The Sound and the Fury

by Elegy (Elegyy)

Summary

Jus drein jus daun...

Notes

Seasons 2 and 3 are restyled...
Mount Weather doesn't exist and some of the characters are still alive.
This story is my tribute to the most badass lesbian warrior ever, and to one of the most interesting and strong representations of lesbian relationships I could discover, the relationship which allowed me to write again after 12 years of creative void.
Thanks to Broody and Timinou, my faithful friends for beta-reading me for the French version, and thanks to Lia Weisflog for the English version.
"[..] no battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools."

William Faulkner. "The sound and the fury"

Night had fallen on the hill and in the valley tens of fires were lightning the Skaikru camp. Careless laughters and shouts were carried by the wind, strong and freezing, which hardly moved the long edges of her black coat. From the top of the hill, her eyes encircled by war paint embraced the view with impassiveness. Only the reflection of the moon on the two swords worn on her back could have revealed her presence to the Sky people.

A pout of despise appeared on her lips in front of the arrogance and recklessness of this people who, barely arrived, had decimated a Trikru village populated with modest and defenceless farmers.

They have to pay.

_Jus drein, jus daun._

_Blood must have blood._

She closed her eyes for an instant, restored calm inside herself in order to better face the roar to come. Then she turned away and mounted her horse to reach the main path.

Concealed in the dark of the forest, hundreds of warriors were waiting for her.

Octavia had disappeared for four months and the extensive research conducted by her brother Bellamy in the company of Finn, Monty and Murphy had remained unsuccessful. Worse, it had proved disastrous. The only clue they had found was her bloody coat in a Grounder's house in a village.

They had questioned the Grounder and the other villagers, but whether they did not know their language or they did not want to reveal anything, they had stayed stubbornly silent.

A desperate rage had seized Bellamy, and he had begun to relentlessly hit the man who seemed to be their leader. Some had wanted to defend him, and chaos had started.

An assault rifle had spewed death for endless seconds, slaughtering men, women and children in a
deluge of fire. When silence had returned, they could only fathom the magnitude of the disaster, dazed, their ears left half deaf by the shots, only perceiving a strange mechanical sound.

The sound made by Finn while pulling the trigger of his unloaded weapon, his eyes mad and his body shaking.

When they came back, Finn had been locked up in a room of the shuttle while waiting to find what to do with him.

Murphy and Bellamy would visit him every day, but they could only observe his mind was tipping into madness. Only the sedatives that Abby, the doctor of the colony, administered to him managed to make him pronounce a few coherent sentences.

Recently, a part of the adults from the space station had succeeded in joining them on Earth, and Marcus Kane had taken command of Arkadia, formerly known as Camp Jaha. Subsequent to the massacre, he had forbidden Bellamy to undertake further research and the latter was champing at the bit. To contain his anxiety, he participated in the fortification of the camp and supervised the operations. A two-meter high outer wall now bordered their camp of tents and small buildings made with wood and recovered metal which surrounded the shuttle. Raven was still working on the production of bombs to protect it.

Bellamy got closer to the central camp fire placed in front of the shuttle around which the survivors of the hundred would meet each night, away from the adults. Many had already gone to bed, but laughter and talks persisted despite the late hour. He greeted Murphy and Jasper who were sharing a bottle of alcohol, and continued on his way.

Bellamy headed for a greater and farer of the center building. When he entered, he saw Clarke stitching a cut on the belly of an injured person. She seemed to be exhausted.

"Hello. You're not gonna sleep?"

Focused on her task, Clarke did not even look up.

"Unless you know how to suture, I don't think I can allow myself.

Somewhere, a man began to moan. Bellamy realized he was one of the Grounders they had rescued. Some had survived Finn's bullets thanks to the combined treatment from Abby and her daughter Clarke who had learnt a lot alongside her when they still were in the Ark.

"Nobody can replace you? How long haven't you slept?"

Exasperated, Clarke abruptly rose.

"In case you haven't noticed, I'm trying to fix your screw-up, Bellamy! So, if you have nothing more important to tell me, you can get lost!"

"Okay, okay, sorry..."

Bellamy retreated hurriedly, not without a last guilty look at the Grounders. When he left the infirmary, one of the guards posted on the surrounding wall called out to him.

"Bellamy, there's something strange there."

"What's up?", he asked when he arrived next to him.
"I'm often assigned here, and, at night, at the end of the path over there, usually I can see stars through the trees... now, everything is black, it's weird..."

Bellamy scrutinized the darkness in the direction the guard indicated to him. When at last he understood what screened the trees, it was already too late.

The Commander unsheathed one of her swords and slowly turned to her warriors waiting for her orders.

"Jus drein, jus daun!"

While the shout was repeated over and over as a haunting prayer by her army, she nodded at the two women riding at her side, then rushed forward in full gallop, yelling, her eyes filled with rage.
"WARNING! WARNING!!" Bellamy screamed when he saw hundreds of Grounders arrive at the camp.

One of the guards managed to trigger the alarm created by Raven before collapsing, run through by a spear.

The surrounding walls resisted, but the Grounders were passing over them with ladders. The assault rifles cracked, but the soldiers were beginning to bend in the face of the number of warriors. Arkadia's men were running in all directions, seized by panic, forgetting the instructions given in the event of an attack.

Bellamy was paralyzed by this new chaos: stupefied, he observed the fierce battles, the flames of the fires spreading, the pounding of the hooves, the screams of pain and agony, the tears, the shots which were diminishing, the sound and the fury everywhere. It was only when a warrior rushed at him and fell down at his feet that Bellamy roused from his torpor.

"What the fuck are you doing, Bellamy?" shouted Murphy who had just saved his life. "We must clear off and hide in the shuttle!"

They started to run towards the shuttle when Bellamy abruptly stopped. In front of him stood a warrior who was fighting against several soldiers. A warrior he knew. Or thought to know.

Octavia.

He had never seen her fight like that. He had never seen her fight at all. She was spinning, her swords cleaving the bodies with dexterity and agility, as if it had always been that way, as if it was normal to cut a man in half or to slit his throat without even granting him a glance.

He ended up shouting her name, and when her eyes made terrifying by the tribal paints met his, he understood she was no longer one of them. He saw though a moment of hesitation go through them, and on her lips he could read the words she silently articulated: "Run away".

Inside the shuttle, Marcus and Abby were trying to make a decision without giving in to panic while soldiers were fighting in front of the door to prevent the Grounders from entering.

"We must shut the door! We won't keep them out any longer!" Bellamy let out when he arrived.

"And then what? They're gonna besiege us and we'll have to get out sooner or later!" Marcus answered.

"We have to surrender, we haven't got the choice anymore," Abby added. "There have already been so many deaths. And not everybody could come inside the shuttle... I... did not see Clarke, someone did?"

"Close the door!!!" Murphy yelled, while dragging Jasper's unconscious body.
Raven, seated at the controls, was observing the fights on the video screens thanks to the cameras installed around the shuttle. With a sigh, she made the decision for them and pushed the door close button.

"I've got another solution," she said. "And you're not gonna like it. I placed bombs in the camp. They're ready."

In the infirmary, Clarke had heard the alarm, but she refused to give up the injured people for whom she was responsible. She glanced out the small opening used as a window and understood with terror that the Grounders had come to take revenge. And amid the sound of gunshots, of harrowing cries, of clashing swords, she heard a voice.

"*Jus drein, jus daun*..."

She turned around. On his bed, one of the Grounders was smiling at her. Then, another one carried on.

"*Jus drein, jus daun*..."

Another one.

"*Jus drein, jus daun*..."

"*Jus drein, jus daun*..."

Suddenly the door flew open violently, letting the smoke of the fires which were ravaging the camp rush in. Like a ghostly silhouette, a warrior slowly emerged from the smoke, her bloody swords pointed at the ground, her long black coat trailing behind her, a mask of war paint making her resolute and enraged gaze even more frightening.

Clarke remained petrified, watching the warrior moving towards her as in slow motion, staring at these green eyes filled with sparkling fury, while the litany resumed, *Jus drein, jus daun, jus drein, jus daun*, keeping the pace of each of her steps towards Clarke, *jus drein*, another step, *jus daun*, a cruel and faint smile on her lips, *jus drein*, the swords raising, *jus daun*, the pace accelerating, *jus drein*, the warrior who rushed forward in a deadly leap, *jus daun*, her shrill cry, *jus drein*, an explosion, *jus daun*...

And nothingness.

When Clarke opened her eyes, she took some time to understand where she was. Then she remembered. The Grounders’ attack, the warrior, the explosion. The infirmary had been blown up, but the debris had miraculously formed a sort of arch above her, preventing her from being crushed. And, ironically, the body of the warrior who had wanted to kill her and which now was lying across hers had also protected her. She pushed it back to free herself and began to verify her own condition. Apart from her half deaf ears which made her suffer terribly because of the blast effect, she did not
seem to be injured. Through the suspended dust and the few available light, she seemed to see a large
stain of a dark and sticky liquid on her legs, but except from some benign scratches, she did no have
any major wound. If it was blood, it did not belong to her.

She turned then to the warrior and realized that blood was spurting from her thigh. Which meant she
was not dead yet.

Clarke did not hesitate and rushed towards her to estimate the damage. A piece of metal must have
stuck into the thigh and she had caused the hemorrhage when she had pushed the Grounder's body
back. She took off her belt to apply a makeshift tourniquet, but when she was about to tighten it
around the wound, a firm hand grabbed her wrist, preventing her from continuing her gesture.

"Ai gonplei ste odon..." My fight is over...

Clarke did not understand the Grounders' language. She only saw the warrior's look, still as intense,
this woman from whom, even near death, was emanating an inexplicable aura of power. She was
struck by the beauty of her face under the black war paints which were running down and mixing
with blood and sweat.

"No... I won't let you die", she whispered, drawing away from the pressure of these green eyes.

She pushed the warrior's hand back, and tightened the tourniquet firmly, making her let out a muffled
cry of pain. Then she tore a part of her own tee-shirt that she attached as best she could to the wound
as a dressing, and looked around mechanically in search of a disinfectant product which could have
escaped destruction.

Obviously there was nothing reachable or unbroken anymore, they were stuck under the wreckage.
Clarke could not do anything more, and she was seized by despondency. They were going to die
here, buried like rats, and asphyxiated by the lack of air. Everybody might be already dead anyway.
Thinking about it, Clarke could not hold back her tears which drew furrows on her face stained with
dust.

That is when a hand was placed gently on hers, getting her out of her prostration. Clarke looked
intensely in the warrior's eyes, suddenly drawing strength from them.

No, she would not give up now, she had to find a way out. She pondered for a while. In front of her,
she could feel the outdoor air, so, with desperate energy, she began removing plank by plank,
fragment by fragment, following the direction of the air, glancing from time to time at the warrior
who, sometimes was observing her, sometimes seemed to have fallen into unconsciousness. She had
to be careful, because everything could collapse again on them like a house of carts, and the moving
of the debris stirred up so much dust than the air was becoming more and more unbreathable.

Hours went by, Clarke was exhausted, but her efforts paid off, and at last she could get out into the
open air. What she saw then filled her with dread.

The camp was devastated, everywhere the fires were consuming the remains of the buildings blown
out by the bomb blasts, scattered bodies littered the ground, Tree and Sky men mixed up in a
macabre dance, agony cries of the injured reverberated in the silence of the night, everything was
ravaged.

Clarke looked for the shuttle and noticed with relief that the door had been closed. There might be
survivors. There must have been. It was certainly Raven who had triggered the bombs from the
inside.
Outside, there were also people standing. A group of Grounders were picking up their wounded and trying to organise themselves.

With tears in her eyes, Clarke retraced her steps, and putting the Grounder's arm around her shoulders, she lifted the injured warrior who managed to walk, putting weight on her good leg. Step after step, the two women finally extracted themselves from their rubble prison.

"Mochof..." Thanks... The warrior whispered while wincing in pain.

