even more tanned, Clarke is mostly pink, and both of them sport relaxed and content smiles for weeks.

It’s a kind of peaceful she hadn’t had in a long, long while.

She has a goal, she has a plan, now all that’s left to do is wait.

Clarke is not so patient when it comes to waiting. Probably something to do with not being particularly keen on probably dying, which Lexa can’t fault her for. She keeps asking Lexa what her plan is, what Maria’s solution to ending the loops was, what Lexa has to do tho stop it all.

Lexa, in a move that surprises her most of all, keeps remarkably patient and sane through all that and remains tight-lipped.

She knows what to do. She’s figured out the problem, has combed through years and years and years of memories to figure out the crux of the problem, where it all went wrong. And she’s quite sure she’s got the solution, though only time will tell.

Clarke dies on a Thursday, the 2nd of August 2018. Lexa’s officially least favorite date of all time. It’s nothing particularly personal against that day, but it’s just the way life goes.

Clarke hasn’t always died on a Thursday, the 2nd of August 2018. Which does not mean it has had its status as least favorite date of all time surpassed by another date. Just that that was the first, and second, and other dates for Clarke’s death, and so it will forever remain her most hated date ever.

The other dates get similar third places. Bronze medals for all. Second place is reserved for loop number seven, one which should hold a particular place in hell.

What Lexa has learned, however, is that Clarke wasn’t supposed to die on a Thursday, the 2nd of August 2018. At all. Not the 2nd, nor the third, nor any of the other days she’s died on.
Clarke was not supposed to die that day, but she did, and so she would keep dying until everything was fixed.

*Clarke* wasn’t supposed to die. Not then.

Clarke had had a night shift and had asked Lexa to pick her up from the hospital since she was working from home that Thursday. Lexa was supposed to have picked her up. She had actually left the house, got into the car, and then gotten a phone call from her boss.

She’d been supposed to pick Clarke up because Clarke didn’t, and still doesn’t, like to drive when she comes off a night shift because she’s scared of driving sleep-deprived and causing an accident.

Lexa had said she would. She’d promised. She’d told Clarke not to worry and that she would be there at 8 a.m. when her shift ended.

And then Lexa had called Clarke and told her that her boss had called her in at the last minute, that they had an emergency at work that required her presence, that she was sorry but could Clarke please take an Uber?

Then Lexa had gone to work and her phone had remained silent for the rest of the day, no calls or messages from Clarke. Which was fine, usual even, after a twenty-four-hour shift, so Lexa thought nothing of it when she got off work and didn’t have any unread messages. And she assumed that, when she got home and found the house empty, Clarke had probably gone off to the store.

Lexa was busy, she had work to do, a stupid ‘emergency’ which didn’t even deserve to be put in that category but still took up her time, so she didn’t notice that the house was exactly the same as she’d left it.

And then the doorbell had rung and two police officers were at the door and her never-ending nightmare had begun.

Lexa is ready for the nightmare to finally end. She’s ready to wake up.
On Thursday the 2nd of August 2018 Clarke is expecting Lexa to pick her up from a night shift.

Lexa has not told her that this is the day she dies, and so Clarke has no reason not to go to work and do everything she did the first time around.

Lexa gets into the car at 7:35 and gets a call from her boss. It goes to voicemail unceremoniously.

She gets to the hospital, waits for ten minutes, then kisses Clarke when she gets into the car, looking exhausted but happy to see her.

Lexa smiles at her and cups her cheek, and Clarke leans into her hand, closing her eyes and sighing in bliss. “Love you,” she sleepily mumbles, then promptly falls asleep as only she can.

Lexa smiles — too pained, too sorrowful, too broken — but Clarke can’t see her. She whispers an “I love you too,” because her voice will not come out stronger than that.

She drives.

The light turns green and Lexa presses the gas softly. She’s immensely aware of where she is, has avoided this particular crossroads for one hundred and twenty-eight years, knows exactly what happens next.

Lexa sees the car out of the corner of her eye. She doesn’t stop, doesn’t speed up.

She breathes. In, out, repeat.

Clarke is sleeping in the passenger seat, she has her seatbelt on. The car is coming towards Lexa’s side, speeding and skipping the red light.

