Learning to Breathe

by roliver4

Summary

Lexa Woods' life was completely turned upside down with the death of her father and stepmother, but from that moment on she decided to do whatever it took to support her and her younger step-brother Lincoln and half-sister Tris-- even if that means killing herself in the process. What Lexa didn't plan on was stumbling into Jaha's Taekwondo Academy to see her brother and running into Clarke Griffin, especially not literally and in a way that would cause bodily harm. Good thing Clarke is the academy's unofficial nurse.

Notes

** TRIGGER WARNINGS: SELF-HARM, SUICIDAL IDEATION, EATING DISORDER, PTSD**

I'm terrible at this whole Second person point of view thing but decided to challenge myself as a write and make this happen... so leave me some comments on ways to make things better.
Chapter names part of Switchfoot's LEARNING TO BREATHE lyrics.

Also, add me on tumblr and let's hang out! http://shanycakes-1131.tumblr.com/
Hello, good morning, how you do?

Chapter Summary

Lexa Woods is physically assaulted by Clarke Griffin as she's dropping off her little sister

LEXA

Walking into Jaha Taekwondo Academy of Macomb is nothing new for you. At the age of 26 years old, you enter this academy more than you walk through the doors of your own apartment. Hell, this place has more of your family’s clothing in it than your own apartment does, but can you expect when your brother is next in line for inheriting the academy when Jaha retires in 2 years?

Thelonious Jaha is a special breed of human being, but for the last 7 years he has helped you and your brother more than you could ever put into words. Ever since the accident, Jaha has been your father, helping you with all of your large life choices, aiding in selling your parents’ house and even helped in organizing the estate after their funerals. You hate to even imagine where Lincoln would be without Jaha.

Even more so, you hate to imagine where you would be without him. You see, life for you hasn’t been easy recently. 7 years ago, you were forced to become an adult at 19 years old. Your life crumbled for a brief moment as your phone rang at 2 am, brightening the Norman Oklahoma dorm room around you as it sang out Rihanna’s Umbrella. That would be the last time you would listen to that song. You were greeted with the voice of a stranger asking for you to verify your identity and then alerting you that you needed to come to Macomb PD. Your heart sank immediately as you knew exactly what was coming next. The words “There’s been an accident” echoed for years. Still today, 7 years later, you shiver when a police vehicle or an ambulance zooms past you on the interstate.

“He died instantly,” the officer spoke as you identified your father’s body. Your best friend was laying on the table in front of you and all this man could say to comfort you at 4 in the morning was a half-assed “We are sorry for your loss” and the peace of mind that your father didn’t suffer.

Your stepmother was a different story. Toni fought hard to return to you. She was alive when the Paramedics arrived at the scene. She was resuscitated twice on the way to the hospital. When they finally pulled into the ER loading ramp she had finally given up. They said that she fought hard, but that was of no comfort. She still left you and her son and daughter alone. They both left you alone.

The worst part of their death wasn’t that she suffered. It wasn’t that your father never wore a seatbelt despite having seen a thousand car wrecks working for the fire department. It wasn’t even that they were gone. The worst part of all of this was that it was

All
Your
Fault.
Had they not come to Norman to visit you at your dorm that weekend then they wouldn’t have been on the interstate at that time.

Had they not stayed long than they expected to so they could buy you dinner then your father wouldn’t have been so tired when he was driving.

Had you not kept them so long then maybe your father would have been reactive to that Semi-Truck turning in front of their car.

Had you not been such a shit then they would still be alive-- and no amount of therapy or counseling or family and friend reassurance can tell you otherwise.

It was all your fault.

“What’s up asshole?” the familiar voice of your brother breaks your thoughts. “Lexa,” Lincoln continues, placing a hand on your shoulder. “Are you alright? You’ve been staring at the floor for a solid 10 minutes.” He gives you a slight shake and you both smile. Your younger brother is one of the two most important people in your life and one of the two people who understand you. In fact, he might be the only person. Tris is great, but she’s a child…

She’s essentially your child until she turns 18.

“Yeah,” you mumble, bringing your little brother in for a hug. He looks nothing like you-- only being related by marriage will do that you guess. He wraps his arms around you, pulling you even closer. “I’m just bringing Tris by. I’ve got another shift tonight at the bar.” He sighs, beginning the conversation about how you’re working too hard…

How you’re killing yourself…

How you need a day off…

How you need some time to yourself…

But you stop listening. It’s the same every time. You just nod, knowing that he cares, but also knowing that he works just as many hours as you.

“Thanks,” you say, shoving him gently. He smiles, rubbing the top of your head violently before linking his thumbs into the belt wrapped around his waist. Lincoln has always been handsome, but something about him in his martial arts uniform makes you even more proud of your beautiful brother. He has worked hard to get to this point in his life and after everything that you have been through, that he has been through, he deserves this. He deserves happiness.

“So where is the monster?” He asks, glancing around the room. He scans quickly before accepting the fact that Tris isn’t here.

“She’s in the office glued to her computer,” you say softly, fixing your long brown hair back into its ponytail, mildly disgruntled that he messed it up. “Where else?” He laughs at your joke, knowing that it’s completely true. Your sister is a 14 year old girl-- she only cares about social media and soccer… not her older brother and sister or martial arts.

That’s a lie though. More times than not, Tris ditches her friends and movie nights and coffee shops to be with the two of you at home. Movie marathons and board games often times replace sleepovers and box office thrillers for Tris and more times than not, you’re thankful that your sister isn’t a normal teenager. She would be harder to raise and this whole surviving thing would be harder to do.

But you three have always made it happen. You work 7 days a week at the diner and the pick up
between 3-6 nights a week at a local bar where you make pretty good money pretending to be straight and flirting with drunk, heartbroken travelers. Lincoln teaches at the academy 6 days a week and works as a bouncer or security guard 5 nights a week. He honestly makes more money than you, but that has never been a concern of either of yours. As long as bills are being paid and Tris is rocking out in school and soccer, everything is well in your world.

“Well can you go back there and tell her something for me?” Lincoln asks, turning to walk back out to the mat. “I have to teach tonight until 9 but ask her to start thinking about what she wants to do after okay?” You almost forgot that it was Thursday. Thursdays are Lincoln and Tris’ date nights. The thought always makes you chuckle, but once a week since your parents’ passed Lincoln has been taking Tris out for dinners and movies, plays or concerts. He has always bonded better with her than you, but honestly it’s because you’re more of the mother. Lincoln is the fun dad and you are the strong, stern mother.

You simply nod, knowing that neither Lincoln nor you are really much for conversation and this much social interaction in the outside world is going to be exhausting. Walking towards the back room, you open the stained glass doors to the small training room, hoping that there isn’t anyone else back here. You honestly don’t want more conversation than is necessary-- especially when you’re about to go hang out with (hopefully for your tips’ sake) hundreds of people who want to chat incessantly though their glasses and slurs. Making your way through the small weight room, you open the door to the office to talk to your sister before it happens.

Next thing you know, you’re on your ass with the feeling of warmth running down your lips and chin.

“Oh my god, I’m so sorry,” the small, blonde girl says, dropping the box that she was holding that is now splattered with your blood. You’ve never been one for nosebleeds, but the picture is slowly becoming clearer. “Oh Jesus Christ,” she stammers, crouching down to your level.

Blue.

Blue is all you can see as she starts to wipe your face with her shirt sleeve. You try to protest stumbling through some words about stains and you being fine before she cuts you off, covering your mouth with her sleeve.

Blue.

Blue is the color of her eyes, deep and shining like the sea.

“Stop talking. I just broke your nose.” Now the picture is completely clear as the throbbing just below your eye begins to scream out to you. This beautiful human being is absolutely correct…

She just broke your nose.

You smile slightly trying to push her away before the sound of a pop echoes through your scull followed quickly by the worst pain you’ve ever felt in your face. It’s similar to that which you felt when you femur snapped during a softball game when you were 15, except in your face… which in your opinion now made it worse.

“What the fuck,” you exclaimed, pushing the girl away from you and pulling your hands to your face. That much movement that quickly made you suddenly lightheaded. Maybe it was the resetting of your nose? Maybe it was the blood rushing to and from your head? Maybe it was this attractive woman in front of you? Shit, when did anyone so beautiful make their way into this academy?
“Shut up,” she said, pulling your hands back. She was a firecracker, that was for sure. “I need to reset it or else you’re going to be screwed up forever.” It wasn’t until she pulled her a roll of tape and a wad of gauze from her shirt pocket that you notice that she’s wearing scrubs. A doctor? Nurse?

Before you could ask, however, Tris exited the office, stepping over you and your assailter. “Lexa, you’re going to be fine. Stop being a bitch,” she told you as the blonde placed a piece of tape over your nose. She tries to tape the gauze to your face but you push her away. You can’t allow everyone to see how bad it actually is… especially not with you going to work right after this.

A black eye is one thing.

A swollen nose is fine.

But a wad of gauze attached to the bottom of your face is just asking for it.

You cringe as she rubs the corners of the tape down, but you try to hold back the majority of it-- Tris can’t see you weak and this stranger surely can’t see it. Reaching out to grab your sister’s ankle you laugh as she trips slightly, turning back to scowl at you. “Date night?” she asked after she reached the stained glass doors. You nod, receiving a nod in return.

Even though she’d never let on, Tris loved date nights with Lincoln. She’d come home bragging about all of the fun things that the two of them did together and be all jittery and giggly for the rest of the night. He was good to her-- better than you ever could be-- but they were more alike than you two. It stopped making you jealous years ago. After all, you all had your own things. Lincoln and you bonded over competition and sports. Sunday night football was your time together. Tris and you enjoyed dancing and music. She brought out the child in you with impromptu rave parties and splurges to concert festivals. Tris and Lincoln could have their date nights.

“Oh, you’re all done, Lexa,” the blonde spoke, surprising you with knowing your name. Tris did just say it though, you think, realizing that she’s not special-- just attentive. You smile from the corner of your lips, lifting yourself off of the mats before offering the girl who both brutally assaulted you and helped patch you up your hand. She took it, flashing you a bright smile in return. “I’m Clarke,” she said, turning your offer to pull her up by her hand into a handshake. “And I’m 100% sure that I owe you dinner now that I tried you kill you.”

You try to snort a laugh but the pain underneath your eye sockets makes it next to impossible. “Do I need to go to a doctor?” you ask her, running your fingers across the tape on your nose.

She shakes her head, returning the tape to her scrub pocket and withdrawing a notepad. “No. Just come back next week and I’ll check to make sure you’re healing properly. I’ll save you a little bit of money.” She laughs harder than you thought necessary at her joke, but this caused you to join in. She was contagious. She was like sunshine. She was bright and shiny and beautiful and she felt warm, even after breaking your nose. Her scribbling continued until the sound of paper ripping interrupted it. “Here’s my number. If you start bleeding again or anything, just give me a call.”

“Are you a doctor?” You ask, taking the small paper from her and giving it a look over before putting it in the pocket of your jeans.

“Nurse,” she said shaking her head. “Much to my mother’s dismay.” She snorted a small laugh, returning her pen and notebook to her pocket. You wonder how much other stuff she stores in those pockets. They’re like Marry Poppin’s bag or something-- endless and filled with all kinds of things. “But for real, I’m taking you to dinner. Let’s go.”

“I work,” you correct her, suddenly regretting your decision to take this shift. A young, attractive woman was asking you out-- even if only because she broke your nose-- and yet you’re going to
hang out with skeezy men until 3 am.

“But you just broke your nose… I just broke your nose… That should be worth something.” She smiles pointing to herself with her thumbs before taking her keys from her pocket-- yet another item from Clarke’s pocket of wonders-- and giving them a slight shake. “For real, it’s the least I could do.”

“But you don’t know me,” you remind her, knowing that this girl is worth way more than you. I mean, other than the whole attempted murder thing that just occurred, she was perfect. She was bright and kind and you were...

you’re just...

you.

It’s not that you’re unattractive… I mean, people have been telling you forever that you are, but you’re just bland. You used to be fun and exciting, but now you’re just you. You work and support your family and the only time that you ever see other people is through work. Sure, there’s been prospects-- people who have asked you on dates or out to events, but you’ve always found ways around it. Honestly, you’re more comfortable with just being you. Lincoln is the exact opposite. He makes sure to make time for friends and girls, but that’s just not your style. You’re more of a loner and that’s totally okay with you.

Clarke laughs at you, putting a hand on your arm and leaning in closer to you. You can smell her now. She smells as good as she looks. She smells like summer. She smells like flowers and all things good. She smells like how clean towels feel. She smells like passion, and that honestly scares you.

“That’s what dinner is for. Let’s go,” she says as she begins walking, pulling your arm and turning your body towards the door.

You pull your arm back, regaining your composure. Clearing your throat and standing up to stretch out your neck and appear stronger and taller, you tell her with the utmost authority, “Honestly, I can’t.” Honestly, you can. Honestly, you want to. But really, can you? You’ve only ever called out of work once when you had the stomach bug and were puking your brains out for three days straight. Plus, that was two years ago. You then realize you have worked literally every day that either place has been open for the past 730 days. What is one day off right? Lifting your eyes to meet Clarke’s, you catch her smile. Damn it… You’re smiling again because of her. “Fine,” you finally mumble, pulling your phone from your pocket to shoot a quick text to the other bar tender. It is Thursday after all… hopefully it wouldn’t be too bad. It’s not Macomb is a college town so the rules of “Thirsty Thursday” don’t really apply.

Clarke smiles even larger as you return your phone to your back pocket. “I know the best Colombian place right around here, she says, grabbing your arm to tug you to the door. As you walk through the academy you watch as Lincoln whispers something to Tris who is now standing next to him near the front desk before giving you two thumbs up and a large smile. Tris appears to gag a little before replying to his comment just loud enough for you to hear.

“I don’t want to think about my sister’s sex life,” you hear as you pass them. Lincoln continues to smile and wave goodbye to you as Tris places her palm over her face and shakes her head in dismay. Where did they actually think this was going? You didn’t even know Clarke and after all, she was just making up for the fact that she hit you in the face and broke your nose… Right?

Once outside of the academy doors, Clarke lifted her arms and removed her scrub top, rolling it up into a ball. She was wearing a tank top underneath which left little to the imagination and suddenly you were mildly turned on. Uh oh. This was going to be a long dinner if you couldn’t control
yourself around a complete stranger. In your defense, the muscles on her back were well defined. Her shoulders were strong and she obviously worked out. Plus, right below where her shirt’s neckline would be began a tattoo that ran deep into her tank top. It looked intricate and detailed and put your little arm tattoo to shame. Before you even realized it, you were staring at the contours of her arms, tracing them with your eyes, memorizing every curve of her torso. This girl obviously had to work out.

“I’ll drive, okay?” She asked, pulling her keys out of the balled up shirt and clicking the auto-start button. A small, blue Ford Focus hatch-back revved up a few spots away. You just nod, noticing that blue was the color that surrounded Clarke.

Not like a sadness kind of blue. It wasn’t like the blue that engulfs you when you sit too long. It wasn’t the blue that you’ve seen for years.

No.

This was the kind of blue that outlines the sun in little kids’ drawings.

Clarke was the sun and the sky

And you...

You were the moon and darkness.

You don’t notice that her hand is still linked inside of your arm until you reach the car and she pulls it away. You don’t realize how much you liked it being there until suddenly it wasn’t. Without saying anything, you take your seat in the passenger side of the car, putting on your seatbelt first, and then folding your hands in your lap. She soon joins you from the driver’s side and shifts the car into gear before starting to talk to you again.

“You don’t say much, do you?” She asks, maintaining a focus on the road which puts you more at ease. Your shoulders are still raised and you’re still on guard, however. After all, you don’t like not having control of the vehicle… not since your parents that is. Shaking your head, you mumble a slight ‘No’ before she begins again. “That’s alright. I’ll get it out of you one way or another.” From the corner of your eye you can see her smiling over to you, taking her eyes off of the road for a brief second. It’s okay though because you keep your eyes attached to the dotted lines in front of you both for her. Once she returns her sight, you steal a slight glance at her profile as the street lights begin dancing off of her flawless skin.

When did it become dark?

“So why were you at Jaha’s?” you ask her, hoping it doesn’t sound intrusive. You’re justified, you believe. You’ve never seen her there before. She was in the office. She wasn’t in a Taekwondo uniform. Jaha isn’t married anymore (plus she’s hella young for him, but who knows with Jaha…). All these things seem to point logically to the question… As if breaking your nose didn’t give you enough reason to interrogate her. She simply chuckled, starting her blinker and making a left turn onto a less busy street. You let out a sigh of relief but Clarke doesn’t seem to notice-- or at least acts like she doesn’t.

“I sort of volunteer for Thelonious,” she begins, explaining that she and Thelonious met when her roommate introduced them. Once he knew that she was a nurse, Jaha asked her to come do bi-monthly physicals and check-ups at the academy. He tried to pay her, but she declined saying that she just wanted to help where should could.

There was something about Clarke that you noticed-- she felt like she owed the world something.
She felt like she had a debt to pay and you couldn’t quite place your finger on why, but for some reason she felt the need to bust her ass for everyone else.

“So why were you at the academy? Obviously you know that girl,” she asked you, merging lanes quickly but gently. She shifts her eyes to glance over at you before returning her stare to the road.

“That’s my sister,” you say, the words rolling off your tongue as easy as ever. “And Lincoln’s my brother,” you add, almost as an afterthought. It wasn’t really, but Clarke seemed to think so as a small laugh exits her lungs. “Do you know him?”

“Of course I know Lincoln. Who doesn’t?” She asks, pulling into a parking lot. She glides the small car into a spot with relative ease and shifts into part, shutting off the engine and turning to face you. “He works with my roommate,” she adds, unbuckling her seatbelt.

You do the same, opening the door to exit the vehicle. Stretching your legs slightly, you realize for the first time that Clarke is shorter than you by a good 4 inches at least. “Who is your roommate?” the question rolls out of your mouth without you even thinking.

Holy shit.

You’re talking with someone.

You’re bonding with someone.

And you haven’t died.

She smiles, linking arms with you again and you feel comfortable with this idea. You have never been comfortable with physical affection, but for some reason it feels normal with Clarke. She makes it easy. “His name is Bellamy Blake,” she tells you, the name ringing no bells. “He works the security detail with Lincoln.” That would explain it. Lincoln is pretty private about the security job. After all, he busted his ass to get clearance—plus, neither you nor Tris really care about what he’s guarding. It’s a power plant and you both just figure that whatever secrets are inside of there are better left inside of there. Instead of saying anything, you just nod, allowing Clarke to fill in the gaps. As you approach the door, the young woman stops in her tracks, turning towards you with a distressed look on her face. “I didn’t even ask you if this was okay!” she exclaims, lifting her hands to her face. “I’m so sorry… If you want something else…”

“No,” you laugh, pulling her hands down. You, Lexa Woods, just touched another human being. You initiated physical contact and you didn’t melt. “It’s fine… plus,” you add, raising you hand to point just past the restaurant. “The bar next door looks promising.” Honestly, you loved going to other bars. You always learned something new and picked up a few trade secrets. It was almost always worth having to deal with people.

Clarke smiled, taking your arm in yours again and continued walking towards the restaurant. “Now you’re talking… In fact, how would you feel about skipping dinner and just getting drinks before the crowd gets wild?” It was as if she read your mind. With a small ‘sure’ and reassuring nod, you allow Clarke to begin tugging you in the direction of the bar.

At least you’re getting a drink out of this whole ordeal.
What makes your rising sun so new?

Chapter Summary

Clarke Griffin assaults Lexa Woods while leaving Jaha's TaeKwonDo academy

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, Here's Chapter 2. Thanks for all of the support!!!
Please, please, please leave comments on how to make things better. I'm new to this whole second person thing and to the whole telling stories from both sides, so let me know what you think!
Also, add me on tumblr so we can be friends!
http://shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com/

CLARKE

“Clarke Griffin, you are an angel,” Thelonious Jaha spoke, flexing his fingers around. You smile back at him, closing up your first aid kid and cleaning up the paper towels that lined the desk. “That bastard has been bothering me for weeks now.” He clinches his fist, admiring the full mobility of his hand before putting a hand on yours to make you stop your cleaning efforts to look at him. Humoring him, you do, even though you know where this is going. “Clarke, let us pay you.”

You laugh a sarcastic chuckle, pulling your hand away and rising from your chair, tossing the balled up trash into waste basket beside the desk. “You can’t afford me,” you joke with your old friend, pocketing what few items remained on the desk. Your scrub pockets were your refuge and literally everything that could fit in them went in them.

Thelonious Jaha has been there for you since you moved to Macomb for work. After high school in California, you left your mother to move down south, Tennessee, for nursing school, then to Macomb Oklahoma to work a St. Anthony Shawnee Hospital. To your mother, you lived in the woods, but to you, Macomb was home, and most of the reasoning behind this was due to Jaha.

When you first started at St. Anthony’s, you lived in this terrible apartment complex in this terrible end of town. It wasn’t the part of town that bothered you, after all, you had lived in LA. Not much fazed you. Your random roommate, however, was a different story. She turned out to be a low key drug dealer, mostly college students and strung out pill addicts, and after you found her digging through your work supplies, you had to get out.

That’s when you stumbled across Bellamy Blake. Bellamy worked security at St. Anthony, as well as a few other places around Macomb and he sported a black uniform, brown curly hair, a beautiful, dark complexion and a gun holstered on his hip as he walked you to your car at nights. Had things been different with you, you might have actually found Bellamy attractive, but he wasn’t…. your type. Bellamy listened to you complain about your roommate with little input for weeks until one night he approached you with an envelope.
“Come live with me,” he said as you opened it, revealing a key. “There’s no reason for you to live in the toxic and I have a 3 bedroom place to myself.” He flashed you that perfect smile and you couldn’t say no. Bellamy had been your best, and only, friend for the two and a half months that you’ve been in Macomb. You just hope he knew what he was getting into.

Bellamy introduced you to Jaha one day while out and about in the city. Apparently, Jaha had trained Bellamy when he was younger and now, the older gentleman was looking for someone in the medical field to come do physicals and help out around the academy. You were exactly what he wanted. He was exactly what you needed.

“Maybe not, but we can try,” the older man replied, brushing some sweat from his brow. The upstairs office was always hot, but Thelonious was also always sweating. “I mean you’re always here.”

“Count this as charity,” you say, turning against him to place your kit up on the shelf. Brushing your blonde hair from your eyes, you turn back to your old friend with a smile. “After all, where else would I go?”

“Home,” he replies, almost too quickly. “Go home Clarke. You’ve been up for over 16 hours now. Go home and go to bed.” You laugh, knowing he has a point. He lifts a box the size of your body, putting it on the desk for you. “Can you take these downstairs?” he asks maintaining eye contact before walking towards his own private office in the back of the room. “They just need to be put in the training room.” You nod, your old friend walking towards you to embrace you quickly in a hug before returning to his office, closing the door behind him.

Lifting the box from the desk was no easy task. The weights inside were for the muscular instructor’s new fitness class and you had to admit, you were not in your best shape. This was only made more apparent by the laughter from the dirty-blonde teenage soccer star that entered the office and made herself comfortable at the desk in front of you.

“Got that?” she asked you, knowing damn good and well that she probably couldn’t lift it either. You nod and grunt, waddling your way to the four stairs that lead to the exit of the office. In this moment, you’re regretting putting that roll of tape in your pocket. Feeling it shift against your stomach, you groan mildly, wondering what kind of indentions it’s leaving on your body. Turning the corner, you come around quickly, hoping to just toss the box outside of the doorway and be done with it, but fate had another idea.

Before you know any different, there’s a thud and a crashing sound and you’re stuck holding a box while this brown haired woman is on the floor screaming profanities and holding her face. You just ran someone down with an amazon.com box of weights.

“Oh my god, I’m so sorry,” you exclaim, throwing the box down beside you two and dropping to your knees in front of the woman. “Oh Jesus Christ.” You begin wiping her face down, immediately taking note of the situation. Her nose is bent slightly to the right and her breathing labored, although you did just assault her with a box full of weighted vests.

“You’re getting my blood all over your sleeve,” she argues, reaching her hands out to grab your wrist. When she touches you, it causes you to shutter. What the fuck, Clarke? Since when did this happen?

“Stop talking,” you tell her, explaining how her nose is broken because of you.

Shit.
You broke her nose.

Sighing deeply, you take the mass of her small nose in your hand, listening as she protests, trying to push you away before you pull.

You pull hard.

And then…

Pop.

Her nose is back where it needs to be and she’s violently shoving your body away from her. At least this one didn’t hit you. The last nose you reset, at 12 year old boy who got in a football accident, decided to haul back and muy-tai you in the face with his fist. Lucky for you, you only ended up with a small bruise over your left eyebrow and not a broken nose yourself.

This woman, however, just continued to talk, slurring words with profanity and trying to keep her distance. It was actually kind of cute hearing this much vulgar language from her. She wasn’t exactly sailor or biker material. She was tall and thin with a tan complexion and dark brown hair pulled back into a tight pony tail. She looked more like a banker than she did a biker thug. Hell, she looked more like someone who had their life together than anything else, and for that you found yourself already envying her.

And then she looked at you.

She looked at you with those dark eyes-- chocolate crème colored with flecks of gold, like an inner fire inside of her that refused to die. She was a fighter-- this much you knew.

“Shut up,” you say, more to yourself than her as you pull yourself back from admiring this girl that you almost just killed. “I need to reset it or else you’re going to be screwed up forever.” Reaching into your huge pocket, you pull out the tape that you pocketed just moments before, cutting a tiny piece and reaching out to place it on her face.

The small, teenager from the office steps down the stairs, laughing as she enters the room. “Lexa, you’re going to be fine,” she says, kicking at the hands of the girl on the floor. “Quit being a bitch.”

You’re too preoccupied with trying to tape up this woman’s nose as she fights with this teenager to correct the younger girl. This woman isn’t being a bitch at all. In fact, she’s handling it all quite well, especially saying that you attacked her out of nowhere.

And then it hits you…

Lexa.

Her name is Lexa.

It’s fitting. Lexa sounds like a name that would accompany someone with strength, someone that would only cringe a bit when you place your fingertips on her nose right after you just broke it.

You ignore the small conversation that they’re having, catching on that they know each other fairly well as you work to bandage up the stubborn woman. She continues to try to push you away as you offer gauze and attempt to wipe down her face.

“Okay, you’re all done, Lexa,” you tell her, taking her hand after she stands. “I’m Clarke,” you tell her, figuring it’s only fair that she knows your name. You shake her hand, realizing that you’re still holding on to it. “And I’m 100% sure that I owe you dinner now that I tried to kill you.” You smile as she laughs, cringing as she does. She’s going to be in pain for a little bit, and will be really lucky if
her eyes don’t swell up.

“Do I need to go to a doctor?” she asks you, feeling the tape on her nose and cringing again. You can’t help but smile at her stubbornness and when you tell her no, handing her your number and explaining to just come back to the academy to get it rechecked, she asks you that dreaded question. “Are you a doctor?”

“Nurse,” you correct her, shaking your head. You add in some quip about your mother, hoping she won’t notice as you place your pen and notebook back into your infinite pocket, watching her watching you. Suddenly, you become more intrigued in this woman and more self-conscious. What does she see in you? Who does she think that you are?

You look her over quickly, scanning her body as she plays with the tape on her nose. She’s the anxious fiddled. She plays with things to keep her fingers occupied. She probably tears at the corners of papers and picks at the tips of her fingers or else she gets nervous. She’s also a perfectionist; you can tell by the way the she holds herself. It’s probably going to drive her crazy over the next week if her face bruises as badly as it should. Normally, these two combined, anxious perfectionism, is a terrible combination, giving way to illnesses such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, but she wears it well.

“But for real,” you begin, breaking your own thoughts before it becomes too obvious that you’re checking this girl out and sizing her up. “I’m taking you to dinner. Let’s go.” You reach out to take her arm, but she pulls back.

“I work,” she says, eyes dropping to the floor. That’s an interesting development. She honestly looks sad that she’s missing dinner with you.

You’re not exactly sure how to interact socially anymore. After your father died, you sort of dove in head first to school and athletics, never really taking time for yourself. It wasn’t until college that you went on your first date, and even that was filled with conversation about work and school. Finn Collins had been patient with you on that date, but in the end, your relationship to school overpowered your relationship with Finn. The two of you broke up within three weeks and he moved away, transferring schools and eventually joining the army or something or another. The two of you lost contact and last you heard, he was heading up some kind of tracking division in the military, but you tried to avoid social media stalking so you never really knew. After that, relationships became a fleeting thing. You were more about the moment than not and to you, sex and work outweighed emotional entanglement.

Even more awkward than your romantic life is your social life. You could count on one hand the number of people that you interact regularly who are not patients at the hospital or members at the academy. In fact, you can count on one finger-- Bellamy. Dad was your social human being. Mom was never good at interaction. She was rough and pointed, not one for small talk and would much rather get to the point and move on. Maybe you two didn’t get along as well as you could because you were the same person-- or maybe it was because she got your father murdered…

“But you just broke your nose,” you said to the woman, noticing that you had slipped into that place of deep thought again, forgetting the people around you. This happened frequently. “I just broke your nose,” you corrected with an awkward smile, pointing your thumbs back at your shoulders. “That should be worth something.” You shrugged, hoping that she would find your unrelenting persuasiveness cute and not obnoxious. After all, you never have known how to take no for an answer. Reaching into your pockets, you withdrew you keys, giving them a small shake before speaking again. “For real, it’s the least I could do.”

“But you don’t know me,” she said, raising her hand to rub the back of her neck. She was becoming
more and more uncomfortable with the situation and had you known how, you would have stopped. You would have let her go and declared it a rain-check kind of situation, but something inside of you refused to let her go. Something inside of you made you want to have dinner with her. Something inside of you made you want her.

And there it was.

When you suddenly admitted it, you realized the magnitude of this statement.

You, Clarke Griffin, were attracted to this woman.

“That’s what dinner is for,” you say after laughing a little at her statement, leaning in closer to her.

Woah, where did flirty Clarke come from? You found yourself leaning in, just inches from her face, a hand on the bend of her arm, craving for nothing more than to stroke the bare skin under the sleeve there.

“Let’s go,” you add, pulling her arm with you as you walk past her, causing her to spin on her heels.

“Honestly, I can’t,” Lexa says, pulling her arm back. Her face is pointed to the ground, those eyes staring holes in the floor and you want nothing more than to lift them back up to you. You want to drown in them. After a few moments, she looks back up at you, eyes sinking slightly before she mumbles a final “Fine,” taking her phone from her pocket and typing out a message before returning it to its place.

You can’t help but smile and she smiles back, making your smile even larger. How is this complete stranger doing this to you? Before you know it, you’re rambling about your favorite restaurant and dragging this girl out the door. You don’t even hear the voices of the others around you as they smile and laugh in your direction.

After all, you’re just taking this girl to dinner to pay her back for breaking her nose, right? I mean, what else would this be?

Outside of the academy walls, you were greeted with the hot intensity of Oklahoma summer. The humidity tightened in your lungs and the heat already began rippling sweat on your skin under your long sleeves. Lifting your arms over your head, you began taking off your scrub to at first to simply escape the heat, but when you caught a flash of Lexa’s stare, it became much more than that. For some reason, you wanted her to watch you. You moved more slowly, taking your time, shaking out your hair. This was going to go one of two ways: you either looked sexy and attractive, or like you were having a stroke. Hopefully it was the first.

Pulling your keys from the ball of the scrub top in your right hand, you clicked the button, starting your Ford Focus’ engine. “I’ll drive, okay?” you ask, more of a statement than not. Watching Lexa nod made you smile. She was actually agreeing to coming out with you. This attractive, dark, quiet, and mysterious stranger was actually agreeing to dinner, at least, and you barely had to persuade her. I mean, all you had to do was break her nose.

Walking her over to the car, you pull your arm from hers, forgetting that it was even there and walk over to your side of the car. You absentmindedly get in, buckle your seat belt and put the car in drive like you have a thousand times before. Taking a moment to thank the gods that you cleaned out your car this morning, you pull out of the parking lot, taking the first right onto the main road.

“You don’t say much, do you?” you ask, keeping your eyes forward. You’re not one for distractions, often driving with the radio off and never eating or texting while driving. You’ve seen too many
teenagers come into the hospital for reckless driving accidents to ever even care what useless text your mother has sent you or what that obnoxious snapchat from buzzfeed says. The woman beside you mumbles a response to you that you can’t understand but you assume is a ‘no’ which makes you laugh slightly under your breath.

Your father was the same way. He was the quiet, strong type who would only speak his mind when necessary. He always did the right thing and that, in the end, is what got him killed.

It was fall, not that that mattered so much in LA, when your father was called out to “Death Alley” right outside of Vermont Vista for a burglary gone hostage rescue. Lieutenant Jake Griffin was a well decorated negotiator, but more importantly to you, he was your best friend. He could talk his way into and out of anything, and often times, he talked you down off of the mountain tops that your darkness inside led you to. That day was supposed to be simple for him. He was supposed to show up to Vermont Vista, get briefed, go to South Vermont Avenue, talk down the young Caucasian male with a gun to the older shop owner’s head in the Westmont community, and walk out a hero like he always did. What your father didn’t know was that this young man was completing his gang initiation and had already failed. The Callie 18, or 18th street gang, didn’t take well to initiates failing and were already on their way to open fire and eliminate him. He was a liability. Unfortunately, so was your father it seemed.

“It’s alright,” you shake your head out of your daze, almost missing your turn. “I’ll get it out of you one way or another,” you finish flirty. You glance over at your guest, hoping that she caught on to your subtle hints. Maybe they weren’t so subtle… you were still new at all of this.

Looking back at the road, you notice that the sun is starting to set and the street lights are coming on. Flashing on your lights, you finally hear the woman next to you speak again and for the first time since entering your car. “Why were you at Jaha’s?” she asks, folding her hands into her lap. She wasn’t comfortable in cars, you could tell.

Letting out a small laugh at her awkwardness, you swallow it back down before speaking again. Making her feel even more uncomfortable is not your goal here. “I sort of volunteer for Thelonious,” you begin, thinking of how to word what you do. “He needed someone to help out with small medical things and I needed a place to spend my free time.” You smile, wondering what free time even looked like anymore. “So why were you at the academy?” you ask her, merging lanes. Glancing over at Lexa, you note that she is still tense and you shift to place a hand on hers, but change your mind right before you move. Too much? Too soon?

“That’s my sister,” Lexa explains the girl in the office, “And Lincoln’s my brother.” It sounded almost as if she forgot about Lincoln for a moment and you can’t help but chuckle. “Do you know him?” she asks, turning her eyes to you.

Again, you’re met with those warm, alluring, earthen eyes.

And that soft, gentle smile.

“Who doesn’t?” you ask, pulling into a parking lot to the left. You turn your car into a spot, shutting off the engine and turn to face Lexa. “He works with my roommate.” Unbuckling your seatbelt, you brush your blonde hair from your face and exit the car, walking around the car to stand beside Lexa. For real though, who doesn’t know Jaha’s second in command. Lincoln has been such a strong force in the academy since before you got there-- even though you’ve never held an in depth conversation with him. With a sister like Lexa, however, this makes sense. If he was anything like her, then he’s not one for small talk.

“Who’s your roommate?” Lexa asks as you link arms with her. She oddly enough seems to relax into
you which makes you comfortable. Maybe this wouldn’t be so bad. Maybe you won’t be too much.

“Clarke, leave it alone,” your mother’s voice echoes in your memory. “You ask too many questions.” All you had asked was questions about your father. All you wanted to know was the truth. “You’re too much sometimes.”

You’ll give it to your mother, she tried her hardest. She loved your father deeply, and he loved her even more. After his death, Abby didn’t know how to handle herself. She threw herself into her work, the same as you. Except, unlike track and getting into college, the Operating Room has the ability to steal every moment of your free time, especially when you’re best surgeon in the L.A. area. To Abby Griffin, work was everything. Saving lives was everything. Unfortunately for you, this meant you were nothing.

“His name’s Bellamy Blake,” you explain drawing yourself closer to Lexa without even realizing it. And then it hits you-- you never even confirmed if this was okay. You just decided everything and never let Lexa have a say in anything. Again, you considered no one other than yourself. “Oh my God,” you begin, stopping to turn to Lexa. “I didn’t even ask if this was okay!” Lifting your hands in the air, you let an exhausted sigh escape before you speak again. “I’m so sorry… If you want something else…”

But she doesn’t even let you finish. With a carefree laugh, Lexa pulls your hands back down to your side. “It’s fine,” she says, continuing to laugh, her hands still on yours. The contact makes you tremble. Is there any possible way that she can feel this too? Or is it just you. “Plus,” she adds, lifting a hand from yours to point behind you. As soon as her hand leaves yours, you crave its presence again. Curling your fingers into a fist, you sigh slightly, hoping she doesn’t see it. “The bar next door looks promising.” You smile, turning to face the building.

“Now you’re talking,” you congratulate her, taking her arm back in yours and instantly feeling comfortable again. “In fact, how would you feel about skipping dinner and just getting drinks?” you ask her, watching a smile ignite on her lips. She doesn’t need to know your reasoning behind skipping dinner. She doesn’t need to know your darkness. “Sure,” she says, nodding in reply to you and allowing you to lead her forward. For a brief moment, you can’t help but feel like she actually wants to be here as much as you do. Maybe… just maybe… but no. that’s not possible.
I could use a fresh beginning too

Chapter Notes

Lots of words. Lots of info. It'll come together, I promise!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

LEXA

Once inside, you sort of regret the entire ordeal. What looked like a small, cozy dive bar on the outside turned out to be a raging night club with 25 cent shot night and a mechanical bull. Clarke obviously picked up on your distress as she asked you questions like “Is this okay?” and “Are you sure?” frequently on the obscenely and unnecessarily long walk through the countless college-girls in short dresses and frat-guys with popped collars to the bar in the back. You nod every time, wondering if what you were saying was true or not, but by the time you make it to the bar, everything inside of you is screaming no. This is only made worse when Clarke lets go of your arm. Suddenly, even though she is still right next to you, you feel completely alone in this room full of people.

“Hey,” her familiar voice and soft hand on your knee interrupts your downward spiral. When did you even sit down on this shifty bar stool? “Did you hear me?” she asks, absentmindedly stroking your knee with her thumb. Her striking pools of eyes fixated on your shifting ones. You shake your head, blinking a few times to regain your composure.

Not here.

Not now.

You will not lose it with her here.

You will not lose it in this bar.

Instead, you take your shivering hands and pick at the sides of your jeans, pulling on strings and ignoring the cravings inside you.

She smiles awkwardly, apologetically, the corner of her lips turning up and you can’t help but stare at her. For real, is this happening right now? Are you actually attracted to this stranger? This stranger that just broke your nose? Your breathing slows again, regaining its natural tempo as the surroundings fade back in. Noise returns and the sights and smells of the bar bombard your senses replacing the darkness that flooded from the corners of your mind.

“I’m sorry. This was a mistake,” she says, standing from her chair. Before you can catch yourself, your hand has reached out and grabbed her wrist. Electricity flows through you causing you to rip your hand back. Your hand burns with the inelegance that just ensued. Never in your life had you begged for someone to stay…

But that is exactly what was happening.

“No,” you say, almost too softly for her to hear. “I’m sorry. I just don’t…” Your words are cut short by her body returning next to you and a hand on yours that has returned to your knee. Her knees are
touching yours and her hand is holding yours, her thumb stroking yours and her eyes are looking into you again.

Blue like the heat of a flame.

Blue like constant.

Blue like calming.

Jesus Christ those eyes.

“It’s fine,” she says, smile growing in reassurance. “Let me get you a drink and we’ll play it by ear.” You nod as she turns away, not knowing what ‘it’ is. What is she playing by ear? A drink? Drinks? The night? The rest of your life?

Fucking hell Lexa, get it together.

She’s buying you a drink… not a wedding ring.

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**CLARKE**

“Hey,” you notice she isn’t even looking at you again. In fact, she’s still not even looking at anything. Lexa’s just kind of staring through things.. The noise was almost unbearable; especially when you try to make eye contact with her and all you can see is her anxiety and you realize that she is borderline ready to cry… Well maybe not. I mean, you’ve only known her for about twenty minutes, but Lexa doesn’t seem like the crying type. If anything, by the look on her face, she’s probably ready to start hyperventilating-- or punching people. Placing a hand on her knee, you usher her back to reality from whatever dark place her mind traveled to. Looking into her eyes, you see it--she’s miserable. She’s utterly terrified and it’s all your fault. She continues to glance around, falling in and out of focus with you. Instead of frustration, you’re filled with regret.

It’s your fault that she’s here.

It’s your fault that she’s miserable.

She smiles in your direction, honestly trying her hardest as you notice your thumb, caressing circles on her jeans. Smiling uncomfortably, you can’t help but be ashamed of yourself.

Clarke Griffin, you are a shit.

Honestly, you dragged this beautiful woman from her paycheck in order to stand uncomfortably in an overcrowded bar with you…

Plus, you broke her nose.

Did she really want you here?

You slide closer to her, intentionally sliding your knee in between hers. She glances down at your legs and you do the same, eyes lifting at the same time.

Fuck, you’re a romantic comedy.
Your life is turning into a romantic comedy and you can’t stop it.

Grabbing her hand, you try to comfort her… try to rectify the situation. “It’s fine,” you say, maintaining eye contact, thumb absentmindedly stroking hers.

Seriously, every time you touch this woman you are caressing her.

Maybe you’re being too forward?

Is that even a thing?

For fuck’s sake Clarke, what do you even want out of this?

I mean, you woke up this morning completely content with your life-- go to work, work 13 hours in the ER, go to Jaha’s, work 3 hours doing whatever he has you doing, go home, talk with Bellamy for a little bit, watch some Netflix over a dinner that you won’t really eat with your roommate, go to bed, wake up and repeat. But now, Bellamy is home by himself, enjoying a meal without worrying about you and you’re here-- flirting with this woman who you assaulted and essentially are holding hostage.

But for some reason, you’re not happy with this. You’re not happy with the way things were-- even though until an hour ago, you were. Suddenly, you want more. You want more Lexa.

Woop there it is.

You want Lexa…

And even though you can’t say to what degree you do…

You want Lexa.

You’ve never actually wanted anyone. Well, that’s not entirely true. You wanted Finn, that much was true. And Finn clearly wanted you, but you could never get past this stupid fucking devotion that you have to your job. “It’s not that it’s a bad thing,” his words echo… your breakup ringing in your brain, reminding you that he never really left.

It’s not a bad thing…

You just have no free time…

You just never sleep…

You just work all of the time…

You just push away everyone close to you…

You just became your mother.

It’s not a bad thing… It’s just the worst thing that’s ever happened to you.

And although you’ve never wanted anyone like you wanted Finn, you’re suddenly wanting Lexa. You want her fingers laced in yours, not dancing awkwardly across her lap. You want her eyes looking at you, not through you. You want her voice speaking more than two word sentences to you.

You want her…
Alone…
With you…

“Here you are,” the bar tender causes you to jump slightly as he lays your drinks down beside you. Pulling back your hand, you reach for your wallet, noting the disappointment on Lexa’s face when you leave her grasp. It’s obvious, but apparently so is your staring as she turns her head quickly to look at the drinks on the bar. You smile as you hand the bar tender your card and he smiles back— but probably not for the same reasons.

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LEXA

Before you know it, the bartender has dropped off two flirty drinks and two shots. You cringe slightly at the sight of both only because mixed drinks are terrible and you have no clue what is in the smaller glasses. Even though you’re well versed in liquors, you aren’t ever particularly ballsy when it comes to drinking… or maybe that’s the reason why.

“I got my favorite shot and my favorite mix. I figured you could try mine then I’d try yours,” Clarke laughs, handing the bartender her card and returning her wallet to her back pocket. Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Did she even hear herself. Picking up the glasses, you follow in Clarke’s lead, taking the shot first— house rum— then sipping from the mixed drink. The light blue and lime green mixture takes you by surprise. Sky Lab. It’s been a very long time since you’ve seen someone order a Sky Lab. The rum and schnapps complement each other nicely and you take a mental note to compliment the bartender. He’s very skilled. “What do you think?” she asked, placing her glass down and turning her knees to face you again. Her hair follows behind as she spins in the barstool. In the right light, you could swear that she has a halo, but you blink away these thoughts.

You simply nod, licking your lips before saying “I like it.” You don’t find it necessary to tell her that you’ve had them before… or really anything else about your life. For now, you’re content with listening as she names off the different drinks that she likes and explains to you the alcoholic make-up of each. You just continue to nod, watching her lips as they dance through the words. It’s like a waltz, twirling though the night. Her words spin through her lips, lining the very seams of your thoughts, breaking in through the small cracks previously unnoticed. She was sinking into you.

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CLARKE

Lexa keeps staring at you and you can’t quite place that look.

Is she attracted to you?

Or is she using you to keep herself grounded?

“You’re eyes are crazy,” Officer Blake says, approaching the nurses station, leaning his elbows on the top of it to rest for probably the tenth night in a row. Every night that you work, Officer Blake is here, walking the halls, flirting with the older women that occupy the rooms, and monitoring the cameras. He has a taser attached to his hip that he often rests his hand on while walking, but you’ve never seen him use it. After all, it’s probably not his style.
“Officer Blake, back again?” you ask, nodding as you gather your papers, shoving them and your blood stained scrub top into your backpack and ignoring Blake’s comment. Normally you’d care about the blood and some sort of biohazard issue, but today the blood is yours and your bandaged arm and 6 page accident report about how a man woke up after a head injury and attempted to claw his way out of your protective care is a reminder of this.

The tan skinned man flashes that beautiful smile, dimples rising as he lifts himself from the desk to walk down the hallway beside you. “Have to keep my beautiful ladies safe,” he says, reaching a hand out to touch your arm. “And apparently I failed today.” He runs a finger down your bandage, steps matching with yours.

You pull your backpack straps closer to your body, letting out a slight chuckle against him. “Can’t win them all, Blake.”

“Bellamy,” he corrects you, turning his head to face you. “Call me Bellamy.” Pushing the heavy metal doors open, he holds them for you as you both exit into the parking lot. You just smile.

“Are you flirting with me?” You ask him, face scrunching up slightly at the awkwardness of this whole situation.

He laughs a reply, “Only if you’re flirting back, ma’am.”

Clicking the key on your keyring, you smile back at the man who is now holding your car door open for you. Stepping one leg inside, you can’t help but be flattered. Bellamy is cute and pretty much every nurse in your wing has some sort of fan-girl crush on him-- except for you.

“Well, Officer Blake,” you tease, putting a hand on his shoulder as the window to your car rolls down. “You’re not my type.” You sit down, allowing Bellamy to close the door behind you.

“Oh I know Miss Griffin,” he chuckles, leaning down into your window. Simply smiling at you, Bellamy gives your car a slight tap with the palm of his hand before turning back towards the building. “Good night Miss Griffin.”

For your entire drive home, you can’t help but wonder why he said that and why he stared at you so intently. What did Bellamy know?

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LEXA

“So what do you do?” Clarke asks, picking up her drink. You do the same, giving yourself time to ponder your words gently. How do you tell someone so vibrant that you are the exact opposite? How do you tell someone so effervescent that you are so lackluster? How do you even begin to explain your life without giving away your very secrets? How do you explicate that you’re a murderer in your own eyes and the absolute devil? How do you illuminate the very nature of the darkness inside of your mind? How do you say to someone who is sunshine that you are a typhoon, destroying lives and wreaking havoc on the world around you, demolishing anything and everything good in your path?
Taking a small sip, you already begin to feel the liquor in your veins-- or at least that’s what it feels like. You’re warm and your brain feels fuzzy in the front of your head. Looking down at your glass, you realize that it’s almost completely empty as are the two shot glasses in front of you. Where did this liquor go?

“I’m a waitress and a bartender,” the words sprint from your lips before you can catch them. You’re swaying slightly as you speak, opening up the details of your work to Clarke as she listens intently, nodding without breaking eye contact with you. There’s no way that she can find this interesting, but somehow she does… or she fakes it really well.

Shut up.

But you don’t.

She makes it too easy to talk with the way that she watches your words and your eyes at the same time. The way that she seems to care when you speak. The way that her hand is inching closer to your knee with each word that you say.

Shut up.

“How do you have free time?” she asks, finishing off her drink and signaling for two more. This was the first time that she’s broken eye contact with you since you started talking. The value that she places in your words honestly terrifies you, but you also miss her gaze when she’s looking away.

“I don’t,” you mumble as you finish yours, taking the new drink from the bar top.

Stop talking.

Stop drinking.

But, again, you don’t.

She looks appalled. “You need personal time,” she says, taking her drink in her hands as well. You take a larger sip than before, not tasting the liquor any more. Is this 2 or 3? Maybe 4? The bartender has been taking the empty glasses away so you can’t even remember.

You grumble a small “sure” as you usher the tender over, ordering your specialty. Weeping Willow. This is mainly to judge the bartender more than anything. So far, you’re the only person you know who can successfully pull off the Weeping Willow-- a fact that you’ve been proud of since you became a bartender. He lays the drinks in front of you two as you reach to hand him your card.

“No,” Clarke exclaims, slapping your hand back down. Honestly, it kind of hurt. Her hand was heavy and the ring on her middle finger scratched your knuckle, but you refused to let it show.

“Tonight is on me,” she added, more to the bartender than you who just nodded and left you two to your own devices.

“You don’t have to,” you exclaimed, sliding your card back into your pocket. You never carried a wallet. Instead you just had a pocket full of papers and cards which Lincoln made fun of you for on the regular. It was probably the only unorganized part of your life.

You also never let anyone buy you anything, but that was going out the window today. Clarke’s determination was incessant and she wasn’t relenting. Instead, you chose to let her have this one, vowing to yourself to cover the next one-- if she wanted a next one that is.
Picking up your new drink that the bar tender just dropped off, you listen just as intently to the words from Lexa’s mouth as she appeared to do for you, catching that she’s a bar tender. That explains the lack of effort put into drinking then. And before you know it, you’re interrogating her about her life-- as if you have any room to talk.

She works too much.

So do you.

She doesn’t take enough time for herself.

Neither do you.

She hasn’t been out with friends in months.

Neither have you.

How many drinks have you finished?

There’s at least two empty glasses in front of your now…

As she orders another drink for the both of you and you fight back a smile, glad that she’s finally opening up and enjoying herself-- even if you have to fight her to keep her from paying for them.

She’s stubborn.

So are you.

---

She turned her full attention back to you, those damn eyes staring you down. “I want to,” she said, placing a hand on your arm. Her thumb stroked circles on your skin. Thank god you wore a short sleeve shirt tonight. You couldn’t even imagine how different everything would be if you couldn’t feel her right now. “I mean, I broke your nose.”

And then it hit you. She’s only here because she hurt you.

She doesn’t want you.

She wants to pay you back.

You finish off your drink quickly, lifting the Weeping Willow from the bar anddowning the double shot hurriedly, placing the empty glass gently next to the other. It wasn’t bad… not great either, but at least he tried. At least you’re still the champion.

“Look, I thank you for this, but I should go,” you say, lifting yourself from your chair.

The darkness begins to slink its way back in.

“What? Why?” Clarke asks, standing and swaying with you. “Did I say something wrong?” She
looks concerned, heartbroken even-- like the look of a child when you tell them Santa isn’t real.

Those damn eyes.

As if you thought they couldn’t get larger or bluer, she proves you wrong.

“No,” you say, fighting the panic rising in your chest. “It’s not you… I’m just…” You stumble through your words before accepting defeat. Without finishing a thought or giving her reason, you turn, shuffling your way through the crowd.

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**CLARKE**

That dark place that you’ve been fighting all night...

It’s winning.

Lexa can’t leave because then you’ll be alone…

And more importantly…

She can’t leave because then you’ll be without her.

“No,” she replies, “it’s not you…”

There it is.

That terrible phrase.

Finn’s voice echoes again from Lexa’s mouth, “*Maybe it’s not you… maybe I’m just not cut out for this.*”

Fuck that.

Fuck the “It’s not you.”

It’s always you.

It was you then.

It is you now.

Without any more reason or explanation, she turns, heading back towards the door and into the crowd. And suddenly, you’ve lost her. Turning back to the bar, you swallow down your tears mixed in with a mouthful of your new drink that Lexa ordered. Your brain is fuzzy and it’s stronger than the ones that you chose and not knowing if it’s the liquor or just the fact that you don’t want to sleep alone tonight, you turn.

You turn and you run towards the door, running into at least four people on your way out, completely knocking the drink out of another’s hand. You stumble madly though the club, accepting the fact that you’re way more drunk than you anticipated.

Had you cared more, you would have stopped to apologize.

Had you not been afraid of what you would be missing, you would have stopped, but Lexa was
already outside and you had to get to her.

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LEXA

Lexa, Don’t look back.

Don’t turn around.

Just run.

Call a cab and run.

Just go and…

“Lexa!”

Damn it.

Your feet had just touched down on the asphalt of the parking lot when Clarke’s voice rang out to you.

Don’t look back.

You turn to face her, a good 200 feet between you.

“Look Clarke,” you begin, knowing that you really shouldn’t be speaking.

Speaking leads to thinking…

And thinking leads to feeling…

And feeling leads to emotions that you’d just rather not deal with.

“I can’t give you a reason-- not without giving you the whole ‘It’s not you, It’s me’ speech so I’ll just leave it at this-- you don’t deserve this. I’m a black hole filled with destruction and there’s nothing here for you,” you say, motioning yourself up and down. “I’m sorry… I’m just… sorry.”

You turn on your heels, swaying slightly as you walk away, not really knowing where you’re going. Your plan right now is just to get away… create distance then call a cab. Go home and sleep off the liquor in your system. Get up at 7am and start over as if nothing happened.

This wasn’t in your plans.

Before you could make it more than 10 steps though, your stride was interrupted by a hand holding tightly to your arm. Your body spun quickly to meet her eyes.

Blue like a giggle.

Blue like the wind in your face.

Blue like mist right after sunrise.

She’s just watching you, pursing her lips as if she wants to speak but doesn’t know how. She swallows deeply, blinking and opening her mouth to produce words before you act. You can hear your heart in your ears, feel it in your veins. How can one organ create so much noise? Your eyes
scan her face, taking in every feature. There’s a small scar over her right eye and for a fleeting moment you wonder how she got it. How old was she? Was she playing superheroes with friends or racing bikes down a large, grassy hill? Did she live a normal childhood? What was her relationship with her parents? Suddenly, you want nothing more than to know every detail of her life. Without thought or consideration you lean forward, your lips meeting hers.

She was sweet. The lingering taste of alcohol filled your mouth as she kissed you deeply, raising her hands to take your shoulders. Your electrified hands lifted involuntarily like magnets, cupping her cheeks and pulling her in closely.

You’re kissing a stranger.

Lexa Woods is kissing a stranger…

In the parking lot…

Of a bar.

And you weren’t dying yet.

Just as quickly as it came, however, you both pulled away, suddenly becoming hyper-aware of your surroundings. You awkwardly rub your neck, taking a few steps back from her.

You just need distance.

She smiled slightly, obviously fighting off a grin. “I’m sorry,” she began, shoving her hands in her pockets.

“I kissed you,” you reminded her, your brows furrowing as you lifted your eyes to face her.

They’re always blue.

Why couldn’t they be some other color?

Any other color?

“Yeah,” she mumbled, lowering her head to hide her smile. “But I pushed you.” Her smile faded and your heart broke slightly. You want nothing more than to chase after it, grab it and drag it back to her face. The light in her eyes retreated with it leaving just blue.

She was no longer the feeling of floating.

Instead she was the feeling right before crying.

“You can leave,” she said, pulling out her wallet and rummaging through some cash. “This is for a cab. I’m sorry I pushed you.” Her hand reached out to you as if by its own free will. The feeling seemed to pain her.

Lifting your hand, you pushed hers back, refusing to accept the money. “Look, I’m….?” you began, already stumbling.

“Don’t,” she tried, looking up from the ground again. “Either leave, or let me buy you a drink to apologize.” She smiled, the light and life returning to her face. Clarke was back from whatever dark place she had retreated to.

You smiled out of the left half of your mouth, eyes shifting between her lips and those lakes. “I’m
sensing a theme.”

She laughed hard, chest heaving and head shaking. Again, you didn’t think it was that funny of a joke, but her laugh was contagious. Clarke was contagious. She grabbed your hand, pulling you back towards the building. It was less crowded this time through which would have made walking easier had you not been intoxicated at this point.

When you returned to your seats, the bartender made some kind of joke about you leaving and him taking Clarke’s card on vacation. She laughs, flirting back about how he wouldn’t get too far. Honestly, you’re just more concerned with sitting without falling and watching this stunning woman in front of you and you couldn’t tell anyone what they were talking about. You just wanted to watch her as she lived.

“So tell me something about you,” She finally speaks to you, sliding a new glass over to you. You didn’t even see the bartender bring them over.

How drunk are you?

How drunk is Clarke?

---

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for continuing with me! Leave me some feedback in the comments so I know what’s up. I’ve ditched updating weekly because I honestly can’t wait a week to share the new stuff with you guys. Updated as I go!
Add me on tumblr and let's be friends: shanecakes-1131.tumblr.com
All of my regrets are nothing new

Chapter Notes

I promise this is the last hectic chapter for a hot minute. We're about to get into fluff and nice things so just ride it out with me :-) this one's shorter simply because I didn't want to ruin what's coming next with too much info... so enjoy the short read.

You're the best guys, for real! Leave me some comments or message me on tumblr. Let's be friends
shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

CLARKE

You sort of black out for a moment, not even remembering how you make it back into your chairs, but when you come into the sudden realization of your life, you don’t even care. Your legs are interlocked with Lexa’s at the bar, a drink in your one hand, the other on her knee and she’s telling you about her life.

And boom. She lays it on hard.

You swallow down your drink, trying not to repeat her words for clarification…

Her parents died 7 years ago?

She dropped out of school to raise her brother and sister?

She’s working two jobs for 80 plus hours a week?

Plus her sister is still in high school?

You almost miss the part where she talks about feeling out of control with her life, but let’s be honest, you feel this more than not… that wouldn’t slip through the cracks like that. And now it all makes sense.

The shifting eyes.

The trembling hands.

The obvious anxiousness around the crowds.

Lexa’s darkness was anxiety and although you had already figured this out, the magnitude of this statement was just now setting in. As she picked at her fingers and shifted her weight from side to side, you admired her courage just to continue standing. At the same time, your mind begins to race as it attempts to catch up to the words that are spewing from your mouth. Too late…

“My dad died when I was 15,” you say before looking up at her slightly to see if she noticed. She did.
Well it’s too late now… might as well finish the story.

“He was a cop,” you began, your sob story releasing itself as you fight back the tears that often accompany it. Spinning your drink around, you stop quickly after a small bit splashes out onto your hand. Turning your attention to Lexa, you catch direct eye contact again, and again you have to stop yourself from kissing her.

She watches you for a moment, her hand sliding onto your knee and stroking your thigh. This is too much. She apologizes… too cliché. You’ve stopped listening to apologies from people anymore… everyone says they’re sorry but what they actually mean is that they have no clue how to respond… Lexa probably understands… you know, having experienced loss, but yet here she is… apologizing for a crime that she didn’t commit.

Downing the rest of your drink, you hope to swallow your cynicism with it. She deserves better.

“Alright, enough darkness,” you say, pulling the attention of the bartender back over to you for more drinks… as if you needed anymore. The interrogation begins and the last thing you see before the darkness is Lexa’s face-- caught off guard by you asking her about herself. She stumbles through her words, mumbling uncomfortably before she smiles.

Then black…

Maybe you shouldn’t have drank so much, but at least the last thing you see is her smile.

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LEXA

“Oh, enough darkness. It’s time for fluff. Tell me about Fun Lexa.” She ushers the bartender over who cringes at the thought of serving you more alcohol, but obliges anyway. She’s swaying back and forth in her chair and you feel like you might have to catch her at any moment. You laugh in your head, not even knowing how to reply to her statement. Who the fuck is Fun Lexa? You haven’t known Fun Lexa in over 7 years. “Like, what do you like to do? What’s your favorite music? Do you like movies? Cats or dogs?” She prompts, catching on to your gracelessness.

You stumble through phrases until the bartender arrives with your drinks and a bill attached to Clarke’s card. Apparently, he cut you off… or the bar is closing. You look around, realizing that you are two of the last people in the building. With the exception of the closing staff, there’s a group of 4 girls dancing in the corner still even though the music had died down, two drunk men at the bar talking about something obviously very important by their body posture and then you.

“Can we talk about this somewhere else?” you ask, suddenly aware of how loud your voice sounds in the quieter room.

She nods, downing the rest of her drink and standing, grabbing your hand to pull you towards the door. You grab her card, forging her signature and a tip on the tab, hoping that she won’t mind and swallow the rest of your drink before following her, allowing her to tug you behind her. Your arm is almost wrapped around her waist and this thought makes you blush slightly as you wonder where she’s taking you at 3 in the morning-- even though you sort of already know.

Exiting the bar, there’s already a cab waiting, as is always during last call and closing time. The two of you hop in the open door, not asking any questions.

Holy shit, you’re drunk. The brain behind your forehead is tingling as if it’s floating and your legs continue to wobble even after you’re sitting on the leather seats of the cab. Your driver asks you
‘Where to?’ in a thick accent and Clarke spouts off numbers and street names that you can barely understand. You sway in your seat as the beautiful blonde next to you lifts your arm, sliding it over her shoulders.

“There,” she says as she buries her body in next to yours. Laying your chin down on her head, you take in her scent. She smells like flowers… like spring. Where you expected to smell smoke and liquor, you’re instead greeted with sunshine and grace. Oddly enough, Clarke smells like comfort.

The rest of the cab ride is in silence with the exception of your Polish cabbie trying to sing to Top-40s pop ballads on the radio and the sound of Clarke’s breathing on your chest. Strangely though, you’re alright with this.

This is exactly where you want to be.

As the cab pulls up outside of an apartment complex, Clarke pulls out her wallet again which you decide to take from her hands. “No,” you say, handing it back to her and your card to the cabbie at the same time. “You bought drinks, I’ll get this.” She smiles, placing a hand on your thigh, dangerously higher than it’s been yet tonight. Your driver thanks you as you’re heading out the door, card in hand, and wishes you a good night with a strange smile. Honestly, it creeps you out a little bit, but Clarke is leading you towards the building and you can’t bring yourself to care about him and his uncomfortable comments.

“It’s right up here,” she says as she tugs your arm towards the stairs. “I’m on the second floor. Hopefully Bellamy is out or something.” With her other hand, she produces a set of keys from her pocket, sliding them into the keyhole of room 203 once you stop outside of it. When the door opens, you’re greeted with a cool blast of air, reminding you of the fact that it’s summer outside right now.

“What’s up Griffin,” a voice sounds from behind the door. You step inside and look around scanning the room from left to right. When you get to what looks like would be the kitchen, your eyes are met with deep mahogany ones staring back at you. “Or Griffin and friend, I should say,” the curly haired man corrects with a smile. His dark complexion and strikingly dark eyes and hair all go really well together. He’s attractive, just like your brother and you can’t help but think that maybe the security place only hires attractive men to work for them. “Y’all try not to be too loud. Keep a sock on the door or something,” he says, twisting the cap off of a water bottle as he walks down the hall.

“Shut the fuck up Bell,” Clarke says, reaching to the dining room table immediately to your right to grab an apple out of the bowl, tossing it at the man and missing miserably.

“You missed, Alchy,” his voice says as it retreats into what you can only assume is his bedroom without even looking back at you and shuts the door behind him.

Clarke turns her attention back to you, brushing her blonde hair from in front of her face. “That’s Bellamy,” she explains, picking up her phone and wallet from the table and grabbing your hand. “Come on.” She pulls you in the direction that Bellamy retreated, not saying anything as you followed, taking in the environment around you.

The living room was to the left of the door and was pretty simple. There was a sofa, a loveseat, a large chair, coffee table and television on an entertainment system. Small paintings and sculptures lined the beige walls, evenly spaced and aesthetically pleasing. Everything that you would expect in an apartment, you guessed.

The dining area and kitchen were to the right. It was hard to see though into the kitchen but you were able to make out liquor bottles lining the tops of the cabinets and roosters on the hand towel. Interesting choice, but you weren’t one to judge. Because of Lincoln, you still had Power Ranger towels and you still, in fact, owned Lion King bed sheets— even if you didn’t use them.
The hallway was straight ahead. The first door on the left was open and revealed what appeared to be an art studio of sorts with stained carpets and half-painted canvases scattered about. You made a mental note to ask Clarke about that when you could coherently form sentences. The door on the right immediately after the studio was apparently Bellamy’s. It was still closed even though light bled through from underneath and music played through the walls. Clarke opened the last door at the very end of the hallway and pulled you in, closing it behind you before she turned on the light. The change in light made you squint for a second before you adjusted to your surroundings.

Within two seconds of standing in Clarke’s room, one thing became apparent: You two were exact opposites. Where your walls were white and nearly blank, sporting only a couple of paintings and academic awards, Clarke’s were pastel blue, covered in posters, photographs, paintings and sculptures.

She was obviously artistic, the design of her room giving that away.

She was obviously intelligent, academic awards lining a shelf on the far side of the room next to the window.

Apparently she ran track in undergrad, a few trophies and metals taking their place on the desk to your right.

Clarke had a lot to tell and you hadn’t even thought to ask.

Before you could say anything, however, she took your hand, pulling you in closer and kissed your lips. This kiss wasn’t as passionate as the first, but it caught you off guard completely. Closing your eyes, you allowed it to engulf you though, kissing her back gently. She pushed her body against yours causing you to stumble back slightly into the closed door. Without thinking, passion took over. You cupped her face with one hand, holding her hips closer to you with your right. A small moan exited her lips as she relaxed into your grip. Feeling a bit more at ease with her, you turned her body, pushing her against the wall next to the door and leaning up against her. Placing a hand on the wall just above her shoulder, you pushed against her, feeling her hips move into yours.

What the fuck was happening?

You went in for drinks and now you’re coming out completely intoxicated and having sex with a near stranger. Hell, had her roommate not been in the living room, you wouldn’t even know her last name yet.

She smiled into your kiss putting her hands on your arms. “Bed,” she mumbled, pushing you away. As you stumble backwards, you catch yourself on the nightstand, knocking off a stack of papers, two books and a glass filled with water while she flips off the light. She laughs at your awkwardness as you try to pick up your mess. “Stop cleaning and fuck me,” she says with absolute conviction in her voice.

You smile awkwardly, picking her small body off of the floor and lay her down on the bed beside you. You take a moment to thank whatever higher power there is out there for Lincoln’s new arm workout that you’ve been doing that makes Clarke quiver under you. Shifting your body weight onto your knees, you lean back, pulling your black shirt over your head. She reaches her hand out, grabbing a remote from the few things that you managed to not destroy on the bedside table and clicks a button on it, starting a stereo in the corner. Music began playing from the speakers, but your brain wouldn’t even let you focus on it at all. Lowering your chest to her, Clarke takes hold of the back of your neck, pulling your head down to her face.

“Just in case,” she slurs, biting slightly on your ear as she does. “Because I’m kind of loud.” You
body shakes with anticipation as her breathing intensifies under you. Her hips are moving against you and before you know it, you’re moving in rhythm with her. She gasps as you slide your hand under her tank top and pull it over her head, leaving it in a pile on the bed next to her. She shutters even more as you quickly unclip her bra, taking her perfect breasts in your hands as you bite at her neck and collarbone.

She wasn’t exactly kidding when she said that she was loud. You really haven’t even done anything yet and she’s already moaning loud enough for her roommate to hear. Without thinking, you place a hand over her mouth, shushing her with laughter. She laughs back, nipping at your fingers with her teeth.

Her fingers begin to dance down your sides, stopping at the waistband of your jeans. “Are you sure?” she asks, flicking the button of your jeans back and forth.

You smile from the corner of your mouth before kissing her and flipping your body under hers. You sit up, shuffling a little so that she is sitting comfortably in your lap, arms wrapped around your neck. You wrap yours around her waist and pull her in closely, closing any distance between the two of you. “Not one single doubt,” you reply, kissing her lips.

“Good,” was all she said before she grabbed your shoulders, pushing you down onto the bed and holding you by your wrists. “Because I’m not planning on stopping until the sun comes up.” Your body continues to quake as she slides your jeans off. When you try to move your arms to touch her, she grabs your wrists, forcing you back onto the bed. “No. It’s my turn,” she said, kissing your neck passionately. You allow a moan to escape your throat which only seems to make her do more. She bites a path softly down your neck from behind your ear to your collarbone. She sucks slightly on your collarbone, still holding your arms down as you squirm under her. When she finally releases your arms, her hands trail down your sides, holding tightly at your hips as she kisses down your chest and stomach.

You can’t help but let out a small giggle as her blonde curls tickle your stomach. You can feel her smile with her lips on your stomach. “Jesus Christ, you’re so sexy,” she mumbles into your skin, running her hands up and down your torso. You grab the pillow behind your head, holding on to the sides tightly as she lifts her body back up yours, unclipping your bra in one fell swoop. She cups your breasts with one hand, placing the other right under your neck to hold you and kisses your lips as she squeezes you gently. You moan louder, unable to even control it anymore, causing her to smile even wider. Her fingers travel down your body, playing with the fabric at the top of your panties. Your toes are tingling and you can’t stop your legs from moving as you shuffle underneath her. “Are you ready?” she whispers into your ear, lowering her body closer to yours as she begins to run her fingers over your wetness though the cloth. You bite down on your lip, closing your eyes and nod, feeling her hands travel under your panties.

With a loud gasp, a small moan and a grinding of your hips, Clarke is inside of you and kissing your neck at the same time. The slow curl of her fingers makes the muscles in your stomach retract and your hips push heavily against her. Releasing the pillow behind your head, you wrap your arms around her, digging your nails into her back and receiving a whimper in return.

Opening your eyes, you meet hers.

Those blue eyes that illuminate the darkened room.

Those eyes that are the crack of lighting during a storm.

Those eyes that are the color of trust and compassion.
Clarke is the illumination in this darkened room.

Clarke is the crack of lightning during a storm.

Clarke is trust and compassion

Arching your back, you cry out, feeling completely comfortable and completely at ease for the first time in ages. Her body falls on top of yours, resting lightly and gently as your breathing syncs with hers. She kisses your neck, rolling slightly to lie beside you and begins tracing lines on your stomach. Glancing over at the clock, you notice the time... 6:22am... for fuck’s sake... You got here at 4:31...

With still heavy gasps, she opens her mouth to speak, but instead laughs lightly. “You know,” she finally says, laying her chin on your chest. You can feel her pulse through her neck. “I’ve never had anyone get me off just by moaning and orgasming before.”

You become suddenly uncomfortable, pulling the pillow over your face and curling your body into a ball, groaning clumsily as you do. How embarrassing. The first time that you have sex with this girl and she may not have even gotten to enjoy it entirely because you were too loud and uncontrollable and she had to do all of the work (in your defense, she didn’t really let you move).

“Oh my god,” you grunt, heat radiating from your face.

“No. No. No,” she repeats over and over again, trying to pull the pillow from your face, wrapping her arms around your body and holding you close. You can feel the heat dissipating. “It was nice. I enjoyed it.” You release yourself from your cocoon, pulling a blanket over your nearly bare bodies as you do. “I mean, I came. It surprised me. You surprised me.” She smiled as he laid her head on your chest, seeming to concentrate on your heartbeat.

“Dogs,” you say, finally, catching Clarke off guard. She looks up at you questioningly, not understanding your outburst. “I like dogs better than cats. My favorite music is classical. I like historical documentaries and I really like going to art galleries,” you answer all of the questions from the bar. She smiles, laying her head back on your chest and pulls the blankets up over her body.

“Thank you,” she mumbles, her breathing regulating into sleep. You’re not too far behind her. Silencing your mind and body, you drift off with Clarke Griffin wrapped up in your arms.
So this is the way that I say I need You

Chapter Summary

Things are finally getting fluffy for both Clarke and Lexa... because god knows they deserve it.

Chapter Notes

Holy shit this crap reached 1K views and that blows my fucking mind! Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!!!

Here's chapter 5 my friends. Little longer and getting more into the flow of things. Thanks so much for all the support and tumblr notes and stuff. you guys rock! Let me know what you thing and what to fix and what not. You're the best.

add me and let's be friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

LEXA

Waking up the next morning was a process. It’s not like you actually slept much since drunk Clarke woke you up on two separate occasions for two, completely different reasons. First, around 730 in the morning, just as the sun was beaming through the blinds, Clarke shifted, turning to face you and whisper in your ear.

“Lexa,” she mumbled, stroking her finger up and down your side until you were awake. “I can’t sleep,” she says, still slurring her words. She smiles as you groan a response, burying her face into your neck. She begins kiss you, biting a little harder each time until you find yourself wide awake, rolling the girl under you. Somehow you went from zero to sixty with only a few nips to the collarbone and before you knew any better, she was humming a small tune from underneath you, grinding her hips into you.

You kiss her lips first, still tasting alcohol on the inside of her mouth.

Next came her cheek and ears. You found out that Clarke’s ears are really sensitive and if you bite just lightly on the tips of them, she’ll gasp loudly, no matter what was going on before. She could be in midsentence, but the minute your lips close around the tip of her ear, she’s done for.

Third, her neck. Clarke was either really turned on, or really ticklish. There was no in between when it came to her collarbone and neck. If you breathed hard enough or tried to speak while kissing her, she would giggle, scrunching her shoulders up and shouldering you in the face. It was kind of funny and super cute so you did it a few more times, loving her reaction every time.
Finally, your lips trailed her body, connecting the dots between all of her sensitive places. With your hands on her breasts, your lips trailed down her toned stomach, following a few freckles to her pelvis where her pink panties still covered her. Taking the corner of them in between your teeth, you pulled back and let go, making the elastic snap her slightly. She smiled, grabbing the sides of your head and pulling your face to hers.

Turning your head so she had access to your left ear, she attempted to whisper (but drunk Clarke was really bad at whispering) into your ear. “I want you to fuck me,” she says, kissing the side of your head. You smile, nodding a reply to her.

Sliding your head through her hands, you trace back down her torso again, reaching her pelvis where you remove the small amount of clothing that she still has on. You smile up at her as you watch her body squirm with anticipation. You could feel her pulse quicken through your hands on her hips as she exhaled deeply, preparing herself for what would come next.

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CLARKE

Your fingers laced through Lexa’s brown hair that had long since fallen from its ponytail, tangling into the mess. Tightening your abdomen, you pushed your pelvis closer to her, feeling her down on you.

You may still be slightly drunk, but you’re completely coherent now, feeling every little reaction in your body. And there were plenty of reactions to feel.

Lexa was skilled, there was no doubt about this, but her tameness and sensitivity with it all made you wonder exactly how experienced she was. I mean, surely with her ability she’d done this before, but she seemed so timid with you, constantly asking how you were doing and what you were feeling.

Was Lexa actually nervous about having sex with you?

Or was she just actually really chivalrous?

In any instance, whatever she was doing, it was perfect.

Her fingertips skated up your torso, dancing across your stomach and down your thighs as she worked, making your breathing ever more labored. You can hardly stand the pressure building up now and you’re close, already feeling it in your toes when she pushes slightly on the area just under your belly button, allowing you to feel the fingers that she slid inside of you even more. Lifting her face to you, she kisses you right before you climax, stifling the loudest of your moans with her lips.

Smiling at you, she withdrew her fingers, kissing your lips once more, just because she could.

You hum gently as she lay her body next to yours. Rolling over onto your side, you place your head
on her shoulder, wanting nothing more than to breathe in her scent. You both smell like liquor, sweat and sex, but there’s something alluring about this right now. Something raw about the feelings that you’re having in this moment.

It feels good to not want to be rushing off.

It feels good to not be worrying about whether or not they’ll be here when you wake up.

Something in the way that Lexa holds you tells you that she will be.

It feels good to feel comfortable.

And then it dawns on you-- You’re actually comfortable.

Clarke Griffin is naked in the bed with someone else and is actually comfortable.

There must be a first time for everything.