They proceeded towards the Grounders' group, Clarke still supporting the warrior she felt on the brink of faint. As they got closer, Clarke perceived the agitation growing among the Grounders, their fingers suddenly pointed at her, some cries, of relief it seemed, getting bigger, and one word repeated on every lip. When she stopped at their level, surrounded with threatening spears, she was astounded.

For among the two warriors on horseback who seemed to be the leaders, she recognized Octavia.

While considering, disconcerted, the ferocious appearance of her friend, her swords covered by the blood of her own people, her icy and terrifying glare under the black warpaints, she distinguished finally the word that all Grounders were yelling, but that she did not know the meaning.

Heda.
It had been roughly three days since Clarke had been thrown into jail roughly. She had neither eaten nor drunk, and the lack of water was becoming so unbearable that she had to lick the rain drops running from the window. There were other prisoners from her camp in the other cells, men that she only knew by sight. Some were injured, and she had even seen one die in front of her, helpless. She felt so weak and tired.

A bitter smile appeared on her lips. What is the point of surviving a bomb, a warrior's attack, fire, suffocation, what is the use of saving the one who wanted to kill her, if it was to end up dying of thirst in a rotten cell?

Lexa had remained unconscious for two days, exhausted by the blood loss and artificially maintained in sleep by the milk of the poppy administered in high amounts by her healers. They had stitched the wound and the injury would soon be only a scar thanks to the magical properties of the Natblida's dark blood.

When she finally woke up, lying in her bed, her mind was still confused and her body a myriad of unsuspected pains. She tried to sit up, but she was immediately seized by dizziness. She clenched her teeth, and removed the sheet covering her legs, displaying the bandage and a multitude of contusions.

"Hod op ! No ! Heda ! You can't move ! You must rest!" Indra, one of her generals, lectured her rushing to her.

"How long it's been since..."

"Almost three days, Heda, your wound is nearly healed, but you're still very weak."

Lexa did not want to reveal it, but she had just realized that she did not recall the events leading to this injury. She vaguely remembered the attack on the Skaikru camp, the explosion, but nothing which had preceded or followed.

Lexa put a foot on the ground and stood up, but her head started to spin and her wounded leg was throbbing painfully.

"Heda, no!" Indra implored catching her before she fell down.

"Em pleni!" Enough! Lexa shouted while stabilizing. "I'll rest when I'm dead. Help me get dressed."

"The Council shouldn't see you so enfeebled..." pleaded Titus, the Flame Keeper, who had just appeared on the threshold of the room.

"I'm not summoning the Council, I just want to meet my generals and a situation report. I've lost so much time, and your silence about it is already revealing, Indra."

Indra lowered her head in front of the disapproving look tinted with contempt given by the commander, then helped her to put on one of her martial outfits.
"Drink that, Heda. It will boost your energy."

Lexa took the cup Titus held out to her and gulped it down while Indra was fastening her shoulder pad, one of the defining marks of the Commander. The haze which had invaded her mind almost immediately dispersed, but not her partial amnesia. She seized her two swords, sharply placed them back in their sheaths, and headed for the throne room with a more confident gait.

When she arrived, crossing the room in great strides, all her generals bent their knees, their heads down in sign of deference. Octavia could not prevent herself from lifting up her eyes discreetly in order to admire the presence and strength emanating from this woman not much older than herself. She had arrived dying just a few days ago, she now stood in her throne in front of them, looking more powerful than ever, her eyes intense and determined, but in which Octavia could read a touch of irritation she could not explain. She observed the other generals, Gustus, Anya, Indra, Titus the Flamekeeper, and also some seconds like herself. All of them were surprised to see Lexa so strong, alive and resolute, as if nothing had happened.

"Indra. I want a summary of the situation", Lexa began.

"We killed a hundred enemies. Several explosions... surprised us..."

"How many men did we lose?"

"Around a hundred, Heda..." Indra conceded swallowing nervously. "They took refuge in their ship... It was impossible to force their door open, we had to give up... and you had disappeared..."

"What happened really?"

Indra cast a worried glance at the other generals, then continued courageously.

"There was total chaos, Heda... their bombs wiped us out... us... and them too... they killed their own people... those who couldn't have fled..."

Something was throbbing in Lexa's mind, something which wanted to emerge from the depths of her consciousness, and which was desperately blocked.

"What happened to me?" She finally spat.

"I lost sight of you during the fights... then at the moment when we were cornering them, there were several explosions... We thought you were dead somewhere... Then... You... You came with... a Skaikru... you were severely injured..."

Lexa took her head into her hands, her mind whirling, the memories coming back like flashes, a Skaikru, the smoke... Jus drein, jus daun, the blonde woman in front of her, her blue eyes, magnificent and terrified, Jus drein, some injured men from her people, jus daun, men who pushed her to revenge, jus drein, these very men she had healed, jus daun, her blind rage, jus drein, the explosion and the darkness. The images burst into her head. She recalled everything, the woman she had wanted to kill had saved her by stopping the hemorrhage of her gaping wound, her desperate efforts to clear herself a way through the debris for hours and hours while they were suffocating in the stale air, the woman who had carried her, out of energy, to her people, the one who-
Lexa suddenly rose from her throne, and with an imperious and terrible voice, she exclaimed while fearing the answer:

"Where is she?"

"Heda?"

"Where is the woman who saved me?"

Lexa's voice had become husky, filled with inexpressible rage, each word articulated with a sharp dagger thrusting into the heads of the responsible generals who tried to avoid their commander's lethal gaze.

"In jail..." Indra whispered.

Octavia shuddered when she observed the Commander's eyes fix upon Indra's, those eyes which could have crushed her face, tore it to shreds, burned and dissolved it, as anger and fury filled them, overwhelmed them, despite the apparent composure of her immobile body, her hands resting on the throne, those hands that Octavia saw slightly shiver though.

"You imprisoned... the woman... who saved my life?" questioned Lexa who was struggling not to yield to her murderous rage, and drive her sword through the heart of her most faithful general.

"Skaikru are killers, Heda. They slaughtered our people", Indra pleaded, aware of the weakness of her words.

"She could have decided to let me bleed to death... she could have decided to leave me under the rubble and to hide... She took the risk to bring me to you without knowing if you wouldn't kill her... And to thank her, you've let her rot in jail for three days?!"

Indra's body seemed to be shrinking as Lexa accentuated her words in a more and more dry and burning voice. Each of the officers was holding their breaths, internally relieved of not being in the general's place.

"Bring her here", Lexa ordered, at the end of a long time during which each general could savor the rest of their lives.

A mortal silence persisted until Clarke was brought tied up, gagged and mistreated by the guards, then thrown to the Commander's feet.

Lexa's rage was so intense that she had to close her eyes a moment in order not to slice the throat of the guards who only obeyed the general's orders.

"Lus em au." Untie her, Lexa whispered.

"Heda!" Indra protested.

The glance Lexa cast to Indra made her understand that she would never be her second any longer if she opened her mouth once again, and Indra lowered her eyes, mortified.

When the guard freed Clarke from her bonds and her gag, she only could fall down, defeated by tiredness and weakness. However, she raised her head in a last-ditch effort of defiance to hold the gaze of the woman she had saved and turned out to be the Grounders' Commander.

"Chon you bilaik? Who are you?" Lexa asked.
Clarke stared at those green eyes, captivating, intense and haunting, the eyes of the woman who would have killed her without hesitation, the one who had thanked her, but made her rot into jail, who had slaughtered her friends, her people, the one who-

"Klark Griffin kom Skaikru!!"

Octavia rose and moved forward, proud and terrified by her own audacity.

"Klark Griffin kom Skaikru. Heda kom Skaikru. The one who led and saved us when we arrived on Earth. The one who has healed us. The one who saved your life, Heda, while you were killing our... her people."

Lexa looked hard at Octavia for a long time, hesitating between punishment for her impudence and admiration for her boldness.

"If she's their commander, Heda, she's responsible for the death of the villagers and of all our warriors!" Anya accused.

"Ripa nou ge teik in hir." Murderers are not welcome here! Titus shouted.

"Teik ai frag em op." Let me kill her, Gustus pleaded.

"Osir jos beda frag em op." We should just kill her, Indra added.

"Wamplei gon Skaikru!" Death to the Sky people! Declared a second.

"Em pleni! GON YO WE!" Enough! LEAVE US! Lexa exploded.

The generals had never heard their Commander yell in this way, and they ran away to the exit as if lightning was about to hit them. Octavia stayed, ignoring the Commander's fury. She caught Lexa's look, a look mixed with anger and acknowledgement.

She finally slipped away, leaving the two women alone.
Clarke was disoriented, disturbed both by Octavia's risky words and her very presence here. It was as if she belonged henceforth to the Grounders. She was also troubled by the tense exchange between the generals and the Commander in a language she did not understand. She could not comprehend the reason for the Commander's wrath, but she herself was angry. Angry with the way she had been treated, angry for all the lost lives among her people.

On her knees before Lexa, she did not know how to react, her throat so dry she was not able to pronounce a word.

Lexa, still standing in front of her throne, took a deep and long breath to calm down, then she slowly went down the platform, staring at the woman kneeling before her. She was in a pitiable condition, her hair disheveled, her clothes torn, dirt, blood and sweat mixing on her body and her tired face. Yet, she found her dreadfully beautiful. Her blue gaze shone with the rage and the determination which characterized the leaders.

She did not fear the Commander. And it was extremely destabilizing for Lexa. Usually nobody stared at her in such an insolent way. Clarke did not bat an eyelid. Frowning, her eyes were defying Lexa, who felt a strange feeling, mixed with curiosity, amusement and something she did not want to define, but which created a twinge of pain inside her stomach.

Lexa approached slowly until she offered her hand to help Clarke get back on her feet. Clarke accepted the outstretched hand and picked herself up with difficulty.

"Ai laik heda Leksa kom Trigedakru", Lexa introduced herself with a surprisingly gentle voice after her previous anger.

"I don't... understand..." Clarke articulated with effort.

Lexa let go of her hand and turned back to look for a water glass that she offered to Clarke. Continuously staring at the Commander's green eyes, which she found to be so intense even without warpaints, Clarke snatched the glass out of Lexa's hands and drank it in one gulp.

"I'm Lexa, Commander of the Trikru, the people of the Trees", she translated.

"More." Clarke handed the glass to Lexa, perfectly aware of the limits of the etiquette she was overstepping blithely considering the rank of the woman before her, and hardly surprised that she could speak the same language as her.

Lexa could not prevent herself from giving a faint smile at the provocation, but she remained silent, and picked up the carafe of water she presented to Clarke. The young woman grabbed it and drank directly from the carafe, some water running down her lips, her chin, then her neck. Lexa followed the trickles of water with her eyes as if it was a captivating sight and she felt the pleasant pain again in her stomach, revived and unsettling. Clarke sensed the confusion in the Grounder, suddenly realizing the precarious and unexpected ascendency she had gained over her.

"Klark kom Skaikru, I'm sorry," Lexa said while swallowing. "I'm not the one who gave the order to lock you up. I didn't know..."

Clarke dropped the carafe which broke on the ground and dangerously moved towards Lexa, their faces only a few centimeters from each other, an accusing finger on her sternum.
"But it was you who attacked my people and would have cut my throat if there hadn't been an explosion!"

Lexa shuddered slightly at the touch of Clarke's finger. Such a gesture would have caused instant death for anyone else, but Lexa took it in silence, trying to conceal the confusion generated by this imposed proximity, but nevertheless betrayed by her gaze which was getting lost endlessly between Clarke's lips and eyes.

Then the Commander inside her regained control. In a split second, she seized Clarke's hand, and with a skillful lock joint, she twisted her wrist and her elbow, forcing her to submit and kneel in order not to break her bones. Heda leaned to Clarke's face which was contorted with pain.