Lexa breathes in, out, repeats. Everything feels like it’s in slow motion.

She hears Maria’s words in her ear, soft and caring and piercing.
“She wasn’t supposed to die, Lexa. That is why this is happening to you. She wasn’t supposed to die that day.”

“Why did she, then?”

“That, you must figure out yourself. Think. Remember. It has been a long time, but I’m certain you haven’t forgotten the first time, the first death.”

“Never.”

“Then you will find your answer. Just let things happen as they should have.”

The car hits, faster than she was expecting, the crash making a horrible, loud crushing sound.

Lexa breathes, in, out, repeats.

She’s found her answer.

Then she exhales one last time and everything is peace.
Everything hurts. A strange thing considering she’d always imagined death to be painless, and yet it feels as if every single fiber of her body is being pulled apart in different directions, twisted and turned and torn.

Lexa groans. That hurts too. She swears like a sailor — internally, to be sure not to cause more pain — and then makes a tentative bid to open her eyes.

That hurts like a motherfucker, so no surprise there. But at least it’s one more point towards possibly being not dead. Which, it’d be nice. Not being dead, that is. The pain she could do without.

She’d been quite accepting of her probable death, had dealt with it very wisely, if she says so herself, probably due to a mix of getting to save Clarke’s life in return along with having all this supposed wisdom from being ridiculously old. But mostly the first one.

But being alive is nice too. Nicer, even.

Clarke’s face greeting her with a relived smile is the nicest of all.

“Hey,” Clarke says, oh so softly, like she’s at someone’s deathbed. Which might be very appropriate, Lexa has no idea what state she’s in. But for now, she’s one step above dead at least, so that’s something.

“Hi,” she says. Or tries to. The sound that comes out is more closely resembling gravel sliding through her throat, and hurts just as much.

Why the hell does everything hurt so much?
“You’re in quite a state, baby,” Clarke says, a wobbly smile on her lips. Lexa tries to cup her face and catch those tears but she can’t move her arm more than an inch so that goes out the window.

Clarke, bless her, catches her intention and holds her hand herself.

“We were in a car crash, remember?”

Lexa blinks once, like she’s in some type of movie, because she just knows that moving her head will hurt like a bitch.

“The car hit you dead-on, baby. It was… Fuck, Lexa. It was really bad.” Clarke’s whole face is wobbly now and Lexa knows she’s trying really hard not to break down crying.

Lexa frowns and tries to fight with her arm to do more than lift an inch but she loses that battle quickly so she settles for squeezing Clarke’s hand as hard as she can. She doesn’t think it’s much, but Clarke breathes in a shaky breath and then she calms down a bit.

“How—” Lexa coughs, her dry throat making the words almost impossible to come out. Clarke hands her a glass of water and she sucks through the straw gratefully. “How— long?”

“Twenty-six days.”

Lexa’s eyes widen with surprise but then she breaks out in as big a smile as she can manage.

Clarke frowns at her. “Lex? You alright?”

Lexa’s smile grows bigger and bigger and bigger and then she’s laughing, small little laughs that hurt like hell but she doesn’t care.

Twenty-six days.

That means it’s the 28th of August.
She tries to whoop in joy and then that comes out like a weird sort of wheeze so she has to laugh at herself before calming down, a huge smile plastered on her face.

“I did it,” she whispers through her grin. “You’re alive.”

Clarke frowns at her in confusion and then, slowly, as if seeing a movie in slow motion, Lexa watches as all the pieces fall into place and the moment it clicks — Clarke’s eyes widening comically, lips parting in shock.

“You stopped it? You ended the loops?”

Lexa’s grin grows impossibly wider. “I did.”

Clarke whoops loudly enough for both of them.

Then Lexa can see the elation visibly dwindling as Clarke fully processes what happened. Clarke’s eyes narrow and her eyes glare menacingly. Lexa gulps.

“Do you mean to tell me that you knew I was supposed to die that day and didn’t tell me anything?”

“Well—”

“And that the reason you ended it was because you had to almost die?”

Lexa mumbles under her breath, eyes fixed on her broken body.

“Can you repeat that?”