---

LEXA

The second time that Clarke wakes you up is considerably less enjoyable.

It’s 10am and you hear her voice shout out an “Oh shit,” before shuffling quickly out from under the covers and over the edge of the bed. What comes next is the only thing that can follow that kind of wake up.

Clarke begins to hurl up the contents of her stomach into a trashcan next to the desk across the room. You’ve never been the squeamish type, but something about hearing Clarke’s heaving makes you slightly nauseated yourself. Swallowing deeply to avoid vomiting as well, you wrap yourself in the sheet, silently praying that Bellamy is either asleep or at work while you make your way down the hall to the kitchen.

Grabbing the first bread that you can see, a box of crackers, you tuck them under your arm, opening the fridge and scanning quickly for something to help Clarke’s stomach. Your head is beginning to pound under the pressure of the fridge light before you hear a voice that startles you.

“Well hello there,” Clarke’s roommate speaks from behind you, causing you to throw the crackers to the ground and pull the sheet tighter around your body. You smile anxiously, staring at him with no response. This is only the second time that he’s seen you. The first time, you were drunk and being dragged into his roommate’s bedroom and this time you’re naked in his kitchen with a sheet wrapped around you. This has got to be looking food for your image. He just nods, picking up the box of
crackers and handing it to you. “Sprite’s in the door,” he says, reaching past you to grab a water bottle from the second shelf and returning to his room.

What was his name…
What was his name…
Bartholomew…
Balthazar…
Bellamy…

BELLAMY! That was it.

You wait until you hear Bellamy’s door close before you reach for the Sprite and close the fridge, sprinting back down the hallway to Clarke’s room, cheeks bright red and flaming.

Clarke is still neck deep in the trash can, appearing to have given up as she’s just sitting on the floor, head resting on the edges of the can. She groans as you take a seat beside her, wrapping her up in the blanket as you present her with your findings. She looks them over, refusing to take either.

“You need something in your stomach,” you explain, opening the first sleeve of crackers for her. “Right now there’s nothing left but liquor and that’s why you feel miserable.” For still being slightly drunk, you’re doing a pretty damn good job of taking care of her. Popping the top to the Sprite can, you take a sip yourself before shoving in front of her line of sight.

She grumbles something that you can’t understand through the trash can, pushing your hand and the can away.

“Take it,” you order her, watching her lift her head out of the trash.

“No,” was her only reply, pulling the sheet tighter over her shoulders.

She looks miserable. Her hair is all tousled and her eyes look slightly sunken in and heavy, but yet she is still beautiful.

“Let’s go back to bed then,” you say, the words coming out more as a question than anything. She nods, allowing you to help her up and support her as she stumbles to the bed. Throwing her body down, you place the Sprite and crackers on the floor next to the bed and lay down neatly next to her, pulling her in close. Before you can even say anything else to her, her breathing evens, alerting you that she is asleep again. You follow closely behind, closing your own eyes and drifting away.

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CLARKE

Waking up to the taste of vomit and alcohol in your mouth was less than pleasant, but this was made up for by the fact that you found yourself completely tangled up in Lexa. Her arms held you close as her bare legs wrapped around yours, protecting you from the outside world. You felt safe in this
position, but your bladder did not.

Pushing her off lightly, you slid your body off of the bed, instantly regretting movement. Either the earth was moving too fast or you were super hung over. Grabbing a t-shirt and your panties off of the floor, you dressed quickly, sprinting from your room to the bathroom to take care of your business.

Emerging just as quickly as you entered, you try to race back to your room without being seen, but run head on into your roommate’s chest with a thud and a sigh. You’ve been caught.

“Good morning, Princess,” he laughs, reaching out a hand to steady you. “You alright there?” You nod, afraid to open your mouth that you’ll have a repeat of an hour ago. He smiles at you, patting your arm before turning against you. “I bet you are,” he mumbles, retreating towards the living room. You can’t help but follow.

“What do you mean?” you ask him as he plops his body down onto the couch, slipping his shoes off and placing his sock covered feet onto the coffee table. You take a seat on the neighboring loveseat, tucking your knees into your chest.

His smile is enough to give it away, but you want to hear him say it. It’s funny when Bellamy gets awkward. It rarely happens, but when it does, it makes your day.

“I’m just saying, you sounded like you had fun last night… that’s all.” He reaches for the remote to the television, flipping it on and scanning the guide for something to watch. He’s avoiding eye contact with you and you smile. “Plus, you’re little friend coming out looking all disheveled and frightened while rummaging through our refrigerator naked sort of gave it all away.”

You can’t help but blush slightly at his statement. Bellamy’s always been a great roommate, but he’s never let you live anything down.

“I mean, based off of your volume last night, I’d say that… Lexa, that was her name right?” he asks, interrupting his own sentence. “Oh yes… I heard that name last night… many times. I’ll never forget it, that’s for sure.” You blush even more, attempting to hide it behind a smile. You’re failing. “I mean, yeah… just… yeah.”

You stand from your seat, wondering if Lexa’s awake yet. More so, you stand from your seat, wanting this conversation with Bellay to end.

“I’m going to go check on her,” you explain, watching Bellamy as he grins widely towards you.

“Yeah princess, you do that.” He chuckles, laying the remote down and folding his hands behind his head, turning his attention back to the television.
You smile at him, walking over and kissing his cheek before beginning your route to your room.

“And brush your teeth,” he adds, wiping his face.

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LEXA

You’ve never been one for hangovers really. Honestly, you just wake up later than usual and you’re fine… but in reality you’ve never been one for drinking either.

When you finally wake up again, on your own this time, Clarke has rolled away from you, taking the blankets with her. She’s mostly clothed now, letting you know that she got up while you were asleep.

Part of you wants to run. I mean, in the very few times that you’ve found yourself in someone else’s room when the sun comes up, you’ve always run, but the other, larger, part of you just wants to lay there… to pull the blonde closer… to hold her until she wakes up.

Gathering your clothes from off of the floor, you can’t help but laugh at where they all ended up. Your shirt was attached to the corner of the nightstand, bra in the pile of Clarke’s belongings that you knocked off the night before. Your pants are wrapped up in the sheets at the foot of the bed and take you a little work to get out.

Quickly pulling your jeans up over your thighs, you check your scars first, thankful that Clarke didn’t see them-- or at least didn’t notice them or say anything about it. Your artwork has been nearly completely private for years and you’d like for it to stay that way.

Sitting down at the foot of the bed, you listen to Clarke’s breathing, slightly uneven as she flinches in her sleep. Smiling over at her, you watch her lips twitch, wondering what she’s dreaming about. Her eyes are shifting back and forth underneath their lids and the curls her toes and kicks her legs over and over again. She’s running. Whatever’s going on in her dream, she’s running.

Standing, you walk over to the door, exiting into the hallway where you’re greeted by the sound of the television. In the living room, Bellamy is sprawled out on the couch, his legs up on one of the arms as he watches the screen.

“Oh well good morning, Lexa,” he says, your name feeling funny to you as it leaves his lips. Is he mocking you?

“Hi,” you say softly, taking a seat on the loveseat. You’re bored, but you’re wide awake and you don’t want to leave.

“Good night?” he asks, turning his attention back to the television with a smile. You lick your lips,
not knowing how to respond to the question.

Of course if fucking was.

He lets out a small chuckle before throwing his feet over the side of the couch and sitting up. He begins putting on his shoes that were under the coffee table, simply sliding his feet into them without untying them.

That annoys the shit out of you.

“Put your shoes on,” he orders you, adjusting his shoes and standing.

You look at him questioningly, obeying anyway. “Why?” you ask, walking to the bedroom quickly and returning with your Toms in hand. “Where are we going?”

He smiles at you, handing you a pair of sunglasses that obviously belonged to Clarke. “You ask too many questions… Just do what I say. I’m going to get you laid.” He laughs, pulling his glasses over his face. “Not that you need my help.”

Once outside, you’re very thankful that he supplied the sunglasses. The sun had been annoying enough simply shining through the blinds in Clarke’s room, but once you were outside in it, it was worse. Even with the glasses, the brightness was giving you a headache. Bellamy continued to walk you down the stairs and through the parking lot to where his truck was parked.

It was a small, forest green Sport Trac with very little distinction from any other truck. You honestly expected Bellamy to drive something more flashy or obvious… not just a truck.

Walking over to your door, he opened it for you, allowing you to climb inside before closing it behind you. You glanced around the truck, noting a few things. Bellamy was clean-- meticulous almost. Everything had a place, including a small trash can in his back seat. Hanging from the rearview mirror, a pair of silver dog tags reflected the light from outside. Reminding yourself to ask him about them later, you buckled your seatbelt, smiling over at the driver’s side. He sat down in the driver’s seat, starting the ignition and pulling the car out of its spot and onto the street.

“You asked where we’re going,” he reminded you, buckling his seat belt only once he was on the main road. “Clarke likes donuts… remember that.” You nodded, storing that piece of information away for the future. “So, for real, how was last night?” he asks, you turning your head to look at him. “I mean the date… not the sex. I don’t care about the sex…” He seems to ramble a bit, stumbling through his sentences. He cares for Clarke, this is obvious.

You face the road again, clenching your fist a few times to settle your nerves.

Still not in control.

The man weaves through traffic with ease, making you grind your teeth as you plan your words.
“Good,” you finally answer him, wondering how long you can use one word sentences before he thinks you’re a bitch. “We skipped dinner and went straight for drinks.” This last statement seems to cause Bellamy to cringe a bit, his hands tightening around the steering wheel.

“So no food?” he asks, turning down a road to the left. You just shake your head, realizing how hungry you actually are. He nods, turning into a parking lot on the left and swinging the car wider into a spot on your right, right in front of the door to a donut shop that you’ve never heard of.

“Look,” he says, turning to face you. He puts his hand on the back of your seat, turning his body a little bit more. He’s facing you almost head on– very standoffish. “Don’t hurt her,” he asks you, suddenly appearing more of a puppy dog than the gruff militant man he just seemed to be. “If you’re going to leave, I’ll drop you off. You can walk away, no questions asked, but if you stay, you can’t hurt her.”

This all seems a lot to be unloading you after just one night.

I mean, it was just one night….

Just one really drunken…

Really long…

Really fun…

Incredible night.

But it’s not like you’re planning on marrying Clarke or anything…

I mean, you’re not planning on not marrying her either…

But it was just one night.

And before you realize it, you’re saying just that. “It’s just been one night,” you mumble, unbuckling your seatbelt. His face drops slightly, turning to the front again. “But I’m okay with staying, if that’s cool too,” you add, unable to control your thoughts.

You smile at the sudden thought of waking up to Clarke breathing on your neck again, her legs wrapped in yours and her hair covering your chin. Bellamy smiles over at you, picking up on your emotions.

“Good,” he finally says, opening his car door. “Because she deserves a lot.”

No pressure…

None at all…

---
Waking up to a completely empty house was bizarre.

At first, when you realize that Lexa is gone, you begin to panic.

Had she not enjoyed last night?

Probably not.

Did she not enjoy being with you?

Probably not.

Would she be coming back?

Probably not.

But then you notice the silence in the living room and the sudden absence of Bellamy’s shoes next to the door or under the table. He had a pattern.

You see, Bellamy does this thing. You don’t bring people home frequently, but when you do, he interrogates them. He drags them out of the apartment under the guise of buying you donuts which he knows you don’t eat and asks them about their lives, testing them for you. On more than one occasion, this has chased away guys and girls alike.

You sigh, throwing yourself onto the couch, still in your oversized t-shirt and underwear, and begin wondering about how Bellamy’s date with Lexa is going.

Has he scared her away yet?

Probably.

Is she even going to come back?

No.

The questions only continue in the time that you spend showering and getting dressed. You do your hair and your make-up, every second inching past you as your mind continues to question how Bellamy’s date with your date is progressing…

Or if it is still going.

Has he told her that he watches you eat?

Has he told her that you monitor every calorie in your body?

Has he told her that you’re a complete and total fuck up?

Probably not, actually. Bellamy loves you, you know this.

In fact, there’s only one person on this earth who he loves more than you and that’s his sister, Octavia-- one of your very best friends.

Smiling at the thought of Octavia, you just lay yourself on the couch before you sit up again almost instantly, hearing the latch on your apartment door click and the door swing open. Bellamy enters, holding a bag of what you can only assume is chocolate covered donuts and a cup of coffee in one
hand, his sunglasses in the other. Your smile falls slightly until you hear Lexa laugh behind him, entering last and closing the door behind herself. She’s smiling.

She’s happy.

That’s good.

This is a good sign.

“Good morning,” she says, sliding her shoes off at the door and making her way to you, kissing your forehead before taking a seat next to you on the couch. She hands you a cup of coffee, still warm, and Bellamy plops his body down on the loveseat near you.

“So what’s the plan?” he asks, brushing one of his curly locks out from in front of his eyes. You shrug, pulling the coffee cup close to your mouth with both hands, glancing over at Lexa who is shoving a donut in her mouth.

“I was hoping you knew,” you say, smiling at the woman beside you.

“I’m just here,” she says, swallowing quickly.

Does she even know how much that simple phrase means to you?

She’s here.

She hasn’t left.

She isn’t leaving.

She’s here.

---

LEXA

“Clarke doesn’t normally bring people home,” Bellamy explains while the two of you wait in the line. “I’m actually shocked to be honest. If anything, she’ll go to their place.” You cringe slightly at the idea of Clarke being with anyone else than you.

What the fuck?

When did you suddenly become interested in who Clarke Griffin sleeps with.

“Not saying that it happens a lot,” he corrects, apparently noticing the awkwardness in you. “I mean, normally she just works and sleeps.”

That doesn’t seem to make him feel any better as he continues to try to explain Clarke Griffin in better ways before you stop him, placing a hand on his arm.

“I got it,” you say, smiling. He smiles back, seeming relieved that you stopped him.

“I just want what’s best for her,” he explains, stepping up to the counter and ordering way more food than you feel is necessary. And then he turns to look at you. “What would you like?”

You choke slightly on your own breath. That amount of food didn’t even include yours?
Jesus Christ, how much does this man eat?

“Uhhh…” you stumble, not even remembering what donuts taste like. You’ve never really been a junk food fan. You’re normally more conscious of what goes in your body-- I mean, Lincoln the health freak and expert cook is your step-brother and Tris is looking to get scouted for a soccer scholarship to University soon and is way more aware of what’s in processed foods than you’d like for her to be. Everything that’s made in your house is organic and homemade. Honestly, you probably haven’t eaten a donut since college. “Just a chocolate one?” you tell the teen behind the counter, asking more than anything.

Bellamy snorts a laugh, handing her his card. “She’ll take 4,” he corrects you, flashing a smile at the girl behind the counter. She smiles back. Does he do this flirting thing to everyone? I mean, if you had Bellamy’s flawless, godlike looks, you would too.

He just has this vibe to him…

He’s always comfortable.

You’ve never been that comfortable in your skin.

And for the second time in the past 24 hours, you’re jealous of Bellamy.

The first being simply because he’s known Clarke.

“Here you go,” the young brunette hands Bellamy and you both a bag each, his considerably larger than yours. You take yours, smiling back as he nudges your arm.

“You’re going to starve,” he tells you, ushering you over to a table. “Have a seat. Clarke will be asleep for a little while.”

Suddenly you’re nervous. Is he about to interrogate you? Why is this complete stranger buying you breakfast after you just hooked up with his roommate?

The anxiety in your chest begins to bubble, but rather than allowing the jitters out, you swallow them back down, taking a seat across from where Bellamy placed his bag. "You’re going to develop diabetes,” you joke in reply after many moments, causing the man across from you to smile. You smile back, feeling slightly more at ease.

“I like you,” Bellamy pulled a donut from the bag, shoving half of it in his mouth. Suddenly, one of the most attractive men that you’ve ever met is actually unattractive, if even for only a minute. Apparently, this was his end game. Smiling at you with mouth wide oven, but blush awkwardly, kicking his chair under the table.

“You’re disgusting,” you say, opening your back and retrieving the first of your donuts. Taking a small bite, your mouth if filled with the awesomeness that is deep fried dough covered in sugar.

Why did you even stop eating these?

Bellamy notices your excitement as you take another bite quickly.

“Well, I didn’t sleep with Clarke Griffin… So at least I have that working for me,” he jokes after swallowing his mound of dough.

Nudging his leg under the table, you honestly can’t be embarrassed-- it’s not like you didn’t want it.
It’s not like you didn’t enjoy it.

“It wasn’t bad,” you finally reply after a moment of thought, deciding to play into his game. If Bellamy was going to try to make you uncomfortable then you’d turn the tables on him.

His expression dropped, mouth gaping in disgust. “For real man?” he begs of you, pretending to be dry heaving for a second. “I really don’t fucking care,” he says in between gags.

“No… no no,” you pretend to stumble, throwing your hands of and waving the in front of his face. “I’m just saying, I’d do it again… I mean, I probably will.” Since when did you become this person?

Fuck, you’re talking to a stranger…

You went on kind of a date with a stranger…

Then slept with that stranger…

And now you’re getting breakfast with her roommate…

And talking to yet another stranger…

About your sex life…

This has never been you, but for some reason this actually feels comfortable…

Almost everything about this entire situation has felt comfortable…

And you’re alright with this.

You’re alright with all of this.
This is the way that I'm learning to breathe

Chapter Notes

fluffy stuff and foreshadowing of great plans that i have.
Enjoy.

LEXA

You’ve never taken so many pictures in your life-- but then again, you’ve never done so much at one time in your life-- not since your parents. This one weekend alone you managed to go on your first date in years, and somehow something has grown out of that-- one really good weekend at least.

Scrolling through the pictures on your phone, you stand behind the bar, waiting for the next older drunk man to come and comment on your cute smile or nice smelling hair… they always talked about your hair and how they could smell anything over their own breath was beyond you. Instead of dwelling on your boredom, you swiped to the left, briefly examining every new photo in your collection.

Pictures of you and Clarke in front of the museum of art in town.

That picture of when Clarke tried to shove an entire cookie in her mouth.

A picture of you looking at a sculpture that you honestly had no clue what it meant.

Pictures of Bellamy’s flawless smile as Clarke attempts to take the phone from him.

Pictures of Clarke painting in her studio.

A picture of Bellamy reading a book right before Clarke poured water on his forehead in their living room.

A picture of Clarke trying to cook with Bellamy in the kitchen.
You stop on one in particular, spending more time examining every individual pixel of it than you did all of the others combined. Clarke has her arms around you and Bellamy, standing in between the two of your and grinning widely as she tugs your heads closer to hers. Bellamy is flawless, as always, even when squinting, but Clarke... Her eyes are unbelievable in this photo…

The color of sun-bleached forget-me-nots-- a flower that Clarke introduced you to in the art museum-- iridescent, stained with every shade of blue that you had ever seen.

She looked happy…

And so did you.

With Bellamy in the corner of the photo and Clarke in the middle, you should surely be drown out as mere background static… you weren’t majestic… but yet, in this picture, even your find yourself attractive.

It’s honestly a good picture.

Before you can stop yourself, you’re grinning like a damn fool down at your phone on the bar top when your next customer shows up, shaking an empty glass at you.

Henry is pretty cool-- for a regular. There’s a part of you that wants to chase him off, for his liver’s sake, but then again, if he left, you’d have no one to pay your tips tonight. Mondays were always slow.

“Whatcha got there sweetheart?” he asks you, slurring his words as heavily as his movements. There’s always a nickname for you, but only for you. He pulled a bar stool up, swaying into it and watching you fill his glass with his regular whisky. You glance up at him over the bottle, smiling slightly.

“You know I can’t tell you that, Henry,” you respond, sliding the glass over to him. “I don’t talk about my life with clients.” He smiles at your reference to an earlier conversation where he called you his therapist.

“It is always worth a try,” he says, tipping his glass to you as he takes a huge swig. “Everything’s worth a try, baby girl.”
Those words resounded with you.

Everything is worth a try.

Smiling back at the man, you lift your phone off the counter, opening a blank screen. Typing out a message with your thumbs, you glance up at some new patrons entering the bar before they escape into the restrooms.

LEXA (2:03AM): Can I take you out tonight?

Almost instantly, a reply pops up next to Clarke’s picture.

CLARKE (2:05AM): It is tonight :-p

Grinning again, you type a reply, acknowledging a new customer at the bar.

LEXA (2:09AM): ‘I’ll pick you up when you’re done with your shift?’

The new guy’s order is simple. His personality, however, is not. Without even being discrete, he makes his move, commenting on your smile, your shirt, your height, your smile again… His compliments only continue after you give him his drink. You glance over at Henry who is preoccupied with his drink, but obviously still laughing at the situation.

“You know, you’re blowing me off like you’re a lesbian or something,” he says, sliding his empty glass to you. Henry couldn’t control it, snorting into his drink, trying to play it off like he choked on a drink.

Henry knew…

Henry knew about you from the first day that you started here…
But Henry would never tell this new guy.

That wasn’t his style.

“Really, I’m sorry,” you mumble, filling the glass again and sliding it back, mocking him more than anything. Pulling your phone from your jeans, you smile at that blinking light.

CLARKE (2:19AM): ‘I don’t get off until 6 in the morning though :-(

Her text left you smiling still.

LEXA (2:22AM): I’ll see you at 6:15 then

You type quickly, returning your phone to your pocket before turning your attention back to the new guy.

“I’m a little distracted today,” you mumble to him, leaning onto the bar in front of him. Hell, if he’s going to play this game, so will you. You can probably milk a few extra dollars out of this asshole if you try hard enough. He smiles, making some kind of asshole comment about being the only distraction that you needed or something, causing Henry to choke again as he finishes off his drink.

“Goodnight Lexa,” the older man says, walking over to you and reaching over the bar, placing a small roll of bills into your cleavage, as per the usual. Anyone else and this would have been an issue, but Henry has been paying your rent for years now. His flirty nature was more of formality than anything.

You chuckle at the old man, grabbing his hand as he pulls away. “Goodnight Henry,” you tell him, shaking his hand. He kisses your fingers before pulling away with a wink and walking out the door.

“So, you’re name’s Lexa?” the new guy asks, creeping on your again. You just sigh, looking at your phone again for the time.

Goddamnit Henry…..
At least the bar would be closing in 2 hours…

And at least the sun would be coming up in 3 hours…

And at least you’d be seeing Clarke in 4 hours.

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**CLARKE**

“Griffin!” Monroe’s voice echoes down the hall, followed closely behind by the clicking of her shoes on the floor quickly behind you. You try to ignore her, knowing that she was just going to be bringing you bad news, but she repeats herself a few more times, making it impossible. Turning quickly, you act surprised to see her, pulling your scrub top over your head and balling it into her arms, hoping that she’ll acknowledge that you were supposed to be off 30 minutes ago.

Lexa was probably completely exhausted from working last night and now waiting in the parking lot for you to get off and you’re still here, walking down the hallways of this hospital and working…

Always working…

“I’m sorry Clarke,” she says, reaching out her arm to hand you another folder.

Another case…

You sigh, taking it from her and opening it, glancing only for a moment before you close it again, sliding it under your arm with your scrub top.

“It can’t wait?” you ask her, rubbing your eyes. She shakes her head, looking just as distraught as you do… even though that can’t be possible. “Alright, give me 15 to get myself together,” you request, knowing that they’ll give you at least that. You need to get changed into clean scrubs and wash your face and wake up. It’s been a long 12 hours and you’re required to be just as alert and awake for the next indefinite amount of time. 15 minutes would be nothing for them.
For you, however, it would mean the world. Sliding your phone from your pocket, you frown at the blinking red light.

**LEXA (6:26AM):** ‘Everything okay?’

Lexa had asked this 12 minutes ago. You type a quick reply explaining how you’re having to stay for a new case and asking if you can make it up to her. Throwing your body onto the bench next to the lockers, you sigh, laying your arms over your face hoping to just doze off. This shift had been surprisingly hard… Cases that involve children always are for you, and it seemed like that’s all this morning had been.

One child abuse case.

One of a kid who drown while skinny dipping.

One where a three year old boy had a stroke.

Another where a nine year old girl had a seizure and wasn’t waking up.

Today was not your day, and now, it was going to continue with a child who was showing heart palpitations and having chest pains. Thank god you weren’t the only one on this case though. He had at least 45 more minutes until he’d be back from getting the proper scans done, but for some reason they wanted you on the floor then.

Just as you started to get angsty about it all, your phone vibrated in your right hand, causing you to startle.

**LEXA (6:39AM):** Not necessary, come to the desk

Standing, you pulled another scrub top from your locker, shoving the old one inside and balling up the new one to fit into your pocket. With phone in hand, you exit the locker room, white tank on, making your way to the desk for whatever reason Lexa wanted you to.

Monroe often got flowers from her Husband. Kane would get mail sent to the hospital from time to
time. Many people received items at the desk, so as you turned the corner, your grin grew when your eyes were met with something even better than flowers. Lexa was standing next to the desk; plastic bag in hand as Monroe chatted with her about god only knows what. When her eyes met yours, she smiled back, giving you the ‘God help me’ face. Biting your lip, you closed the distance, taking her hand.

“Come on,” you say, pulling her back away from the desk. “Thanks Monroe,” you shout around the corner with a small wave, the younger girl looking accomplished. “What are you doing here?” you ask her, ultimately shocked that she was attached to you at the moment. Suddenly, the day was actually better. Things were always better with Lexa with you.

“Well, you need to eat,” she mumbled, lifting the bag as you dragged her around the next corner. With only about 20 more feet to go until the locker room, you couldn’t wait any longer. You pull Lexa’s arm closer to you, turning her to face you as your hands push her shoulders against the wall. As you kiss her, you can feel the shock in her body.

She doesn’t even know how to respond.

She’s kissing you back, but she doesn’t know how to respond.

“Clarke,” she gets out, pushing you slightly off of her. “You’re at work!” She’s kind of cute when she’s trying to be all responsible and shit.

“I know,” you breathe heavily, licking your lips and smiling at her. You glance around, noticing how empty the hallway is right now. “Come on,” you order her, pulling her arm towards the locker room. Shoving her inside was an accomplishment in itself as she protested the entire time, citing things like responsibility and work ethics but honestly, all you’re worried about is how she’s right here…

In front of you…

In this moment…

“Clarke,” she says, only half protesting while she kisses you back. Inside of the locker room seems a little more comfortable for her as there’s less of a chance of anyone walking in on you-- even if that chance still stands. Breathing deeply into your mouth, she grabs the back of your head, kissing you deeply, sliding her tongue into your mouth. “This isn’t right.” The bag on the floor is quickly joined by your tank top, followed by her shirt then your bra. You agree, knowing that at any moment
anyone could walk in.

Your mother.

You cringe, making a mental note to never think of your mother again during a heated, topless make-out session with Lexa before quickly scanning the room for options.

The Boobie Room-- or at least that’s what you called it. In the back corner of the locker room was a small room created for mothers to have privacy while they breastfed. On more than one occasion you’ve escaped to this room to lock the door and be away from people if only for 15 minutes…

Today, however, you’d have a different reason.

“Come on,” you say, grabbing Lexa’s arm and pulling her towards the small room. Once inside, you slam the door shut, not even bothering to lock it. Pushing your body against Lexa’s as you tug at the button on her pants as she begins breathing deeply into your mouth.

“This is better,” she laughs, dancing her fingers up your back and into your hair. She tugs slightly on your hair, pulling your head back to reach your neck with her kisses. Even after the last 4 days of being with you, Lexa was still gently, taking her time, planning her steps. She still seemed cautious, wanting nothing more than protect you.

As you pull her pants from her body, you notice a small squirm. It’s almost invisible and almost too easy to play off as just her helping you remove her clothing but you know otherwise. Pulling back a little, you look at Lexa, her face illuminated in the nearly dark room by a small plug-in night light.

“Are you okay?” you ask, sliding a hand up to her cheek. She just smiles, grabbing the sides of your neck and pulling you back in to kiss her. Before you can stop it, you’re mumble a small “you’re perfect,” into her mouth, feeling her cringe at your words. To counter it, you slide your tongue into her mouth, hoping that she won’t speak anything in reply.

Instead, she takes your shoulders, pushing you into the padded chair just behind you. Straddling one leg on each side of you, just sits in your lap, pushing her hips into you and you can’t help but moan against her, pulling her body closer to yours.

Even if Lexa struggles every time that you remind her of how perfect she is, this doesn’t deter you.
Because in moments like this, you’re reminded of just how perfect she is.

She is perfect for you.

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LEXA

The room itself wasn’t particularly spacious and left little room to move around in, but honestly, to you, it was faultless. As long as Clarke was with you, everything was perfect.

Sliding off of her lap and falling to your knees in front of the woman, you rest your hands on her thighs, thankful that she missed your little slip up a second ago.

Well, she didn’t…

But you played it off well.

You were always playing it off well.

Your fingertips skated up her legs, pulling at the loose material of her scrubs. Balling a mass of the fabric into your fists, you pull, sliding her pants down her legs. She smiles, running her hands through your now tangled hair.

You had actually straightened it this morning and she was messing it all up…

But that was fine.

Everything was wonderful.

Thinking for a moment, you reevaluate the situation. Sure, this could work like this, or it couldn’t. It would go one of two ways, and your clock with Clarke in this room was ticking.
“Stand up,” you say quietly, pulling her to her feet by her arms. Switching places with her, you take the seat, pulling her nearly naked body into your lap. She laughs into your kiss, throwing her arms over your shoulders.

“Are you really thinking this through?” she asks, kissing your face multiple times. “This isn’t warlexa… You don’t have to plan things. Just fuck me.” You laugh a little in return, watching the light work its way across her face.

She was right.

But you didn’t know how to just let go.

You don’t know how to just let your mind go blank.

Grinning out of the corner of your mouth, you place one hand on the back of her neck, pulling her face closer to yours and kissing her deeply as you slide the fingers of your other hand past her panties and into her. She gasps into you and you smile, kissing her deeply to keep her noise to a minimum.

She wasn’t lying that first night when she told you that she was loud during sex.

Poor Bellamy…

As she pushes her body harder against your hand, she throws her head back, giving you access to her neck which you take complete advantage of. Kissing and biting gently at her throat, you work your way down to her collarbone, keeping a tight grip on the back of her neck. She places one hand on your arm that’s preoccupied pleasuring her, pulling it closer and deeper into her while her other hand holds on to your shoulder, digging her nails into your skin. She continues to whimper, trying, unsuccessfully, to stifle her own noises by biting down on her lip and you can’t help but smile, knowing that you’re the source of this.

You can feel the pressure on your fingertips as her body prepares itself for release. Sliding your free hand around her waist, you pull her closer just as she comes, letting out a loud moan and head falling onto your shoulder. You laugh slightly, pulling your damp hand from beneath her and wrapping your arms around her. She smiles into you, kissing your shoulder and up your neck to meet your lips. Resting her head on your shoulder, you both relax, breathing steadily as she just relaxes into you.
“I have to go back to work,” she groans into your neck, kissing in between each word. You just nod, knowing that her 15 had been up long ago.

Lifting her head, she makes eye contact with you, stroking the back of your neck with the arms that she had wrapped around your shoulders. You smile into, kissing her lips before mumbling a small, unconvincing “go”. She kisses the tip of your nose before lifting her body off of yours and gathering her clothes, getting dressed in the dark.

As she reaches for the light switch, you begin to panic, realizing that your pants are still on the floor. Rising quickly, you scurry for them, pulling them on just in time to cover your legs from sight. She smiles, looking down to the floor where you were sitting before pulling her tank top back over her head.

She looks at you like you hung the moon and a slight bit of guilt bubbles inside of you. If only she knew.

But she can’t.

No one else can know.

That’s what ran Costia away.

That’s what will chase Clarke away.

---

CLARKE

Making your way out of the boobie room, you pulled Lexa with you quickly, hoping no one was in the locker room.

All clear?

All clear.
Except for your shoes in the middle of the room and the bag of take-out that had been left on the bench, there were no signs of disturbance in the locker area.

Thank god.

Explaining this would be too hard…

Well actually, it wouldn’t. There wouldn’t be any explaining… But living it down… that was another story.

Lexa chuckled, turning you into her grasp. She wrapped her arms around you, pushing you to continue walking backwards towards your locker and matching you step-for-step.

“I should probably go,” she mumbled into your lips, kissing you one final time before releasing you. Suddenly your arms felt cold without her. You couldn’t help but frown at the absence of her body against yours.

“Yeah,” you agree, but not without silent protest. You did have that patient with the heart issues, even if four other nurses did as well.

Would they even really miss you?

“Here,” Lexa said, lifting the bag off of the floor and handing it to you. “You need to eat.” You sigh before you realize it, watching as Lexa’s face drops.

She’s catching on.

Panic begins to rise in you as you quickly take the bag from her hands, hoping to play it off. “I will as soon as I’m done with this case,” you say quickly, shoving the bag in your still open locker. Pretending to glance down at your pager, you act surprised at the time, mouth opening and mumbling the most convincing “oh shit” that you can muster.
It appears to be working.

She seems less worried.

Except for her eyes. Her eyes give it all away.

“Clarke, when was the last time that you ate?” she asks, running her hands through her hair before pulling it back into a pony tail that was wrapped around her wrist.

You stumble for a moment, attempting to look as if you’re actually thinking hard about it.

“It’s only been a few hours,” you lie, claiming to have hit up the vending machine in between cases. This seems to soothe the questions momentarily. Thank god.

Pulling the woman in for one final kiss, you stroke her cheek with your thumb, promising to eat as soon as you’re done with the case at hand. She nods, pushing you to the door.

“Go save some lives,” she orders you, following you out.

This would have been an easy transition. There was only one other person in the hallway and had it been anyone else, no one would have known that Lexa was even there really…

But you found yourself face to face with Marcus Kane, your boss, Lexa still attached to your arm.

“Clarke!” he says, surprised. “I was just coming to check on you. Are you alright?” His concern sounded serious as he glanced over Lexa quickly.

Stumbling through your database of possible lies, you pause, realize that your stutterings are being vocalized.

“Yes sir,” you settle for the half truth, telling him that Lexa came to bring you lunch and that the two of you lost track of time catching up. Her fingers slip through yours, exiting the interlocking position that they had previously occupied, leaving you wanting her back. She slipped past you and Kane,
beginning the walk down the hallway towards the exit.

“Sorry to have kept you,” the woman says, faking like she’s just an acquaintance. It burns you in your chest how convincing she is at this. It hurts to think of Lexa as anything else than… whatever the fuck you two are. “I’ll see you later Clarke,” she says with a final wave, turning down the hallway to her left and sprinting out of sight.

Kane’s eyes return to you, staring you down. “Friend of yours?” he asks, crossing his arms over his chest. His smile seems to say it all, but Kane is too professional to call you on it… plus, he likes you. He always has.

“Yeah… We uhh… We grew up together,” you lie, hoping you sound more convincing to Kane than you do inside of your own head.

“Uh huh… Alright Griffin, get down to the O.R. Your boy’s out of scans and ready to go. Jasper will brief you when you’re scrubbed in.” You just nod as Kane walks away, shaking his head.

You failed to convince him…

But honestly, you don’t really care.

Smiling, you pull your scrub top from your pocket, pulling it over your shoulders and pulling your hair back into a pony tail as you walk. Once around the corner and out of Kane’s line of sight, you pull your phone from your pocket, catching the blinking red light from the corner as you continue to walk.

LEXA (7:24AM): It was great catching up with you Clarke. Let’s do it again sometime :-P

You type out your reply quickly, smiling at the entire situation before returning your phone to your pocket and beginning your jog to the O.R.

CLARKE (7:33AM) : Thanks for lunch. I’ll pay you back soon :-)

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LEXA (9:04AM): So it’s settled, I’m taking you to dinner tonight after I get off work at the diner.

CLARKE (9:09AM): No. Please sleep. You’ve been doing too much

LEXA (9:12AM): Nope. Done deal. I’ll pick you up at 7.

You’ve been glued to your phone since surgery let out. Thankfully, the case was small and 5 nurses were sort of overkill for Dr. Jasper Jordan.

Dr. Jordan… or Jasper to you, was a work of art. This man was simultaneously one of the smartest human beings that you had ever met, and the dumbest. He was funny, and an asshole. He was a walking paradox, but he was one of your favorite people at St. Anthony’s and you always loved working with him. He was always a brilliant doctor and a wonderful friend.

“You’re in a good mood,” Jasper’s voice spoke from across the locker room that he was sharing with you. He was changing into another set of scrubs as you were balling yours up into a bag and shoving them into your backpack, phone in hand.

“Good surgery,” you only half-lied, tucking your phone under your chin and zipping up the bag. Throwing a strap over your shoulder, you grabbed your phone, returning it to your pocket. “Good job today.”

He smiled over at you, jerking some of his hair from his face. “It was before that… What’s going on Clarke? You’ve been in a weird mood all day. It’s creeping me out.” He smiles, shoving his soiled scrubs into the bottom of his messy locker, making you cringe at the thought of what could be growing in there.

You stride over to the young doctor, kissing his cheek before turning towards the exit. “Have a good day, Dr. Jordan,” you mock waving over your shoulder as you exit.

Making your way to the doors of the hospital, you glance around, hoping for a clean getaway.

“Clarke!” you hear from behind the desk.
Goddamnit…

Turning to catch Monroe’s eyes, she smiles over at you, ushering you over with one finger.

It’s not like you’ve been in this damn hospital for over 20 hours now…

It’s not like you haven’t slept in like 30 hours now…

“What’s up?” you ask, acting interested in what she has to say.

It’s not that you don’t like Monroe… She’s just always the bearer of bad news. That’s not any fault of her own… it’s her job to give you new cases and more clients, but it’s hard to separate her from the job sometimes, especially when you know very little about her on the outside.

“Soooo,” she draws out her words, spinning in her chair. “Who was your little friend?” She finally spit out her question, grinning widely as she mocked you, brushing her long brown hair from her eyes. “Got a new lady in your life?” Since when did Monroe know what you were gay?

Well Bi…

But irrelevant…

Since when did she know anything about you?

“She’s just a friend from when I was younger,” you lie, deciding to follow the same flow as with Kane. Consistency would be key if you wanted to keep all of these people out of your personal life.

“I’m not buying it,” Monroe says, shuffling some papers on the desk. “My husband doesn’t even bring me lunch and sex at work,” she explains, glancing back up at you. “And we’ve been married for years…”
“Sex?” you cut her off, choking on the air in your lungs. You almost shouted, gathering the attention of a couple of the other doctors and nurses in the area. With your face bright red and heat emanating off your body, you lean over the desk, bringing your face closer to Monroe’s. “Who said anything about sex? She just brought me lunch so we could catch up!” Monroe’s grin tells you that she’s not buying it… even if you want her to.

“Sure…” she jokes, standing up and placing a hand on your cheek. She can feel the heat pulsating off of them-- you just know it. “That’s why you came out looking all messy and giggling a lot…”

Pulling away from her, you pretend to be suddenly interested in the way that your shirt is sitting on your shoulders and how tight your backpack straps are…

Anything to keep your attention off of Monroe.

“Just because Jasper and Maya shack up in the locker room doesn’t mean the rest of us do,” you argue, throwing your friend and fellow nurse under the bus. You’re getting defensive and the longer you argue, the more apparent your lies become, but you can’t stop them.

“Allright Griffin, whatever you say,” Monroe lets up, putting a hand on your shoulder and pushing you to the door. “Now go home.”

That’s the best advice you’ve heard all day and you decide to take it, turning towards the exit before sending one last salutation back to Monroe, receiving a “Bye Griffin” in return.

Pulling out your phone from your back pocket, you smile at the blinking red light again, clicking the ignition on your keys.

LEXA (9:15AM): Oh, and wear a dress :-)

You can’t help but smile again, as you always do with texts from Lexa.

CLARKE (9:46AM): Will do. See you tonight

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I'm learning to Crawl

Chapter Summary

Flashback for Bellamy and we find out that big brother Bellamy may not be as alright as we thought.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, i'm backtracking a bit here but you'll understand soon enough :-) Have faith my friends and send me some messages on tumblr!
shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com
Thanks!!

BELAMY

Reaching into the fridge, you withdraw a water bottle, hearing the door unlock behind you.

“Hey, let me text you later,” you tell your sister through the phone. “Clarke’s home finally.” Your roommate doesn’t normally come in after closing call, so when she does, it worries you. But your worries fade away when you hear her laugh, only to resurface when you see that there’s someone attached to her arm.

“What’s up Griffin,” you mumble, watching your roommate trip into the other girl’s arms, more so to alert her that you’re here so she doesn’t decide to suddenly strip down and start fucking here.

You laugh to yourself momentarily, but you know it could happen.

It’s happened before.

She snorts a witty reply (or at least it is probably witty to her), giggling into the neck of the other girl.

Smiling it off, you make some cracks at Clarke and her friend, making your way back to your room, hoping to just disappear. Clarke’s always been good when you brought home girls-- you owe it to her.

“Shut the fuck up Bell,” you hear her shout from behind you before a thud follows, an apple rolling down the hallway past you.

Laughing, you kick it out of your way, not caring enough to stop and risk drunk Clarke throwing anything else at your head.

“You missed, Alchy,” you crack, turning into your room and closing the door behind you. You can practically hear Clarke breathing as you throw yourself onto your bed, pulling a pillow over your head.

First there’s the door closing-- Clarke was never graceful. She’s significantly less graceful while
Then there’s a second thud-- you can only assume it’s someone’s body against the door.

Jesus Christ.

Rolling over, you pull the pillow from your face, reaching for your book on your bedside table, hoping to preoccupy yourself and drown out the sounds of your roommate’s sex life with the words of Tim O’Brien’s The Things They Carried. You’ve read it before, once in middle school, again in Mali, and now you’re looking at it from a different perspective-- as that of a wounded veteran.

Shuttering slightly at some of the depictions of violence and war, you close the book after reading only two pages, unable to swallow. This happened frequently these days-- first, your mouth would dry out. Then, it would feel like you swallowed a golf ball in your throat. Next comes the chest pains that weren’t really pains but more like someone sitting on top of you for hours. Lying in bed, you stare at the spots on the ceiling, tracing out the constellations that you’ve gazed at thousands of times before. Afraid to close your eyes for more than a standard blink, you allow your eyes to water before they force themselves shut against the intensity of the light.

And that’s when it happens. In that microsecond of darkness between when your eyelids close and when they open again, you see death. Most times, it comes in the form of grenade carried in the arms of a small child, sometimes in the sound of an airplane or in the crashing of a pot in the kitchen.

Taking a deep breath, you fight off death, yet again, exhaling slowly just as the therapist taught you.In-2-3-Out-2-3-4-5-6. The small crash from the room next to yours brings you back to reality as a smile crosses your lips. At least Clarke is having a good night.

You can’t even be angry at her though. She needs this-- whatever this is.

Hearing Clarke moan was just too much for you though. Reaching beside your bed, you grab your phone, turning on music and pulling the headphones from your headboard over your ears. The sounds of Clarke’s sex life soon took a backseat to your rock music that began drowning out the insecurities that you still felt in your own bed.

A small ding interrupted your music before allowing it to continue, leaving a blinking red light in its wake.

Little Sister (4:37AM): She make it in okay?

You smile at Octavia’s text, knowing that she had to be awake early and was still concerned with you and her friend. She always had a great heart, even though she often times didn’t know how to use it. Swiping your fingers across the screen, you write a quick reply, hoping that she’ll just leave it. You’re not so lucky.

Bellamy (4:38AM): Yeah. With friend…

Little Sister (4:41AM): Ew no. Don’t care

Little Sister (4:41AM): Is he hot?

Little Sister (4:41AM): or she?

Bellamy (4:43AM): I make an effort to not check out my roommate’s fuck-buddies, you skeez

Little Sister (4:47AM): Come onnnnnnnn give me something here. I’ve been so lonelyyyyyyy
Little Sister (4:47AM): SO NOT HOW I MEANT THAT!

Little Sister (4:48AM): FOR REAL… I CAN SEE YOUR LITTLE TYPING FINGERS HAVING A FIELD DAY WITH THIS. STOP.

Little Sister (4:48AM): no

Bellamy (4:49AM): I wasn’t going to say anything about that … just going to let it slide.

Little Sister (4:51AM): Whatever… you never let anything go… I’m going to hear about this later

Little Sister (4:51AM): Speaking of which, what are you hearing right now ;-) 

Bellamy (4:53AM): I don’t even want to talk about what it sounds like outside of these headphones.

Little Sister (4:57AM): AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA Well at least one of us is getting something.

Bellamy (4:58AM): gross. No

Little Sister (5:01AM): Well, at least she’s happy, right?

Bellamy (5:04AM): Sure, I guess. Maybe this is what she needs.

Little Sister (5:10AM): And what of you?

Little Sister (5:22AM): Bell?

You stare at your phone, unable to even respond to your sister’s message. Octavia knows about your struggles-- in fact she is the only one who knows about your hardships…

Well her and your therapist.

There have been a few moments where you thought that maybe Clarke had caught on, but just as quickly as you thought she knew, suddenly she didn’t. To her, you were the strong big brother.

You’ve always been the strong big brother…

When really…

All you want to do is cry.

So how do you text out a message to the strongest person you know telling them that you, her role model, her big brother, her protector, is weak?

She’s your sister.

She’s your responsibility.

And yet, you get anxious reading a book written for 7th graders.

How do you tell your little sister that war ruined you?

That the brother that she grew up with, played with and loved died inside of a Humvee in Mali?
That the brother that she cried with at the death of your mother was actually buried under the sand of the desert next to three other men who didn’t walk away like he did?

That the brother who followed in your father’s footsteps actually died in the same exact way, even though he was carried away on a stretcher and given a medal congratulating him for his bravery and service?

Little Sister (5:28AM): I swear to god that if you don’t answer me I’m coming over there right now.

Little Sister (5:29AM): Putting on my shoes…

You know she’s lying, but you’d rather not risk it. Octavia’s crazy.

Bellamy (5:31AM): Chill out you crazy fuck. I was going pee. Shit…

Lie

Bellamy (5:32AM): I’m fine

Lie…

Bellamy (5:33AM): You know… All things considered

That should fix it, right?

Little Sister (5:37AM): need to talk?

You find yourself shaking your head at your phone before you even realize it. It’s not like she can see you-- thank god… because Octavia could always see through your bullshit.

Bellamy (5:41AM): Nah. I’m going to go to sleep if Clarke’s done screaming out this girl’s name

Little Sister (5:42AM): SO IT IS A GIRL! NAILED IT!

Little Sister (5:42AM): Well, Clarke is at least….

Little Sister (5:43AM): BOOM!

Bellamy (5:44AM): gross… Good night little sister!

Little Sister (5:46AM): Good night big brother.

Placing the phone next to you, you refuse to take off your headphones, knowing that whatever drunken chaos that was going on next door was probably still active and, honestly, not worth your time. Clarke deserved some happiness without you ruining all of it…

That doesn’t stop you from hearing Clarke’s voice shout out the name of what you can only assume is the woman that she dragged in from outside in between songs from your headphones.

You’d have to remember that tomorrow when you wake up. Closing your eyes with a small groan, you allow the rhythm of Brand New to drift you into sleep.

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BELLAMY
The next few days are extremely weird for you.

Normally, people leave when you force them to get coffee and donuts with you after they try to sneak out of the house and leave Clarke alone in her bed the next morning.

But 3 things went wrong with your plan today.

First, Lexa was naked in your kitchen when you left your room to get a water bottle. Sure, she was wrapped up in Clarke’s bed sheet, but she was there… which was issue enough… and she was looking for something to help drunk Clarke stop vomiting… not running away… she wasn’t trying to sneak out… she wasn’t gathering her things… she was staying…

Second, she actually seemed to enjoy donuts with you. I mean, she looked like she had never eaten a donut before with how quickly she shoved it into her mouth after the first bite, but she continued with your banter, not backing down after you attempted to make her uncomfortable. In fact, she made you uncomfortable which was unheard of…

Third, she stayed. After all of it, she stayed. She requested to return to your apartment with you and be with Clarke, even after you, essentially, threatened her and offered her the out… After everything, she stayed and never backed down…

And for this, Lexa mildly terrified you.

But slowly, you watched her warm up.

It started at the art museum where she listened as Clarke talked incessantly about things that didn’t interest you in the slightest… but Lexa held on every word. She watched Clarke’s mouth as it rambled through history facts about artists and painting mediums as if she was listening to the greatest story ever told. Clarke could have been reading the phonebook and Lexa would have been just as interested probably. The way that her eyes flicked between Clarke’s lips and her eyes gave away everything.

And as you took her phone from her hands and began snapping pictures of the three of you, she started to smile. It was shy, of course, but it was there. She was modest, which was new for Clarke, but she was refreshing, this sort of calm breeze in you two’s hectic life. You watched as the girl clung to the arms of your roommate, continuing on with the banter that surrounded the two of you.

Then, when you went out to eat, she challenged you to different contests, betting you outrageous things that you wouldn’t eat something or couldn’t fit so many French fries in your mouth. At first, you wondered if this was her trying to fit in-- people do it all the time… But the longer that you spent with Lexa over those next 8 days, the more realized how false that was.

Lexa wasn’t trying to fit in.

Lexa was perfect for Clarke.

And Lexa was perfect for you.

When passing by her in the hallway of your apartment, she would shove your arm, pushing you into the wall before awkwardly laughing on her way.

When she would eat meals at your place, she’d immediately go into the kitchen and begin cleaning up afterward.

When she brought Clarke coffee in the mornings, she brought you a cup as well.
When you awoke for a morning job, she joined you, sliding on her running shoes and holding her own without any question.

Conversations with her were short, but not awkward.

She was quiet, but sincere.

She was exactly what Clarke needed in a relationship.

And was exactly what you needed in a friend.

**Little Sister (9:08AM):** Sounds like you have a crush on Clarke’s girlfriend- weird-o

Barf. Your sister has no clue what she’s talking about.

**Little Sister (9:09AM):** But for real… why is she perfect? If she’s hot too, I’m done with this shit.

Attaching one of the photos of you and Lexa from the three of yours day at the museum, you send another message to Octavia before kicking off your shoes and putting your feet up on the arm of the couch. You haven’t quite gathered the energy to go change for work yet after your morning jog (which Lexa missed out on for the first time in 5 days…) but you also didn’t want to spend any more time in your nasty running shoes.

**Little Sister (9:14AM):** For Fuck’s sake! She’s a fucking super model! Go Clarke!

You snort a laugh at Octavia, tossing your phone back beside you and closing your eyes for a brief second before standing and making your way into the bathroom to shower and change for work.

You’d find Lexa inside Clarke’s room alone after your shower, looking through some old photos pinned up on Clarke’s wall. After a small chat about work and the weather, the two of you would sit in silence for a few moments, just appreciating the simplicity of the moment.

You liked this most about Lexa-- you didn’t have to be anything in particular around her. You could just sit and be and that was totally fine.

---

**BELAMIY**

“So, wait, she’s still there?” Octavia’s voice asks in your ear through the darkness of your closed eyelid. With your phone up to one ear, you can hear the sounds of the ceiling fan and some slight whispers from Clarke’s room in your other.

“Yup,” you answer her, opening your eyes, only long enough to locate the bowl of candy that’s resting on the table and to take a few of the Starbursts in your hand. “They’re all holed up talking or something,” you mumble, shifting to hold the phone between your ear and shoulder to free up your hands. Unwrapping the first Starburst, you shove it into your mouth, tossing the wrapped onto the table.

“You sure they’re talking?” Octavia snorts through the phone. Behind her, you can hear the sounds of traffic in the city, making you slightly anxious. But you’d never let her know his.

“I mean, I hope so because it doesn’t sound too thrilling if they’re not.” You both laugh a little bit before there’s a small pause. Normally these kinds of silences are awkward, but not with Octavia.
Especially not when the last 10 days has been filled with conversation about Clarke’s sudden relationship… or… whatever…

“Hey Bell?” she asks, concern riddling her voice. You shrug a slight ‘uh huh?’ into your phone, unwrapping another Starburst. “Is she good for Clarke?”

To be honest, you can’t answer this question. You don’t even know what’s good for Clarke these days.

Other than eating…. That’s good for Clarke, but more days than not, that seems out of the question.

Before you can solidify an answer, your sister begins speaking again. “Because after Finn… you know… I just don’t think we can…”

“I know,” you stop her stammering, receiving a grateful sigh in return. Rubbing your chin with one hand, you take your phone to keep it from falling, reaching out with the other for more Starbursts.

“And I don’t know if she even knows who she is anymore,” Octavia continues as you battle gravity to stay on the couch, arm outstretched still for the candy bowl.

“I don’t think that’s the problem,” you insert. “I think it’s that who she is isn’t who she wants to be.”

You sigh, suddenly overwhelmed by your emotions about the entire situation with Clarke.

There was a time when you didn’t really worry about it. There was a time when you could talk yourself out of caring so much…

But that time went out the window when you had to leave work and rush to the hospital to sit beside your friend with talk of a feeding tube going down her nose soon. Luckily that bullet was dodged quickly and Clarke was stabilized, but your battle never ended.

Her battle never ended.

“Yeah,” was all that your sister mumbled through the phone, sighing deeply just as you did. “I just worry,” she said, you replying absent-mindedly with a ‘I know’. “And I worry about you,” she turned it around, her tone changing from the hypothetical to concrete. “Are you taking care of yourself Bellamy?”

She bled with concern, even through a phone. Clenching your jaw, you questioned how easy it would be to dodge this question.

Not easy enough…

Especially not with Octavia.

Sighing deeply, you begin the act. “Yeah, I’ve been going to therapy and taking the medications…” you run through the script, not even stopping when the agitation in Octavia’s breathing became apparent. “I’ve been avoiding my triggers and keeping up with my journals. Everything’s fine.”

Octavia doesn’t buy it and this is obvious. “No Bellamy, that’s not what I asked.” You exhale. She’s right. “How are you doing?”

“What do you want to hear, O?” You beg her, distress growing. Sitting up, you throw your legs over the side of the couch, resting your elbows on your knees. Lexa passes through, grabbing something from the kitchen and throwing a balled up paper towel at your head as she returned towards Clarke’s room. You smile at her slightly before reclaiming your position-- if nothing else, you need to con
“I want you to be real with me, Bell,” she begins, background noise growing louder. She was out of the car at last which meant that she’d have to go teach a class soon— which meant this conversation would finally end. “Tell me what’s going on.”

What did she want to hear?

That you feel like dying?

That you haven’t slept with the light off in over three years?

That you still dream of the face of the child that single-handedly killed three of your friends?

That when it rains, your knee locks up and reminds you of how it should have been you?

That you’ve craved to retrace the scars on your chest and open those wounds up again just to know what’s real?

“It’s fine, O,” you mumble, fighting the urge to claw yourself out of your skin.

She just sighs, mumbling something that you can’t understand before asking “Okay, fine, but we’re still on with the therapist on Friday, right?” You nod before you realize that she can’t see you.

“Yeah,” is all you can bring yourself to respond, exhausted that this conversation has even occurred. You don’t want to go to therapy. You don’t want to drag Octavia to therapy with you. Hell, you don’t even want to think about it. Hearing the door in the hallway creak open, you’ve never been so thankful to be interrupted in your life.

“Bellamy?” Clarke asks from down the hallway still.

“Look, O, I’ve got to go. I’ll call you later?” You hardly wait for her reply, but you know better than to hang up on your sister.

“Yeah, alright. I love you big brother,” she says, irritated.

“I love you too little sister,” you reply, clicking the end button and lifting yourself from your chair, thankful to finally be out of that center of attention.

Heading towards Clarke’s room, you breathe in deep, exhaling all of the anxiety that had balled up in your chest.

It was just you now…

No war…

No violence…

Just you and Clarke and her…

Whatever the fuck Lexa was to her…

You enter the room and throw yourself on the bed in between the two

“You okay?” Lexa asks, brushing a small bit of her hair from in front of her face. She and Clarke are both sitting on the bed, knees pulled in close to their own chests. You can’t help but smile, sitting up
and pulling the two in, wrapping your arms around their necks.

Sitting between them, you smile wider, feeling comfortable at last.

This was good.

Lexa was good.

“Yeah,” you say, releasing them from your hug. It’s not entirely a lie-- not now that you’re here with them. “So what’s up??”

Clarke looks over and Lexa and smiles before turning back to you.

This was good.
I'm finding that You and You alone can break my fall

Chapter Notes

A little bit of fluff followed by a lot of angst. Hang in there guys... I promise there's a reason why everyone has baggage... I promise I have a greater plan for you yet :-) Thanks for the support and the reads!
Add me on Tumblr and let's be friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

CLARKE

The sun dances through the shades and off of her freckles, her smile shining almost as loud as the rising star outside of your bedroom window. Lexa has quickly become your sun and stars. She has become your everything, the one thing keeping you grounded. It's as if everything gravitates towards her. She’s the center of your galaxy. Maybe she was right about being a black hole, but if there was one thing that she got wrong, it was the past of destruction that she left behind her. If anything, she fixed all of the previous aches, cleaning up after the few before her. Her lips curl up in a wide smile, fingers intertwining with yours as you simply lay in bed together. Tracing the constellations on her face, you kiss her freckles, treading lightly on her still bruised nose. She is the night sky and you could stare at her forever, finding something new and beautiful every time.

“What’s your favorite song?” you ask with your groggy morning voice, releasing her hand to pick up your phone, opening youtube with a quick thumb swipe to the left. She shrugs, tucking her now empty hand under her face. You simply smile at her, not believing that she doesn’t have one. Instead, you offer to meet her halfway, pulling up yours first.

Ed Sheeran’s voice rings through a guitar line, singing the words to the song that speaks the most to you. “White lips, pale face. Breathing in snowflakes. Burnt lungs, sour taste…” You watch as her eyes close and the corner of her lip curls up in a smile. “And they scream The worst things in life come free to us 'Cause we're just under the upper hand And go mad for a couple grams. And she don't want to go outside tonight.” Laying down your phone between the two of you, you wrap your right arm around her waist, pulling yourself closer to her. With your foreheads touching, you can feel her breathing, listening as the air exits her lungs and then returns. Honestly, something so simple yet she makes it seem so majestic.

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LEXA

You don’t want to tell her your favorite song. Honestly, you don’t even quite know what that term means. You have songs that mean different things to you in different times and because of different things, but you’ve never really had one song that has stuck with you for a long period of time…

Well, that’s not entirely true…

Since you met Clarke you’ve had this one song stuck in your head, but you couldn’t dare tell her. Not only was that a super lame thing to tell this girl that you’ve only been seeing for about 4 days now, but it was sort of an older song and Clarke was more of a top-40s kind of gal… She had probably never even heard of it. Plus, she’d probably ask you about it and then you’d be forced to
Instead of outing yourself as an outdated sap with coping issues, you chose to take the passive road, closing your eyes and listening to the music that she picked. It sounded vaguely familiar-- as if you’ve heard it in the bar or at the restaurant or in the car, but you never can place these things. You were more of a rock and alternative person and if it came out after 2010, you probably didn’t know it really. Opening one of your eyes for a brief moment, you glance over at Clarke who has now closed her eyes and is wrapped around you. Something inside you feels warm, and it’s moments like this where it all starts to make sense. Nothing outside of this room matters, and finally, you’re calm.

Clarke is a breeze on the ocean, stirring up small waves and ripples within you, but calming the storm waiting. You see, the darkness is always close, it’s always lurking, but Clarke is light and Clarke is peace. When she’s away from you, you still feel her calmness, taking away your darkness, shouldering your burden. Clark is like coming home.

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**CLARKE**

When this song comes to its bitter sweet conclusion, you never know exactly how you feel. There’s always a lot of emotions about these lyrics-- about the fight within the song-- about the struggle that the girl faces-- but for the first time, you can finally end it comfortably. Opening your eyes, you move your arm between you and Lexa, pulling your phone back into focus. Blinking a few times to adjust your contacts, you look over at her again.

“For real, what’s your favorite song?” She just shrugs, not even bothering to open her eyes. This creates a groan in your throat that exits your mouth a bit louder than you expected. Punching her shoulder, you complain to her, still making noises rather than using words. “Lexa, play along for fuck’s sake.” She’s smiling now, just enjoying getting a rise out of you. And you’re not sure when it happened, but you’re alright with this kind of game. As long as you’re with Lexa, you’re pretty much alright with anything.

“Okay,” she finally agrees, opening her eyes and grabbing the phone from you. You wait as she types the name into the search bar and places the phone face down on the bed, watching to make sure that you don’t look at it.

And then the intro begins to a song that you know all too well. In fact, Third Eye Blind dominated 2009 for you. A smile spreads across your face as you listen to the very familiar lyrics. “And I am high like a star that’s flying. Cassiopeia. Everything’s changing now…” When it reaches the chorus, your foot automatically bobs back and forth in rhythm and Lexa seems to notice, smiling as she closes her eyes, leaning her forehead back on yours. “Lightning comes and lightning goes and it's all the same to me. Let it in Cause I want you so. I can hardly breathe or release into one thousand pieces I have broke into over you. The chain will soon be gone, I keep burning on and on and on.”

“You know that song’s about a break-up, right?” You ask her once the music stops. She looks at you, shocked as if you’ve just offended her.

“It’s not!” she groans, pulling your phone from your hands. “It’s about falling in love with someone. Shit Clarke.” You can’t help but smile at her passion-- even if she’s wrong.

You don’t know when it happened, but since meeting Lexa, you haven’t felt the need to always be right anymore. Your entire life has been spent arguing your case, always being perfect, always being right, but when you’re with her you feel safe… you feel like you don’t have to fight. When you’re with Lexa, you feel comfortable with just being and, finally, you can relax.
“If you say so,” you mumble, closing your eyes and burrowing your face into the pillow under your head, wishing it was her neck instead. The tapping of her fingers on the screen of your phone were lulling you to sleep when you felt her lay it down one the pillow above your head. When you feel her arm wrap around you and pull you close to her, it causes your heart to flutter.

She wants you closer.

You lay your head on her arm, taking in her scent. You never can place it, but you always know it. It’s the smell that lingers in your oversized tshirt after she leaves for work. It’s the aura on the side of your bed closer to the window. It’s the aroma after she showers, flooding into the halls and reminding you of the comfort that you feel with her. Wrapping your arms around her waist, you pull yourself even closer to her until you’re practically tucked under her neck. Breathing in deeply once more, you listen as her new song begins to play, basically serenading you back to sleep in her arms. You’ve never heard this song before, but it only takes you the first three lines of the first verse to figure out why she picked it.

“Katie, it’s amazing how you were made for me. When you're not here in my bed, I can hardly sleep. But a part of me is lost inside these sheets,” the chorus sings as the guy and woman in the song harmonize perfectly. It’s almost chilling, the goosebumps you get listening to his heart being poured out for this woman. “I know that it seems silly ’cause the other three sixty four you are laying in my bed, girl But I want more, I want more.” Lexa sighs, leaning her face down to kiss the top of your head, returning her chin to cover her trail. You smile into her neck, placing a kiss in return on her throat as she swallows. “Katie, it’s amazing how you were made for me. When you're not here in my bed, I can hardly sleep. I know that tomorrow you'll be staring back at me but a part of me is lost inside these sheets.” The final note rings out in silence, leaving you unable to move… more in particularly, leaving you not wanting to move. In this moment, you’re indestructible. In this moment, everything is perfect.

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LEXA

You take a moment to thank whatever higher power exists for the fact that youtube automatically begins playing the next song on the list because you don’t want to move. Clarke is tucked comfortably under your chin and although your right arm is going numb under her head, you don’t want to change a thing. ‘Sumer’s Love song’ by Clarensau and although this breakup song isn’t the best choice for this moment, the melody and the harmony between the singers gives it the illusion of happiness and you’ll take it. If it keep’s Clarke in your arms, you’ll listen to anything.

Before you know it, an alarm is ringing from the phone that you’ve placed above your heads and Clarke begins stirring, grumbling out your thoughts. She picks up the terrible device, rubbing her eyes as she pushes away from your body. Opening your eyes, you stretch your arms above your head, yawning. Apparently, the two of you had fallen asleep… and now you’re feeling it. Your right arm is stiff and heavy and feels like it’s nonexistent, and your mind hasn’t completely caught up with what is going on, but Clarke is already throwing her legs over the side of the bed.

“I’ve got to get ready for work,” she says, slouching forward to rest her chin on her knees as she moans in agony. This was her thing-- She’d lay in this super uncomfortable position and grumble when she didn’t want to do things. Smiling you place a hand on her back, rubbing circles in the shirt between your hand and her skin. Her blonde hair was covering her face as it cascaded over her head towards the ground, but she was smiling, you could feel it in your hand… you could feel it in your heart.

“Get up,” you say, giving her a slight push. Instead, she rolls to the floor, leaving you alone on the
“NO!” she shouts, rolling over onto her back. You crawl to the edge of the bed, leaning your head over the side to look at her.

“I’ve got to go to work too,” you remind her, complaining slightly to yourself as you do. You never had an issue with work before. Work was your life-- but now that Clarke was here… now that Clarke was your life, you wanted nothing but to lay in this bed with her and count the number of sparkles in her eyes.

It’s been 8 days and you can already feel her in your bones.

It’s been 8 days and you already ache for her.

In fact, it’s been 8 days since your last panic attack. It’s been 8 days since you had to talk yourself down off of the mountain top. It’s been 8 days since you’ve felt the demons breathing down your spine. It’s been 8 days since you’ve felt the cold chill of the darkness approaching from the corners of your mind.

It’s been 8 days and you’re already falling in love with her.

“Yeah, but you like your job,” Clarke complained from the floor, kicking her foot up to your face. You shift slightly to avoid it, grabbing her ankle with your left hand.

“You do too,” you say, watching her smile. Throwing her foot back to the floor, you lift your sore body off of the bed, lowering a hand to her. “Now get up. It’s time to save lives.” She smiles wider, still grumbling through her teeth as she takes your hand, allowing you to lift her to her feet. She plants a kiss on your cheek before turning to the door, grabbing a set of scrubs off of the dresser on her way out.

“You’ll wait?” she asks, turning her head through the door. All you can do is nod as you watch her, hand on the door frame, leaning through the crack to face you. She grins at you, eyes glistening.

That fucking blue that has been trapped in your brain for four days.

That blue that has wreaked havoc on your life.

That blue that has done nothing but haunt every waking moment that you’ve been away.

That blue that makes you yearn for more.

Turning away again, she retreats into the bathroom across the hall, closing the door behind her. Walking over to the dresser, you begin looking at the pictures lining the wall behind it. Most of them are of Clarke and one or two other people-- some of which you’ve learned about through conversation or stories.

There’s Octavia who is Bellamy’s younger sister. She’s some sort of dancer or free style artist or something. Clarke has explained it to you numerous times, but all that you can seem to remember is that she teaches free running classes in Norman and she already terrifies the shit out of you. From what you’ve seen in pictures, she’s all of 5 foot 2 inches worth of crazy and entirely too thrilled with life for you. Every picture on the wall that has her in it either has her flexing her biceps or her grinning into the camera with her mouth wide open.

Then there’s Raven. She’s Clarke’s old college roommate who introduced her to that one ex-boyfriend who came up in conversation before. Apparently they dated the same guy at different
times, but you never bothered to learn the backstory behind it. She’s Clarke’s mechanical engineer friend in the military and it clearly shows in her muscle definition. She only smiles out of the corner of her mouth and Clarke said that since her accident (although she never told you what), she’s stuck behind a desk and miserable with her new white collar job instead of the field research that she was doing before.

Bellamy lines the walls in various photos, most of which include his smug half smile or a bottle of beer in his hand. One photo of him stands out in particular to you. Here, he is dressed as a cop (which you believe is probably just his security uniform with a different badge attached to it) and has one arm wrapped around Clarke whose black and white striped dress and shackled arms can’t help but make you grin. She looks too intoxicated in the picture, but she also looks happy— and thin… really thin.

“What are you doing weird-o?” the familiar, deep voice asks from the door. You turn to see Bellamy standing in the doorway that Clarke previously occupied. Pushing the door open a bit more, the man entered the room with you, having a seat on the corner of the bed.

“Just waiting on Clarke,” you begin, turning your attention back to the desk. One thing that you appreciate about Bellamy is that he never demands your attention. When he enters a room, he knows that he has your attention, but he doesn’t demand that you look at him or speak to him. It’s sort of this unwritten code between the two of you, and you like it that way. He’s quiet and controlled, just like you, even if Clarke claims otherwise. “What about you?” you ask, flipping up a paper on the desk.

He chuckles slightly, rolling up the sleeves on his shirt. “You know, just whatever the hell I want.” You laugh in return, turning to the next page in a notebook to leave Clarke a note. The page is occupied however… with you. Clarke must have been busy while you were reading one day as she drew you with your book. Tracing the lines of the sketch with your finger, you remember that day.

Two days ago, you sat on the floor of Clarke’s living room across from her as she was curled up on the couch, sketch book in hand. She was furiously etching with the charcoal pencil as you flipped through pages of a book that you’ve read a thousand times. Ray Bradbury was a classic and you could honestly read every other word and still understand it perfectly. Glancing up from the pages, you made eye contact with the blonde who simply blushed slightly and returned to her work.

Now it made sense. She was drawing you. Turning the page back, you chose to ignore it. If she knew that you saw the product of her affection for you, it might change things. After all, everything like this normally fall apart for you anyway… why make it happen faster.

“So what’s next?” you ask, walking over to have a seat next to Bellamy. He grumbles a reply of ‘work’ before lying back on Clarke’s bed, folding his hands over his eyes. Without thinking, you do the same, resting your head on your hands. Suddenly, in this moment, you’re the closest you’ve ever been with Bellamy and you haven’t even had to use words.

“You work?” he asks without moving his hands from his face. You nod, hoping he can feel your response so you don’t have to speak. “Cool. I might come visit after my shift.” You smile, realizing that you and Bellamy might actually be becoming friends. You might actually be becoming friends with Clarke’s friends.

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CLARKE

Once inside your car, you regret even having a job. Leaving Lexa is the hardest part of everyday…
at least for the past 8 days. She always hugs you a little tighter before you get in your car, kissing your forehead as she walks away, releasing your hand at the last moment. Sometimes you wonder if she’s going to let go at all. Every time, you hope that she doesn’t.

You watch from your car seat as Bellamy drives off first in his green pick-up truck, followed by Lexa in her red Jeep. Something in you, however, can’t bring yourself to start your car. Your arms feel as heavy as your body, weighed down by the guilt of Bellamy’s homemade breakfast.

You ate too much, you knew this as it was happening, but you couldn’t stop yourself… not with the glances that both of them were giving you. Bellamy’s were obvious-- he worries about you. He’s seen you at your best and at your worst. He’s picked you up when you were too weak to go on… when you were at your best… and then he’s helped console you as you cried on the bathroom floor, the scale proving your vilest fears-- your worst. Lexa’s, however, were hard to read. You hadn’t really spent enough time around her when food was in the equation and although you appreciate this, it makes gauging her responses harder. Did she still find you attractive while eating? What about after? Was that even possible? I mean, she continually tried feeding you, but you always had an excuse…

Your database of excuses was incredible.

Instead of going to work immediately, you head back inside your apartment, closing the door behind you. It won’t take long… you just have to get rid of the extra weight. As soon as the baggage is gone, you’ll be able to continue on with your day. Making your way to the bathroom, you stop for a moment to look at the pictures in frames that line the walls. They show you and Bellamy at every stage of your relationship.

First, when you first met at the hospital’s ugly sweater Christmas party almost two years ago. This one’s your favorite. Bellamy’s cheesy smile illuminates his whole face and your hair sits just right and frames your perfectly thin face. Honestly, this is the one that you look the best in, in your opinion. This is the one that you look the thinnest in.

Next, there’s a photo from the New Year’s Eve that you and Bellamy spent in New York with some friends of his from when he was in the National Guard. You’re surrounded by four muscular men and still somehow you manage to look fat in this picture. You’ve begged Bellamy to take it down, but he says that it reminds him of fun times and you can never argue with his smile.

The next photo that sits in the green frame is of you, Raven and Bellamy from that time that you visited Raven’s house in the woods of northern Washington State. The three of you were out skiing with Finn and Raven decided that she needed a picture of the three of you all decked out in your gear, even though you begged her otherwise. You hated the way that the helmet and the fluffy jacket made you look and you hated the puffiness of your cheeks even more.

Continuing down the hall, you refuse to look at the rest of them because you know what they’ll do. After that trip, when you started working out with Bellamy to get ready for summer and bikini season, you started seeing changes. No matter what you did, your thighs were always too large. Even though your waist size decreased, your pants size increased because you were running and lifting more. Nothing you could do made it any better and after that, everything was different. Sprinting the remaining 10 feet to the bathroom, you quickly slammed the door behind you, locking out those hideous pictures. Every time you walked the hallway to take care of your problem, you were reminded of where you’ve been and how far you’ve come. You’re closer than ever to looking like that first photo again, but the battle isn’t over yet and the demons outside of this door will only pull you back.

Stepping on the scale next to the sink, you see those terrible numbers, showing you your worst fears.
It’s okay… They’ll drop soon. Stepping to your right, you grab the glass off of the sink and fill it with water, chugging the contents before refilling it and repeating. You’ve learned how to get business done. After all, you’ve only been doing this for 11 years now. Stepping back over to the toilet, you lift the seat, bending your body over it. Fighting the urge to squat next to the toilet, you remember what you learned in high school. It’ll only make it harder to come up. Sticking a finger down your throat, you wonder briefly how many other 25 year olds struggle like you do….

Then you wonder if this is really a struggle?

It’s not like you’re actually trying to change your behavior.

You’re just trying to change your image.

And just before you vomit, Lexa comes into your mind.

What would she think if she knew that the same hands that hold her cheeks before she kisses you helped destroy your throat? What would she think if she knew how much money you’ve already spent on enamel restoration and special mouth washes? Would her image of you change at all if she knew that your demons were living inside of you? Inside of the very food that you eat?

Suddenly, you can’t puke. You add another finger. Nothing. Toothbrush? Nothing. Slamming your fists on the side of the toilet you shout angrily, overwhelmed by the entirety of the situation. You’ve been so good up until now. You’ve been monitoring everything that has gone into your body. You’ve made sure to go to the gym at the hospital as soon as you got off work every day. You’ve even managed to purge at work almost every day— a feat in itself… but then Lexa shows up and ruins everything by telling you that you’re beautiful and taking you out to restaurants and actually telling Bellamy that he’s a good cook (which he is, but that’s beside the point).

After a few minutes of internal debate, you stand, using the sides of the toilet as a crutch. Walking over to the sink, you glance over yourself quickly in the mirror, unable to even fully look at the disgusting reflection before you, before opening the bathroom door and finally heading to work. Based on the time, you’ll only be a few minutes late. No one will even care.

No one ever does.
I'm living again, awake and alive

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for all of the kind words and messages friends! This is an adventure to work on and just as I promised... less angst this time...
Add me on tumblr: http://shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com/
listening and writing to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvPvAll2UIQ (this movie never deserved this soundtrack)

LEXA

Even with Clarke’s reassurance, you’re still freaking out. Octavia is about 30 minutes away from meeting you for the first time and as you repeat the same questions over and over again, Clarke grabs your hand to reassure you-- everything’s fine!

“Are you sure that you’re ready for me to meet her?” you beg again, honestly sort of looking for Clarke to dismiss you. You don’t feel ready… not at all… I mean, this is Bellamy’s sister, the free running, kick-boxing rock-star from the city and you’re… well, you’re you.

She’s been a part of Clarke’s life for years…

And you haven’t.

You’ve got a lot to prove.

“Are you sure that you’re ready?” Clarke chuckles from the mirror where she’s taken her place fixing her mascara. “You’re going to be fine,” she says with one final dab to her eyes, turning to face you with a smile. Making her way over to where you’re sitting on the end of the bed, she pushes your shoulders down, climbing on top of you to straddle your body with her legs. Placing her hands on the bed just above your shoulders to support herself, she kisses your lips softly with one final “She’s going to love you.”

You wrap your arms around her waist, noticing how she feels smaller in your arms momentarily before brushing it off, pulling her body closer to yours.

She made it too easy to feel like falling.

“Will she love me like you do?” you ask her kissing her cheeks. She snorts out a laugh with a ‘god I hope not’, breathing into your ear.