"You were the ones who massacred defenseless villagers who had done nothing to you... You were the ones who decided to trigger those bombs which have decimated you as much as us... You have arrived like conquerors, without ever caring there were people before you. People who have never left the Earth and who have fought for their survival. People you have decided they were worth less than you and that you were allowed to trample on them, to despise their rules and their customs, and take their lives."

Clarke's eyes lost their brightness and clouded with tears. She turned away, shame and guilt engulfing her. Lexa released the lock on her wrist, immediately relieving the pain, and returned to her throne.

A long moment of silence settled between the two women who did not look at each other anymore, each one lost in their thoughts.

Clarke, still on the floor, ended wiping her tears away and got back on her feet.

"What's gonna happen now?"

When Lexa's gaze staring at the void turned back to fix upon Clarke, it has become stern and cold.

"I could kill you now. For all the limits you overstepped when you spoke to me."

Lexa pulled out her dagger and made it twirl nonchalantly in her hand.

"I could execute you according to our rituals to avenge the death of the innocents you massacred."

She slightly tilted her head to the side, as if she was weighing the different options, her eyes contemplating her dagger.

"I could hold you prisoner and exchange you for the ones who are responsible for it. Or for your impressive weapons."

When Lexa's icy gaze dived back into Clarke's, a chill ran down the young woman's spine. For the first time, she did not dare to speak, and her self-assurance had evaporated away in front of the Commander's threatening presence.

"I could send thousands of men to crush you, and all your bombs wouldn't be enough to stop them."

Lexa stared fixedly at Clarke. She could see emotions changing in her eyes, from fear she had just gone to a kind of afflicted resignation.

"In all cases, the war will be ineluctable. In all cases, you'll lose. In all cases, our peoples will bleed. Again."
Lexa drove her dagger into one of the throne's arms and rose.

"I've succeeded in maintaining peace by uniting with difficulty the twelve clans of Grounders. I don't want a new war. In saving my life, you've made me question some of my certainties. You must help me, Heda Klark kom Skaikru."

The Commander had come closer and Clarke could see in her more softened gaze a glint of hope and anxiety pending her answer.

"I've never been Heda or Commander, if it's what it means... Octavia and some of them could have believed it, before the adults' arrival... before Chancellor Kane, because I took decisions when it was necessary... but I'm nothing... So how can I convince them... There were so many deaths, so much hatred on both sides..."

"Nothing is easy, but it's worth trying."

"I don't even know if there are survivors among my people, I don't know where to begin..."

"By death."

"Pardon?"

"You must give up to us the ones responsible for the massacre of the last village. When they're dead, we'll be able to consider peace. It's the only way."
Chapter 5

In the comfortable room she had been given, Clarke discovered a small tub filled with warm water and a profusion of food on a table. She had slipped into water with delight, and the tension in her body had immediately begun to flow back. Her eyes closed, she was trying to relax, but the images of her meeting with the Commander kept coming back in her mind. In a few minutes, this stunning and dangerous woman had aroused in her too many contradictory feelings that she could not control, that she did not have the time to analyze and that had left her even more exhausted than she had already been. She had thought she had perceived an identical confusion through the warrior's facade, but she had attributed it to her delicate political position. She had not understood the exact content of the words opposing the Commander to her generals, but she had sensed she was the bone of contention. And her anger both fascinated and terrified her, like in the infirmary when she had seen her moving towards her, her body and her gaze turned into a lethal and invincible weapon.

Someone knocked at the door, rousing Clarke from her thoughts. She abruptly got out of the bathtub and wrapped herself hurriedly in a towel when the door opened.

"Am I disturbing you?" Octavia asked with a mocking smile.

"You've never been taught to wait for people to tell you to come in?"

"I wanted to check if Heda hadn't cut your tongue, you can't stop yourself."

"Clearly, neither can you," Clarke replied, referring to the audacious speech to defend her.

An embarrassed silence settled between the two young women.

"I'm happy to see you safe and sound," Clarke admitted. "Bellamy's desperate, he..."

Clarke did not end her sentence. She did not even know if Bellamy was still alive.

"Nevermind," Octavia lied. "I'm no longer Skaikru. I've found my way among the Trikru. They've accepted me, and today I give my life to heda Leksa kom Trigedakru."

"Why?" Clarke asked, disturbed by the absolute veneration with which she had pronounced the Commander's name, whereas she used to defy authority incessantly when she was on the Ark and in camp Jaha.

"Because you haven't made room for me. Because you haven't taken me seriously."

Octavia paused, deliberately concealing her forbidden relationship with Lincoln, one of the Grounders, their struggle to be accepted among his people, her days and days of fight training in order to rise amid the warriors, her battle for becoming Indra's second, the numerous humiliations, pain and suffering, before receiving the ultimate reward in her eyes, the Commander's respect. And her trust.

"I'm happy to see you Clarke, but I didn't come for that. I came to warn you. I've gotten to know these people and their history. They've survived for a longer time than us. They've survived thanks to a line of commanders, the Natblida, chosen men and women whose particularity is to possess a magic dark blood. Former Commanders' memories are passed down to the new one, bringing him or her wisdom, strength and knowledge. I came to tell you not to underestimate heda Leksa kom Trigedakru. Lexa is the first Commander to have succeeded in uniting the twelve clans of Grounders who tore one another apart for years and to maintain this peace."
"I want you to really understand the situation, Clarke. Lexa has visibly trusted you, for a reason which escapes me, despite all her generals' opposition, and certainly against the opinion of the clans' Council if they were informed. You have to know that if Lexa decided to let the twelve clans loose on our people, they'd crush us like bugs. The few hundreds of warriors she sent to our camp was just an advance guard, she even didn't regard us as dangerous enough to talk to the Council about us."

Captivated by Octavia's account, Clarke had forgotten her tiredness. She understood better now some implications and the impact of Lexa's words. And the nearly mystical stature of the Commander.

"She wants to sacrifice those who slaughtered the Grounder village. Bellamy, Finn, Murphy, Monty..."

"It's the Grounders' justice. *Jus drein, jus daun.* Blood must have blood. They have to pay for their actions, otherwise the Grounders will never accept to make peace," Octavia answered laconically, as if Bellamy's possible death did not touch her.

"Actually... Only Finn killed... he's become crazy... he's been overwhelmed..."

Octavia concealed a sigh of relief.

"So, only Finn will have to die. But there is no alternative, Clarke, and you know it. If the hope you represent is up to what our Commander seems to see in it, then you'll have to look further than your feelings. It's no longer only a man's death. It's the survival of our peoples.

"I tell you again, Clarke. *Heda* never gives her trust blindly. Even less to an unknown enemy, and even if you saved her life. Even less against everybody's advice and while her people asked for vengeance. You have to deserve her trust, Clarke. What she gives you is exceptional. Don't disappoint her."

And on these words with heavy consequences, Octavia left the bedroom.

Clarke had not slept well, but nevertheless she had recovered little energy. Octavia's speech had overwhelmed her with heavy responsibility she did not know how to assume. She was not even the leader of their clan. How could she convince them to deliver Finn to death, and to make peace afterwards? She herself was devastated by the idea to sacrifice her friend.

After getting out of bed, she noticed that her clothes had been washed and sewed up. She dressed quickly, ate a few pieces of fresh fruit and followed a guard coming pick her up who led her in a sort of fighting arena. She arrived in the bleachers and caught sight of Octavia who nodded at her. Downstairs in the arena were clashing Indra and Lexa.

Both armed with a bô, a long training staff, they were spinning around each other, their breath hoarse and panting, their looks focused on the next move.

Indra attacked, her staff aiming at her opponent's throat who blocked with as much alacrity and counterattacked at her head. The two Grounders threw a combination of attacks and parries at a frantic rhythm, neither one getting the upper hand, neither one yielding, spinning, jumping, evading, without ever stopping.
While Octavia was observing the two women with an admiration close to adulation, Clarke was only staring at the Commander, fascinated by her combat science, by her toned and agile body dancing on the sand of the arena, by the speed of her blows which erased the staff's very shape, by the sweat soaking her tense face and making her tattoos glisten on her bare arms. With the new vision brought by Octavia the day before, she understood now the intrinsic power emanating from her, in her every move, in her every look and word.

The battle went on, intense, unpredictable, violent, the staves bumped into each other, marking the sustained beat like bewitching percussion, lashed the empty air when the bodies bent down to avoid them, crashed into the sand missing their target, the fight continued, indecisive, until Lexa felt Clarke's presence, the weight of her stare at her. A split second, her eyes diverted towards the bleachers, a split second which was enough for the staff to smash on her thigh wound and open it again. Lexa cried and fell down on the sand.

"Heda!" Indra exclaimed, both surprised and angry. She glared at Clarke, before helping the Commander to lift up. "You're still weak, and you're not focused enough!"

While Clarke was mortified and was fixing the blood beginning to appear through Lexa's pants, Octavia, even if she did not like to see Heda in difficulty, could not prevent herself from smiling in front of the interaction she had witnessed.

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Lexa was carried in her quarters in order to be cured, and Clarke had followed, but the guards stopped her on the threshold.

"Teik em komba raun! Make her come!" the Commander ordered with irritation.

The guards lifted their lances and Clarke entered the room prudently, trying to ignore the hostile looks of Indra and Titus.

Lexa was sitting on a table, almost nonchalantly, her injured leg stretched out, the other one leaned on the ground. Two healers were dealing with her wound. They had cut her pants around the injury and were applying an ointment to disinfect it.

"I'm sorry Heda," Indra apologized. "I didn't want to hurt you, it never happens, I..."

"Shof op. Shut up. It doesn't matter, and it was my fault... sand in my eyes..." Lexa lied, looking at Clarke with a faint smile.

But the first smile Clarke saw on the Commander's face suddenly turned into a rictus of pain, as a healer was beginning to stitch the wound. Clarke observed the dark blood of the Natblida she did not pay attention to the first time when she had made the tourniquet because of the obscurity caused by the infirmary's rubble. She also noticed that the healer did not know how to make correct sutures and was butchering the wound.

"It's a carnage," she exclaimed. "You can't go on like that, let me do it!"

Hardly had she taken a step towards Lexa than she found herself with Indra's knife under her throat, the general pressed behind her back and immobilizing her with an iron grip.

"Nouwich em op, Heda! Don't trust her, Heda!"
"Shuda daun, Indra! Em laik fisa seintaim! Weapon down, Indra! She's also a healer!" spat Lexa who suffered more than she wanted to acknowledge.

Indra released her reluctantly, and Clarke moved forward, snatching the thread and the needle from the astounded healer's hands.

"I also need a very sharp knife," asked Clarke staring Lexa intensely.

Even before Indra opened her mouth, Lexa raised her hand to make her be quiet.

Holding Clarke's bright gaze without blinking, she pulled her dagger out with a quick movement and gave it to the young woman.

Clarke understood the symbolic impact of this gesture. She gave her life to her, she put her trust in her, as she had done it under the wreckage. And she did it in the presence of witnesses.

Clarke gave a little smile of gratitude, then kneeled to level with the wound. With the dagger, she cautiously cut the stitches placed by the healer, then after having putting it down, she grabbed the thread and the needle and began to suture the wound cleanly.

Lexa could not repress a thrill when she felt Clarke's elbow leaning against her other thigh to settle herself. Stitch after stitch, Clarke applied herself, her work made difficult by the blood staining her fingers, and paid close attention to the reactions of Lexa who clenched her teeth. Clarke tried to concentrate and not to let herself be distracted by Lexa's hand which had just gripped her shoulder tightly in a moment of sharper pain, by the muscle of her contracted jaw playing under the skin, by the sweat drop she could see running slowly down her forehead creased with pain.

After long minutes of tension, the last stitch was finally placed, and Clarke, relieved, stood up to clean the blood and apply a bandage around the wound.

Respectfully, she stepped backwards and the healers helped Lexa to sit comfortably on the bed.

"Moshof, Klark. Thanks," whispered Lexa, whose face's pallor bore witness to the trial she had just gone through.