Lexa looks up, meets Clarke’s unflinching eyes, says, “I thought I would die.”
Clarke goes from flushed with anger to deathly pale in a millisecond. Then she visibly swallows, takes some steadying breaths, and very calmly says, “Lexa. Be very glad that you’ve broken more bones than I could recite because otherwise I would kick your ass so bad right now you’d wish you had died.”

“Clarke—”

“I’m telling Anya. Just wait until you’re recovered.”

Well then. Clearly some people don’t play fair. Lexa is very much regretting that she didn’t keep her mouth shut.

Later, when Clarke is much calmer, though no less angry, and has spent a long, long time lecturing Lexa about the unacceptability of her life choices, Clarke asks, “Why didn’t you die, then? From what you said — which, we’ll still be having words about, Woods — but you said I wasn’t supposed to die because you thought you were?”

Clarke doesn’t look pleased by the idea one bit. In fact, looks very much like she would rather keep repeating the loops than have Lexa run even the slightest risk of dying. Which is very much what Lexa has been feeling all along, so she’s not going to apologize for protecting her girlfriend — especially not after failing to do so over and over and over again when the solution was apparently so simple.

(She’d never say that out loud though, cannot even begin to imagine Clarke’s face as she proclaims that Lexa almost dying would’ve been the easiest thing ever to fix their problem.)

If only she’d thought about it before, if she’d asked for help sooner… Well. Things are what they are. At least it’s all over now.

That thought brings a smile to her lips that is so relieved, so weightless, that she can’t actually bring herself to be upset about the risks she took to get here.

“I don’t know,” Lexa says, the words coming out with a sigh. “Maybe I was wrong? Maybe I was
just supposed to be there with you? To make things go as they should have? Or, I don’t know, whoever’s in charge of this whole thing took pity on me?”

Her tone shows how skeptical she is of that, but the truth is, she just doesn’t care.

She’d asked Maria, of course, in between tears and pleas, had asked her over and over again, ‘Why? Just— Why?’ But, of course, the woman had no real answer. None of them would ever have one. It was all just guessing and wishful thinking to save themselves from certain madness.

Maria had called it divine intervention. “We’re a very god loving people, you see. We have a saying, ‘God writes right with crooked lines.’ It means that the road may be tortuous, but there’s a path to be followed that will lead you straight.”

Lexa had raised a dubious eyebrow, not wanting to offend but still reluctant to accept it, but Maria had just chuckled, amused. “You can think of it however you wish, Lexa,” she’d said, “But maybe consider that it is just the universe righting its wrongs, readjusting the currents so the flow is left undisturbed. Fate.”

That was when Lexa had had the ridiculous self-awareness that reminded her that even if she was much older than Maria, she was still far from the stereotypical wise old person image, serenely sitting in her garden feeling the wind blow or listening to the crickets or something. Perhaps if she made it out of her own personal hell, she would also start sprouting philosophically-sounding sage words to tearful women in beach resorts.

But in the end, whatever it is, what or whoever is responsible for all of this — and she doesn’t think she’ll ever figure it out, doesn’t think she ever can — it means that it finally worked.

Lexa is free. Free for the first time in one hundred and twenty-eight years.

For the first time in longer than she can remember, she doesn’t know what comes next, has absolutely no idea what her future holds let alone anyone else’s. The world is just as much a mystery as it was always supposed to be. Just as scary.

She loves it.

“I don’t know, Clarke. And I don’t actually care,” she says with a smile, fingers laced with
Clarke’s. She squeezes lightly and Clarke gives her a fond look. “But I’m free. *We’re* free.”

Clarke’s smile in return is the most beautiful sight in the whole world.

“So, can I buy you that ring now that I’m not doomed to die?”

Lexa blames the too-casual tone of Clarke’s voice and the sluggish state of her post-comatose brain for how long it takes her to process that question.

And then she smiles, cries possibly a bit more than a lot, and curses her broken body for not being able to throw herself at Clarke like she wants to.

Clarke does the throwing for her, though, so it turns out alright in the end.

Lexa sits down on her favorite porch chair with a tired sigh, exhaustion seeping through her bones.