For that brief moment, you’re incapacitated.

You actually just used the word “Love” in a sentence with Clarke…

And she just let it slip by…

A small knock at the door frame breaks your pseudo-conversation just as Clarke turns to kiss you again. “Jesus Christ ladies, do I need to get a spray bottle after you?” Bellamy asks, tossing a small stack of mail onto Clarke’s dresser. “For fuck’s sake, I mean you’re like goddamn rabbits in here…”
Clarke lifts her body off of yours, taking the pillow from behind your head and tossing it at the door, missing just as terribly as she did that first night with the apple. The pillow crashes into the dresser, taking random items with it as it falls to the floor.

“You missed, asshole,” Bellamy mumbles as he’s turning away towards the living room, pulling her bedroom door shut with him. At least he’s considerate.

You chuckle lightly under your breath at him, her, and the whole situation, Clarke turning to glare at you from above you still.

You couldn’t even be scared under those eyes.

“Don’t egg him on,” she orders, kissing your cheek.

She’s really cute when she’s angry.

Shit, she’s cute all of the time.

You don’t even realize that your hands are on her hips until your fingers ache as they fight off the urge to pull her in closer to you. Octavia’s like 15 minutes out by this point and you want nothing more than to have Clarke close to you, feel her breath on your skin.

Since when did you become so dependent on someone else?

This never happened.

You never craved anyone.

Not since Costia…

And even then…

It was…

Different…

But here was Clarke, hovering over you with her hitched breathing and sideways grin, drawing you in closer with each second that you stared into those stupid fucking blue eyes.

“We should finish getting ready,” you remind her as she begins kissing your neck repeatedly. She mumbles a slight ‘uh huh’ but makes no effort to change, still kissing you softly. “Clarke, your friends are coming over,” you groan under her, tucking your chin into your shoulder and pushing her off slightly. She grumbles something about you being a stick in the mud and makes her way back to the mirror to scrunch her hair once before turning back to you.

You have to admit to yourself silently that you miss her when he’s not touching you.

And this idea makes you more nervous than anything else on earth at the moment.

“Well, I’m ready,” she says in this almost mocking tone, putting her hands on her hips as she watches you.

Damn those eyes.

She’ll always get her way if she just keeps looking at you with those fucking eyes.
Grinning from the corner of your lips, you reach out your hand, accepting defeat. She looks at you, completely surprised that her efforts worked before she sprints back to the bed, taking your arm and rolling you on top of her as she falls onto the sheets.

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**BELLAMY**

“I’m back, bitches,” your sister’s voice echoes through your small apartment as she crashes through your front door, arms flung wide open. She’s obviously not thrilled with the greeting that she receives as it’s just you in the living room, Clarke and Lexa still holed up in Clarke’s room with the door shut.

Lifting yourself from the couch, you laugh a little, walking over to Octavia and embracing her, kissing the top of her head.

Nothing about her has changed.

She’s still attractive enough to give you heart attacks.

Being the big brother of a young, strong, attractive woman wasn’t easy, but Octavia made it fun at least.

From watching her chase butterflies in your backyard growing up, to leaving for college, to falling in love and heartbreaks, she’s always been your little sister.

At least coming into adulthood meant that you could no longer beat potential suitors into the floor, but instead it brought with it new fears.

Your sister.

Your responsibility.

Octavia was actually dating for a future these days and the hardest part of growing up these days has not been the battles you fight for yourself, but the wars that you wage over your sister…

Or at least it would have been…

But war never ended for you…

“You look like shit,” she reminds you of the darkened rings under your eyes. Sleep wasn’t easy last night… or the night before… but you thought you’d at least be able to play it off slightly. Of course, nothing makes it past Octavia. Lifting her hand to your face, she holds your cheek before pulling you in by the back of your neck for another hug. “I’ve missed you, big brother,” the freckled girl says into the shoulder of your black button down.

“I’ve missed you too O,” you reply into her hair, wrapping your arms around her shoulders again. Octavia is one of the few people on earth who you’ve ever been able to be honest with-- and the only person who knows everything.

Thankfully, she’s been extremely good with helping you in any way possible. She contacted Jaha when you first returned from war, reaching out to your old mentor who helped find you a stable and rewarding job. Then she helped you find this apartment, helping you move in all by herself since you no longer had any contacts in the city. She arranged for you to meet people and get plugged into a good therapist and then she arranged these weekly meetings with friends to cover for her having to
come in town for family therapy every weekend.

It was the biggest play every orchestrated in your life, but it had become something so much more over the last few years. You actually became excited over the “family dinners” that you had every week and Octavia not only remained your little sister, but became your number one, helping you cope with the darkness inside and teaching you how to open up.

Although the process had been long and hard, you were getting there, and Clarke and Lexa were integral steps in this process…

And Octavia reminded you of this frequently.

“So where is my best friend?” she shouts, obviously knowing the answer to that question, pushing you away by your shoulders. Almost as if she’s been summoned, you hear Clarke shuffling in her room, obviously hustling to get outside. “Oh god,” Octavia nods to you. “Are the fucking?” You just shrug your shoulders, unable to answer that question.

Probably?

Maybe?

What words can you use to not draw Lexa into the limelight but also answer your sister in a way that she’ll accept?

Suddenly, Clarke’s door swings wide open as Clarke runs out into the living room and into Octavia’s open arms. The two girls squeal in each other’s grasps, rocking back and forth as Lexa lurks her way out of the room, buttoning the last button on her shirt. You pretend not to see, but you can’t help but point out that she missed a button. If Octavia would have seen that, she wouldn’t have let it go-- ever. Lexa nods, smiling thankfully at you, fixing her mistake just in time for Octavia to turn her attention to the brunette. “And this is your…” her words trail off. Octavia doesn’t know what to call Lexa, and honestly, you don’t know how to help her.

It’s never really bothered you to put a label on what Clarke and Lexa actually were. I mean, as long as they were happy together, you didn’t really care, but with Octavia’s awkwardness now, you couldn’t help but wonder if they’ve even talked about it. You wonder how that conversation will go. Lexa and Clarke both seem completely invested, but in this moment, neither is speaking up to ease the silence.

“I’m Lexa,” she finally spoke, breaking the painful thought processes of everyone in the room, thrusting her hand out towards Octavia. Octavia just smiled, taking the girl’s wrist in her hand and pulling her in for a hug, obviously unaffected by the uncomfortable air that just vanished.

“Lexa, Octavia,” she spoke, still holding the girl. When she released Lexa, she reached for Clarke again, pulling the blonde in with one arm around her shoulder. “So when is everyone else getting here?” Octavia asks, laying her head on Clarke’s shoulder.

You glance over at Lexa, gaging her emotions right now. Other than her shyness and mild awkwardness with new people, she’s holding her own pretty well, especially with it being Octavia.

Your sister wasn’t the easiest person to know sometimes. She was loud and boisterous, always active and arguing just for the sake of getting a point across-- even if she didn’t even believe in the point. She was obnoxious and overwhelming sometimes, but that’s why you loved her. Your life would never have been the same without her. Your life didn’t begin until she was born.

“Should be any minute now,” Clarke growled from under the smaller girl’s arms, trying to squirm
her way out. “Let go, asshole.” She pinched the bottom of Octavia’s arm, getting the perfect response-- a yelp and a release from Octavia’s grasp.

Just as Clarke regained herself, stepping beside Lexa to grab her hand (Lexa probably thought you didn’t catch her interlocking fingers with your roommate, but you did), your apartment door opened again, multiple bodies finding their way into your living room.

“Don’t any of you fucks use a doorbell?” You shout over the sudden commotion of your friends’ arrivals, receiving multiple negative responses in return.

“Shut the fuck up Blake,” your old friend John Murphy shouts over everyone, tossing you a bag of Starbursts. “You’ve never used the doorbell in your life.”

“Oh Murphy,” you say, batting your eyes at your co-worker. “You know the way to my heart.” He pretends to blush, tucking his unshaven chin into his leather coat before removing it and tossing it by the door, prompting the piling of jackets and shoes in the corner of the apartment.

“Alright homos, get a room,” Harper says, slapping your chest and grabbing a handful of the open Starbursts as she passes by you with a case of beer, making her way to the kitchen. “No offense Clarke,” she shouts through the dividing wall, causing your roommate to smile.

“Hey, Harper, shut your goddamn mouth. You’re just jealous that you’re not cut out for being gay.” You watch as Lexa begins to shell up, retreating slowly at the commotion. This is obviously not her normal kind of scene and your friends are obviously not her normal kind of friends.

Without thinking, you reach out your hand, grabbing her elbow to gain her attention. Clarke has long since left the woman standing in your living room to help with gathering the drinks in the kitchen, unaware of the anxiety that was building up in her date.

“You okay?” you ask too softly for anyone else to hear. She nods, crossing her arms tightly over her chest.

Good to know-- Lexa isn’t really fond of loud social situations…

And had these people not single-handedly saved your life when you returned from the war, neither would you be.

A flash of recognition crosses her face as she seems to ask you the question ‘How do you do this?’ with her eyes. You just smile, hoping that answers the question. Her half-smile reassures you that it does-- or at least that’s what you’re going to tell yourself.

Sighing, you release her arm, ushering her into the kitchen.

“It gets easier,” you say, leaning into her ear. “Just speak to them.” She nods again, taking that first step into the group and closer to Clarke.

At least she’s half way there…

---

LEXA

Clarke’s friends are all extremely loud.

Every
Plus, they’re all way different than you expected.

Monroe, who you had only known as the geeky desk lady at the hospital, was actually sort of sassy, filling conversation with witty comebacks and sarcastic remarks-- half of which went unnoticed by the group, but you caught them all, acknowledging every subtle insult jokingly flung at another member of the circle with a smile. She noticed your recognition and laughed back with you, leaving everyone else in the dark.

Murphy, who you had only heard mention of once, was a friend of Bellamy’s and supposed to be the skeeziest man that you’d ever meet. Instead, you were met with a soft smile and kind eyes, welcoming you into conversation with open arms-- even if something about him seemed deceptive.

Harper, who you had never even heard of but worked with Bellamy and Murphy, was the pretty one with a sharp mouth, too quick with the comebacks and pointed remarks. Had they not been friends, you would totally think that she hated Bellamy. They seemed to go back and forth in this volleyball match of retorts and insults all night. It was honestly a little overwhelming to keep up with.

Monty and Jasper who worked at the hospital with Clarke turned out to be these complete dweebs, in spite of the fact that they were both well-established physicians in the medical field. When they talked, every word from their mouth sounded strangely like a plot of some kind. You could tell that they were the trouble makers of the group, even though they should have been the most “adult” of them all.

Maya, a nurse at the hospital who you had seen once or so in passing turned out to be exactly what you expected, however. She was still new to the group, you could tell that from the way that she interacted with everyone, and you could feel her excitement for no longer being the only new person. She stayed pretty attached to Jasper’s arm adding in comments only when necessary.

At least she had that one up on you-- You hadn’t even talked yet at all.

“And what of you Lexa, what do you do?” your concentration is broken by Monty’s words, Clarke’s hand quickly returning to your arm. You glance up at her, meeting a smile. It’s as if she knew that you were going to be completely overwhelmed by suddenly being thrown into the center of attention and she was willing to sacrifice herself with you. You just smile back. “I mean, other than Clarke obviously,” Monty adds, a roar of laughter erupting in the group. You blush slightly, biting your lip to hide your smile.

“I don’t need to hear this,” a very familiar voice sounds from the doorway. Looking up, you’re greeted by your brother’s beautiful smile as he stumbles in the door carrying two cases of beer and a bottle of liquor.

Standing, you greet him, taking one of the beers while Bellamy takes the other, patting him on the shoulder. Lincoln pulls you in for a hug, wrapping a single arm around your shoulder and kissing your head.

“Missed you,” you say as he releases you, handing the liquor over to Harper. “Here jerk, that rum I’ve owed you for months now.” Harper’s face light up as she takes the bottle, unscrewing the cap immediately and taking a swig. You cringe at the thought of it, but Harper takes it like a champ, not
even flinching.

“Thanks, big man,” she says, raising the bottle to your brother from her seat. He smiles, nodding towards Bellamy who tosses him a beer. You place the case of beer down next to the others, returning to your place at Clarke’s side.

“So what’s the game tonight?” Lincoln asks, pulling up a chair next to you. Suddenly, you understand what he meant by “game nights at Blake’s Place” all those years.

Suddenly, you’re surprised that you and Clarke had never met before.

Suddenly, you’re jealous of the fact that he spent one night a week with Clarke without you.

Suddenly, you’re completely comfortable with where you are, Clarke on one side of you and Lincoln on the other, surrounded by…

Well, that’s weird.

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CLARKE

Lexa’s doing pretty well for herself… you know, for not knowing anyone in the room except for you, her brother and Bellamy. In fact, as time goes on, she actually begins opening up and you can’t fight the smile spreading across your face any longer.

When Harper asks her how the two of you met, she makes some comment about how you kicked her ass, causing everyone to chuckle. It wasn’t too far from the truth really, but no one really knew the details of that day except for you two and Octavia, and that’s how you liked it.

You didn’t want everyone to know that you welcomed Lexa into your darkness from day one… That just doesn’t look good for your brokenness.

Then Jasper opens a jar and you know that the party is about to get a little wild. Gripping Lexa’s knee, you shake your head as the mason jar makes it way to you, already smelling whatever atrocious concoction the two mad scientists have come up with now, watching as Lexa does the same.

“This is hangover free,” Monty exclaims proudly, taking a swig as it reaches him again… No one was brave enough to even bother. “What the hell is wrong with you guys? Jasper and I have created something great here!”

He wraps his arm around his buddy’s shoulders just as Maya opens here mouth to out him. “Oorrrr you two sat around and got so sick testing these things that you don’t even remember what a life without a hangover feels like anymore.” Everyone laughs a little, including Lexa, causing you to smile.

Your friends are all here and you’re happy.

Lexa is here and you’re happy.

You, Clarke Griffin, are actually extremely happy.

And this is mostly to do with the girl lacing her fingers into yours right now.

Lifting her hand up to your lips, you place a small kiss on her fingertips, avoiding the eyes of
everyone except for Lincoln who simply smiles over at you, not bothering to out you to the group. You smile back, thankful not only for Lexa, but her brother also.

“So, It’s Maya’s turn to pick the game,” Bellamy speaks, rising from his chair and heading into the kitchen, calling for Lincoln to join him. “You all know what that means,” he continues, returning with an armful of random liquor bottles and shot glasses.

“Never have I ever,” the group explains, a mixture of groans and joyous sighs intermingling with the words.

“Shut up, Assholes,” Maya begins, taking one of the glasses that Bellamy just placed on the table and filling it with the first alcohol in front of her. “We play your stupid kings game like every day.” Maya shoves Jasper just as he opens his mouth to speak, making him spill his freshly poured shot on his hand.

“Hey, that’s alcohol abuse,” he says jokingly as everyone in the group groans in agony at his terrible, obviously overkilled joke. “Get it?” he asks, nudging Maya with his free hand. Lexa laughs harder than anyone and you smile again, realizing that you haven’t stopped smiling since you all sat down.

She’s destroying you, Clarke Griffin.

She didn’t lie when she told you that she was a black hole…

She just failed to mention that when she sucked in everything around you, she filled it with joy and happiness.

She failed to warn you that you were going to fall in love with her.

Shaking your head slightly, you try to rid yourself of such thoughts. You two haven’t even technically started dating…

Even if you’ve spent almost every minute for the past few weeks with each other.

Why the fuck are you even thinking about love?

“So, everyone knows how to play?” Bellamy asks, taking a shot before refilling his glass. Everyone looks around the room for a brief second before Lexa awkwardly raises her hand.

“I’ve never played before.”

God, she’s so fucking cute.

---

LEXA

Raising your hand was the most awkward and uncomfortable thing that’s happened to you in a very long time. Even with Clarke’s hand on your knee, you still felt like you were being stared at by every person in the room…

Probably because you are.

“Wait,” your brother begins, popping the top on a beer and taking a swig of it. “You’ve never played this game before?” You just smile uncomfortably, bowing your head slightly. “How are we even related?”
“Only by marriage,” you spit before you can stop it, causing everyone to laugh. Crisis averted. The tension has been relieved and you can finally move on more or less.

“Okay, here’s the deal,” Maya said, sliding a shot glass to every person at the table. You slide yours back, graciously declining with a wave before everyone called your some sort of name like ‘boring’ or ’spoiled sport’.

What you can’t tell them is that you’re not ready for any more darkness in your life right now. The anxiety is already real and you’re seeing too many similarities between this relationship and your last one…

I mean, neither relationship wanted to declare itself at first.

Both relationships were founded upon drinking with friends.

You try to think of more reasons to punish Clarke for your past with Costia, but, honestly, there isn’t any…

This isn’t anything like what you… had?.... with Costia?…

But for some reason, you can’t get past it all.

So, instead, you decline a drink, not feeling like opening that gateway tonight.

Not tonight Satan.

Lincoln pats you on your shoulder before pulling you in for a hug, sighing gratefully as he does. “I’m proud of you,” he whispers into your ear as Maya continues explaining the rules to the game.

Something about that makes you extremely happy.

You’ve heard it a thousand times since you put Lincoln and Tris through so much, but hearing it almost 7 years later makes it even better.

You’re getting better.

Hell, you’d even push to say that you are better.

It’s not too hard of a game, but the way Maya’s explaining it makes it sound worse.

“Okay. I’ve done it, I drink,” you clarify, putting her out of her misery after hearing her ramble through situations and scenarios for minutes.

“Exactly,” she cheers, clapping her hands before looking slightly sad. “But you aren’t drinking… So…” She ponders for a moment before Octavia chimes in.

“I’ll drink for her,” she laughs, pouring herself a shot and raising it before downing it quickly. Bellamy’s eyes shift between Clarke and Octavia, both smiling between them. There was something there that you’d have to ask Clarke about later… a story of some adventure they had together, no doubt.

“It’s settled. Let’s begin. Never have I ever played this game before,” Maya laughs, quickly taking a shot. Everyone in the roam grumbles a complaint at her, downing their shot, Octavia taking two.

“But I haven’t played before,” you defend, questioning Octavia’s second shot.
“I don’t care,” she mumbles, pouring another and drinking. “I just want to drink.” The group laughs as you retreat back, accepting her answer. Fair enough.

You can’t help but smile as Clarke pulls you in, kissing you deeply and quickly. She already tastes like liquor, just like the first night. Lincoln pretends to gag next to you, prompting you to shove him out of his chair and into Harper next to him.

“Eww god… stop it. My turn,” Monty chimes in, pretending to cover his eyes before raising his glass. “Never have I ever kissed someone on the first date?” Everyone grumbles again, taking their shots, Octavia taking two without even checking with you. Surely Clarke told her all about your first… date? Is that what that evening was? She smiles over at you after her second shot, raising her glass with a smile…

Yeah, Clarke told her… everything.

“I’m in,” Bellamy chokes after his shot. “Never have I ever slept with a guy.” All of the women in the group groan about feminism while Octavia laughs, taking her first shot, pouring a second before glancing over at you. You just shake your head.

Not once.

Not ever.

“No shit?!” Octavia screams over the conversation, drawing everyone’s attention to you. You begin blushing awkwardly, unable to control the heat from your cheeks. “You’re a fucking gold star lesbian? How cool is that?!“

Clarke laughs, kissing your cheek before turning your head to face her. “Ignore them,” she orders you, kissing your nose. “They’re just all jealous.”

Murphy snorts, “Well I mean, you’re with Griffin so how jealous can we be?” he jokes, flashing that weirdly sneaky smile.

“At least I didn’t sleep with Fox,” Clarke mumbles over her beer can, receiving a chorus of ‘OOhhhs’ and gasps from the group. She produces a sassy smile, cocking her head to the side.

“One fucking time,” Murphy shouts, throwing a Starburst at her chest from the shot glass covered table. “It was one time like a year ago and you won’t let it go, will you?”

Your date simply shakes her head, winking over at Murphy.

You laugh as Lincoln pats you on the shoulder, making a comment about how proud he is of the fact that his sister has never been with a guy. You miss it though, preoccupied by Clarke’s eyes.

Those…

Damn…

Blue…

Eyes…

And that smile…

That’s the same smile that she gives when she’s confident about something…
The same smile that she gives when she’s finishing a sketch…

The same smile that she gives right before you…

“Okay, assholes,” Octavia begins, standing.

You realize in that moment that meeting Octavia was the most shocking of Clarke’s friends. You see, you had this image of Octavia based off of everything that Bellamy and Clarke told you and none of that included 5 foot 3 inches of motorcycle riding super model. But yet, that’s exactly who walked into the room and wrapped you in her arms…

And that is exactly what was standing next to your brother right now, on her chair, raising her hand.

“Never have I ever been in the back of the cop car,” Octavia yells, throwing her hand down, cutting the air in front of her. “Boom!”

“No no no,” Bellamy and Clarke both shout at the same time, lifting themselves from the table and pointing at the girl. Octavia’s face drops.

“What the fuck Bellamy! Let me have this one! I always get out!”

Bellamy laughs, grin spreading across his face as he lifts a beer to his lips “No ma’am, there was that one time in Florida when you and Clarke….”


Again, the group begins laughing and Murphy throws back a shot with her, smiling and offering a simple ‘High School’ as his reasoning.

After the laughing dies down, Lincoln raises his hand, clearing his throat for dramatics. Octavia laughs unnecessarily at him and for a brief moment, you think you see something between them…

But no…

Lincoln would have told you…

Right?

“Never have I ever peed myself in public,” Lincoln says with a laugh, staring specifically at Octavia.

“Jesus Christ, It was one time!” the small, fiery woman protests before taking her shot, slamming her shot glass down on the table with a force that made you shake.

Clarke quickly takes a shot, trying to make it so that no one sees her, but you do.

And you make a mental note to ask about it later when she isn’t swaying and slurring her words.

Murphy takes it upon himself to skip you and Clarke, noticing the eyes between you two and the distraction from the game.

“Since I’m not eye fucking someone in the room,” he begins, laughing over his beer. “Never have I ever broken a bone,” he says proudly, Octavia groaning as she took down two shots.

“This little shit and my best friend are trying to kill me tonight,” she complains, gagging slightly at the liquor in her throat. “I mean, first she decides to break that one’s nose,” everyone freezes for a
moment before laughing at the situation, “and then they decide to become each other’s body pillow and now she decides to not drink. God…”

You laugh, glancing over at Octavia. “I didn’t ask you to be my drunk,” you laugh, tossing a beer can tab at her face. She sways slightly, unable to dodge it completely. Lincoln catches her before she falls off of the chair, and although no one else noticed it, you did. Smiling over at your brother, he turned away quickly, refusing eye contact, his hand staying attached to the smaller girl’s side.

That little shit…

He didn’t tell you…

Harper clears her throat, standing up like Octavia did, making her presence known. “Okay guys,” she begins, filling her motions with dramatics, obviously feeling the effects of her liquor. “Never have I ever,” dramatic pause, “swallowed,” dramatic pause followed by giggles from the group, “drugs.”

You shutter, almost missing the comments about Harper’s previous drug use and how Murphy calls her out for snorting stuff in undergrad. You’re too preoccupied with Octavia’s stare, wondering if she needs to take a shot, to even notice your grip tightening on Clarke’s hand. She notices however.

Squeezing gently on yours to get your attention, she motions towards the bedroom, dragging you to your feet.

Is this really the best time???

You’re losing touch with reality and she wants sex??

“Well guys, it’s been nice,” she slurs, swaying back and forth into your arms. “But we’re going to go to bed now.” Glancing over at the clock on the television, you realize that you’ve actually been playing this game for three hours now. 2 am came really quickly and even though you’re not tired, Clarke is dragging you behind her.

But you can’t be entirely upset…

Only because you can’t even breathe…

In fact, you’re so wired right now that you feel like you’d probably never sleep. Your chest is tightening and your muscles ache from the constriction in your shoulders.

All you want to do is cry, but that won’t happen either.

Not here.

Not in front of her.

“Get it, girls,” Jasper drunkenly shouts, inciting the cheers of the group and causing you to blush dramatically as Clarke turns you towards the bedroom, pulling you down the hall quickly. You catch one last glance at Lincoln who is smiling uncomfortably towards you while continuing a conversation with a clearly drunk Octavia before you duck your head to avoid the attention of the rest of the group.

He knows.

He always knows.
Breathe in.
Breathe out.

You keep repeating these things to yourself as you enter the room, quickly being pushed against the door by Clarke.

Darkness overtakes everything as you fight the urge to scream.

“Clarke, no,” you plead softly, drawing your hands up to your face.

Your body begins to curl up, caving in on itself as the sounds of the world outside of the room disappear.

This is how it happens, every time.

This is how it begins.

“Lexa, stop,” she says, grabbing your wrists. “It’s fine… breathe.”

She’s distanced.

Non-confrontational.

In fact, she’s trying to help.

“Lexa, breathe,” she repeats over and over again, holding tight to your wrists. It takes a few moments of her saying the same words over and over again to you, whispering them almost before you feel the lump in your chest begin dying down and the darkness retreating away from your sight.

And all you see is blue.

You’re drowning in the waves of her eyes again, almost hearing the crashing on the shore.

It’s relaxing.

Taking in a few deeper breaths, you shutter, cringing under her eyes.

“I can’t,” you mumble in between breaths, unable to say anything else. You repeat yourself over and over again, hoping that the point comes across eventually.

But it’s not, because Clarke is still holding you, still shaking her head.

“Lexa, stop,” she orders, more firmly, not letting go. “Come back to me.”

Now she’s just pleading and your heart begins to break.

“I can’t do this tonight,” you say, fighting for control of your arms.

No avail.

“I’m not asking you to do anything Lexa. Just be with me.”

You stop fighting just long enough to catch a solid breath, breathing in deeply for the first time in minutes. Feeling the air fill your lungs, you finally feel your chest expand, shedding the weight of the anxiety that you’ve been holding in for a while now.
Suddenly, you’re completely exhausted.

“Better?” she asks, running her hands up your arms. You fall into her, wrapping your arms around her waist and resting your head on her shoulder, breathing her in.

“I’m sorry for…” you begin to crumble, being stopped by her grabbing your arms and pushing you away so she could look you in the face.

“Don’t you apologize,” she ordered, stern faced, not backing down. You can smell the liquor on her as those eyes peered into you, burning passionately. “You have nothing to apologize for, do you hear me?” You begin to nod, but she’s not giving in. “I mean it. Never apologize for feeling.” A smile breaks from the corner of your lips as you lean forward, resting your forehead on hers.

You can smell liquor on her breath more, but, for some reason, it feels safe.

“Do you want to talk about it?” she asks you, receiving a shake in return.

You can’t bring yourself to do anything else for a few moments.

“Not really,” you mumble, closing your eyes against her. She nods, exhaling slowly.

Not here.

Not now.

“Can we just be together?” she asks, hands sliding down your arms to interlock fingers with you. You nod, allowing her to lead you to the bed where she lays down, pulling you with her. Wrapping yourself up in her grasp, you breathe in deep, relaxing in her arms.

Without even thinking, your mouth begins to from the words “I love…” before you catch yourself, unable to finish it. Time seems to stand still as Clarke waits silently for you to finish that phrase.

It’s obvious that she’s trying not to pressure you.

It’s obvious that she’s failing.

The last time those words left your lips, you caved completely before them.

The last time those words left your lips, you almost died.

“…this,” you settle, kissing her fingertips.

What the fuck almost happened?

Did you almost just say that?

Did you really almost just tell Clarke Griffin that you loved her?

Fuck Lexa, get it together.

That’s twice now…

“I love this,” you repeat, feeling her shoulders drop under you.

“Me too,” she sighs. “Me too.”

Does she mean that as a response to your almost slip up?
Or is she responding to your actual words?

Does she love you?

Or does she love cuddling?

Or both?

Shit, you’d settle for both.

Both would be cool.

Both would be fantastic.
I'm dying to breathe in these abundant skies

Chapter Summary

lots of words. really important

Chapter Notes

listening and writing to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7yglSVnX6w
add me on tumblr so we can be besties: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

LEXA

Waking up completely engulfed in Clarke had become an entirely normal occurrence for you. Her hair was always scattered across your face, tickling your nose until you forced yourself awake to move it. Her feet were always cold and always pushed up against your legs—no matter how you were sitting they were always there. Her hands were most likely tucked either under your hip if she held you or in between her knees if you held her. But the most constant thing was that you felt loved—- even if that hadn’t been discussed yet.

For the first time in years, you felt love. Not that Lincoln and Tris didn’t love you, but they didn’t love you the way that Clarke did. They weren’t supposed to.

But she did.

With her breath tickling the back of your neck, you roll over into her grasp, wrapping your arms around her waist and kissing her nose.

She stirs mildly, but not really moving.

Out cold.

Another hangover probably…

Glancing her over, you map out every feature of her face for probably the 100th time.

The scar over her eye which reminded her of the time that she got in a car wreck in high school…

The lines at the corners of her lips from how she smiles…

And god… how she smiled…

Glancing her over once quickly, you smile at the cute little things that she does in her sleep.

The way that she’s constantly rocking back and forth, drifting you into sleep…

The way that she sucks on her lower lip…
The way that her eyes shift back and forth behind her eye lids…

The way that her feet twitch, begging to flea…

Sliding out of her grasp, you laugh as she rolls up the blankets and pillow to take your place, replacing you almost immediately and not seeming upset by this fact.

Walking away, you gather some clothes out of the bag in Clarke’s closet that you’ve been living out of for weeks.

She cleaned you out a drawer not too long ago, but you haven’t been able to move yourself into it yet. That’s too big of a step and even though there was a minor argument between you and Clarke as to what that meant for you, you still haven’t compromised.

‘You’re being stubborn’ one voice says…

While the other mocks, ‘She’s just going to run.’

With your clothes in hand, you glance back once more at your… girlfriend?

The word feels funny in your brain, trying to escape through your lips, but it’s been so long since you’ve said that word with affection towards someone in particular that you don’t even know how anymore.

But if there was one person on earth who you wanted to say it to at this moment, it was her, Clarke Griffin-- the girl who broke your nose and actually gave you a chance.

Releasing the door that you’ve been gripping tight to for fear of falling off of the face of the earth as you got lost in your own thoughts, you make your way back over to Clarke, brushing a lock of her blonde hair from her face before kissing her lips lightly.

“Mmm, Lexa?” she mumbles as she shifts a little, pulling the blankets tighter over her small frame. Memories of last night’s vulnerability flash in your mind, remembering how Clarke had to pull you back from the ledge that you were prepared to jump from. She saved you from the darkness again, and you still woke up beside her, but a part of you was still afraid that she’d be leaving soon.

‘They always leave soon,’ you thought, restraining your urge to crawl back into bed with her again. You settle for a small ‘yeah?’ in response, placing a hand lightly on her cheek.

She lifts her hand to hold yours, tucking it under her chin. “I love you,” she mumbles in her sleep, tightening her grip around your hand. Stomach plummeting, you sit on the bed, allowing her to hold your hand under her head as she slept for a few more moments, pondering the best response.

On one side, you could just walk away. She’s asleep. She’d never know any better.

But when those eyes opened, you wouldn’t get to see them and you know that leaving now means never turning back.

On another, you can agree with her, wrapping her up in your grasp and telling her the words that have been itching at the back of your throat for days… almost weeks… now. You could say ‘I love you too’ and just lay there with her, allowing her to forget that it ever happened and then choose when she wakes whether to remind her or not…

But you settle for the easier technique… “No you don’t,” you say, kissing her forehead.
‘If you can convince her that she doesn’t, it’ll be easier when she doesn’t,’ the darkness tells you, tugging you to run. For the first time in weeks, you want to run. You want to return home, allowing Clarke the luxury of waking up in her own bed, alone, and not having to worry about breaking you apart. ‘If you break her first, she can’t hurt you.’ She just nuzzles up to your hand, tucking her small nose in and hiding in your arm. Sitting for a few more moments, you just breathe, grounding yourself for the world outside of this room.

Making your way into the bathroom and to the shower, you turn on the water, watching the steam rise and dance along the ceiling. The water is way hotter than you would normally have it, being a cold shower person yourself, but something feels right about the small burn against your skin. Running your hands over the scars on your legs, you trace them without looking. Their portrait is inked into your memory anyway so what difference would a visual reminder be? They haven’t changed in the last 5 years.

Exhaling deeply, you place your head against the cold tile of the shower wall, allowing the water to just run over your body. What the fuck are you doing? This is supposed to be a happy time—everything is finally working out, but yet you don’t feel right about any of this. Something’s weird with Clarke. Something’s weird with Bellamy. A lot of things are weird with you. But more than anything, something’s not right about this whole situation.

You don’t like the secrets and the whispers between Bellamy and Clarke. You don’t like the hushed arguments that their eyes project over dinner. You don’t like how every time that they look at each other, you feel like they’re talking about you. But worst of all, you don’t like how you know that this isn’t true, but you can’t get it out of your head.

Worst of all, you know that all of this angst and broodiness is your fault—because none of it exists outside of your head.

Turning the handle on the shower, you refuse to move your head for another 4 minutes until you begin shivering from the change in temperature and water still on your body.

“Get it together, Lexa,” you growl at yourself as you push off of the wall, pulling back the shower curtain into the rest of the bathroom. You grab your towel, pulling it over your face and grumbling into it one last time, vowing to stop punishing these people who clearly love you for your own fuckery. Pulling back the fluffy towel, your eyes are met with an all too familiar sight for you.

On the side of the sink sits a little orange bottle, filled with bright red pills. Wrapping the towel around your body, you step a bare foot onto the cold tile, remembering the sting of that night. Rarely have you thought back to that exact moment, but this precise time mirrored that night, just different. Reaching out and taking the bottle in your fingers, you read the label carefully, feeling more nosey than normal.

Bellamy Blake

Effexor 40mg

Twice Daily

So, Bellamy’s on depression medication? That’s new.

Returning the bottle to its place, you decide to ignore it, storing that little bit of into the back of
your mind for future reference.

If Bellamy wanted to talk about it, he would.

Once inside the hallway, all hopes for a peaceful morning alone after a relaxing shower are shattered along with something glass in the living room.

“Mother fucker,” you hear Bellamy’s voice grumbling alone followed by a loud thud. Looks like you might be having that conversation earlier than anticipated…

Shuffling your feet down the hallway quietly, you glance around the corner at the end, watching Bellamy as he paces through the kitchen, sweeping up the glass shards that littered the floor.

“You’re going to have to get it together, Blake,” he mumbled over and over again in different formations of the same sentence. He was blinking a lot, almost shivering with rage as he basically shouted at himself.

Throwing the glass remains in the trashcan, he made his way over to the window in the living room as you scurried back down the hallway to avoid being seen, pulling your stringy, wet hair in close to you. Listening as he continued to argue with himself, you cringed at his self-hatred. He continued to tell himself things that weren’t true-- about how he ruins things for everyone… how he was just going to chase everyone off… how they were better off without him.

His final sentence, however, did it for you. You were done with this pity party that he was throwing for himself. More so, you were done with allowing one of your best friends hate himself.

“You should just never have come back from war, Blake. You should have died over there,” he stifled a shout as his fist made contact with the drywall next to the window, the plaster giving way under his punch.

“Bellamy?” you ask, emerging from the hallway finally, watching as he tried to shake off the throbbing in his hand before walking over to him and embracing him without asking. He stood slightly shocked as your arms held over his, wrapping around his small, yet muscular frame. Without moving, he just stood, allowing you to hug him, but not embracing you back.

“Lexa…” he mumbled after a few moments, squirming slightly to try to escape your grasp, but you’re not backing down.

“No,” you simply tell him, laying your head on his shoulder. “I’m not leaving.” He stops resisting, allowing you to hug him again. Finally, he wraps his arms lightly around your waist, keeping a distance, but actually beginning to hug you back. “Do you want to talk?” you ask, receiving no response. He’s just standing there, holding you at a distance as you’re fighting to keep him grounded.

Since when did you become the wounded savior?

Since when did you become someone’s therapist?

You’re just as broken as him-- probably worse-- but here you are, holding him as he seems to need you.

There is a first time for everything…

“Do you want to listen?” you ask before you can stop it, releasing him and allowing your hands to drop down into his, holding tight onto the tips of his fingers. He nods, tolerating you leading him to the couch where he sits, caving into the exhaustion of anxiety.
“Okay,” you sigh, plopping yourself down next to him, hands in your lap.

How to begin this conversation.

“I tried to kill myself,” you blurt out, unable to stop the words before they exit your mouth.

Well, there it is…

It’s out there and it can’t come back.

He just watches you, unblinking as the words continue to bleed from your mouth.

“It was right after my parents died. They were killed in a car wreck,” you stutter slightly, having to take a deep breath before continuing. “I couldn’t handle my depression and I wanted to die.” He pursues his lips, half smiling that recognition smile that says ‘I’ve been there.’ “And it took a long time to get over that.”

As your story continues, you notice a few things about Bellamy that you haven’t previously seen…

When he blinks, his eyes shutter from side to side.

Any time there’s a noise from outside, his attention is immediately broken for a small period of time.

He’s shifty and fluttery and because you haven’t had a large amount of time with him one-on-one, you’ve never noticed it before.

In a group, Bellamy is completely fine. Bellamy is happy and alive and well.

But alone… Bellamy is broken.

“I kept them too long,” you mumble, blinking away the tears forming in the pits of your eyes. “And my dad wasn’t ready for the semi to pass in front of him.” The more you talk about it, the dumber it sounds.

There’s no way it’s your fault, but you can’t convince yourself of that.

Clarke’s been trying to convince you of that, but she doesn’t know the whole story.

There’s no possible way that you’re to blame for the truck driver’s negligence, but still… maybe…

No.

It was.

It was your fault.

“And that’s me,” you say, patting his hands before returning to your shell. It wasn’t everything, but it was enough. The uncomfortable air in the room is thick and you can feel your chest tightening up from the anxiety of the silence. Taking a deep breath, you clear your chest, coughing slightly. “And that’s where I’m coming from.”

You’re not even sure why you felt the need to tell him this.

Maybe because you need him to know that he’s not alone in struggling.

Maybe because you need him to know that he’s not the only one with fears.
Or maybe because you finally needed to say it all.

And now that you have, it actually feels better.

But what doesn’t feel better is the still stagnant air around you two, twenty-six minutes after. Bellamy’s eyes have not left the floor despite the dance that they’ve been doing in his skull as his breathing has serenated the shuffling in his feet.

Just as you’re preparing to stand up, his voice startles you, broken and soft as you’ve never heard it before. “It was Mali, not too long after I was promoted to Squad Leader,” he echoes in the silence, your heart breaking at his tone. “I was fresh blood and all too excited to get out and prove myself.” He wringed his hands inside of his grip, twisting his fingers inside and out. Clarke began to shuffle in the back, but quickly stopped, probably just repositioning herself in her sleep. “There were children out playing near a community and I didn’t think anything of it when they ran up to my Humvee because they were always excited to wave to the US troops. We fed them and played soccer with them and even let them win so it was nothing new to have them coming up to us as we passed through.” He swallowed deeply, taking his first breath since he began speaking. His lungs rattled as he breathed in and out a few more times before he spoke again. “One day something was different.” He lowered his head, attempting to take in more air. “He looked at me as he ran up to the convoy and I knew that something was wrong. He wasn’t excited to see us, but rather terrified. And then… It all happened so fast. There was a… an explosion… and a ringing… and I was upside down and everything was so hot and… and then there was silence… then there was nothing”

His words trailed into the silence and nothingness that he spoke of as you reached out to place a hand on his shoulder, but he flinched away, taking his body with him.

“No,” he explained, shaking his head. “I survived… I shouldn’t have, but I did.” He began, speaking faster than before, unbuttoning his shirt and pulling it apart to reveal a scarred chest. It was intricate and detailed, but then you realize something— it wasn’t done by his own hands. Placing your fingers over the scars, you traced their jagged lines, suddenly becoming overwhelmed by your own fragility. “I wasn’t supposed to live… they all died… all my men…”

He started shivering just as he finished, prompting you to take your friend in your arms. He continued to tell you his story of survival from under your grasp, forehead resting on your shoulder. For over three hours he was trapped inside the scorched remains of his Humvee as the locals panicked and screamed, some of them trying to help dig him out. He remembers the smell of blood and burnt flesh and the feeling of the tearing in his chest and the sound of the bones in his legs snapping as a local man named Ibrahim finally pulled him from the wreckage and applied pressure to his wounds until someone arrived for him. He told of how his legs were shattered and he had to relearn to walk after months of breathing and eating through tubes.

And all you can do is listen, unable to control the tears that are streaming down your face as he forces this information upon you, trembling under its magnitude.

“He had freckles,” he shutters, taking another breath that rattles through his ribcage. “The boy who had the bomb strapped to him. He had freckles which I thought was bizarre, but not as bizarre as how absolutely terrified he was to see us that day.” Bellamy pulls away from you, running his hands through his curly hair and over his exhausted seeming face.

He and Clarke shared this weird quality that, until now, you never could place… Even in their most stressed, they still cared...

Even when they were riddled with anxiety and overwhelmed by everything around them, drowning in the day-to-day grind of simply getting by, they had a light inside of them, shining out into the
world.

They would stop the world for you.

They would stop the world for anyone.

“Does Clarke know any of this?” you ask, him shaking his head in reply.

“No,” he repeats four or five times, making it clear to you that she can’t know. “She’s had enough baggage,” he mumbles, trailing off as if he realizes something.

And he did.

And you realized it too.

You knew nothing about Clarke Griffin.

It was only fair because she knew nothing about your struggles, but this sudden awareness broke your heart. You knew only the soft, fluffy, happy Clarke and nothing of what she’s survived through.

But Bellamy has.

Sighing slightly, your eyes drop to your hands in your lap, popping your knuckles with ease. “You should tell her,” you say, deciding to swallow down your angst and let Bellamy have his moment without your darkness impeding on it.

It was his turn to confide in someone…

Not yours…

With a chuckle, he repeats the phrase that’s been coursing through your mind and lingering on your lips for months. “She’ll just run when she finds out who I really am…”

But Bellamy can’t steal your line.

He’s not allowed to hurt.

That’s your job.

Not his.

“No Bell,” you say, looking back up into his broken, brown eyes. Lifting a hand, you place it on his chest, covering his scars. “This isn’t you… This is your story, but this isn’t you.”

“Who we are and who we need to be to survive are two very different things,” he grumbles, pulling away and buttoning his shirt back up, fixing his collar and pushing his hair from his face.

Looking at Bellamy, you swallow deeply, inhaling and exhaling slowly before you roll your arms over, pointing to the scars on your wrists that have almost disappeared. “I understand,” you say, exhaling again as his eyes graze over your skin before returning to yours.

He forces a smile from the left side of his mouth before standing. “I have something for you,” he says, walking over to the kitchen table and pulling a book out of a stack of papers. The Screwtape Letters. You read it once just before you left for college, but it wasn’t really up your alley. You weren’t religious and you didn’t like how it portrayed light and dark in such extremes, but when
Bellamy handed it to you, it felt lighter-- as if all of the weight that it held once before simply disappeared.

“I didn’t know you were religious,” you laugh as he sits down next to you again, turning to face you.

“Fuck no, I’m not,” he says with a snort, finally regaining some of his composure. The air was still dense around you though, but it was getting there. “But I’ve seen the devil and I like how this makes him out to be the good guy… You know maybe there are no good guys.” You nod, listening to the words coming from his mouth as you thumb through the pages. “There is one quote in particular that I want you to know,” Bellamy said, taking the book from your right hand and turning it to a page that has been littered with ink and folded countless times. As he began reading, each word echoed harshly in your mind, forcing you to have to blink away tears. “It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.”

He shut the book quickly, tossing it back into your hands. You admire the destruction that this book has seen, obviously having been read over and over again and wonder how many times Bellamy’s thumb has turned down a corner of a page or how much of the ink inside bled from pens in his left hand during different times and different seasons in his life. “Think about that Woods… Maybe you and I both need someone to let the good things in.”

You smile, watching him as he stands up, walking towards the kitchen. “Are you hitting on me, Blake?” you ask, opening the book to page one and starting to read, throwing your bare feet over the arm of the couch and shuffling to get comfortable.

“You wish,” was his only reply as he made his way from the kitchen with a water bottle in hand, grabbing at your toes as he did so, causing you to squeal slightly, then blush at your response.

It was awkward, but your feet were ticklish and other than your brother and sister, Bellamy was the only person to ever know this.

Smiling deeply, you hear Clarke begin to shuffle again. She would probably be waking up soon and you want to be there when she is.

“Blake?” you say as you both round the corner and he begins to enter his room. He turns to look at you, arm resting against the door frame as a small ‘yeah?’ exits his mouth. “Your secret is safe with me,” you say quickly, watching the man in front of you crack a smile.

“Yours too, Commander.”

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**CLARKE**

Lexa enters your room just as you’re beginning to actually force yourself awake. Throwing your legs over the side of the bed, you stretch your out in front of you slightly as she pulls the door most of the way shut, leaving a small crack into the hallway.

You need to shower, to wash away the feeling of alcohol that is currently plastering your tshirt to the back of your neck, but you can’t bring yourself to move, the weight of the words in your mind holding you to your current location on the edge of the bed.

“Lexa?” You ask, reaching up to scratch the back of your neck as you watch the woman rummage through a bag, pulling a pen out and folding it into the pages of a book that you’ve seen a thousand times before in your apartment but never dared to touch.
“Yeah?” is all she answers, closing the book and placing it on your dresser before returning to you, straddling one knee on each side of yours and sitting in your lap facing you. With her arms around your neck, she’s making it really hard to have this conversation when all you want to do is kiss her.

Something about those soft freckles and those gold littered eyes make you melt slightly, losing all composure, stumbling over your words as she smiles at you.

“So I’ve been wondering… I don’t know how you feel…. Well, that’s not what I mean… I mean, I just wonder….”

Smooth Griffin.

Deciding to take the direct approach, you shut up for a moment, letting the woman who has been staring at you with an eyebrow raised for a hot minute kiss you, falling into her.

“What are we?” the words finally leave your lips, taking every bit of moisture out of your throat that’s ever existed. “I mean, are we dating? Because it feels like we’re dating, but…”

She kisses you again and you can tell it’s just to silence you. She’s reserved and holding back, and this is upsetting you.

“I mean it,” you say when you break away from her, pushing her hips back slightly from yours.

She watches you, scanning your face for a minute before speaking again. “Okay,” she exhales, pulling her body from yours to sit beside you. Putting a hand on your knee, she licks the back of her teeth, eyes shuffling back and forth as she watches the floor. Glancing back up at you, she speaks those dreaded words that terrify you more than anything. “We need to talk.”

Nodding, you know she’s right, but you hope it’s for the same reasons that you feel.

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**LEXA**

You tremble as you say those words, knowing how they could come off. She seems alright enough with it, however, but that doesn’t stop the voices in your head.

They’re crawling into this room, your safe place, from the crack that you left in the door. They’re making their way in through the blinds in the windows and the slits in the vents. Filling the room, you can’t even hear your own breathing over their screams.

‘She’s going to leave’

‘Just stop while you’re ahead.’

‘If you tell her now, you’ll be screwed’

And the scariest thing is, however, that while it’s normally been your voice that you’ve heard in your head, now it’s others.

You hear Bellamy telling you that you don’t deserve friends like them.

You hear Lincoln telling you that you’ve done nothing but burden him and Tris.

You hear Octavia telling you that Clarke deserves better than you and your damage.
You hear Costia repeating to you that you’re fucked up beyond belief.

Worst of all, however, you hear Clarke’s voice in your head listing off all of your faults, making the list of your sins.

And then she puts her hand on your face and everything is silenced. “Hey,” she whispers, ducking her head down into your line of sight. “Come back to me.” You lift your head and she follows, maintaining her eye contact with you as you slowly sink into her.

Those damn eyes.

They draw you back from the ledge every time.

“Talk to me,” she says, almost a whisper, taking your hands in hers. Instead of saying anything, you push her down onto the bed, sliding into the space beside her and burying your face into her shoulder.

This is entirely out of character for you, but with Clarke, everything is out of character.

With Clarke, you want to be vulnerable.

With Clarke, you want to feel.

With Clarke, you want to be happy.

She exhales deeply, chest rising and falling as she runs her hand through your hair, kissing your forehead.

“Tell me about your parents,” she finally breaks the silence between you, causing you to tremble slightly.

Really?

Today?

Again?

“What do you want to know?” you ask, playing dumb.

‘She’s going to hate you when she finds out that you’re a murderer’

Shut up.

“Everything,” she says, almost as if it was a question. “Start at the beginning. I want to know everything about you.”

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**KEITH**

“Champ?” you asked, knocking on your 4 year old daughter’s bedroom door. It was covered in stickers and crayon art that she had already paid the price for, but, honestly, would you have it any other way?

No, especially not now.
“Huh?” Lexa asked from her bed where she was playing with some plastic horse that supposedly talked or flew in the air or rode a rainbow or some other unrealistic nonsense. You didn’t understand it, and neither did she really, but she really enjoyed this one toy that the next door neighbor gave her for her birthday for some god awful reason. It was hideous, but something in it drew it to her. Whatever-- children are weird little gremlins anyway.

Your wife followed close behind, wrapping her arm through yours, making your chest tremble with the news weighing on your heart.

How do you tell a 4 year old that her mother is dying?

How do you tell a 4 year old that her mother has been dying since before she was born?

Watching as Lexa continued playing with her toys, her long, brown hair falling gracefully over her shoulders, just as her mother’s did before treatments started, you couldn’t help but begin tearing up, Tonya gripping your arm tighter.

The woman attached to you was the epitome of perfection. A nurse with the heart of a fighter, she married you after a month of knowing you, having let you buy her a drink in a bar and then searching you out, telling you that she knew from the moment that she saw you that you were going to be the father of her children. She always talked in plurals, but you could only give her one before the sickness claimed her. During her pregnancy with Lexa, the two of you came into the knowledge of her illness, beginning treatments as soon as Lexa was born. It was too late however, and ever since the discovery of her illness, she had been living on borrowed time. Every day that you woke up to her breath on your neck was a blessing, but those days were coming to a close and you were losing her quickly.

“Lexa, can we speak with you?” your wife asks, releasing you to walk over to her daughter, picking up the small girl and holding her close, sitting on the bed with her back against the wall. Making your way to them, you sat next to her, on the edge of the bed, back turned to them and unable to face them.

You can feel Tonya’s concern emanating off of her. She breathed hope and life and love. Thankfully, Lexa got that trait from her.

Lexa was this perfect blend of both of you. She had your eyes, freckles, drive, and competition, making her the perfect tomboy while possessing Tonya’s hair, nose, heart and soul, making her the most beautiful individual that you’ve ever encountered… and sure, you were biased, but it wasn’t just you who said this. Everyone in your life confirmed it-- your child was perfect.

Without turning, you exhale deeply, placing a hand on your wife’s leg next to you.

How do you tell a 4 year old that her mother is going to be dead before her next birthday?

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LEXA

“TOUCHDOWN!” your father shouts in unison with you as you both throw your bodies into the cold air around you. You weren’t the only two either-- not by a long shot. The stadium was filled with red and white as the two of you shared the moment with thousands of other Sooners fans. It was a cold day in September as you watched you and your father’s favorite team murder Tulsa in their ugly blue jerseys.

After momentary celebration, the two of you returned to your seats, chowing down on your stadium
hotdogs as you watched your team dominate. It was tradition and you wouldn’t change it for anything.

“Hey Champ, I want to tell you something,” your father speaks, swallowing down his hotdog and soda quickly.

“What’s up, pops?” you ask, your feet dangling over the side of the bench, not able to touch the ground still. “Don’t tell me that you’re turning into a Tulsa fan?”

Your father laughs deeply, taking some mustard from his bun and smudging it on your face as he shouts “God no.” He’s a good man, and a great father. After years of service with Macomb Fire Department, he took a pay cut to raise you when your mother died 4 years before. He took less hours, managing not only his life but yours, making it to every softball camp that you had, every school recital and cheesy class play, and never once had he complained. Honestly, you have never seen him complain about anything— even when he had much to be upset about.

“But for real Champ, I want you to know something.” You pause from cleaning your face to look up into his brown eyes, your brown eyes. “I’ve kind of been seeing someone.”

Is this supposed to be earth shattering?

“Okay?” you ask, not knowing exactly what that means. The band is beginning to make their way out onto the field and you’re beginning to pray that this conversation ends in time enough for you to see the half-time show. It was your second favorite part— only second to watching the Sooners win.

For as long as you can remember, you’ve been an Oklahoma fan. You were born here. It’s in your blood. Your room matches your father’s office with firefighting memorabilia and Oklahoma football posters. Not that anyone ever doubted that you were Keith Woods’ kid by looking at you, but if they did, your room should clear that up— and if not, the minute you opened your mouth, they’d be able to tell. You are your father’s clone.

“Okay,” he repeats, sighing graciously. “So you’re not upset about me dating?”

Ew.

“No?” you question again, taking down the last of your hotdog. “I mean, are you happy?”

He nods, handing you the soda which you accept, sucking down a large mouthful before opening your mouth to reveal your half-chewed food to your father. He nudges your shoulder with his elbow, grimacing at you.

“Well, looks like I’ll be single again soon if I keep you around your nasty animal.”

You can’t help but laugh as you chuckle out a response. “That’s the plan,” you joke, taking another swig of the soda before handing it back to him. “Gotta keep you all for myself.”

You are your father’s twin. There’s no doubt about this.

“Are you interested in knowing who she is?” he asks. You nod, suddenly realizing that the half-time show isn’t as exciting as this moment with your father. He’s happy— smiling and laughing like he hasn’t in a long time. “You remember that woman from the art gallery a couple of weeks ago?” he asks, receiving another nod in return from you. You do. She was tall and pretty, a darker complexion with an accent... French, you think. “Well, she and I reconnected and really hit it off.” Your father’s smiling and it’s slightly uncomfortable.
“Gross,” you grumble before you can stop it. Again, you are Keith’s kid. Throwing your hands up in front of your mouth, you gasp at what just came out of you, your father simply laughing in reply.

“Shut up you gremlin,” he groans, cramming the final piece of his hotdog into your mouth, smearing mustard all over your face as he does.

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LEXA

“Punk ass bitch!” you can hear being shouted as you sprint towards the parking lot of the school. It had only been three months since your father married Toni, officially bringing Lincoln into the family as your brother, but for the past year and a half, you and Lincoln had been sister and brother, defending each other to the death. And now, you were about to have to defend him again. “Go back to Africa, you fucking nigger,” the other boy’s voice mocked as his foot made contact with your little brother’s ribs.

Without thinking, you dove across the distance between the two of you, knuckles meeting his jaw with all of your small frame. You were only 10 at the time, but after beginning Taekwondo lessons with Lincoln, you threw a pretty mean right hook, and the face of the little bitch ass 9 year old from Lincoln’s class would confirm this.

The gasps from the crowd that had gathered began dying down as you lifted your brother off of the ground, wiping the tears from his eyes for him.

“We fight. You get up and we fight this. It's your choice... Get knocked down, get back up,” you tell him, grasping the sides of his face. “Lincoln, shut up and get back up.” He shrugs you off, turning to run in the opposite direction as you rub the blood on the sleeves of your shirt.

The boy who attacked your brother just stares at you, not sure what to think exactly.

“Woah dude,” someone from beside him begins to whisper. “You just got punched by a girl.”

A boiling rage builds up inside of you and suddenly you can’t control it anymore. Leaping again at the fucker who hit your brother, you land on top of his, smashing your fists down onto his face, making contact with whatever part of his body got in the way.

“Don’t... you... ever... fuck... with... my... brother... again...” you shout with each impact, not even noticing your father who is now racing towards you. He grabs you, shouting your name as he pulls you off of the bloody mess of a younger child, still kicking and screaming.

“Lexa, stop!” he orders, pulling you close to his body. You catch a glimpse of Lincoln in the car, wiping the blood from his nose before glancing back at the boy that you just smashed. His actions were very similar. “What the hell is wrong with you?” Your father begs of you as the vermin scurry away. Grabbing your shoulders, he lowers himself to your level, leaning one knee on the floor. “What the hell has gotten into you?”

“Get knocked down, get back up,” is all you can mumble through your tears as your father pulls you in to wrap his arms around you.

“We don’t fight,” he whispers into your ear as he continues to hug you, allowing you a safe place to decompress.

Exhaling slowly, you feel the tension releasing from your shoulders. “We protect,” you respond, feeling your father shake his head with laughter.
“You’re going to get me killed one day,” he says, pushing your shoulders away. “Come on. Let’s get you two home before Toni kills us all.”

The car ride home was spent in silence, just like the first thirty minutes of dinner until Toni apparently couldn’t take it anymore. The slammed her silverware down onto the place, turning towards Lexa.

“We don’t fight,” she said, her French accent bleeding through deeply making it even more demanding sounding.

“It’s not my fault!” you plead, refusing to allow her this victory.

“Then what, Lexa?” she shouted over your pleas. Toni was a very intimidating woman when she wanted to be. Normally, she was your best friend… well third to your father and Lincoln, but right now, it seemed like she was against you. “What actually happened then that caused you to beat a younger boy into the ground.”

“Mamma, please,” Lincoln begged, his shy voice barely audible over Toni’s rage.

“Lincoln, this is not the time,” she demanded, pointing a finger at your brother.

Your father just watched silently, knowing that discipline was not his strong suit and that you were in better hands with Toni handling it.

“Mamma, it was my fault,” Lincoln lied, catching the attention of all three of you. You father lifted a glass to his mouth, pretending to not know what was going on. “I started it. I got Lexa involved. I should be in trouble, not her.”

Lincoln had never taken the blame for you. In fact, you had never taken the blame for him either, but after all was said and done, when dishes were cleaned and the trash was taken out, Lincoln was sent to his room and you were free to roam as you pleased.

But yet you found yourself knocking on your little brother’s door.

“What?” he groans from his bed, ice pack over his swelling eye.

“Why did you do that?” you ask, walking over and pushing him over so that you can sit.

Lincoln and you actually get along surprisingly well. In fact, your family blended perfectly, much to everyone’s surprise.

When Lincoln’s dad left his mother to return to the Congo, Toni and Lincoln struggled a lot to make ends meet. When you met Lincoln for the first time, he was shy, angry and distrusting of everyone, especially your father. But your father was persistent and determined to make Lincoln love him, and it didn’t take too long for Lincoln to warm up to you guys.

You and your father had athletics, history documentaries and Oklahoma Sooners football. You and Toni had art shows and classical music in common. Lincoln and your father, however, had very few things to bond about, but when he enrolled your brother in taekwondo lessons, Lincoln began to change. He suddenly seemed more appreciative of your father and more open to the idea of being a part of a family.

For the first time in forever, you guessed, Lincoln was trusting people.

“You save me, I save you... We fight. Get knocked down, get back up, right?” he repeats your own
words, resting his head on your shoulder.

“I love you little brother,” you say, kissing his forehead.

“Gross,” was his reply, making you smile. He loved you too.

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LEXA

Your hands tremble as you hold the bright pink sticky note that Lincoln had written to you for support. Running your thumb over the corner again, you notice that it’s worn down beyond the ability to stand on its own.

You’re too nervous.

You need to calm down.
This can really only happen one of two ways.

Either they were going to be fine with it….

Or they were going to disown you…

And neither Toni nor your father are that type…

Are they?

They just watch you cautiously from the other side of the table where you sat them.

‘Get knocked down, get back up,’ the note echoed in your brain in Lincoln’s voice. Get knocked down, get back up.

Handing your parents the second sheet of paper in your hand, you watch as they unravel the sweat covered mess that you have been balling up for over an hour now. Watching their eyes shift across the paper, you recite many of the words in it to yourself.

‘I don’t expect you to understand and it’s okay if you don’t’…

‘I’ve fought this for far too long…’

‘I’ve known for a very long time…’

‘She makes me happy…’

Breathing deeply, you wait for your father to look up from the last line before you repeat it to him, just in case he hadn’t read it correctly. “I’m gay.”

You stood in the middle of the kitchen, watching your father open and close his mouth repeatedly, trying to form words. Toni simply sat, processing her thoughts. Finally, your father stood, walking over to you and taking you in his arms.

“I love you, kiddo,” he whispers into your hair as you wrap your arms around him in return.

Toni makes her way over to you two, waiting for her turn to interact with you. Before your father can even fully release you, your step-mother has her hands holding your cheeks, turning your face towards her. “We are so proud of you,” she tells you, bringing your face in close to kiss your
forehead.

*This could have gone worse…*

*This could have gone way worse…*

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**CLARKE**

Sighing deeply, you take in Lexa’s whole story, absorbing every small detail and storing them away in your mind. You want to know everything about her, every detail, every small piece that will bring her closer to you.

How could she have survived losing so much love?

You thought that you had it bad with losing your father, but she lost her whole life.

She had a family who loved and accepted her-- every bit of her-- and the universe took that away, leaving her to raise her younger siblings alone and without aid.

Swallowing deeply, you kiss the top of her head as she finishes talking about how her brother and her celebrated their parents’ acceptance by getting vising Lexa’s girlfriend at the time at her apartment in Norman and getting extremely intoxicated and getting Lincoln laid for the first time.

Suddenly, a twinge of jealousy rises in your chest at the mention of Lexa’s ex-girlfriend. You remember from a previous conversation that she had only had one serious relationship and that was with this girl who she dated for almost 2 years. This had to be the same girl, and you hated her.

You hated her for the fact that she knew Lexa first.

You hated her for the fact that she had Lexa first.

You hated her for the fact that she got to be Lexa’s coming out story.

You hated her for breaking Lexa’s heart.

But most of all, you just hated her…

And you had never felt this about anyone before.

Coughing away your bitterness, you swallow again, kissing Lexa again, hoping that she hasn’t caught on to your broodiness.

“What about your dad?” Lexa asks hesitantly, interlocking fingers with yours. Her slow shaking fingertips confirm exactly what you were worried about…

She’s terrified of upsetting you.

She’s walking on egg shells, treading lightly to not set you off.

You’re tired of people being delicate with you about it all.

Fuck that.

Taking a deep breath, you calm yourself, remembering who you’re talking about here…
This is Lexa.

The queen of experiencing loss.

She’s not delicate with you.

She’s appropriate.

And she’s making you fall more in love with her.

“It’s only fair,” you sigh,shrugging her off when she tells you that you don’t have to talk. “You deserve at least this,” you say, kissing her forehead again.

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CLARKE

The car merged lanes quickly as your father turned his blinker on and off again, reminding you that when you tested for your license in the next year that you couldn’t drive like him

“There’s driving, and then there’s cop driving,” you both say at the same time with a laugh. You and Jake Griffin looked almost nothing alike except for one quality. Your eyes were exact replicas of each other’s. Your father would say that this was a good thing -- “your mother has all the looks, I’ve got all the brains,” but this was only made funnier by the fact that Abby Griffin is the number one surgeon in the United States.

And you are the only child daughter of the number one surgeon in the United States and the number one hostage negotiator in California.

No pressure at all.

Approaching the last 5 miles before your ritzy private school’s gates, you decide to ask the question that’s been weighing on your heart since you left the hours. “Are you and mom getting divorced?” You heard the shouting this morning-- it was based around your mother’s work schedule again.

It had been the same since you were 7 when your mother lost a baby that she was carrying. It never really affected you much, but your father and mother suffered deeply, never really healing completely from her loss.

And that’s when you first noticed your mother’s absence in your life.

“No!” your father almost shouts, pulling the car over to the shoulder and slamming it into part, turning to face you. “No, that’s never an option.” When he says it, it sounds true. When your mother does, it’s a script, rehearsed in front of mirrors and well planned. “I can’t survive without her,” he adds, adding a small “or you,” at the end while bringing a hand up to your cheek, pulling you in to kiss the top of your head.

“How did you meet? I’ve never even heard the story,” you ask, hoping that he’ll keep the car in park, making you late to school.

Instead, he shifts it into gears, calling you out for being sneaky. “I was visiting a buddy who had been shot in the line while he was at the hospital and I brutally attacked your mother, knocking her hot coffee out of her cup and onto her hand while I rushed for an elevator.” You laugh at your father’s clumsiness before allowing him to continue. “I begged her to let me buy her another one, but she said no... So I asked her to settle for drinks.”
“Oooh, smooth Griffin,” you mock, nudging your father’s shoulder as he drives, receiving a small punch in return.

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**CLARKE**

You never realized how much you missed that day in particular until you explained it to the woman in your arms. “When dad was killed, mom disappeared entirely. She was all work, all the time and I promised myself to never be that way.” You sigh, realizing that you have become exactly what you vowed not to be. “We never recovered as a family… Hell, I don’t think either of us recovered as individuals…” Lexa just nods from under your arms and you can tell that she understands exactly what you mean.

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**LEXA**

The last words out of Clarke’s mouth causes you tremble, feeling it in your soul. “We never recovered as a family… Hell, I don’t think either of us recovered as individuals…” You’re not sure if a more true statement has ever been made about your family-- even if it wasn’t about you directly. “If you don’t want to talk about it then I understand, but I’d like to know about your parents’ death.” She was stumbling and trembling as she stuttered through the words, gripping you hand tighter than before. She was nervous.

Tightening your grip, you glance upward to make eye contact with her, breathing in her familiar scent. “Please stop being delicate,” you say, kissing her chin. “I want honesty. I’m not sure if I know what the means anymore, but I want to try honesty, okay?” She just nods. “If you’re going to be my girlfriend, you have to be comfortable with me and I need to be comfortable with you.” Clarke smiles wide, wrapping her arms around you and pulling you in closer, waiting for your tale.

“They came to visit me for the weekend in February. They hadn’t seen my apartment since I moved out of the dorm after the first year and were super excited to meet my roommate Anya, and I begged them to stay the night. I didn’t want them to leave yet, but…” you clear your throat, voice cracking you she do, “Costia was upsetting Toni and I could tell. They really wanted to leave, but I just wasn’t ready to miss them yet. My father finally agreed to dinner and Anya, my dad, Toni and I all went to dinner and then they left… And that was the last time that I saw them.” You pause, breathing in deep to calm your nerves before proceeding into the silence. “On the way home, my father was run off of the road by a semi. It’s all my fault after all,” Clarke’s grip tightens around you just as you start to feel like falling. “I mean, had I not kept them so long, he would have been more awake…”

“No,” Clarke cuts you off, basically stealing the air out of your lungs. “That has nothing to do with you.” You just sigh, overwhelmed by the exhaustion of telling your story for the second time today…

2 times in one day…

That’s more than in the past 5 years…

And you hadn’t even gotten to the part where you tried to end your own life with Clarke…

But that would have to wait.

“Look,” Clarke begins, pulling you in just a tiny bit closer. “I know it’s not going to help, but I know
that it’s not your fault.”

You laugh a little, reminding her that although her efforts are nice, the voice inside of your head tells you otherwise… the voice that speaks in your own voice…

The one that reminds you that you begged them to stay…

The one that reminds you of how easy it was to carve up your skin…

The one that reminds you of how simple taking all of those pills was…

The one that tells you every day that you should have died on that bathroom floor…

Just as you begin to spiral again, losing yourself to the darkness that’s been seeping into this room all along, you feel Clarke’s soft hands on the sides of your face, pulling you back into reality.

She was your anchor, keeping you from floating into sea.

She was your lifejacket, keeping your head above.

Kissing your nose softly, she whispers “you’re perfect,” and before you can stop yourself, you’re cringing.

“Don’t,” you mumble, Clarke just shaking her head in return.

“Your parents did a wonderful job, all 3 of them, and they would be so proud of you,” she continues, ignoring your discomfort with her statement.

You are not perfect.

You have never been perfect.

And every time that she tells you that you are, another wall goes up.

Little does Clarke Griffin know, while she’s been chipping away at the walls of your baggage, she’s been rebuilding them in different places with her words.

If only she knew.

If only you could tell her.

“Can we go back to sleep?” you beg of her, turning your eyes to her. She nods, opening her arms to you as you fall into them, burying yourself into her grasp.

She holds you as the tears begin to swell in your eyes, following their paths down your cheeks and when one lands on her arm, she pulls you in tighter.
CLARKE

The slight bit of light outside dances through the blinds at the perfect angle to start shining into your eyes before your alarm even goes off. Groaning slightly, you roll away from Lexa, you glance at your alarm. 3:22. Goddammit. You honestly don’t mind waking up hours before it’s time to get up, but 8 minutes… for real? Your body couldn’t wait 8 minutes…

At least today was the late day at the hospital, meaning you didn’t have to be there until 5AM… but along those lines, sadly, today was the late day at the hospital. You were scheduled to be off at 5PM, but honestly, would that even happen?

Has that ever even happened?

Throwing your legs over the edge of the bed, you rest your elbows on your knees, rubbing your eyes as Lexa shuffles beside you, rolling over to wrap her arms around your waist.

She’s perfect, even if she refuses to accept this fact.

“You leaving already?” she asks you in the raspiest, most groggy morning voice that you’ve ever heard, burying her nose into your side, tightening her grip around you waist. Honestly, it’s kind of sexy.

Actually, it’s really sexy.

Groaning a slight ‘Uh huh’ you lift you lift your body out of her grasp, suddenly overwhelmed by your exhaustion and deciding to shower despite your original plans to skip it this morning. Lexa pulls the sheets tighter around her, rolling away from you and returning to sleep.

Again, she’s perfect, even if she doesn’t seem to think so.

She hasn’t spent many nights at her house recently, and you haven’t ever spent the night there. You asked once, but she played it off, complaining of a single bathroom and not a lot of privacy, but you’re not buying it.

You and Bellamy only have one bathroom.

That doesn’t make a difference…

Is there something wrong with you?

“Hey, babe?” your voice jars her awake as you’re gathering your clothes, causing her to jump.
Choking back a small amount of laughter, you smile watching your date fumble through the sheets, trying to regain her composure. Finally, she’s sitting upright, looking at you and you’re beginning to feel guilty for waking her up.

She’s so cute.

And she’s so dedicated.

But still, you haven’t been able to pin her down into a relationship yet.

It’s not like it’s the biggest deal in the world. I mean, you’re with each other almost every night. You two spend almost every waking moment together. You go on dates and hang out with the same friends. For all intents and purposes, the two of you are in relationship, but as far as it goes, when people ask, you still say you’re single…

And more terrifyingly, so does Lexa.

“Can we stay at your place tonight?” you ask her as she smacks her lips a few times, wiping the sleep from her eyes. She stares blankly at you for such a long time that you wonder if she even comprehends what you’re saying.

“Yeah sure,” she mumbles, throwing her body back to the bed and returning to sleep, pulling the blankets over her head.

You can’t control the smile that is forming at the corner of your lips. ‘Fuck showers’, you think, making your way back over to the bed and taking your place next to her, grinning deeply as she rolls into you, nuzzling into your neck and exhaling slowly.

“I thought you needed to get ready?” she mumbles, trailing off into silence at the last word.

You can’t find it in you to reply, just wanting to be with her. In any instance, you’re too terrified that your words will betray you again. It’s not like you’ve forgotten how you told her that you loved her a few days ago while you were drifting into sleep.

It’s not like you’ve forgotten her reply either.

She denied you, telling you that your feelings weren’t accurate.

And rather than bring it up and lose her entirely, you pretended to be asleep again.

And rather than bring it up and lose her entirely, you’ve settled for half-ass relationship Lexa…

Because that’s what she wants.

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LEXA

Clarke (9:52 AM): Don’t forget, your place tonight!

You totally forgot.

And now, because sleep-you doesn’t pay attention to what she’s agreeing to, you’re opening a whole new world to Clarke tonight…

A world with few door knobs and sticky note inspiration everywhere.
After your suicide attempt, Lincoln did the best he knew how. He read book after book and article after article of how to help loved ones in crisis—because supposedly that’s what was happening to you—and he reorganized your life. Your closet was color coded. The cabinets were organized neatly. The door knobs removed, sharp objects locked away, gun sealed up tight, and inspirational quotes painted on almost every wall. Even the inside of the refrigerator held some cheesy quote on a bright green sticky note about being one day closer to your goal. After you were declared “healed” (whatever the fuck that actually means), these things were never taken down. They had just become a part of your life. Honestly, you’d probably feel naked without them… But Clarke still didn’t know…

Clarke still couldn’t know…

Shoving your phone back into your apron and deciding to ignore your brooding angst for another minute or two, you grab the plates to take order out to table number 16, the older couple who comes in for “brunch” every morning.

At 9am…

And every morning, it’s the same.

He orders a cheeseburger, well done, with cheese and ketchup only and a side of hash browns and she gets a broccoli and cheese omelet with black olives and a side of fruit salad. Both drink unsweetened teas with an ungodly amount of Splenda in them and every time that they clink their spoons on the inside of their glasses, you cringe, thinking about how the Splenda affects their systems.

Lincoln has definitely rubbed off on you.

“Thanks darling,” the man speaks through his salt and pepper moustache, sliding the plate another couple of inches in front of him as you place his wife’s before her.

“Of course Mr. Caughorn” you reply with a smile, taking out your book and producing their bill, laying it on the end of the table. “Now, no rush you guys, you know the drill.”

He smiles at you, placing a hand on yours to stop it. You shiver, still hating when people touch you—especially while at work. It was just weird: you didn’t know this man any more than his order… but he was touching you and you were forced to smile, fighting the urge to rip your hand back. “Now Lexa, how many times do I have to tell you,” he jokes through his thick eyebrows. His wife begins to chuckle, taking a bite of her fruit while you’re still there. “Call us Benjamin and Sondra.”

You smile, knowing that he tells you this every day, and knowing that you’ll never change. You do it now just to annoy him, but you play it off as courtesy well. You’re not on a first name basis with customers—general rule of thumb… except at the bar…

But that’s different.

“Yes sir,” you say with a sarcastic grin, warranting and small tap on your hand with his thumb. Walking away from your only table, you sigh at Tuesday mornings. There’s never anyone in the diner, but you’re always here, wasting time and never making any money. At least Clarke’s still at work too so you’re not missing out on too much on the outside world.

Pulling your phone out once you return behind the cover of your booth to wrap silverware, you reply to the text, sliding your fingers over the screen lightly.

Lexa (10:16AM): Are you sure? It’s a bit rough at my place…
You sigh as those three little dots appear, alerting you to Clarke’s typing. Sitting your phone down next to your glass of water, you begin the process of rolling fork, spoon, knife, and straw, wrapped up in the white napkin. Getting fourteen of them completed, the ding draws your attention back to your phone.

Clarke (10:18AM): I don’t mind. It’ll be nice to be away from Bellamy for a little while.

Exhaling again, you glance over at your guests, making sure that they’re fine—of course they are… The Caughorns always are. They just sit there, eating and talking and laughing like it’s their first date, even though they’ve been married for 46 years (they told you during their anniversary last week). You can’t help but smile at their story.

You can’t help but want that.

You can’t help but want that with Clarke.

Beginning to type out another message, you pause, remembering Clarke’s smile in her sleep.

You remember the way that she watches you as she sketches, pouring her heart onto the paper.

You remember the way that she told you that she loved you…


You sigh as you click the screen lock button just as the door to the dinner opens, dinging loudly to you and the cook on duty, the only two staff in the building at the moment. This is how Tuesdays went—just you and Carl.

Sliding out from the booth, however, you’re greeted with a set of familiar faces. Your brother and Bellamy stand at the hostess station, black work uniforms starched and tasers strapped to sides, chatting about whatever the fuck they could possibly bond over. They were both such different people, but there had to be something. Bellamy laughed deeply as you approached, enjoying whatever comment that your brother had just made and it made you chuckle slightly.

“What are you doing here?” You ask as you take your brother in your arms. Rarely did he visit you at work and Bellamy had never made an appearance— you were alright with this though. Work was a different place where you were someone different. Work wasn’t safe.

Home, however, and with your friends— that was safe. There you were safe, but not here.

“Just visiting,” Lincoln replies as you release him and move over to hug Bellamy.

“Don’t play, I’m here for food,” Bellamy corrects him, taking a coloring sheet and a pack of crayons in his hand. You begin to make some joke about him not being allowed to use those unless he’s under 12, but your thoughts are silenced by his next words. “And Octavia might be stopping by if she gets back in time.”