"You should avoid hard trainings as long as the wound isn't cicatrized," Clarke advised to conceal her embarrassment.

"Sha. Yes," agreed Lexa smiling again. "But you should say that to Indra..."

"Heda!" the general protested.

"Leave us now," the Commander ordered with a calm voice.

Everybody exited, Indra casting a resentful glance at Clarke, who ignored her stoically.

"I'm gonna go, I've got to meet my people again, and offer our deal to them."

"Of course. Octavia will escort you with some guards."

Clarke did not want to leave, she did not want to shoulder this responsibility and she did not know how she could deal with the situation. Lexa perceived her doubts.

"Ste yuj, Klark kom Skaikru. Be strong, Clarke from the Sky people," Lexa translated immediately. "Together, we can bring peace. But today, only you can blaze the trail. I trust you. Mebi oso na hit choda op nodotaim. May we meet again," she added holding out her arm to Clarke.
"May we meet again," Clarke answered, taking the Commander's arm according to the ritual, and immersing herself for a last instant in the intensity of her green eyes.
Chapter 6

Clarke and Octavia rode a few hours before reaching Arkadia at last, both fearing what they were going to find there. To their great surprise, the door opened when they arrived, but they were greeted by armed soldiers, tense and distrustful, not knowing what to think about their escort of Grounder warriors.

"Shuda daun! Weapons down!" ordered Octavia to her men to try to appease the ambient tension, while Clarke dismounted.

Her mother Abby, Kane, Raven and Bellamy appeared suddenly from the shuttle, and a huge feeling of relief overwhelmed Clarke as she saw them all alive.

"Clarke!" her mother exclaimed before throwing herself into her arms weeping with joy. "Are you okay? Where were you? We were worried to death!"

"I'm okay, don't worry. But tell the soldiers to stand down, the Grounders are here to protect us."

Abby watched with apprehension the handful of tattooed and made-up men looking ferocious who had accompanied her daughter and were waiting silently the orders of the female warrior on horseback.

"Octavia?!" Abby shouted, identifying her finally under her tribal paints and her leather armor.

Bellamy had recognized his sister for a while and, fascinated, he was staring at the little girl he had protected for so long and, today, who could slaughter, blindfolded, three seasoned soldiers without even effort, nor remorse.

"I think Klark kom Skaikru has important things to tell you. There's no point in losing time with sterile civilities," she said sharply. "Heda Leksa kom Trigedakru is waiting."

"Out of the question!" Abby screamed.

Octavia, stayed in the background, rolled her eyes, having already anticipated the reactions of the different protagonists.

"We won't deliver Finn to these barbarians! It's not possible!" Abby carried on, outraged.

"So we'll all die," Clarke concluded with a crestfallen voice.

"We can't accept such an ultimatum, Clarke, and you know it," Kane added.

Bellamy, Murphy and Monty remained silent, floored by the consequences of Finn's behavior in the Trikru village. They still felt guilty of not having intervened and of the disaster following Arkadia's attack by the vengeful Grounders. Even if they had never fired a shot that cursed day, they felt as responsible as Finn. Raven, who by herself with her bombs had killed hundreds of people, was hanging her head. All of them, even Abby and Kane, in one way or another, had the blood of both peoples on their hands.
"Clarke," Octavia recalled finally coming out of the shadows. "Heda gave you her trust. You saved her life for one reason. And this reason is here and now."

Clarke remembered the weight of the warrior's body when she had brought her out of the ruins, this life she could have sacrificed and she had chosen to save taking all the risks, the thanks of the most powerful woman in this world, Lexa's dangerous opposition to her generals for the survival of everyone, her will of peace, her courage, and what she felt when this green look filled with immemorial wisdom and ancestral strength pierced through her.

"You don't understand what's at stake," Clarke began. "We landed as winners, coming back on Earth like owners after one century spent in space, as if we were at home. But we're just usurpers. We've lost the right to claim anything on this Earth which doesn't belong to us any longer because we've fled it, abandoned it to our own destruction. This Earth belongs to the Grounders who have stayed, have survived and worked for their people's survival with the little that was left. Who are we to arrive and destroy them like harmful species? We are the noxious invaders, we are the ones who ruin the precarious balance they succeeded in maintaining thanks to the Natblida, the commanders with dark and magic blood. Today, despite all these unnecessary and unfair deaths, despite your selfishness and despite their fear, this people you hold in contempt extends the hand of friendship to you, Heda Leksa kom Trigedakru, their supreme commander, offers you peace and a future."

Octavia quivered while hearing Clarke pronounce Heda's name in Trigedaslang, the Grounders' language. She knew that from this moment everything was going to change.

"Heda Leksa kom Trigedakru is at the head of twelve clans made up of thousands of warriors. The attack we suffered was only a test. She could wipe us out with a simple frown. Today, Heda only asks for justice, the death of a murderer in exchange for a lasting peace and the survival of our two peoples. Actually we don't have the choice. Either he dies, either the Skaikru, the Sky people, will disappear."

As the chancellor, Kane made his decision and accepted the deal, with a heavy heart. Abby was outraged, but she only could yield. She was also overtaken by what her daughter seemed to have become. After a few days away, she did not recognize her any longer. Just like Octavia who had turned into a completely different person. The adults had underestimated the one hundred teenagers they had sent on Earth. What they had lived during their absence had made them mature abruptly and had forever cut them from their shared experience with those remaining on the Ark. On Earth, time seemed to be accelerated. And they would never make up for this lost time.

During these few days spent in Arkadia, Clarke could rest and recover. She also helped her mother at the bedside of the injured in the infirmary hurriedly rebuilt by the survivors.

Octavia accepted to drop her guard slightly and finally spent some long hours talking to her brother, filling the void of the four months among the Grounders, narrating the life in the warriors' camps and in the capital, Polis, even confiding him about her relationship with a Grounder.

Kane and Abby asked her many questions about the organization of the Grounders' society, the political powers at stake, the different clans and the Commander's personality. Bellamy noticed that when she mentioned this woman who seemed terrifying, Octavia's eyes shone with a fervor even more ardent than when she had talked to him about her love for Lincoln. Octavia gave them a lot of information, but she held back from revealing the proceedings of the ceremony of death penalty,
known as Death by a Thousand Cuts. She was aware that if Kane or even Clarke knew the content of it, they would go back on their decision.

Meanwhile, Lexa had gathered the Council of the Twelve clans of the Coalition and had explained the situation. As she had expected, the Ambassadors were either doubtful or fiercely opposed to the establishment of peace with the Skaikru. As she had assumed, the Azgeda were the most vehement.

Sat on her throne, she was patiently listening to the Ambassadors expressing their arguments and their doubts while playing carelessly with her sharp dagger.

While the clans had started to debate between one another, her mind escaped one second, seeing again Clarke grab this dagger, then kneel between her legs, remembering the touch of her fingers on her skin which, despite the pain, had made her quiver, arousing a disturbing emotion she had not felt since...

"Heda!"

Lexa started imperceptibly, the voice of the Azgeda ambassador awakening her from her reverie.

"Heda, em mebi na teik oso kongeda au! Commander, it could kill our coalition!" He articulated.

"Daun ste pleni! That's enough!" She imposed herself raising her hands. "Skaikru has agreed to give us the one responsible for the villagers' deaths up as dictated by our tradition. Blood must have blood, as we demanded. They agreed to put an end to the conflict. And they possess knowledge which could be useful to us."

Every Ambassador thought immediately about the assault riffles and their lethal power, as well as about the Sky people's unknown technology.

Lexa saw she had scored a point at the silence which fell in the room.

"If we annihilate them, we'll lose their knowledge and their science," she added fixing the Azgeda with a defiant look.

Some whispers ran through the different clans, until the Yujleda ambassador rose and took the floor.

"Heda, oso wich yu in. Commander, we trust you. We agree to give them a chance."

On these words, he knelt down and bowed. Then, one by one, each representative placed their trust in Lexa again before going down on a bended knee. Only the Azgeda stayed standing and fixed Lexa with an arrogant look, their eyes engaged in a deadly and silent duel. Then, he ended up following suit and bowed without uttering a word. Lexa chose to ignore the provocation and brought the meeting to an end.

"Tonight, each of you, by your Embassador's role, could administer a ritual cut, thus sealing your agreement."

Finally, she sent the Council off. And it was only when she found herself alone, on the balcony of the Throne room, at the top of Polis' great tower, her gaze lost above the bustle of the city, that she allowed herself to let out a discreet sigh of relief.
Chapter 7

At night, almost all of the Polis population was gathered on the main square at the foot of the command tower in order to be present at the execution ceremony. In the center of the place illuminated by torches they had installed a pillar to which the condemned man would be fastened. Around had arranged themselves the Ambassadors, the generals and Lexa's guard, posted on each side of the throne which had been taken down from the tower, and on which was sitting the Commander, dressed with her leather armor and her imposing coat, her eyes outlined with the black of war paints.

Lexa was nervous, which was not in her habit. She could feel the extreme tension overtaking the place and created murmurs of agitation in the crowd. Everybody was waiting for the Skaikru, who finally arrived with the prisoner. Lexa saw Octavia enter first, riding at the head of the group and crossing the place. She stopped five meters in front of the throne and dismounted.

"Heda," Octavia said simply while putting one knee on the ground and bowing.

She rose to her feet and presented the important members of the Skaikru delegation.

"Heda Markus Kane kom Skaikru, Marcus Kane, commander of the Sky people."

"Nice to meet you at last, Heda. May we initiate peace between our two peoples," Kane said with a loud voice, before bowing respectfully, a gesture soon followed by the whole delegation, as Octavia had taught them.

"Welcome to Polis, Heda Markus kom Skaikru. May your gesture tonight honor your word and your will of peace," Lexa answered.

Kane moved aside and let Abby come forward.

"Abby Griffin, fisa kom Skaikru, healer of the Sky people."

Lexa observed with interest Clarke's mother whose hostility was palpable.

"Abby kom Skaikru, so you're the one I have to thank for having passed down your healer's gifts to your daughter, Klark kom Skaikru, without whom I wouldn't be here today, and without whom no hope of peace would have been possible," Lexa said with a mischievous smile.

Cut to the quick and not knowing what to answer without jeopardizing the fragile agreement Clarke had reached, Abby silently joined Kane in the most dignified manner possible.

"Clarke Griffin..." Octavia hesitated for a short moment, then resumed. "Bandrona en fisa kom Skaikru, Ambassador and healer of the Sky people."

In another context, Lexa would have admired Octavia's diplomatic flair in her presentation.

But at that moment, she was just trying to fight against the turmoil overwhelming her when Clarke's gaze met hers again, she was trying to deny the uncontrolled impatience she had felt all day long at the thought of seeing her again, she was trying to make her face impassive in order not to betray to the eyes of her people and of the Council what the mere sight of a smile on Clarke's lips aroused inside her, this animal emotion she refused to admit and prevented her from thinking.

Nothing of that emotion had shone through in the eyes of the other present Skaikru, Kane, Abby,
Bellamy, Murphy, Raven, Monty, Jasper, come to honor their friend, they only saw the impressive and merciless Commander Octavia had recounted and who incarnated herself tonight in front of them, they could only feel the power emanating from her and the fearful and devoted respect of the thousands of Grounders around her. Even Clarke had been fooled by the seeming impassivity of the Commander who did not return the smile she could not have prevented from giving, despite the tension and the gravity of the moment. But she did not have the time to wonder about the disappointment she had felt, because Lexa had risen to announce the beginning of the ceremony.

"Peoples of the Coalition, we gathered tonight for the Death of a Thousand Cuts ceremony, tonight when justice will be served according to our traditions for the TonDC villagers. Bring the prisoner!"

Finn was escorted by two Trikru guards and fastened to the central post. Abby had fed him with sedatives in order for him to remain unaware of everything.

An icy silence fell when Lexa drew her dagger and held it out to the Azgeda Ambassador.

The latter took it and went towards Finn slowly.