The closed front door allows for some blissful silence and her brain thanks her for it, finally able to calm down and listen to herself think.

She’s too old for this shit, she thinks to herself in amusement. Way, way too old.

Leaning back on the cushioned chair, she lets her eyes fall shut and breathes out another sigh, this one in contentment.

She loves it here. Loves the peacefulness of the countryside and the smell of pine trees and the chirps of the birds. Loves the house she built with Clarke, the first one that was just *theirs*, loves all the memories they’ve shared over the years.

What she does not particularly love is a house full of loud children and grandchildren and too many friends and family to count.
Gosh, she’s turned into a proper old woman. All she’s missing is a long list of aches and pains and stiff joints. Well, she does have some of those, but they’re only a few and she is proud of how in shape she is, at least.

“There you are, love.”

Lexa opens her eyes and meets Clarke’s sparkling blue ones, face gentle and loving with a hint of fond amusement. All in all, Clarke’s go-to face for dealing with Lexa most of the time.

“Just needed five minutes of quiet,” Lexa tells her, and pats the chair next to hers in invitation.

Clarke walks over with only a slight limp, her new hip healing particularly well. Lexa often wonders how Clarke is the one with more joint problems after the major car crash they were in, which left Lexa as the one with more broken bones than she cares to count, but she supposes working as a doctor takes its toll on the body.

Clarke sits down and hums, hand rubbing her left hip absently.

“You might have had the right idea, Lex.”

“I always have the best ideas.”

Clarke snorts. “I’ll refrain for reminding you of that venture into the woods a couple of months ago, then.”

Lexa gives her an affronted look and Clarke’s only response is to smirk wider. The traitor.

“I should get a divorce,” Lexa grumbles.

“You could, then I’d just have to ask you to marry me again,” Clarke wittily replies.

Lexa rolls her eyes and allows the smile she’d been fighting to seep through.
“Fine. I’ll stay in this harrowing marriage, even if you are a horrible wife.”

“You love me.”

Lexa’s smile grows and she twines her fingers with Clarke’s. “That I do. More than words could ever say.”

“You’ve gotten sappier in your old age,” Clarke quips with an eye roll, but Lexa knows she not so secretly loves it when Lexa gets all sappy, as she calls it.

“I’m allowed. Perks of being old as fuck.”

Clarke snorts out a laugh then hums in agreement. “And how does it feel? Being ‘old as fuck’?”

“Like I’m the oldest person in the house,” Lexa replies with an exaggerated huff. “Nay, the planet.”

Clarke laughs merrily. “But you are, my love.” Then her eyes glint in mischief and her face does that particular thing which has Lexa groaning preemptively. “My Bicentenary Commander.”

Lexa groans again, more heartfelt this time, and hits her head softly against the wall. “I will never live that down, will I? It was once, one moment of drunken weakness more than forty years ago.”

Clarke laughs at her antics but doesn’t look the least bit persuaded to take pity on her and finally stop with the teasing. Of course she doesn’t.

“Sorry, Commander, it is what it is.”

Lexa throws a pillow at her face.

The door bursts open and Anya comes out, wheeling Raven who’d given up on walking after the
first thirty minutes of yelling at the children to mind her bad leg.

“There you losers are. We were wondering if the party was over without anyone telling us.”

“You have to tells us when it’s over. Your grandchildren are the spawn of the devil, I want to be able to go home as soon as I can,” Raven says, though Lexa knows she’s mostly joking. Mostly. She actually loves the children but they truly are little hell minions. Only Anya can keep a firm hand on them all, and that’s because even the kids’ parents are still scared of their Aunt Anya to this day.

“Blame the Griffin genes, Raven, my egg produced a perfectly normal daughter.”

Clarke smacks her upside the head. “Luca and Leo are perfectly normal sons,” she says in mock outrage. “And you know very well our daughter is anything other than normal.”

Which, fair point. Sophia is a wild sort of spirit who prefers to spend more time lost in her own world than dealing with reality. But still, Sophia’s child is nothing compared to the other four grandchildren, so Lexa maintains her superiority in the gene pool. At least to herself.

Anya snorts. “Right. Anyways, we’re staying out here for a bit. Watch your feet.”