You smile as Lincoln shuffles slightly, causing your to look over to him from Bellamy. His eyes get wide as he’s asking you to change this subject with the shift of his jaw.

“So have you heard from Clarke?” You ask Bellamy, taking two menus and their silverware, sitting them down as far away from your other patrons as your section will allow. Once they’re seated, you join them in the corner of the booth next to your brother.

“Nah, you know how the hospital is. She’s a slave.” Both you and Lincoln chuckle at Bellamy’s
comment as they begin looking over the menu. You smile as your other patrons walk through the
exit, waving at you as they do. Dismissing yourself from your friends, you make your way over to
the other table, stacking the plates and gathering up the small amount of trash that the Caughorns left
behind. Taking the bill and the cash without looking at it, you cram it into your apron pocket and
take the dishes to the back, pulling your phone out as you enter the kitchen.

Clarke (10:54AM): That’s okay. I can handle it-- as long as you’re there with me.

You smile, placing the dishes in the bucket and nudging Carl who was currently cleaning his grill
with your shoulder.

“Friends of yours Miss Lexa?” he asks, producing a hiss as water hits the still hot top.

Carl is a work of art. He’s like 45 or 46 years old, has a master’s degree in Marketing Management
but instead of actually working in a firm or something, he moved back to Macomb from some big
wig job in New York to be with his wife’s mother who was diagnosed with cancer. Instead of
moving her with them, he’s helping run a dinner and you’ve never heard one complaint out of the
man. He’s singlehandedly the most joyous man alive and it’s all because he has something to live for.

Until recently, you’ve envied him for this.

Until recently, you haven’t known what he meant

You nod, watching the steam rise into the vent.

“Go hang out for a bit. I got this.” Your friend smiles, patting you on the shoulder as he walks past
you, leaving you alone in the kitchen.

Lexa (11:01AM): Sounds like a plan :-)
Turning on the water, you were greeted with your friend’s laughter over your shoulder.

“Don’t be so jumpy, Griffin,” he tells you, placing his hands on your shoulders from behind. “I’ve just got a question for you.

“What is it?” you ask, turning quickly and wiping your hands on your friend’s scrubs. He groans at you, bumping shoulders with you as you walk by.

“Is Blake’s sister dating that super muscular security guard dude?” You laugh at Jasper as he inhales deeply before speaking, becoming mildly uncomfortable after the words leave his mouth. He shoves his hands in his pocket, watching you as you clean up the rest of your mess, waiting patiently for a reply.

You can’t help but laugh again as you begin to form your answer. Honestly, you don’t know. You haven’t talked about it… In fact, most of you and Octavia’s conversations have centered on you and Lexa. Octavia had relationships— that wasn’t unordinary for her. You, however… you didn’t date. Not since Finn at least… not really.

“I don’t know Jasper… you and Maya interested?” you joke, nudging the man who has made his way beside you. He brushes his dark, shaggy hair from his eyes, looking utterly disgusted.

“I was talking about Lincoln,” you bite back, watching him cringe a bit. Interesting— you never pegged Jasper for being uncomfortable about sexuality…

Throwing his hands into the air, the small man over exaggerates his reply of “He’d squish me!” calming all notions of homophobia you had imposed on him. Apologizing to Jasper in your head, you pat him on the shoulder, telling him that you’ll ask and he laughs, replying, “well don’t tell them that we’re wondering, but Maya and I have a running bet. I think they totally are, but she disagrees.”

“I’ll check,” you say, wishing him goodbye as you wander out of the locker room, pager singing just as the door closes behind you.

Why would the afternoon be slow for you?

Afternoons were never slow, but as you check your pager you remember that tonight is the first night that you’re spending at Lexa’s house since you two met over 2 months ago (not that you’ve been counting even though you know for a fact that you broke her nose 64 days ago and you woke up next to her for the first time 63 days ago…) and this thought brings a smile to your face…

That is until you see Monroe in the hallway, dreaded yellow folder in hand.

“Griffin!” she shouts, waving you down as if she didn’t already have your attention. The girl’s dark hair is pulled back into a messy pony tail- indicative of being stressed…

Fuck…

“I know you’re supposed to be going on lunch soon,” you laugh silently to yourself as she speaks… lunch… “but you’re needed in B wing… It’s a code white with the new CT.” She hands you the folder which you don’t even bother to open.

Code whites were never good…

Code white meant that someone was reactive to medication or treatment and had started taking
swings at people…

Code white mean that she was going to have to inject someone with a sedative or risk the individual being Tased by security.

Thanking Monroe quickly, you turn and begin your jog to B-wing behind you, holding the folder in your mouth as you pull your hair back-- less for them to grab when they come after you.

At least today would be interesting.

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LEXA

Lexa (12:45PM): Just your beautiful face

Was that too upfront? It had to be too upfront… she wasn’t replying and it had been over an hour now. Sure, yeah, she was at work, but you had also just sent that stupid fucking text message…

Dancing your fingers just a micro-space over the keyboard, you debated internally over whether or not to send another text apologizing to her before Octavia’s hand reached out, taking your phone from you. The minor panic that ensued caused all three of the others to laugh as you scrambled across the table, reaching and grasping for the phone but always falling short as she pulled it further from your reach.

“Jesus Christ Lexa,” Octavia grumbles as she scrolls through Clarke and yours correspondence. “Is there ever a time that the two of you aren’t communicating?” She clicks the lock button, tossing your phone back over at you. Once it’s safely in your hands, you shove the device into your apron, thankful that she didn’t choose to stop and read anything-- not that there was a lot to read.

You were more of a talk it out kind of person. In fact, before Clarke, you never texted anyone except reminding Tris to do her homework or telling Lincoln if you were getting off work late so he wouldn’t worry.

“And, by the way, are you two dating yet, or are you just fucking my best friend still?” the small brunette asked, shoving a handful of Bellamy’s French fries into her mouth.

“I don’t need to hear this,” Lincoln mumbled, putting his hands over his ears. You crack a small smile, thankful for your brother’s humor.

“No, but for real… She won’t tell me anything,” Octavia complains. You know this is false. In fact, you know that Clarke tells her everything which is why she’s asking. You know, for a fact, that Octavia knows that you’ve been skirting the question for weeks. You know, for a fact, that Octavia knows that Clarke told you that she loved you (that is, if Clarke even remembers that…). And, you know, for a fact, that Octavia is sitting by the phone daily, waiting for that text or call declaring your official relationship status.

“I don’t know,” the words exit your lips, almost sadly. How can you be sad, though? It’s your fault that you aren’t.

You’re the one who has been unable to nail down that official title.

Not Clarke.

And again, it’s all your fault…
Octavia laughs, throwing a small French fry at your face as she speaks with the utmost conviction, “Well, why don’t you ask her? She’s waiting on you.”

Bellamy snorts a laugh, trying, but failing to suppress it as he hides his face beside his sister. “That’s the understatement of the century.”

Lincoln uncovers his ears, putting a hand on your knee. “But for real… She’s waiting on your move.”

Jesus… Is everyone in on this? Even Lincoln had a say and he never cares about your relationships…

With all of them staring at you, you awkwardly resist for a moment before you finally crack. “Fine!” you exhale deeply, rolling your head to face the phone in your lap as you unlock it, noticing your four new text messages.

**Jasper Jordan (2:16PM):** Hey… Ask Clarke out already….

**Monty Green (2:18PM):** You really need to ask Clarke out… shit….

**Tris (2:19PM):** Grow a pair and ask that girl out before I kill you.

Glancing up from the table you now notice all of their smiles… This was their plan all along.

Lincoln is the first to break, trying to conceal his laughter behind his glass. Octavia follows next, laughing out loud, throwing her head back in the process. Bellamy holds his straight face for a longer period of time, trying to play it off by asking the group what’s so funny before his snorts a laugh through his nose, causing Octavia to burst into a larger fit of laughter.

You can’t even be upset.

You can see why Clarke loves them all so much…

They all love her.

Switching your messages over to the inbox, you open the last one from Clarke, scanning it quickly before writing your reply.

**Clarke (2:22PM):** Will do… and stories. I’ve got stories…

**Lexa (2:37PM):** Hey, do you have lunch any time soon?

The three little dots appear almost immediately followed by a ding of her reply.

**Clarke (2:38PM):** in 45, why?

Standing, you make your way to the back without saying anything to your friends, handing your apron to Carl who just stares absently at you.

“Can you cover things for about an hour?” you ask, knowing that you’ll actually be gone closer than 2 hours… but he doesn’t have to know that… not yet… It’s Tuesday after all… No one comes in on Tuesdays.

“Uhh sure?” he says, almost questioningly. “Everything okay?”
You smile from the corner of your lip, unable to even form words. You’re running away from work to go visit a girl to ask her out because your friends are reminding you of the fact that you’re completely, utterly, uncontrollably in love with her? Or something like that.

“Yeah, something just came up….”

Exiting the kitchen, you wave to your friends who cheer you on, Bellamy pumping his fist and Octavia whooping through her right hand. Ignoring the fact that Octavia has moved to the same side of the table as Lincoln and you can clearly see his fingers interlocked with hers under the table, you make your way out to your car, sitting in the driver’s seat and starting the ignition all before you take your first deep breath. With the smell of French fries and sweet tea on you, you pull out, beginning the 52 minute drive to the hospital.

Lexa Woods, you’re fucked.

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**CLARKE**

**Lexa (3:41PM):** Come outside

This text stops you in your tracks, sitting alone in the locker room gathering your thoughts.

She’s at work… how can Lexa be at the hospital?

Exiting the darkened locker room, you race through the bright, white hospital halls towards the exit, hoping and praying that for the love of all things good in life that no one stops you… and thankfully they don’t.

Entering the parking lot, you turn the corner to your left and are quickly grabbed and pulled behind a car before you even know what happens. And suddenly, Lexa’s kissing you, holding your arm gently. Without effort, your arms are lifting themselves, wrapping around her shoulders as you kiss her back deeply.

“What are you doing here?” you ask between kisses, tracing her jaw with your thumb. She just kisses you back, holding the sides of your face.

“I have to ask you something,” she looks you in the eyes, kissing you again over and over before she tries to speak for a second time. Smiling into her lips, you pull away, placing your forehead on hers.

“I have to go back to work soon.” This seems to tighten her grip on you as she pushes her body against yours, pushing you against her jeep before she kisses you again.

You’re not complaining though…

When she pulls away slightly, her hands stay on your face holding you in place.

“Clarke,” Lexa says, almost laughing.

She’s so awkward.

She’s so perfect.

Her brown eyes are staring deep into yours as she tries, unsuccessfully, to form words a few times before finally blurring out the one phrase on her mind. “I want to be your girlfriend.” You pause;
waiting for the ‘but…’ but it doesn’t seem to be coming. Instead, the uncomfortable woman holding the sides of your head becomes even more awkward, shuffling slightly as her faces begins to drop.

You bite you lip, still waiting, until you finally can’t take it anymore. “And?”

She grins from the corner of her mouth. “And that’s it. Will you be my official girlfriend?” Her smile widens as you basically shout ‘Yes’, jumping into your girlfriend’s arms.

Fuck…

Girlfriend…

That feels good to finally say.

It’s taken you 64 days to convince her of it, but you, Clarke Griffin, have a girlfriend.

And that is Lexa Woods.

Kissing her deeply again, your moment is broken by the annoying buzz between the two of you, vibrating on your hip.

“For fuck’s sake,” you mumble into her lips, kissing her softly once more before removing a hand from her face to grab the pager. “I have to go,” you say, kissing her again two more times. She nods a slight ‘I know’ as she meets you half way before kissing your nose.

“I’ll see you tonight?” she asks you as you begin to walk away. You just nod, watching her unlocking her door. Smiling back over at you, she closes the distance quickly, kissing you again one final time.

As you head back inside, you’re completely content for the first time in your life.

You have a girlfriend.

Smiling as you enter the door, you determine that today will be the best day in history-- even if it’s almost over.

Nothing can ruin this moment… Not even the two Code Blue/ Cardiac Arrest Adults, the one Code Pink/ Cardiac Arrest child, and the three car accidents and the one drunk man in a spiderman costume who is suffering from extreme dehydration that come in between the moment that Lexa asks you to be hers and the time that you finally leave at 8:30. To make it even better, the influx of congratulatory texts from your friends let you know that they may have pushed the situation a bit… but you can’t be mad… not at all.

Octavia (8:22PM): So You’re getting laid tonight… just saying. You’re welcome.

Bell-Bear (8:23PM): Please don’t come home… go somewhere else… I need sleep and you are too loud… p.s. congrats on your girlfriend… even though you’ve been dating for 2 months…

Lincoln (8:25PM): Make sure she treats you right :-P

Monty (8:26PM): threesome? j/k. congrats asshole. See you this weekend?

Maya (8:26PM): When am I getting a wedding invite? I need to get fitted for my dress!!

You’re not even surprised when your phone continues to vibrate from a group text between you and
your friends. Since when did your relationship life become a key talking point? In any instance, nothing mattered…

You have a girlfriend.

And like a child, you can’t help but look up the cheesiest love song possible for your drive home and on repeat Kat Dahlia’s *I Think I’m In Love* plays at least 13 times during your hour long drive to Lexa’s house. As you pull into the driveway, you take a deep breath, spotting all three of the Wood’s cars outside.

Now or never, it was time to walk into your girlfriend’s house.

You have a girlfriend.

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**LEXA**

Clarke-proofing your house was proving to be an adventure that neither of your siblings seemed to understand the need for. Tris sat at the table filling out paperwork for scholarships while Lincoln hovered over her, doing anything he could to avoid you while you fluttered back and forth, ripping sticky notes that had been in their places for almost 5 years from the walls and shelves around the house.

“Why are you hiding this from her?” Tris asks, never breaking eye contact from her papers. “She’s going to find out eventually.”

You race in front of her, tossing the balled up papers at her head angrily, huffing deeply as you do. “Shut up asshole. I’m not hiding anything…”

“Sure,” your sister cuts you off, finally looking up to you. She looks just like your father…

She looks just like you…

It has taken you guys years to get to this point-- to the time when you both could talk so freely about what happened. Your decline into madness was harder on Tris than you ever could have imagined at its beginning, but after lots of therapy and tons of family bonding, you finally reached an understanding and when you became “better”, things cleared up. She still worried about you all the time, this was obvious with her delicate wording and the way that her eyes shifted back and forth when you were stressed, but she was finally comfortable with letting you live without supervision.

“And that’s why you haven’t told her…”

You don’t want to agree with her… so you don’t… not out loud at least, but truth be told, you are hiding your darkest secrets from Clarke.

You don’t want her to know that you took enough of your ex-girlfriend’s Adderall to kill a small horse.

You don’t want her to know that you went into Cardiac Arrest three times on the way to the hospital.

You don’t want her to know that you lost so much blood from your failed attempt that the doctors said that it was incredible that you were still alive.

You don’t want her to know that they told your brother that he wasn’t going to make it to the
hospital in time.

You don’t want her to know that your darkness still lingers in the corners of your mind, clawing at your ankles as you walk past them.

Most importantly, you don’t want her to know that you still struggle, even with the light that she brings into your life.

“It’ll just take time,” you mumble, jumping as the lights from Clarke’s car pull into your driveway. “She’s here!”

Lincoln laughs at your excitement, kissing Tris on the forehead before turning to you, putting a hand on your shoulder. “I’m going to bed,” he says, kissing your cheek. “Don’t have too much fun.”

You smile as Tris cringes, slamming her book shut. “For Fuck’s sake, I’m going to my room… Don’t let me hear you hooking up or anything… please….” She intentionally walks closer to you, bumping into you with her shoulder on her way down the hallway behind Lincoln.

You continue to smile as they leave, hearing a knock at your door…

Is she really fucking knocking?

What a dweeb.

Opening the door quickly, you realize exactly how little chill you have. For real, you’re like a teenager in here, freaking out about your new girlfriend coming over while your parents are away.

“Hey,” Clarke greets you in sweat pants with her hair pulled back into a messy bun. Even at her most exhausted, she’s radiant. Her bright face, although clearly tired, is shining with her overly excited smile and deep blue eyes.

You’re drowning again…

And you’re okay with it.

“Why did you knock?” you ask her with a laugh, ushering her inside. She only has a small backpack with her, making you sigh with relief. She doesn’t plan on staying at your house long… which means she won’t get the full picture of how fucked up you really are yet.

She stands awkwardly in the living room, grasping at the hoodie folded up in her arms, looking around at the spoils of you and your siblings’ lives. “It’s my first time here… I can’t be rude.” You can’t help but smile at her…

Clarke Griffin? Rude? As if that would ever happen.

“Come on,” you demand, dragging her through the hallway, pointing to the rooms quickly and telling her what each one is in simple one word phrases, pointing like a mad conductor as you progress through the hall. “Living room. Den’s in the back. We don’t use it. Kitchen. Hallway. Bathroom on the left. Lincoln’s room on the right. My room here. Tris’ room at the end of the hall.” You stop right outside of your room, taking a breath for the first time since she arrived. She looks slightly shell shocked at the sudden rushed tour, but when you open your door, she follows behind, no questions asked.

Since when did you become nervous around Clarke? You haven’t been nervous around her since you met, but for some reason, your fingers are shaking. You’re terrified of what she’s going to think
and what she’s going feel and for some reason, you’re terrified that she’s going to leave you…

Day 1 into your relationship and you’re going to lose her already.

“I’m sorry it’s such a mess,” you explain away the two articles of clothing and the stack of papers in the corner and Clarke snorts, tossing her bag on the floor.

“This is a mess? Please, you’ve been in my room!” She does have a point though… You and Clarke are extremely different people when it comes to organization. You are your father. Everything has a place and everything is organized, alphabetized or hung up in its exact location. Your walls are sparsely decorated with a few awards and some pictures, but overall, the wood paneling remains bare. You and Clarke have very different definitions of messy.

You begin attempting to explain yourself, drawing more attention than you cared to to the sticky notes that you already removed, telling Clarke that when you were having a rough time adjusting after your parents’ deaths, Lincoln would leave notes around the house for you and that you just became accustomed to them so they stayed. Before you knew any better, you were rambling and Clarke was leaning in, kissing you, if nothing else, to get you to shut up.

It worked.

You kissed her back, lightly at first and growing deeper as she pushed her body closer to yours, wrapping her arms around your waist. She pushed harder against you, walking you back to the bed behind you where you sat, allowing her to straddle your lap, still kissing you. With your hands on her hips, you felt the tug in her body towards you.

You were magnets, closing the distance quickly and uncontrollably. Sliding your thumbs under her shirt, you caressed the sliver of skin just above her pants line, feeling her exhale into your mouth slightly.

“Look, Clarke,” you began before you could stop it.

Shut up.

“I want to talk with you about something.”

Shut the fuck up.

The blonde shook her head, trailing kisses down your jaw line onto your neck. “Talk later.”

Rolling your head to the side, you attempted to concentrate on your thoughts, but that was easier said than done. “It’s important though…”

You words were cut short by a very specific roll of your girlfriend’s body originating in her shoulders and cascading down to her hips into you as your breathing became more labored. Unable to even fathom the fact that if Clarke didn’t stop or you didn’t respond soon then you were going to finish in your pants like the high school crush you felt like at the moment, you roll her over on the bed, sliding your knee between her thighs. With your hands on her shoulders, you smile down at your girlfriend who is completely surprised by your reaction.

“Okay,” you say, kissing her once, quickly. “Talk later.”

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I never, never thought that I would fall like that

Hey guys... Next chapter is go.
Sorry for the delay...
I've been on vacation all weekend and had a really hard time keeping the focus as I was writing this.
Anyway, i'm quite pleased with the development of this and i'm super stoked about the next few parts that are coming up so i hope you're happy with it too!
Anyways, the italics are flashback... i'm sure you've figured that out by now...
Add me on tumblr and let's be friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com
send me a message and let me know how you're feeling about it! I love hearing from you guys!!!
Cheers!!!
Listening and writing to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeBYIElpEpo

LEXA

“What’s 1824 days?” Clarke’s voice calls out from inside of the shower where she’s at while you’re brushing your hair in front of the bathroom mirror. Honestly having no clue what she’s talking about you reply with a quick ‘Dunno’, placing your toothbrush back in its exact spot, turning to the shower and pulling the curtain back just enough to stick your face into your girlfriend’s shower.

Your girlfriend.

Even now, two days after she said yes, it still feels weird…

Not bad…

Not bad at all…

It’s just that you never thought that you’d be able to say that word again…

It’s just that you never thought that you’d be able to say that word and be happy again…

“Why do you ask?” you ask her as she leans in, kissing your lips gently and pushing you out of her shower by your forehead. You smile, loving every second of this feeling as you return to your routine, getting ready for work.

“It was on a random sticky note in the kitchen,” Clarke responded, turning off the water and reaching through the curtain for her towel all before the air completely exited your lungs.

Of course you forgot one…

And of course it’s the one where Lincoln has been counting the days since you last ran a blade across your flesh…

And of course he’s been keeping up with it since day one…
Because he loves you.

“Oh,” you mumble wondering if she even heard you.

Lies begin to formulate in your brain, but none of them seem sufficient to explain away this random sticky note… not to mention the fact that you’re still caught off guard that Lincoln has been counting this whole time. He really is a great brother, but right now, you wished that he wasn’t so perfect… it would make this easier.

“What time do you get off?” Clarke asks, moving on to a different topic, stealing the air from your lungs again.

Thank god.

You begin to explain to her how you’re done at the diner at 9 and then you go to the bar until 3, but when she pulls back the shower curtain and steps out onto your shower mat, all thoughts of words are silenced. Your brain is completely blank, turned off, shut down, unable to respond when you look at your girlfriend, gorgeous, naked and wrapped in a towel in your bathroom.

This never would have happened had it not been Thursday night.

This never would have happened had you not taken Tris to soccer practice that day.

This never would have happened had Lincoln not needed you to tell Tris something.

This shouldn’t have happened, but it was happening and, breathing a sigh of relief, you thank whatever god is out there right now for the fact that this is happening.

Taking the one step between the two of you, you wrap your arms around Clarke pulling her in to hug her. You’re going to tell her about the sticky notes. You’re going to tell her about the scars around your wrist. You’re going to tell her everything… just not yet.

It’s something about the way that the beads of water rest on her shoulder or how her eyes seem even more transparently blue in the steam sitting in the air, how her hair is plastered to her shoulders or how the freckles on her shoulders outline the constellations that you trace after spend nights holding her. Something about this woman in your arms feels like home.

Resting her forehead on your shoulder, she allows you to hold her, pulling the towel in closer around her small frame. She’s getting smaller. She’s been getting smaller, but you’ve been playing it off. Surely it’s nothing. She’s been talking about getting in shape. She’s been running with you a lot. You’ve seen her eat, at least you think so… And surely Bellamy would have noticed if something was wrong… Surely it’s nothing.

“Clarke?” You ask, hiding your face in her hair, listening to the hum of the breath that’s exiting her nose. The world outside of this room is loud and dark, but here… here is good.

Hearing a knock at the door, your moment is interrupted as you jump slightly as you turn your head to the door, Clarke giggling at your terror.

“Stop fucking in there and hurry up,” your sister begins, a thud on the door just where her head would hit accompanying her words. “I have to pee,” she groans, sliding down the door to the floor, making you laugh.

Tris would.
Turning your attention back to Clark, you smile at her, kissing her forehead before releasing her.
“You gotta get going,” you say, turning to the mirror one last time, checking your reflection before turning again to Clarke.

“So…” she explains, still standing in the middle of the bathroom, towel pilled across her body. Jesus she’s cute.

Biting her lip, she twists her toe into the floor, maintaining eye contact with the ground.

“I kind of left my clothes in your room…”

You snort, laughing at her awkwardness more than her situation. “Well…” you begin, thinking about going to get them for her, but then you reconsider… “That sucks.” Grinning, you kiss her forehead, turning against her and open the door, your sister falling backwards through the threshold.

“Jesus Lexa,” Tris mumbles, scrambling to her feet. “You could have warned me! Oh hey Clarke,” she continues, not even looking at her. It’s funny how unphased your little sister is by your mostly naked girlfriend.

Clarke, however, is not as unphased about the situation. Blushing wildly, she crosses her arms tightly, following close behind you as she greets Tris back, closing the door as she enters the hallway.

“You know you could have gotten them for me,” she mumbles, trying to push past you. Instead of letting her, you take up the totality of the hallway, grinning as you do. “MOVE LEXA!” She’s getting irritated.

Just at that moment, Lincoln’s bedroom door opens beside you, your brother emerging just to Clarke’s right.

“Oh hey Clarke. Hey Lexa,” he says, squeezing past you two and towards the kitchen.

“Fuck!” she shouts, pushing past you and into your bedroom, slamming the door behind her. Hearing a laugh, you turn around, catching Lincoln as he shoves a banana in his mouth.

“Not the first time we’ve heard that phrase… she sounds angry this time though,” he says with the food in his mouth, swallowing quickly. You blush slightly, coughing it off. Lincoln has never once commented on your sex life before… This is totally new… and uncomfortable… “You should check on that.” He turns away from you, disappearing past the wall.

Turning again towards the closed bedroom, you sigh walking over and tapping your knuckles quickly on the wood, listening for an answer that you never get.

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CLARKE

As the door creeps open, you bury your face deeper into the sheets, knowing that it’s Lexa coming to check on you. After you left her in the hallway, you came into her bedroom, closing the door behind you, and changed from your damp towel into your fresh clothes, jeans and a t-shirt, before throwing yourself onto the bed and groaning.

First off, your new girlfriend’s family had all just seen you basically naked… that was bad enough, but then she facilitated it. You were uncomfortable and she knew this, but she allowed it to continue.
‘Why are you even mad about this?’ you wonder, feeling Lexa crawl into the space beside you.

Wrapping her arms around your body, she tries to pull you closer and all you do is dig deeper into the bed, shoving your face further into the pillow. The darkness is soothing to the overwhelming embarrassment that you’re feeling as it spreads across your face.

“Babe?” Lexa asks, almost so distant to indicate that she doesn’t actually want a response. “What’s going on?”

All you can do is inhale and exhale, feeling the air fill your lungs. ‘What’s wrong? You forced me to parade through your house… but nothing happened… but I didn’t like it… and you didn’t acknowledge it…’

Honestly, you can’t pin it down…

You can’t answer that question…

Because you don’t know…

Sighing deeply, Lexa rests her chin on your shoulder, kissing the tip of your ear before she tries to speak again, the air from her mouth making you cringe as it tickles your neck and ear.

“I’m sorry baby.”

Does she even know what for?

“I shouldn’t have put you in that situation.”

“And I shouldn’t have laughed…”

Rolling your head to the side, you’re less than an inch from your girlfriend’s face, taking in the entirety of her flawless look.

When she smiles, it comes from her eyes, reflecting the light in their gold flecks as they stare into you. Her freckles line her nose and cheek bones, outlining the shadows cast on her in the bedroom. Watching her face shift as she switches glances between your lips and your eyes, you think of how obsessed with the stars you’ve always been-- but looking at her now, you realize that stargazing isn’t just something that you do at night when you can’t sleep. Stargazing is mapping the constellations across her face, watching as they move through space when she smiles.

She really is beautiful.

She really is perfect.

And now, you can’t stay mad at her-- not with that face.

Swallowing deeply, you post a light kiss on her lips as she smiles against you. Light butterfly kisses always make her grin, shifting your constellations across the sky of her cheeks.

“I’m sorry too,” you mumble, rolling into her. “I’m new to this.”

As she wraps her arms around you, and pulls you into her chest, you sigh and smile at the reality of that statement. You’re completely new to every aspect of this. You’re completely new to feeling loved. You’re new to having a family. You’re new to being cared for. You’re new to others not caring (about the bad things, that is). You’re new to girlfriend-ing.
Lexa just chuckles, offering you a quick ‘me too’, kissing the top of your head as you breathe in deeply. Sighing into her, your eyes close, allowing you to focus on the heartbeat pounding into your ears, tapping out the steady rhythm keeping her alive and with you…

And in this moment, you’re completely thankful for her brother’s attempts… even if she doesn’t know that you know…

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**CLARKE**

The bedroom around you was dark, that was for sure. That was one wonderful thing about Lexa’s place-- since she didn’t live in the middle of the city (if that’s what you could call Macomb) like you did, there were never lights shining through her bedroom windows. You couldn’t hear the sound of your upstairs neighbor walking on her heels across the room above you. You couldn’t hear the sounds of the highway just a few blocks away. You couldn’t hear anything except for her relaxed breathing next to you, and you were extremely grateful for this.

Rolling on your other side under the arm wrapped around your waist, you turned to face her, planting a light kiss on the lips that just hours before were mumbling your name. Jesus, she’s perfect-- and even more so, she’s perfect for you. Even in the darkness, you can see her eyes shifting behind her eyelids, jolting from side to side. She sucks her bottom lip in and out of her mouth a few times, letting out a small whimper in her sleep. It happened frequently. Lexa cried in her sleep a lot, but you chose to never bring it up to her. She was always so strong… At least in her sleep she could relax. You’d let her keep that. You’d let her find safety in her dreams at least.

Turning against her once more, you slide out from under her arm, careful not to shake her or the bed too much. She’d only been asleep for a couple of hours and after your evening’s festivities, she was surely tired… Rolling off of the bed quickly, your bare feet skirted across the wooden floor gently, pulling one of Lexa’s shirts and your pair of shorts from earlier over your body, watching for that creaking board three steps away from the large, comfortable bed.

That was another thing that Lexa’s place was better at-- her bed was like a fucking cloud.

Exiting the room, you pull the door mostly closed behind you, letting go of the handle that is clearly newer than the door just as the wood touches the frame. Dancing down the hallway, you make a quick stop at the bathroom, relieving your full bladder and washing your hands before starting the migration to the kitchen again. The light, however, catches you off guard as you round the corner, catching Lincoln leaning over the table, scribbling on a bright green sticky note.

“Oh hey Clarke,” he says to you, capping his pen and glancing over at the clock on the wall. “What are you doing up?” He’s donning a pair of pajama pants and a plain, white tank and it’s mildly uncomfortable for you to see him so casual. Seriously, you’ve never seen Lincoln dressed any lower than a button down and a pair of blue jeans and suddenly you’re welcomed into his kitchen by the full force of all of his shoulder muscles.

No wonder Octavia was attracted to him-- even if both of them are still refusing to announce their relationship that you all know about (like you and Lexa are one to talk…). This man is cut-- chiseled jaw line, muscle structure of the gods, perfectly proportioned specimen and the medical professional in you can’t help but appreciate how beautifully well written his genetic code must be.

“Thirsty,” you finally mumble quickly, closing your mouth that you finally realize has been wide open since you first walked in. Yes, you could have worded that better. No, you weren’t just checking out your girlfriend’s brother and best friend’s… boy-thing… even if you kind of were. Hey, you can
appreciate his perfection. Making your way over to the cabinet, you grab a glass from the second shelf, filling it with water from the tap before turning back to Lincoln who had now migrated over to the far wall, standing between an end table holding the tray where all of the Woods/Holcolm children put their keys and wallets and other pocket belongings and a small table holding a stack of books about chemistry and U.S. History, no doubt belonging to Tris. He was placing the small sticky note on the wall when you approached him, putting a hand on his shoulder as you stood beside him, looking at it. “What’s that?” you ask, taking a sip of your water before realizing how thirsty you actually are, chugging the rest of it quickly.

Lincoln laughs, turning his head towards you. “Thirsty?” he asks, looking back at the note after receiving a nod from you. “Days clean,” he says, tapping the words ‘1824 Days’ with his middle finger. “You know, for Lexa.”

You choke slightly into your glass, hoping that he doesn’t notice. “Lexa’s on drugs?” you exclaim, realizing how loud you actually are before quieting down, repeating your question again in a softer tone. “Lexa was on drugs?”

Lincoln snorts a small laugh, turning away from you and gathering the supplies on the table, sticky notes, pen, and small roll of tape. “No, Sweetheart,” Lincoln tells you, making you blush slightly. He’s never used nicknames with you before. Maybe you’re finally fitting in… “You know, since she hurt herself.”

Something about the three seconds after that statement came out of Lincoln’s mouth clicked with both of you two. Suddenly, you realized Lexa’s scars on her forearms probably weren’t accidental like you had attributed them to. And suddenly Lincoln realized that before this moment, you hadn’t known. This epiphany of sorts takes you both by surprise as you begin stumbling through phrases like “oh yeah” and “that’s good” while he simply continues to clean up around the kitchen, doing anything to avoid eye contact with you.

“Lincoln?” you finally ask after an eternity of awkward silence while he begins to leave the room towards the hallway. “Sit down please?” your voice begs, making it almost impossible for him to say no. Taking the chair across the table from where you’ve slid your body, he flops down heavily, sighing as he does.

“I knew this was coming,” he says, rubbing his eyes.

“I just don’t want to blindsided,” you explain, placing your face in your hands. “I love her.” You confession causes Lincoln to look up at you from his hands, smiling slightly. Honestly, the words shock you.

“It’s been a long time since someone other than Tris and I have said that about Lexa,” he says, almost inaudibly thought his fingers. “Look,” his hands lower to the table. His face is that of desperation. He’s pleading with you and it’s breaking your heart. This massive tank of a man is begging you now to not destroy his sister. “We can’t do it again. She won’t survive it again.” You still don’t know the entirety of the situation, but you’re beginning to piece it all together. It’s an all too familiar story.

Girl has her heart broken.

Girl can’t help but feel like it’s her fault.

Girl takes it out on herself in one way or another.

Girl suffers.
You know this story very well… You’ve been fighting through this story for years now, but you’ve only ever been close to death once. Lincoln makes it sound like Lexa’s dabbled in the shadowlands for years… her scars make it seem like she’s wandered in the borderlands between life and death multiple times.

Wiping away the tears forming in your eyes, you make the split decision to put him out of his misery. It’s not his place to tell you, and it’s not yours to ask. “Lincoln,” you say quietly, placing a hand over his. Your fingers cover barely any of his hand as he rolls it over, taking your palm in his. “You don’t have to tell me anymore. I know it’s hard for you.” He swallows, nodding and thanking you. “No problem,” you say, feeling the pressure building in your chest. You have thousands of questions… literally thousands…

‘Am I good for her?’

‘Is she better?’

‘Am I helping?’

‘Is she going to fall again?’

‘What are the warning signs?’

‘Why did she crumble before?’

‘How did I not know?’

‘How long has she had to shoulder this alone?’

You list goes on and on as the words scroll in front of your brain, much like the bar at the bottom of the news with minor stories and short descriptions.

All these thoughts are silenced, however, when Lincoln taps the top of your hand with his thumb, drawing you back in. “Hey,” he says, noticing the blank expression on your face that indicates that you’ve checked out. “She’s doing better… especially now that you’re here.”

The both of you smile before you bite your lower lip, clinching your jaw as you wonder how to ask the next phrase.

How do you ask Lincoln if his sister will fall apart if you fail?

How do you ask him if her mental security is hinged on the stability of yourself?

How do you ask him if Lexa will crumble when she finds out how broken you really are?

‘Linc?’ you finally begin as he lets go of your hand to scratch his growing facial hair. He glances up, a flash of recognition in his eyes. “Will I destroy her?”

You swallow deeply in the half second before he replies, feeling like an eternity as the words drag slowly from his lips. “I don’t think you know how,” he finally responds, lifting himself from his chair and walking out of the room, leaving you alone with your empty glass at the dinner table.

Sitting there for the next hour and a half, you trace the lines in the wood with your fingertips, occasionally making glances to the green sticky note taped to the wall in front of you.

You want to kiss it-- thankful for the fact that your girlfriend has made it that long.
You want to rip it apart-- destroying all evidence of her struggle.

You want to go into her room, taking her arms in your hands and kiss the few remaining scars, tracing the veins in her arms that supply life with your lips before you tell her that she’s too beautiful and too perfect to struggle again.

You want to marry her so she always knows what it’s like to feel loved.

But more than anything, you want to run, overwhelmed by the idea that you could ever be the reason for her pain to ever resurface.

Before you can decide on anything, however, a creak in the hallway breaks your thoughts, telling you that you’re no longer alone anymore.

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TRIS

Entering the kitchen should have been weird for you. You sat for all of last night listening to your sister and her girlfriend sex it up in the room next door to you and no amount of unlimited texting, headphones and Netflix could make it okay. Nothing can erase the sounds of your sister’s gasps that were engraved into your mind-- that was until you caught sight of her girlfriend at your kitchen table, alone and shattered looking at 4am with an empty glass in her hand, eyes fixated on the table below her elbows.

“Need water?” you joke, pulling your family’s characteristic brown hair into a ponytail and making your way to the fridge, taking a bottle of green tea from the top shelf. You were the only one in the family who drank the stuff, but somehow you always had a fresh supply-- because Lexa and Lincoln loved you. Taking a seat next to Clarke, you wait for a reply, but get nothing. She’s completely silent for a few moments before lifting her hand, pointing a shaky finger across the room.

“What was it like?” she asks, and you don’t even have to look over in the direction that she’s pointing to know what she’s talking about. For the past 5 years, nearly, Lincoln has updated that sticky note every morning so that it was current when you and your sister woke up, counting the days since you almost lost her-- since the worst time in your life.

Exhaling deeply, you twist the lid off of your bottle and raise it to your lips, pondering your words carefully. There’s no way to explain what it was like to lose your parents. There’s no words to elaborate the emotional spiral that you felt. And even more than that, nothing can explain what it was like to almost lose your sister over and over again every day because of it. It’s impossible to tell this almost complete stranger how you felt when you were picked up by a family friend from soccer camp, sweaty, exhausted and wanting nothing more than to shower, eat and sleep and instead taken to a hospital where you watched you older sister breathe through a tube and listened to the machinery hum as it held the life in her veins.

“Falling,” you finally say, lowering your drink before your lips could taste it. “It was like falling… knowing that you’re going to hit the bottom at any moment and you’re either going to survive or shatter into a million pieces.” From the corner of your eye, you can see Clarke nodding at you and you can’t help but wonder if she even understands what you’re saying. How could she? What does she know about death and depression? “It was like waking up and being in someone else’s life… like in a foreign country where you don’t know their customs or rituals…” you continue, finally taking a sip from your tea before you continue. It’s refreshing, but does little to soothe the burn in the back of your throat that always develops when you talk about that time. You can’t help but still feel to blame for more struggle than necessary, but you were just a child… And then the word vomit
begins as you try to defend yourself. “I woke up one day to my sister in the hospital and when she came home, she was different and I didn’t know how to interact with her… suddenly I was insensitive and that wasn’t her fault, but it wasn’t completely mine either… I was a child and half of my vocabulary had to be changed.” You continue to speak words that you’ve never said, explaining to this near stranger your inner dialogue for almost 5 years. Clarke simply nods, watching you with the most affirming and approving eyes that you’ve ever seen and you begin to realize a little of how Lexa feels around her. Clarke is a safe place. Clarke feels like home, even to you…

And now it hits you… This is what Lexa sees in her. Lexa sees home.

“My life changed… suddenly I couldn’t use a knife in the kitchen and couldn’t latch my door and I couldn’t use phrases like ‘I’m going to kill myself’ or use words like depressed instead of sad…. Which I shouldn’t have anyway, but that’s what children do…” Taking in a deep breath and feeling it exit your lungs quickly, you swallow the lump in your throat before speaking again, craving nothing more than for this conversation to change paths soon. “I didn’t do a lot to help and I’ll always feel to blame for that, but it was hell.”

“You’re really mature,” Clarke’s voice cracks as she swallows deeply, blinking away the tears that are filling her eyes.

Jesus, this woman is sold on your sister.

But how much has she been told? Obviously not enough to not be asking questions… and how much are you supposed to be telling? If they’ve been at it for this long and Lexa hasn’t told her anything about this yet, you’ve just outed her entire life without even hesitating and Lexa’s just going to wake up without any more secrets…

If Clarke runs, it’s your fault, but even that can’t make you stop…

“We all had to grow up really fast, but Lexa had to mature quicker… she never had a chance,” You say, finally finishing your bottle, taking a quick swig from it before you cap it and continue. “No one made her… it’s just who she is… she’s going to take care of her people, no matter what sacrifices it requires.” You smile slightly, spinning the bottle on its side as you remember Lexa’s conversation on the side of the soccer field when you wanted to quit practices. “‘Victory stands on the back of sacrifice…’ that’s what she used to say to me when I would complain about soccer.” You bite your lip, thinking about how your sister was there, the week after your parents’ deaths, with her hands on her knees, crouching to your level as you complained about the heat and the cramping in your calves and anything else you could think of to get out of practice. She wasn’t going to let you throw away everything because of your sadness, even if that’s what she wanted to do to herself in that moment. She was always there to keep you from drowning, even when she couldn’t find it in herself to swim for tomorrow. “She was right… I just never understood what that meant for her,” you finally add, grabbing the bottle from its cycle and sitting it upright, pushing it back over to its side and repeating the process a few times.

Clarke simply nods a few times, eyes focused on the sticky note about 20 feet from your faces. “She never let you go, did she?” The blonde asks, closing her mouth quickly after the phrase almost as if it scared her. You simply shake your head, explaining that even when Lexa couldn’t swim, she refused to let you drown.

After a few moments of silence between you two, you yawn, rising to your feet and stretching before beginning your walk to your room. Your steps are halted, however, when the blonde girl at your table reaches for your hand, pulling you around a little.

“Do you think Lexa’s fine now?” she asks, her blue eyes piercing through you as she begs for some
sort of affirmation. You think for a moment, her hand still gripping yours, as you try to find a way to word your exact thoughts.

You’ve never thought anything was wrong with Lexa-- not even when you were lying next to her in a hospital bed as she fought for her life… That person wasn’t your sister… that person was the broken fragments of what Costia left behind.

“I think Lexa was fine all along…” you finally explain, catching Clarke off guard with your words. This was obviously not the answer that she wanted, but this was the answer that she needed to hear. “I always thought it was like someone was living in her brain telling her things, putting ideas into her mind, but the older I get, the more I realize that it’s more like someone up there keeping things out… and that’s the more terrifying part.” You sigh, pulling your hand from Clarke’s grip, rubbing your eyes. “Lexa’s not broken, but she’ll never come to know this… her demons won’t let her hear it… instead, all she hears is the bad… because the good never makes it through. If she can just come to let the good in, Lexa will be great.”

Clarke’s half smile reassures you that something in that remotely resembled an answer that was acceptable to her as she nods softly, turning her attention back to her empty glass. Running her fingers over the top of it, she thanks you, and you turn back to the hallway.

“Clarke?” you ask as you turn around, leaning against the wall at the start of the carpeted hall. The blonde looks back up at you questioningly and you let out a quick “make her let the good in,” receiving a smile and a nod from the woman as you turn to towards your room.

Once inside, you close the door quickly, leaning your head back against it and sigh deeply, exhausted by the emotional weight of this conversation that you’ve only had in your head for the past 5 plus years. Throwing yourself on your bed, you turn your head towards the nightstand beside you, housing papers, half-occupied glasses of water and trash. Behind all of this, however, in a black frame that you bought after you almost lost Lexa forever is a picture of the two of you just moments after you were born. Her hair is long and draped over her 12 year old shoulders. She’s wearing her favorite Oklahoma Sooners shirt that your father had given her for the Christmas before-- the same one that she still wears on game days when her and Lincoln shout profanities from the living room through their beers and nachos as she holds newborn you delicately in her arms. Her smile is plastered across her face and her baby dimples show through her freckled face. She loved you from the moment that you were born, and nothing, not even death or sadness has changed that… and nothing has changed the fact that you still worship the ground that she walks on.

She’s your sister, and she’s finally happy… and she’s finally loved…
Chapter Notes

Here's chapter 13. I'm beginning to bring a few quotes for the show in here now for very specific reasons that will all play themselves out. I've got some great things coming so I hope you're loving it as much as I am.

Thanks for reading and please please please don't hesitate to message me with any questions of comments!

You're the best guys!!!

Also, follow me on tumblr and let's be friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

What I wrote this chapter to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SK2jdjE1RKU

LEXA

Leaving Clarke after that small argument was the worst. The feeling of dread and lack of absolution that lingered into your brain opened a window for the darkness to climb in, reminding you of every insecurity, every doubt, and every unspoken word that delayed on your tongue. Wondering how many phrases still tasted inside of Clarke’s mouth only made it that much more uncomfortable-- especially when she ran her hand up your forearm as she released you to make her way to her car. It was a simple gesture, probably meaningless, but at the same time, a silent indication to you that she was catching on-- especially after the whole sticky note incident. She knew you had baggage, this was obvious, but for the first time in 65 days, she was beginning to show indication of knowing the extent of the weight that you carried-- and that was not okay.

Clarke wasn’t allowed to see you struggle.

I mean, no one was allowed to see you struggle…

But especially not Clarke Griffin.

She had to be protected from it all.

Turning the corner onto the main street, you stop at every 4-way intersection, taking your time as you always do. You’re the world’s most cautious driver-- of course. With the memory of your parents’ lifeless bodies on the tables every time you’re in the driver’s seat of a car, you have to be. With the memory of the cop’s voice in your ear every time you hear a semi pass by you, you have to be. With the memory of how your parents’ car was flipped and turned into the ditch and so badly mangled by the time it arrived at the stock yard for investigation that you could barely identify the Suburban, you have to be. So it comes as no surprise that you’re at a complete stop for multiple seconds, waiting for a black car who is entirely too far away to act on their right of way.

What does surprise you, however, is the silver CRV who zooms around him, cutting the turn too tight and almost slamming into the front driver’s side bumper of your jeep. Without thinking, you jerk the wheel to the right, pulling your car just inches out of his reach as he continues on his path, unaffected by the nearly disastrous event that just unfolded.

You, however, are not unphased.
Taking shallow breaths, the darkness begins seeping through the cracks in the frame of your car, flooding the floor boards and sucking in your feet. It's like quicksand, rising up your legs and into your lap as you put the car in park, trying to suck in the tiny bit of air that hasn’t been overcome by the flood infiltrating your vehicle. As the darkness levels rise, overtaking your body and shoulders, you take a breath, preparing to drown. It's inevitable, this is the end. The flood swarms you as your lungs tighten, filling with the darkness. Unable to breathe anymore, you lay your head on the steering wheel, gasping in what you can. Your lungs are clawing at the air around you, begging for something just as your nails begin to dig into your upper arm. Squeezing your body tight as if your chest will explode at any moment, you just sit, waiting for death-- waiting for air-- waiting for something.

‘This will end,’ you say to yourself, hearing only your voice in your head.

‘This is temporary,’ you repeat the things that therapy taught you, knowing that it doesn’t work anyway.

Because this isn’t temporary.

This has never been temporary.

And this will never be temporary.

And then it breaks-- just as it does every time. With the exhaustion in your neck and shoulders and the claw marks at your upper arms, you release, shoulders dropping as air fills your lungs for the first time in minutes, tears streaming down your face. Just as quickly as the flood of panic rises, it dissipates, stealing every ounce of energy that you had and leaving you hallow, exhausted, and numb.

Taking in one more quick breath, you shift your car into drive, turning back onto the road and continuing your drive to work. Just like every time before, you talk yourself down from the mountain top, and continue on your way as if you’re not suffering. Just like every time before, you’re completely fine…

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BELLAMY

Weekly game night has become your favorite night of the week, especially when Lexa drinks. Clarke is funny and all, but drunk Lexa is probably your favorite person alive. She speaks in unusual voices and talks about things that your calm, quiet and controlled friend would never dare utter. Last week alone you heard about how when she was in her first semester of college she almost got arrested for skinny dipping and how in high school she and some friends broke into a teacher’s garage and sticky noted her car. In fact, you hear a lot of stories about a Lexa that you’ve never come to know, and that makes you wonder when the shift occurred.

Actually, you know when exactly it happened-- this was evident in you and her’s heart to heart that one day when she stumbled into your world of post-traumatic stress as they called it (or life, as you’ve come to know it as), but to take such a 180 in the course of one night surprises you. Not for you, of course, because you’re life changed in one step of a little Mali boy’s feet in the sand, but for Lexa to become so closed overnight-- that blows your mind.

“Bellamy fucking Blake, draw a goddamned card,” your sister’s voice breaks your in-depth analysis as you resurface into reality, realizing that you’ve been staring at the stack of cards on the shot glass for the entire circle.
Kings, or Circle of Death as you always knew it, is one of your favorite games, but when it comes down to it, you have really bad luck at this game, as is evident by the two empty beer bottles and the fuzzy feeling in your head from the shots. Your skull feels like it’s about to burst with all of the words flowing through your brain as you grab the card closest to you, laying it on the stack in the center before you even read it. Suddenly, everyone’s thumb goes on the table except for yours.

“Shit,” you mumble, opening another beer and taking a drink of it, realizing you’ve lost yet again.

All eyes are on you as you swallow your beer, responding to the small amount of laughter that you comprehend from the group before resting an elbow on the table. It’s like you’re wearing ear muffs, only half of the sound entering your ears— or it’s like there’s something in your brain, a demon, keeping half of the words being spoken out.

“Bell?” your sister asks, placing a hand on your knee. Opening your mouth to respond, you begin to feel the pressure rising in your chest. Too much, too fast. Closing your mouth quickly you simply shake your head, realizing that if you try to speak, all that will come out is vomit. “Bathroom, now,” she orders you, asking Lexa to help lift you to your feet. Between Lexa, Lincoln and Octavia, they somehow get you to the bathroom and your head over the toilet before you’re unable to hold it down anymore.

How did you get so drunk? You never get this drunk… ever. First there were the shots with Clarke while she was waiting for Lexa to get off work. Those probably weren’t the best idea, but there were only three or four of those… or was it 5? Then when Lincoln arrived, you had a beer with him… ‘Liquor before Beer you’re in the clear’ right? Oh, but then the shots came out again as your friends began trickling in and Monty and Jasper had that new, terrible gummy bear vodka shit… and then… fuck… and then you never took your nightly medication…

Pulling your head from the toilet, you look up at the hand holding your shoulder, following it back to Lexa who is standing beside you with a glass of water, holding it out to you. “I need my medication,” you almost gaggle, taking the glass from her.

“Nope,” she says, almost stoically. What a bitch.

“But I didn’t take it…” you sound like a child, foot stomp and all as you drop a fist a little harder than you meant to on the toilet seat.

Her expression remains unchanged as she offers you a faint “too bad. Take it in the morning.”

As you begin to try to lift yourself to your feet, she offers you support, guiding your arms as they flail around to catch the air around you. Who made the Earth spin faster? When did this become a thing? As you reach out for the pill bottle to her left, she swats your hand down, pushing her body between you and the sink.

“Fuck off Lexa, I need to take my medication.” You do need it. If you don’t take it then the memories return. If you don’t take it then Ibrahim’s voice sounds to you in your sleep, telling you in Arabic that he’s going to get you out. If you don’t take it then you remember the constellations on that boy’s cheeks just before he detonated. If you don’t take it then you remember the shouts of Wallace and Metcalf as their bodies left their seats, being thrown from the newly formed hole in the side of your Humvee. If you don’t take them, then you die a little bit inside.

But she’s not backing down.

Pushing your body back, Lexa keeps her hands on your shoulders, pushing you against the wall behind you. “I’m not going to let you die,” she says, her full weight on her hands. Even in your
You're drunk,” you remind her, poking her with your finger as if her swaying body wasn’t enough to tell her so.

She smiles slightly from the left side of her lips before speaking to you again. “And you’re going to bed.” Before you know otherwise, her arm is around your waist and pulling you out of the bathroom door where Lincoln takes over, passing you to him from his sister.

“Come on, buddy,” he says, throwing your arm over his shoulder as he walked you to your room, your sister following close behind.

“Goodnight Lexa,” you slur over your shoulder, wondering if she heard you.

Why do you care? She’s just your roommate’s girlfriend. It’s not like you have anything in common with her-- except absolutely everything.

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LEXA

Returning to the party after taking Bellamy to bed was a nice relief. Even with the alcohol coursing through your system, you could tell that if that conversation had continued, it was going to go one of two ways…

Either A: you were going to be overwhelmed by anxiety

Or

B: you were going to be kissed by a very drunk vomit-mouth Bellamy

And neither option sounded nice by any stretch of the imagination.

So when you took your seat next to your girlfriend, you’re extremely thankful for the heavy hand on your knee, and even more thankful for the whisper in your ear, even if it tickles your neck slightly.

“How drunk are you?” she asks softly, or as softly as drunk Clarke can. She’s extremely far gone, swaying in her chair and giggling at every statement that’s made. “Because I’m a little drunk,” she adds before you can even answer. Nodding at her, you kiss her cheek, or at least try to until she turns her head in, causing your lips to land on hers. Taking the sides of your face into her hands, she kisses you deeply and the table around you erupts into either cheers or groans, making both of you laugh into each other.

“You’re just jealous that none of yall are getting any,” you say, laughing to your friends.

“Speak for yourself,” Jasper jokes, wrapping his arm around an obviously drunk Maya who pushes him off, causing everyone to laugh again.

For real though, are all of you drunker than usual, or is it just you?
As the night progresses, you begin to realize the truth-- Jasper and Monty got you guys fucked up with their new creation.

It begins with Octavia who insists on playing a game of strip poker and refuses to accept no for an answer, taking off her shirt first, followed by her shorts, and then sitting in her bra and underwear until Lincoln throws a blanket over her.

Then it proceeded to Harper who, on more than one occasion, fell out of her chair, almost taking the entire table with her. Murphy was there to catch her until the last time when he fell with her.

Maya was next. She fell into a deep sleep as she progressed through the phases-- first laying her head on Jasper’s shoulder, then dozing off slightly, jolting awake a few times, until she finally laid her head on the table and was unconscious within seconds.

Next, surprisingly, was Lincoln who grew extremely quiet-- as was his norm-- until he tried to go to the kitchen for a glass of water, knocking over his chair and taking half of the items on the table by the door down with him as he the ground hard.

“We’ve got a grounder!” Murphy shouts, raising his glass as your brother lifts himself to his feet, shoving Murphy as he passes.

“Fuck off, Murphy,” he mumbles, retreating behind the wall, you close in tow.

“You okay?” you ask, following his lead as he grabs a glass and filling it with water. He takes a big gulp as you fill yours before he speaks, only offering a slight grumble and an ‘Un huh’ between his drinks. “Linc?” you reassure him, laying a hand on his shoulder.

You worry about your brother, honestly. He spent years worrying about you, and still does to this day, but he’s never let it bother you. In fact, he’s never let anything bother you and that’s what worries you the most. You’re supposed to be the one who shoulders everything, but yet your little brother has been stealing your stress for years, harboring it away from you and never allowing you to see it.

But was now the best time to be bringing this up?

He turns to you, wrapping his arms around your shoulders and pulling you into his massive hug. “I love you Lexa,” he says, the words penetrating deep into you. Rarely does Lincoln actually talk about his feelings-- that’s how you know he’s drunk-- but even more so, rarely does Lincoln talk about his feelings with you. That’s more of a Tris kind of thing. You two don’t feel… Tris feels…

“I love you too little brother,” you can’t stop yourself as you wrap your arms around his waist. Even if he’s bigger than you and even if he’s taken care of you, he’s still your little brother and always will be.

When Lincoln releases you, you feel arms around your waist, gripping you from behind. Running your fingertips over the hands locked at your front, you know automatically that it’s Octavia, ring and fingernails giving it away.

“My best friend wants her fuck buddy,” she mumbles into your ear, extremely close to your face. You’ve never been this physically close to Octavia, especially not while, still, mostly naked… Another thing to add to tonight’s list of firsts, and when you begin to move, she seems to fall over slightly, falling right into your brother, making you wonder how much of an accident it actually was.

Leaving your brother and his… whatever the fuck was happening between them two-- alone in the kitchen, you walk over to the living area where Clarke was laying on the couch, bumping into
Monty’s shoulder and rubbing his head as you passed. He reached out, tapping your ass and before either of you could realize it, you were laughing. In just a few short weeks, you were fitting in perfectly with this group of ruffians.

“Hello perfection,” Clarke exclaims from the couch, throwing her hands in the air. You fight back the cringe in your brain at that word that she uses way too loosely to explain you as you lay down next to her, pulling her closer more so that you won’t fall off of the couch than anything else.

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**CLARKE**

Lexa smells like cigarettes and alcohol as she kisses you lightly on the couch. For the first time, she actually smoked with Bellamy and Murphy, coughing as she took the drag into her lungs. Also, for the first time, she’s kissing you deeply in front of your friends. Normally, she settles for mild pecks in passing, but today, something about the liquor and her comfort level rising, Lexa’s completely at ease and relaxed with your group, and this thought makes you smile. Wrapping your leg around hers, you feel her grip around your waist tighten, pulling your body closer to hers.

Feeling the breath filling her lungs only makes you want to kiss her more and when she slides her tongue gently into your mouth, fireworks explode into your veins, filling your body with heat. Goddamn, this girl has you bad.

After a few moments of silent cuddling, though, just as the table behind you begins dying down and your friends begin trickling out, leaving just you two, Lincoln, Octavia, Murphy and Harper, your mind begins to wander to the nights before that you spent in conversation with her siblings. You wonder about the sensation of falling that Tris talked about and you wonder if Lincoln updated the sticky note today even though Lexa never went to her house. You question if Lexa feels like giving up in this moment or if it comes and goes in waves. Millions of thoughts fill your brain and just as you think that you can’t handle any more, they spill over, pouring from your lips.

“Lexa?” you ask, unable to stop your voice from speaking. Those brown eyes and perfect smile look down at you, just inches from your own blue. Your eyes shuffle from side to side as her smile drops, noticing the seriousness in your face. You want nothing more than to chase after that smile, forcing it back across her face, plastering it up to keep it there forever. “What happened to your arms?”

You already know, but you don’t know how to ask that. How do you ask ‘Why did you find the need to run a blade through your veins’? How do you ask ‘What caused you to want to give up the air in your lungs and the beat in your heart’? How do you ask ‘Who injured you so badly that you felt as insignificant as to disappear’? How do you ask these things when you want nothing more than to whittle away some days?

She clinches her jaw, swallowing a shallow breath before opening her mouth to speak. Her voice cracks and it breaks your heart as she nearly whispers “I’ll explain it later,” but that’s not good enough for you.

“But I want to know,” you say, knowing that pushing the matter won’t help any, but that doesn’t stop you. You move her arms, running your thumbs over the obvious designs that she’s spent years doctoring to disappear.

Jerking away quickly, she sits up, moving from the couch. “I’m going to bed,” she says as she stands, walking towards the back. She didn’t even give you warning and everyone at the table is now well aware of the tension forming between you two as you follow your girlfriend to your bedroom.
“I just want to know,” you say, closing the door behind you. Why are you pushing this? You know it’s not necessary. You’ve had the conversations where Lincoln and Tris both reassured you that things were fine, but something about Lexa not telling you that she hated her life really bothers you. Did she actually try to kill herself? Or did she just mark up her body? Did she harm any other part of her body or was it just her wrists? Why was she hospitalized?

She turns quickly on her heels to face you, almost too quickly to hold herself up. “Look, you don’t need to know.” Her expression tells it all-- she’s beyond done with this conversation. With eyebrows raised and eyes wide, she’s looking straight at you as she’s saying no. “It’s happened. It’s over. I’ll tell you if you need to know, but right now, you don’t!”

And something about that statement sets you off…

“I don’t need to know?” You ask sarcastically, arms raised. “What the fuck does that mean? Why won’t you tell me things? Why don’t you communicate? Why don’t you reciprocate? For fuck’s sake, Lexa, why won’t you love me?” And the questions pour from your mouth, ending in the one that’s haunted you for days now. “What’s so wrong with me that makes it so you can’t love me?”

With you pleading at her Lexa looks shocked, stumbling through words before finally forming a sentence. “It’s not that,” she says, rubbing her exhausted eyes. “It’s not that I don’t love you… It’s that I love you too much. It’s scaring the shit out of me,” she explains, popping her knuckles and fiddling with her fingers, anything to keep the focus off of the conversation at hand. Her eyes are on the floor until she looks up at you, speaking softly as she says, “I’m terrified of you having this much control over me.”

But you’re still not buying it, even with the emotion filling her eyes.

“That’s bullshit,” you slur, pushing your girlfriend slightly, hoping, more than anything, for distance between you two. The three or so feet that stood between you and her wasn’t enough for you to escape the sadness in her eyes, and with more space, you could see those gold flecks less and be reminded less of how much of an asshole you were being at the moment. You could ignore that fact that the you that lives inside of your brain when drunk was now calling the shots. “You’re not actually trying, are you?” you ask, not even believing that yourself. This is the liquor talking now and no amount of internal conflict can stop the fact that it has taken over your body, taking you hostage inside of your own mind. You’re banging at the windows, begging to be let out, but no one can hear you over the sound of your own, drunk voice being a dickbag.

“Fuck off, Clarke,” Lexa’s voice surprises you as she grabs a jacket from the pile of clothes next to the door, exiting the room with a large swing of the door, slamming it into the wall behind.

“Oh that’s right, run away,” you shout after her, following even though the voice inside of you is yelling to stop.

You’re doing this all wrong.

You’re doing everything wrong.

Outside of the apartment, in the stairway, you’re met with the cool, early morning air, standing in the threshold as your friends gather behind you, calling out for the two of you to return to the apartment to talk it out. That’s not happening though as Lexa’s half-way down the flight of stairs before your voice rings out again.

“Run away again like you did when you cut yourself,” drunk you shouts into the darkness, the real you dying a little inside. The real you dies entirely when Lexa turns around quickly, making her way
up the 8 steps in 4 strides, walking extremely close to you.

“You have no clue what you’re fucking talking about,” she says with such authority that even drunk you believe her for a small moment. She looks like she could hit you at any moment and for the first time ever, you’re scared of your girlfriend. “You don’t even know what it was like…”

But then she said that…

“Yes, I do… Remember? I lost my father too. He died once also, but you know what, Lexa?” You shutter as the next phrase comes out of your mouth, knowing that it’s going to hurt her, but not knowing how to stop the drunk rage inside of you that’s bubbling out. “You need to get over it sometime… You have to get over this depression that you’ve blanketeted yourself with.”

And when those words left your mouth, you gasped, swallowing down drunk you and real you finally surfacing just in time to see your girlfriend crumble in front of you.

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LEXA

When those words left Clarke’s lips, you didn’t hear them in her voice. No, you heard Costia, reminding you of how much you suck and how much you bring down the mood of the evening when you break down at the loss of your parents while she leaves to go to the bathroom with Echo and other friends of hers, only to return rubbing her nose and suddenly craving your body more than before. No, you heard Costia, reminding you of your loss and how you aren’t coping, listing off all of the things that you hate about yourself before she disappears for hours at a time, returning with more people to share her joys with. No, you didn’t hear Clarke, the woman who has spent the last 67 days building you up and telling you that you are worth it. You heard Costia, the woman who you spent 2 years trying to get to love you only to have her walk out on you while you were fighting for your life… even if you didn’t want to live.

“Fuck you,” you say, almost calling her the wrong name as you turn against her, starting back down the stairs.

“Lexa,” everyone’s voices call out to you as you leave, but you ignore them. You don’t want to talk, especially after this. In fact, you don’t want to do anything after this night. You just want to go home and exist-- because that’s all that you can do right now… and even that you’re proud of.

When your feet hit the concrete of the parking lot, you realize the full extent of your drunkenness, stumbling at the sudden turf change as you fumble with your keys, dropping them three separate occasions on the way to your car. Shoving your key into your jeep’s door, you hear heavy footsteps behind you.

“I don’t want to speak,” you say, opening the door before it’s closed quickly by your brother’s hand.

“You’re not driving,” he orders, snatching the keys from your hands. He pockets them before you can fight back, moving your hand from the door handle.

“What do you care? Go make out with Octavia or something. I’ll see you at home.”

Lincoln looks at you with a stern face, jaw clinched as his eyes flick back and forth. “I didn’t spend years on the floor with you, fighting for you to stay alive just so I could lose you to driving drunk. Now get in my car,” he responds, clicking the key fob on his key ring, unlocking his truck one aisle over.
“You’ve been drinking too,” you remind him, making him smile slightly.

“Yeah, but that was hours ago and I’m fine. Let’s go.”

Wrapping your arm around your brother’s waist, you lean your face into his side, hugging him tightly. You can’t tell if it’s to keep yourself standing upright or because you feel comfortable with him, but probably a little of both.

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LINCOLN

Driving drunk Lexa home proved to be a bit of an adventure. First off, she talked the whole way, listing off all of the things about Clarke that bothered her, giving away more of her own insecurities than Clarke’s faults. Second, she often interchanged Clarke and Costia in the conversation, explaining more about her failed relationship with that wretched woman than you had ever known.

In the 10 minutes before you stopped, you learned that Costia was a drug addict (that was news to you). You learned that often times she’d ditch your sister to get high with her friends and then basically force or guilt your sister into having sex with her. You also learned that she pressured your sister to use with her and even though Lexa declined every time, she would drink with the girl and her friends frequently which is why Lexa doesn’t drink a lot anymore. In those 10 minutes, you learned more about Costia than you had in those years that you were forced to interact with her, but you also learned more about Lexa’s shortcomings and what started it all.

Had you known all of this before, the transition after the hospital would have been easier.

“Pull over,” Lexa mumbles through her hands in the middle of a sentence, making you jerk the wheel quickly to the right. Before you can even put the car in park on the side of this abandoned highway next to an empty field, your sister is already throwing her body out of the side of your truck and onto the ground, vomiting up the entire contents of this evening.

“How the fuck do you believe that?” she asks between heaves as you make your way over, pulling her hair from her face. “She fucking said that shit after everything.” She continues to puke, throwing out jabs in between vomiting and you begin to wonder who she is even talking about anymore. Clarke and Costia—there’s supposedly a thin line between the two even though you can see it plain as day. The line becomes hazier as she continues and you’re beginning to reach your breaking point with this conversation. It becomes clear, however, that you need to intervene when the words, “Costia’s a bitch,” exit her mouth as she wipes her cheek with the back of her hand.

“Clarke,” you correct her as you reach inside your backseat, pulling a roll of paper towels out and handing them to your sister. “Look, it’s not my business, but how long are you going to punish Clarke for Costia’s fuck ups?” She looks over at you as if she’s ready to jerk your face off of your head, but when you begin speaking again, you can tell she’s listening. “Yes,” you begin, taking the roll from her and returning it to the backseat after she took a few. “She was wrong to say that... and I know that you can only blame so much on the liquor, but you need to stop holding her responsible for things Costia did.” You pause for a moment as Lexa exhales deeply and you wonder if she’s going to puke again.

She doesn’t.

“Costia fucked you up, I get it. She ruined a lot of things and I will always hate her for what she did and who she was, but if you don’t quit pushing Clarke away because you’re afraid of her being like Costia, then you’re going to lose possibly the best thing that’s ever happened to you.” When you’re
done speaking, Lexa stares at you for a moment before throwing her arms over your shoulders, hugging you tightly.

“I’m fucked up,” she cries into your shoulder as you pull her in tightly.

“No,” you correct her, hugging her back. “You’re still healing.”

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**CLARKE**

When your phone rings at 8:27AM, you’re surprised to see Lexa’s name and picture appear.

Surely after everything that you said to her last night, she would never speak to you again… That’s why, when you woke up in Bellamy’s bed, fully clothed, with your mascara smeared and Bellamy bringing you your favorite sadness breakfast, you figured you were single again.

“Is that her?” your roommate asks from the kitchen, shocked to hear your phone ringing as well. He turns off the water from the faucet where he was washing dishes and makes his way over to you, drying his hands on his jeans as he does. “You going to answer it?”

You simply shake your head, regretting that decision as your brain now feels like it’s floating in a vat of water within your skull. Your hangover is not graceful, that’s for sure, and Bellamy’s world famous French toast is not helping at all.

“Wrong move, Griffin,” he offers as your phone stops ringing, beeping to indicate a missed call. Sure, it probably was the wrong move, but it was the only thing that you knew to do. How do you even begin to apologize for the shit things that you said last night? How do you even begin to tell her that you didn’t mean it when, clearly, it was your voice who blamed her for her tragedy? But your thoughts are interrupted by a second ringing and Bellamy shouts from his bedroom where he had retreated “Answer it!” prompting you to do just that.

“Hello?” your voice cracks, being greeted by Lexa’s raspy morning ‘Hey’. A moment of silence lingers over your call before both of you attempt to speak at the same time, smiling as you tell her “you go first.”

“I’m sorry,” she begins, the words taking you by surprise. What in the world does she have to be sorry for? You were the asshole. You said all of those words. You deserve to be apologizing.

“No,” you correct her, feeling the smile on her lips through the phone. “I was a douche. I shouldn’t have said that and I don’t mean it.”

She pauses for a moment, the air exiting her lungs into your phone before she speaks again. Inhaling deeply, she begins, “I just don’t know how to do this…” This sounds more like a break-up than anything and that’s not going to happen. Not today. Not now.

“If you care for me, I need you to trust me,” you tell her, knowing that she’s trying to compare you to her ex at this moment. “I’m not Costia,” you say, surprised that you remember that name at the moment.

“I do trust you, Clarke,” she says as you can feel the cringe in her voice. Her tone is cracking and you can tell that she’s crying and even this thought breaks your heart. You know she’s fighting it back and you know that she’s refusing to let it show, but she can only do so much to stop it in her voice.
“I know that’s hard for you,” you tell her, reassuring her that it’s all going to be okay. You’re not sure if it’s even working anymore.

She breathes deeply, making you want nothing more than to get in your car and drive to her house, enter her room and throw your arms around her, pulling her into your embrace, but your legs feel like jell-o and the room around you is still spinning too fast to even think about moving. “You probably think I’m harsh,” she mumbles into the phone as you nod with a smile on your lips. That’s true. “But that’s how I’ve survived…”

Her words trail into silence as you think about your next phrase carefully. If she was here right now, you’d kiss her. You’d hold her hand and tell her that you love her, even if she can’t bring herself to say those words back. “Maybe life should be about more than surviving,” you settle, saying the rawest statement in your mind. “You deserve better than that.” What she doesn’t hear is the phrase that’s lingering on the tip of your tongue ‘You deserve better than me.’

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LEXA

With you head in your hands and your elbows on your knees, you occupy a seat at the kitchen table, listening as Clarke tells you of your worth and value through the phone. This call was hard for you, and had Lincoln not woken up before you, it probably wouldn’t have happened. You’re obviously terrible at emotions, but you’re even worse at confrontation and this phone call was filled with both.

“We’re fine,” Clarke reassures you as you ask her for probably the 30th time if she forgives you for leaving her on the stairs of her apartment. “As long as you let me stay over tonight,” she adds, a slight bit of cheekiness bleeding through her tone.

You smile and blush slightly as Lincoln passes by throwing up a questioning thumbs-up. You give him one in reply, telling him that everything is going to be alright and he leaves the room.

And for the first time in the past 12 hours, you actually believe that phrase…

Everything’s going to be alright.
Waking up to the smell of waffles was a nice surprise. Obviously, this was not Clarke’s doing—she couldn’t cook if her life depended on it. Throwing your feet down to the carpeted floor, you rub your eyes, retreating into the master bathroom connected to your room to check your reflection, before taking on the world outside. The dark rings under your eyes screamed out to the world around you, telling everyone in your path about how you don’t sleep for fear of remembering. Shaking it off, you splash water on your face before running your hands through your curly hair and heading towards the kitchen.

Waking up to Lexa cooking waffles was a nice surprise as well. Apparently, sometime in the night, Clarke had snuck her girlfriend into your apartment, managing to not wake you. This came as a shock to you considering that A: Clarke is not sneaky, B: Lexa has her own key, and C: Clarke is the loudest person you know in bed…

You must have slept hard through the night. The medication must be working.

“Good morning,” Lexa says to you as you round the corner. You grumble an inaudible reply, causing her to laugh as you reach for a bottle of water in the fridge. “Don’t be grumpy, it’s waffle day.” She flips the waffle iron that Clarke’s mother gave you two for Christmas last year that’s never been used, handing you a fork and telling you to sit at the table. “We’re going to eat like civilized human beings today.”

You oblige, taking the fork from her before nudging her with your right shoulder. It’s then that you notice that she smells incredible. Lexa was awake and showered before you even realized that she had snuck into your house.

“Did you spend the night?” You ask her, receiving a nod in return. Conversations between you two were always shorter and to the point, but that doesn’t mean that they were any less deep— not by any means. In fact, you and Lexa could say only 5 words to each other through an entire evening and
convey more depth and meaning than an entire dialogue with anyone else. Something about her made this possible because god knows it wasn’t your doing.

“Clarke didn’t get off at the hospital until 5 this morning,” she says, glancing over at the clock. 9AM. Clarke’s going to be irritable when you two wake her up in an hour. “I met her here after I closed up at the bar and went home to get some clothes.”

Before you can stop them, the words “Why don’t you move in,” are exiting your mouth, causing you to snap your jaw shut at the table where you sit. “I mean, if you want.”

Lexa looks a little surprised and the blanket of awkwardness surrounds you. “It’s a bit soon, don’t you think?” she asks, opening the waffle iron and pulling out the most perfect waffle that you’ve ever seen. She puts it on the plate and slides it over to you. Without hesitation, you dig in. “Plus, I think Clarke has to agree to that too.”

“Please,” you say sarcastically, mouth full of waffle, taking a drink of your water to wash it all down. “You basically already have and Clarke will be thrilled…. Just think about it…”

Lexa seems relieved when you choose to drop the subject, pulling another waffle and bringing it to have a seat next to you. She delicately cuts hers into squares and you watch on as the meticulous process takes minutes. Honestly, you’ve never understood how someone can have such self-control when a waffle is at stake.

“So how’s it going?” she asks, taking her first bite. She chews so slowly that it blows your mind. This woman honestly thinks about everything before she does it, doesn’t she? How can she even stand you and Clarke?

“Good,” you mumble between bites, realizing exactly what she’s asking. Other than your sister, she’s the only one who knows of your challenges. Other than Octavia, she’s the only one who has seen you fall apart. “You know, considering,” you add, deciding it best not to lie entirely to the only friend you know that can help you. With what, you’re unsure, but other than your sister, she’s the only person who knows the truth about you… and she’s the only one who really understands what it’s like to feel like this.

“And therapy?” she pushes, taking down some of her water before continuing with her waffle. She’s persistent to say the least and she doesn’t sugar coat anything. She’s honest, and you’re totally alright with this.

Nodding, you swallow the lump of waffle in your mouth, cutting another piece with your fork as you speak. “It’s alright… It’s therapy. We go every week.” That’s not entirely true. Therapy is hard. Therapy makes you think about things that you don’t want to and talk about things that you don’t want to and put your sister in positions that you don’t want to. Therapy sucks, but you can’t let anyone know that-- especially when you’re trying to get better.

“And work?” Lexa changes the topic, noting with her eyes her acknowledgement of your awkwardness. You were practically clawing at the walls in the silence before she asked you about your job-- it was evident. Thankfully for your, Lexa understands the way that things work in your brain-- even if that only makes one of you.

Nodding again, you cram as much waffle in your mouth as you can hold, and then a little more just to finish off the plate. Only choking slightly on the mound of carbs sliding down your throat, you offer a small “It’s good” before gulping down a lot of water. When you look back up at your friend, she’s smiling at you. “I love my job. I love the people I work with and I love seeing Clarke at work at least once a week. It’s a good place,” you almost ramble, pushing the plate away from your body.
Lexa nods in return as you interrogate her about life, asking the same questions.

“It’s good,” she says, eyes dropping back to the waffle in front of her as her fork picks at it, unable to finish it. “Things are actually going really well, for the most part.” There’s something lingering on the tip of her tongue, words that she’s refusing to speak. “I just….” Placing her fork down on her plate, she folds her hands in front of her face, resting her elbows on the table. “Clarke thinks that I’m perfect.”