"Jus drein, jus daun," he said before slashing Finn's cheek.

He retraced his steps and gave the dagger to the Floukru Ambassador. Who came nearer Finn and drove the blade into his shoulder.

"Jus drein, jus daun."

When Clarke saw the representative come back and offer the dagger to another Ambassador, she moved closer to Octavia.

"What's happening? The Death by a Thousand Cuts, tell me it's not what I'm thinking?!

"Shut up, Clarke, justice must be done."

"They're not gonna... slash him in turns...?!!"

She watched with horror a new slit appearing on Finn's forehead, and blood running down his face.

"How many, Octavia? How many?..."

"As many as victims."

Bellamy and the others had become pallid. There had been about fifty deaths among the villagers. Clarke distinguished Kane holding Abby back, one hand on her mouth to prevent her from shouting. All of them had understood the torture Finn was expecting.

"And if he's not dead, Heda will give the ultimate blow," Octavia finished, with a fascinated look.

Then Clarke went towards Lexa. The guards shuddered, but the Commander stopped them with a simple hand gesture.

"As an Ambassador, I reclaim the right for blood," Clarke improvised.

Lexa was surprised, but she nodded her head to the Ambassador who had just punished the prisoner. Clarke grasped the dagger and moved towards Finn, with tears in her eyes.

Lexa understood too late there was something abnormal. Clarke had put her forehead on Finn's, mixing blood with her tears, and was whispering soothing words to him as the dagger sank slowly
into his heart, putting an end to his agony. Sobs shook Clarke's body, while the crowd was yelling, torn between the frustration that the ceremony was not respected, and the strong symbol Clarke gave when taking the law into her own hands. So Clarke straightened up and, giving back the dagger to Lexa, her hands covered with blood, she faced the Commander's gaze a last time. A gaze filled with rage and incomprehension.

Shattered, Clarke took refuge without thinking in the room she had occupied the first time when she had come to Polis. The guard in front of the door had let her pass as if it was still reserved for her. She leaned against a wall whining, staring at her bloody hands, overwhelmed by remorse and guilt, listening to the crowd shouting downstairs without knowing which meaning she could give to this persistent clamor.

And then the door burst open with a loud bang, letting Lexa appear in all her fury, and Clarke, in her distress, thought to live again the warrior's arrival coming to kill her in the infirmary, so much was the anger deforming the Commander's features, her look burning with rage and her threatening dagger in her hand. She swooped in on Clarke, and pinned her to the wall, her hand gripping the blonde hair, her weapon pressed under her throat, her feverish eyes plunging into hers.

"Why, Clarke?!" Lexa spat. "Why did you betray me in front of all my people?"

"I couldn't let him suffer endlessly, I..."

"Do you realize that by breaking with tradition, you broke your word?"

Fascinated, Clarke was watching the Commander's lips shout every word with anger, captivated by this slight contraction along her jaw she would have wanted to follow with the tips of her fingers.

"Do you realize that by wanting to spare your friend, I'm the one you condemned? I vouched for you and the Council is likely to depose me, thus breaking any hope for peace!"

Clarke had just understood the catastrophic consequences of her impulsive gesture of compassion towards Finn, but at that moment, she realized that what was the most painful for her was the disappointment and the sadness she could detect behind the fury in Lexa's eyes.

And the indecent and incongruous desire aroused by the hand pulling her hair off and keeping her at its mercy.

"Octavia had let me know that you were unpredictable, and I didn't want to believe her..."

Lexa's voice had begun to quiver, as did the hand holding the dagger. Through her rage, and because she abruptly became aware of the heady proximity of her body against the other woman's, Lexa felt all her repressed emotions explode suddenly in her stomach and release violently into a one and only sensation, an urgent, abrupt and uncontrollable desire.

She dropped the dagger which fell to the floor, strengthened her grip in Clarke's hair and crossed the last centimeters still pulling them apart, freeing this drive she had contained for so long.

Her body pressed against hers, she threw herself on Clarke's lips, forcing her mouth open, tasting blood and tears, a frenzied desire overwhelming her senses.
Clarke responded to it hungrily, and their kiss turned into a violent fight, their tongues avidly searching for each other, their lips grazing over the teeth, their breaths becoming hoarse.

With her free hand, Lexa untied Clarke's belt and watched with delight her face tense up slightly when she slid her hand and entered her. Pressed against Clarke's leg, she was trying not to lose control, her fingers following the rhythm of her moans already getting closer, every one of them electrifying her, feeding her fury, her urge to possess her further, deeper. She felt Clarke's hands clanging to her back, her neck, drawing Lexa to her, guiding her inside her. She sank in Clarke's ecstatic gaze, in the movement of her body banging against the wall with each thrust of her hand, in the softness of her lips she restrained herself from biting, in the warmth of her mouth her tongue was profaning relentlessly.

They had no time for gentleness, they had no time any longer, there was only the elation of their desperate passion, the consciousness of the ephemerality, the unexpected fusion of their similarities and of their differences into this feverish wrestle.

Lexa was losing her mind, she only felt the touch of Clarke's leg between hers, the pleasure which arose from it and was going to overwhelm her, the heady moans of the other woman, the painful tension in her fingers which sped up, harder and harder, again and again, lost in the intoxicating moistness. Sweat was running down her forehead, down her eyes darkened by visceral desire, drawing some new patterns on the black warpaints, this gaze which deeply moved Clarke whose breathing was becoming panting, impaled on this powerful hand which made her come, made her feel alive.

They had no time for patience, they had no time any longer, then Clarke pushed her head back, finally crying out her ultimate pleasure, her body arching violently under the strength of her orgasm, soon joined by Lexa, who could not repress a nearly animal groan, swamped by bliss, in a last compulsive movement of her hips against Clarke's body.
Chapter 8

Their pleasures consumed, Lexa had gone as she had arrived, in a blast of rage, leaving Clarke panting, leaning against the wall, the feeling of her fingers inside her still pervading, and the longing already reappearing inside her stomach.

Out of frustration, Clarke turned around and hit the wall in order for the pain to dispel this unbearable desire. She resolved to fall down on the bed, but it was only after long hours seeing again the intensity of Lexa's gaze, remembering her body against hers, her hand possessing her, than Clarke succeeded in finally getting to sleep.

Lexa had not slept a wink all night. In the morning, she would have to face the Council of the clans, and though, the only thing she thought about was Clarke's look when her hand had penetrated her, and her cry when she had given in to pleasure. She would have wanted to spend the night with her, but she could not. Clarke made her be out of her depth and she could not allow herself.

"Gyon op gon Heda ! Rise for your Commander!" Titus announced.

All the Ambassadors stood up, including Marcus Kane as the representative of the Sky people.

Lexa entered and crossed the room majestically, her eyes fixed on her throne on which she sat down after having adjusted her coat and cape, concealing behind an unyielding gaze the anxiety of a destiny she did not control any longer. Nevertheless it was with a firm voice that she addressed the Council.

"The Death by a Thousand Cuts ceremony hasn't been completed, but justice was done. The culprit was punished. Thus I ask the Council to accept the temporary integration of the Skaikru as the thirteen Coalition clan."

"Traditions were flouted, Heda, and you know it," the Azgeda Ambassador accused. "Nonetheless, the people has liked the intervention and the abnegation of Klark kom Skaikru, the people who also knows you owe your life to her and who is grateful to her for that. In the present circumstances, the Council, even if not all of us agree, respects the people's choice and accepts the terms of the surrender and allegiance of the Skaikru."

Lexa hid her surprise behind her mask of impassiveness. She would not have hoped such a decision.

"In that case, the allegiance ceremony will take place tonight."

When the moment came, the throne room was full and the atmosphere remained tense. The ambassadors, the generals, the Skaikru delegation, all were squeezing up to attend the ceremony. Lexa was waiting standing in front of her throne, dressed with a traditional gown, a tribal make-up around the eyes. She was trying not to let herself be overwhelmed by the anxiety of the symbolic
importance of this ceremony, and also because she had not seen Clarke again since the night before, and she did not know how to behave or think about what happened between them.

"Klark, bandrona kom Skaikru!" Titus announced, with a loud voice, silencing the talks.

The doors finally opened onto the Skaikru Ambassador and Lexa had to use all her Commander skills to contain her emotion when she saw Clarke appear, in ceremonial outfit, her eyes made up with war paints, her hair braided in the Trikru style, advance majestically, with a bright gaze, then kneel before her, head down.

"As the Ambassador of the Sky people, I swear allegiance to Heda Leksa kom Trigedakru, supreme Commander, and request to join the Coalition as the thirteen clan in accordance with the ancestral rules and traditions."

"Heda Markus kom Skaikru!"

Marcus approached in his turn, kneeled next to Clarke, and repeated the ritual sentence.

Both kept their gaze down, while Titus brought the incandescent iron rod.

Lexa took Marcus' hand and, stretching out his forearm, branded him with the Coalition seal.

Marcus clenched the teeth to muffle a cry of pain while the burning was unbearable.

"Skaikru, yu laik ai kru nau. Sky People, you're my people now." Lexa declaimed, without ever looking at Clarke. "Skaikru ste gouthru ona ai bana nau. Du bilaik trana kot daun daun na kof em sonraun op! The Sky People march with us now. Anyone else who tries to undermine that will pay with their life."

After the ceremony, Lexa had demanded to be left alone. She had put back on her armor, her cape and her shoulder pad, her Commander clothes in which she felt more comfortable than in that gown which made her feel vulnerable.

Sit on her throne, she was thinking about the events which had come in succession. The Council's decision had surprised her because she had expected to be deposed or to be challenged. Against all odds, the people had finally leaned towards her, touched by the gesture of Clarke regarded by many as the real Skaikru commander. People had known Clarke had saved Heda's life and they had considered that what she had done to Finn was a proof of courage and responsibility, the accomplishment of her duty in spite of her feelings for the young man from her people. And thanks to her, peace had been established with the Sky clan.

Some knocks at the door interrupted her thoughts.

"Min yu op! Enter!" Lexa shouted with irritation.

"Moba, Heda, Sorry," Commander, said a guard with a fearful voice while opening the door of the room. "I know you didn't want to be bothered, but... Klark, bandrona kom Skaikru, would like to talk to you in private..."

Lexa was not sure it was a good idea. In a way, she was ashamed of the rage with which she had
talked to Clarke, ashamed of this anger which had nearly pushed her to cut her throat in the bedroom, given the unhoped for turnaround ruling in Clarke's favor.

She did not know how to face her gaze, she did not know what to tell her, or what she really wanted. Everything was confused. Except for the desire she felt for this woman.

"Let her in."

Lexa had to hold her breath when she saw the young woman approaching. She had kept her ceremonial clothes, and was moving forward with calculated slowness, each step making slide the edges of her gown and revealing her bare legs. Her eyes, still ringed with tribal make-up, were staring at her with provocation.

"Clarke..." the Commander whispered, fascinated despite herself, her fingers twitching on the throne's arms.

Clarke stopped at a respectable distance and, repeating the allegiance scene, kneeled.

An instant.

Without waiting for the usual order, she rose, an enigmatic smile in the corner of her mouth, and resumed her slow and inexorable walk towards the throne.

"Clarke?"

Lexa's voice nearly choked, betraying the lack of understanding and the faint desire which was ineluctably growing inside her, as Clarke kept moving, crossed the invisible and forbidden line in front of the throne, climbed a step, her burning gaze fastened on hers, another step, defying the most powerful woman, a last step, now immobile, petrified and flattened against her seat.

Lexa, as hypnotized, was contemplating Clarke's body standing in front of her, she was observing the progressive dilation of her steel-blue pupils, she was trying to breathe, the urge tearing her stomach like a knife thrusting and twisting over and over into the entrails.

And then Clarke sat on her, her bare legs on either side of her own leather-clad legs, and Lexa thought she was going to faint.

And then Clarke moved her lips closer to hers without ever touching them, and Lexa thought she was going to die.