She wheels Raven in next to Clarke and then sits down on the swing, remarkably agile for her age.

“I feel like we’re missing something,” Raven says.

“You’re right.” Anya whistles loudly and a few seconds later loud feet come running out of the house. “You, pink hair, fetch us some cake, will you? Pigtails, help your brother. Freckles, bring us some drinks. The good punch, and don’t try to sneak a sip or I’ll know,” she adds with a fierce glare.

They all nod obediently and march off at a run, returning not five minutes later with everything.

“Good kids. Now off with you, and don’t tell anyone where we are!”
Lexa snorts in amusement and Clarke shakes her head in exasperation. “I need to learn those tricks.”

“You’re their grandmother, you’re supposed to be soft,” Anya tells her dismissively.

Sometimes Lexa wonders if Anya and Raven never had kids because Anya refuses to be seen as soft, but that’s a comment she wisely keeps to herself.

Raven digs into the cake with gusto and makes such pornographic sounds that Lexa has to have a slice as well, even though she’s still way too full from lunch.

“So, how does it feel to be fucking old, little sis?”

Clarke snorts. “I asked her the same thing.”

"Need I remind you we're all old? I'm actually the youngest in this room." Lexa smirks and the other three snort.

"Yeah, keep kidding yourself, Lexa," Anya says, swinging carelessly with her drink dangling precariously from her grip.

“The timeless Commander,” Raven teases, chocolate-covered fork pointing at Lexa.

Lexa groans. “Please stop. I beg of you. My only birthday wish.”

“Never going to happen, Lexi poo.”

Lexa sends Anya a glare but she just doesn’t have the energy to put any venom in it. The chocolate cake is too good, old age is making her softer.

Ugh. She’s losing qualities by the day.
“Anyway, this is a big birthday, baby. Feel any different?”

“Well, I’m certainly glad that I don’t look two hundred, that’s for sure.” Not that seventy-two is her best look either, but she thinks she pulls it off quite well.

“I’m sure your people feel the same, Madam President,” Clarke says with amusement. She always says it like that. *Your people.* Like it means more than just being their president for almost eight years.

Lexa supposes it does, at that. She feels responsible for the wellbeing of the whole country, but she still struggles to comprehend some days how much the people actually love her.

Retirement will be strange but more than welcome, is all she knows.

“It’s nice,” Lexa says after a beat. “It was always kind of my limit and… I didn’t think I’d surpass it for the longest time.”

Clarke squeezes her hand and Lexa sends her a comforting smile. They’ve had years and years to deal with that particular pain, but it’s still a touchy topic for Clarke.

“I’d certainly never expected to have actually aged in a fashion somewhat resembling my true age, but it’s been really fucking amazing.”

“I could pass on the old bones,” Raven quips, eliciting a laugh from all of them.

“I wouldn’t mind a few less wrinkles either,” Clarke adds, and Lexa shakes her head.

“You’re still gorgeous.”

Clarke sends her a fond eye roll. “You’re just a besotted old fool.”
“And quite blind,” Anya adds.

Clarke throws her slipper right at Anya’s face.

Raven burst out laughing and Lexa immediately follows.

“I think that means she’s allowed to say it but you’re not, An,” Lexa says in between laughs.

Anya glares at them halfheartedly then shrugs and takes another bite of the cake, Clarke’s slipper lying innocently next to her.

They quiet down, enjoying their cake and the peaceful mood, only occasionally interrupted by a louder sound coming from the house. Lexa can only hope that her demonic grandchildren aren’t destroying her house.

But that’s a problem for a few minutes from now, when they decide to join the fray and return to the party where her children will surround her with warm hugs and gentle teasing and her friends will make fun of her age and her grandchildren will try to drive her crazy but then quiet down when she agrees to tell them about one of her many adventures.

Now she leans back, eats her favorite chocolate cake which Costia makes every year, and holds her wife’s hand.

And lives.

Perhaps, if she’s extra lucky, she’ll make it to her second hundredth birthday party.

Chapter End Notes

So this is it. Thank you so much for all your patience and kind words along the way and I hope it was worth the (ridiculous) wait? Let me know what you think? <3
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!