Choking slightly into your glass, you laugh at Lexa without realizing it. “That’s it?” you ask, immediately regretting your reaction as her expression falls. “I mean, I was expecting something terrible, but you’re biggest issue is that she thinks you’re too good?” You snort another laugh, taking a quick sip before raising your eyebrows at her. “I mean, that’s a great problem to have…”

“No Bellamy,” she cuts you off, rubbing her eyes in frustration. “She thinks I’m flawless and I’m not.” Lexa’s obviously upset with this situation, but you can’t find it in you to understand the problem. She’s frustrated that her girlfriend thinks she hung the moon?

“You know what I say dude?” you begin, picking up your fork and picking at her waffle, putting a piece of it in your mouth. “Get over it. Let her love you, even if it makes you uncomfortable.” She looks at you for a moment before sighing, slapping your hand as you raise another piece of her waffle to your mouth.

“Lay off, asshole,” she declares as she picks it up off of the table with her fingers, putting it in her mouth. “You’ve had yours. This one’s mine.”

You smile, leaning back in your chair as you take in the entirety of the situation. 75 days ago, Lexa stumbled drunkenly into your apartment to have a fling with your roommate. And today, 75 days later, you’re sitting with possibly one of the best friends that you’ve ever had, planning another roommate weekend together.

Life’s not too bad.

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LEXA

Waking Clarke up on days off is much like dealing with a toddler. Usually your adventure consists of you starting off nice, cuddling close to her, whispering in her ear, bringing her breakfast and telling her that it’s time to get up. As the hours progress however, your song changes from “Hey sweetie, it’s time to wake up,” to “Clarke, get the fuck up or we’re going to be late.” Bellamy simply laughs from his perch on the doorframe while you rip the blankets off of your girlfriend’s body, thankful that the two of you both got cold in the night so she’s clothed… this time. With a grumble of a reply, Clarke throws a kick or two as you attempt to drag her feet over the side of the bed, but once her toes touch the carpet, she’s ready to go… And within 15 minutes, she’s dressed, adding final touches to her makeup before meeting you and Bellamy in the living room to leave.

“Alright, ready!” Clarke announces, entering the room and bringing the sunshine with her.

You don’t even know how she does it. She goes from zero to sixty in just 20 minutes and goes from dead to the epitome of life, bringing joy into your darkness. When she enters a room, it’s as if it’s filled with bubbles or the sky is free of clouds.

It’s like the blue of her eyes flood the room with clarity.

Clarke entering the room is the freedom of driving for the first time with the windows open.
She is the winning touchdown in the 2008 Big 12 Game with your father between your Sooners and the Missouri Tigers.

She is joy that you never thought you’d feel again, and it terrifies you.

“It’s about time… Shit,” Bellamy says, pushing himself off of the chair that he was occupying, grabbing his keys and heading towards the door. “We’re going to be late to the movie.”

Bellamy is a whole nother ordeal. Bellamy is your foundation. Much like Lincoln, Bellamy is the force that keeps you grounded. Bellamy is gravity and realism, proving the paradigm of reality, the beautiful lie that we all live from time to time.

Bellamy is freedom and slavery.

Bellamy is shelter and peril.

Bellamy is courage and fear.

Bellamy is strength and vulnerability.

“You don’t even like the trailers,” your girlfriend reminds him as you follow closely behind, laughing at their little lovers quarrel. Clarke is obviously not enthused about your lack of a stance in the argument as she glares over at you, sliding her key into the apartment door and locking it behind you.

“Doesn’t matter,” Bellamy nudges Clark with his shoulder as you reach the top of the stairs. “It’s the point of the matter… we said get up and you didn’t…”

“I never get up… You know this.”

“I know!” Bellamy shouts, tossing his hands in the air as a smile spreads across his face. He’s enjoying this fake argument of theirs. Clarke is not. “That’s the point.”

On the last step of the stair case, Clarke thrusts her foot out, pushing Bellamy from the small of his back down the final step to the ground below. Luckily, the railing was there to catch his fall.

“Fuck off Griffin!” He shouts, turning quickly to grab Clarke from around her knees. Before you knew any better, Bellamy was lifting your girlfriend off of her feet, throwing her torso over his shoulder. ‘Let’s go Lexa,” he says to you as Clarke squeals and kicks, trying to regain herself. Bellamy isn’t letting go though. “Let’s take out this trash and then we’ll go to the movies ourselves.

You just smile, not even knowing how to respond. They’re perfect for each other.

Even more so, they’re perfect for you.

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LEXA

The movie was perfect. More than the movie, Clarke was perfect in it. She sighed and gasped with her hands over her mouth and completely fan-girled over some book turned into a movie named Insurgent while you had no clue what was happening. Not having read the books or seen the first movie, you were completely lost as you attempted to catch on to what this girl who shared the same name as your sister and her overly defined boyfriend were doing. From what you gathered, she’s something special and people are trying to kill her for it but her boyfriend is trying to protect her and
although they live in the future, everyone is really poor and angry.

It doesn’t really make sense, but Clarke seemed to enjoy it, and that’s all that matters to you.

“Wasn’t that the best?” Clarke asks as you squint into the outside world, the sun blinding you for a brief moment. Leaving movie theaters was what you would expect leaving Plato’s cave in his Allegory to be like. You lose all track of time and no matter what time you went in, you’re always convinced that it’s midnight when you leave… Every time. But it never is, and you’re never prepared for it.

Rubbing your eyes, you just nod, not really knowing what else to do. It wasn’t terrible, you just don’t understand it. “I guess,” you accidentally mumble, silently preparing yourself for the backlash that’s already forming in Clarke’s eyes.

“You guess?!” She exclaims, stepping in front of you, throwing her hands over her head. “I mean, I know it didn’t exactly follow the book, but it’s coming together really well! Plus, Tris and Four are perfect together! What the fuck is wrong with you?” There’s a fire in her eyes that you’ve rarely seen before. In fact, when talking to Clarke, this passion only comes out when talking about her art work (which she doesn’t let you see enough of) or when discussing work.

So that makes three things that Clarke’s passionate about:

1) Work
2) Art
3) Divergent

Oh and then there’s you.

She’s passionate about you.

“I mean, he loves her even though she’s not great for him…” she says, sighing as her inner fan-girl shows. You want to smile. You want to laugh at how adorable your girlfriend is right now, but something itches in the back of your brain as you begin to ponder if that’s how you and Clarke are.

She loves you even if you’re not great for her.

I mean, this Tris girl obviously had baggage… She was cold and isolated and going through some pretty rough (although weird) shit… and something like that rings true for you… You’re pretty cold and isolated if you’re going to be real with yourself… and you’ve brought more than your share of baggage to the table.

Are you Clarke’s Divergent?

“Never read it,” you explain away your thoughts, almost whispering, terrified of what’s coming next. Clarke stops walking backwards, halting you in your tracks.

“Oh no,” Bellamy warns you, taking a step away from the two of you as he holds his hands up in surrender. “I’m… I’m going to… go get the truck… Yeah… That’s a good idea.” He walks backwards for a few steps, laughing silently as he does before turning and jogging in the direction of your parking spot.

Turning your attention back to your girlfriend, you smile awkwardly at her. She’s not returning the smile.
“I can’t believe it… You read all these books but you’ve never ready the Divergent series?” She looks at you completely concerned, turning away again. “I just… I can’t.” You laugh again as she’s unable to express herself articulately. Normally Clarke is completely capable of using words-- but not when fan-girling… Clarke can’t do anything when fan-girling.

“Well, you’ll have to let me borrow it sometime,” you say as you wrap your arms around her waist. She’s obviously still confused by you and your entire life at this point as she places a hand on your cheek. She nods, and continues to walk with you attached to her. Kissing her cheek, you smile, just happy that she’s finding humor in your awkwardness. “I’m glad you liked it though,” you whisper into her ear as she cringes and laughs at your breath on her neck.

“Whatever,” she mumbles, taking your hand in hers and separating your bodies. “You’re lame.”

That may be the case, but you’re falling more in love with her by the minute, and that’s totally fine. At least this way you know that she’ll always have something to explain to you. You can be lame if it gives Clarke reason to continually speak to you.

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**BELLAMY**

Walking into your apartment that evening was a blessing. You honestly expected to be alone and you weren’t too enthused about that, but opening the door, you walk into a warm and welcoming room with the smell of cooked apples (or whatever synthetic form of so comes from candles) greeting your nostrils. Lexa was balled up on the loveseat, book in hand with candles lit on the table.

“Oh hey,” she greets you, closing the book quickly. She’s trying to hide it, but it’s not working. Catching the cover before she shoves it under the pillow beside her, you can’t help but crack a smile. Divergent.

“She’s got you whipped,” you tell her, removing your jacket and placing it on the dining room chair to your right. She smiles back awkwardly, pulling the book from its hiding place and glancing over the cover before laying it on the table.

“Yeah,” a groan exits her lips as you push her feet from the space next to her, taking the seat beside her. “It’s pretty terrible…”

“I read it once,” you admit, threatening her with her life if she tells anyone. “I hated it, but the movies aren’t bad.”

The two of you continue to talk about books and, although you knew this before, you’re shocked by Lexa’s intelligence. She’s well versed in literature and highly well rounded in her genres, having read most of the books that you listed.

The Great Gatsby.

Lord of the Flies.

To Kill a Mockingbird.

The Odyssey.

Brave New World.

The Things They Carried.
The Awakening.

Things Fall Apart.

Don Quixote.

The Divine Comedy.

Your list continues, as do Lexa’s nods. Seriously, the only thing that you have up on her was that time you read through the entire works of C.S. Lewis and that you and Octavia read the Giving Tree with your mother when you were younger.

“Oh!” her words interrupt your thoughts as you ponder more books to quiz her on. “I have your book,” she explains, standing from her seat and sprinting into the bedroom to only return with the copy of Screwtape Letters that you allowed her to borrow.

Taking it from her as she sat, your eyes met hers and you saw it, heartbreak. You don’t even need to ask her whether or not she enjoyed it. Her eyes give it all away-- it broke her soul.

You want to ask. You want to converse. But those eyes tell you that you can’t. You can’t bring yourself to open up that darkness. Not right now.

“The safest road to hell is the gradual one - the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts,” she quotes Screwtape to you, wringing her hands in her lap. “It was… a heavy read.” Understatement of the century. “I’m glad that things worked out for the Patient in the end though,” she adds, glancing up with a half-smile.

That’s a weird statement though. “The Patient died in the end,” you remind her, crossing one leg over the other. She looks concerned at first, face dropping slightly as she looks at her hands, picking at her fingers. Where did this Lexa come from? She went from being happy, intelligent and confident one moment to silent, uncomfortable and downtrodden the next. Had you said something wrong?

“Yeah, but he got his salvation,” she replies, still not looking at you. “His demons were defeated… It just sucks that it happened that way.” And that’s when you realize it… Lexa’s still fighting.

Everything inside of her is still fighting.

Everything inside of her is still struggling.

And as you watch her awkwardly tremble next to you, all you want to do is hold her, telling her that everything will be alright.

But you can’t.

Because that’s not how the two of you operate.

Instead, you settle for changing the topic. That’s the easier bet.

“So, how far along are you?” You ask, tossing your book on the table and pointing to the book that she’s borrowed from Clarke.

She smiles, obviously grateful for the topic change as she leans over to grab the teen fiction from the table and lifting to you. “I’ve got one more chapter,” she says, grinning loudly.

Loudly. That’s the best way to describe when Lexa is overjoyed. It’s a stark contrast from her normal demeanor. She’s calm and quiet and collected and totally in control-- and then she becomes excited.
And when Lexa is excited, you see a little bit of the Lexa that you’ve only heard about in drunken stories on game nights. You see a Lexa that is care-free and no longer exhausted. You can see a Lexa that loves herself.

“Wait,” you say, raising an eyebrow. There’s no way… “That’s over 500 pages and you’ve read that all today?” you ask, taking the book from her and skimming the pages with your thumb. She simply nods, explaining that she’s pretty much been perched with a glass of wine in this same spot over the course of your 7 hour shift. “That’s incredible dedication,” you mock her, tossing it into her lap. “Clarke will be pleased.”

“She better be,” she says, rubbing her eyes. “It’s not terrible…. It’s just…”

“Terrible?” you cut her off, finishing the statement for her. “It’s pretty terrible.”

Lexa laughs, taking the book in her hands, looking over the cover as if she’s never seen it before. “Yeah,” she finally speaks with a snort, tossing it to the couch next to you. “It’s definitely not Steppenwolf or King Hereafter,” she adds, catching you off guard.

“Never read King Hereafter,” you tell her as her eyes widen. Giving you a similar expression to that which she received from Clarke earlier today, your friend watches as you blink silently, waiting for the backlash.

But it doesn’t come.

That’s so Lexa.

Instead, she pulls out her phone and types away without words for about three minutes. Sitting in the silence isn’t awkward, though. It’s just like conversations with her, you’re on the same field here.

“Done,” she says, clicking the screen lock button and tossing her phone onto the couch next to Divergent with pride flashing across her face. Staring at her with a confused grin, you chuckle as her face breaks into a wide smile.

There it is again.

“You’re going to have a package arriving here in a couple of days that has my name on it,” she begins, pulling her hands over her mouth to have her smile. “Open it. It’s for you.”

She did not.

“No, you didn’t just buy me that book, did you?” you beg, placing a hand on her knee before you notice it, pulling away quickly.

Not crossing that line.

She just smiles, nodding gently before adding a small “Yup.”

Of course she did.

“Anyway, I think you just skimmed that book,” you say, brushing her off and pointing to Divergent on the couch between you two. “There’s no way that you could have finished it that quickly.”

She smirks, shoving your knee with her foot to make your leg fall from its perch. “Whatever, maybe I’m a better reader than you.”

“Sure,” you reply, realizing that you’ve been sitting on the couch with her for an hour now and you
desperately need to shower in order to get ready for this evening.

It’s not every day that you have a date…

Lifting your body from the loveseat, you walk around to the back side of it, rubbing Lexa’s head as you pass.

“Oh,” you add, smiling and remembering something very important just as you make it to the hallway. “You want to get laid tonight?”

The question seems to catch Lexa off guard as she jumps around to face you, looking at you with eyebrows furrowed.

“Sure?” she says as if it’s a question. “I mean, are you offering?” Her joke surprises you as you blush, her smiling uncontrollably at her humor.

Fuck her.

She’s a sarcastic motherfucker.

“All right asshole,” you begin, rolling your eyes. “Orange cream slush from sonic and the Divergent movie. Don’t have sex on my couch.” You don’t have to say anything else. The look in Lexa’s eyes tells you that she understands. The nod that she gives you before you turn around only reinforces this fact.

Smiling as you reach your room, closing your door behind you, you can’t help but be pleased with the way that your relationship is progressing. You’ve had friends before, Saturday nights at your house is evident of this, but you’ve never really had that “Bro” before. Clarke’s good, but she’s Clarke. She’s your little sister basically…

But Lexa.

Lexa’s your “bro”.

Lexa’s your best friend.

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LEXA

You’re not quite sure how Bellamy knows it, and you decide not to ask because it’s better if you don’t know, but he was right. When Clarke came home to you sitting on the couch, laptop pulled close with Divergent paused at the opening scene and the largest possible Sonic cups filled with orange cream slushes for the both of you, her face immediately lights up. You don’t find it necessary to tell her that you had to drive for over an hour to get fucking sonic nor that you had to sign up for your own Netflix account because you couldn’t remember the password to hers, especially not after she climbs onto the couch beside you, allowing you to wrap your arm around her shoulder as she pulls her knees to her chest and swaddles up with her drink into the blanket that you’ve laid out.

“I finished the first book,” you tell her, a smile spreading across her lips that you crave to kiss. Leaning in slightly, you plant your lips on hers before she pulls away, too quickly for your liking.

“Wasn’t it the best book you’ve ever read?” She asks, fan-girl Clarke surfacing to overtake your girlfriend. She’s obnoxious and graceless, but she’s beautiful and too entirely cute to pass up.
Choosing your words delicately this time, you try to fake a smile as you reply, “It was pretty good, yeah!”

Clarke catches on, laughing against you. “It’s okay… I know it’s not your style.”

You join her in shaking your head, cracking a smile and laughing slightly as you lean in to kiss her again. “It’s really not, but I know that you love it.” The words ‘And I love you’ almost slip through your lips before you stop them, kissing her instead. You still can’t bring yourself to say it… Even though you want to. Every time you begin, however, you choke up, feeling the burning on the back of your neck indicating the oncoming panic of anxiety. It’s just easier not to right now.

Smiling at you, she moves the laptop from your legs, leaning forward to place her drink on the coffee table, taking yours from your hand to do the same. Before you can question what she’s doing, Clarke throws a leg over yours, taking a seat in your lap to face you. Wrapping her arms around your shoulders, she pulls your head into yours, sliding one hand into your hair while the other scratches at the base of your neck.

“Do you know how much I care for you?” she asks you, placing her forehead on yours. As the movie continues to play behind her on the laptop, you listen to her breathing, biting down on your lower lip gently, you ponder your next words carefully, swallowing down the lump in your throat.

“I love you,” you whisper as your fingers gently stroke the sliver of skin just above her pants line, almost hoping that she doesn’t hear it.

If she doesn’t hear you say those words, then you don’t have to talk about them.

If she doesn’t hear you say those words, then you don’t have to own up to them.

If she doesn’t hear you say those words, then you still maintain control.

But that’s not the case.

Even with your eyes closed, you can feel the smile crack across her face before she kisses you deeply, tightening her hand that’s in your hair.

What was that about losing control? Because you have no power in this situation. Clarke owns you.

Unable to stop it, you whimper slightly into her mouth, completely okay with Clarke’s dominance at this moment.

Withdrawing her hands from behind you, she grabs yours, pulling them up to the back of the couch behind your head. “Stay there,” she orders as you try to move them to hold you, pushing your wrists back into the couch. She continues to kiss you, unbuttoning your shirt and pushing her body closer to yours. “No,” she orders again, pulling her face away to look at you when you try to move your hands. “I said keep them there.”

It must have been something in the way that you smiled at her, but Clarke knew that you weren’t going to be standing still if you had any control of your arms-- the pull of her body was just too much. Instead of leaving that up to you, she decided something else. Pulling her tank top over her head, she wrapped it around your wrists, shoving your hands back down behind your head.

“Now, leave… them… there…” she orders, kissing your neck between each word.

Okay…
She wins…

With her hands skating down your sides, she kisses your neck and shoulders, pulling your shirt away from them. The one fatal flaw in her plan, she tied your hands up before removing your shirt. Oh well… that doesn’t seem to be stopping her. Biting small circles on your skin, Clarke dances her way down your body, your hips beginning to move with the pulsating in your chest. Fuck this ‘no hands thing’. Moving your hands to grip the back of her head, you breathe heavily as she begins unbuttoning your jeans.

Just as you move your hips to help her slide them off, the door begins to unlock, causing both of you to jump. Panicking slightly, Clarke pulls the blanket over her body as you fight against the shirt that she tied tightly around your hands. Of course she knotted it.

The door opens and Clarke disappears under the blanket at your feet with a giggle, leaving you sitting on the couch, your shirt unbuttoned, hands tied, and girlfriend balled up in the blanket on the floor at your feet as Bellamy and Harper walk through the door.

“Well this is weird,” Harper says through her attempts to fight back laughter. You would say the same thing if you were even able to gather air. “Never knew you were in such great shape Lexa… You’ll have to work out with me sometime,” she adds, wrapping an arm through Bellamy’s who is simply standing there, staring at the mass that is your girlfriend on the floor.

He pokes out his lip, obviously thinking about what to say before pointing to the wad of Clarke’s tank top, holding your hands together. “That Clarke’s shirt?” he asks, raising an eyebrow. You simply nod, listening to the giggling mass at your feet before kicking at her slightly, a hand surfacing to slap your leg. “Alright, well, have fun,” he laughs, pulling a giggling Harper back towards his room. “Oh,” he adds, poking his head around the corner of the hallway to face you again. “Don’t have sex on my couch.”

Clarke lets out the laugh that she’s been surprising since the door began opening as she stands, bringing the blanket with her to cover both of you as she climbs back on top of your legs.

“Well, this is uncomfortable,” you explain, an awkward smile crossing your face. 75 days ago, you would have died of anxiety at this moment. Today, however, you’re just mildly embarrassed. That’s progress.

“What?” Clarke asks, kissing your lips. Can she hear your heartbeat? You’re sure she can hear it. “The fact that Bellamy just walked in on this or the fact that he and Harper are totally about to fuck each other?”

Cringing slightly, you debate on which fact is the most uncomfortable. Honestly, you’ve never known anything about Bellamy’s love life and you’ve been totally alright with that. Other people’s relationships make you uncomfortable. “Both? You reply awkwardly, gritting your teeth as Clarke laughs.

“Can we go to your place?” she asks you, holding the back of your neck as she kisses you under the blanket.

You’d honestly say yet to anything at this point if it kept her around… especially after you spoke those three terrible words.

They always leave after those three words…

But Clarke, she was still here.
She was still here after you told her that you loved her and she was still asking to be with you.

“Yeah,” you nod as Harper begins giggling from Bellamy’s room. Your eyes widen to meet Clarke’s who look to be in complete shock and disgust. “Hurry.”

Even in spite of the fact that she didn’t say those three evil words back, tonight’s a pretty good night.
This is the way that I say I'm Yours

Chapter Notes

Hello gentle viewers...

Here's Chapter 15.

More fluff and filler as well as some flashback angst to hold you over.

Was going to make these 2 separate chapters originally but fused them into one longer one.

add me on tumblr and let's be friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

Enjoy.

listening and writing to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7SJXYvm KE

BELAMY

Hearing the apartment door close from inside of your bedroom made you and Harper laugh slightly. It’s not like anything was actually happening that would distract you from the world outside-- I mean, unless you count Netflix binging and ordering enough pizza to feed Ethiopia. It’s Harper for Christ’s sake-- she’s one of the guys… but yet she’s not.

“Alright, Blake… We have three different cheeses, bell peppers, bacon, chicken, onions, black olives…”

“Oh now,” you silence her words, stealing the laptop from her lap next to you. Somehow, in the last twenty minutes, this woman has not only made her way onto your bed, but also under the blankets and had gained control of your computer and the pizza ordering ability. Who the fuck does she think she is? “We do not eat olives in this house.” You say it as if she should already know this, but why wouldn’t she? Olives are the devil’s food.

“Fuck off Blake, olives are good for you!” Holding out her hands and demanding the laptop back, you give in, handing it over and watching her click on the black olives again, ordering them anyway.

You could always just pick them off. Your therapist did tell you that you needed to learn to not try to control every situation-- he also was the one who told you to ask Harper to dinner, but that’s beside the point…

Something about how you talk about her frequently in sessions and often reference her when discussing your friends, but that’s just horseshit. Of course you reference her… She’s your friend.

“So, you going to explain to me why you’re in my bed, or do I have to just guess?” you ask her as she gets to the payment screen on the website, battling for control over the computer still as you snatch it from her hands, entering your debit info before she could.

“Only if you explain to me why you invited me to your apartment after taking me on a date.”
Good comeback… even though it’s misguided.

This wasn’t a date.

This isn’t a date.

But yet….

“This isn’t a date,” your mind catches up to your mouth, you guess, as you throw out these words, almost too quickly for them to be genuine. She lets out a laugh as she pulls the Xbox remote from beside you, reaching over your waist as she does so.

“If you say so Blake…” She smile leaning a head on your shoulder as she pulls up netflix on the television across the room, not even asking a preference.

It’s not a date.

“I’m just saying…. A dude like you doesn’t invite a girl back home with him if it’s not a date.”

“A dude like me?” you ask her, mocking her tone. “What kind of dude am I?” Who the fuck uses the word dude anymore anyway?

It’s not a date.

“An asshole,” was her first response, laughing as she scrolls through the thriller section, obviously judging your Netflix account list. In your defense, you share this account with both Octavia and Clarke, so you’re only slightly responsible for what shows up. There are words still lingering in Harper’s throat though and you can feel them as she breathes in deeply.

“And?” you cock you head slightly to the right so you can see her face.

Is she fucking blushing?

It’s not a date.

“You’re not a bad guy, Blake,” she says as the tips of her last two fingers inch onto your thigh under the blankets. When did you climb under the covers with her? Were you here the whole time?

It’s not a date.

Smiling, you can’t help to stare as her eyes flick from side to side, doing anything to ignore your face.

“You’re in my way,” she almost whispers to you, finally looking at you, placing the controller beside her.

It’s the small things like that motion that you would never normally notice. It’s the way that her breathing has been catching since she slid her hand onto your leg. It’s the way that she’s clinched her shoulders, tightening her entire body as it inched closer to you.

It’s not a date.

“Move me,” you dare her, taken back by your own forwardness. You’ve never been particularly shy, but you’ve never been the one to make the first move either. Taking your right hand, you brush a piece of her blonde hair behind her ear, cupping her left cheek before kissing her gently.
Much to your surprise, she reciprocates, sliding her tongue into your mouth and dancing across yours lightly. Before you know any better, you’re lifting her body with one arm while supporting yourself with your other, sliding her under you slightly. Still kissing you back, she tugs at the collar of your shirt, pulling your body closer to hers. You hold tight to her hip as she begins unbuttoning the first button under your collar, grabbing the base of your neck and running her fingers through your hair.

Before you can even process your next move, the doorbell interrupts your progression, alerting you that your pizza is here-- or at least that’s what it should be.

“Fuck,” Harper exhales, sliding away and running her hands through her hair. “I’ll get that.” She’s all sorts of disheveled as she sprints quickly though your door and out of your room.

It’s not a date.

It’s actually probably a date.

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TRIS

Tris (1:22 AM): I can’t handle this… They either need to buy me ear muffs or get their own place

BROSEIDON (1:24 AM): ….

Tris (1:25 AM): You have to agree?!?! She’s your sister too!

BROSEIDON (1:28 AM): just don’t listen you weird-o. You have head phones

Tris (1:29AM): AT SCHOOL!

BROSEIDON (1:33 AM): aAHAAHAHAHAHAHA sucks for you!

BROSEIDON (1:34 AM): P.s. don’t leave those expensive shits at school…

Tris (1:36 AM): I’m coming over

BROSEIDON (1:37 AM): Don’t.

Tris (1:38 AM): Too late…

BROSEIDON (1:41 AM): I’m not decent… I’m naked

Tris (1:42 AM): You’re full of shit.

---

LINCOLN

You honestly shouldn’t have been surprised by the small knock on your door before it creaked open just slightly enough for your little sister to slide her thin body through. She looks more like Lexa than she does you… She looked more like Keith than your mother, but you see your mother in her eyes. That same half-smile, though, greeted you, just as it did every night when Keith would come into your room, knocking lightly as he entered to talk with you about how your day was going.

He didn’t have to be your father. In fact, you begged him not to be. You already had one of those
and he did a terrible job at it, using up your mother and leaving her broken and shattered only to return to whatever hell-hole he crawled from and disappear forever. Keith was supposed to be the same, destroying everything that you and your mother had built up, but instead, he read you and your new step-sister the newspaper every morning, driving you to school soon after while having deep, stimulating and intellectual conversations about whatever news topic you read that morning, picking you up early on Wednesdays for ice cream and bringing home pizzas on Fridays for family dinners. Instead of destroying your mother, he loved her fully, taking her on cruises that he shouldn’t have been able to afford, massaging her shoulders after a long day at work while the 5 of you sat around, talking about your days. Keith was supposed to break your heart, telling you that you were a worthless human being and a lousy son, just like your father did, but instead, he invested in you, building you up into a man who would go on to take care of his family. Keith wasn’t supposed to be a good man, but that’s all that Keith knew how to do.

And Tris was just like him. In fact, Lexa was just like him. Actually, all three of you were just like him, even if you shared absolutely no blood with him whatsoever. Keith was your father, even when he didn’t have to be.

“Scoot over fatty,” Tris says as she climbs over the footboard of your bed, pushing her way between you and the wall. It’s been years since she’s spent time in your room. The three of you were generally pretty good about respecting each other’s privacy and rooms were sacred places, but every once in a blue moon, Tris would climb into bed with you, cuddling up under your down comforter and forcing you to watch some terrible dance themed movie or something from the 80s. In fact, the last time that she even ventured past your doorway was when you were struggling to keep Lexa alive.

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**LINCOLN**

“I can’t do it,” your little sister mumbles, scaling the side of your bed with ease. Crawling under the blanket beside you, she exhales deeply, shuttering as she does. “All she’s done is sit there and complain about not being able to do anything… Nothing matters to her anymore.”

She’s not wrong. Nothing matters to Lexa anymore…

Nothing except ending the pain.

“It’s not her fault,” your voice falters slightly as you pull the blanket off of your little sister’s face. You only slightly believe the words that are coming from your mouth.

Actually, you don’t believe them at all, but that’s beside the point.

Your opinion doesn’t matter.

“The doctor says it’ll just take time.” Again, you don’t even believe what you’re saying, but it’s what Tris needs to hear. It’s what you need to hear. This isn’t Lexa. You’ve grown up with Lexa. You’ve matured with Lexa. This person sitting lifeless in your living room and sleeping behind doors that aren’t allowed to close isn’t Lexa. This person craving conclusion and seeking gratification isn’t Lexa. It’s absolutely her fault because she brought you into this world, but that’s not how you’re supposed to feel. You’re supposed to love her and support her and help her in any way possible.

But you can’t.

Not entirely.
In fact, you hate her.

You hate her at given moments for what she’s putting you through.

You hate her at certain times for what she’s putting Tris through.

You hate her for trying to leave you behind to pick up the pieces of your family after everything.

More than anything though, you hate her for not being as strong as you always thought she was.

“I know,” Tris sighs, grabbing the blanket and pulling it back over her face. You crack a small smile at your little sister, watching as the blanket rises and falls with each breath she takes, thankful for the air in her lungs. “I’m just not sure how to handle it. She’s just so different.”

That was an understatement.

“She hasn’t even come to a single game this season,” she adds, the sadness bleeding through her voice as if she was painting her words with it. “She always comes to my games.”

You nod your head, still watching the blankets as they shake through her tears. Truth is, Lexa had never missed a game, even after your parents died. It wasn’t until this situation came up… It wasn’t until the full force of Costia happened that Lexa started to disappear on you.

“I know Kiddo,” you sigh, placing a hand over where her face is, pretending to suffocate her for a moment. “It’ll get better.” The words taste like a lie in your mouth. “It’ll just take time.”

---

LINCOLN

“But for real,” Tris begins, pulling your remote from your nightstand, flipping the television across the room on as she skims through the channels. “How long does the honeymoon phase last? Isn’t Lesbian Bed Rest a thing?” You snort a laugh as Tris glares over at you before returning her attention to finding the perfect show. “I’m just saying… If I lose regionals because I couldn’t sleep over them playing Marco Polo in there conquering uncharted lands, I might have to break them up.”

You continue to laugh at your sister, only laughing more when she stops her channel surfing at ABC Family’s Harry Potter marathon, smiling brightly as she tosses the remote to the foot of the bed.

“Nerd,” you whisper, pulling a book from beside you and opening it to where your pen was placed.

“What the fuck ever!” You’re met with a fist to your shoulder, nudging you slightly to your right. “You’re the asshole with a hallows tattoo.”

She’s not wrong.

A silence lingers for a few moments that should have left you to your book, but instead, your mind is consumed with memories of the first time that you saw your sister.

Tris was tiny, but all babies are too frail for this world. It’s almost as if they’re not supposed to survive-- too weak-- too frail. But Tris was strong; there was no doubt about this. And she was always Lexa’s. You two got along just fine. You bonded over soccer and movies and food, but Tris was always Lexa’s first. From the moment that she was born, Lexa claimed her, taking her in her arms and promising to protect her always. It was endearing how your 14 year old sister was making all of these grand promises and schemes to this hours old baby, but she never once broke her
promises-- even when she was at her darkest.

“You’re not even fucking listening, are you?” Tris asks, nudging you again with her fist. You simply shake your head, blinking a few times as you draw your attention back to your sister, bundled up in your blanket next to you, legs pulled in close to her chest. “Shit Brometheus, I could have just gotten you to agree to anything… I could have just asked for your motorcycle…”

Shaking your head, you push her over with your shoulder, falling on top of her. “Well, good thing I didn’t actually say anything then, right? Plus, you can’t drive a motorcycle,” you remind her as she squirms, squealing under your weight.

“Get the fuck off!” you hear her shout, kicking your legs with her small feet.

Something about having your little sister here again with you is nice, especially saying that this time, you’re not afraid of losing Lexa in the room next door.

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**CLARKE**

Lexa’s warm hand over your mouth is enough to send your body into shock as she shushes you loudly. It’s still not enough to drown out the sounds coming from your mouth.

“If you don’t learn to keep it down, my sister is going to light our room on fire.”

Our…

She said our room.

It was small and almost unnoticeable, but it was there.

Removing your eyes from the ceiling above you, you peer down at your girlfriend whose head was resting on your chest, listening intently to your quickened heartbeat intently as she skims her fingertips up your bare sides.

She’s ridiculously gorgeous. For real. Everything about her screams perfection. Her hair. Her complexion. Her eyes. Her smile. Her physique.

And then there’s you.

And you pale in comparison to Lexa.

You’re not exactly in this perfect shape. You struggle on morning runs with her (on the few times a week that she can drag you out of bed for them). You haven’t exactly done a sit-up in the past… forever. If anything, the only real thing that you have going for you is that you don’t gain weight frequently-- you’ve made sure of that.

And yet, here this stunning image of perfection is, dancing her fingers up your body, telling you that you’re beautiful when you can’t even bring your brain to say that word.

How is it even possible for her to find you beautiful?

She’s perfect.

And you… well, you’re just you.
LEXA

Waking up to shared days off with Clarke were like a blessing to you. Without the sounds of alarm clocks buzzing at god awful hours and without one of you two rushing out of the door to get to some place or another, you enjoy simply lying in bed for an hour after the sun wakes you, taking in the glory that is your snoring, drooling girlfriend who has always managed to steal all of the blankets and, without fail, always has her ice cold feet tucked against your body.

She gives you air.

She gives you life.

Just as she starts to shift, you begin planning your day. This evening is the first of your sister’s regional soccer competition and there was no missing it. You’d be there no matter what-- come hell or high waters. There’s only been one time in your life that you missed her matches and there was no way that you were ever going back down that road. Tris was yours-- always has been.

Sliding your body away from Clarke’s gently, your feet touch the cold, hardwood floor, sending a shiver through your legs. Scooting the rest of the way off of the bed, you listen closely to the sounds around you, hearing Tris’ pre-game ritual happening in the room right next door.

Grabbing your phone from the nightstand, you find it impossible to ignore that blinking red light indicating a missed message.

Tris (2:37 AM): You are a piece of shit.

Smiling against your sister’s text, you make your way to the closet, careful to avoid the squeaking floorboard just beside your bed so as to not wake Clarke. Rummaging through your clothes, you grab the first shirt you find, a black v-neck, followed by the soccer jersey matching your sisters, pulling a pair of jeans next and making your way through the door, skirting past Clarke’s clothes scattered across your once immaculate room.

She’s actually sort of moved in…

“I fucking hate you,” are the first words that you’re greeted with, passing your sister’s room on the way to the bathroom. “Seriously, all I heard last night was the sound of you and the princess in there getting it on… Do you honestly have to fuck every time the door closes?” She tosses a shirt at your head, exiting her room and nudging past you to the kitchen. “Give that to Princess when you come tonight.” Unfolding the shirt, you can’t fight off a smile when you see that it’s another jersey for Clarke to wear.

Tris is inviting your girlfriend to her game.

“And try not to fuck each other too much at the game. It might distract some of my teammates,” her voice echoes through the walls followed by Lincoln’s deep laugh. You smile in return, tucking the new jersey under your arm as you close the bathroom door behind you.

---

CLARKE

When Lexa returns to find you still in bed, she doesn’t even seem shocked. You’re completely wrapped in the blanket, scrolling through your newsfeed on your phone when she creeps into the
room, sliding through the barely cracked doorway and throwing her body next to you.

“What are your plans for the day? She asks, planting a small kiss on your lips.

“Well,” you begin, kissing her back, smiling as you do. “I was thinking about falling more in love with you.” She smiles. “But I can shuffle some things around if you’ve got a better idea.”

Lexa pretends to think deeply, tapping her finger on her lips. “I think we can manage that,” she finally replies with another grin, kissing you again as she tossing her arms over your shoulders, pulling you down on top of her. “But, I do have one request.”

Lexa rarely asks things of you. In fact, you make most of the plans. Normally, it’s you and Bellamy deciding on things and simply looking at Lexa and telling her what’ve you’ve decided. For the first time ever really, Lexa’s asking something of you.

“Alright?” you ask, almost inaudibly as you bury your face into her neck. She’s showered and smells sweet, the scent of vanilla invading your nostrils and reminding you of what your pillow smells like when she’s gone or that oversized hoodie that you stole from her for when she’s at work.

She shrugs, fighting off the laughter of your breath on her neck. “So, tonight’s Tris’ regionals,” she says, almost mumbling. You wait for the question, not wanting to seem too overeager with your answer, but she’s talking too entirely slow for you.

“Yes,” you respond, not letting her finish her question. “I’d love to go.” A smile breaks across her face as she watches you. Lifting her body off of yours, she tosses you the jersey, making her way to the doorway again. “Invite whoever you want,” she says, turning back to face you, still smiling. “Tris would love an audience.”

You laugh as your girlfriend leaves the room, just as quickly as she entered, listening as she and Tris continue to squeal and chat from the hallway.

That’s something about the Woods/Holcomb family-- they don’t just spend time in the living room like most families. No, their main room is the kitchen, but any room can become a family room in a heartbeat with them. You never know when you’re going to be face-to-face with your family.

And that’s when it hits you…

These guys are your family…

Your phone vibrates, scaring the living shit out of you just as you start to zone out.

**Raven (10:35 AM):** Hey bitch, I’m coming in town. Crash Octavia’s house?

A smile spreads quickly across your face as you feel a giddy laugh begin to form in your chest. This is always your reaction when it comes to Raven.

**Clarke (10:37 AM):** FUCK YES!

Before you can even think of a follow up, your phone vibrates again.

**Raven (10:37 AM):** And I want to meet your new girlie! Done deal.

Just when you didn’t think your smile could get any larger, it did, and just then Lexa entered the room, crashing down on the bed again beside you.
“Sexting your boyfriend?” she jokes, poking her head around your arms to glance playfully at your phone.

“Nah,” you reply, biting your lip as you type with just one thumb, the other hand pushing her beautiful face away from you. “Bellamy’s asleep.”

She laughs into your palm and the feeling of her breath against you sends shivers down your spine.

You want to kiss her, but that’s nothing new.

You always want to kiss her.

---

LEXA

Meeting Raven should have been easy. You’ve been through the ringer with all of Clarke’s other friends, so why should this one be any different?

Well, Raven was different for many reasons.

Firstly, she was completely unpredictable. Every word that flowed from her mouth hinted at this.

Secondly, she was articulate. She sounded like the kind of person who you would follow into war and those kinds of people often terrified you.

Thirdly, she wore her battle scars with pride, making jokes at her own injuries. Apparently, while in the military, she was injured by a bullet to her spine and now sported the most intimidating leg brace that you’ve ever seen, but god did she wear it well.

Fourthly, she was super attractive. Her mother was Hispanic and her father Irish or some combination, but it gave her this perfect complexion with a slightly darker skin tone and these stunning, large, almond eyes.

Finally, she caused something to happen in Clarke. Your girlfriend was different around Raven. She was alive in a way that didn’t occur around any of her other friends and although it wasn’t bad, it was just different.

And different terrified you.

“So what’s our plan again?” Raven asked, throwing her body onto the couch, immediately reaching for the candy jar of starbursts that you’ve only ever seen Bellamy pull from. She took the entire jar into her grasp, lying down and propping her feet up on the arm of the couch, crossing her ankles over each other.

You open your mouth to speak from inside of the kitchen where you were finishing the clean-up process from lunch before Clarke sprints into the room from the back, jumping into the lap of her friend, squishing her body between Raven and the couch. “Lexa’s sister is a rock star at soccer and we’re going to watch her play after we swing by Octavia’s.” Clarke’s got this. She doesn’t need your help.

“And tell me more about your hot brother, Lexa?” Raven begs, grumbling at Clarke as she repositions herself to keep them both from falling into the floor.

Your face heats up as you blush slightly. You’ve never seen Lincoln as your hot brother, in spite of
what everyone keeps saying. Lincoln’s just Lincoln. It’s hard to find someone attractive when you’ve seen them literally shit on themselves before. Sure, Lincoln’s handsome, but he’s Lincoln.

“Doesn’t matter,” Clarke saves you, grabbing a starburst from her friend who resists at first but gives in when Clarke pinches the back of her arm. “Octavia’s totally hooking up with him.” You snort as you enter the living room, tossing the damp rag onto the kitchen table on your way out. Walking over to the loveseat, you plop your body down across from your girlfriend and her friend.

“Nu uh,” Raven denies, shaking her head violently, brown hair whipping back and forth. “She would have said something to me about it…. Did she tell you?” Her last question comes out more violently that you would have anticipated as she interrogates your girlfriend, grabbing her hips and tickling her. A tiny tinge of jealousy bubbles up in you as you swallow it back down.

She’s just her friend.

Clarke laughs, pushing Raven from the couch and taking her seat. “No you asshole, I just know.” Raven stands from the floor that she landed on, pulling her shirt down and huffing angrily at Clarke before turning her head to you.

“You’re going to be my new best friend, alright?” she asks as you nod silently in reply.

You’re doing it again…

That thing where you don’t talk a lot.

You shouldn’t have nodded though, because the moment that you did, Raven paced the two steps between you and laid her body down on yours, joining you in your chair.

Jesus this woman’s muscle definition was on point-- you could tell that even through her shirt.

“Oh stop trying to steal my girlfriend,” Clarke yells over at her friend, throwing a starburst at her head, missing and hitting you instead. She laughs, apologizing softly as her hands cover her blushing face.

Fuck, she’s cute as shit.

“You mean like you stole Finn?” Raven asks. And the jealousy is back. You’ve never really been jealous of Finn before. In fact, you’ve never really talked about Finn before. It’s almost been fair that if you’re not going to talk about Costia then you shouldn’t ask her about her one, dramatic ex, but even more so than that, it seemed irrelevant. He was in her past and if he didn’t resurface, then why bring him into her present?

But here he was, and suddenly it was hard for you to ignore the elephant in the room of your brain. The darkness was creeping in through the crack under the door as you began zoning out the conversation around you. Clarke’s voice became muffled and Raven’s gargled as if through a filter as your eyes dropped to the ground in front of you.

Finn Collins. You’d be lying if you tried to say that you didn’t look him up once before. Like Raven, he was a military grunt, leading some kind of expedition team. His facebook was littered with pictures of him in camouflage uniforms surrounded by other guys who looked just like him, shaved heads and guns in hand.

Nothing like you…

“Isn’t that right Lexa?” Your name from Clarke’s mouth draws you back to reality. You just nod,
having no clue what you just agreed to and prompting Raven to turn around, using your arm to hold her body up.

“Do you actually speak?” She asked, face awkwardly close to yours.

“Yeah?” you mumble, not knowing how to speak through the darkness that’s rising around.

Here it goes again.

You’re shelling up.

You’re giving a terrible first impression.

Get it together Lexa.

---

**CLARKE**

Lexa’s uncomfortable-- this you can tell, but there’s nothing in the world that you can do to stop it without drawing attention to it. That has been your promise since you first began discovering her darkness-- don’t draw attention to it. And that seemed to help, but now you were stuck.

On one hand, Raven understood struggle. She lost her boyfriend (to you, remember) and then she lost the mobility in her leg… which then prompted her losing the only job that she ever cared about and being stuck behind a deck since then. You’ve seen Raven at her worst, crying uncontrollably in a hospital bed, covered in cuts and dust, screaming that she couldn’t feel her leg.

But on the other hand, Lexa and Raven were totally different people. They healed in different directions, and bringing Raven into Lexa’s darkness was not your job. You were not allowed to decide who does and does not know about her struggles. If you learned anything in your own life it’s that no one else can make those decisions on your behalf.

So instead, you do nothing and you simply watch as your girlfriend drowns in silence.

“Besides, I’m hella better off now, isn’t that right Lexa?” you ask, a glint of recognition flashing across her eyes as she just nods back. Raven begins her interrogation, still sitting in your girlfriend’s lap, and you smile awkwardly over at Lexa, hoping that she forgives you for not acting. Even with her acknowledgement of acceptance, you can’t help but feel guilty.

This is too much for her.

---

**BELLAMY**

“So what are the chances that she’s even here?” Clarke asks as you pull your truck into a parking spot outside of Octavia’s apartment complex. It was a small place in the seedier side of Norman, but, honestly, no one expected anything less from Octavia. She was always living an adventure, and her one room studio apartment was nothing short of an adventure.

First, the pipe in her kitchen burst two weeks after moving in.

Then, a few months later, the toilet began sinking into her floor.

Third, someone tried to climb in through her window and was taken down instantly by your sister
who tied the teenager to the bed with a belt before the police arrived.

If it wasn’t one thing for Octavia, it was another, but she loved her weird and bizarre life—there was no question about that.

One you’ve all piled out of the truck, you decide to answer Clarke’s question, seeing as no one else has. “Where else would she be?” You feel like you have a valid point, but Clarke seems to have something else in mind.

Approaching the door, you listen as Raven tells Lexa about her job, all stories that you’ve heard before. In fact, Raven never has new stories about work. Every tale that Raven has is from before her accident and you’re beginning to understand why.

Raven’s like you.

Raven never recovered.

Reaching out a hand, you take the door knob, knowing that Octavia’s open door policy is normally intact, but for some reason, today the door is locked as you’re greeted with a click and nothing. “What the hell?” you mumble, drawing your keys from your pocket. Clarke and Raven seem just as shocked as you do as you slide your key into the hole, both verbally questioning the sudden lock on the door.

Those questions would never measure up to the questions that would flow from all of your lips when you open the door to Lincoln standing in the middle of the apartment, alone, in only his boxers.

Your overly muscular friend greets you with a tiny wave before returning both of his hands to their gripping position in front of his body. “Uhh, hi,” he almost whispers shifting his weight from side to side. Octavia is nowhere to be found.

You can feel Clarke shift behind you as you just stare, mouth wide, at your mostly naked friend standing in your little sister’s apartment. “Told you,” she whispers to Raven who begins pulling out her wallet, producing a ten dollar bill and handing it to your roommate who takes it with a smile. “I can’t do this,” Lexa groans, reaching past you to pull the door closed, but your hand stops it just before it closes all the way, forcing it back open.

Then it begins.

It starts as this small bubbling of rage inside of you that begins to flood over at the seams. Without even realizing it, you’re charging at your friend, knowing that you can’t take Lincoln’s sheer strength. Throwing a punch anyway, of course he deflects it, taking your arm to throw you to the floor, sitting on you slightly.

“Get the fuck off!” You yell at him, squirming under his boxer covered frame.

“Not till you calm the fuck down!” Is his response, only making you angrier.

“You’re sleeping with my sister?” you ask, even that coming out as a shout.

Lincoln laughs, shouting back at you. “We’ve been dating for months you numb-nuts!”

He twists your arm around slightly; making you shout in pain until Octavia’s voice intervenes, calling off her dog.
This was not how your announcement of your relationship was supposed to go. When you and Lincoln had discussed it, it involved more clothes and less physical altercation-- still some altercation of course, Bellamy is Bellamy, but an arm bar by your mostly naked boyfriend was not the plan.

Neither was your two best friends sitting in your doorway taking wagers on your relationship status, but hey, it happens right.

“Get your dick off of my face!” Bellamy says from under Lincoln who is now squatting over him. Bellamy is helpless and although you’re enjoying watching him squirm and the joy on Lincoln’s face because of it, you know that you have to end it before it gets any more dramatic.

“Lincoln, stop,” you order him. He releases Bellamy almost immediately, returning to the bed to grab his jeans, stepping into them and pulling them over his hips.

“Damn O, you’re looking good!” Raven says, ignoring the tension in the room and stepping in anyway, walking over to you. And then you notice that you’re still in your tank-top and panties, having been interrupted during your dressing routine by Bellamy’s shouts.

“Thanks girl,” you respond, hugging your friend who stepped specifically over your brother to reach you. “All that free running!” Flexing the muscles in your legs, you smile as you notice Lincoln staring at you. Something about the way that he looks at you…

“Let me tell you about it,” Raven laughs, tapping her brace on her knee. Instantly, you feel terrible. It’s been a little over two years since her accident, but you still forget. You spent the first 6 months of your friendship with Raven working out and running with her, and although you should remember, her baggage still slips your mind. “Hey,” she interrupts your daze, forcing your eyes back to her large almond ones. “I’m just fucking with you Blake. Chill out.”

Bellamy, who has somehow found a way to pick himself off of the floor, walks over to you, wrapping an arm around your shoulder while rubbing his red, carpet designed face with the other and pulls you in for a hug, kissing the top of your head. “I’m sorry,” he mumbles first to you, then turns to Lincoln, repeating the same words while offering him a hand. “I’m just…”

“I know,” Lincoln stops the awkward transaction, everyone in the room sighing with relief. “Just don’t be a little punk about it, okay?” he asks, taking Bellamy’s hand and pulling him into a half hug, half back pat thing.

Guys are weird, especially the men in your life.

“Well, if you’re done,” Clarke says, clearing her throat, “And you’d like to put on pants, we’d like to make it to Tris’ game before she kicks off or whatever soccer does…”

Lexa and Lincoln laugh, obviously being the only two who know anything about soccer in the room. When they exchange a small smile with each other, you can’t help but feel a slight pain of judgement from them both. Rather than pursue it, you choose to let it roll off of your shoulders. Lincoln has never judged you yet… why would he start now?

“You mean I can’t go like this?” you joke, furrowing a brow and cocking you head at Clarke as you motion to your pantsless frame. Both Lincoln and Bellamy reply with a quick ‘NO’ making you all laugh as you make your way back to the bathroom.
This is good.
This is a good place to be.

---

LINCOLN

Soccer may not be your sport, but one thing is for sure, it’s totally Tris’ sport. She’s completely in her element today, weaving in and out of the competition as if they aren’t even there as she carries the ball with her, untouched. She’s indestructible and although you’ve been to every one of her games since she started playing, you’ve never seen her so in touch with the game-- and then you see why. Standing next to the sidelines, whispering things to the coaching staff of Mount Weather High School is the blonde man and brunette woman that you and Tris have been waiting on all semester. Tapping Lexa on the shoulder, you signal over to the two and get a smile and a nod in return. Matt Porter and Vanessa Mann from University of Oklahoma are here and they’re watching your sister.

Tris makes a break for the enemy goal, ducking under a flailing arm from one of the opponent’s team members as she hurls across the field faster than you’ve ever seen, gliding across the blades of grass as if they’re ice. When a member of the other team steps in front of her, just when you think she has to stop, Tris dives, kicking the ball between the legs of the mammoth of a girl before following close behind it. She’s bold today and it looks like it’s paying off. When she stands quickly, still following the ball Porter leans into Mann, saying something that you can’t hear as she scribbles on her clipboard with a smile on her face. It’s looking good.

Within the final yards before Tris reaches the goal, she tips the ball up with her toe, kicking it into the goal just over the keeper’s head, causing the crowd to erupt into a thunderous applause so loud that you almost think to cover your ears. Instead, you join in, watching as your older sister jumps up and down while screaming and your younger sister runs across the field, arms out stretched before jumping into a pile of her teammates.

Another thing Keith did really well-- He made two fantastic, talented daughters.

When the teams recover and begin playing again, Clarke, who rode with Bellamy and Raven while your sister stayed behind with you and Octavia, steps up behind your sister, wrapping her arms around Lexa’s shoulders from the step above, kissing the top of her head.

“What did I miss?” your friend asks Lexa as your sister turns into her, kissing her girlfriend passionately.

“Fucking Gross!” Octavia groans from beside you, shoving Clarke and Lexa with her elbow. “You missed the best goal in the world!” she practically shouts an answer, clapping her hands.

Clarke smiles at you, lacing her fingers through Lexa’s before she squeezes in between Octavia and her girlfriend. You almost miss the kiss on Clarke’s fingers that Lexa tries to steal before smiling and whispering something to her girlfriend, but what you don’t miss at all is the complete and utter joy that’s written across her face. For the first time in her life, Lexa actually looks happy, even if she’s drenched in sweat, probably going hoarse, and most likely hypertensive with stress over what this match could mean for Tris.

When the crowd begins to roar again, you turn your attention back to the field just in time to watch your little sister, who is still on fire, steal the ball from another player, sending it to a teammate before tripping over the opponent’s feet, cascading to the turf with the other girl.
The middle aged, out of shape ref somehow finds it in him to blow his whistle while running to your sister’s dogpile, gasping for breath as he calls a foul on Tris. As the crowd starts to boo, Tris stands, throwing her hands into the air, obviously siding with the crowd. The girl that Tris took down with her is now standing, making her way to your sister with arms outstretched and an angry glare across her sullen face.

This isn’t going to be good.

---

LEXA

Just as you think that Tris is going to recover from this situation without being benched, the girl from the other team makes her move, shoving your sister’s shoulders violently.

That did it.

Beside you, Octavia joins in the booing, yelling through her small cupped hands while jumping up onto the seats. “Bench her!” she yells, pointing at the other girl. The ref is paying absolutely no attention to the crowd, but that doesn’t stop any of them from screaming even louder.

Tris glances over at you for a moment before she turns to Lincoln. He’s always been better at these kinds of situations. Until your parents died, he was always the level headed on, taking everything into consideration before acting.

“Shake it off,” he shouts at her, shaking his shoulders and arms just in case she didn’t get the message. She didn’t.

Turning to look at you, you notice a spark in her eye. It’s the same spark that you grew up with and you know it, she’s not giving up. “She’s not going to drop it,” you shout over to Lincoln who hasn’t taken his eyes off of Tris. Shaking his head at your younger sister, Lincoln just stares, saying absolutely nothing which tells you that he agrees completely.

With frustration growing in her eyes, Tris stops for a split second where you think everything’s going to be okay, but then, in a split second, everything changes as she turns quickly on her heels, fist engaged and swinging towards her opponent. When it makes contact, you swear you can hear the crack of lightning from Tris’ hand against the other girl’s jaw.

“Oh shit!” Raven shouts, this being the first time that you’ve heard her voice over Octavia’s yet, as Lincoln drops his face into his hands, clearly as upset as you are. The rest of your group all stand with different expressions of surprise. Clarke has her mouth wide open. Octavia is gripping her cheeks. Bellamy laughs awkwardly. Raven has her hands on top of her head with her eyes wide. You just stand there, watching closely as Mount Weather’s coach separates the two fighters, dodging the loose arms of the other players craving to join in the action.

“It’ll be okay,” Clarke tries to comfort you. You just shake your head, pointing to the scouts who are now whispering between themselves, scribbling away on their clipboards with solemn faces.

“They’re coaches from Oklahoma,” you explain as Clarke’s face drops. “They’re scouting Tris.”

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LINCOLN

The ride home is incredibly uncomfortable for the first few minutes as you, Clarke, Lexa and Tris sit
in absolute silence. Mount Weather may have won the game and Tris may have played like a rock star for the first half, but there was that whole incident that got her carded and benched for the other half. Oh, and there were scouts… so there’s that.

“What the fuck were you thinking?” You finally shout, hearing Lexa’s attempts to hush you from the backseat. “No,” you silence her, turning back to face her for a moment before realizing the terror in her eyes. You’re not focused on the road. You are acting on Lexa’s number one fear and it shows in the way that she trembles as her large brown eyes stare into you. Turning to face the front again, you grip the steering wheel until your knuckles are white. “You knew they were there!”

“You don’t understand,” your sister mumbles into her lap, pulling her knees into her chest. She’s scared…. Tris is actually scared of you…

But that’s not stopping you.

“Please, then,” you reply sarcastically, still ignoring Lexa and Clarke’s attempts to soothe you. This charade goes on for about 20 minutes back and forth between you and Tris where you beg her to explain why she threw the punch and she shuts you down, saying that it doesn’t matter.

“Fine!” She finally agrees after you pull over the car into the grass next to the highway, unable to focus on driving enough. “Do you really want to fucking know?” Tris’ voice echoes through the small car. You can feel Clarke bury herself into Lexa’s shoulder. “She said that mom and dad don’t come to games because I’m a sloppy player.” The catch in Tris’ voice makes you stop in your tracks, feeling like an absolute asshole as your younger sister unravels in front of you. “She said that where ever they are is way better than here, watching me shit on the field.” Tears begin to stream down her face and it obviously becomes too much for Lexa who crawls over your leather seat, wrapping her arms around your sister.

Well, you’re an asshole…

---

Tris

Obviously, you haven’t coped as well as you thought you had… In fact, the last few years have been filled with small outbursts much like the one that you friends and family finally witnessed today.

At school, you had been getting into more fights.

At practice, you have been more aggressive.

With friends, you have been more argumentative.

Everything was different, and you could pinpoint a specific time when everything changed for you…

When Lexa healed.

When your sister finally beat her vices, that allowed for yours to surface. It was as if when your sister was done fighting, the free time and energy that you now had to invest into something was turned inward, waging war on your emotions.

But let’s be honest, that bitch deserved it.

“She said that where ever they are is way better than here, watching me shit on the field,” you mumble, allowing your eyes to finally meet your brother’s just before Lexa climbs from the back,
wrapping her arms around you tightly. Breathing her in, you can smell a mixture of her shampoo and sweat, feeling the beads of perspiration on her cheek as she holds you close, whispering that she loves you into your ear, bringing back memories that you would rather have stayed forgotten.

The hospital room is cold and dark when you arrive, alone, knowing that you told Lincoln that you’d be there an hour later. She hadn’t woken yet since her… accident? Can you call it that? And your brother needed to go home and shower… But you couldn’t stay away… not any longer.

Lexa lay in the bed under the white sheet, breathing softly as the ticking machines behind you marked every pulse, every breath, every change. Thanking god for science and technology, you take your sister’s hand in yours; caressing her soft, warm fingers with your thumb. You don’t know why you expected them to be cold… She’s not dead, the beeping behind you evident of that, but you did. Rolling her wrist over, you eyeball the gauze wound tightly in a few layers over the place where life once drained from her onto Costia’s bathroom floor.

That mother fucking bitch. You didn’t like her… not from day 1. Not from the moment that she stumbled into your house, hanging off of your sister’s arm like she was something important-- like the world owed her something. To Lexa she was important. To you, she was the devil. You didn’t like her when she attended your parents’ funerals, sighing and grunting in the corner as she refused to take her eyes off of her phone. You didn’t like her when your sister showed up at your house, reeking of cheap booze and cigarettes after drowning her sadness in tequila, fighting with your brother, pleading for the life in her veins to escape. You didn’t like Costia because of what she did to Lexa. You didn’t like Costia because of what she did to you.

And now, your sister was here, fighting again for her life, unknowingly to herself. Running a light finger over the gauze, you watch as the blood ripples under it, moving with your touch. Her wounds are still fresh-- and they probably will be for years.

Just like yours.

“I love you,” the words exit your lips without question as you bend down and kiss your sister’s wrist, laying you head on the bed next to her. “Come back to me…”

Breathing in deeply again, you choked back your memories, suppressing them for another meeting with the school psychologist or another state mandated therapy session every 6 months-- you know, since they technically own you and Lexa and Lincoln were only your “guardians”.

“I’m sorry,” Lincoln mumbles, reaching out his hand to pull both you and Lexa in. You wonder how Clarke feels, alone in the backseat as you share an intimate family moment, the three of you huddling together over the console of the car. This all must be really weird for her. She’s not even a part of this family, but her love for your sister (and despite what either of them will try to say, it’s evident that she loves Lexa) has sold her into this world of angst and grief. She’s trapped in this forever.

Interrupting your personal moment, your cell phone rings, a random 405 number flashing across your screen as EchoSmith screams from your right hand just as Lexa crawls into the backseat again, planting a kiss on Clarke’s cheek. The smiles on their faces remind you of your parents’ for a moment before you swipe to the right, pulling the phone to your ear.

“This is Tris,” you say, never having understood why people say hello into the phone like it’s a question.

“Tristian Woods?” The voice asks from the other end of the line, irritating you slightly as he uses your full name… no one knows your full name. You have to bite back your sarcasm as you almost say ‘Yes, isn’t that what I just said’ but instead you settle for a short “Yes sir?”
“My name is Matt Porter and I’m a coach for the University of Oklahoma.”

I know exactly who you are…

“We were at your game…”

I know, and I’m very sorry…

“And we saw your performance today…”

I just have a lot on my plate at the moment…

“And I have to say….”

It won’t happen again…

“We’re really impressed with your skill and technique.”

You’re what? But I beat a girl into the turf…

“We’d love to get dinner tonight with you and your parents…”

Well fuck…

“And talk about your future with the University of Oklahoma.”

WHAT?!

---

LEXA

When Tris answers her phone, she sounds like a business woman. Laughing at this thought, you try to remember a time when she hasn’t answered the phone like a robot, but nothing comes to mind. Since you got her a phone 5 years ago, she’s always answered in the same fashion, even if you’ve made fun of her since day one about it. But even more so than her awkward introduction, this phone call seems important to her.

She straightens her back after the greeting, sitting up as if the person on the other line can see her. Her words are short and to the point, littered with “Yes Sir” and “No Sir” followed by an “I would love that, sir” and a “We’ll be there. Thanks again sir.” Tris is never this formal… This must mean something.

When she ends the call, glancing her phone once over again to be sure the call has ended, she looks, shifting her eyes between you and Lincoln before looking over at Clarke and back to you.

“That was Matt Porter,” she says, her words stifled as she’s trying to hold in excitement but failing miserably as a smile stretches across her face. “They want to meet with us about offering me a scholarship!”

Before you know it, your little sister is screaming with her head thrown back, arms in the air as she’s reaching for you and Lincoln, ushering Clarke to come into the hug as well. As your eyes catch Clarke’s you admire the excitement written across her face as well.

Clarke doesn’t have to be excited. She doesn’t have to be involved in this. Costia never was. Costia never asked about your family. Clarke does. Costia never went to a game. Clarke has. Costia never
talked with your sister about soccer. Clarke does (even if she obviously has no clue what the point of the sport even is). Costia never once hugged your sister in the 2 years that you were together. Clarke has, and she is again now, tightening her grip around you and your sister’s necks.

“Tris, that’s incredible!” your girlfriend says, kissing your sister’s forehead as she releases the group. When she laces her fingers through yours in the backseat, a smile spreads across your face, only widened by the kiss that she plants on your cheek before turning back to Tris, begging for more details about the meeting that they just scheduled.

You should be listening. As Tris’ legal guardian for the next 4 months, you’re going to be there to talk logistics (as if her being 18 would have changed your desire to go…) and what-not, but honestly, you can’t take your eyes off of Clarke who is listening more intently to this single conversation with your high school aged little sister than Costia ever did to any conversation that you ever had with her.

And now the truth of Lincoln’s words hit you like a freight train.

Clarke is not Costia.

Clarke is way more than Costia ever could have been.

Clarke was made for you…

And you were crafted for her.
Alright my friends. Here’s Chapter 16.

I ran out of lines for the other song so I’m starting to name them after lines from Paramore’s MY HEART. I think it will be fitting.

please don't hesitate to send me a comment or a message telling me what you think!

Add me on tumblr so we can be best friends!!! http://shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com/

written to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vId2bF78i5s&list=PLv9yertvv6Dew4-ezV-GtsZ3b_8QZJBBa

Clarke

Even when Lexa’s mouth had stopped moving and the words quit flowing from her voice, her eyes were never silent. Every time that you looked over at your girlfriend type reverently on the laptop propped on her legs as she sat on your bed, leaned against the headboard wearing only her panties and an oversized t-shirt, your heart melted at her determination.

That was just like her. She was always determined in everything that she did… Especially this though.

This had been the only thing on her mind for the last 3 days. Even while she was at work, she was texting you, begging for information about scholarships and grants for Tris. Porter and Mann’s meeting with Lexa and Lincoln had left her with a bad taste in her mouth-- since Tris’ little outburst where she took another child down and left her with a bruised shoulder, black eye, and missing canine tooth on the right upper jaw, Porter figured it best to only offer Tris a half scholarship, political reasons he cited, for the first year and then see from there what they can give her. He made no promises either way, but to Lexa that meant that she needed to find an extra $11,040 dollars a year for tuition and fees alone, plus whatever else Tris would need since she couldn’t work during season (not like Lexa would let her anyway…).

You left the room quietly, afraid that if you announced your exit that Lexa’s train of thought would be broken, but as the door begins to close behind your grip you hear a faint, but solid “I love you,” exit from Lexa’s lungs in one solid breath. Smiling slightly, you turn your head, poking it through the crack to see your girlfriend staring up at you, brown eyes wide, filled with worry and panic.

This is really stressing Lexa out.

The Lexa that you first met at Jaha’s Taekwondo is beginning to resurface.

The Lexa that has spent 77 days stuck under a blanket of love, compassion, friendship, energy and life is starting to claw her way out and that worries you.

You noticed that she texted her boss at the bar earlier, asking to pick up extra shifts to cover the fact that she had officially asked off for Saturdays for family game nights. You saw that her diner
schedule had begun covering Sunday mornings which she had previously not worked since the two of you met. In fact, you noticed that she was filling almost every waking moment with either work or scholarship searches, that she hadn’t gone to bed by 5 AM when you were waking up yesterday and was still awake and in the same place at 8 PM when you got off work, claiming to have gotten up and eaten and showered, but yet she still looked untouched and the kitchen was unaltered.

The Lexa that you know was slowly drowning underneath the stress of the Lexa who only knows how to survive and you can’t help but recall your conversation on the phone after the night that you thought you lost her. ‘Maybe life should be about more than surviving,’ you remember telling her, but now, you don’t even know if she knows what that means.

When your face drops, she seems to notice, closing the laptop and motioning for you to come and sit beside her.

Even when stressed, she’s still thinking of you.

Typical of her.

Instead, you scale the footboard, crawling up her body, pushing the laptop to the side as she slides her body to lie down. With your head on her chest, you hear her heartbeat, louder and more sporadic than usual.

Anxiety…

“Quit diagnosing me in your head,” she whispers, almost as if she’s read your mind.

What the fuck?

Lifting your head, you place your chin on her chest, looking up at her closed eyes.

Her freckles seem to have disappeared, cast under a shadow of worry and concern. She owes this to Tris, you know that’s what she’s thinking, but you can’t help but wonder how much of this worry is for herself. She’s never been away from her sister-- not since her depression started, and she’s often told you that without Lincoln and Tris she probably would have died… What you don’t know, still to this day, and what bothers you the most is to what extent did she rely on them? You’ve never seen scarring so deep such as on Lexa’s arms without an attempt on life, but for some reason, she always makes it sound like a one-time thing-- like sadness just overtook her for a brief moment and she ran a blade over her arms just to feel something before letting go of the sadness and despair that blanketed her. Tris and Lincoln paint a different picture, but even reading through the insecurities and the inconsistencies, you’ve never been able to nail down a solid story-- not in the last 77 days

“I have a question for you,” you ask her, laying your head back on her chest, and listening as her heartbeat intensifies. She’s nervous. Taking her hand in yours, you run your fingers down her palm and onto her forearm, tracing the veins that supply life to her body, pumping blood to and from her heart, praising whatever god you haven’t been able to trust for sustaining her existence for at least until this moment. “You don’t have to answer,” you add once you reach the scarring on her forearm, running a light finger along the outline before filling in the gaps of the once gash that looks like it should have killed her.

She breathes deeply before you can finish your thought, sighing as she exhales and placing a kiss on your head. She speaks before you can continue, knowing exactly where your thoughts were.

You had been told not to ask why. All of your training in crisis prevention and suicide awareness through the hospital told you not to ask why someone tried to hurt themselves, but with Lexa, that
went out the window. More than anything, you wanted to know why. Since you discovered her damaged wrists, you’ve wondered what brought the love of your life to the breaking point self-conclusion. You’ve wondered why she felt so cold and numb that she would destroy her body in order to even feel. You wondered why she chose pain over any other emotion.

And even more than that, you wonder why you still do it-- and maybe having Lexa’s answers to her damage will help you find yours.

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LEXA

Clarke hasn’t found a way to ask you yet, so you haven’t told her… and the same goes for you, so you understand. You know that Clarke hasn’t been eating a lot-- grabbing an apple on the way out the door for work in the mornings that you’ll find hidden in her backseat the next day, but it’s been impossible to word the questions running through your head.

So you haven’t.

And now, as she’s sitting here with her head on your chest, body tight and tense, with words practically spilling over the edges of her brain and as she thinks loud enough for you to hear the buzzing, you can’t help but take the defensive, feeling like you’re not the only one with damage to explain.

But that’s not the way that it should be, you remind yourself.

“I took it out on myself because I thought that she deserved that,” you say as she traces your arms delicately, not even allowing her to finish the thought. You knew where this conversation was going even before it happened. She sighs deeply with a thumb on your scar, turning her head back up to look at you. “I thought Costia was worth…”

Dying over…

You thought Costia was worth dying over is what you want to say, but then you remember that Clarke doesn’t know yet.

You haven’t told her that you tried to escape your life.

You haven’t told her that you wanted everything to stop-- not even just slow but completely stop.

You haven’t told her the truth… and strangely enough, you don’t feel guilty.

Not yet.

“It,” you settle for after a slight pause. “I thought she deserved my pain, but I was wrong.” You lay your head back, looking up at the ceiling for a brief moment before closing your eyes and listening to the steadying of your pulse with Clarke’s pressed up against your chest. She pulls her body up yours, kissing your neck before holding the side of your head gently, turning your face down to hers.

“She wasn’t,” she whispers slightly, planting a small kiss on your lips. “No one is.”

You just nod, unable to take your eyes off of hers.

Those blue eyes that were crystal, shimmering, churning like the sea. If you stared at them long enough, then maybe, just maybe, you could ignore the darkness that was filtering in through the open
window and cracked door. Maybe you could ignore the feeling of it dancing around your toes, a thick fog rolling over you slightly.

Those blue eyes like water so deep that you’re terrified of jumping in, not knowing what lies beneath, but still tempting you to explore anyway.

Those damn blue eyes that drew you in every time.

“I love you,” is all that you can say, feeling your own eyes shift back and forth between hers. She cracks a small, forced smile before kissing you again, pushing her body from yours and sliding off of the bed, making her way to the door again.

“You’re perfect, Lexa,” she says as she reaches the door, holding on to it to turn back towards you. You fight the cringe just long enough to awkwardly smile at her and for her to leave the room, bringing the door to a close with her, but the minute she’s gone, you breathe out deeply, suddenly overwhelmed by her statement.

Why the fuck does she continually tell you that you’re perfect? Why does she find it necessary to rub in your face all of your flaws-- even though you know that she doesn’t see it that way. Why does Clarke remain ignorant to the fact that you are the absolute furthest from perfection?

For Christ’s sake-- Why does Clarke continue to love you?

And why do you continue to lie to her?

Actually, you know the answer to that one…

Because the minute you don’t…

The minute you tell her the truth…

She’s going to run…

They always run…

---

TRIS

You were surprised when your phone interrupted your song, vibrating and beeping while you were inside of the shower. Even more surprising was the fact that it was Clarke, texting you at 8 AM in the morning-- not that it was an early time, but you know, for a fact, that she doesn’t have to be at work today.

Lexa’s Princess (8:13 AM): Hey what are you doing for lunch?

Tris (8:27 AM): It’s 8:30 in the morning on a Saturday… I don’t even know what I’m doing for breakfast…

Lexa’s Princess (8:34 AM): I’m coming to get you. Be dressed in 30.

Well that was weird. Clarke rarely texted you. Scrolling through your previous messages, you notice that really the only texts that the two of you have are either you giving her a hard time about sleeping with your sister or her asking about Lexa’s schedule. Sure there were to occasional texts from her asking about your day or about soccer training (Clarke actually did a really good job of caring, even
when she didn’t have to), but that was it.

In fact, you had more texts with your teammates’ moms than you did Clarke, but here you were, standing with a toothbrush hanging from your mouth and a towel wrapped around your body staring at a text from your sister’s girlfriend asking you to brunch.

**Tris (8:43 AM):** Okay, but make it 45.

**Lexa’s Princess (8:44 AM):** 40 and you have a deal :)

Entering Clarke’s car after it had been sitting in your driveway for over 5 minutes (you told her 45 and she arrived 37 minutes later… it wasn’t your fault…), you could already feel the tension of her questions. This wasn’t just a social meeting-- not that you expected this grown woman to just want to hang out with your 17 year old self. Even without that expectation, though, your shoulders drop slightly, wishing that you had been wrong.

It would be cool for Clarke to just want to hang out with you. Clarke was a pretty cool kid. I mean, as far as other human beings go, she’s pretty much one of your favorites.

“So, what is it that you want to ask me?” you drill her after about 10 minutes of small talk and basic silence, turning the radio down in the car as she drives. She seems surprised at first, turning her eyes to face for you a moment before smiling back at the road.

“Is it that evident?” she begs, twisting her hands on the steering wheel as she parallel parks with grace on the side of the road outside of a small dinner… Yeah, she wasn’t from Norman or Macomb… No one in Norman or Macomb knows how to parallel park-- they’ve never needed to.

“Yeah,” you reply, unbuckling your seat belt and pulling your long brown hair back into the ponytail around your wrist. “I can basically hear your thoughts,” you say as Clarke’s stomach growls loudly. “And your belly.”

Clarke snorts a small laugh, opening the car door beside her and climbing out, clicking the lock button on her key fob as you close yours. “Yeah, I didn’t eat this morning.” Entering a diner that you’ve never been to, she takes a seat at the first booth, waving at the cook through the serving window. “I like this place,” she adds as the server brings her water, asking for your order.

You order a coke, knowing that you’ll regret this on your run later today, but if you’re going to be interrogated, you deserve something.

“So, those questions?” you ask of Clarke, sipping on the straw as soon as the waitress drops off your drink, leaving you two alone for a moment.

“What did Lexa’s spiral look like?” Clarke asks, not even bothering to sugar coat the question. That’s another thing that you appreciate about her-- She’s honest, always, even when it’s not comfortable for her. And this conversation is anything but comfortable for her. This is obvious in the way that she wrings her hand under the table as she refuses to maintain eye contact with you. “I mean, you told me what it felt like, but did you know?”

You resist the urge to snort into your drink as you choke slightly at her question.

Yes?

No?

Did you?
“No,” you finally say after moments of silence where you chewed on your straw, obviously leaving that statement open for debate. “I mean, I knew things were changing, but I was jaded by our parents’ deaths… there was a lot happening.” Clarke nods, seeming to know more than she’s letting on. “But looking back on it,” you add, releasing your glass, your comfort, your safety blanket, for the first time since you started speaking. You wipe your hands in your lap, cocking your head from side to side to pop your neck before looking back at your sister’s girlfriend. Instead of finishing that statement, you let it hang for a moment, changing sentences halfway through as you say, “For what it’s worth, you would know… Lexa’s different now. She’s changed…”

“How?” Clarke asks, cutting you off almost excitedly, dismissing the waitress as she comes over to ask your orders. Of course you have no clue what you want… you haven’t even looked at the menu yet.

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Clarke

Your phone vibrates in your pocket, but you can’t even find the focus to reach for it, scared to death to tear yourself from this conversation with Tris that it might evaporate away from you the minute that you release it.

“How?” you ask, wondering what Tris means as you raise a hand to the waitress, telling her that you’re not quite ready. You’re a regular here-- they’ve accepted the fact that you’re kind of rude when you’re engulfed in something… Usually it’s work or useless banter with Bellamy.

Tris just chuckles, pulling her straw back into her mouth with her tongue and taking another sip before speaking again. When the girl speaks, she looks and sounds just like Lincoln-- she chooses her words carefully, thinking before anything leaves her mouth. She doesn’t just talk, leaving way for interpretation. No, she’s precise and attentive with the way that words roll out of her mouth, forming perfect phrases and judgments.

“You just know,” she finally says, chewing on the end of straw just like Lexa does.

Smiling at the realization of this one similarity opens the door to a thousand more.

Her half smile that forms from the left side of her mouth.