And then Clarke slightly rose, took the Commander's hand and thrust Lexa's fingers inside herself, her feverish gaze still tied up to hers. And Lexa thought she was going to come.

Her hands clinging onto the throne's back, Clarke began to move her hips gently, riding the fingers of Lexa who was suffocating, captivated.

Finally the warrior woke up. With her other hand, Lexa managed to draw Clarke near her for an instant and to extract a brutal kiss from her, her hungry tongue tasting the moans of her pleasure until Clarke tore herself away from her grip with an animal growl, and her hips began to give a more intense rhythm.

The distance Clarke kept between them was unbearable, and Lexa leant once again to make her tongue run down the skin revealed by the lock-up neckline of her dress, a single second during which she could savor the smell of her skin, the salt of intoxicating sweat, before Clarke pushed her back violently.
Then the warrior surrendered, giving in to the will of the other woman, only focusing on their single carnal point of contact, and on her feverish gaze dominating her, and she discovered the disturbing and extremely exciting sensation of no longer controlling anything.

When Clarke understood she had won this fight, a lascivious smile appeared on her lips, and she sped up her movements, crushing the submissive hand, letting out almost painful groans. Clarke was gradually arching her back, increasing her back and forths, more and more frantic, her eyes veiled by pleasure, leaving Lexa's gaze to let herself go backwards, her jerky moans mixing with the panting breathing of the warrior. When Lexa felt the growing tense between the contracted legs of the other woman, she took control back of her hand, and sank more violently into her, releasing her in a last spasmodic cry, her head pushed back, her hands still grabbed onto the throne.

Lexa was on the edge of orgasm, and she knew that the least touch would be immutable. But Clarke, whose breathing was becoming more regular again, knew it too, and this was with a mischievous half smile and her gaze plunged again into the feverished green eyes that she regretfully released Lexa's hand and put hers between her thighs. Clarke pressed her fingers against the leather, one time, two times, and delighted in the visceral growl Lexa let out while freeing herself from her torment, her eyes closed, and her hands so tightly clenched on her throne's arms that her knuckles whitened. Suffocated and paralyzed, she took some long seconds to regain her composure and open her eyes again. She was alone. Clarke had disappeared.
Chapter 9

"Heda!"

The staff had crashed painfully on Lexa's arm, disarming her, then had swept her legs in a circular move, making her fall down heavily on her back.

She got back on her feet, gave a last disappointed look at the empty bleachers, ignoring Indra's remonstrances.

"Heda, what's up? I threw you to the floor twice today! You're not focused!"

No, she was not concentrated and she could not care less about Indra's training, she only thought about Clarke and the way she had used her, the Commander, for her pleasure. And how she had enjoyed it. Two days had passed since this night which would no longer made her view her throne as before, and she had not seen her again.

"Em pleni! Enough!" She said, dusting the sand stuck to her clothes.

And went away, leaving Indra perplexed and irritated.

She did not think and her steps led her directly in front of Clarke's bedroom where the guards informed her she was not here. Luckily for them, in her frustration, she did not see the little smile of collusion they exchanged. She left, her anger taking up a notch.

Later, in the throne room, she was listening to the grievances of the different clans, resolving the conflicts, accomplishing justice. But she could not take it anymore. The images of these two nights with Clarke kept imprinting themselves in her mind and making her deviate from reality.

"Heda, you understand it's unacceptable! You have to settle it!" Demanded one of her subjects.

Lexa, staring into space, had switched off. She had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. She just wanted him to disappear, him and the others. And know where Clarke was. See Clarke again. Touch her.

"The day has been difficult, Heda is tired, we adjourn the session, Heda will rule tomorrow," Titus intervened, visibly unsettled.

The room emptied, not without murmurs of discontent.

"Weron Klark kamp raun? Where's Clarke?" Lexa asked when they were alone.

"Klark kom Skaikru has left several days with the healers to know and collect the medicinal plants we use."

"When does she come back?"

"Tomorrow."

A long silence set in between them, Titus watching with a heartache the lost gaze of her Commander who did not even try to pretend any longer.

"Heda, teik ai chich ap klir? Commander, Permission to speak freely?"
"Sha. Yes."

"It has to stop, Heda, you're not yourself anymore. Indra told me you don't manage to fight anymore, I see you inattentive, you don't listen anymore, you don't focus anymore on what you're doing."

"What are you talking about, Titus?"

"Your relationship with Clarke."

"What relationship?" She spat.

Titus paused, embarrassed by this talk he did not want to broach, but he could no longer postpone.

"We're not blind... And guards have ears..."

"Speak clearly!"

"Hodnes laik kwelnes. Love is weakness, Heda, you know it. You can't allow yourself to reproduce the same mistake as with... Costia... You've got to take Clarke away, for you, for her..."

Lexa nearly blew up when Costia was mentioned and she glared with fury at Titus who curled up inwardly. However, she said nothing. For she knew he was right, she did see Clarke disturbed her, even if it was not a question of feelings. The invading desire overwhelming her when she thought about her prevented her from being attentive to her role of Commander, diverted her from her duty. And for these last days, she had been only thinking about her.

"Being a Commander means being alone, Heda, even if it's unfair and painful, you were chosen for..."

"Ai get em in! I know!" Lexa shouted. "I know what my duty is! No need to keep repeating to me I'll never have the right to one ounce of weakness nor to any form of attachment."

Lexa turned away to hide the tears beginning to appear in her eyes. She thought she had accepted her condition, she thought she had forgotten about Costia. But Clarke had called everything into question.

"Tomorrow morning, when the Ambassador of the Sky people will be back, gather the Skaikru here."

When Clarke came back from her expedition in the forest, she was asked to go immediately in the throne room. When her name was announced, she entered the room, a small smile on her lips when remembering what happened here between Lexa and her.

The whole Skaikru delegation was present, and her smile disappeared immediately when she perceived that Lexa avoided ostensibly her gaze.

"Heda Markus kom Skaikru, it's time for you to leave, and to set up our collaboration. We want Abby to stay in Polis to exchange her knowledge with our healers, as well as Raven to teach us some of her techniques. In return, we supply you seedlings and our knowledge to be able to cultivate on your camp, and Octavia will teach you our fighting techniques."
"But..." Clarke protested, stunned.

"Yes," Marcus cut her. "Clarke is both ambassador and healer. Shouldn't she stay to sit on the Council?"

It was with a glacial voice and ignoring Clarke's gaze filled with incomprehension that Lexa answered.

"Without wanting to offend your Ambassador, and despite she saved my life, the real experienced Skaikru healer is Abby. And you need a healer in your camp. If we gather the Council, we'll let you know."

"Well, Heda. We thank you for your hospitality and your help, and we respect your orders," Marcus conceded. "We can leave tomorrow when we have settled the..."

"You're leaving now," Lexa cut short coldly. "Everything is ready. May we meet again Heda Markus kom Skaikru."

"May we meet again," Marcus answered ritually, unsettled by the suddenly hostile tone of the Commander.

On these words, the delegation left the room. Not once had Lexa's gaze crossed Clarke's. This very gaze which was now contemplating Polis and was filling with tears.

After having said goodbye to Abby and Raven, both fuming to be obliged to stay, the delegation set off with Grounder warriors and a few farmers designated to help them to put in place their own cultivation.

Octavia and Clarke were riding at the head of the procession. Silence reigned among them, everybody wondering about the surprising behavior of the Commander. All but Octavia, who was observing Clarke's crumpled face.

Clarke was asking herself if she had pushed Lexa too far, if she had overstepped the mark as she could do so well, ignorant of the rules which could reign over the relationships between Trikru. However, Lexa had not rejected her, whereas she could have killed her with a snap of her fingers. Clarke did not understand, she was furious, sad and frustrated.

"Why did she do that?!" She ended up saying to Octavia.

"Why she did what? To dump you without even a goodbye or a glance?" Octavia answered with a little smile.

"But... no... I..." Clarke stammered.

"You really think your looks would have passed unnoticed? And guards talk..."

"Who... Who is in the know?" Clarke asked blushing.

"Just about all of Polis."

Clarke's astounded and ashamed look made Octavia burst out laughing.
"To answer your question, either she makes you understand you both spent a nice moment but it stops here, but seeing her sudden coldness and the talks I caught between Titus and Indra, it's unlikely..."

"Which talks?"

"Apparently you have such an effect on Lexa that she's no longer concentrated, she's too distracted... and it's dangerous for a Commander."

"This is why she ordered me to leave?" Clarke asked, disturbed by this revelation.

"Not only. I think she takes you away to protect you. And protect herself."

"For what reason?"

Octavia gave a sigh before resuming.

"She's never talked to you about Costia?"

"No. Who's she?"

"Costia was her partner. At the time, the Clans weren't unified, and the Azgeda were at war with the Trikru. The queen of the Ice people, Nia, kidnapped Costia and tortured her to get information about the Commander. Then they beheaded her and delivered her head to Lexa's bed."

"How awful!" Clarke exclaimed, deeply shocked.

"Yes... Everybody thought Lexa wouldn't get over it, but she overcame this ordeal and even invited the Azgeda into the alliance she created afterwards."

"She didn't get revenge?"

"No, she followed the duty of all Commanders, choosing her people's interests rather than her feelings. And ever since, she's had no known intimate relationship, at least none which could endanger her status. Until you..."

Clarke could not prevent herself from blushing while thinking about the implications of Octavia's words. She understood better Lexa's decision, but she was not less sad. And this sadness revealed to her she did not feel only desire for the other woman.

"I must talk to her, I..."

"No," Octavia cut her. "You have to respect her choice. You've also got obligations to your people, Clarke. Let the dust settle. Because if all of Polis is in the know, Lexa's enemies will be too."
Weeks went by, and even though Lexa had become invincible again in fight and monopolized by her function of Commander, reassuring Titus and Indra, that did not mean she forgot Clarke who, when she was alone, filled all her thoughts. But Lexa had also become cold and bitter, and her close relations had to suffer when her orders bit like a whip and her glacial look struck them.

And then one day, during a meeting with the generals, the door of the throne room burst open, letting Octavia in without being announced, sweating and out of breath, who fell on her knees at Lexa’s feet. With a hand gesture, the Commander stopped the door guards who had rushed in behind Octavia, and that she had visibly neutralized to enter.

"Moba, Heda! Em ste meija! Sorry, Commander! It's important!"

"Chit's gon daun? What's going on?"

"Klark kom Skaikru had been kidnapped!"

Lexa jumped off her throne, the breath of fear seizing her heart.

"Gouva yu klin! Explain yourself!"

"Clarke went into the forest with two guards in order to look for plants, as she does it every other day... When I saw she didn't come back, I started looking for her. I found the two guards on the ground, the bag of plants abandoned, and Clarke had disappeared. One of the guards could tell me before dying it was the Azgeda, he had recognized their traditional scarifications."

All the generals could see Lexa’s jaws tense, her look fill with incandescent rage and her hands begin to slightly shake while the image of Costia’s bloody head suddenly imprinted itself in her mind. All of them knew the tragic story of Lexa’s lover, and all hung onto Lexa’s every word, terrified in advance by her reaction. Against all odds, she closed her eyes, took a deep breath and sat back down in her throne.

"Gustus, make all your spies talk in the Azgeda capital! I want to know who did it and where they took her. She musn't be there, they wouldn't have taken the risk of being so noticeable. I want an answer tonight! And send one of our best trackers with Octavia, if they were careless, maybe we can follow their track."

"Sha, Heda."

Clarke had been knocked out. When she woke up, she was fastened to a chair, a gag in her mouth, the ties biting her wrists. She looked around her and noted she must have been in a great tent. Some men entered, all wore the Azgeda ritual scars. What Lexa feared had become reality.

"Here's Lexa's whore, as promised," said one man in trigedasleng.

"Well, leave us," ordered a blonde-haired warrior, his steel-blue eyes cold and calculating.
The man observed for a while the prisoner with a sadistic little smile, then he kneeled at her level.