Her hair and the way that it cascades down her thin shoulders, even when pulled back.

The shape of her face when she avoids eye contact with you, noticing that you’re staring down at her.

The way that she plays with her fingers, picking at the skin around her nails when she’s anxious.

This girl, your future little sister, is the clone of her older sister… the spitting image of their father.

“So, when did you know that she was better?” you ask, trying to change the conversation from the darkest times, noting Tris’ lack of comfort. Tris has never been comfortable when discussing Lexa’s descent into darkness, but the climb out of oblivion is a different story. Tris loves describing her sister’s victory, obviously proud of Lexa’s admirable recovery.

“We realized one day that Lexa was getting better and it was sort of a sudden discovery… like when you realize that the sun has started coming up after a night of staying up,” she begins, smiling as she speaks. You just nod, knowing what that feeling is like every day that you work the third shift. Tris’ explanation is spot on. “It’s not slow and steady… you don’t see the sun from the moment that it
starts… it just happens to be there when you blink and you realize that you missed all of the small
dangers-- the sights and sounds of daylight as if they’ve always been there.”

Taking some of your drink, you allow the waitress to take your orders, forcing Lexa’s sister to order
more food as you settle for a small salad, dressing on the side, no cheese and no croutons-- your
regular. Tris just stares at you like you’re an alien before brushing it off and continuing.

“It just happened one day when Lexa was in the kitchen washing dishes and Lincoln and I were
sitting in the living room watching a soccer game between Barcelona and Man U, listening to her
sing over the water running. Both of us stopped in mid-conversation listening to the words from
some song from Tangled exiting her mouth. That’s when we realized that our Lexa was back.” Her
smile widened as one cracked across your face, following her lead. “It wasn’t the same… it never
would be… but she was singing again… and she was happy again… and then she started returning
to work… and when she came home to a door knob on her bedroom door, she thanked Lincoln,
crying tears of joy for the first time in months…”

You try to focus on the words coming out of her mouth, but all you can hear for a sentence or two is
the delight that’s bleeding through her speech. The way the she explains this moment is the reaction
that you would expect if you were to ask her what the greatest time in her life was.

After all of the incredible moments that the Woods/Holcomb family shared with you, this is the one
that screams excitement most of all.

“And when I placed the knives in the kitchen again, she didn’t seem phased by them… and in
another slow, sunrise kind of progression, life returned to normal. And suddenly, just like realizing
the sun is up, I realized that I wasn’t scared that I’d lose her again because I knew that she was here
to stay.”

And for the first time, you realized how much Lexa meant to Tris.

For the first time, you understood exactly what Lexa mean when she said that Tris was hers.

For the first time, you see Tris smile about something other than soccer and you see a real, full face,
eyes invested smile.

She was terrified of losing Lexa, much like you are, but she’s fine now.

She knows that Lexa’s here to stay.

And that’s enough for you.

---

LEXA

When your sister returns to Clarke’s apartment with your girlfriend, take out boxes in hand, a smile
cracks across your recently showered face. Now you understand why Clarke wasn’t answering your
texts… and now college scholarship searches seem irrelevant. With both of them here with you, you
can’t help but be happy. Nothing else is really relevant anymore.

“God, so much estrogen,” you hear Bellamy’s voice groan as he passes through to the kitchen,
surfacing with his trademarked water bottle before sliding over next to you, pushing your feet off of
the couch and onto the floor as he takes the seat that they previously occupied.

“You’re an asshole,” Clarke mumbles from the kitchen where she was putting her and Tris’ boxes in
the fridge, joining you, her roommate and your sister in the living room, inviting Tris to take a seat. Tris sits on the floor next to you, like the weird-o that she is.

“So what’s the plan now?” your little sister asks, turning her head to face you and Bellamy.

“Why is the kid looking at me?” he asks, unscrewing the cap of his bottle, taking a giant swig of it.

“I’m not a kid!” she replies, reaching out to punch him in the knee. He cringes, pretending to be in pain for a moment while grasping his right leg, acting it up like a champion in order to make Tris laugh. This makes you smile, reminding you of how much of a good guy Bellamy can be. “Lincoln says that you guys have a party on Saturdays…” Tris begins, immediately halted by you.

“No,” you demand, nudging her with your knee.

“Oh come on Lexa,” Bellamy laughs, lifting himself from his seat before heading to the back. “Let the kid live a little.” Something is different in his words as he leaves though. Something sounds distant and withdrawn…

It sounds like he’s giving up on conversation…

It sounds like he’s checking out…

Rising out of your seat, you push yourself up using the top of Tris’ head for support, receiving a grumble and a loosely swung punch as she tries to shrug you off. “I’ll be right back,” you say to Clarke as you pass, catching her hand that’s reaching out to you, allowing her fingers to slide from yours as you walk away. She just smiles back at you before turning to your sister, continuing with conversation that you can’t hear as you enter into Bellamy’s room for the first time since… well… ever.

With a small knock on the door, you open it, not waiting for a reply, poking your head in as you catch him sitting on the bed, nose engulfed in a tattered and worn version of John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men, mumbling to himself before he looks up, eyes meeting yours. He closes the book quickly, sitting up in the bed, offering you the spot next to him. Taking it, you walk over to the bed, hopping the small distance onto the black sheets and pulling your knees into your chest.

You’ve never seen the inside of his room except in passing. He was organized, but messy, much like Clarke. Everything had a place, this was evident by the outline of the room, but more surprising to you was the incredible amount of books in this small room. You knew that Bellamy read, but not like this. The three book shelves that lined the wall to your right were pouring over, shelves buckling under the weight of the classics.

Of Human Bondage.

Robinson Crusoe.

Pride and Prejudice.

The Red Badge of Courage.

Wuthering Heights.

Gone With The Wind.

War and Peace.
To Kill a Mockingbird.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Fahrenheit 451.

The Good Earth.

Jane Eyre.

Heart of Darkness.

Anything that you’ve ever read in your life, Bellamy seemed to own it. And then you see it-- the copy of King Hereafter that you ordered for him, bent and sticknoted to its conclusion. He had actually read it… all 736 pages of it.

“What’s up Commander?” he asks, sliding his book over to the other side of his body wrapping an arm around your shoulder.

“Are you alright?” you ask, suddenly uncomfortable with this decision. You’ve never really been physically close with Bellamy… In fact, you’re not really physically close with anyone-- other than Clarke of course. As your eyes dance around the room, you try to find something to focus on to take your mind off of the physical contact. You guess Bellamy catches on as he slides away slightly, pulling both of his hands into his lap.

“I will be,” he says, almost a mumble as his eyes fall to his hands. His knuckles are bruised and you can’t help but remember the first time that you saw his vices play themselves out as those same knuckles cracked against the drywall frame of the living room’s sliding glass door.

“What happened?” you ask, taking his hands in yours and running a finger over his knuckles, already knowing the answer but feigning ignorance.

He’s not buying it.

“Is there a reason you’re in my room?” he asks, pulling his hands away. You shake your head, returning to the visual exploration of his room, hoping to just buy you some more time.

There’s a plethora of movie posters and band pictures covering what little wall space remains, accented by additional stacks of books in various places around the room. On the desk under the television across from the bed is a bunch of papers spread violently on the table top, held down with more books, some flipped over, holding specific pages, as well as sticky notes and highlighters galore.

“You really do read a lot?” you ask, sliding off the bed and instantly noticing the comfort returning to his posture.

He doesn’t like proximity when panicking.

That’s good to know.

You two are the exact opposite.

Making your way to the desk, you shuffle through the papers, helping yourself to the information scribbled across each. Most of what you browse seems to be quotes from books, noted with titles and
page numbers. It’s not until you get to the bottom of the stack that you find something different.

“You went to college?” You ask him, turning to face him as you hold up a small diploma from Florida State University, torn and covered in coffee stains. “Why isn’t this framed?”

Bellamy shrugs, pulling his book back in front of him, obviously trying to escape your words. It’s not going to work. “It’s not that big of a deal,” he mumbles out loud before beginning to read again, murmuring the words from his pages into the air where you can’t understand them.

“Not a big deal? The words exit your mouth before you can close it. “This is huge Bellamy!”

“It was just literature!” he shouts, eyes expressing more fear than anger as he tosses the book onto his lap. “Now can we drop it? It’s in the past.”

You nod, returning the paper to the bottom of the stack where you found it, pulling a sticky note off of the pack and writing a small message, handing it to him before kissing his cheek.

“We’ll be in the living room when you’re ready,” you whisper to him, pulling the door closed behind you as you leave.

Exhaling slowly, you lean back on Bellamy’s door frame, breathing in again to regain yourself before making your way to the living room and to your sister and Clarke.

He’s going to be okay.

If nothing else, you’re going to make sure of this.

He’s going to be okay.

---

Bellamy

Sighing deeply, you lay your head back on the pillow, breathing in and breathing out.

There must be something more than this.

Unfolding the bright pink sticky note that Lexa handed you just moments before, reading the words out loud to yourself before closing your eyes, you sigh at the truth in them.

“Some of us think holding on makes us strong; but sometimes it is letting go. -Hermann Hesse,” you repeat over and over again, wondering at which point in her life Lexa stumbled across this phrase. You wonder when she held this one closer to her heart.

You wonder if she remembered this quote when she ran the blade across her skin.

Or if she remembered this quote when she turned away, walking out of the bathroom without cutting herself again.

You wonder…

Maybe it is time for you to let go…

Maybe it’s time.
LEXA

You gave in. After hours of begging and a long winded conversation with Lincoln about high school children and alcoholism, you gave in and now, at 11 PM on Saturday night, your little sister is bouncing around Bellamy and Clarke’s apartment, solo cup in hand filled with some mixed drink that Harper made for her before disappearing with Bellamy into the back.

You gave in, and strangely enough, it’s not that bad. Having Tris here is actually fun. Your sister is a fun person normally, but when alcohol is added to the picture, she becomes even more like herself—the her that existed before everything changed for you two.

Sitting on the couch, you wander deep into the complexities of your thoughts, losing touch with reality for a moment as you cradle your first drink of the night, trying to remember what life was like before the changes.

Lincoln was wild-- you remember that at least. He drove fast cars and raced motorcycles, going to parties and sneaking out of the house. You knew all of these things, hell, you helped him a few times, but your parents never did.

Tris was fun-- not that she’s not now… But she was less focused on school and soccer and more on social interactions. She actually went out with people and went on dates with attractive boys and almost failed classes.

You… you were fun once too. You often went out and visited people, making plans for the weekends and dancing at karaoke nights.

All these things changed when your parents died…

But now, with Clarke, you were beginning to see these people you once knew resurfacing.

Apparently, Clarke wasn’t just good for you…
Clarke was good for your family.

“Lexa Fucking Woods get your smug little ass over here and toast to your goddamned sister!” Octavia’s voice shatters your thoughts as everyone laughs from the crowd around the table. Shaking yourself from your isolation, you slide across the room, taking a cup from Monroe’s hand and joining in the toast, raising your glass to the center of the table.

“This mother fucker here,” Octavia says, wrapping an arm around Tris’ shoulder, causing your little sister to blush as she hides her face in Octavia’s shoulder.

Yup, Tris is drunk.

“This little bag of dicks is the best damn soccer player I’ve ever seen,” she continues, missing Bellamy and Harper’s entrance as they slink into the group, separating to opposite ends of the table so as to avoid interrogation and being noticed. It doesn’t work and you take a mental note to harass Bellamy about it later. “I saw her literally dive between another girl’s legs to keep her from getting the ball… before I saw her deck a mother fucker in the middle of a soccer field.” Everyone laughs except for Lincoln who is obviously still sore about the situation. You smile over at your brother who is standing next to Tris, reassuring him that everything’s going to be alright. Clarke’s warm fingers somehow find their way to yours as you hold your glass up, continuing to listen to Octavia as she speaks. “This little asshole scored the most fantastic goal of the game, got herself a scholarship and incited a riot all before the end of the first half… And for that, we raise our glasses to the newest and youngest member of our group-- Tris Woods!”

The group cheers briefly before silence reigns over the room as everyone takes in their drinks-- everyone except for you.

You’re not drinking tonight-- a conscious decision made based on the fact that your thoughts are already fuzzy and dark tonight without liquor.

Clarke notices, hiccupping slightly as she turns to you, pulling you closer by your fingertips. “You okay gorgeous?” she asks, blinking more frequently than normal. She’s beginning to feel the alcohol in her drink; this is evident by her small sway.

You simply nod, kissing her cheek before releasing her and making your way over to Tris who has been occupied with telling some soccer story to Murphy who seems to be listening more intently to the words from your little sister’s mouth than anything you’ve ever said to him.

“You having fun?” you ask her, wrapping an arm around her shoulder.

“LEXA!” your little sister screams, throwing her arms around you, spilling her drink on your black shirt slightly. Of course she’s getting absolutely shit-faced-- she’s never really drank before. “Did you hear my toast?” She’s practically shouting and Murphy and Monroe can barely contain their laughter as Murphy reaches out a hand to stabilize your sister.

“I did! Pretty cool, I didn’t get a toast,” you tell her, rubbing the top of her head as she smiles, eyes shifting quickly in her head. “Be careful tonight,” the warning slips from your mouth almost too easily as you start to walk away, listening as she continues her conversation with Murphy who is immediately enthralled again.

“I did! Pretty cool, I didn’t get a toast,” you tell her, rubbing the top of her head as she smiles, eyes shifting quickly in her head. “Be careful tonight,” the warning slips from your mouth almost too easily as you start to walk away, listening as she continues her conversation with Murphy who is immediately enthralled again.

“Come here,” your stride is broken by Clarke, jumping in front of you, tugging at the hem of your shirt as she walks backwards down the hallway, pulling you with her. You can’t help but smile as your girlfriend sways drunkenly down the short hall, tripping a grand total of 5 times before she reaches the bedroom door, you close in tow.
“Is this going to become a normal thing?” you ask her with a smile spread across your face as she pulls you in close enough to smell the alcohol on her breath. With her forehead on yours, you close your eyes, listening to her breathing as the sounds of the party behind you begin to disappear. “You know, you seducing me while you’re drunk?” you finally add after she questions what you mean. When she takes your face in her hands, you can’t fight off the urge to hold her any longer, gripping tightly at her hips and drawing them closer to you. Your finger skate across her back, dancing up her shirt and tugging at it slightly before you remember that you’re in the hallway and not inside of her room. “I’m okay with it,” you add, finding the door knob behind Clarke’s body, pushing the door open while forcing your girlfriend into it.

“Bed,” she orders you, turning you around and pushing you towards the bed before walking closer again, backing you up until the back of your knees hit the bed, forcing you to sit on the corner while Clarke straddles one leg over yours wrapping her arms around your shoulders.

She’s not even giving you time to think before she’s tugging your alcohol covered shirt over your shoulders, kissing your neck passionately, biting your skin in between each kiss. Your hands manage to find her hips again, pulling them again closer as she grinds into you, hips and stomach rolling with each pulse of your heart. This is going to be over before if even starts if she doesn’t stop that movement-- but at the same time, you pray that she doesn’t as your breathing intensifies. Burying your face into her hair, a small moan escapes your lips and you can hear her breathing catch at the sound of your lungs exhaling into her ear.

“Don’t hold back,” she begs, holding your face and kissing your lips, sliding her tongue into your mouth, dancing it across yours. That and the feeling of her pushing into you was enough. You were done with this whole procrastinating act. With your hands holding tight at the back of her thighs, you pick up your girlfriend, laying her down on the bed before crawling over her, pulling her shirt from her body and tossing it somewhere beside her. Sliding your hands underneath her shoulders, you remove her bra with ease, yours following closely behind as she reaches around you to unhook it, kissing you the entire time.

“You are so beautiful,” you mumble as your hands trace her curves, your eyes fixated on her lips as she bites down on her lower one, fighting back the exhale.

Jesus Christ, this woman is killing you.

Sliding your hand into her jeans, you watch still as she squirms with anticipating, grabbing your wrist and pushing it deeper into her.

Fuck…

She moans into the room and you kiss her, trying to silence noises before the others hear. God, she’s close already and you can feel it in the way that her body moves, every muscle contracting around you. Laying your body closer to hers, you drop to an elbow, kissing the top of her left ear as she moans into yours, taking a fistful of your hair and tugging gently on it.

Just as Clarke climaxes and the sound exhales from her chest, you hold her close, feeling the tremble in her body. She relaxes, almost melting into you and giggles slightly in your ear, pulling your face over to kiss you, causing you to smile into her lips.

“Why are you perfect?” she asks you when your faces separate, causing the tinge of awkwardness to return to your body.

“I’m not,” you mumble, almost unable to look at her.
As your eyes start to shift away, she draws your attention back into her deep blue eyes, suffocating you as you drown in them again.

“But you are,” her voice speaks softly, thumb caressing your cheek before the door swings wide open, causing you to leap back, pulling the blanket to cover Clarke first, then yourself.

“What’s up bitches? We’re going swimming!” You sister stands in the doorway, supporting her very drunk body with Octavia’s equally drunk frame, all held together by Lincoln’s very drunk arms.

You’ve actually never seen Lincoln belligerent. You’ve heard stories and you’ve always been jealous of those few friends that had seen him over the edge drunk, but for the first time ever, your brother was gone as fuck and it was incredible-- or it would have been if you weren’t half-naked in the middle of Clarke’s room with her at this exact moment.

“Awkwarddddd,” Lincoln’s voice slurs as he grabs Octavia from the waist pulling her backwards before he reaches for Tris, tugging her from the back of her shirt. As they retreat, he pulls the door shut, laughing as Tris complains that you’re too busy fucking to go swimming.

You can’t help but laugh slightly at the whine in her tone, fading away until it disappears into the sounds of the world outside of this room. Clarke reaches a hand up, grabbing you by the belt loop at the back of your pants, pulling you back down onto the bed. “I love you,” she attempts to whisper into your ear, failing miserably as it comes out as more of a shout.

“I love you too,” you reply, turning around to kiss her lips, smiling when she pushes you off.

“Get dressed… We’re going swimming,” she orders as you separate, causing your smile to widen.

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**Bellamy**

Returning to the party was not as awkward as you had thought it would be, especially when Harper is the expert of blending in, fooling everyone into thinking that she’s been there the whole time. She really is a fascinating person…

You’re not sure what this means for you two, if it means anything, but she’s stayed over a grand total of three times now, not counting the quick hook-up sessions that have found their way intermingled into your Saturday night house parties.

It’s probably nothing, but you talk more than you have sex and this is a completely new thing for you.

She’s intellectual and funny, witty and considerate, concerned for the world and often expresses fears for the future, citing politics, religion and social phenomenon. She worries for future generations and wonders how they’re going to ‘clean up our messes’. And although you never would have believed this had someone told you when the two of you first met, you’re actually enjoying getting to know her.

Plus, she knows about… you. She approached you one day at work, sounding like she was regurgitating a Wikipedia article.

“Venlafaxine,” Harper said into the emptiness of the hallway that you were both patrolling, almost as if she was speaking to no one. It wasn’t unordinary for her to start conversations with you, especially recently, but even this one seemed foreign.
“Huh?” you questioned, rolling your chair around to turn away from the cameras and to face her. Her hair was pulled back and her weighted vest fit perfectly around her shoulders, hugging tight to the black shirt underneath. It’s not like you two didn’t have the same uniform, but god did she work it better than you.

“Effexor,” she speaks, turning her chair to face you as well. “It’s a drug used to treat depression, anxiety and panic disorders.” You swallow deeply, wondering where she’s going with this conversation.

Is she just citing random knowledge?

Or did she know something?

“More in particularly, Effexor is used to treat P.T.S.D. in military veterans who have suffered trauma in the field… It’s okay to talk about it.” And that’s when she gave away her secret. “I saw the bottle on your dresser Bellamy. You know you can talk to me, right?”

You want to kiss her just for offering. She’s not the first, but she is the first to offer who doesn’t have to. Octavia has to be there-- she’s the only family that you have. Lexa has to be there-- she’s your best friend. Clarke has to be there-- she’s your roommate. Harper… Harper owes you nothing. To Harper, you are nothing…

But now, you’re not even believing that.

“I’m just saying…” she adds, turning her chair around to face the monitors again. “My dad had P.T.S.D.” And the truth comes out. “It was hard for him.” There’s a catch in her throat as she continues to look away from you that sounds as if she’s fighting back the tears. “And I’d hate to see another person lost to that battle.” And there it is.

And, much to your surprise, you took her up on that offer.

And now, there were no walls between you two.

And it was wonderful.

She smiled as the two of you sat with your friends, talking and making jokes as if there was nothing between you two, but occasionally you’d catch her smiling over at you, forcing you to smile even when you tried to play it cool.

Harper’s the first one to notice Clarke and Lexa sneaking off into the back very indiscreetly. She nudges you with her elbow, pointing over to the two while laughing. You laugh in return, rolling your eyes at your roommates but knowing that you can’t judge them-- you and Harper just got back to the group about 10 minutes ago.

And when Tris, Lincoln and your sister decide to go barge in on your roommates as they’re holed up in Clarke’s room, you can’t help but laugh out loud, nudging Harper to return the favor. You both watch on as they enter the room, seeing Lexa’s shirtless, blanket covered, defensive pose just slightly over Lincoln’s shoulder before they all back out, being pulled by a still, semi-coherent Lincoln.

“Oh my god!” Harper gasps, covering her face and leaning into your chest before letting out a loud laugh. “That’s terrible!” Before you even realize it, your arm is wrapped around her shoulder and you’re resting you chin on the top of her head.

And you’re actually enjoying it.
You’re holding Harper in the middle of your living room and you’re totally okay with this.

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LEXA

Watching others swim is way more fun for you. Tris has always made fun of you for hating the sand and hating water. She claims that it’s inhuman to not enjoy a good pool on a hot day or to not have the slightest desire to visit the beach, but if that’s the case, then you’re not human.

Instead, you hang your feet over the side, water rushing over your ankles as you watch your drunk friends dunk each other under the water of the apartment’s pool that you all hopped the fence to (which was another adventure in itself as Octavia was too short to reach and Clarke was too drunk to try), glad that at least one of you was sober enough to keep an eye on things.

Swaying as he walked, Bellamy traced the outline of the pool with his toes, slowly making his way over to the deep end where you sat. Tossing a book in your lap, he haphazardly sits down next to you, unaware of exactly how close his body was to tumbling over the edge into the water.

Flipping over the book to look over the title, you read THE BELL JAR, having heard of it briefly but never having read it yourself. Supposedly it was heavy, and for that reason alone you’ve always avoided it.

“Never read it,” you tell him, explaining your thoughts to him as he shook out his hair.

Taking the book from your hands, he skims the pages with a heavy thumb, speaking in slurs as he does. “I know,” his words come out in a cracking tone, almost as he’s going through puberty again. “I can just tell.” Much like all of Bellamy’s other books, this one is marked at tattooed with his jagged handwriting, notes in the margins about the wording choice, the history of the time it was written, and annotations to other works by other authors. Bellamy was smart-- there was no doubting this, not for you at least. But you’re sure now, after the whole situation with the diploma before, he doesn’t believe the same as you. “‘To the person in the bell jar,’” He quotes, reading the words as his finger traces them across the page, “‘Blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is a bad dream.’”

Stopping you dead in your thoughts, you ponder the depth of these words. This is an explanation of your life. In fact, this is all of your lives. This was Bellamy. This was Clarke. This was your brother, and your sister, and Clarke’s mom and anyone who has ever experienced loss or felt abandoned or shut out.

You were not alone.

You are not alone.

Bellamy knew this all too well as he just watched you ponder your words. His large, dilated eyes seemed to look through you, seeming to hear the words as you held them in, nodding to your thoughts. There was another thing about Bellamy-- even when you didn’t speak, he was listening. Bellamy was always listening to you. His eyes… His smile… The way he watched the words as they left your mouth, following their trails into his ears. Bellamy paid attention to you when you spoke, and that was new to you. Sure, Lincoln and Tris had always paid you attention, sometimes too much for your liking, but that was their job. Bellamy… Bellamy didn’t have to…

But he did.

“WE ARE APOGEE!” Jasper’s voice screams out from the illuminated diving board, interrupting
whatever thought tank you and Bellamy were about to have before he cannon balls into the water, forcing a small wave over the edge and soaking the back of your pants while simultaneously splashing you and Bellamy and the book all in one fell swoop.

“I’m going to drown the doctor,” Bellamy grumbles, pushing himself from the ledge and into the water, swimming his way quickly to Jasper who has just surfaced from his maneuver, shaking the water from his hair. Bellamy grabs his feet from below, pulling the thin doctor below the surface before using his head as a crutch to push himself up, pushing Jasper deeper below. A small laugh escapes your lips as you crack open the book again, shaking what little water had actually touched it from the pages. Before you can even think about reading, however, the theme song from jaws begins playing off-key from inside of the pool, approaching you with small waves.

“Dun dun…” Tris chants, giggling as she doggy paddles slowly towards you and getting increasingly louder. “Dun dun…” again, she takes a small leap closer to you, sending a shock wave of water further up your shins. “Dun dun dun dun dun dun…” Your sister grabs your toes, tugging slightly as she’s practically screaming the tune. Smiling back, you kick at your sister, splashing a small amount of water onto her face. “You have the best friends,” she reminds you, prompting you to glance around at your motley crew of associates, taking in everything.

Clarke, Octavia and Harper are all wading off to the side, talking while they tread water beneath them. Your girlfriend smiles over at you, waving slightly as she mouths to you, asking if you’re okay. You nod with a small half smile back, continuing your scan to the left.

Lincoln and Murphy are organizing a game of chicken (or something like that) with Monroe and Jasper while Monty screams at them about the rules of the game. Maya is sitting off to the side, splashing water onto the back of Jasper’s head, laughing as he doesn’t notice.

And then there’s you-- and you’re not sure how you fit into all of this, but you’re totally okay with it.

“Yeah,” you say, not even knowing how to put into words how lucky you actually feel right now. As if your siblings and your friends weren’t enough, the two groups were finally merged and for the first time in forever, you had a large support group of people caring for you.

“You lifeguarding?” Tris mocks, grabbing your feet again and tickling them under the water. She knows you hate when people touch your feet… that’s why she’s doing it.

“Someone’s gotta save your drunk asses when you drown,” you explain, smiling as you pull your feet back and kick her shoulder from beneath the surface. “Just think of me as a doctor of sorts.”

Tris snorts, laughing at the fact that there are actually 2 doctors and 2 nurses in this pool, but yet you’re the one that’s going to save someone’s life.

“Isn’t that Clarke’s job?” she asks, instantly grabbing Clarke’s attention from the conversation with Octavia.

“Is what my job?” your girlfriend questions, paddling over to where you are, placing her elbows on the side of the pool to pull herself up slightly, kissing your knee. “Fucking your sister?” Tris groans, cringing awkwardly as she throws her hands over her face.

“Ughhh, Fuck off!!” your sister mumbles, trying to splash Clarke but accidentally pushing water up on you instead. You kick water back, honestly kicking more water on Clarke than you do your sister.

And the riot begins.

Clarke and Tris begin fighting slightly for control of the same piece of space in the pool, pushing
each other under the water a couple of times as you laugh at their antics. One laugh, however, was too much as their attention turned towards you, faces smiling as they inch closer to your feet.

“No…” you begin, pulling your legs up from the water and starting to stand.

Before you know it, water is filling your lungs and your eyes burn slightly with the sudden infiltration of chlorine. The sounds around you are muffled and inaudible, but you can make out shouts of laughter.

Yep, you’re in the water.

Surfacing quickly, you breathe in deep, coughing to spit out the water that has filled your throat as you look around quickly to find the perpetrator of such a terrible crime-- you weren’t even dressed for the pool. Kicking your legs harder than normal to compensate for the weight of your jeans in the water, your eyes meet with Murphy standing where you once sat, grinning boldly at your body treading water.

“Enjoying the water?” he asks you before Lincoln pushes him in to join you, throwing his body over yours and Clarke’s into the 8 foot deep pool with a large splash. Again, the laughter of your friends fills the air and again you’re reminded of just how lucky you are.

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**CLARKE**

It may not mean much, but for what it’s worth, you’re falling more and more in love with Lexa every time she even breathes. When she surfaces from the water after Murphy snuck up behind her, you and Tris distracting her just enough to not notice that he was there, and pushing her into the chlorine pool around you, the look on her face is priceless. Her brown eyes are huge and her expression screams a mixture of rage and terror in a combination that you never thought that your mostly stoic girlfriend could produce, especially while sober.

She had just enough time before impact to throw the book behind her and you can’t even pretend to not have noticed. THE BELL JAR was one of Bellamy’s personal favorites and a part of you is surprised that it has taken him this long to make her read it while the other part of you is honestly surprised that he would even suggest it. Bellamy was very personal when it came to that book and you’ve often wondered why, but never really thought about it.

Wrapping your arms around your girlfriend’s shoulders, you pull her body into yours, kissing her lips gently while attempting to ignore the groaning from her younger sister beside you.

“Jesus Christ, Get a room!” Tris grumbles, splashing water onto your faces. “It’s bad enough that I have to hear you praising Jesus every night… Give me just one moment without having to worry about it here.” Her face is kidding, even if her tone sounds genuine and your intoxicated brain can’t help but wonder how much of what goes on in you and Lexa’s room is actually heard by her.

Another tidal wave of water reaches over your head, engulfing you and Lexa’s face as Octavia joins in on the angsty grumbles, shouting to you “Stop making babies you assholes.”

Before you can even form a response, your very sober girlfriend laughs, explaining to Octavia the physicality of baby making and telling her that the anatomical similarities make it…

Oh fuck it… She tells her that it’s impossible, but you’re too drunk to even remember how…

All that you honestly care about is that this girl that is wrapped in your arms, floating in this pool full
of your friends is speaking… you don’t even care what she’s saying, but Lexa’s speaking and that’s good enough for you.

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**TRIS**

You don’t remember when you fall asleep. You don’t remember a lot of things, but one thing is for sure… you’re remembering this headache for a long time. The lights in the window are bright. The birds outside are loud and… Jesus Christ if Lexa doesn’t quit with the sounds in the kitchen, you’re probably going to murder her before Clarke or Bellamy can even stop you.

“Shut the ever loving fuck up!” you grumble, pulling at the sheet wrapped around your body on Clarke and Bellamy’s couch. You’re still in last night’s clothes and the smell of chlorine and tequila invade your nostrils, making you gag from under the blanket. Hell, you don’t even remember how you or this sheet got there, but as it covers your face, you’re thankful for whatever kind soul blanketed you.

“Oh, you’re alive,” she fakes surprise, putting down whatever god awful thing was making such a loud noise in the kitchen (a skillet? A fucking hammer? A goddamn steam plow?) and joining you, lifting your feet and sitting down under them, allowing them to fall back into her lap. “How do you feel?” Her hands on your shins was just heavy enough to comfort you.

“Fuck off,” is all that you can muster from under the blanket, removing the sheet from your eyes just enough to glare at your sister before returning to your cave of solitude.

Lexa’s laugh shakes the couch and normally you’d be happy for your sister’s laugh (well, you’re still happy, but normally you’d be more happy and excited for the fact that the girl who couldn’t find reason to live was now laughing from her chest, shaking furniture with her enjoyment), but right now, with the sea-sickness that you were feeling with each jarring inhale, you’re resisting the urge to kick her in the boobs… It would just be so easy. “Don’t be grouchy,” she begs, patting your knees.

Silence falls over you two as Lexa continues to sit under your legs. When you move the blanket, you catch a small glimpse of her in her natural element, eyes and nose buried deep into the ink of a book. As a smile spreads across your face, she catches you, closing the cover and putting it beside her on the arm of the couch.

“You know he is totally crushing on you,” you ask, pointing over at the book that you vaguely remember Bellamy handing off to your sister last night. Lexa snorts an awkward laugh before you can even speak again.

“As fucking if,” she says pushing your feet to the floor. “He’s my best friend.”

“Fuck off,’ you joke, kicking her shin slightly with your toes.

Your shoes are off too?

What the fuck did you do last night?

“I’m supposed to be your best friend!” you continue to mock your sister, poking out your lower lip and pretending to pout. With your arms over your chest, the tantrum continues as Lexa rolls her eyes at you.

It’s moments like these that you love the most…
Moments where you and your sister are communicating about something other than school, work and soccer.

Moments where conversation existed with little agenda.

Moments where you honestly forgot what you were even saying…

And that was okay.

Moments with Lexa.
Alright, as promised, Chapter 18... the most angsty thing that I could come up with.

Things are finally starting to fall into place how I originally planned and I'm going to go ahead and apologize for the drama that's about to unfold.

I appreciate so much your emotional investment time after time after time, just for me to break your heart in the next 3 chapters.

ALSO, I started a playlist of all of the songs that I was using for inspiration and quoting in the chapters. Check it out. I kind of love it.. plus, it's going to be constantly changing as I write and as new plot things unfold... ANDDDD if you read deep enough into it, you can sort of find some secrets and info that you may not have caught onto before. I'm trying to make this a whole new experience for you because that's what this feels like for me :-) 
http://8tracks.com/roliver4/learning-to-breathe-by-roliver4

LEXA

As the next 3 weeks go by and as the bruises that Clarke left on your face during your first meeting become a distant memory that makes you smile, you come to realize three things more intensely than ever before.

1) Clarke Griffin is a great artist.
2) Clarke Griffin is a great nurse.
3) Clarke Griffin is a hurricane of a human being.

More in particularly,

1) Clarke Griffin loves to paint realistic things and can almost fool anyone into thinking her work is a photograph. One more than one occasion, you’ve stumbled upon a sketch of yourself or scenery from your everyday life that takes your breath away.

2) Clarke Griffin has more compassion and care for her job than she does anything else in her life. She’s almost never late. She never misses. She stays until her job is done, not matter what that means. She talks of patients like they’re her friends and family, having been part of her life for years.

3) Clarke Griffin is the eye of a hurricane-- the center of the storm. When everything else seems grey and dark, she is the focus, calm and collected. When she breathes, everything within you steadies. When she speaks, the voices inside of your mind all quiet to listen. It’s as if anxiety halts in its tracks for Clarke Griffin.

There are smaller, miniscule things that you have learned about Clarke Griffin…

Such as her favorite color is blue because it reminds her of her father’s eyes…
(What she doesn’t realize is that those same exact eyes that look at her through pictures and dreams are the same exact eyes that tear through your walls and bring you to your knees)

And that she enjoys math and science because it’s always the same…

(Even though consistency and reason are not Clarke’s strong points… You theorize that this is because she wants and craves regularity but it’s not in her DNA)

And that she hates romantic comedies because she feels like they aren’t realistic…

(Even if your story of meeting is what movies are made out of)

The most overwhelming point of Clarke Griffin’s life for you, however, and the number one thing that you wish to change is something that Clarke has lived with for way too long.

When the two of you go out for dinner, Clarke orders light. At first, you wondered if she had an aversion to eating at restaurants. Tris was like that. She would only order chicken nuggets and French fries, no matter what. Clarke is very similar. She’d order a salad with dressing on the side, no croutons, no bacon, nothing added, claiming that it was next to impossible to mess up a salad.

You accepted this at first. Not everyone has vices like you and food poisoning wasn’t exactly your favorite life memory ever either.

But then it began happening at home too after a while.

When she came over to your place for Lincoln’s famous Spaghetti with Octavia, she developed a stomach ache after only three bites, dismissing herself to the restroom for about 20 minutes. Afterwards, she was completely fine, claiming it was probably something that she ate earlier at work. Octavia’s shifting eyes told another story.

And again, when Bellamy invited you and Tris over for dinner. She ate before coming home and instead drank water while continuing conversation with you three. Bellamy’s questioning face gave away what you were hoping to be false, but you, yet again, chose to ignore it.

It happened every day-- from apples on the way to work that would never leave the backseat of her car to take out boxes completely full that would sit in the refrigerator for a week before Bellamy would toss them.

Clarke wasn’t eating.

It wasn’t until you were looking for contact solution in her bathroom cabinet as per Clarke’s request that the truth screamed out in your ear in such a resounding sound that you could no longer ignore. She had obviously gone through a lot of effort to hide it, but your wandering eyes and curious mind found it. Your hands held Clarke’s vice as you entered her room, trembling at the conversation that you were inevitably about to have. Sitting down on the corner of her bed, you looked up at Clarke, fixing her hair and getting ready for work in the mirror on the wall. Your heart breaks for her, for the conversation that’s about to begin.

“Find it?” She asks, finally looking away from her mascara to look over at you. You just nod. She reaches over to the desk, picking up her glasses and placing them on her face before her expression changed to terror. You love the way that your beautiful, blonde girlfriend looks in her glasses, but now, you can’t stand that face. In that moment, you knew. “What are those?” She chokes her fear back, appearing ignorant. Her dark framed lenses created a glare across her eyes, shielding her expression fully from you, but the tremor in her voice read aloud to you.
“Clarke?” You ask, standing, leaving the pink pills on the bed next to you. “What’s going on?” She just shakes her head, opening her mouth too quickly to have a real explanation. “Don’t lie to me either. You don’t eat. You have thousands of laxatives in your bathroom. Just tell me that you’re alright.” You’re trembling. You’re not even the one being confronted about your issue and you’re trembling.

“Everything’s fine,” she lies, turning her face back to the mirror. The light surrounding her retreated into a dark place as you swallow back your own darkness.

“Clarke…” you begin, finishing the walk over and putting a hand on her shoulder. You want to tell her… you want to tell her that it’s okay to struggle. You want to tell her about how your hands still crave the cold steel. You want to tell her that you still feel the urge to lose control. You want to tell her, but she doesn’t let you.

“For fuck’s sake Lexa, everything’s fine. I’m fine!” She cuts you off, shrugging off your hand and taking a step away from you.

You drop it-- for now.

“You didn’t have any contact solution,” you finally say, picking up the pills and pocketing them. Even if she has more, at least these few would be out of her way. She nods, finishing her makeup and turning to pick up her bag and scrub top off of the table.

“I’ll have to pick some up then,” she says, shouldering her bag. She makes her way over to you, confidence and light bleeding through her again. Placing a kiss on your cheek, she smiles, opening her mouth again. “I’ll be home around 10. Will you be here?” You shake your head, reminding her that you have to open at the bar tonight. “Alright. I’ll text you.” Before you can say anything else, she’s out the door and you’re standing alone with the darkness in this place. Taking a deep breath, you swallow even harder, making sure that that lump of darkness retreats back into your stomach. It’s been 5 years since you’ve ran a blade across your skin and you’re not about to start now. Not with her in your life.

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TRIS

Seester (8:43AM): Hey I have a question…

Tris (8:45AM): Well good morning to you too…

Seester (8:46AM): Goodmorning… and question….  

Tris (8:50AM): yes?

Seester (8:53AM): how did you know that your teammate had an eating disorder that one time?

Tris (9:01AM): Damn Lex… way to bring down the mood… Hannah puked a lot and I caught her one day

Tris (9:06AM): Why?

Tris (9:38AM): I’m going to ignore the fact that you aren’t answering me….

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CLARKE

Walking into the hospital was all too exciting today. After this morning’s little argument with Lexa, if that’s what you could call what occurred, you really don’t want to talk with anyone. 20 minutes is all that you really need to gather yourself normally, but even your 53 minute drive wasn’t enough to calm your nerves. Lexa had caught on and this was not okay. She wasn’t supposed to see you struggle. She wasn’t supposed to know. As soon as you make it in the door, however, you realize that today is going to be anything but what you need.

“Griffin, thank god you’re here,” Monroe shouts over the desk, handing you a folder as you pass by on your way to the locker room. “We had a multi-car accident come in on top of a suicide attempt and a heart attack. Everyone’s swamped with their own work and we need you to work the floor.” Monroe was normally good with allowing you a few minutes to acclimate— what you did wasn’t easy after all, but today seemed to be the day that everything would go wrong.

“How many in the wreck?” you ask, flipping through your folder, not even really looking at it, before sliding it under your arm. Your friend stepped out from behind the desk to walk with you, stride quickening to keep up. With your coffee in one hand and your backpack strap in the other, you listen to her tell you about the 13 people who entered your ER for one reason or another related to the car wreck.

“Supposedly a red Jeep sped through an intersection, T-boning another car which started it all,” Monroe spoke, your heart dropping at what she had to say.

You spin quickly on your heel, almost running into the girl who wasn’t aware that you were stopping. “Red Jeep?” you ask, already pulling your phone from your pocket. Monroe nods, furrowing her brows at you as you begin dialing Lexa’s number. It rings twice then goes to voicemail. You hang up, pressing redial quickly. Again, ringing twice before voicemail. Turning towards the direction of the locker room, you start walking again, faster than before, still dialing Lexa’s number, leaving Monroe in the middle of the hallway. Still again, “This is Lexa, leave a message.”

“Damn it,” you say, tossing your phone onto the pile of your clothes and papers on the bench next to your locker. Sitting down next to them, your mind races with all of the possibilities. Placing your head in your hands and your elbows on your knees, you breathe deep, thinking everything out loud.

Maybe it wasn’t Lexa.

What if it was?

Your voice echoes alone in the empty locker room.

How many red Jeeps are there in this city?

How many of them are driving at this hour?

The door opens and the body of another nurse passes through, grabbing his things, nodding to you, and then leaving.

What was the last thing that you said to her?

You couldn’t even remember.

Picking up your phone, you click redial at least three more times, ignoring the beeping coming through your pager.
“Hello?” the confused voice on the other end of the line finally answers. “Clarke?” You’re sitting in silence for a moment, simply listening to Lexa’s gruff voice on the other end, thankful to hear her responding. “Clarke, are you there?” she asks one final time. You can hear the background noise of the diner— the clashing of dishes into a sink, the calling of orders, the shouts of the wait staff to each other over the roar of the stove. The concern bleeds through in her tone and you can tell that you’re worrying her now… just like she worried you.

You take a deep breath, calming the shutter in your voice. “I miss you,” is all that you can muster, afraid that anything else and you’ll start crying.

She laughs from the other line, sighing obviously with relief. “I thought something was wrong.” You smile slightly, finally regaining yourself even though your legs are still trembling. “I miss you too,” her voice speaks, stumbling slightly. “Are you alright?” she asks and you find yourself nodding before you stutter a yes. You can almost hear her smile when she says that she’ll come over after her shift at the bar.

“Drive safe,” you tell her, just glad to have avoided one disaster today.

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LEXA

A few more days go by without bringing up the issue of Clarke’s eating habits and you begin to notice small things.

Her scrub pants are fitting more loosely. She seems to tire easier on your morning jogs together. The brightness in her eyes has faded mildly. Had it been anyone other than you, they wouldn’t have noticed these things, but as you’ve been siphoning out Clarke’s laxatives slowly so she wouldn’t notice, she appeared to lock down her eating habits even more. Just when you thought you were making progress, she closes the gates and barricades herself in. Until one day, you can’t take it anymore.

Bellamy is honestly surprised when you text him asking him to meet you at a local coffee shop. Coffee wasn’t really your thing, and he damn well knew this after he offered it to you every morning and you denied, saying you’d rather go for a jog to wake up. When he opened the door of the street corner cafe, his exhaustion met yours equally. He already knew what this conversation was about.

“I know,” he said as he sat down at the table after ordering, laying his motorcycle helmet down on the floor next to him and pulling another chair over next to you to place his feet on. Of course he had a motorcycle also… the truck wasn’t flashy enough for him and you knew this. ‘I guess he was just waiting on the weather to warm up,’ you think, noticing the sunshine for the first time today.

If you knew only one thing about Bellamy Blake it was that he was confident seeming and always comfortable where he was— no matter what.

I mean, you knew a lot about Bellamy, but one thing was for sure-- he was confident, even when he wasn’t.

In fact, you knew more about Bellamy than you did anyone else, probably… And he knew more about you…

But you always knew for sure, without a doubt, where ever you were, Bellamy was comfortable… or at least he looked that way. “And I know that you’ve caught on,” his voice speaks softly this time as he rubs his jaw.
You swallow deeply, blinking a few times before nodding. “I’m worried about her.” Worried honestly didn’t begin to explain it. You were terrified. You’ve only known her for 112 days now, but you’ve seen the changes in the photos and you’ve watched as the life has been sucked out of Clarke.

“Me too, but it comes and goes in waves.” He didn’t even look completely convinced of this. The barista appeared like a ninja beside you, placing Bellamy’s coffee on the table with a ‘thank you’ and a smile before heading off. Bellamy flashed his perfect smile in return. You could see now why Clarke called him a flirt a while back. It almost came naturally to him, and, sadly, this barista probably thought that she was the only one who received that deceptive smile. “She’ll get over it soon, and then it’ll come back when work picks up.”

“That’s not good enough,” you say, sipping your water. Clarke was perfection. She wasn’t allowed to struggle. Only you were allowed to struggle and you weren’t allowed to let her struggle. It was your job to shoulder that weight for her and everyone around you. You’re the wounded savior-- always have been… always will be

“Well, if you’re going to marry her one day, let it go,” he said, blowing some steam from his drink. “Pushing it only makes her lock down harder. Believe me, we’ve tried.”

Marriage? No one has said anything about marriage…

Well fuck…

But what if….  

You shake your head, unable to even fathom the intensity of that word. That was a whole new level for you and you weren’t ready to take that step… not yet… Instead, you laugh it off. Bellamy has no clue what he’s talking about… Marriage… You’re still figuring that one out.

He seems to catch on to your internal conflict, smiling over his glass. “Or whatever the fuck you guys are doing… It’s none of my business. I’m just saying…” You kick his feet off of the chair next to you and he cringes as the coffee spills out on his hands a slight bit “Fuck off Woods,” he replies as he nudges the leg of your chair with his foot, pushing you back from the small, round table. You both smile, finishing the rest of your drinks in silence for the most part. With the exception of a few conversations about work and his sister, Bellamy allows you time to process your thoughts, and you’re thankful for this.

You’re actually thankful for Bellamy.

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CLARKE

“Get it together Griffin,” you shout at yourself, papers scattered across the locker room floor. The two other nurses in the locker room with you just chuckle, understanding your current emotions more than they would like to-- or at least they think they do. You’ve all been at work at least two hours over your scheduled shift due to one bullshit reason or another and you’ve all three had to deal with the people in this hospital for longer than you’d like. Honestly, you’re all three probably burnt out of today, but unlike you, their hands aren’t shaking like yours.

Their knees aren’t wobbling back and forth like yours.

Their eyes are able to focus for more than two seconds on something before drifting to the back of their head.
Unlike you, they’ve probably eaten something in the last day or two.

Well, you’ve eaten, but you haven’t digested, you remind yourself, so it kind of counts. You sort of fooled your body into thinking it’s been fed.

Except you haven’t, and that’s why you’re going through this right now.

That’s why you can hardly stand.

That’s why you’re fucking everything up today.

“Clarke, what’s going on?” you hear, feeling a cold hand on your arm. Turning almost too quickly for your aching body, you’re caught in the arms of Dr. Marcus Kane. Of course, your boss would find you like this.

“I’m fine,” you mumble, lifting yourself from his grasp. He’s holding the majority of your papers, reaching for the rest of them from the other nurses in the room before he dismisses them.

“You look terrible, take a seat.” He ushers towards the bench in front of the grey lockers, holding your shoulder with the other hand. You can’t help but smile, remembering the last time that you saw him in this locker room, before his vacation, was when you were sneaking Lexa out of the boobie room.

“No, I’m fine,” you plead with the man, sitting on the bench and pulling your hair back into a pony tail. At least with it off of your shoulders you’ll be a little bit cooler, if the approaching heat and darkness would quit attacking you from just out of your peripheral.

You know all of the signs of blacking out, but if you ignore them long enough, they’ll go away. That’s how it always works. That’s how it’s always worked for you at least.

“When did you last eat?” Kane asks that dreaded question, glancing at his watch. You almost let out a sarcastic snort but stop yourself just in time. The look on his face gives away that he caught on, but he’s ignoring it. Maybe he’ll translate it differently. Maybe he’ll see it as a jab at how busy you’ve been rather than as a window into your darkness.

Marcus Kane is a good man. He’s been shit on by the universe a lot, but he’s a good man… More in particularly, he’s been shit on by your mother a lot, but he’s still a good man-- and that makes two of you. Kane is the number 2 neurosurgeon in the U.S. and your mother hasn’t let him forget this over the years… especially since she’s number 1… especially since you chose to become a nurse instead of following in her footsteps… especially since you chose to work for him instead of her. Since he had known you since you were born, Marcus reached out to you just before your graduation from nursing school and offered you a job as soon as you had your degree. When you told your mother the great news, she countered with a better paying option, citing all of the failures and shortcomings of Kane and of St. Anthony’s. Something about your mother’s arrogance and her seeming need to be right bothered you (probably because it was like looking in a mirror) and just to be spiteful and just to get away from her, you moved to Oklahoma, taking the job under Kane and you haven’t regretted it yet.

Kane takes care of you.

Kane treats you like an adult and, to this day, you feel like your mother never could do that.

Crouching down in front of you, Kane waits for your reply, watching your eyes as they shift back forth. You just stare, unable to even form a lie at this point. You used to be so good at this all… what happened?
“Come on,” he says, standing and brushing off his pants, offering you a hand. “We’re going to the cafeteria and you’re going to get something in you before you pass out.”

This is going to ruin everything.

You take his hand, not knowing what else to do. Your boss has essentially called you on your bullshit without even knowing it… What else is there to do other than go along?

“Is there someone I can call to come pick you up?” He asks, wrapping an arm around you to help you walk. You want to push him off, but you don’t know how. Instead, you shake your head, reminding him that you’re okay.

“I think I’ll be fine when I eat,” you mumble, hating the feeling of the words in your mouth. He nods, distancing himself from you and releasing you from his grip as you leave the locker room together. Kane is big on image and he’s always conscious of the image that he’s giving off. Being seen coming out of the locker room holding one of your nurses probably isn’t a good look for him, but you can tell he’s watching, making sure that he’s there if you fall.

Your feet are still shaking under you when Kane brings you a tray holding a turkey sandwich and an apple. “It’s not much, but I don’t want you to make yourself sick by binging on an empty stomach,” he explains, taking the seat across from you with a bottle of water in his hand.

Of course he’s staying to watch you eat.

Of course Kane is a nice gentleman who is just looking out for you.

Of course he won’t leave until he knows that you have something in your system.

“Thanks,” is all that you can mumble as you take a bite out of the apple. Suddenly, you actually feel hungry. Another bite and you realizing that you’re starving.

You are literally starving yourself.

You are dying.

“You gotta learn to take better care of yourself Clarke,” he says, placing the bottle to his lips. “Your mother will murder me and bring me back to life just so she can kill me again if something happens to you.” You nod, no longer listening to him but rather to the sounds that your stomach is making. You can’t tell if it’s happy or pissed off that there’s finally something inside of you. “Besides, Blake tells me that you have a girl in your life,” Kane adds, making you almost choke on the food that you’re trying to swallow.

Bellamy fucking would out you to your boss.

Not like he hasn’t seen Lexa…

“Hey,” Kane says, breaking your silent plotting of Bellamy’s death in your head. He places a hand on yours, tapping the top of your hand with his fingertips. “You know I don’t care Clarke… I’ve never cared… just don’t hook up in the locker room or whatever…” He smiles knowingly, capping his now empty water bottle, standing and sliding his chair in. “And don’t worry,” he adds, checking his watch again. “I won’t tell your mom.” With a wink and a smile, Dr. Kane is off, probably to go save some poor soul who will never come to understand the magnitude of this man’s heart.

You smile, taking a bite of the sandwich and savoring its taste.
Has food always tasted this good?

And then your phone vibrates a text from Lexa asking how your day is going. You proceed to type out a simple ‘good’ kind of lie, but then backspace, placing the phone on the table in front of you. You stare at it, hoping that the answer will just type itself out.

If only the phone could read your mind, typing out the words “I need help” or “I’m ready for change” or “I feel like I’m falling”. But instead, it sits there, screen darkening after minutes of inactivity. Taking another bite of your sandwich, your eyes stay glued to your phone as it’s going to try to run away at any moment. Chewing slowly, you ponder what to say, reeling through all of the options in your head. Finally, it comes to you. ‘I’m getting better,’ you type, fingers barely grazing the send button as if you’re terrified of her response. Actually you are terrified, but that’s beside the point. She probably won’t even read too deeply into it.

But you have to get better.

You owe it to her.

You owe it to Bellamy.

You owe it to yourself.
Say goodbye, after all we’ve tried...

Chapter Notes

I'm all kinds of angsty about some things right now so I'm changing the title names again... I'm naming them after lyrics to the song SECRETS by Good and Broken which is found on the soundtrack that has been made for the fic ( http://8tracks.com/roliver4/learning-to-breathe-by-roliver4/ )

Anyway, here's my tide-turning chapter. I'm sorry to start doing this to you, but i'm enjoying incorporating more things from the episodes into the fic and am super stoked about where these next few chapters are going.

Don't hate me too much please...

Add me on tumblr and let's be BFFs: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

and as always, leave me some comments and let me know how you're feeling about things. I love feedback, even if you hate it haha

LEXA

Just as quickly as your reason for concern came, it went.

Just as Bellamy said, it came and went like a wave crashing on the shore for Clarke. Suddenly, she was eating for a normal woman and suddenly she seemed to not worry about things and the light returned to her eyes and the aura was back.

Just as quickly as the wave of despair came, it receded back into the sea of worries to save for another day.

For you, however, the battle was not over. Over the next two weeks, you found yourself growing more and more concerned with what Clarke was eating, despite her attempts to get you to drop it. And even though she was actually eating, you were still not comfortable with the situation… not at all. All of this angst and broodiness culminated into one massive blow out for you-- One for the record books.

"Jesus Lexa, I told you to leave it!" Clarke’s voice echoed as she gathered the dirty clothes from the bedroom floor. You were sitting on the bed with a packet printed off on eating disorders and dealing with them appropriately. Although you’d admit that it wasn’t your best move, it was all that you knew to do. “Everything’s fine. I was just stressed!”

You swallow, trying to keep your tone low and care-free. The packets told you that coming off non-confrontational was your best bet. They also told you not to back Clarke into a corner, but you seemed to have already done that. You knew all of these things anyway from when Lincoln and Tris had to intervene on your behalf. You knew to take it easy… to use non-confrontational tones… to use non-hostile and indirect words that didn’t cast blame. You didn’t need worksheets and pamphlets to tell you this, but the papers in your hands made you feel empowered. They made you feel stronger and, honestly, strength is what you needed now. “I know, but I just worry about you. I talked to
Bellamy and…”

“Bellamy? You brought him into this?” she shouted, throwing the clothes into a hamper before throwing her hands into the air. “And what did he say?”

“He agreed… for the most part.” Your head sunk, knowing that Bellamy told you to leave it alone too, but he did agree that he worried about her too so that was only part lie.

“Oh sure… and I bet he helped you with this little intervention packet?” She asked, making her way over to you and grabbing the papers from you. You reluctantly released them to your blonde girlfriend, knowing she wouldn’t read them. “Bellamy, come here!” She shouted through the door. The sound of footsteps down the hall alerted to the two of you that he had heard you… the weight in his steps told you that he had heard it all.

“I’d rather not,” Bellamy poked his head through the door, leaving the rest of his body in the hallway.

She waved the papers in front of his face, shouting as she did. “You’re in on this?” He stepped into the room, leaving the door open behind him. His hands raised, he opened his mouth to speak, his words were halted because Clarke didn’t give him the time. “No. I don’t even want to hear it actually. You’re both shit. Just go.” She threw the papers back at you, storming past Bellamy, pushing through him with her shoulder and closing herself in her studio. You both just stand in disbelief.

After gathering your stuff, you begin to make your way to the door. The darkness is real right now. You can feel it bleeding in through the corners of your mind. It sinks in through cracks in the walls and slowly but surely floods everything, drowning you in the process. You are a sinking ship and Clarke was what was supposed to save you-- but it seems that she can’t even save herself. Taking a breath, you crave the cold blade across your skin, but you swallow it back down yet again.

Not now.

Not ever again.

As you reach the door handle, your fingers dance across it before a hand grabs your arm, pulling you back inside. When you turn and see Bellamy, your heart sinks a bit, having hoped it was Clarke. He shook his head, ushering you over to the couch. You follow without words, not understanding why.

“Just wait it out,” he says, taking a seat next to you. You sit for twenty minutes in silence. He stands and disappears into the kitchen, reemerging with two water bottles. Handing one over to you, he reclaims his seat beside you and the waiting game continues.

Another thirty minutes pass as you empty the bottle and you think that you hear stirring from the studio, but maybe your mind is playing tricks on you. Bellamy has yet to speak, but instead appears to be listening to the very breath of the house around you.

Ten more minutes and you’re about to lose your mind. You’ve never sat this long and waited on anything. Your legs are itching to leave. Your fingers are all twitchy, scratching at your palms just to keep busy. Your feet continue to shake randomly, uncomfortable with sitting for this long.

Just as you’re getting ready to leave, the studio door opens and the blonde emerges, make-up smudged and tear lines bleeding down her face. She seems surprised that you’re here-- maybe even more surprised than you are, but you play it off well, watching Bellamy’s cues.

He stands.
You follow.

Clarke walks over to him first, wrapping her arms around his waist and taking him in for a hug. He engulfs her in his arms, pulling her in tighter and placing his chin on her head. He whispers something inaudible to you in her ear and she breathes deeply, obviously fighting off tears before releasing him.

Then her sights are turned to you.

“I’m sorry,” she mumbles, attempting to continue some phrase about her being a jerk. You stopped listening though and instead threw your arms around the small girl, pulling her into you. “I’m sorry,” she said again, kissing your neck. Much to your appreciation, Bellamy found this the perfect opportunity to leave you two, smiling to you before bowing slightly and retreating into his bedroom and shutting the door behind him. Your arms remained around your girlfriend as she continued to spill herself to you. “I’m sorry,” she repeated over and over again, each time you pulling her in just a little bit closer. You don’t even really know what she’s apologizing for, but you’re content with just holding her. You’ve always been content with just holding her.

Once you finally released her, or more in particularly she released your waist, the two of you sit on the couch-- A conversation that you don’t want to have but you know is necessary.

“When did it start?” You ask, your hand on her knee. You’re stroking circles on the skin just below her shorts as you watch her eyes shift back and forth.

Blue like the sea.

Turmoil like the sea.

Clarke is the sea and you are drowning in her.

She exhales deeply; shoulders dropping in what you can only assume is shame. There’s only been one instance that you’ve felt anything close to this, and it was hardly the same. You were trapped then and you’ve rarely spoken through your emotions so you can hardly relate to the feelings that she’s having right now but you try. God, do you try.

“High school,” she mumbles, reaching out her hand to take yours. Her fingertips are cold, but her palms are warm. She’s sweaty and anxious and looks as if she’s ready to cry. You try to reassure her that she doesn’t have to tell you anything but she shakes her head. “No, I need to talk with you about it… I need to talk with you about it.” You just nod in agreement. “My mother was really hard on me when it came to… well, everything.” She sighed again, swallowing deeply. “She’d often tell me that I was getting fat when it was offseason and, well, I needed control…”

“Track, right?” you ask, hoping that a small interjection would alleviate some of her stress. You already know that she was state champ for the 800m run at 2:02:04 (you sat through too many conversations with her and Tris about high school athletics to not know that), which you assumed was good even though you had no clue anything about track and field, but allowing her a moment to breathe at your expense was worth it.

She nods, smiling up at you from her lap. “800 meter. It continued in college though… all through nursing school, it became a way of coping. When I felt the most out of control, I knew I could at least control myself.” She frowned into her lap again, withdrawing her hands. “The only problem is that I have no control. It destroys everything. It’ll destroy us.”

“No,” you say, grabbing the sides of her head gently with your hands. “You’ve got baggage-- so
what. Have you met me? I’m a train wreck.” She laughs, reaching her hands up to yours and holding them closer to her face. She turns her head into one of your hands, kissing your left palm.

“You’re perfect,” she mumbles into your hand, kissing it again. You can’t help but wonder if she even knows how false that statement is. You’ve always wondered if she even knew how false that statement is… Your wrists healed well and with minimal damage and she hasn’t seen your thighs—not in the daylight. You paid specific attention to the placement of your blade that first year after your parents died so that no one would see them. She talks about wanting control while you’re the master of losing it here.

“Cl… Clarke,” you stutter, pulling your hands back. She looks shocked at first, then concerned. The sheer amount of feelings that this girl seems to have for you is alarming. Even at 115 days after meeting her, she’s absolutely in love with you… and no one is allowed to feel for you-- that’s when you fuck it up the most. “I need to show you something,” you finally say, grabbing her hand and pulling her from the couch. You drag her down the hallway towards the bedroom, wondering the entire time why now. What has changed in you that has made you want to show this girl you’re weakest moments?

She’s just going to run.

Just like Costia.

She’s going to hate you.

Just like Costia.

She’s going to blame you.

Just like Costia.

You’re weak.

You’re fragile.

It’s all your fault.

It has always been your fault.

The door closes behind you, closing the two of you into the bedroom and the dark voices outside in the hallway. You feel trapped, but you feel safe as well. Clarke just looks confused as you stand before her, all of your darkness scratching to be let in.

“Wait,” you tell her, unbuttoning your jeans and sliding them down to your ankles. To date, you’ve paid the utmost attention to not let Clarke too close to your outer thighs. It’s been hard and exhausting, but it’s been survival. Sure, she’s touched you-- God has she touched you, but if you move just right and if you turn your hips at the perfect angel and if you maintain dominance when she’s sober, she’ll never catch on and for 115 days, this has been how you survived. You reach over, grabbing her hands, shivering as you pull them down to your legs.

Fuck up.

All your fault.

All these thoughts and more scream out to you in that second before her finger tips dance across the scarring. She gasps, pulling her hands back.
You burned her.

She looks at her finger tips as if they had been set ablaze, glancing back to your legs before dropping to her knees. Her eyes are now turned back to you as she reaches out slowly, running her fingers from the top of your project to the bottom. Two years of artwork and you were the canvas, and now a true artist is looking upon your design. Her fingers trace every line twice over as she fixates her attention on every mark, a healed scar raised gently from the surface. As she traces the words ‘Fuck Up’ as they’re written in tiny letters on your skin, you can’t help but hear them spoken in your brain in her voice. Finally, her eyes turn back to you.

It wasn’t like it had been though.

This blue was fire.

This blue was electric.

This blue looked like it could take on the world.

Clarke was no longer the sky and the sun.

Clarke was a martyr, ready to die for her beliefs.

Clarke was no longer a mist on a cool morning.

Clarke was a riot, ready to burn down the system.

Clarke was passion, burning hot.

“Lexa,” she said, lifting her body from the floor and wrapping her arms around you. This was exactly what you wanted to avoid. This was not your pity party. This was not your moment to be saved. This was not what you wanted.

“No, Clarke,” you say, pushing her away. “This isn’t about me. This is about you and your misconstrued belief in my perfection.” Suddenly, without filter, it all flows out of you. Every moment that she used the words ‘perfect’ or ‘flawless’ to describe you, every compliment, every notion of royalty she attributed to you, all of those pent up moments of hostility poured from you in this single moment and you couldn’t even explain why. “I’m not perfect. I’m a perfectly fucked up piece of shit, but you… you are… so much more.”

“Lexa, stop,” she pleads, reaching out to grab your hand.

“No,” you say, pulling it away. “You keep doing this… you keep implying that I don’t struggle when every day of my life has been a struggle and I just know that when you see how fucked up I really am, you’re just going to leave.” You’ve started speaking and it doesn’t stop. What you meant to be something supportive has turned into the exact opposite.

Just like everything else, you’ve fucked this up too.

But yet you can’t stop.

It’s best this way.

Her face drops and you realize exactly what you just said. There’s no going back now though. You’re already here.

“Do you really think that low of me?” She asks, crossing her arms. She’s shielding. She’s deflecting.
She’s uncomfortable and you’re aware of this, but the words keep coming anyway.

“Yes,” you say.

Shut up.

“I do,” you reiterate.

“Because everyone always does,” you add the final nail to that coffin.

Just don’t.

“I’m not everyone,” she shouts, tossing her hands up.

“No, you’re not,” you say, almost a whisper. “You’re good and kind and passionate and admirable and worthy of so much more than I can offer you.” You’re trembling, the words still flowing from your mouth even though your brain stopped long ago. “I’m surprised that you made it this long,” you say, reaching down to pull up your pants. “Most people give up before this point. I’m proud of you.”

She watches silently as you walk over to the door, leaving the bedroom and closing it behind you. Once in the living room, you’re hoping for a clean getaway. This wasn’t what you signed up for. The last few months have been great, but honestly, you’re not cut out for this life.

You’re not made for happiness.

And that’s what Clarke is…

Clarke is happiness…

“She deserves the world,” you hear Bellamy’s voice from the dining area.

Damn it. You were so close.

“What?” you ask, gathering your keys, cards, and phone from the table beside the couch. You know exactly what he’s saying, but maybe if you play dumb he’ll drop it. But he doesn’t.

“She’s got so much heart to give,” he explains, lifting a coffee cup to his lips. “Sometimes too much.” You nod, continuing to look at the floor. “You don’t have to save her… she can do that on her own… She has so much to give… We have so much to give…”

You don’t say anything to your curly haired friend as his voice cracks at his last statement, letting you know that if you walk out on Clarke, you’re walking out on him too. You know that he’s right, but admitting that is just too much right now. Instead, you open the door and walk out into the sunlight, leaving the apartment behind you. You’re still needed at home. Your brother and sister still need you and every minute that you spend here wastes time that you could be helping them.

Friends have been nice, but you’re not made for this.

You’re within 10 feet of your car when a voice calls out to you.

“Lexa!”

Damn it again.

Just like the first night, you turn on your heels to see Clarke racing towards you. Only this time, tears are filling her eyes.
“Lexa, wait,” she says, stopping in front of you. “I’m sorry,” she begins, shaking her head. You’re reminded of how cute she looks in her glasses. “I don’t know what is even happening right now.”

You can’t do this.

“Nah,” you say from the corner of your mouth. “Don’t apologize. I told you that I was toxic.”

You did warn her.

You’ve warned her with every breath that you took.

“But you’re not,” she cries, eyes falling to the ground below. “I know you told me the night that we met that you were a black hole, but I don’t believe that is a bad thing. Maybe you just absorb all of the energy around you. You try to take on too much. You try to be too many people’s hero, Lexa.”

She looks up at you, half-smiling the distance between you two.

“I’m not who you think I am,” you mumble, turning your back on the girl and opening your car door.

I’m a murderer-- the words linger, unspoken, in your mouth.

“I love you,” she shouts out from where she stands. You stand silently, one foot in the car. “Look, it may not be much, but I love you… every bit of you. I love the you that is constantly competing during our morning jogs.” You can’t help but smile a bit. “I love the you that lights up when you talk about Lincoln and Tris. I love the you that yearns for adventure and craves knowledge.”

At least she likes all the good things about you.

“But I also love the you that cries in her sleep. I love the you that still trembles when a semi-truck drives past. I love the you that’s afraid of lightning and the you that feels like everything is her fault when it’s not and the you that feels the need to tear herself out of her flesh. Lexa, I love you.”

You stand for what seems like ages, gathering your thoughts into words. More than anything, you want to close the door to your car, walk over to Clarke, take her face in your hands and kiss her, telling her all of the same things about her… but you can’t. The words just don’t come.

“That’s not my fault,” you say almost too quietly for her to hear. “I didn’t ask you to love me.”

You sit down in your car, closing the door and starting the engine. Pulling out of that parking lot was the hardest thing that you’ve done in years and for the first time in years, you question if you were even remotely close to making the right decision. Pulling over on the side of the road a few miles down, you allow emotions to take over, sobbing into your steering wheel for what seemed like hours. Finally, after a flood of dark thoughts, tears and many fists against your steering wheel, you feel dry enough to make your way home to Lincoln and Tris. Putting the car in drive, you take the rearview mirror off of your windshield, too afraid to look back.

You’ve made this bed, now it’s time to sleep in it. Attachments aren’t for you and you’re just going to bring Clarke down when you crumble.

At least this way you’re saving her.

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Bellamy
Staying in your seat was nearly killing you. With your coffee cup raised to your face, you watched as your roommate sprinted out of the apartment after Lexa, leaving the door wide open. You wanted to follow. From the moment Lexa exited your apartment, you wanted to follow, warning her about how terrible of a mistake that she was making. Instead, you stayed sitting.

You could hear their voices from inside.

Clarke’s pleading.

Lexa’s half-assed responses.

The cracking in both of their voices.

Both were fighting this.

Both wanted something more.

But for some reason, Lexa couldn’t gather it.

And for that, you hated her. You hated her for what she was doing to you. You hated her from what she was doing to Clarke. You hated her for what she was doing to the beautiful family of friends that you guys had created together. But most of all, you hated her for what she was doing to herself—even if you couldn’t bring yourself to say it out loud.

“That’s not my fault,” you hear Lexa say, blaming Clarke for everything whether she meant to or not. With the start of an engine and the sound of tires against the pavement outside, you rise from your seat, leaving your half-drunk coffee cup on the table as you make your way to the door, ready to pick up the pieces in Lexa’s wake. When you reach the door, however, you’re met with an unaffected seeming Clarke… no tears… no anger… no rage…

Just Clarke.

“Yes okay?” you ask, knowing that it’s the world’s dumbest question but not knowing what else to do.

Instead of offering an answer, she falls into your arms, wrapping hers around your neck and burring herself into your shoulder. Unable to support her, the two of you fall to the floor, you breaking the majority of her fall.

If you ever needed an answer to that question, this was it… Lying in the floor, holding your roommate as she sucked air into her lungs, overwhelmed with depression…. This was it.

The next few minutes were spent in this exact place as Clarke’s tears soaked the neckline of your shirt. “I can’t do this,” she mumbled a few times into your collarbone, the words jarring deep into your heart.

“I’m sorry this isn’t easy… Believe me,” the words exit your lungs calmly as, internally, you panic, feeling your insides fall like the ashes of cigarettes.

You’re breaking too.

“I don’t know what to do,” she begs you for an answer, surfacing to look you in the eyes, her face just inches from yours. You can see every trail that every tear has made down her cheek, streaking into the shadows outlined on her face.
You want to tell her something. ‘I don’t know’ doesn’t seem like an appropriate response, but there are no words to explain what you’re feeling either.

Lexa didn’t just break up with Clarke.

She broke up with all of you…

But more importantly…

She broke Clarke…

She broke Clarke in a way that hasn’t happened since Finn…

The rage is in your blood and apparently it’s in your face as Clarke places her hands on the sides of your head, kissing your forehead slowly.

Why is she comforting you?

She’s the one that was just broken up with…

“Clarke,” you begin, taking her hands. She shakes her head in reply, asking you without words to stop.

“I need sleep,” is her only reply as she stands, making her way to her bedroom and closing the door behind you, the lock clicking just moments later. She’s left you on the floor, knowing all the words that you want to say to her, singing her everything… just thoughts… but nothing is happening.

You can’t speak.

You can’t move.

You can’t feel.

This is what dying feels like…

Like losing home.

Like losing hope.
This last day reminds me all of my mistakes

Chapter Notes

So I apologize for the darkness in the last chapter. To be honest, this one isn't any better, but it's a lot of backstory that explains a lot thus far... here's the final twist for a moment. I promise... I PROMISE that everything will work out my friends. I'm totally a CLEXA supporter so just ride through it with me. The next chapter will be soft and fluffy. I swear. but please accept my 9K word apology. I'm finally drawing an end to most of my references to the TV show. I love you

TRIGGER WARNING: this chapter has a lot of Self-harm and eating disorder references and descriptions. Please tread lightly. You are important and you are valuable and I love you dearly. If you are struggling with suicidal thoughts, please talk to someone. I promise, you are not alone! Here's a list of numbers that you can call if you need help: http://www.suicide.org/suicide-hotlines.html
If you struggle with self-harm, please know that you are not alone. Hope is real. Help is real. and Rescue is possible. You are stronger than you know! http://www.twloha.com/
If you struggle with eating disorders, please seek help. You are precious and you are beautiful and you are needed for great things.
http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/find-help-support

Add me on tumblr and let's get to know each other: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

The soundtrack is starting to make sense now. Check it out at:

CLARKE

Bell-Bear (3:24PM): You need to tell her dude.

You stare at this text for what seems like hours.

You’re beginning to hate Bellamy Blake.

More in particularly, you’re beginning to hate how he’s right.

Ever since you and Lexa’s huge falling out the day before, he’s done nothing but bother you.

But to be honest, everything was bothering you today.

The sound of the air conditioner was annoying.

The extra weight attached to your hips was annoying.

Even the size of your fucking shoes annoyed you at this point.

Lying in bed, you refused to move, surrounded by Kleenex and plastic baggies of sugar free gummy worms, knowing that the minute you leave these sheets, you’d be accepting the life in front of you…
The life without Lexa.

**Bell-Bear (3:32PM):** It will help, I swear.

**Bell-Bear (3:32PM):** have you eaten anything other than gummy worms?

Your fingers twitch, craving to type the ten thousand words that are floating just behind your lips, but you can’t. Instead, you hear them in your own voice to yourself.

How the fuck will telling her that you almost died help anything?

She said that she didn’t want a pity party.

Why present her with one?

**Bell-Bear (3:46PM):** or I could tell her… if that’s easier for you.

No.

That wouldn’t help.

Sighing, you throw your phone to the foot of your bed, pulling the blankets over your head and listening as the device hits the floor.

Fuck all of this.

“I’m not getting up,” you yell into the silence, hearing Bellamy shuffle in the room next to you. He laughs through the wall before his noise stops. Before too much longer, you hear your bedroom door opening, feeling a body climbing up your bed before pulling at the sheet-bubble that you’ve created. Your handsome roommate crawls under the sheets with you, pulling them over his head to close the two of you under.

“No one is asking you to, Clarke,” he says wrapping his arms around you. He pulls you in closer and you turn into him, burying your face into his neck.

Exhaling slowly and relaxing into your roommate’s arms, you try to count the number of times that Bellamy’s held you through crisis, but you give up. There’s no numbers that high.

“I am become death, destroyer of worlds,” you mumble into his neck, quoting Oppenheimer.

He laughs, pushing your shoulders to distance the two of you. “You’re being a little dramatic, don’t you think?” he asks, staring you in the eyes. “You scared her… not killed her, okay?” He blinked a few times, never breaking eye contact with you. Something about his eyes tell you that he’s not even buying it, but his voice doesn’t falter.

You nod, pulling yourself back into his arms and breathing out slowly.

“I really think that you should tell her though… maybe she’ll see things a bit differently if she knows,” he persists, tucking the top of your head under his chin.

“Why?” you ask him, breathing him in again. Since you met Bellamy Blake he’s always had the same scent and you love it. Bellamy smells like home. “So she can really be freaked out by the fact that I’m an absolute nut case?” You can feel the burn of the tears forming in the pits of your eyes, but you’re not even ashamed anymore… not after everything that Bellamy has been through with you.
Waking up in that hospital bed with the taste of blood and vomit in your mouth hurt worse than anything that you have ever experienced in your life. Everything ached and even opening your eyes drained your energy beyond comprehension. The IVs in your arms burned as the steady, rhythmic beeping beside you twinged in your brain at every pulse of your weak heart.

You close your eyes, regaining energy before trying again.

There’s a blurry glimpse of a figure next to you before your eyes force themselves shut again.

You exhale, mustering all of the energy that you can, pushing your eyes open one final time.

Beep.

Shaking your head, you allow them to shut, realizing that you can’t do this.

“There she is,” Bellamy’s soft voice greeted you back into reality. Forcing your eyes open, you squinted at your friend, hearing him say “Hey Clarke, welcome back.”

Back?

Where had you gone?

Last thing you remember, you were leaving home to go to work.

Funny how you were headed to a hospital but yet you were waking up in one.

“What happened?” you question, looking around at the almost too clean looking room. You hate the color white…

And everything here is white…

So much white…

“Clarke?” Bellamy questions, drawing your attention back to him. “Clarke, It’s gotten bad.” He’s stroking your arm with his thumb, looking over your face with the utmost attention. He looks concerned.

You know why…

But there’s no reason to be concerned…

You have everything under control…

“What do you mean?” you play dumb, tracing the IV drip back to its bag with your eyes. They’re pumping you with electrolytes…

Fuck…

That’s going to make you gain weight…

“Clarke,” Bellamy insists, pulling his hand away. His deep eyes never falter though. “They’re taking about a feeding tube.”
You cringe.

“You almost died.” His voice shutters as he speaks these words, revealing his fears. “Your kidneys can’t keep playing this game…”

Your kidneys are fine.

You’re as healthy as an ox.

You’ve never been better in fact.

“They’re failing,” Bellamy continues, almost as if he read your mind. “You’ve ruined them, Clarke, and you’re going to die if we don’t get you help.”

Help…

That’s a funny word…

What he means to say is fat…

If they don’t get you fat…

You shake your head, opening your mouth to speak before he shuts you down, cutting off your breath. “No. It’s my turn Clarke. We tried it your way. We’re getting you help.”

No one has ever shut you down like Bellamy Blake…

You’ve never let anyone shut you down like Bellamy Blake…

“I… I don’t know how…” you say, tears beginning to form lines down your cheeks. He smiles, wiping them away with the sleeve of his shirt while nodding.

“That’s why I’m here,” he says, biting back his own tears. “It’s going to be alright.”

---

LEXA

Entering your house that evening was almost unbearable. The doorway that you’ve seen a thousand times before Clarke now suddenly reminded you of only her. The bed that you had slept in a thousand times before Clarke now smelled only of her. The living room, the kitchen, the hallway all looked empty without her near you-- even though they had remained unchanged since you rented the place years ago with your brother.

“Lexa!” His voice shouts from inside the kitchen, ushering you in. You drag your feet as you walk, not even really knowing how to lift yourself off of the floor.

Who turned on the gravity?

“Glad you could finally come home!” Lincoln joked from the table, rising to come and wrap his arms around you. You hug him back with one arm, distance screaming between the two of you. He notices, pulling you in tighter to overcompensate.

“It’s only been four days,” you mumble awkwardly once he releases you, sitting down at the table next to him.
He smiles, sitting down and closing the laptop that he was working at. “Yeah, but still… I mean, I guess it’s no different than working haha. Where’s Clarke?” Apparently he didn’t catch on enough.

“We’re ummm…” How do you begin this?

You ran her off…

More appropriately, you ran away…

Just like you always do…

Just like you’ve always done…

Lincoln nods, not even needing you to finish that statement. “I’m sorry,” he says, glancing you over. “How are you holding up?” he asks, his tone giving away his true nature.

There are hundreds of ways that he could have asked this question and it be more discrete than that…

Have you cut yourself?

Do you want to kill yourself?

Have you taken too many pills again?

Have you thought about dying lately?

And only every second since you walked out of Clarke’s apartment earlier that day.

Reaching over to your brother, you take the sides of his shaven head in your hands, pulling his forehead to yours. “I’m not going anywhere,” you mumble with your eyes closed, feeling him sigh with relief in your hands. He places his large hands on your shoulders, pulling you in for a hug before thanking you.

He cares…

That’s all there is to it…

He cares, and sometimes, that’s enough.

---

LEXA

She was dark, that was for sure, but something about that darkness called out to you.

Her short dark hair was plastered to her face with sweat as she ran past your apartment every day, breathing deeply, chest heaving with each step of her tennis shoes on the pavement.

You didn’t even know her name, but you longed for that chest to be pushed against yours.

You watched her day after day, observing her habits, taking it all in. She was gorgeous and she was constant. It’s not that it was completely creepy-- I mean, you had one class with her, but you never had the chance to speak with her. She was brilliant though-- this was obvious by her comments during your lecture together. She spoke with an accent that matched her intellect. Canadian, you think you remember her saying once.
Without thinking one day, you took off after her, matching her stride as you approach slowly behind her. You’ve never really been the shy one, but for some reason, she made you anxious. It was time to put those butterflies to rest.

“Hey,” you say loud enough for her to hear over her ear buds. Apparently it didn’t work because she continued running, not even noticing you. “Hey,” you try again, a little louder. Success.

She turns her head to greet you, pace slowing slightly as she removed her earbuds.

“No, don’t slow down,” you request, pointing straight ahead. “I’m just going to run with you.”

“Okay?” she questions awkwardly, eyebrows furrowing.

“I’m Lexa,” you say, offering her your hand as you match her step for step. She lets out a small laugh as she turns her body into a weird position to shake your outstretched hand.

“Costia,” she says, as she turns to face the front, pace picking up slightly up the small hill in front of you. “And I know who you are… We have econ together.”

She knows.

She remembers you.

You smile, picking up your pace against her to place yourself in front of her.

“Look, I know this is weird,” you begin, receiving a small chuckle in response. “But I was wondering if you’d like to get lunch or something sometime.”

She slows to a stop, you stopping only a couple of strides in front of her. “Lexa, are you asking me out?” she asks, pursing her lips and smiling.

You grin back, your arrogance showing slightly. “Maybe,” you mumble, kicking a rock away from in front of you. “That all depends on what you’re going to say.”

It’s hot outside but you’re only half sweating due to the heat. The butterflies that you came outside to kill today are more active than ever before and have now climbed into your throat, attempting to scratch their way out. You feel the need to vomit in this silence between you two.

“Lexa,” Costia says in between gasps for air and smiles. “I’m sorry,” your expression drops, “but you’ll have to catch me first.” The girl sprints off up the hill, leaving you standing for a split second, not knowing how to respond.

Soon after, though, your mind catches up with the situation at hand and you begin running, chasing after the girl.

---

LEXA

She was darkness, this you knew long before the relationship between you two flourished, but you never would have been able to guess how much blackness surrounded her. Costia was complicated and layered and just when you thought you were breaking through a wall, life would throw you a curveball and unleash something else into your world.

She was beautiful though, and something about her made you feel alive, even if something about her made you hate yourself. Some of your best nights were spent on her living room floor drunk with her
as her roommates snorted their drugs in the bathroom. She’d often disappear for minutes at a time with them, only to return craving you more than ever before.

You desired her though, in spite of it all, and you loved her though, in spite of it all.

You loved her…

You loved all of her…

And that’s why the end came at such a shock for you.

---

**LINCOLN**

When your phone rang during your last class of the evening, you knew something was wrong immediately.

“Lincoln Holcolmb?” The man’s voice confirmed from the other line. A shiver traveled its way up your spine. There were only 2 reasons why you’d be receiving this call right now and you couldn’t lose either of them. Lexa and Tris were your life.

Arriving at the hospital only solidified the statements made by the man on the other line. “Your sister has been admitted to the Emergency Room at 6:33 this evening for what we believe is an attempted suicide.” You didn’t have to ask which one. Tris was at soccer camp and Lexa was with… that girl…

That girl that you could feel was pushing her way into Lexa’s life.

That girl who had told her to “get over” her depression just a week ago.

That girl who showed up at your parents’ funerals and acted like she was put out by being there to support her girlfriend.

As the elevator crawled the flights, your mind raced with all of the warning signs that you should have noticed.

Costia was toxic, you knew this, but she wasn’t the only reason.

Since your parents passed two months before, Lexa had been changing.

She was no longer competitive.

She was no longer present.

She was no longer happy.

She was no longer Lexa, and you should have known.

Shaking the tears from your eyes and the thoughts from your mind, you exited the elevator doors as they opened, pushing your way past a couple of nurses who congregated in the hallway near your sister’s room.

And that’s when you saw her…

That girl…
Sitting in the chair next to Lexa’s bed, book in hand. She didn’t even look as if she wanted to be here now… and you wonder if that’s how Lexa felt right before she tried to take her own life.

“Get out,” you growl at the girl as you enter the room, not even allowing her time to greet you. She stands, staring against you mercilessly.

“Lincoln, always a pleasure to see you too,” she mumbles, taking her seat again and opening her book.

“I said get out,” you repeat, taking a step closer. “You’re done here.”

“And I said no,” she says before laughing. “Oh… wait… I didn’t, did I? Well… No.” She brushes a small sliver of hair behind her ear, revealing her dark eyes. “If it wasn’t for me, she’d be dead,” she explains, crossing her legs.

“If it wasn’t for you, she wouldn’t be here,” you shout, throwing your arms up. A nurse enters, asking if everything is alright and you quickly dismiss her, too upset with everything else to add someone else into the situation.

“Look,” Costia says, standing from her chair and walking over to you, placing a hand on your chest. “You want me gone so bad, fine,” you breathe a sigh of relief for a moment before she continues, “but when she wakes up, she’ll want me… and I’ll be here.” The woman walks out of the room, disappearing into the hospital before you can even look back at her.

You’re alright with it though. Walking over to Lexa’s body on the bed, you brush her hair from her face, listening to the rhythmic beating of her heart as the words from the man on the phone echo in your mind. “She’s stable Mr. Holcolmb, but she’s lucky. She cut pretty deep and took a lot of pills.” Running your hand down her arm, you trace the bandage on her wrist, wondering where else your sister has tried to redefine her skin. Taking the seat next to the bed, you slouch into it, thankful that Tris is out of town for the evening. Exhaling deeply, you just sit, mind blank of anything other than the echoes of Lexa’s pulse.

At least there’s that.

---

LEXA

“You have to let go of this depression,” Costia screams across the room at you, throwing her hands up in the air as she does. “You’re bringing us all down!”

You bite your cheek until you taste blood, unable to produce words enough to explain what you were feeling.

Your parents died less than 2 months ago.

It was your fault that they were dead.

And you were supposed to just “let it go”?

Without saying anything else, you walk away, making your way to the bathroom and shutting the door quickly behind you, locking it before you slide to the floor, back against the wood. The tile is cold underneath your legs as you remove your jeans, displaying your artwork to only you.

“That’s it Lexa, just run in there and cut yourself again… that’s how you can handle this situation,”
you hear her voice through the door. “Just like everything in life, just cut it away, right?” Her fist echoes against the wood above your head as you reach for the blade that you’ve hidden amongst her things.

It’s not like she’d know any different anyway… her roommates had them hidden all around the apartment. They used theirs for different reasons, however.

Without thinking, you traced the lines in your skin, releasing all of the butterflies that you had ever felt for Costia… all of the butterflies that you had ever felt for anything. As the blood flowed from your legs, you exhaled deeply, releasing any pain that you had ever felt… any hope… any sorrow… and joy… any emotion at all.

But it wasn’t enough.

This was taking too long and the longer you sat here on this floor, the longer you were alive in this terrible life…

And that’s when your eyes caught hold of a wonderful idea…

That little orange bottle on the corner of the sink called to you, singing a song like you’ve never before heard…

And that’s when you knew…

It was time…

---

LINCOLN

Supposedly, according to the first responders who found Lexa, Costia called in the suicide attempt after Lexa stopped responding after she had been inside of the shower for an hour. The only problem with her story, other than it came from her, was that your sister wasn’t found inside of the shower. She was on the floor, pills scattered about with razor blade in hand.

Had you known….

But you didn’t…

But she did…

That girl did…

And because she didn’t do anything (or because she did everything), you now found yourself with your younger sister sitting beside the only other person that matters in your life as she’s fought for her own.

It was 63 hours after your first entrance into this room when Lexa began to open her eyes. The first time you saw those brown eyes flecked with gold staring into yours, you began to cry, taking your sister into your arms as Tris crawled into the bed with her from the other side.

“What happened?” Lexa asked, almost panicking. You swallow deeply, sitting on the bed and pulling your legs up so the three of you are squished into the hospital bed together.

“Lexa, you tried to kill yourself,” Tris speaks first, not even bothering to be subtle. You can’t blame her though. She’s spent the last 60 hours wondering if her sister was ever going to wake up.
Lexa shakes her head, swallowing deeply before you speak so she doesn’t have to. “We’re going to get through this though,” you mumble, more to yourself than her as you wrap your arm around your sisters, kissing them both on the head. “Get knocked down, get back up,” you tell them, quoting your family motto since you and Lexa met all those years ago.

Hours pass as the three of you sit cramped in the hospital bed in spite of the availability of empty chairs in the room as you talk about anything and everything other than Lexa’s condition before another body from life outside of the hospital enters the room...

That girl...

Making eye contact with you, Tris slides off the bed, excusing herself without any words, nudging the shoulder of that girl in passing. Costia just hisses a response to Tris before turning her attention to you.

“May I speak with Lexa?” she asks as you tighten a grip on Lexa’s hand. You sister nods at you, pushing you slightly towards the edge of the bed.

Stepping off of the hospital bed, you make your way towards the door, almost avoidant at first, but stepping in close to her at the last moment.

“You hurt her now and I’ll fucking kill you,” you whisper to the girl before leaving without seeing her reaction.

As much as you want to stay right outside of the door and watch the conversation unfold, you respect Lexa’s privacy too much and settle for sitting at the end of the hall where you see can see the door, but nothing else. Seconds turn to minutes which turn to an hour and a half. Tris comes and claims a spot on the bench next to you, handing you your third cup of coffee of the day and carrying on the silence that you’ve already began. You simply continue to watch the door, waiting for Costia to pass through so you can return to pick up whatever shattered remains of your sister she left behind. Another 20 minutes pass before she exits, not even noticing you before sliding into the elevator, her darkness retreating with her.

Standing, you motion for Tris to stay where she’s at: You need to do this alone.

The walk between your bench and Lexa’s door was excruciating… your heart pounding with each step. One of two things were going to happen when you entered this room and it was going to play out because of one of two reasons.

Either your sister was going to be an emotional train wreck beyond comprehension or she was going to be fine.

Either Costia was still going to be a pain in your ass, or she was out of your lives forever.

You couldn’t really decide which was the lesser of the two evils.

- 

Taking Lexa home was the easy part. Keeping Lexa at home was complicated. Every so often, she would get a grand idea to call, text or visit Costia to “apologize”. This was off limits-- one of the few things that you and the hospital psychiatrist agreed on. Not only so, but all meals, bathroom visits, and excursions outside of the house were to be monitored… and Lexa didn’t like babysitting.

Even more upset by Lexa’s sudden dependence than Lexa was Tris and keeping the balance between these two was not easy. Ever since Lexa moved back to live with the two of you after the
death of your parents, Tris and Lexa had been at odds. They had always gotten along before the tragedy, but neither were coping well.

None of you were coping well.

Entering the front door of your house, you’re immediately greeted by loud, punk rock music emitting from the bathroom. A shiver runs up your spine as you make your way through the living room, into the kitchen. It’s definitely not Tris’s music, that’s for sure, and this fact terrifies you even more. Walking through the kitchen and into the hallway, the noise grows louder, as does your breathing and terror.

Rapping your knuckles against the hallow wood, you’re greeted with silence. “Lexa?” you ask into the room, expecting silence but instead hearing the sounds of scurrying, like someone’s trying to hide something.

“Hold on, Lincoln,” she replies, the panicked shuffling continuing.

“Lexa, open the door,” you demand, shaking the handle of the door. “You know the rules.”

You probably could have left that last part off because as soon as the words exit your lips, the clean-up process ceases. “Fuck off,” Lexa shouts before turning the music up louder.

This isn’t happening.

Not today.

Not to your sister.

“Lexa, open the goddamn door,” you order her, knocking one final time. You’re greeting with only the music, not even hearing your sister inside anymore.

Not today.

Taking the door handle firmly in your hand, you back up, tensing your body for impact before throwing your large frame at the small door.

It never stood a chance.

Stumbling through the doorway, you’re greeted with spintering wood and the sight of your sister sitting on the floor, retracing the lines on her leg with a razor blade. Without thinking, you dive towards her, grabbing the blade out of her hand.

She looks shocked for a slight moment, taken aback by the fact that you’re suddenly in the room with her, but more than anything she looks like she wants to murder you.

The psychiatrist said this would happen.

“Recovery will be hard and the most important thing to remember is that this person in front of you is not Lexa… this person is the shattered remains of your sister and she’s going to have to relearn everything… including how to love…” he said to you outside of her hospital room.

You never thought that you’d believe him but when you looked into her eyes in the moment that the blade left her hand, you realized it…

This was not your sister…
Not yet...

But it would be again...

One day....

“Lexa, stop,” you argue the flailing woman under you as she swings her arms wildly, slapping at your neck and face. Before you can think otherwise, her fist connects with your nose causing you to drop the blade on the floor momentarily-- just long enough for her to grab it and squirm out from under your grip.

Without thinking, you grab her, pulling her to the floor on her back again, grabbing the wrist holding the blade and slamming it on the floor over and over again.

“This isn’t happening tonight,” you shout over the music, still holding her hand tightly. “I love you too much for this to happen. Don’t give up. We fight. You get up and we fight this. It’s your choice... Get knocked down, get back up,” you repeat the same words that she told you when you were children on the playground, tears streaming down your face before she drops the blade.

When all was said and done, you grab her shirt and shoulder, pulling her into your chest, holding her tightly as she sobbed into you. “I just want to die,” she stumbles through her tears and deep, panicked breaths. “Why won’t you let me die?”

You breathe deeply, holding her tighter as she claws at your arms, finally falling into you, ending her struggle.

“I’m not letting you go,” you whisper to her, feeling the blood running from your own nose as it meets with her blood covering your arms. “I’m not letting you go,” you repeat over and over, feeling her relax a little more each time. Finally, she sinks completely into you, letting go entirely. “We’re going to get through this,” you remind her. “We’re going to make it.”

After your last incident with Lexa, all of the door knobs in the house came off of the doors. Lexa and Tris had gone out for the day and while they were away, you slaved away, removing all of the door handles and latches as well as every knife, blade, and other sharp objects that you found in the house. Locking them all inside of a safe in your closet, you changed the code, knowing that Lexa was the only other person alive who knew it. Your gun for work was suddenly kept in another safe that you purchased that day as well as all of the medications in the house. By the time your sisters returned home, your house was the safest in the area, ready to take on the challenges that Lexa would continue to face for the next couple of years.

Tris, however, was not prepared.

“This is bullshit!” she yelled, slamming her unlachable door over and over again. “I can’t close my door because she can’t control herself?” She stormed down the hallway, entering the bathroom and slamming the door which propelled itself back at her before the growled angrily, swiping her hand across the sink to throw all of its contents to the floor. “It’s been a month now! How much longer are we going to dance around the fact that we can’t help her Lincoln?” She shouted at you from inside of the bathroom. You sat in the living room with your older sister who just stared at the floor, obviously afraid to look up and acknowledge anything.

“Tris, we have to work through this together, okay?” you begin to beg her, placing a hand on Lexa’s shoulder to reassure her. It’s not working.
Together? Like a family? That’s funny because I’m pretty sure we lost that privilege when our parents died and Lexa tried to fucking off herself without talking to us,” her words cut deep into the silence around you as she stormed her way back into the kitchen. “She’s fucking ruining everything.”

Lexa flinches as her sister stomps past her and out the front door.

You follow close behind, unable to control your anger any longer but refusing to let it show in front of Lexa.

“Look here you piece of shit,” you shout at the younger girl for the first time in your life. You’ve never yelled at Tris, much less called her any kind of name in anger. In fact, the three of you have never fought… not until your parents that is…

“What the fuck Lincoln?” she asked, spinning quickly on her heels. “Don’t you see….”

“No,” you cut her thoughts short, lifting a finger in front of her face. Pointing it at her, you stare her down, jaw clenched. “You are done talking. Understand me?” Something in your tone terrifies her as she just nods. “Do you want to lose her? Because that’s going to be what happens. We’ll lose her again if you don’t get over yourself.”

“She needs to grow up,” she mumbles as she begins to walk past you. “We all lost our parents… she’s just the only one not dealing with it…”

Reaching out to grab her arm, you pull her back around to face you. With your face just inches from hers, you grip her arm probably too tight, rage filling you like it never has before. “And unless you want to lose her just like we lost mom and Keith then you need to grow up and realize that she needs us right now. She’s always been there to support you, working all of the time and putting her life on hold. Now it’s your turn to grow up a little Tris,” you explain, gritting your teeth so hard that your head begins to hurt. “You need to get it together.”

She pulls her arm away, maintaining eye contact as she enters the house, retreating within its walls for protection, leaving you in your yard alone. After taking a few deep breaths, you return to the doorway, noticing that Lexa hasn’t moved at all-- she’s still staring at the floor on the couch.

“I’m sorry,” she mumbles as you throw your body down beside her.

“I’m sorry,” you explain, correcting her with your emphasis on the word I.

“This is all my fault,” she continues to mumble, tears falling from her chin. Taking her in your arms, you pull her in tightly, whispering a faint ‘no’ to her. You hold her like that for a little while before you hear stirring from the direction of the kitchen. Looking up from where you’re seated, your eyes are met with Tris, tears streaming down her face as well.

The younger girl walks over to where you and Lexa are sitting, falling to her knees in front of your older sister.

“Look,” she says, sliding a picture into Lexa’s hands. Flipping it over, Lexa shows it to you-- a picture of younger Lexa holding an infant Tris just moments after she was born. “Don’t take this from me,” she begs, throwing her arms over Lexa’s shoulders. “I can’t lose you again.”

If nothing else, in this moment, you three are together.

You’re on the same page and although this surely won’t last long, maybe sooner rather than later you can be this again-- only better.
LEXA

The next three days are extremely… normal.

You get out of the bed that you fell asleep in alone.

You shower and get ready for work, alone.

You eat breakfast with Tris and Lincoln, remaining strangely silent, just as you have done for years.

You go to work, alone.

You go to the bar for your shift, alone.

You come home, alone.

And you repeat, alone.

And although you have been completely surrounded by people at work and you’ve had the full support of your brother and sister, you’re still completely alone.

And you’re beginning to realize how lonely your life has been since… well, since the darkness first began.

Since you tried to destroy yourself…

“Hey asshole!” Lincoln shouts at you from across the table, tossing a balled up dollar bill at you. “It’s your go.” He’s trying to hide his concern, but it’s failing. In fact, he’s been failing at hiding it since you came home from Clarke’s house three days ago.

“Sorry,” you mumble as you pull your cards back up in front of your face. Looking them over once more, you pull a 7 from your hand, tossing it down on the table as Lincoln groans, folding his cards down.

“Look,” he begins, standing and walking out of the kitchen, returning moments later to toss your running shoes at you. “Put them on. I’m tired of you taking all of this out on yourself and on me.” You sigh, dropping them to the floor and telling him that you can’t. “And why not… What else do you have planned? Take it out on the street. Let’s go.”

Reaching down, you begin to grumble angrily, beginning to hate your brother for even trying right now. He doesn’t know what you’re going through right now. He doesn’t know how you’re struggling to stay afloat without Clarke there to ground you. He doesn’t know what it’s like to try learning to breathe on your own.

But before too long, you’re out on the pavement, jogging lightly as he drills you about work and you interrogate him about how things are at the academy. You’ve allowed yourself to forget the healing qualities in endorphins, but Lincoln is slowly reminding you with each strike on the pavement that your worn down tennis shoes make.

Work is work, but Lincoln doesn’t settle for that answer. He asks about the Caughorns and Henry and Carl and the other bartenders and he asks you about the extra shifts that you’ve been picking up and the new drinks that you’ve learned and suddenly, you’re volunteering information. Slowly but surely, he’s brought your guard back down and talked you off of your mountain top. He was always
good at that.

“And how’s Jaha?” you ask, trying to avoid asking the question that’s been lingering on your tongue. Have you seen Clarke? Sweat is beginning to bead up on your forehead as you glance around you, realizing that the two of you have jogged at least 5 miles now without even realizing it.

“He’s fine. He hasn’t been around a lot, but he’s good.” You’re not accepting that answer either. And just as easily as you spoke, Lincoln speaks, explaining the new class schedule and the curriculum and telling you things that you don’t even comprehend. Taekwondo was always his thing… you quit after the first month.

Slowing to a stop at an intersection, you sigh, looking down at the fading skid marks that run into the middle, wondering if those are like the ones that stole your parents from you.

“You see the marker up there?” Lincoln asks as your pace slows. He’s pointing into the distance and if you squint just enough into the sunlight, you can make out the small, green sign pointed out of the ground. You nod. “I’ll race you.”

Before the words are even completely out of his mouth, both of you are sprinting as fast as you can towards the sign. You’re heavy breathing drowns out the sounds of your brother’s footsteps behind you. In fact, you can’t see him or hear him anymore-- all that’s left is you and the small stretch before you. Of course your feet cross the finish line first-- you’re always first. When it comes to running, you’ve always been better than Lincoln. He may be strong and he may be good at pretty much everything, but you have an endurance that he doesn’t and you’re light on your feet. While Lincoln is a bag of bricks rolling down the sidewalk, you’re a feather, floating through the wind.

“I… always… win…” you manage to say in between breaths. With your hands on your knees, you stay bent over for a moment, trying to take in air and knowing that this isn’t going to work. Standing up straight, you straighten up your back, taking in more air than before. “I’m the big sister.”

“And that’s why you can’t let your heart win?” Lincoln asks ungracefully, the words rolling out of his mouth too easily. He’s been dying to call you out for the last three days and this is now increasingly obvious, as is your frustration. Before you even realize it, you’re shoving your brother away angrily and with no concern.

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LINCOLN

Lexa has tried, you know this, but it’s not working. She may be running with you, but she’s not here with you. She’s still completely engulfed in thought and that’s when things get dangerous. And before you know any better, the words slip out of your mouth, calling attention to the fact that Lexa isn’t managing like she thinks she is.

And her reaction is just as expected. With two hands on your chest, she pushes you back, trying to create space between the two of you. “Is that is?” you ask, pestering her as you shove back slightly. If she’s going to get better, she needs to be angry. Lexa needs to be upset, and instead, all you’ve seen is stoic, in control Lexa. “For fuck’s sake Lexa, why are you always running from things? All you do is work so that you can avoid the fact that you’re lonely.” Her fists are balling up at her sides as she grits her teeth, grinding her jaw and staring you down. “I mean, how the fuck are you going to get anything done if you don’t get it together?”

The first punch comes as a surprise. You thought that you had at least a few more seconds before she would throw that right hook, but she didn’t and when her fist made contact with your jaw, you swear
you could hear a pop.

“That’s more like it!” you yell, trying to pop your jaw like Lexa, undoubtedly, begins shaking her hand, complaining about the pain from your rugged jaw. “Now that we’ve gotten that out,” you say to her with a smile, wiping the blood from your nose and lips, “let’s talk…”

Honestly, you’d take a hundred more shots if it meant that she’d open back up to you again.

And for the first time in a very long time, you and Lexa communicate. Recently, since the start of her relationship with Clarke, the two of you have been talking more, but you’ve also been communicating less.

You’ve talked about a lot of things…

But not about the things that matter…

“I still miss them too,” you say as the two of you collapse into the grass next to the greenway. The sky is almost completely clear of clouds, bright blue and shining down on you two as you attempt to hide in the shade of an oak tree behind you. “Every day I find a new way and a new reason to miss them. Sometimes it’s the smell of coffee in the kitchen… other times it’s the way that Tris smiles at me just like Keith did. Point is, we all miss them… and we miss you.”

Your eyes turn to Lexa who has her hands folded behind her head, eyes closed as her face continues towards the sky,

“I miss her,” she mumbles just as you turn towards the sky. You can hear the stumble in her tone from where she chokes slightly, trying to fight back tears. “She was absolutely everything that I needed and I walked out on her.”

“Why?” you question, honestly still having no clue what happened between your sister and her now ex-girlfriend. You’ve heard a brief snippet from Octavia, but it honestly didn’t make any sense to you. Rather than having asked before, you wanted Lexa to come in her own time, but this was her time now.

She inhales deeply, exhaling slowly as she fights back the tears. “I got scared,” is all that she can say, prompting you to reach out to her. “She wanted me and I left her there.” You nod, not knowing what that feeling is, but knowing that Lexa feels it frequently.

You’ve dealt with this idea a lot with yourself. Trying to even count the number of therapy sessions that you attended with and without your sisters where you heard the validation of your terror, where you heard the phrases ‘it’s okay to feel this way’ and ‘you are not to blame for your weaknesses’ and even ‘you don’t have to always be strong’, your mind goes numb, overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of time spent coming to terms with the fact that your mind will never be as strong as your body.
In fact, that’s why your body is as strong as it is… because that’s one thing that you can control.

When your parents die…

When your older sister checks out…

When you’re left alone to raise your baby sister…

When your older sister is hospitalized…

When the bills stack up…

When everything falls apart…

At least you can work out…

As you stand up, your sister’s eyes question you, screaming out the words that her mouth refuses to say. “Get up,” you order offering her your hand and pulling her to her feet. “We’re going out tonight-- all three of us-- just like we used to do.”

Used to do…

Before everything fell apart…

Before you lost everything…

And were forced to grow up…

Lexa smiles, throwing her arms over your shoulders, hugging you tightly while whispering “I love you,” into your ear. You hold her around her waist, hugging your sister next to the greenway as you reply, telling her the same words.

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BELLAMY

If anything, the next two days are about survival. At first, things seemed fine-- Clarke came home, went to sleep, got up, ran, went to work, came home, went to sleep… Wash, Rinse, Repeat. But it was about 48 hours into the cycle where the foundations began to crumble and Clarke seemed to travel through every stage of grief within 5 hours, leaving you with a mad case of whiplash.

First, came the denial. Clarke attempted to convince you that she was fine, telling you that Lexa would be back soon when she had time to get over everything. That was fine, at first, but after hours of sitting around talking about how Lexa was coming back, Clarke began melting. The catch phrase of this phase was: “I promise, just watch…”

Next came anger and this stage terrified you the most. In its beginning stages, it started as words, cutting deep into your heart as your roommate tore your best friend (if you two were still in fact friends that is…) apart. Phrases like “incapable” passed through Clarke’s lips multiple times and each time, it was like the knife in your chest was twisted a little more. The phrase of this phase: “She’s so fucking stupid! We had something great and then she ruined it!”

Third was bargaining. In this stage, she paced through house, questioning what it would take to get Lexa back. “If I changed X, Y, and Z, do you think she’d love me?” and “What if we tried to back it up and start over?” It was in this moment that you realized exactly what was occurring and you decided to call her on it-- bad mistake.
“You think this is grief?” she shouted, throwing her hands into the air. Anger. “I’m not grieving!” Denial. “I’m just fucking dying.” Depression. “And I’m just trying to figure out how to fix things.” Bargaining…

Without fail, Clarke continued through all 4 stages, finally reaching what should have been acceptance. Instead of acceptance, however, existed this odd and unusual lingering depression where she simply laid on the couch, staring at the ceiling repeating phrases like “I ruined it” and “I hurt her”. In a way, it sounded like Clarke was cracking, but was her psyche so frail as to sever so quickly?

Instead of taking the time to figure that out and potentially lose Clarke, you opt for the better choice, tossing her jacket onto her chest, pulling your phone from your pocket and opening a new text.

“Get ready,” you tell her as you type. “We’re going to visit Octavia.”

Bellamy (10:04 PM): We’re coming over

Little Sister (10:06 PM): Okay? Is everything alright?

Bellamy (10:10 PM): I don’t know what to do….

Little Sister (10:12 PM): Bring it. Netflix and junk food engaged

“I don’t want to,” Clarke groans, pulling the jacket over her face. Depression. “You go ahead. I’m just going to stay here.”

As if…

You’ve never left a man behind, not even after your legs were shattered and your chest blown through… you’re not about to start now…

“Clarke fucking Griffin, get off of your ass and let’s go. Octavia is waiting,” you explain to her, sliding your phone back into your jacket and pulling your shoes out from under the table to slide them on your feet as you take a seat in the chair caddy-corner to Clarke. A slightly smile cracks across her lips at the mention of your sister’s name and you know that you’ve sold her.

She’d never say no to Octavia… even if she said no to you.

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CLARKE

Driving with Bellamy isn’t normally this complicated, but he’s cutting you to the bone with questions, pressuring you for information about your feelings and questioning every step of your relationship.

“Do you think that you fell in love too fast?” He asks, his hands gripping the steering wheel tight as his truck made its way down the highway, a thin layer of mist separating the pavement from the rubber tires. “I mean, It’s been what?”

“4 months and 3 days since we met,” you tell him, not even hesitating to count. You’ve counted that number over and over again in your head. In fact, you’ve pondered that theory as well. Maybe you came on too quickly.

You were the one who pushed her to go out with you.
You were the one who pushed her for a title.

Plus, you knew that she was broken… you knew this from the minute that she began opening up in the bar… but you never understood the magnitude.

“Maybe you should just talk to her,” Bellamy’s gruff voice interrupts your thoughts, glancing over at you with a small smile quickly before returning to the road. “Maybe if you actually tell her about your shit then she’ll see where you’re coming from.”

Where are you coming from?

“I can’t,” your words come out more as a slur as you forget for a moment how to speak. Telling Lexa about your near death experience was out of the picture. No one knew about that… Only Raven, Octavia and Bellamy… Fuck, your mother didn’t even know…

“And why not? Pride?” Bellamy asks, beginning to get on your nerves now. Who the hell is he to talk about being open and not being prideful? It’s not like he doesn’t have his own shit going on…

Oh yeah… but you aren’t supposed to know about that…

“Just shut up Bell,” you beg of your friend, pulling the jacket in your lap over your arms, wrapping yourself in a cocoon. “I can’t be responsible for anyone else anymore…” He glances over at you again as he merges lanes, pulling into the slower lane so a semi-truck can pass, making you wonder where Lexa is right now. Is she dry and safe and warm? Is she feeling as alone as you? “I don’t want to bring anyone else down with me when I fall,” you explain after a moment of silence, knowing that he was waiting on your move.

You can practically feel his breath as he exhales, forcing a sigh from your own lips. “Who have you brought down?” he asks calmly a hand sliding over to take yours.

How do you tell him that you know?

How do you say that you feel responsible for his baggage?

“You,” you settle for simplicity, choking back the tears forming in the pits of your eyes. They burn, but the pain is comforting. Without blinking, you allow them to sit for a second before one rogue tear escapes, running down your cheek. Choosing to not say anything else, you wait for Bellamy’s next move in this chess match of an argument that you two are sort of having.

He chuckles slightly, more of a deep sigh than anything. “What are you talking about? You’ve never brought me down…”

“Oh,” your voice interrupts his sentence before he can lie to you any more. “So that’s why you won’t tell me about your psychiatrist? That’s why you won’t tell me about your issues?” Before you know any different, you’re dumping everything on him, vomiting words that you never intended to tell him. “That’s why you’ve been on pills and why you’ve been punching holes in our walls?” You can basically hear his thoughts as you continue to speak, practically shouting from underneath your jacket cocoon when you turn to face him. “That’s why you won’t tell me that you have a disorder when you’re panicking about the fireworks outside on holidays and you never sleep until you come and check inside my bedroom door first to make sure that I’m still alive? That’s why you don’t sleep with the lights off and why you wake up at every little sound?”

You have a thousand other rhetorical questions that you could bombard him with—a thousand other situations in the past two years that has made it obvious that Bellamy has had a secret, but when you catch the reflection of light from the streaks on his cheek, you bite your tongue, suddenly ashamed at
your outburst. Of course you’re ruining this too.

Your mom.

Now Bellamy.

You ruin every relationship in your life…

You ruin everything.

A small shutter escapes your travel buddy’s chapped lips as he merges back into fast lane, increasing speed with a small push from his foot. “It’s got nothing to do with you,” he begins and you bite back your argument again, becoming more aware of the cracking in his voice. “I don’t know how to… I try… but I can’t…”

“Because you shouldn’t have to…” your words stray off from his, eyes meeting the darkness outside from the window next to you. “I’m just going to ruin this too…”

The car is merging over into the shoulder, a slight shutter from the wheels as they cross over the hazard grooves, warning you that you’re exiting the road. The sounds of rocks being kicked up into the undercarriage serenade the silence that sits over you inside of the car, blanketing you in awkwardness as you wait.

“Look. I don’t know what you want me to tell you. Yes, i didn’t want to tell you because i know that you a have a lot of stuff going on without my baggage.” Bellamy swallows eyes shuttering between yours and the outside world behind you. You want to look away. You don’t want to see him like this, but you have to see this through. You have to fix this. “And yes, I’m sorry….” Why is he apologizing? “And yes, I should have told you, but yes… I’m still learning how to live… but you can’t possible tell me that you’ve been honest with me about your baggage either Clarke.”

Oh shit…

He knows…

He’s always known.

With his jaw clinched, he swallows again, eyes dropping to his lap. “I’ve heard you in the bathroom. I’ve found the laxative packaging in the recycling. I’ve been paying attention to you and I know that you’re struggling, but I know that you’re getting better… and the same is for me… We’re just getting better in different ways…” With his last sentence, his eyes lift to meet yours, those brown globes staring through you as the cars zip past, their headlights illuminating the inside of his truck just enough for your to see his tears.

A response never comes, despite your open mouth.

What kind of response could you even begin to form?

“And look, I know that you’re hurt and I know that you’re wounded and I know that Lexa broke your fucking heart or something like that.”

Understatement of the century…

“But you have to stop this trying to push me away bullshit… I’m not going anywhere. Octavia’s not going anywhere. We’re here to stay and you’re just going to have to fucking deal with it.”
Without another word, your arms are thrown over your roommate, unable to control your own actions.

You just want to be close to him.

You just want to feel his heartbeat.

You just want to hear his breathing.

You just want to know that what he’s saying is true…

Because you’re going to need it…

Because although he might not be leaving…

You are…

It’s the only way.

---

BELLMAMY

When Clarke hugs you, the distance becomes more obvious. Although she’s trying to not let it affect your interaction, it’s too much.

She’s withdrawing…

“We can get through this,” you tell her, feeling her sulk into your arms. It’s as if she melted, overwhelmed by the pressure of everything.

She’s failing…

She shakes her head into your shoulder, leaving you questioning why until the words “I’m not going” escape her lips into an almost whisper.

Just when you think everything is fine, she pulls away, withdrawing her arms as she goes, reaching for the door handle before turning to face you with an apologetic smile. The door opens behind her, her small, shrinking body retreating into the darkness of the outside world.

“Clarke,” you beg, opening your door as hers closes. “If you need forgiveness, I’ll give that to you… You’re forgiven,” you tell her, rising up from the seat and slamming the door quickly, chasing after your roommate as she walks swiftly down the side of the road. “Please, get back inside the car…”

The rain is misting over you slightly, hiding the fact that you’re crying as you reach out for her, grabbing her elbow gently. She turns around into, holding onto your hand. Without saying anything, she leans in, squeezing the hand in hers and kissing your cheek as you release her.

Worse than watching your little sister cry over your father’s grave… Worse than listening to the screams of your soldiers from inside of the Humvee… Worse than hearing Clarke’s tears for the past three days and the sound of her vomiting for a sense of control… Watching her walk away into the darkness was the hardest thing that you’ve had to do in your life.

But it had to be done…

She needed this…
In spite of what you needed…

In spite of what Octavia needed…

In spite of what Lexa needed…

She needed this.

You stand for what feels like ages, watching Clarke’s body disappear into a cab in front of the bar just a quarter of a mile away before withdrawing your phone from your pocket, swiping over to Clarke’s contact. Your thumb hovers over the call button for a moment before you lock the screen, sliding the phone back into your jacket and pulling your hood over your head. Returning to your car, you run your tongue over the back of your teeth, exhaling deeply as you shutter, grasping the steering wheel for support.

This is not how you planned on this happening.

This is not how everything was supposed to end.
**Clarke**

Entering into your hotel room has been a slightly welcoming and rewarding feeling for the past week and three days. If nothing else, you’ve come “home” (as you’ve begun calling it) to silence…

And silence was comfortable.

Silence gave room for you to think.

Silence gave room for you to read.

Silence meant that no one else was around for you to hurt and that was totally fine.

With the exception of your constantly buzzing phone (goddamnit hospital job for not allowing you to turn off the wretched device), you’ve been surrounded by silence…

And it was perfect.

In fact, silence gave you time to reconnect with yourself.

Silence gave you time to start therapy.

Silence gave you time to write a letter to your mother, explaining the past 11 years of rage and anger.

Silence gave you time to learn to breathe again.

Silence saved your life.

But silence was also beginning to drive you crazy.

With each buzz of your cell phone, you wondered what your friends were doing.

With each buzz of your cell phone, you wondered if Lexa was thinking about you.
With each buzz of your cell phone, you contemplated moving back to your real home with Bellamy.

But with each buzz of your cell phone, you were reminded why you were doing this.

You needed to focus on you.

You needed to heal you.

Bell-Bear (10:43PM): Hey, call me if you want.

Octavia (1:19AM): Lincoln and I are going to Waffle House. Join?

Raven (2:51AM): I’m coming in town. Party?

Lincoln (4:33AM): I’m always here


Harps (8:14AM): Hey Clarke. We missed you at family night!

Jasper (9:12AM): Okay so seeing you in passing at work is fun and all, but I miss kicking your ass at poker and kings. Come home?

It was nice being cared for, but none of it mattered. You needed to learn to breathe on your own before you could breathe for anyone else.

You needed this.

Walking over to the bed, you throw your body down on it, reaching over to open the journal on the nightstand, scribbling into it the words that pain you every time.

Breakfast: Bagel + cream cheese, Orange juice
Snack: Granola Bar
Lunch: ½ sandwich + Apple
Snack: Gatorade + Banana
Dinner: Grilled Chicken Salad + baked potato

Each day you scribbled your meals into this stupid fucking book, feeling the weight pack on with each letter written, but you knew it had to be done.

‘You’re going to feel like you’re dying,’ the words of your psychologist Adrian echoed in your brain as you rolled over onto your back, placing your hands on your hip bones. They were still noticeable, but not as much as before. Maybe you’re just making it up though… Could ten days really make that much of a difference? ‘It’s going to be hard, but it’s what you need…’

“It’s going to be hard,” you repeat to yourself, closing your eyes against the ceiling fan above you. “But it’s what I need.”

I…

That’s funny…

It’s been a long time since you considered what you need…

At least in a way that was healthy for your.
Mom (10:34AM): I enjoyed our talk today. Thanks for calling me. I’ve missed you.

Clarke (10:40AM): Me too. We can make this happen more often if you want.

Mom (10:45AM): Always

Mom (10:46AM): tonight?

Clarke (10:48AM): deal.

You never called your mom back, but she did call you, which is way more progress than ever before. According to your call logs, it has been over a year and a half since she called you last... and in the last two days, she’s called your phone twice and you’ve called hers three times. Although you’ve been ships passing in the distance as far as answering goes, playing a beautifully articulated game of phone tag, you’ve had more in depth conversations with each other’s voicemails in the past week than you have had in person in over 11 years.

“Your instincts tell you to take care of everyone else first,” Your mother began when you called her crying your first night in the hotel. You were nervous. You wanted to go home. You were anxious. Most of all, you were alone. “Like your father,” she added as you sobbed into your pillow, making you smile slightly as you inhaled deeply to keep the tears at bay for just a moment. “But don’t do it... I can’t lose you too.” Through the phone, you could hear the small sniffle escape your mother’s nose, wondering for just a moment if she was actually crying over you. “I love you, Clarke,” she finally said for the first time in over a year.

“I love you too, mommy,” you reply, rolling over on your back and sitting up, wiping the snot from your face on the back of your hand before climbing from the bed to grab tissues. “Will I ever be okay again?” the question rolls from your tongue, really asking if you’ll ever feel again.

Will I ever love again?

Did you ever become okay again after daddy?

Did you ever get over it?

Will I ever get over it?

The silence that met you from the other line was not as comforting as you thought it would be, but when Abby’s voice finally spoke to you again, the words echoed through the night and into your sleep, carrying you away from the darkness of this lonely hotel room. “Yes, baby. You’ll be okay again... because after everything, you still believe in true love.”

---

RAVEN

Oklahoma was a wasteland to you. Fucking fields and grass and dirt... nothing like the mountains and massive trees that lined every inch of your hometown of Chewelah, Washington, but for some reason Clarke and Bellamy liked it here.

Driving was out of the picture though... You’d risk the lost baggage and layovers in stupid airports to avoid the 26 hour drive into nothingness... In fact, you’d sell your soul to avoid that drive-- which is what it felt like every time that you boarded an airplane.

Your brace always set off a metal detector.
You always got a leg cramp.

Some obnoxious asshole always hit on you.

Some stupid child always stared at your leg.

You always got stuck in the aisle seat.

But it was all worth it to be with your friends.

Especially now.

“What’s up, asshole?” your words scare Bellamy Blake from behind, making the young man jump slightly, trying to play it off as he turned. “Gotcha.”

“The fuck you did!” he counters, wrapping his large arms around your shoulders and hugging you tight. “Enjoy your flight, cyborg?” he asks as he releases you. You cringe slightly at his comment before remembering who you were talking to.

Bellamy was the first one to greet you when you returned from Afghanistan.

He was your only friend with battle wounds.

He was the only one who understood.

To him, your damage was real.

To him, your damage was understood.

“Sure if you like assholes who snore,” you finally reply, poking your arm out to his chest, passing your bag of to him. “Help the cripple.”

“Oh fuck off Reyes. I have disability too.” The two of you laugh as he takes your bag, throwing it over his shoulder before wrapping the other arm around you, tugging you in the direction of the exit.

You’ve missed your friends… even if it’s been less than 2 months since you were last here.

More importantly, you’ve missed being able to be there for them…

Which is what brought you into town this time.

“So anything from Griffin?” you ask as you take a seat in Bellamy’s truck, waiting for him to toss your bag into the backseat and take the driver’s seat. One thing about Oklahoma, it was way brighter than Washington. Where the evergreens blocked the majority of the blinding sunlight, casting a mellow glow around the mountains, here, everything was illuminated; making you wish you had brought your sunglasses.

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Which is what brought you into town this time.
She could be alone, in a random city, not answering her phone at all…

But thankfully that’s not the case and you’d much rather not go to that place again.

“So what’s for lunch?” you ask Bellamy as he merges onto the interstate, glancing over at you with a slight chuckle.

He opens his mouth to speak, a witty reply no doubt, before snapping it shut again and pondering his words more closely. “Help us find Clarke and we’ll feed you whatever the fuck you want.”

“Deal,” you mumble, pulling your phone from your pocket and sending a quick message to your missing friend.

**Raven (1:57PM):** In town now. Message me if you want k?

Tossing your phone in your lap, you honestly don’t expect a reply. If she’s spent this long avoiding texts, why would she message you now? For this reason alone, you’re surprised when your phone vibrates repeatedly, a picture of your gorgeous blonde friend holding a beer bottle to the side of her insanely thin face popping up on your screen.

Clarke Griffin is calling you.

“Shut up,” you nudge Bellamy’s arm as he continues to sit silently next to you, taking offence with his slight glare before you pull the phone to your ear. “Reyes,” you answer, trying to play off your excitement.

“Raven?” Clarke’s voice asks from the other line, shaking slightly as she speaks.

“What’s up buttercup?” the words flow from your lips as you wonder if that’s even the right reply. You don’t know what is happening to Clarke right now and you’re playing it off as if it’s no big deal… But maybe that’s what she needs… If she knew that you were in town specifically to bring her home, who knows what would happen. She’d probably never make it.

She’d never come back.

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**CLARKE**

“What’s up buttercup?” Raven asks, making you smile as you tuck your phone between your ear and shoulder, reaching for your coffee cup as you merge lanes.

Lexa would die if she saw how distracted you were while driving.

“Nothing much, headed back to work now from lunch, but I’m supposed to be off at 8. Want to get dinner?”

It’s almost as if you can hear the thankful sigh escape form Raven’s lungs as you mention the words ‘lunch’ and ‘dinner’.

She was there from the beginning. When you first moved in with her your freshman year, a random roommate assignment that couldn’t have worked out better if you asked for it, she called you on your bullshit from day one. Raven was at the university on a softball scholarship and enjoyed playing Ultimate Frisbee in her free time. She talked like an athlete, walked like an athlete and ate like an athlete. And then there was you… Although you were on the same scholarship for track, it was
obvious that you and she were different people—especially when it came to food.

“I’d love to doll-face,” she replies, the smile across her face practically bleeding through the phone to you. It was contagious.

“Perfect, well, I’ll call you tonight then,” you tell her as you zip into the parking lot, taking your spot and turning off the engine to your car. Without thinking about it, you grab the apple from your passenger seat and take a bite of it, grabbing your phone from your shoulder with the other hand.

Making your way into the hospital, you walk inside, waving at Monroe who has obviously been dancing around communication with you.

She obviously knew that you weren’t at home.

She obviously knew that you were avoiding everyone.

She obviously knew that you weren’t answering questions or taking phone calls.

But most importantly, Bellamy had obviously told her not to say anything to you about it all.

And she was obviously struggling with this.

“Hey Griffin,” she practically shouts when your phone call with Raven ends, waving you over to the desk. With your elbows on the top of it, you greet her back, taking another bite of your apple, counting the 20 times that you chew before swallowing. Adrian said that would help—so far so good.

Actually, as far as shrinks go, Adrian wasn’t too bad. In fact, you’d venture to say that you little, gay, Hispanic psychologist was actually the best, even if you had yet to fully open up. He didn’t push you for information or give you unruly demands, but rather listened, asking you small questions about your favorite movies and your taste in music. It’s as if he wanted to get to know you more than your illness and for that you thanked him.

“So you coming to family night tomorrow?” she asks, reminding you that it is in fact Friday. You simply shake your head, apologizing and explaining to her your crazy work schedule for tomorrow. It wasn’t entirely a lie. You had chosen an extra shift plus an on call just to avoid family night… you just chose to leave out that part when explaining it. She nods, slightly disappointed while wishing you a good day before disappearing into the stacks of manila folders behind the desk, sifting through charts and x-rays.

That was your cue to leave.

If anything the mess you’ve made of these relationships reminded you of all of your mistakes.
Sighing deeply as you entered the locker room, you push away the dark thoughts, taking a few deep breaths in and out, just as Adrian told you to.
Shuffling through your locker, you withdraw the only remaining clean scrub top, sliding it over your shoulders and reminding yourself to do laundry tonight…

That meant you would have to get quarters…

Hotels suck…

But for the first time in a long time, you actually felt like you were improving…

For the first time in forever, you felt like you were getting better.

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BELLAMY

Nine PM on a Friday night and you’re in your favorite place-- nose deep in The Brothers Karamazov, by Fyodor Dostoevsky with your knees pulled into your chest on your bed, surrounded by a note book, three different colored highlighters, ten different pens and two empty bags of Doritos. Honestly, if you had to choose any way to go, this would be it.

9:01 on a Friday night and you’re in your favorite place when the doorbell buzzes, causing you to jump slightly. No one ever rang your doorbell-- no one ever cared-- and since Clarke left, the door was absolutely always left unlocked no matter what, and everyone knew this.

Laying the book face down on your bed, you roll from the side, making your way barefooted into the living room, feeling each bristle of the carpet in between your toes. Until you stood, you didn’t even notice that your feet were falling asleep, making the adventure to the door even more awkward as you stumbled over your own two feet until you finally reach the silver handle, pulling it open to be greeted with the smell of whisky and cigarettes-- a trademark of a broken heart.

“Lexa,” you respond to the brunette in front of you, watching as her eyes shuffle quickly from side to side, unable to focus on anything in particular. She’s smashed…

“Bell!” She drunkenly slurs, throwing her arms around you as she sways from side to side, pulling you inside of the apartment.

This is all too reminiscent of years ago…

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BELLAMY
“So what do you do in your free time Mr. Blake?” the newer blonde nurse asks you as you bring the drinks to your table, sitting one down in front of her while taking the other for yourself. She’s cute, there’s no doubting that, but she’s weird.

You flash a cocky smile in her direction, fighting back the awkwardness in your chest as you attempt to think over the loud music. You hate this bar-- always have-- but it was her suggestion.

“I read a lot,” you say, instantly regretting it as she snorts a laugh into her drink. This is why you don’t date…

Was this even a date?

“Are you serious?” Clarke Griffin asks, taking another swig of her fruity, nasty drink. You simply nod, hiding your face behind yours. You’ve only been here for an hour but Clarke has managed to down drinks like she was getting paid for it and it was beginning to show. You’d have to get her out of here soon or she’d probably start dancing on the tables or vomiting everywhere.

“Do you want me to take you home?” you ask her after the drinks are done, receiving a nod with way too many blinks attached to it. She was hella drunk-- that was obvious.

While on the way to her house, Clarke begins dumping on you the story of her roommate. This girl, Myranda, was a random roommate assigned by the apartment complex when Clarke moved in. Supposedly, everything started off alright until Myranda fell off of the bandwagon about two months ago and began dealing drugs from their apartment. On more than one occasion, Clarke awoke to strange men in her living room and some of her medical supplies missing.

It only took the words “drug deal” for you to begin turning your truck around, heading in the opposite direction of her apartment-- towards yours.

“Where are we going?” Clarke giggles as the wheels turn, sliding a hand over to your knee.

“I’m taking you to my place sweetheart. You don’t belong in that toxic.” It was true. If your sister was living in such a place, you’d kill the creep… but because Clarke wasn’t yours, you can’t.

“But I have a boyfriend,” she continues to laugh, squeezing your knee slightly.

A boyfriend?

Really?

And that’s why you’re touching me?

“And I have a guest room,” you counter, explaining how you’re not planning on sleeping with her tonight. I mean, if something was to happen, you wouldn’t be opposed to it. She’s attractive, obviously smart and funny and all… but she’s Nurse Griffin, with a boyfriend, and this is becoming more apparent with every word that conspires between you two…

Plus she’s way out of your league.

“Tell me about your boyfriend?” you ask her, wondering why she’s never mentioned him before now. Her head drops slightly as she withdraws her hand back to her own lap, obviously upset by that question. “You’ve never mentioned him,” you add, hoping that the addition will help soothe whatever burn you created.

She sighs, continuing to sway with every bump of the car. “We’re kind of breaking up,” she says,
leaving you to question what ‘breaking up’ means as opposed to ‘broken up’. Is it a process? It’s never been a process with you, but maybe Clarke Griffin is weird as fuck…

I mean, you know she’s weird as fuck, but maybe she’s weirder than you’ve imagined.

“I focus too much on work… But I’m going to fix it and get him back.” The last part of that comment makes you cringe… more so, her excitement at changing her life for this man makes you cringe.

“He’s not worth it,” you say before you realize it. Smooth Blake. Recover. “I mean, if he was meant to be a priority, then he would be already-- or at least understand when he’s not. You’re doing great work… You’re saving people’s lives and if he can’t respect that then he doesn’t deserve you.”

You’re thankful for the fact that you were pulling your car into a parking spot at that time because the way that Clarke turned her face towards you was indicative of someone who was either ready to kiss you or puke on you and right now, at this moment, neither seemed like good ideas.

After basically carrying her up the stairs and through the door, you usher your drunken nurse friend down the hallway, showing her the guest room before turning towards your door.

“I’ll be right in here,” you add, tossing her a towel which she fails at catching. “Bathroom’s over there.”

As you’re pointing to the bathroom door, Clarke bursts into a fit of laughter. “You were actually serious!” Of course you were… “What are you, like a saint or something?” No, you just respect women more than to sleep with someone who has a boyfriend, especially when they’re in no condition to consent, in spite of what mildly intoxicated you is feeling.

Once Clarke retreats into the guest bedroom, you close yourself up into your room, dragging your tired body into the sheets and pulling your book of the day from the nightstand. Reading out loud the words to Ulysses by James Joyce, you pause when the quote “History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake,” exits your lips. With a shudder at the truth of those words, you continue, ignoring the pain building up in your chest. Now was not the time for an anxiety attack. Octavia had already started threatening you with therapy… and that wasn’t about to happen.

Before you can fully recover, however, the door to your bedroom cracks open and you can see blonde curls just over the top of your book as they scurry past your footboard, crawling into your bed with you. Suddenly, Clarke’s alcohol infused lips are pressed against yours, her tongue entering your mouth before you know any better. Without even realizing it, you find your hands gravitating towards the woman’s hips, pulling her close before you push her away again, suddenly understanding the magnitude of your actions.

A small ‘No’ exits your lips before the tears begin to fall from her eyes as the throws herself onto you, wrapping her arms around your shoulders. “Why won’t you love me?” she begs of you, trying to kiss your neck as you attempt to pull away, grabbing her shoulders to give her a slight shake.

“Clarke,” you practically shout to the woman that you’ve only known for two months. “I do love you Clarke, and that’s why I’m saying no.” She looks at you like you’re an alien, speaking a foreign language never before uttered on earth. Her eyes are focused on yours and you can see your reflection in the lakes that are engulfing you. “You’re my friend and I’m going to protect you.” Your dialogue continues to flow as you hold her shoulders, her hands gripping tight to your shirt. “I’m not Finn… You’re deserving of more than this regret that you’re going to feel in the morning.”

Her eyes maintain contact with you for such a long period that you begin to shudder under their
stare. Tears outline her thin cheekbones as she leans in, planting a small kiss on your cheek before laying her head on your chest and muttering a small phrase to you.

“Can I stay in here tonight?” She asks in a tone like a child who is afraid of the dark.

“Only if you want to hear a story,” you smile down at her, receiving a nod in reply. Picking up your book from where it was tossed beside you, you open up to the correct page, beginning where you left off. By the end of your reading of the first page to Clarke, you can hear her breathing level, understanding that she’s asleep. Continuing to read out loud anyway, you slowly drift into unconsciousness yourself, your friend curled up in your arms.

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**BELLAMY**

“Bell!” Lexa drunkenly slurs, throwing her arms around you as she sways from side to side, pulling you inside of the apartment.

You allow the door to close behind her, focusing more on keeping your roommate’s ex-girlfriend topside and stable which was a feat in itself. She reeked of cheap whisky and terrible cigarettes, her breath hot on your ear as she explained that she missed everyone.

Pushing her away slightly, you created the much needed distance from her, allowing yourself to look her over. There were no signs of injury or blood so she wasn’t hurt— not physically at least. Her knuckles were a little bit battered but rather than question that, you chose a safer route.

“What are you doing here?”

She laughed, leaning her head in towards you as if she wanted to whisper, but the words that came from her mouth were anything but a whisper. “I’m here to see you!”

Licking your lip slightly, you open your mouth to speak but are suddenly halted when Lexa leans in, kissing your lips as she grabs the sides of your neck, pulling you in closer.

Pushing her from her shoulders, you pull away immediately, watching as your drunken friend fights your hands for independence. “Lexa!” you order her multiple times, giving her a small shake much like you did to Clarke all those years ago. “Lexa, stop!” Almost instantly, she freezes, shoulders dropping slightly as she melts into your arms. “Come here,” you beg of her, wrapping your arms around her and ushering her drunken body over to the couch.

When did you become the adult friend?

Her eyes scream out to you as she looks up, asking, “Where’s Clarke?”

This is the question that you’ve been dreading. You’ve wondered how long it would take for Lexa to show up and ask you a question about your A.W.O.L. roommate. As it turns out, 11 days was all that it took.

After their fiery meltdown, it only took Lexa 11 days to breakdown and show up at your place drunk. What would have happened if Clarke would have been here?

“She’s out,” you say, not necessarily lying, but the look in her eyes give it away…

Lexa misses her.
“Look,” you begin, moving your arm from her shoulder and separating yourself from her almost as if she would lunge at you again any moment now. “Yes, it was a dick move of Clarke to make you feel uncomfortable, but recovery is hard.”

She sighs, dropping her head to stare at the ground. You can feel the tension radiating from her small frame.

“And maybe she actually felt like you were perfect to her…”

Her shoulders tremble as you continue.

“And sure, she’s an asshole and does some really shitty things.”

And now you don’t know if you’re talking to yourself or to the drunken woman on your couch…

“But Clarke deserves more than half-ass leaving when it gets tough.”

Her

“And sometimes, you just have to give it up, let her live, and welcome her back with open arms when she returns.”

You

“And maybe you and her can be together again.”

Her

“But maybe you need to fix some things with you first.

You

Lexa just nods for a few moments, face still staring at the floor, taking a deep breath before looking up at you. “Can I stay here tonight?” she asks, receiving a nod in return.

When you return with a blanket for her after a few minutes, you find Lexa curled up in a ball, laying on the couch with her hands tucked under her chin. Unfolding the blanket, you toss it over the girl, tucking her bare feet into it before looking her over once more.

She deserves better than this too.

You all deserve better than this.

Bellamy (9:56PM): Please come home.

Clarke (10:04PM): soon.

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CLARKE

Dinner with Raven was a blast. You spent the entire evening just chatting, talking about the last 2 months and trying to convince the other to move somewhere else to be closer to each other. You spent the entire evening eating dinner without even thinking about what was going into your body. You spent the entire evening feeling completely loved and comfortable. You spent the entire evening never once thinking about Lexa.
Needless to say, when Raven invited you to lunch the next day, you were all too eager to say yes. Unlike everyone else, Raven didn’t push you to answer questions or give responses. All Raven wanted was to be with you…

Or at least that’s what you thought.

“You know, I read somewhere a quote that said ‘Change is painful. But nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere you don’t belong.’” As soon as the words exited her lips between bites of her pizza, you knew where this was going. “It’s by this woman named Mandy Hale and I read it posted on a group that I follow called To Write Love On Her Arms… They deal with a lot of self-help problems and saved my life when I was struggling with a lot of deep shit…”

There’s a part of you that wants to question what she means by ‘deep shit’, but the part of you that watches your friend squirm awkwardly under the weight of this deep conversation knows better. Raven didn’t have the best upbringing and you know this. She busted her ass to get where she wanted to be and then had it all stolen by a rogue bullet to the spine in Afghanistan.

If anyone’s seen deep shit, it was probably Raven.

“I think you need to learn something Clarke…“

Oh no…

“This isn’t just about you. We’re all characters in this story and we just want what’s best for you.”

And there it is. Next will come the plea to come home and return to normal.

“I’m not going to tell you that you should come home…”

What?

“But I am going to tell you one thing…”

You’re being selfish… She’s going to tell you that you’re being selfish…

“We’ve all got battle scars, Clarke. You need to build a brace for yours…”

This wasn’t where you expected this conversation to go…

But this was exactly where it needed to go.

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BELLAMY

Waking up the next morning should have been easy. You should have woken up and Lexa should have been gone and everything should have been alright…

Should have…

But that wasn’t the case.

Oh no…

You awoke to the sounds of pots crashing in the kitchen and a long string of profanity accompanying it as you dragged yourself from your sheets, feet touching down on the carpet softly to carry you to
“What the fuck?” you ask as you round the corner, Lexa standing there in a sports bra and running shorts, covered in eggs and black beans. “What are you doing here?”

With her arms up above her head, she refuses to break eye contact with the pot on the floor, an awkward grimace written across her face. Taking a shallow breath, her body begins to tremble and you can feel it…

She’s losing it.

“I don’t know what to do,” she mumbles, not changing posture.

Walking straight through the remains of what you can only assume was supposed to be an omelet, you take your friend in your arms, pulling her head onto your shoulder as you feel the eggs squish under your feet.

“I’m disgusting,” she apologizes as she tries to pull away, making you latch on tighter.

“It doesn’t matter,” you whisper to your friend as she drops her arms, her posture melting into you.

With tears running down her face and dampening your shoulder, you hear her whisper a small thanks before continuing. “I’m lost here, Bellamy,” she begins, hands finding your back. “I don’t know what to do without her.”

You want to agree…

You want to say ‘me too’ and tell her that you’re struggling to…

But you can’t…

You all agreed that Lexa couldn’t know about Clarke’s Rumspringa…

“I know,” is what you decide on after many moments of hearing Lexa’s tears exit her body and shattered air enter.

As she pulls away from you just slightly, the question that you’ve been afraid of since last night exits her lips and her eyes meet yours. “Can I wait here until she gets back?”

“No!” you explode before your brain catches up with the fight or flight reaction. “No,” you say again, more calmly this time.

Quick…

Think…

Recover…

“You need to talk to her in a neutral place…” Smooth… make it like you’re protecting both of them and not just hiding the truth.

By the end of the conversation where and Lexa held each other the whole time, Lexa felt more comfortable with her and Clarke.

She felt more comfortable with her future.
She felt more comfortable with you.

But most importantly, she felt more comfortable with herself.

And when she left your apartment, she looked lighter, filled with more energy to take on the world.

And that was all thanks to you.
But I’m strong enough to say I’ve been hiding it every day

Chapter Notes

Here’s chapter 22... where Clarke finally decides it’s about time to come home
Check the playlist: http://8tracks.com/roliver4/learning-to-breathe-by-roliver4
Add me on tumblr: http://shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com/

BELLAMY

Clarke (4:22PM): Dinner at Pete’s? 6pm?

Bellamy (4:31PM): see you there.

It took you rewriting that message from the security booth of the hospital at least 20 times before you were comfortable hitting the send button.

You wanted to sound excited.

You wanted to sound normal.

You wanted to tell Clarke that she should be home now.

You wanted to tell her to take her time.

You wanted what’s best for Clarke.

But most of all…

You wanted the fear to disappear...

The fear that you aren’t what’s best for Clarke.

The fear that this life wasn’t what’s best for Clarke.

The fear that she’s never going to return.

Rolling your chair around to face the screens again, you hear Harper sigh from behind you. You’ve been distant since Clarke left you on the side of the highway 12 days ago and although you’ve known that you shouldn’t be closing her out… you have.

“Raven?” she asks when she hears your phone being placed on the table after you replied to the ding. You offer her a small ‘No’, not wanting to get her hopes up by telling her that it was Clarke. You didn’t have any information to offer to your… person?… girlfriend?… fuck buddy?.... Harper… who was also missing Clarke. She was friends with her too after all. “Hmm,” was her only reply from behind you before she stood, sliding in her chair. “I’m going to handle the next walk,” she explains, walking out of the room. You turn just in time to see her pulled back hair round the corner to the exit to begin the security walk around the perimeter of the building. Day shifts were the worst
because there was never really anything to do but monitor cameras and walk a hallway every thirty minutes, but today was especially terrible because you and Harper weren’t speaking.

Opening your phone, you scroll through the texts until you reach her name, clicking it with your thumb and biting on your lower lip, pondering what to say.

**Bellamy (4:46PM):** We get off in 15

Lame

**Bellamy (4:47):** Well, 14

**Bellamy (4:47):** shit… 13

She’s not responding, but that little text at the bottom of your messages tells you that she’s read them. With a sigh, you push yourself from the chair, checking the cameras one last time before making your way towards the exit that Harper’s picture on the monitor is standing at.

When you open the door, you’re instantly met with the smell of cigarette smoke as Harper quickly tosses the cigarette into the empty parking spot behind her, exhaling her drag into the air. Why is she hiding from you?

“What are you doing out here?” she asks, hiding her hands into her pockets. With her brown eyes shifting away from yours, she digs her toe into the ground as you approach her, wrapping your arms around her tightly and pulling her in.

“I’m sorry” you attempt to apologize, stumbling on your words as you do. “I’m distracted” your excuse is more of an explanation, but no matter how you say it, it doesn’t come out that way. Luckily, Harper understands.

“She’s my friend too,” she begins as her arms find your waist, tugging tightly from your back. “I miss her too but you can’t push me away.”

She’s right.

“Want a cigarette?” she asks once you release her, producing a pack from her pocket. Taking the death stick from her hands, you smile at her, asking when she started smoking again.

Harper used to smoke religiously. It was an every hour affair at the minimum after her father’s death last year, but within the last few months, she had stopped, quitting almost cold turkey, producing the worst week of her life.

“When Clarke left,” was all that she could admit, lighting hers before handing you the lighter. Taking it from her, you sighed, lighting yours and handing it back to her.

“And when will you quit?” You didn’t mean for that to sound as accusing as it did, but Harper seemed unphased, chucking slightly as her soft fingers wrapped around the cigarette. Just as she removed it from her pink lips, the smoke surrounded her in the air carefully as if it was the aftermath of a kiss you ached to give her.

“When Clarke returns…”

She wasn’t wrong.
Clarke

Pete’s is this small corner diner that you and Bellamy had discovered in this rundown area of town forever ago when you decided to only eat local for a month. It was a month filled with the greatest food that you had ever encountered, but it was also the month that prompted you to hit rock bottom, ending up in the hospital with talk of a tube down your nose and IVs in your wrists.

Since then, you never thought to tread here, but visiting anywhere else was too risky. Raven and Octavia had already started frequenting the places that you had been going to for lunch after meeting them both so now, you found yourself here-- the sketchy, hole in the wall diner that was home to Bellamy’s favorite steak and eggs dish, waiting on your friend to walk through the doors and join you at the back corner booth.

The waitress had already refilled your water three times and you couldn’t help but smile when she came by for the fourth round, laughing about you being hydrated. If only she knew that you were super anxious which is why you were drinking so much. Drinking the water kept your mind off of the conversation that you were about to have.

But that distraction ceased working when your curly-haired friend walked through the door, leather jack over shoulders, helmet in hand. Bellamy was always gorgeous, even when he drove over an hour to see you… well, knowing his driving, probably more like 40 minutes.

The beauty of your friend was masked, however, when he approached, taking the seat across from you, by the darkened rings around his eyes and the worry marks outlining his forehead. He had not slept in days probably and looked as if he had been living off of fast food and soda. He looked like Bellamy when you first met him. He looked like Bellamy before family nights started.

“What’s up Griffin?” he asked, placing a hand on yours on the table. His knuckles were bruised and scratched and suddenly you felt like this was a mistake. Even his voice sounded exhausted.

The corner of your mouth turns up slightly when he smiles in your direction, wrapping his fingers around yours and holding your hand tightly.

With your friend so close to you, you felt like coming home.

As conversation between you and Bellamy began, you chat about work and Harper and what family nights have looked like and how many people have asked about you. Again, what never comes up in conversation is Lexa.

Again, you’re actually alright with this…

But again, you’re actually not…

You’re basically clawing at your skin when the conversation turns to you and when the spotlight is put on your life, you begin picking at the hem of your pants… sliding your glass to draw pictures with the condensation… running your fingers through your hair… anything to avoid eye contact with Bellamy.

“I’ve talked with my mom,” you tell him after the two of you order your food. Trying to read him, you can’t decide if he’s more surprised at the fact that you’ve ordered real food or the fact that you started the conversation about your mother. It’s been a long time since Bellamy felt comfortable with your mother… more in particularly, it’s been a long time since you’ve felt comfortable with your mother and Bellamy knew this.
“How’s that going?” he asks, sipping at his tea. He seems unconcerned with conversation and just as you begin getting irritated with his lack of interest, you remember exactly how this same conversation has gone in the past.

Over the period of the last two or so years, there have been small moments when you attempted to contact your mother—mainly when good news came about. Your mother, however, was never on board and Bellamy had to be there to pick up the pieces.

When you and Finn first started dating, instead of being happy for your first real relationship, she asked when you were getting married and why you were dating a military grunt instead of someone “more on your level.”

When you moved in with Bellamy, you tried to call your mom to tell her about your new address. Instead of being happy for you, she reamed you asking when she could expect you to get pregnant.

When Kane got you accepted to the master’s program and provided research funding for you to be certified as an advanced practice registered nurse, instead of her being excited that you were bettering yourself and your knowledge for your clients, she asked you why you didn’t just go to medical school if you were going to continue your education.

For these reasons and more, Bellamy never liked your mother and you could totally understand.

“IT’s different now,” you say, lifting your glass to your mouth.

“She’s changed?” he asks, raising an eyebrow. He face gives away that he’s still not buying it.

“I don’t know… maybe we’ve all changed…”

As silence washes over you two and your waitress brings your food to the table, Bellamy’s eyes lift from the table and scan over your plate, then over you. A smile breaks across his lips and for the first time in months, you can tell that he’s comfortable with your eating habits.

**Dinner: Black Bean Burger + French Fries**

When his hand reaches over to grab one of your fries, you lift your knife, pointing at his throat with a solid, unrelenting expression on your face. “Do it,” you begin, swinging the knife horizontally mocking like you’re cutting his throat. “I dare you.”

He withdraws his hand slowly, a single French fry between his fingers as he lifts it to his mouth, biting just the corner of it before putting it back on your plate just as slowly.

“That’s it, asshole,” you joke, stabbing the table with the knife in your hand. “Your life is mine…”

The two of you laugh again for many moments, continuing to joke about anything and everything that comes to mind until Lexa’s name rolls out of his mouth in conversation on accident. With a pause, he looks at you just as concerned at his slip up as you are. With a sigh, you shake your head.

“Do you think I can be forgiven?” you ask, eyes dropping to the table to avoid his expression. “Do you think she’ll forgive me for doing the same thing that Costia did?”

Bellamy opens his mouth to speak, but closes it quickly, repeating this process a few more times before he settles on a sentence. “You know, I read once in a book by C.S. Lewis called Forgiveness that ‘if God forgives us, then we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise, it’s almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him.’” A smile cracks across your face when Bellamy begins talking with you about God.
Neither of you are believers, per say, but neither of you really care either. You talk about God and the devil and the war that is raging inside of you all of the time and something so petty as not having a solid foundation has never stopped you before.

“I think it’s important to remember that Lexa’s not god,” he adds, snatching a French fry from your plate. “Lexa loves you… but I think you need to learn to forgive yourself and the rest will come in time…”

“Do you forgive me?” you ask, glancing up over your almost untouched plate of food to your roommate who is sitting with a french fry hanging from his mouth like a walrus tooth.

His expression causes you to chuckle slightly which is exactly what you needed in this moment. “Clarke,” he begins, pulling the French fry into his mouth with his tongue and chewing it up before swallowing and speaking again. “I forgave you the moment that you walked into my room and tried to kiss me.”

Oh yeah… that night… the night that you tried to cheat on Finn simply to get revenge for him distancing himself.

The night that you got insanely drunk and allowed Bellamy to take you home.

The night that he refused to let you do anything that you’d regret and instead held you while you drifted into sleep.

The night that he read you your first bedtime story since your father’s death.

The night that he became one of your best friends.

“I knew you’d break my heart eventually, but I knew that more than I wanted to be intact at the end of every day, I wanted to be your friend.” You can’t help but smile as your friend reaches into his pocket, pulling his phone and checking it before producing a few bills, tossing them on the table. “I have to go,” he mumbles, placing a hand on yours and holding tightly for a few moments. “But first, I have something for you.”

From inside of his leather jacket, he pulls a small, cracked CD case holding a neon pink and electric blue CD.

“Listen to ‘Coming Back to the World,’” he explains, handing the CD over to you. It’ll mean the world to you…”

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CLARKE

He wasn’t wrong-- especially when the first 15 seconds sing out to you, bringing tears to your eyes.

“Whoa, I'm coming back to the world. I, I'll start it over again. Whoa, I've fallen down by the wayside. I'll get up and sing it again.”

You haven’t even made it through the first verse when you completely lose it, unable to control the explosive sobs that are draining from your face, keeping you too occupied to even think about putting this car in reverse and leaving this spot.

“So she prays to God to believe in trust, in hope, in life, in love…”
And even though you’ve never felt the urge to claw your way out of your skin, you understand completely and sympathize entirely with the girl in the song.

“Another day it’s the same habit she tries to break. It doesn't go away, her problems still stay. There's more to life than this. She's always had a choice and today. She's found the inner strength to sing.”

With each word from the singer’s mouth, you hear Bellamy begging you to come back home.

With each word from the singer’s mouth, you hear Raven telling you that you’re needed.

With each word from the singer’s mouth, you hear Octavia asking you to fix everything.

With each word from the singer’s mouth, you hear the rest of your friends, pleading with you to return all of your lives to normal.

With each word from the singer’s mouth, you hear Lexa simply saying your name.

With each word from the singer’s mouth, you’re learning to believe in trust, in hope, in life, in love…

With each word from the singer’s mouth, you’re learning to breathe.

It’s time to come back.

---

LEXA

You weren’t planning on sitting on their couch when Bellamy opened the apartment door, swinging his leather jacket over the chair to his left before catching sight of you, jumping out of shock.

“For fuck’s sake Lexa...” his words trail as he grabs his chest, eventually taking in a breath and clearing his throat. “I wasn’t expecting you here.”

“I wasn’t expecting to be here,” you admit, lifting your body from the couch and making your way into the kitchen where your friend was placing a to-go box into the fridge, pulling out 2 water bottles and handing you one.

“So how did you end up on my couch then?” he asks with a laugh, ushering you back towards the living room and towards the couch.