"*Heda* has good taste," he commented while making his fingers run down Clarke's cheek who lowered her head to escape the touch. "But she obviously didn't learn her lesson. She's not as wise as we heard."

"Tell me, Clarke, I've always wondered, how's she in bed?" he resumed, removing the gag.

Clarke spat in his face by way of answer.

"You're a pig! I'll say nothing, anyway I know nothing!"

He got back on his feet and wiped his face without ever losing his smile. He unsheathed a dagger from his belt, and with a quick move, stuck it into Clarke's shoulder.

Clarke yelled, the pain so intense she nearly fainted.

"Tell me, Clarke," the man went on, "how many men are in Heda's army?"

"I don't know," she said in a sob, the blood beginning to drip from the cut.

He took the handle of the dagger and gave the blade a quarter-turn, making Clarke start in her chair and let out a strident cry.

"How many men in Heda's army?"

"I... I don't know..." she wept. "We've never talked about it."

The man frowned and his dagger drew a long slit on Clarke's cheek who clenched her teeth.

"Well. A question you should be able to answer now. How many guns do you have and where do you put them in your camp?"

He gave his dagger a quarter-turn in Clarke's shoulder who yelled again. This time, the blood flew freely from the wound, and she fainted.

Outside, Lexa was listening to Clarke's unbearable cries while biting her lip. They had easily found the trail of the abductors and were waiting for the right moment to intervene. Clarke's last scream of pain brought an end to the Commander's patience who waded in. With a roar, she leaped out of her hiding place, her swords slicing the two men on guard before the tent, while her warriors dealt with the rest of the Azgeda. She rushed in and as she was about to decapitate the man in front of Clarke, she stopped her gesture at the last moment.
"Roan?"

"Heda," he said plainly, kneeling as a sign of submission when he immediately understood it was useless to respond, Lexa's blade weighing on his throat.

Rage flooded in Lexa's eyes who struck him violently with the pommel of her sword, breaking Roan's jaw, Queen Nia's son, prince of Azgeda.

She finally turned to Clarke, and repressed a cry of amazement. There was so much blood everywhere that she thought she had arrived too late, but she saw her chest slightly rose. She restrained herself from throwing herself on Clarke and holding her in her arms for fear of accentuating her wounds.

"Em ste kiken! Ai gaf fisa in! She's alive! I need a healer!" she ordered to Gustus who had just joined her.

The two healers who had accompanied Lexa and her men finally arrived in the tent and hastened to examine her. One of them abruptly removed the dagger from Clarke's shoulder and compressed the wound.

"She'll live. None of her injuries is mortal, Heda," the other healer reassured.

Lexa gave a sigh of relief, then turned to Octavia.

"Octavia, I'm making you responsible for taking Clarke back to Arkadia escorted by half of my warriors. I'll deal with this Azgeda louse and I'll send you Abby to treat Clarke."

"Sha, Heda."
Chapter 11

One week had passed since Clarke's release. Against her generals' advice who demanded vengeance, Lexa had not wanted to execute Roan, who remained locked up in Polis' jail. She had still hoped to keep the peace and thought Roan could give them information about what the Azgeda were plotting. Unfortunately, despite hours of torture, neither Roan or the men that they caught revealed anything.

Alone in the throne room, Lexa was waiting for Octavia's arrival, who had to give her some news from Arkadia.

"Okteivia kom Skaikru!" the guard announced, making the brunette warrior enter.

Octavia went closer and knelt before the Commander.

"Get up. How's Clarke?" Lexa asked without preamble.

Octavia repressed a little smile at Lexa's direct question betraying her impatience and her interest for Clarke.

"She heals quickly, but..."

Octavia stopped short, embarrassed, wondering if she could speak frankly to the Commander about whom Indra had warned her of her nearly permanent irascibility since Clarke's departure.

"But? I knew you as a straightforward person, Octavia. Tell me what you have to say."

"She's angry with you. Because you sent her back to Arkadia without explanation, and because you didn't come to see her after she had suffered."

Lexa took the reproaches silently, her cold and impassive gaze considering Octavia. She finally rose and came closer to the window which overlooked the balcony, her hands behind her back. Octavia understood Lexa was trying to hide her emotions.

"You know I had no choice," Lexa ended up saying without turning back.

Octavia would have wanted to tell her she could have explained it to her, and that Clarke would have understood, but she refrained and silence settled between them.

"Did Clarke tell you what Roan wanted?" Lexa asked finally.

"Yes, and it's preoccupying. He wanted to know how many men you have in your army, if you possessed Skaikru rifles and where they are in Arkadia."

Lexa turned round, her eyes suddenly worried.

"They're preparing an offensive against us! Your camp is protected?"

"If they want to come, we're waiting for them resolutely, Raven's bombs have been placed in strategic areas, and the extra rifles are in the shuttle. Nevertheless, we need her to come back to Arkadia, Heda."

"You'll go back with her."

"What are you gonna do with Roan?"
"Trade him for Queen Nia's surrender in order to maintain peace."

"And if she doesn't accept?"

"Then it will be war."

Two days later, Lexa had gathered the Council of the Coalition in the throne room. The Azgeda prisoners were on their knees and tied up in a corner and the Commander noted the embarrassment the Ambassador of the Ice people did not succeed in concealing.

"Ambassadors, I probably don't need to present prince Roan to you. He's guilty of acts of treason, kidnapping the Skaikru ambassador and torturing her to obtain information with the aim of attacking us."

Outraged whispers were heard in the room.

"If we didn't arrive in time, she'd be probably dead. She's recovering from her wounds and this is why she's not here today. Heda Markus kom Skaikru represents his people in her place."

Lexa paused, then, gathering her courage, set out her strategy.

"Roan is still alive, because I don't want war. I propose trading the prince's life for Queen Nia's surrender."

"It's unacceptable!" The Azgeda ambassador protested. "You don't even know if Queen Nia is responsible for this... abduction, and if Roan didn't act on his own initiative."

"It doesn't matter. Roan represents his people as an heir and he must be accountable for his actions."

"And what if she refuses, Heda?" the Floukru ambassador asked.

"It will be a declaration of war, and I request from the eleven other clans to support me by adding their warriors to mine. I give you two days to talk to each of your clans and come back for your answer."

When Marcus came back from Polis, he immediately convoked a meeting. All the Skaikru had gathered to listen to him. He explained the maneuvers of the Azgeda responsible for Clarke's torture and Lexa's demand who left the choice of following her in this war or abstaining.

"It's not our war. There were enough dead people and suffering among us," Abby said. "Lexa will have quite enough warriors!"

"I agree," Raven added. "Finn's sacrifice was already unbearable. Do we have to lose people again for a conflict which has been lasting for years and didn't concern us?"

The clamors of agreement of the crowd outraged Clarke and Octavia. But it was Bellamy who took
"It may be not our war. But who did find and free Clarke? Who did extend the hand of friendship to you and offer you peace, food and protection? And what sort of honor do you have? You swore allegiance as the thirteen clan of the Coalition and when the Commander needs you, you turn your back on her?"

Bellamy's words suddenly cooled the protests.

"I'm a soldier," he continued. "And a soldier didn't give up his commander when they need him. I'll be there. With Lexa kom Trikru. For peace. For her survival. For our survival."

Murphy, Monty, and other young people joined him, then some adult soldiers, pleading loudly their allegiance again.

Octavia stepped forward, unsheathing one of her swords, and yelled "Kom wor!" For war! "Kom Heda!" For the Commander! And the Trikru remained in the camp with her screamed in unison. Almost all soldiers rallied to the general movement, and Clarke closed her eyes, a lump in her throat.

Night was about to fall on Arkadia when the sentries saw three horse riders approaching at full gallop. Octavia heard the horses and moved forward to the entrance gate which opened onto two Trikru warriors followed by a rider with a hood hiding the face. When the hood was taken off, Octavia had a choke of surprise.

"Heda!"

"Beja, Okteivia, shof op. Lid ai gon Heda Markus, Please Octavia, be quiet. Bring me to chancellor Marcus," Lexa ordered with a smile of collusion seeming incongruous with her coldness during the previous days.

"Sha, Heda," Octavia answered, smiling back at her.

Lexa followed Octavia in the shuttle, causing surprised reactions among the Skaikru recognizing her. In the command post, they found Marcus and Raven talking.

"Marcus, Heda Leksa kom Trikru do us the honor of her visit," Octavia announced.

"Lexa! Welcome to Arkadia!" Marcus said, surprised.

"I... I came to see if you were sufficiently protected in case of Azgeda's attack... and if I can rely on your support if the war is declared," Lexa explained.

In front of the improbability of the excuse, Octavia immediately understood Lexa had just improvised the justification for her presence here, and that the real reason was named Clarke. More serious, she guessed nobody knew she had left Polis. Indra and Titus were going to become crazy, and Octavia could not prevent herself from feeling a certain jubilation.

"I thought that... you expected my answer tomorrow during the Council... but it goes without saying we'll be with you if we can't avoid the war against the Azgeda."

"Very well, I didn't expect less from you," Lexa said while catching Octavia's knowing eye.
"We were about to eat. Come and join us," Marcus proposed.

Marcus led Lexa in their cafeteria building. The Skaikru always took their meals together, trying to maintain a conviviality and a comforting life in common. When they entered, the silence fell in the room as the Skaikru noticed the Commander's presence.

"Rise for the Commander!" Marcus ordered.

Everybody obeyed and bowed their heads. Lexa nodded at Marcus who invited her to join the table where Abby, Bellamy and Raven had already sat. Lexa took a place and the Skaikru resumed their meals and their talks. She sensed some hostile looks, Abby's and others' who had probably never accepted Finn's sacrifice. She consented to an alcohol drink that she slowly drank while talking with Marcus, and began to relax gradually.

And then Clarke appeared. She headed for their table and stopped abruptly when she glimpsed at the Commander, and retraced her steps. Octavia jumped up and intercepted her outside.

"Clarke! She came for you!"

"I don't care, I don't want to see her, it's too late."

"Clarke... Tomorrow, it will be probably war... This is also why she's here... and she took the risk of coming while nobody knows she left Polis! Give her a chance to explain!"

Clarke saw Lexa who had gone out of the building and was waiting patiently and silently behind Octavia, her two warriors watching from a distance. She capitulated and waved towards the warrior to follow her while giving her an almost despising look. She let her in in her tent and waited, her arms folded, her back turned to the door.

For the first time, Lexa was intimidated, not knowing how to face and appease the angry stare fixing her.

"Why?" Clarke finally said, moving closer to Lexa.

"Why did you take me away without a word, without even a look?" She resumed walking towards Lexa, making her step backwards. "I wasn't even worth an explanation? Or you thought I was too stupid to understand?"

Clarke shouted every word and through her almost cracked voice appeared rage and sadness.

"Why did you never come and see me, while I was tortured because of you!? Or even send me a message, a sign, anything!" Clarke spat while keeping moving towards Lexa who ended up cornered against the table in the middle of the tent.

"Hodnes nou laik kwelnes. Love is weakness, this is what is taught to all Commanders," Lexa finally answered, her hands clung onto the table's edge, sinking her regretful eyes into Clarke's ones in which tears began to drip. "This is our way to survive."

"Maybe life should be more about just surviving... How can we live like you? You no longer feel anything for anybody, you lock yourself in your impassive shell, you reject everyone who try to approach you, you're indifferent to everyone!"

If Lexa had not been so overwhelmed by her emotions, she could almost have laughed at the fact that Clarke was totally wrong. Their bodies and their faces were so close from one another that Lexa could feel the warmth of Clarke's breath on her own lips, and despite the tension and Clarke's
hostility, an absolute and unbearable desire was growing inside her.

"No. Not everyone... Not you..." She finally confessed while trying to breathe.

Lexa saw astonishment in Clarke's eyes, but she did not let her the time to protest, and leaned to kiss her gently. Clarke did not push her back. She raised her head and wiped a tear running down the cheek of the other woman whose look was suddenly undefinable.

Lexa put her lips again on Clarke's and delicately drew their contours with the tip of her tongue, giving rise to goose bumps on the ambassador's arms.

Clarke pulled Lexa against her, and half-opened her mouth, inviting her tongue to join. Their kiss became deeper, more intense, their lips embracing slowly in a bewitching dance which lasted for long minutes, making an irrepresible fire grow in their bodies.

Then Clarke decided to break the contact and kneeled in front of Lexa. She undid the leather pants she slid down just enough to kiss the warrior's sex who let out a moan when she felt the tongue begin to explore her.

Clarke tasted the spiced fragrances and the softness of her innermost parts, moved slowly at the pace of the discreet moans, her hands grabbing onto the slightly shaking legs.

And when she felt a hand behind her head, she gradually sped up the caresses of her tongue, surreptitiously watching Lexa, who had closed her eyes, her other hand clung on the table to keep her balance while she was staggering as waves of pleasure spread inside her.

Soon, her breath changed, becoming more panting, her groans louder, her hand closing in Clarke's hair who intensified her movement still more, over and over again, until Lexa's body arched, overwhelmed by ecstasy, a long hoarse cry bursting from her dry lips.

When Clarke rose, Lexa had not opened her eyes, and she kissed her at first gently, then carried away by her unsatisfied and pressing desire, more ardently, until Lexa responded to it, devouring her mouth.

Suddenly, Lexa lifted Clarke whose legs wrapped naturally around her waist and she carried her to the bed on which she threw her unceremoniously. Standing before her, Lexa slowly undid her armor, part after part, revealing her nudity to Clarke's eyes, darkened by longing, who sat up straight and took off her clothes in her turn, unveiling a bandage on her wounded shoulder. With a look imbued with lust, Lexa joined Clarke on the bed and finally experienced the exhilarating touch of their skins pressed against each other, their lips meeting in a passionate kiss, her hand inexorably slipping between Clarke's thighs, testing the moistness which greeted it.

Clarke's first moan got lost in the violent embrace of their lips, while the next ones rose to Lexa's ear whose tongue lingered on the throat of the other woman and sank into the intoxicating smell of her skin. Clarke's nails imprinted themselves in the warrior's back with every rise of pleasure, her hips accompanying the fingers which caressed her, impatient and insatiable. Lexa intensified the pressure of her hand, following the rhythm of Clarke's more and more panting breath, ignoring the pain of the scratches which inked her back with new bloody tattoos.

And when Clarke finally surrendered in an ultimate cry of pleasure, their feverish gazes chained to each other, nothing mattered anymore, nor the war, nor their peoples, nor duty, nothing was more important than the force of this imperishable and symbiotic voluptuousness gathering them.
When Octavia entered in Clarke's tent later in the night, it was not to discover the two naked women sleeping against each other, Clarke pressed against Lexa's back, her face buried into the warrior's hair, which surprised her. What struck her was to see the appeased and radiant face of the Commander who smiled in her sleep. A state of bliss Lexa had probably not known since Costia's death. Or maybe even never, Octavia wondered, as what emanated from the two women when they were together was so much strong and unsettling.

She hated herself in advance for what she had to do. She would have wanted to leave them this moment of break, this instant of peace and happiness, but she had orders, some orders given by that very one to whom she was going to tear her smile off.

"Heda. Taim don kom op," she said without shouting. "It's time."

Lexa opened her eyes. When she recognized Octavia, a veil of sadness passed through her look and her smile vanished.

"Moba, Heda... I'm sorry..."

"Ai kom op. Gon we. Moshof, Okteivia. I'm coming. Leave us. Thank you, Octavia."

When Octavia went out of the tent, Lexa stood up and got dressed silently.

"You have to leave already?" Clarke asked, woken up by the brief exchange.

"I've to arrive to Polis before the Council. And discreetly."

Clarke rose and pressed her naked body against the warrior's back, wrapping her arms around her, making the desire arouse again.

"I want to come with you."

"You can't. You have to stay here to help your clan."

"But if there's war, I'll be useless here!"

"If there's war, I especially don't want you to be in Polis, you'd be in danger!" Lexa said angrily breaking the embrace becoming unbearable with temptation.

Suddenly, Clarke realized it was maybe the last time she saw Lexa, that if Lexa had come, it was also because she grasped the war was inevitable, and she might die during the fights.

"Actually, you already knew Queen Nia would refuse..." she said, with tears in her eyes.

"I have to go, Clarke," Lexa answered coldly, her gaze determined but imbued with sadness.

Clarke understood she would never make her change her mind and that her presence in Polis would be more disturbing than useful. So she came closer again and they hugged a last time, in a violent and desperate kiss, grief and desire mixing with the taste of tears, Clarke's body shivering with cold and rage.

"May we meet again, Clarke," Lexa said while tearing herself away from the lips of the young woman.

"May we meet again, Lexa..."
And before the warrior turned away and exited the tent, Clarke clearly perceived tears forming in this green and intense look which always moved her deeply, shook her beliefs and stirred her to the depths of her self.
Chapter 12

It was the day of the Council. Octavia had seen Clarke, her face dejected, wandering all day long. The tension in the camp was at its height as the hours went by and everybody was waiting for Marcus Kane's return, left in place of the convalescent ambassador. When he arrived late at night, her inscrutable look gave the answer to all their questions.

He convoked all the Skaikru and addressed them grimly.

"The Azgeda ambassador didn't come back, which means they refuse the agreement and prefer to sacrifice Roan. The Commander Lexa asked what the clans had decided. Two clans refused to follow her and declared themselves to be neutral. So we are ten clans to support her in this war against the Azgeda. The clans' armies will gather in front of Polis in two days. I will take only volunteers. You have to know we'll be in the frontline, because we've got the assault rifles. But we fight for the peace between our peoples, a peace the Azgeda refuse because they have always coveted the supreme power. We have to help *Lexa kom Trigedakru* because peace between us all depends on her."

The day after, Marcus left with his army to join Lexa's troops. Clarke met Raven in the shuttle.

"I found a way to follow the battle," Raven said with a satisfied smile. "I succeeded in crafting a drone that will show us everything."

Clarke said nothing, not knowing if she should rejoice or not. She heard Raven click on several buttons, then silence.

"Fuck!"

"What?" Clarke asked, suddenly in panic.

"I've just found the Azgeda army. There are too many of them!"

The armies of the coalition had gathered near Polis in the plain suitable for the fight. In the front row were the Skaikru, in charge of eliminating the greatest number of enemies with their rifles until running out of ammunition. And even more ahead, four redoubtable women on their chargers, Lexa, Indra, Anya and Octavia, were waiting for the beginning of the attack, all made up with war paints around their focused and murderous eyes.

Marcus observed the army in front of them. They were thousands. How could it be possible? Where did all these warriors come from?

"Commander, they're many more than us!" He shouted.

"*Winnes set raun bakon kom givnes. Disha hukop souda win au!* Victory stands on the back of
sacrifice. This alliance must win!" Lexa declaimed.

At that time, Lexa knew she led her warriors to their downfall. She understood the two clans which had declared as neutral were actually opposite them. And that the Azgeda had secretly succeeded in rallying peoples from the borders of the world, unknown to the Coalition. But she could not retreat any longer. She thought about Clarke, about this woman had revived inside her, about the strength she brought to her, about the feelings she had reawakened inside her. So, she unsheathed her sword, and pushing her horse into a gallop, screamed her ultimate command:

"Kom wor! Frag em op! To war! Kill them all!"

All the warriors rushed forward following their Commander. The Skaikru poured forth their murderous bullets on the front rows of the enemies who fell down. Hundreds of Azgeda collapsed, until the rifles went out, making way for the fury of metal against metal.

The Skaikru moved back, stepping aside behind the Grounders. And Marcus, further back, observed, fascinated, the four women still forward fighting against the Azgeda.

Around twenty men surrounded them, and their blades sliced, cut, slashed, slit the throats relentlessly, their bodies dancing and flying in a martial choreography unknown to her.

Lexa was the most impressive. Of the five men who attacked her, not one survived. In a few seconds, her swords had reduced them to nothing, her body spinning with lightness, whipping and ripping the warriors who fell before her amazing dexterity. Her power, her will, her courage led her army like any commander had never done. The four women, stained with their enemies' blood, kept going forth, slaying the Azgeda's rows, and the Grounders followed them blindly.

But the Azgeda surpassed them in number, and the Coalition warriors could not fight much longer. Seized with terror, Marcus saw even Lexa was beginning to weaken, while a sword missed her head by an inch, saved in extremis by Octavia who diverted the blow and decapitated the warrior.

The Coalition was going to be wiped out here in this plain.

In the shuttle, Clarke, Raven and Abby were watching with horror the images broadcasted by the drone.

"They won't make it, it's the end," Abby said, with tears in her eyes, before leaving the room, refusing to see more.

Clarke, who had followed the fight of the four warriors, her heart terrified, could not resolve to inaction. An abominable idea crossed her desperate mind.

"Raven, are there operational missiles left in the shuttle?"

Raven stared at her silently, stunned.

"You're not gonna do that, Clarke..."

"It's our only chance..."

"I refuse to do that! It will kill everyone!"
"Not if you direct it properly."

"Out of the question!" Raven, exclaimed while getting up abruptly from the command console.

Clarke, her gaze full of tears, drew her gun and pointed it at the mechanic.

"Prepare the missile, Raven," she said, her voice broken by sorrow.

"No, Clarke."

"Prepare this fucking missile! It's our only chance! If they win, we'll all die!"

Raven was conscious that Clarke was probably right, but the missile would cause damage on all sides, making no distinction, and particularly in the center of the battle, where all their friends were. When she finally understood in stupefied amazement that Clarke was ready to sacrifice Lexa, Octavia, Kane and all others for the survival of their people, she eventually accepted to sit back down, and calibrated the missile in order for it to crash as closely as possible to the Azgeda army.

"It's ready," she said with a heavy heart, standing up again. "But the rest is yours. It's your decision, your responsibility."

Raven went out of the command room, leaving Clarke in front of the console, tears blinding her eyes.

"Mebi oso na hit choda op nodotaim. May we meet again," Clarke said in Trigedasleng when she pushed the firing button.

The four warriors, exhausted, had to back off faced with the number of the fighters, taking refuge in the second row to catch their breath. Anya and Indra were wounded, but kept their guard over the Commander.

Marcus knew the situation was desperate and wondered what decision to make when something catch his attention above him. He looked up and it took him a few seconds to understand before he began to run like mad towards Lexa.

"Commander! Commander! A missile swoops right on us!"

"A missile?" Asked Lexa who did not know the term.

"A Skaikru weapon! It's gonna destroy us all! Tell your army to flee, quickly!"

Lexa raised her worn out eyes to the sky, glimpsed a bright object, and rushed to Gustus.

"Teik oso rowenes laud! Sound the retreat!"

And as Gustus was blowing his warhorn, Lexa shouted at all her warriors in the front row to run away. And all of them began to run as they had never run, in a desperate effort to escape from annihilation, the four women running abreast, Marcus, Bellamy, Murphy, at their sides. And when the missile hit its target in an ineffable explosion, Lexa, like in a dream, saw all her fighting comrades be thrown like rag dolls, taken in a blinding light and an incandescent heat, she felt her eardrums burst, and her body propelled forward by the apocalyptic blast of air. She heard the sound and the...
fury. And then she felt nothing any longer.

The wind was blowing on the disfigured plain, carrying the blood smell of thousands of decimated warriors, lying in the middle of a crater, also conveying the cries of agony and pain of the wounded and the distraught survivors. One discerned fire, one breathed death, one revealed the abyss. And emerging from below the corpses, seriously injured but alive, a warrior rose, her gaze ringed with black sweeping the extent of the chaos.

"Klark... Chit don yu dula op? What did you do?"

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