“Why did you stop me?” you ask him bluntly as you sit, turning your eyes towards your friend. “When I tried to kiss you last night, why did you stop me?”

A small laugh escaped his lips. “You mean other than the fact that you’re gay?” You smile back at his chuckle, uncapping your bottle and lifting it to your lips. “Look, I don’t care who you fuck or what you do as long as everyone is happy, healthy, consenting, and whole… and you weren’t consenting… you were drunk.”

Your smile widens as Bellamy’s inner feminist surfaces. He continues to talk with you about consent and how he defines that and what it means to him as an older brother, a friend, and a decent human being and after almost 2 weeks of avoiding your friends, you’re overwhelmed with the desire to be close to them all again, even if that meant having to see Clarke and missing her more than ever.

Maybe you can apologize…

“So it had nothing to do with me?” you ask, the words cracking in your tone as they exit your mouth.
What you’re really asking Bellamy to do is something that you know he is incapable of. You’re actually asking him to tell you what’s wrong with you…

And he doesn’t know that…

Hell, you don’t know that…

“It had everything to do with you,” he says with a smile, uncapping his bottle and taking a large drink from it, draining over half of it. His smile is priceless. “Lexa, I love you. I love you with all of my heart. I’d do anything for you… But I’m not going to watch you self-destruct.” You wonder how many times he’s needed to hear those words himself while you were away.

“Can I come over tonight?” you ask Bellamy, receiving another laugh in return.

“Of course! We’ve missed you around her Commander…”

And the nickname is back.

And the friendship is back.

The next hour goes by between you and Bellamy as you argue over what kind of pizza to order, who is going to pay and whether or not Ronda Rousey is the best women’s MMA fighter of all time or not. Bellamy stands his ground for the most part, citing statistics and fight dates that you never even anticipated him knowing, but you argue fervently, disagreeing with him.

“You have to be kidding me you penis-sneeze,” you shout over him as Harper enters the apartment, laughing at your shouting match. He hasn’t stopped trying to scream over you and you’re not stopping until you get your point across. “Cupcake Tate is going to kick her ass in December!”

“Woah now boys!” Harper interjects, basically throwing her body in between you two as she sits in Bellamy’s lap, placing a hand on his face before turning to look over to you. All three of you laugh slightly as she greets you as if you’ve been around the whole time— as if nothing’s changed.

“Whatever,” Bellamy shrugs, throwing himself back into the chair, pulling Harper with him as he does. “Watch as Rousey and I steal all your money in December then…”

You laugh as you challenge back a small “Deal”, leaning back on the couch yourself. “Everyone coming over tonight?” you ask, noticing Harper’s small glance shifting between you and Bellamy. She looks as if she has something to say.

“Yeah… Lexa… We need to tell you something…”

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**BELAMY**

Reading Lexa was harder now than ever before. Sure, when you met her, she was difficult… distant… closed off… emotionless… but then she began opening up. Then you began seeing her reasons for being so isolated. But now, even after the 4 months of learning to decipher her mannerisms, you couldn’t place your finger on the signal that she was sending.

It looked like anger.

It sounded like depression.

It seemed like denial.
Hell, she was traveling through the stages of grief on your couch as Harper told her how Clarke had disappeared, leaving you on the side of the highway. The memory of Clarke entering that cab still burned when your friend questioned why you didn’t try to stop her…

Truth be told, you had wondered this countless times yourself.

It would have been all too easy to refuse to let her go.

It would have been all too easy to just say no and not let her leave.

But you didn’t.

“She’s okay though,” you try to reassure Lexa, noticing the tremble in her hands and the shutter in her voice. “I had dinner with her today,” you add as Harper turns to look at you, brows furrowed with questions. “I didn’t tell you because I didn’t want to get your hopes up.”

The hand that you place on the small of her back seems to clear up any angst that was building between you two in this moment, but the weight that you could see in her shoulders told you that this conversation wasn’t over between you two.

“So when is she coming home?” Lexa asks into the silence, swallowing the lump in her throat so deeply that you can hear it.

Harper grits her teeth, tightening her jaw as she looks to you for the answer.

“We don’t know.”

Lexa’s eyes widen, her brows raised and her glare looking right into you. “You don’t know?” she questions almost sarcastically. “How can you not know.”

“Look, Lexa,” you begin, leaning forward and wrapping your arms around Harper’s waist for support. “She’s done this before… She’ll be back when…”

“This isn’t the first time?” your friend is practically screaming at you again from across the small table except this time there’s not jest in her voice. You’re not fake fighting over a sports team or your favorite athlete or your favorite book. No, Lexa is yelling at you for lying to her and you’re totally deserving of what’s about to come out of her mouth.

Instead of more words, however, the Lexa that you first met over 4 months ago returns. Instead of more words, she shells up, retreating behind the darkened blanket that you’ve basically become accustomed to reading. Instead of more words, she just stares, standing from her seat and walking out of the front door…

And you don’t even try to stop her.

For the second time, you’ve let Lexa leave.

For the third time, you’ve let one of your friends walk away from you.

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LINCOLN

When family game night rolls around, you’re honestly dreading it. For the first time since game nights started a little under 2 years ago, you honestly debate simply staying home. It was all too easy to do. Ever since Tris got recruited, she was doing 2-a-day practices with her private coach (another
$100 a month that you and Lexa were doling out, but it was worth it) and because of this, you two suspended Thursday date nights… you could have easily declared Saturday nights to be date nights, but Tris wasn’t having it. More in particularly, Tris wasn’t having you around the house and Lexa hadn’t returned yet from wherever the hell she was going.

Last week’s family game night was sufficiently awkward in itself without Clarke and everyone dancing around the fact that no one really knew where she was or what she was doing, but this week, knowing that Lexa now knows that you guys have no clue where Clarke is, it almost felt wrong going to the party…

That was until Lexa crawled into the passenger seat of your car, tuning the radio to her favorite station, buckling her seatbelt and looking over to you, asking if you were going or not. Shoving her car keys into your glove box, she turned her attention to you one more time, apparently noticing the look of surprise and concern written across your face.

“I’m okay,” she says, sounding like she’s trying to convince herself more than you. When you start the engine and begin pulling from your drive, you hear an exhale exit her lips followed by another quick and less convincing “I’m okay.”

Once at the party, however, the aura around you two changed. It was moments like this that you learned exactly how much you appreciated your friends. From the moment that you and your older sister entered the apartment, you were welcomed in—no questions asked.

More in particularly, Lexa was welcomed in, just like before, no questions asked.

All fear seemed to dissipate as she walked over to Bellamy, whispering something into his ear, hugging him and Harper then intermingled with your friends-with her friends- as if nothing had conspired between her and Clarke. She talked with Raven and Octavia like she had always been a member of that group. She chatted with Bellamy and Murphy like she hadn’t been A.W.O.L. for nearly 2 weeks. She joked with Jasper and Monty as if she had not been damaged.

Everything was fine… and for the first time in a long time, you actually felt like everything was going to be alright in spite of everything.

Lexa was going to be fine—even without Clarke if that’s what it came down to.
LEXA

Falling asleep alone still feels almost foreign to you, even after the two weeks that you two have been separated. In fact, the idea of it terrifies you, but when your head touches the pillow, exhaustion takes control and you’re out before you know it. All you remember is Lincoln wishing you goodbye as he headed out to work, begging you to try to relax and keep your mind clear. That’s been easier said than done since everything between you and Clarke, but you’ve tried… And you took clear advantage of this, eating an avocado, changing into your pajamas, and crawling into bed in the darkened silence. You don’t even remember the point where you started falling asleep. It just happened.

Waking up, however, was a different story. You’re able to pinpoint the exact moment that the ringing of your phone in the darkness woke you up, illuminating the room while screaming its loud song to you. Rolling over, you groan, slapping at it with a heavy hand while a string of curse words escapes your throat. The noise stops and you begin to roll back over away from it when the piercing song begins to play again.

It’s that of the ringtone that you set after Clarke’s influence, alerting you that it’s not a text or an alarm. As the words “Lightning comes and lightning goes and it’s all the same to me,” are shouted into your bedroom, you’re reminded of how Clarke said that it was a break-up song, never agreeing more than you do now as you roll over again, grabbing the phone to check the time.

3:47AM

Someone is calling you at 3:47AM.

“Hello?” you ask groggily, sitting up in your bed when the man on the other line begins speaking.

“Lexa Woods?” he asks. You nod, knowing that he can’t see you.

“Miss Woods, this is Atom at St. Anthony’s hospital…”

You freeze.

This is entirely too familiar for your liking.
“Yes?” you question, knowing where this conversation was headed but hoping for a different outcome. Your hands were shaking as one wrapped around the phone at your ear, the other balling up the sheets of the bed in its grasp.

Without hesitation, the last few months flash before your eyes, reminding you of how much you have to lose at this time.

Clarke’s smile. Those eyes. The way that she wrapped her arms around you in her sleep. And even if she wasn’t in your life at the moment, she was still here in everything you did.

Lincoln’s compassion. His hope. The way that he held you on the bathroom floor when you wanted nothing more than to die. How he never gave up on you and is still fighting to make sure that you’re well.

Bellamy’s stupid fucking laugh. His compassion. The way that he works hard to keep his life on track. How he refuses to let you fail and is constantly texting you, trying to set up times to hang out even though you normally don’t answer him.

Raven’s charm. Her boldness. That damn incessant need to know how you are, wondering if you’ve heard from Clarke recently. How she doesn’t allow you to forget that everyone is there for you, even when you remind her that you’re the one that damaged Clarke.

Octavia’s charisma. Her stunning personality. The way that you catch her in the diner on random days, ordering only water and talking with you about your life. How she fishes for information, but doesn’t pressure you, knowing exactly how far to push you before you break.

Tris’s talent. Her absolute devotion to everything in her life. The way that she refuses to hold a grudge even though you stole years of her life. How she loves you in spite of everything and continually checks on you, day after day.

“Miss Woods, there’s been an accident…”

And now all you can think of is those words…

Those three damn words that it took you 75 days to tell her while sober…

That’s it.

That phrase is the end of your life…

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CLARKE

Maybe your light wasn’t green? Honestly, now, you can’t remember, and listening to the conversations around you isn’t helping. In fact, they’re making you more confused.

You’re in shock.

Opening your mouth to speak, the air exits your lungs too quickly for anything short of a gasp to come from your lips.

“Don’t speak, Miss Griffin,” the paramedic tells you, placing a hand on your chest. His green eyes are compassionate as he maintains eye contact with you. “We’re going to get you taken care of.”

When were you moved to a stretcher?
Think Clarke, what happened to you? You’d need to know what to tell Lexa when you spoke to her next…

FUCK!

Lexa…

THINK!

Of course Lexa’s on your mind now… she hasn’t left your mind since she left your apartment that day, bound and determined to return to normal life…

Ok, so you were driving from your night shift at the hospital to the hotel room…

No…

You weren’t…

You had packed your bags and checked out earlier that day…

You were heading to Lexa’s house…

There was a note in your pocket in case you couldn’t speak to her…

An apology…

A forgiveness letter…

You had just turned left onto Alameda Street and were making your way to 72nd… and then it all goes black… right after the super small gas station and the first station on the left.

Actually, you stopped. The one stop light on that whole damned road and you stopped.

“Blood pressure is dropping,” the man says as the machinery beside you begins to beep. He slides an IV into your arm, hooking a bag into the link.

You’re in an ambulance. Are you blacking out?

Think. For fuck’s sake Clarke? How did you ever make it through nursing school without being able to concentrate?

“Miss Griffin?” the man’s voice repeated over and over again as he shined a light in your eyes. “Miss Griffin, I need you to focus on my voice…”

You are…

But you’re not…

Are you?

“We’re losing consciousness… Miss Griffin?”

That makes sense…

Your forehead does feel like it’s pounding… actually, it feels like your brain is falling out, but you know that this isn’t possibly the case…
Is it?

No…

Think about it…

The Dura Mater is connected to the meningeal surface of your skull and it holds your brain in place within your head… but then again, you do remember your head hitting the steering wheel.

“Oxygen,” the paramedic requests, taking a mask from the other EMT, sliding it over your face. Feeling the air fill your mouth, you’re not even taking it in.

Something’s wrong.

Gasping slightly, you choke, unable to breathe as deeply as you can.

Something’s wrong.

Think…

Let them do their job… they’re here to save you… let them figure it out. How did you get here?

You passed the gas station and stopped at the light.

It was red.

Stopping, you checked your phone to see if Lexa had messaged you.

Lexa…

She’s going to be so distraught.

FOCUS!

She left you… remember that…

But that doesn’t mean that she doesn’t care…

You just overwhelmed her…

But she hasn’t texted you or called you since then…

But you haven’t tried to contact her either…

THINK!

You put your phone back into your scrub top pocket and watched the light turn green.

IT WAS GREEN!

And then there was silence.

There was a crack and then silence.

And now it all comes back to you. It was a blue truck with a hula dancer on the dashboard.

That fucking Hula dancer…
BELLAMY

Last time you traveled this route this fast was for far too similar of a reason.

“Mr. Blake,” the man’s voice said to you, sending a shiver through your spine. “There’s been an accident. Clarke Griffin is currently in route by means of ambulance.”

Throwing yourself off of the bed, you sprint towards the door, grabbing your keys and coat on the way out, not even stopping to lock the door—not like it’s been unlocked for weeks or anything…

“We won’t know her condition until she gets here, but she’ll be arriving at the emergency room in less than 30 minutes.”

You can make the trip in almost that time if you speed. Unlocking your helmet from your bike, you mount it quickly, kicking the ignition as you helmet up, speeding out of the parking lot.

Taking the first left turn and then a right, you zoom down the main road of your town, suddenly hating how far out into the woods you two live. Strike that… Clarke hasn’t returned home in weeks and even though she’s texted you and met up with you once, she’s been refusing to move back in, still sending in her rent check and saying that she just needed time to work through some things.

Fuck…

She was beginning to get better. She had been putting on the weight that she needed. You had found letters in her mail between her mother and her. She had told Raven that she was attending therapy and it was actually helping. Of course some drunk asshole in an overly large truck would run through a red light and T-bone her car when she was finally beginning to recover…

You didn’t plan on slowing down at the one red light in your town, but the scene before you stopped you in your tracks. In the middle of the intersection sat the blue Ford Focus that Clarke purchased just after she moved in with you, scrunched up on one side like it had been forced through a paper shredder. Scattered about the street, the glass reflected the blue flashing lights of the police and medic vehicles as you made your way through slowly, choking on the vomit building up in your throat as you left the scene.

Pulling over quickly, you practically drop your bike to the ground, ripping your helmet off of your head as soon as you can, throwing up the entire contents of your stomach on the side of 72nd avenue as the rubberneckers continue to drive by slowly, ogling at the scene that could potentially be the death of one of your best friends.

They need to move the fuck on.

They don’t even understand.

She may be dead and they’re just staring.

Your stomach rolls over, unable to produce anything else as you continue to heave, choking on the dryness in your throat now as you drop to your knees, unable to stand any longer.

Sitting right next to Clarke’s crash site, it becomes even more obvious to you than ever before…

You are incapable of taking care of yourself…
You are incapable of being alone…

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LEXA

You can’t decide which is worse, driving in silence or being at the mercy of your ipod in your car, constantly being reminded of your fuck ups as you flip through the shuffling songs.

Mary Lambert’s voice sings softly and you switch it off quickly just as the words ‘She says I smell like safety and home’ exit your speakers, telling you of the scent that still lingers in your sheets reminding you exactly what safety and home feel like…

“And honestly I have been begging for answers,” Mayday Parade serenades you for a brief moment before you click next again, offering a slight ‘me too’ to the lead singer.

3Oh!3’s Still Around begins, the piano accompanying the lone voice as it waltz’s through your car. Nope. Not today. Not now.

Hitting next that time, however, was probably the worst thing that you could have done and before you can stop it that dreaded song that has come to mean the world to you begins with its stupid fucking nylon guitar sound and vocal accompanying. “A little early in spring, a bonfire ring, she's shivering alone. I bumped into you somehow but you can wear my duct-taped vest. It's a party best. It's really all I own. Everything's changing now.” Before you know any better, you’re blinded by the tears forming in your eyes, unable to blink away the flood overwhelming you. With a click of your blinker and a soft turn of your wheel, you’re pulling your car into the shoulder, igniting your emergency lights and allowing emotions to take control again.

What the fuck?

Turn it off…

But your fingers don’t move. Instead, they stay gripping so tight to the steering wheel that they ache when you finally move them to wipe your face, not that it mattered. You’re drowning in your own tears on the side of 72nd street and there’s no way to stop it.

“And lightning comes and lightning goes and it’s all the same to me.”

You walked out on her

“Let it in because I want you so.”

When you wanted her the most, you walked away.

“I can hardly breathe or release into one thousand pieces I have broke into over you”

And instead of trying to fix it, you ran.

“The chain will soon be gone, and I keep burning on and on”

And now, you may never get a second chance to make it right.

And then the bridge hits and you lose it all as the words dance around your head, proving everything that you’ve been thinking.

“This, this is, this is the last time…”
Please no.

“This, this is, this is your goodbye…”

This can’t be the end of it.

“This, this is, this is the last time…”

Shut up.

“This, this is, this is your goodbye…”

“Shut up!” You scream into the empty car, smashing the next button so hard that in any other moment you would fear that it was broken… but now, nothing matters except for escaping that song.

The next song doesn’t offer much in the way of comfort though as the rhythmic sounds of X Ambassadors releases from your speakers to wrap you tighter in the blanket of depression that was filling your car quickly.

“Hold, hold on, hold onto me because I’m a little unsteady…”

God if only they knew how true those words were in that moment.

“Mama, come here, approach, appear. Daddy, I’m alone because this house don’t feel like home.”

Pulling the neck of your tshirt over your face, you try to wipe away your shame again, beginning to feel the effects of exhaustion in your neck and shoulders. It’s still not working though as the tears continue to fall.

“If you love me, don’t let go…”

Oh dear god… That did it…

“If you love me, don’t let go…”

And another jab at your heart.

As the chorus plays again, begging you to hold on, you crave nothing more than letting go.

Fuck what Clarke would have wanted.

Fuck what Lincoln worked so hard for.

Fuck what Tris needs.

This is what you need.

Reaching your hand over to the glove box, you open it, digging deep into the back of it where time has all but forgotten your hidden treasure. It’s been there for years now, slipping in and out of your memory, but never leaving.

It never left.

You never healed.

Producing the small razor blade, you held it tight in your palm, feeling it cut into your hand as your grip tightened. As much as you want to slide it across your skin… as much as you want to feel that
release, something in you isn’t allowing it. All of this and you can’t even do it.

All of this and you can’t even do it.

You can’t even do it.

You can’t.

“Dad, I know you're trying to fight when you feel like flying…”

A small scream exits your lungs as the blood from your palm runs down to your elbow. Opening your hand, you look over your palm, two individual cuts marking the place that the razor sat inside of your grasp as your tool… your weapon… your paintbrush sat on the canvas of your skin.

“But if you love me, don't let go…”

And for the first time since the song began, you’re no longer hearing the singer’s voice.

Instead, you hear Clarke’s tone just before she wraps her arms around you.

You hear the whisper of her voice in your ear as you lay in her bed.

You hear her as she begs you to stay strong.

“But if you love me, don't let go…”

Opening the car door, you step out of your jeep, razor still in open palm and make your way over to the field to your car’s right, silently cursing Oklahoma for being a wasteland before you decide how false that statement was.

This place was perfect. This is where Clarke lived and anywhere that Clarke was was perfect.

Clarke was perfect.

And then you realize, even with all of her baggage… Even with all of her faults… Even with all of her drama, Clarke Griffin was perfect to you-- and you to her.

Staring out into the desolate field, you clinched your fist tight one more time, feeling the blade as it outlined the previous marks it left before throwing your arm out far, releasing it into the void.

You throw your arm like the thousands of high fives you’ve given Tris since she was born.

You throw your arm like the thousands of softballs you’ve pitched to Lincoln in your backyard.

You throw your arm wide like you never wanted to see the blade again…

Because you needed to never see the blade again.

“Hold, hold on, hold onto me because I'm a little unsteady… A little unsteady…”

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**OCTAVIA**

Lincoln was taking too long and waiting for him in this stupid fucking waiting room that smelled like antiseptic and desperation was, without a doubt, number 3 on your worst things of the day list.
First was that stupid fucking phone call from that stupid fucking man who told you that your best friend was in a stupid fucking car crash.

Exhaling deeply, you tried to silence your thoughts, but as you paced back and forth, your brain seemed to display very similar traits, racing frequently between thoughts. There was the last conversation that you had with Clarke where you accused her of not trying hard enough… Then there was the way that you left her hanging when she told you that she loved you… Then there was the way that you failed to see how utterly miserable and lost she had been for years… Then there was the fact that you allowed Lexa to leave without even trying to help.

Sure, it’s not your job to maintain your best friend’s relationship… but maybe if you had tried harder.

Fuck it…

You’re useless anyway…

Second was arriving at the hospital to the news that your best friend has gone into surgery and no one can tell you anything else yet. Attached to that was watching as they wheeled her through, attached to a stretcher with tubes and IVs poking from every available space on her chest and face. She didn’t even look like Clarke. She looked like some terrible fucking actor from some terrible fucking hospital TV show… But that wasn’t the case. She is your best friend and she is probably dying right now and you’re stuck in this goddamned waiting room, pacing back and forth as you wait for…

“Lincoln!” You shout, catching a glimpse of your boyfriend as he rushes into the hospital doors, panic stricken face with sweating outlining his white v-neck, jogging over to wrap his arms around you.

“Anything?” he asks, pulling you in closely to hold you, kissing the top of your head. You can feel the stress wound tightly in his hug when you shake your head. “And Lexa?” his concern for his sister bleeding thought in the way that he says her name. Again, you shake your head.

You sent her multiple text messages but received no response. You called her at least seven times and each time, you were greeted with the silent click and her voice saying “Hey this is Lexa. Leave a message.”

“Nothing,” you sigh into his arms three times before he finally releases you. “She’s on the sixth floor,” you complain, suddenly overwhelmed by everything.

You’re actually standing in this hospital for the second time in your life.

You’re actually standing in this hospital to see Clarke for the second time in your life.

You’re actually standing in this hospital not knowing if Clarke is alive or not for the second time in your life.

Feeling Lincoln’s fingers lace through yours, however, calms some of your thoughts just as you begin to tremble. “Let’s go,” he almost demands, pulling you towards the elevator door and pushing the up button, looking back at you.

Honestly, he’s looking at a shell.

You feel numb and hallow and incapable of anything other than the terror that is blanketing you.

And this doesn’t change when the doors to the elevator open with a ding.
This doesn’t change when Lincoln pulls you in.

This doesn’t change when the doors close and the elevator creeps up each floor.

2- ding.

3-ding.

4-ding.

God.

“For fuck’s sake!” You finally explode in the space between the 4th and 5th floor, throwing your hands in the air and allowing a fist to meet with the elevator wall quickly, retracting it just as fast. You don’t even feel the throbbing and swelling already starting its course on your knuckles.

“O!” Lincoln replies, wrapping his arms around you to hold you tightly so you can’t cause any more damage. “Stop,” he almost whispers, you melting into his grasp.

Just as the doors open to the 6th floor, your heart skips a beat.

You’re here.

It’s time.

---

LEXA

The bandage on your hand and the shifting glares of the nursing staff on the 6th floor as you pace back and forth would normally be enough to give you an anxiety attack-- if you even had the ability to feel anymore. Going in wasn’t an option. Making it to the floor was a feat in itself when all you wanted to do was run. Instead, you walk back and forth, watching the scenery of each room change.

‘If you love me, don’t let go…’

The first door is filled with life, a family all crowded up onto the bed, talking with a patent who can’t be any older than Tris.

‘Hold, hold on, hold onto me’

On the left, next, is a completely different scene-- a dark room with only the glow of the television to illuminate the wrinkled face of the lonely old man.

’Cause I’m a little unsteady’

On the right is a woman with no one around, breathing through a mechanical device like Darth Vader. Unable to take it anymore, you turn around, completing the rotation yet again.

‘A little unsteady’

And then you wonder, which is Clarke going to be?

Will she be breathing through a box until someone has the balls to pull the plug?

Will she be alone forever because everyone else is incapable of maintaining her?
Will she be full of life, surrounded by people who love her?

Will you be one of those people?

Turning again to make your way back towards the rooms, a hand reaches out to you, grabbing your shoulder and pulling you in close, wrapping its fellow arms around you tightly before you know any different.

The smell of home fills your nostrils as Lincoln wraps his arms around you tighter, hugging you like it’s the last time he ever will. Suddenly, all of your emotions flood out through your eyes as you cry onto his shirt, unable to control every tear that you’ve been holding back since you entered St. Anthony’s doors. Octavia wraps herself close behind you, sandwiching you between them in an effort to comfort and console you and, strangely, it’s working. Hearing the catch in Octavia’s slow breathing, you appreciate not being alone in this moment that is totally out of character for you. The three of you stand here for a few moments, simply crying into each other, no one capable of walking into that door.

“I love you,” Lincoln whispers through his tears, kissing the top of your head again. Octavia simply nods.

You are loved…

Even if you left.

---

OCTAVIA

It wasn’t fair to blame her, you knew that, but hearing that damn text tone on your phone set something off. For the first time since Clarke decided to check out on you guys, she was texting you with a super vague message of ‘Floyd’s at 3’.

Of course your friend who ran away was in your city.

Of course your friend who ran away was messaging you.

Clarke (2:14 PM): Alone.

Since when did Clarke Griffin send one word text messages?

Since when did Clarke Griffin disappear for 8 whole days?

Since when did Clarke Griffin get to call the shots?

After ignoring all of the missed calls and hundreds of texts that you sent asking about her safety, a simple text with a time and a place was all you got back, and that wasn’t good enough. Not after all of the tears that you’ve shed for Clarke Griffin.

Pulling into that parking lot and seeing her blue Ford Focus filled you with rage, reminding you of how she just walked out, running away and leaving your brother on the side of the road. Seeing her blue Ford Focus reminded you of the look of desperation on his face as he stormed into your apartment, dripping from the rain and covered in mud from chasing after her. Seeing her blue Ford Focus filled you with rage, but also gave you hope.

Walking past it, you notice the amount of clothes and water bottles thrown about it. She had never
been one for storing things in her car but right now it looked like she was living out of it. How very out of character for Clarke.

Opening the door to the small diner was another feat. Today would be filled with small victories, you guessed as you scan the room, catching the all too familiar blue eyes of your best friend, sitting at her usual booth in the far back corner away from everyone. For everything changing around you, nothing has changed. You should be mad. You should be pissed. But all that you want to do is hug her and hold her close.

But that changes when you reach the table, noticing the bruising on her knuckles and the sunken, bruised rings around her eyes. She’s sipping on a glass of water when you take your seat without words. Opening her mouth to speak at last, you can’t take it anymore.

“What the fuck, Clarke?” you ask, no filter. “What are you even doing?” You continue to rip into your best friend as she sits silently, waiting for you to run out of words.

“I just need time,” she says, shifting her eyes down to the rings that were forming from her water glass.

“Time for what?” the words exit your lungs as you exhale, hoping that the waitress who just dropped off your water doesn’t believe you to be crazy. “What are you doing?”

Your friend sighs, moving her glass from side to side to fill in the design with lost condensation. She’s avoiding eye contact, but honestly, you’re fine with it. Clarke doesn’t look like Clarke. She looks like an exhausted, hallow shell of the girl that you once knew.

“I just need some space to think,” she begins to mumble before you can’t take her bullshit anymore.

“No, you had space… we could give you space. What you’re doing is running away-- like you always do.” You’re not letting up. The fire in your brown eyes is only matched by the bite in your words as you tear into your friend, watching the tears as they form in the pits of her sunken eyes.

“I am running completely… absolutely, but I don’t know what else to do,” your friend pleads, eyes looking up at you from the table. She looks like a disaster. She looks like you feel.

“Let us in Clarke. Come home. We need you.” You’re pleading with your friend as you take her hand in yours, forcing her to let go of the glass.

Clarke blinks, changing the subject. “Have you talked to Lexa?” she asks, eyes shuffling around to look anywhere except for at you. Shaking your head, you glance down to the table for a moment, pondering your words carefully.

“We didn’t know how to tell her… not yet.” Clarke nods, replying with a brief ‘Good’ and begging you not to tell anyone.

“I’m doing the best that I can,” she mumbles, lifting her glass to her lips.

“It’s not good enough.”

And that was it. Lifting your body from the booth, you reach into your pockets, pulling out a $20 bill and tossing it on the table, glancing your friend once over.

“Order something to eat,” you demand, turning away from her without any more words.

Honestly, you don’t know why you’re mad… more so, you can’t pin-point one reason why you’re
mad, but the biggest thing isn’t that Clarke ran…

You honestly don’t blame her for needing a break…

You’re mad at Clarke for not telling you where she was going…

And you’re mad at yourself for not asking.

“I love you,” she says as you turn away. Unable to bring yourself to say anything, you take that first step instead, creating the distance that you need and continuing with one foot after the next.

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OCTAVIA

Scratch that. Walking into that hospital room door was the worst part of your day…
I've got a lot of loose ends, I've done some damage

Chapter Notes

Alright, so instead of making one massive chapter, i've decided to break these into smaller updates to give you a little bit to hold you over until the tides turn... so that being said, here's Chapter 24- the chapter where Tris comes back with a secret, Lexa is all stubborn, and nothing really happens except everyone gets all mushy and gross.

I decided that rather than stop at 26 like my original plan was, i'm going to run to at least 30 to tie up some loose ends that I don't want hanging around... but we are coming closer to an end, so let me know if there's anything in particular that you think should happen...

Chapter names are now being named after lyrics from LEDGES by Noah Gundersen which can be found on the 8 tracks page that has been updated as well!

As always, add me on tumblr and let's be best friends. I love hearing from you guys!
shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

LINCOLN

Taking three steps towards the door, you turn, noticing that your sister isn’t beside you anymore. Instead of being between you and Octavia, she’s still where you left her, eyes on the floor and chest heaving deeply. Sighing, you rub your eyes, realizing exactly how hard this was going to be for you guys. This was new, but yet it seemed far too familiar.

Walking back to her, you take Lexa’s hand in yours, squeezing tightly as you pull her into your grasp, wrapping your arms around her and holding her to your chest. Hearing her breathing attempting to steady with yours breaks your heart with every shudder.

She’s trying.

She’s trying so hard, but she’s unable to even breathe.

“Get knocked down,” you begin, kissing the top of her head. You can feel her inhale deeply, taking a sharp breath into her chest as she opens her mouth to speak.

The words come, but they’re weak and broken, giving away more about her feelings than Lexa has in years. “Get back up,” she whispers a reply with another tremor. Nodding against you, she pulls herself apart, tugging her shirt back down, brushing her hair from her eyes and wiping her face, exhaling whatever stagnant air remained in her lungs. She nodded once more, clenching her jaw and sliding her hand into yours, taking Octavia’s in the other.

For a brief moment, when you rounded the corner, you thought she was going to hold it together.

Hell, for a brief moment, when you rounded the corner, you thought you were going to hold it together.
Neither statement could be further from the truth however.

When you entered the room, Clarke was sitting upright, bright eyes shining at you in spite of her bruising or cuts on her face as she greeted you…

Or at least that’s what you were ready for…

What you saw, however, was your friend lying motionless on the bed, IVs exiting her gown and tracing her body up to the machinery that beeped softly, obviously holding life in her veins and air in her lungs. Her chest rose and fell slowly, contrasting against your sister’s heavy breathing next to you as you and Octavia basically dragged Lexa closer.

“I can’t…” she mumbled, turning against you to flee. Stopping her with your outstretched arm, you pulled her in again, hugging her for at least the 4th time since you entered the hospital. “Why won’t you let me leave?” she begged you over and over again, explaining how badly she wanted out of this room. “I can’t be here… I can’t do this.” She was basically clawing at the walls to escape your arms, but you held her tight refusing to let her leave.

“You need to,” was all that you could say, choking back your own desire to run. As you watched the air leave Clarke’s body and heard the sounds on the machinery whirling oxygen back into her, your voice cracks again, attempting to speak. “She needs us… She needs you…”

Listening to your sister sob into you killed you inside. With each shudder… with each breath… with each tear, you die a little more, feeling your knees knock back and forth.

This can’t be how everything ends.

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Lexa

Smiling over at the blonde next to you, your stomach fluttered as joy rose inside of you. Who would have guessed that you would be here? After everything, who could have predicted that you would find yourself in bed with Clarke Griffin again? Much less, who could have predicted that you would have found yourself in bed with Clarke Griffin, planning the future of your lives… all three of yours.

“He’s kicking,” she smiles to you, reaching out for your hand within the dark red walls of your new bedroom. Rolling over onto your side, you place your left hand under your head to support yourself, using the other to trace the blonde locks from her face before meeting her own hand. She leads you to her stomach, placing your fingertips just to the right of her belly button, pushing slightly until you feel the push back.

With a smile spreading from the corner of your mouth across your face, you feel your son kick back in protest to your pressure. “He’s a fighter,” you tell her, leaning in to kiss her rounded, swollen belly. Even though you never thought it possible, the contours of Clarke’s body were more delicate and her face was more radiant. She seemed more welcoming… More alive… More like home— even though that shouldn’t have even been possible. And within the last few months, she has managed to fill your home together with that same alive, welcoming feeling as the two of you filled it with your belongings, making it your own.

With a small chuckle, she moves her hands to cup your face, pulling you up to her level and kissing your lips, allowing her hands to trail down your body to your hips, holding you closer to her. “Well, that explains everything for Alexander, doesn’t it?” she says with a smile as you cringe.
“We aren’t naming him after me…” you correct her, rolling over onto your back with another smile.

Who would have guessed that you’d end up here?

Hypnic jerk, sleep start, sleep twitch, … Whatever you call it, the sensation of falling while sleeping suddenly awakens you, jarring your head out of Octavia’s lap as you throw your body up, glancing around the room before you. Instead of the warm reds and yellows of the home that you dreamed about, you were surrounded by the pale white of the hospital room that you found her in. Instead of the light shining through the shutters onto the love of your life’s face, you were greeted with the fluorescent humm blinding you as you blinked into awareness.

It was a dream…

A great dream…

That ended…

Leaving you in the stupid fucking I.C.U….

Listening to each peak of Clarke’s heart on the L.C.D. screen behind her head, waiting for it to end.

Reaching out to you, Octavia opened her mouth to speak before you shrugged her off, pushing her arm from your shoulder and lifting yourself from the loveseat, making your way past your brother, ignoring him as he reached out for you.

Pacing through the halls, you watch as each individual in the wing seemed to have their own agenda, rushing back and forth past you as you crumble inside, unable to even cry anymore. The burn of unshed tears still lingered in your eyes as they shifted from side to side, observing the patters in the footsteps around you. Nurses hustled. Patients dragged. Family cried. Friends laughed.

And then there was you.

Never before had you felt like a Death Cab for Cutie song, but never before had you felt like the words ‘There’s no comfort in the waiting room’ had any meaning to you…

Until now.

Reaching the end of the hallway before you even noticed that you were headed towards it, you turn back to the elevator, living the lyrics to the song that was burning into your subconscious with each step.

‘Cause there's no comfort in the waiting room’

Shivering, you try to breathe a deep breath of air, unable to even get past initial rising of your chest before the feeling of falling begins to set in.

‘Just nervous pacers bracing for bad news’

Each time a nurse sprints past you, you can’t help but wonder when your turn is next. With each pager vibration around you and each sound of footsteps coming towards you, you wait to hear your name spoken from the mouth of a stranger who wants to be there even less than you-- if that’s even possible.

‘And then the nurse comes round and everyone will lift their heads’

As you turn the corner and make eye contact with a nurse that you’ve seen before, your soul drops,
feeling the depression radiate from her body. Maya makes her way over to you, taking you in her arms before you can even say anything.

‘But I’m thinking of what Sarah said’

“Lexa,” she begins before the shudder ceases all words from her mouth. You offer a simple ‘I know,’ listening to the heartbeat pounding against your own chest, wondering if the beating in Clarke’s machine matched.

‘Love is watching someone die’

---

LINCOLN

After Lexa leaves, the feeling of dread begins to flood through you, filling every sinus and every cavity in your body with fear. Octavia obviously catches on, looking up from the charts that she was reading over and glancing to you. Rising from the space beside where Lexa had been laying, she takes a seat in your lap, wrapping her arms around your neck.

“How are you so calm?” you ask her as she kisses your cheek. Glancing over her face, it becomes obvious how stupid of a question that actually was. From a distance Octavia seemed collected and controlled, but once up close, you can see the truth of it.

The darkened, bruising rings under her eyes.

The puffiness around her face.

The exhaustion and fatigue in her shoulders.

She’s falling apart.

“I’m not,” she answers you before you can even correct yourself. “This is hard as fuck on me.” And now you feel like an ass. “This is the second fucking time I’ve been in this hospital to find Clarke dying.” She’s losing it.. Here… and now… “And you’re wondering how I’m calm?”

“Octavia,” you begin, pulling her by her waist closer to you. “I didn’t mean that… I’m sorry.” She’s refusing to look at you and at that moment, when her brother walks through the door, you’ve never been so thankful to see Bellamy, exhaling deeply when she jumps from your lap to greet him, throwing her arms around his shoulders.

He hugs her tightly, asking a few questions that you don’t bother trying to answer. Instead, you take this opportunity to flee, slipping through the door behind them almost unnoticed. If not for the millisecond of eye contact that you shared with Octavia, you would have believed yourself to be in the clear.

Pacing the halls, your mind begins to wander as you listen to the sounds emanating from the other rooms. Some were similar to the one that you just sat in for the past 12 hours with the beeps and the sounds of compression from breathing machines. And then some were totally different, filled with life and excitement. Catching yourself at the end of a hallway, you turn quickly to find your sister parked on a small bench next to a medicine cart, staring into a room on your right. With her elbows on her knees, she watches with shuffling eyes as the inhabitants play a game of monopoly together, unphased by the awkward lingering of Lexa just feet from their threshold.

“He’s dying,” she says as you join her, taking a seat in the small spot next to her, occupying a similar
posture with elbows and knees and head slouched under shoulders. Glancing up, you catch sight of a little blonde boy, no older than 10 years old, who is standing on the bed in victory, waving the colorful dollar bills at an older boy who looks like a darker haired version of the patient in the gown. “The parents know, but they haven’t told him yet,” she adds, reaching her hands up to rub her eyes.

“How long have you been here?” you can’t help but ask, turning your attention away from the family and to your sister. She shrugs her response, looking back at the family. The glisten in her eyes allow you to see that she’s crying-- as if the streaks down her cheek bones didn’t give that away enough. Without thinking, you reach out to wrap an arm around her shoulder, receiving a shrug in return as she pulls away.

“Can I be honest?” You nod your reply as her head turns to you, her expression void of emotion, staring straight through you as you tremble against her look. “I’m tired of being hugged.” Pursing your lips and nodding, you think that’s the end of it, but it’s not. “And I’m tired of people dancing around emotions with me,” she continues, only pausing to take a breath. “I can take it… I can take this.” You close your mouth, realizing that you’ve been watching her as she speaks as if you had something to say. Honestly, you didn’t. Honestly, you couldn’t. “I’m not weak and I’m not broken.”

Nodding once more, you turn your attention back to the family in the room in front of you, admiring the parents even more when you see the father, a dark haired man whose face is littered with grief, take his wife, a blonde woman, marked with exhaustion and fatigue who was too preoccupied with reading over the paperwork given to her by a nurse to even notice her husband standing before her.

“I know,” you say, voice trembling as your face turns to meet with Lexa’s eyes. “You’re stronger than we ever give you credit for… I just…

“You don’t want to lose me,” she interrupts, speaking the words that you were terrified to say. “I know… but you have to stop.”

You nod, licking your lips as a small “Okay,” escapes with the last bit of air held in your lungs. “Okay,” you repeat, your eyes looking over her deep brown ones, not picking up a bit of emotion inside of them. With one more “okay,” you pat her knee, deciding to take her request to heart as you lift yourself from the bench, leaving your sister alone.

That thought terrifies you more than anything in the world…

But if this is what she needed…

If time alone is what she needed…

Then it’s what you would give to her…

Whether you wanted to or not.

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LEXA

The mother made her way out of the room, pulling the door to and making her way over to the bench before collapsing into it, dropping her papers to the floor. As you bend over to grab them, the words ‘acute lymphocytic leukemia’ stand out in bold letters, screaming out as your hand holds tight to the paper, stretching out to the woman next to you.

“I’m so sorry,” she murmurs, reaching out to take the small stack from you while wiping her eyes with the back of the other fist. She has nothing to apologize for, and yet she’s doing it.
Before you can stop yourself, you’re apologizing to her, offering small and frail ‘no, I’m sorry,’’ as the papers leave your hands. She smiles back turning to face the closed door that her family was hidden behind. “I have no clue what I’m doing…” You don’t know how to respond as silence lingers over you two, draping the conversation in a mild awkwardness. “I mean, everything was fine,” she continues, flipping through the sheets, appearing to be looking for something in particular. “And then it wasn’t.”

Isn’t that the truth?

You glance up from the floor for just long enough to see that she’s looking at a graph of some sort, the page littered with words and numbers-- all too much for you to take it.

“I understand that,” you reply, scratching at the bandage around your palm. “In the blink of an eye,” you add, not wanting to finish that phrase.

In the blink of an eye…

Everything changes…

In the blink of an eye…

You walked out on Clarke…

In the blink of an eye…

She disappeared from your life…

In the blink of an eye…

You found yourself in the hospital waiting to see if she would ever wake up…

In the blink of an eye…

She could be gone…

The woman next to you exhaled slowly as she stood, walking over to the door without any words, leaving you in your own thoughts.

In the blink of an eye…

Lifting yourself in a similar fashion, you pushed away from the bench, continuing down the hallway towards Clarke’s room again. Stopping just 20 feet shy of the door, you stare at the numbers on the wall, wondering how many others sat in this room… cried in this room… found hope in this room… died in this room…

“Going back in?” Bellamy’s voice broke your thought as his body appeared next to you, weighed down by all of the same emotions that your own body filtered through perpetually. He looked thinner, but heavier. He sounded awake, but exhausted. More than anything, the air around him echoed the words that you craved to etch into your skin, painting deep into your life…

‘Love is watching someone die.’

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BELLAMY
“Going back in?” you ask Lexa as you inch up to where she was standing, take-out bag in hand. When you exited the elevator moments before, you caught a glimpse of your friend, wearing the same clothes that she arrived in, looking exactly the same as the last time you saw her, only more exhausted. Her hair was pulled back and her shoulders were slouching as you stepped up beside her, speaking the words and receiving no reply. She just stared at the window in front of you two, blinds pulled shut so the inside was a mystery, but honestly, you both knew it-- nothing had changed.

“I don’t know if I can,” she said as the air escaped her lungs, her knees buckling slightly beside you. “I don’t know if I can.” She repeated the words again as if there was something she wanted to add to it, but she couldn’t.

Taking her hand in your free one, you trace circles on her thumb, feeling the warmth radiate from her palms. “It doesn’t matter if you can or not,” you say, pointing your head down to face her. She looked back up at you, those small brown eyes meeting yours as tears began to swell up again, forcing your own eyes to produce ones in return. “It doesn’t matter if we’re strong enough or not…” We need to be there. She deserves that.” For at least the 100th time in the past 5 or so months, you’ve told Lexa what Clarke did and didn’t deserve and for at least the 100th time in the past 5 or so months, you’ve reminded yourself that Clarke deserved a better you. Closing your mouth tightly and biting down on your bottom lip, you turn back towards the room, beginning to walk without releasing Lexa’s hand.

Much to your surprise, she follows without resistance, allowing you to lead her into the room. Once inside, however, she took her own path, taking a seat next to the bed and grabbing hold of your roommate’s hand, leaving you standing in the entrance way. Lincoln stood, taking the bag from you and patting your shoulder, leaving you empty handed in the room that you dreaded most of all.

There was nothing else that you could really think about or say. As you stood in the white room in silence with only the sounds of your friends’ staggered breathing and Clarke’s life support to accompany you, the anxiety came crashing down, forcing you to sit in the seat that Lincoln vacated to set up the food containers on the table. Without any prompting, Octavia made her way over to you, grabbing your hand and pulling it to her chest, covering her heart as she forced your head up with the over hand, making you look her in the eyes.

“Breathe like me,” she orders you softly as your eyes shift around. She always knew when things like this were happening, even before you did. You’re unable to even catch a breath as you gasp like a fish on land, but she’s not settling for that. “Bellamy. Look at me.” Your eyes move back to hers. “This is temporary. Remember 5-4-3-2-1…” You breathe in once, exhaling slowly, opening your mouth but no words come. “Come on Bell,” she demands, pushing her hand over your chest. You can feel her heartbeat and hear her breathing, knowing that you’re supposed to be centering yours with hers, but nothing’s happening. “Come on… 5 things you see…”

“You,” you exhale, beginning the process that your therapist taught the two of you when coping with anxiety attacks. “Food,” Number 2. Octavia snorts a small laugh, nodding and offering you a ‘good’ before pushing you forward to name three more things that you see. “Lincoln… Clarke… Lexa…” you rattle off quickly, not feeling any better.

“Okay… 4 things,” Octavia pushes forward, grasping your button down shirt in her fist. “Come on Bell… just 4 things…”

4 things you can touch… “You…” you begin before she cuts you short.

“No sir… You’ve already named me…”
Damn. She’s good at this. Just breathe… 4 things you can touch. “Your shirt,” you say as you try to wrap your fingers around her v-neck. Easier said than done when you can barely feel your fingers moving. “The chair,” you free hand reaches down, stroking the soft chair that your body is resting on. This is good. You’re moving. You’re barely breathing, but you’re moving. “The floor,” you voice shudders as you tap your foot on the solid tile below you. “myself,” your final answer comes easily as you reach up and poke a finger at your chest. With each word, the breath is coming easier, but it’s still not there. You’re still breathing through a straw—or so it feels like.

Your sister smiles, nodding gently as she continues, “3 things you can hear big brother.”

“Beep,” is all you can get out as you try to exhale the stagnant air in your lungs. “Breathing.” You inhale again, this time a little deeper. “Footsteps.”

“Excellent. We’re almost done. Okay?” Octavia’s soft words resound as your shoulders begin to drop, relaxing a little more. Your thoughts are becoming a little clearer and that’s when you notice Lexa, still sitting in the chair next to Clarke, head down on the bed. How can you even begin to experience panic when she’s so close to the one she loves and can do nothing to stop it. “Bellamy,” your sister’s voice repeats your name. “Come on… 2 smells.”

“Clean”

“Not a smell,” she interrupts, moving her hand from your chest to your shoulder. “What do you smell?”

“Coconuts,” you say, describing your sister’s shampoo. She smiles slightly as you continue, “Sushi.”

“Alright… Last one. One taste…”

Breathe in. “Blood.” Breathe out. Just as you say this, you realize that you’ve been biting down on the inside of your cheek, breaking skin and filling the side of your mouth with the blood that you’re tasting. Breathe in. Breathe out.

Grounding has worked, yet again and when Octavia releases you, the darkness and the heat that had begun to overcome you from the outskirts of the room had fled, leaving nothing but your exhausted self to fall into your sister’s grasp. Lincoln still stood behind her, not wanting to interrupt whatever moment it was that you two were having, but unable to wait any longer, he made his way over to you, placing a hand on your head.

“I’m proud of you,” he says with a small smile in your direction. As you lift your head and raise your eyebrows at him, Octavia’s eyes meet yours. “She’s told me everything,” he explains, kissing the top of your sister’s head.

Of course she did.

And of course nothing changed between you and your old work friend…

Because why would it? Just because you had baggage doesn’t mean that you can’t have friends…

And this realization is becoming clearer with each person that you welcome into your world.

---

**BELLAMY**

The next four days were probably the hardest that you’ve seen in years. Every time that you entered
the room, you found Lexa, steadfast and waiting. In fact, by day three or four, you realized that she hadn’t ever left, still sporting her destroyed skinny jeans and black v-neck t-shirt as well as yesterday’s exhaustion. Before day 5 even begins… before you even leave your apartment, you know what you’re going to be welcomed into and you remember to grab her a luggage pack with some necessities in that you took from the drawer that she never moved from your place.

And then it hits you—she never came to get her stuff… and Clarke never moved it… Neither of them planned on their separation being permanent, whether they knew it or not…

“You should really go home and get some sleep,” you tell her, tossing her a bottle of water as you enter, laying the bag down next to the door. After having gone home and showered yourself, you felt completely refreshed and maybe even optimistic (just maybe…), but Lexa seemed to think otherwise.

Shaking her head, she uncapped the water, thanking you for it as she took a swig. “I need to be here when she wakes up.” You begin to speak, opening your mouth to let the words ‘what if she doesn’t,’ but you stop yourself, realizing the gravity of those words.

Clarke not waking up means her losing Clarke.

Clarke not waking up means you losing Clarke.

Clarke not waking up means the end of everything for your family.

Instead, you nod, thinking of the other options. Home was incredibly far away-- you knew this. The 56 minute drive (more like 75 minutes if you drove like Lexa did) meant that if anything did happen, for better or for worse, returning to be here for it would take too long… “I got it,” you say, reaching your hands into your back pocket, withdrawing your wallet and pulling your credit card from it. “Go get a hotel room across the street.” Just a few hundred feet from the entrance of St. Anthony’s was a small, quaint little motel specifically built to house the visitors of patients. You had passed it thousands of times to and from work and never really thought anything about it until now. Tossing Lexa your card, you smile at her again, hoping to convince her of your plan, but when she tosses your card back, it’s obvious that it’s not working.

“Hell no dude,” she argues as you make your way to her, pulling up a chair beside hers. The hum of Clarke’s machines grew louder as you came closer, reminding you again of why you’re here, causing your heart to break again. “I’ll just stay here… for real.”

Shaking your head, you try not to glance over at Clarke, trying to steady your hand as you offer your card again. “Just go. Take a shower. Sleep in a bed. Then come back. I’ll call you if anything changes.”

Taking your card from you, she glances you over once more before pushing it back into your hand, shaking her head angrily. “Look…. I can’t…”

“It’s nothing,” you argue again, refusing to back down. Your friend looks like death. Her eyes are puffy and sunken at the same time. She looks as if she hasn’t slept in days and you know for a fact that what little sleep she has gotten has been filled with night terrors and tremors that have shaken her awake. She’s barely eaten anything short of whatever Lincoln and you have brought her in the form of Asian take-out and cheap sushi and, as far as you know, she hasn’t showered in days. “Lexa, it’ll be okay… I’ll call you if…”

“Just stop,” her voice interrupts you as she turns in her seat to face you, crossing one leg over the other. “I left her once… I walked away and now we’re here…” Her voice trembles as she bites on her lip, eyes shifting between yours. “I can’t do that again.” Inhaling deeply and exhaling slowly, she
glances down at her hands, picking at the skin around her fingernails as she’s done for the last 5 days. “I can’t be responsible for what happens next…”

And now you get why she’s so hesitant…

She blames herself…

“Look,” you begin, placing a light hand on hers. “I get it… I do, but you can’t hold yourself accountable for everything…”

“Says you,” she smarts back, pulling her hand from yours. “I just can’t miss it…”

Lifting a hand to rub your eyes, you say the only thing that you can think of to help the moment, even though you know that you can’t promise what you’re saying. “You won’t.”

Glancing back over at you, she takes the card from your hand, holding out a pinky to you and glaring you down. “Promise me you’ll call,” she begs, poking the pinky closer to you. Without hesitation, you take it, kissing your pointed thumb as she does the same, reminding you that she can cut off your pinky if you lie to her. Laughing, you nod against her as she makes her way towards the door.

“Hey Commander,” you ask before she leaves, making her turn quickly on her heels towards you. “Get two… We have a lot of friends.”

She smiles, returning to space next to Clarke, kissing her forehead with a small exhale before walking over to you, kissing your cheek and returning to the door, exiting into the hospital and leaving you with your roommate.

“Alright Clarke,” you speak to your unresponsive roommate, skipping chairs to take the one that Lexa just left. “Don’t make me a liar… Please come back to us…”

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TRIS

You never had to carry a drunk Lexa into the house before, but if you had, it would be similar to what was happening right now. Two days after your brother and sister essentially moved into this hotel across the street from St. Anthony’s, you finally gathered the courage to join them for the weekend.

And honestly, that’s the entire reason why you hadn’t come yet. Clarke had been in a coma for 7 days now and you have spent the last 7 days trying to justify why something like this would happen… how something like this could happen-- especially to Clarke. Honestly, she was one of the few people who you actually enjoyed… in fact, all of the people in these two hotel rooms and that hospital room were the only people you honestly enjoyed… them and Roma of course, but she was a different story…

She was special… She was yours… but your personal affairs were unimportant at the moment. What was important was getting your overly-exhausted sister to bed. Essentially dragging the stumbling Lexa up the flight of stairs and into room number 24, you walk her to the bed where she collapses, basically asleep before she even touches the pillow. As you begin to untie her shoes, she mumbles something to you that you can’t understand, but you manage to catch the words “Best sister in the world,” and to you, that’s totally fine. That’s enough.

“Go to sleep,” you order your older sister, throwing a blanket over her before realizing that she was
already there before you even said it. Flipping the light switch on your way into the living area, you collapse onto the couch yourself, suddenly exhausted at your endeavor. In spite of your brother and Bellamy’s best attempts, Lexa was still spending too much time at the hospital simply sitting next to Clarke. When she wasn’t sitting, she was reading books that she had ordered about hospital patients in comas and taking notes. Already filling two composition books with information, your sister had begun talking in her sleep, explaining to you the prognosis and diagnosis of different types of comas. Sighing deeply, you listen as she breathes lightly, not talking tonight but instead just allowing sleep to overtake her.

You’re not sure when you fell asleep, but waking up to your brother attempting to break through the chain-latched hotel room was enough to wake you violently, and enough to prompt Lexa’s night terrors to begin again.

“Fucking hell Lincoln!” you shout at him before hushing your own words, unlocking the door and pulling him in quickly, shutting it behind him.

“Who the fuck locks the damn chain?” your brother defends himself as he wraps the chord of his earphones around his fingers.

Laughing slightly, you notice the running clothes and ipod, giving away Lincoln’s stress levels. He only ran when stressed… Cardio was his least favorite exercise. “How was the run? You ask, making your way to the refrigerator to grab him a bottle of water. He took it graciously, taking a giant swig that killed at least half of it before taking a seat where you were just napping.

“Not long enough,” he replies, licking his lips. “How’s she doing?” He nudges his head in the direction of your sleeping sister who has now since settled back into sleep.

“Exhausted.”

He nods, looking around before speaking again. “She’s going to burn out if she doesn’t slow down…” The worry is apparent in his voice as he turns to face the darkness that Lexa was engulfed with, obviously listening to her tremored breathing.

You simply nod, knowing it to be true. When your phone beeps, you glance down at the name across your screen, smiling at the small preview of the text before you choke it back, noticing Lincoln’s smile in your direction.

Roma(1:44AM): Still awake? Up for a run?

“I’m going to go for a run,” you tell Lincoln, grabbing his earphones that he was preoccupied wrapping around his fingers over and over again before heading towards the door. He simply stared at you, shrugging it off before offering a slight ‘okay, have fun.’

If only he knew…

If only you could tell him…

If only you could tell him about the only reason why you were still standing at this moment…

If only it was appropriate to tell him about the girl that you had fallen in love with…

Soon…

But not yet…
You honestly enjoyed the alone time in this room, but something about today was unsettling. 8 days into Clarke’s coma and you found yourself slightly stir crazy, pacing the room, cleaning small messes, refolding the blankets around the chairs… anything to stay busy.

“You know I fucking hate you right now, right?” you ask Clarke into the silence of the room as you fold the final blanket. “I mean, if it’s not one thing, it’s another with you Clarke Griffin… But I’d kill to have you back now.” The silence that greeted you was unwelcoming and disconcerting, so when Lexa enters the room, you’re thrilled with the company—anything to distract you.

But when conversation turns to Clarke, the worry returns.

“What was Finn like?” Lexa asks, moving her pawn two spots across the chess board. You sit quietly for a moment as you ponder your next words.

“Octavia Blake, you piece of shit,” the man’s voice echoes as he tosses a grease covered rag over to you. “You’ve gotta learn to take better care of this damn bike of yours.”

Tossing the rag back, you can’t help but glare at Finn as he jokes with you, not picking up on the fact that you’re not playing back.

In fact, Finn didn’t pick up on a lot of things when it came to you…

He didn’t realize that you knew about his and Clarke’s arguments…

He didn’t catch on that when you spoke to him, you avoided eye contact more times than not…

He never even noticed when the shift occurred, which was when he first told Clarke that his job was taking up too much time in their relationship—when the changes first began.

Actually, Finn didn’t catch on to a lot of things period…

Clarke’s eating habits…

Clarke’s sudden interest in working out…

Clarke’s unexpected illnesses…

Honestly, the dark haired man in front of you was…

“Oblivious,” you reply to Lexa’s question after a few moments of thought. “He was oblivious and he was destructive.” The words seem to resound with Lexa as her questions cease with that, leaving you in a void for conversation as you move a knight across to her side of the board. “Look,” you glance up at her, catching eye contact with your friend who has completely disregarded the board to focus on you now. With her brown hair pulled back into a tight pony-tail, you can see her eyes clearly, noticing the amount of focus she has on you, hanging on every word that you’re speaking. “I don’t know why you did it… why you left…” Her eyes drop back to the board as she moves a piece to avoid looking at you. “But I don’t think it matters anymore.” And her eyes are back up to yours. A chill runs through you as she stares straight into you, focusing more now than ever. “I mean, you’re
here now… even though you don’t have to be and that speaks mountains to me.” A small smile cracks across her face when you look away to move your piece, allowing her to move again before you start to speak. “But look, when she wakes up and sees you, she needs to know that you’re here to stay…” you pause for a second, but only long enough to catch your breath and Lexa realizes this when she attempts to speak but you don’t allow it. “Because if you’re here to stay, that means that you’re one of us… and that means never letting go…”

Without any words, Lexa simply nods, turning herself out of her chair and walking over to where Clarke was laying, leaning in to kiss her lips softly, cupping her cheek as she did. With tears streaming down her face, she sat down in the chair next to the bed, grasping the hand of your unconscious friend. You tried to look away and give her a moment alone, but something about the exchange left you unable to turn, so instead you watch along as Lexa whispers to Clarke, holding her hands tightly. “I’m here now,” she says, lifting Clarke’s hand to her lips. “Now come back to me…”

For a moment, it almost felt like Clarke was going to reply, but that would have been too simple…

And nothing was that simple…
As promised, Chapter 25: the chapter where Octavia's broodiness shows, Tris reveals she isn't pregnant, Lexa finally falls apart, Bellamy makes us all sad as fuck, and Abby Griffin finally shows her beautiful fucking face...

The playlist was updated! there's now 46 songs on it that have helped me read, write, and edit this work over and over again! Hope you like it as much as I do! Check it: http://8tracks.com/roliver4/learning-to-breathe-by-roliver4

Guys, I personally reply to every comment and message that I get and LOVE LOVE LOVE hearing your feedback so hit me up on here or on tumblr and let's chat about what you're feeling.. follow me and let's be best friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

i'm not done yet.

OCTAVIA

It wasn’t fair to blame Clarke, you knew this, but 11 days into her coma, your brother is looking worse than ever. More times than not, you find him wandering the halls of the hotel or pacing though the hospital’s corridors, lips attached to a coffee cup or a cigarette between his fingers. In fact, since he met Clarke just about two years before, introducing you at brunch at his apartment right before she moved in, his happiness has hinged on her well-being. You knew that Bellamy was actually to blame for this-- if it wasn’t Clarke, it would have been someone else-- It was you often… your mother before… but it was far too easy to blame the girl before you in a coma. She couldn’t defend herself when you told her that she should have never stepped into your brother’s life. She couldn’t argue when you told her that she was a piece of shit for doing this to Bellamy. Most of all, she couldn’t tell you that you were actually angry at her because you felt useless. She couldn’t tell you to “Shut the fuck up” and “Girl the hell up” in a typical Clarke Griffin fashion…

More than being angry at Clarke and more than being angry at Bellamy and more than being angry at the drunk driver who walked out of the hospital 10 days earlier with just a broken wrist and a mild concussion after taking your friend’s life from her lungs and beat from her heart, you were angry at yourself.

You left that diner knowing that Clarke Griffin was waiting for your reply. You left that diner knowing that Clarke Griffin was trying. You left that diner knowing that she was going to be coming back, but you still left… and for that, you blamed yourself… You hated yourself.

You’re angry at Bellamy who allowed himself to feel so deeply and for actually giving a damn about people.

You’re angry at Clarke who made everyone fall in love with her and for not waking up by now.

You’re angry at Rickard Terry who drove the truck that ran through your friend and for not sustaining at least as bad of injuries as Clarke.
You’re angry at yourself… because you were too caught up in yourself to even tell your friend that you loved her before leaving the diner.

You’re angry at your mother and your father and everyone who has ever hurt you or damaged you or injured you or walked out on you…

Most of all… you’re just angry.

You are angry as fuck and nothing that you can do or say is going to change that.

11 days into Clarke’s coma and all you can think about as you sit beside your best friend’s lifeless body that’s held together with gauze and respirators is how angry you are.

11 days into Clarke’s coma and all you can think about as the number of hotel rooms rented by your motley crew of a family has grown from a simple 2 to 4, all connected with doors that are rarely closed as food and praise are passed between them and tears and words of affirmation are delivered is how angry you are.

Fuck… Even when Lincoln wraps his arms around you and kisses your neck from behind, all you can think about is how angry you are and it’s beginning to show. The tension in your shoulders from being so tightly wound is unrelenting. The pain in your jaw from grinding your teeth is making it impossible to chew. The headaches that you have from pressure are beginning to bleed into your neck and back and all you can think about is how angry you are.

“Octavia, Your go,” Murphy laughs as he flicks a couple of water drops on you from the glass between his knees. You glance up at the group around you, 6 of your closest friends, and suddenly you feel like a stranger. “Are you okay?” he asks you, cocking his head to the side a big as concern spreads across his clean shaven face.

“Yeah kid, you don’t look well,” Monty echoes the concerns as everyone joins in, looking over to you.

“I’m fine,” you say, returning to your cards. “I’m just…”

Mad… Annoyed… Inflamed

Angry… Outraged… Fuming

In denial… Irritated… Storming

Frenzied… Sore… Resentful

Unsound… Exasperated… Bitter

Unstable… Irascible … Indignant

There’s a million and one words that you could use to finish that phrase, but instead you just pause, looking up at your friends. Their faces mirror yours as you notice all of the same expressions written in their eyes.

11 days into Clarke’s coma and in the middle of a game of Uno, you come to realize that this isn’t about you…

This has never been about you…

11 days into Clarke’s coma and you’re standing on the ledges that you have made, finding that
steady hand that you’ve been needing…

The hand that’s always been reaching out for you…

11 days into Clarke’s coma and you realize…

you all need her back…

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TRIS

Roma(10:45AM): Are you sure this is the best time

Tris (10:52AM): I can’t not tell them anymore…

Roma(10:55AM): I don’t want you to feel pressured. I’m fine. We’re fine.

You smile down at your phone from the seat across from your brother in the small diner, waiting on Lexa to get here from the hospital where she was checking in with the doctors about Clarke who was still in a coma after 13 days. The good news was that your sister had finally returned to work. The bad news was that now, instead of being swamped with work, she was swamped with driving back and forth from work to the hospital to the hotel to work to the hospital… it was a never ending cycle with her and she was beginning to wear thin again, slowly but surely closing off to the world outside of Clarke and the sounds of the machinery keeping life in her body.

“What do you got for me?” You brother asks, reaching for your phone as you panic, pulling it back too quickly and dropping it on the booth as you do. “For fuck’s sake Tris… I was just kidding,” he laughs from the corner of his mouth, tossing his hands up in surrender. “You act like you have porn saved on there or something… shit.”

If only Lincoln knew the secrets that this phone held…

“I can’t tell you… not till Lexa gets here.”

And just as if summoned, your sister comes in like a hurricane, pushing into the booth beside you and sliding your body over, throwing a jacket across the table to the empty spot between Lincoln and the wall. “I’m so sorry,” she apologizes multiple times, wrapping her arms around you and embracing you in a hug. “The doctor started talking about papers that needed to be signed and right to life laws and I didn’t even know that Clarke signed all decisions over to me and now Abby is coming in town and….”

“Woah…. Chill out there Lex… You’re fine,” Lincoln says with a small chuckle, placing his hands on top of your sister’s to still them. “We haven’t been here long...”

“I know,” she begins, racing through the thoughts again. “I just wanted to make sure that you knew that I wasn’t blowing you off or anything like that. It was a really…”

“Alexandria McKenna Woods… Shut up…” you almost shout, putting a hand over your sister’s mouth. She and Lincoln both look amazed that you pulled out your sister’s entire name, but if you don’t begin speaking soon, you never will. “I need you to listen to me…” As you remove your hand from in front of her face, Lexa smiles at you, turning to face you a little bit. Lincoln does the same, a smile written across his face as well. “Something has happened…”

“Oh god… you’re pregnant…” Lincoln sighs, interrupting you as his head drops into his hands. For
a moment you chuckle slightly, thinking he’s kidding, but when you don’t deny it, both him and Lexa stare at you, faces stern and serious.

With your smile dropping, your eyes widen and you mouth opens as the air escapes your lungs. “No… no no no,” you plead, biting back the laughter that’s begging to escape. “I’m gay.”

Lincoln just stares at you for a moment as Lexa begins laughing, placing her head on the table and holding her hands over her pony tail, still shivering with laughter. Still continuing to stare at you, Lincoln leans to the left, pulling his wallet from his back pocket and withdrawing a twenty dollar bill, handing it to your sister who has now outstretched her hand, still with her head down laughing.

“I told you,” she manages to let out as her she lifts a tear screaked, red face, struggling to take in enough air to stop laughing.

“Wait… what?” you ask before it hits you.

These fuckers… your siblings… have been taking wagers on your sexuality…

What assholes…

“I’m… sorry…”Lexa gasps between breaths, putting a light hand on your knee. She breathes out deeply once more, stilling herself before she looks at Lincoln’s still sullen face, cracking up again.

“We’ve had this bet going for almost ten years,” Lincoln explains, glaring over at your sister as she attempts to silence her laughs again.

“Ten years?!” What on earth could you have done at 7 years old that would have led them to bet on your sexual preference?

“Yup and I was right… I knew it,” Lexa replies, pointing to Lincoln. “And he was wrong.”

Well, that could have gone worse, you suppose.

Not that it would have… with your progressive feminist of a brother and flaming lesbian of a sister…

But, at least it’s done and now you can concentrate on other things…

Like being there for your family…

And falling more in love with your girlfriend…

---

LEXA

Lunch with your siblings was exactly what you needed. The laughter, the jokes, the conversation… It almost helped you to forget what was going on in the outside world. It almost helped you forget that you were now solely responsible for decisions on Clarke’s behalf-- even if she never asked you if you wanted to be. It almost helped you forget the words of the Doctor on duty when he explained to you that after 14 days in a coma, the prognosis greatly decreased and that long term affects increase.

Almost…

But not entirely…
And that’s when you found yourself surrounded with WebMD articles, books on neuroscience and about 500 pages worth of composition notebooks on the hospital floor, your study session being serenaded by the clicking and breathing of the respirator and the beeping of the heart monitor behind Clarke.

“By the third day the chance of making a moderate or good recovery is reduced to only 7%,” your voice reads out loud, barely comprehending the words as the flow from the pages into your mouth and out into the world. “And by the 14th day is as low as 2%…” Taking a deep breath, you look over at Clarke who has yet to move from the bed… yet to breathe on her own… yet to do… anything. With tears swelling up, you feel the pressure on your chest beginning to push you backwards onto the floor in an attempt to drown you in the darkness that has begun flooding room 633 of St. Anthony’s hospital. Your baptism is almost complete as you allow yourself to fall backwards, head and back against the cold tile beneath you.

“Get up,” Lincoln’s voice interrupts the floods just as it reaches your ears, nearly overtaking you. He reaches out, pulling you up by your arms and continuing to lift you to your feet. Unable to even touch down, you essentially dangle from your brother’s grasp as he adjusts to hold you under your arms. “Lexa, stand up.”

But you can’t.

Your feet are touching, but the bones in your legs have disappeared. The muscles have torn away from their attachments and instead of allowing 6 million years of evolution to keep you standing upright, you flail and flop, falling back to the ground when Lincoln gives up.

With one final inhale, the tears come again, flooding across your face as Lincoln tries to console you in the best way that he knows how. Squatting down, he takes you in his arms, allowing your tears to be absorbed by his grey t-shirt, not darkening because of you.

“Lexa…” he says softly, holding your head close to his shoulder with one hand while the other holds at your back, making sure that you feel close to him. “Lexa, you need to breathe…”

That’s not happening.

“Lexa, breathe…”

You’re trying… you really are… but it’s like something is choking you… It’s like the darkness that has been a flood has now been personified and is wrapping his massive hands around your throat.

“Lexa get it together,” Lincoln argues against your tears, shaking you slightly.

“She’s got one day…” you’re able to complain in one breath, sucking more air in as you finish.

Your brother lets you go for a brief moment before the panic sets in and you start clawing at his shirt, trying to pull him back into you. If he lets go, then you’re going to fall. If he lets go, then you’re going to drown. If he lets go, then you’re going to die.

“Most comas end with eye opening and regaining of consciousness,” He begins reading from another page, looking at you before grabbing another packet from the floor, flipping to a random page. “Two thirds of patients who were unconsciousness for two weeks or less may make a moderate to good recovery… 14 days!” He looks at you again before grabbing your shoulders and pushing you away from him. With outstretched arms planted on your biceps, he looks into your eyes, making sure that you’re looking at him. “She’s got one more day until 14 days… Don’t discount this one more day… Don’t discount what Clarke is capable of…”
Nodding, you try to understand what he’s saying, but it’s so much easier to give up.

It’s so much easier to think that everything is going to fail.

But Clarke deserves more than that.

Clarke deserves your faith and your trust.

And although it’s not easy, that’s what she’s going to get from you.

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BELLAMY

With the same song on repeat for the past three days, you sit in the hotel room, watching the lights dance off of the walls in the room next door to yours through the connecting door that you haven’t seen closed since your family essentially moved into this room. 14 days ago, when you arrived at St. Anthony’s hospital at 4:54 AM, you never thought that you’d be here now, whispering the lyrics as they exited your phone’s headphones into your ears for the 86th time today. 14 days ago, when you arrived at St. Anthony’s hospital at 4:54 AM, you never thought that you’d be sitting in this chair for the sixth hour in a row, too overwhelmed by the fact that you are useless in the situation. 14 days ago, when you arrived at St. Anthony’s hospital at 4:54 AM, you never thought that you’d be watching your best friend as she disappears. 14 days ago…

14 motherfucking days…

When the song restarts, your voice stops, leaving the silence in the room broken only by the static sound coming from your headphones.

“I’ve got a lot of loose ends. I’ve done some damage. I’ve cut the rope so it frayed. I’ve got a lot of good friends keeping me distracted, keeping my sanity safe.”

If there was ever a more true song lyric to sum up your life, you haven’t heard it yet. If nothing else, the path that you can see between the 4 hotel rooms occupied by your family that is littered with clothes, take out cartons, and pizza cartons fully solidifies this idea. Just as your eyes begin to burn with the unshed tears, Maya passes through two doors away, stopping in the threshold to give you a thumbs up which you return. Pursing her lips, she nods, understanding that you need your space—she’s always good at that. Using the same thumb and the attached pinky, she lifts her hand to the side of her head, mouthing a ‘call me’ before walking through to grab her scrubs and exiting in the same direction that she came with a wave.

“Here, I stand on the edge of the ledges I’ve made, looking for a steady hand. Here, I stand in the land of the rocks in the valley, trying to be a better man.”

This is what interaction was like today. 14 days into Clarke’s coma and everyone was beginning to become exhausted, but no one was giving up… not anymore. After numerous conversations, you all decided that you were seeing this through to the end… no matter what that meant. You were all standing on that ledge, waiting for something to change… waiting for something to happen.

“And I drink a little too much. It makes me nervous. I’ve got my grandfather's blood. And I take a little too much without giving back. If blessed are the meek then I'm cursed.”

Taking in another breath, you swipe open a text message in your phone, clicking on the first name that pops up when you type ‘C’.
Bellamy (4:39PM): Where are you?

Bellamy (4:39PM): When are you coming home?

Bellamy (4:40PM): It’s getting really hard to wait on you.

Bellamy (4:40PM): we don’t mind waiting… it’s not the waiting that’s hard.

Bellamy (4:41PM): it’s the uncertainty.

Bellamy (4:41PM): I don’t blame you for leaving anymore

Bellamy (4:42PM): I would have left too if I needed to

Bellamy (4:42PM): I’m sorry

Bellamy (4:42PM): I never told you that

Bellamy (4:44PM): I’m sorry for everything. I’m sorry for pushing you. I’m sorry for not communicating. I’m sorry for questioning you. I’m sorry for not letting you try to heal on your own. I’m sorry for that time I called you a fuck up after I picked you up from therapy a year and 3 months ago. I’m sorry for everything Clarke… literally everything…

Bellamy (4:45PM): just come home and we can make everything better than it ever was…

Bellamy (4:45PM): We can make this family better than it’s ever been

Bellamy (4:48PM): We can start going on vacations again and start traveling the world like you always talked about and you start painting again and I can start playing soccer again and Lexa can move her stuff in and we can even move if we need to… we can all go in together and buy a huge house and move the whole family in like you joked when you, Lexa, Lincoln and I drove past that mansion sized house on Peggy Lou Drive and we can decorate each room in animal print if that’s what you want

Bellamy (4:49PM): or we can go on with life like nothing happened. It’s totally up to you.

“I want to learn how to love- Not just the feeling… bear all the consequences. And I want to learn how to love and give it all back and be forgiven for all I've done.”

With tears streaming down your face, you inhale air, sucking it down in an attempt to silence the screaming inside of you as your fingers shake, hovering just over the keyboard on your phone.

“Here, I stand on the edge of the ledges I've made, looking for a steady hand. Here, I stand in the land of the rocks in the valley, trying to be a better man for you.”

Bellamy (4:53PM): Just wake up.

---

OCTAVIA

The sign outside of room 633 stares at you, taunting you with its red letters…

Red…
That’s a terrible choice of lettering in this hospital.

Who the fuck decided on red…

As you take a step towards the door, a rhythmic clicking sound meets your ears just before you round the corner to find Lexa curled up, knees to her chest as she rocks back and forth. Without thinking, you dive to the floor wrapping your arms around your friend as she shakes, trying to still the movement inside of her.

“14… 14 days,” she stumbles through her gasping for air. Lexa has yet to have cried in front of the group. For 14 days, you’ve only seen the remnants of tears as she brushes her wrist over her face, wiping them away with most emotions. For 14 days, you’ve only heard the muffled sounds of crying through closed doors. For 14 days, she’s remained stronger than you thought she would, but now, right before you, she was crumbling and all you could do was pull her head closer to your chest, breathing in deeply as you shushed her, rocking with her.

As the time passed, you continued to hold Lexa, knowing that nothing else would do any better. Glancing around you, your eyes met with multiple red circles on papers that were scribbled across, ruined for anyone else who wanted to read them. One thing that every article had in common though was the red circle around a set number of days… 14 days…

“14 days is also dependent on will,” a voice that you’ve only heard in cynical voicemails interrupts you and Lexa’s moment, jarring you to your feet, almost dragging Lexa with you… Almost…

Instead, she stays on the floor, surrounded by papers as her eyes follow the same path as yours to the thin, exhausted seeming woman in the doorway. She enters, walking over to Clarke with her teeth gritted shut, jaw protruding from her thin, defined face.

She had the same nose as Clarke, and shared many similar features, especially while fighting back tears-- the way that her eye twitched slightly… the way that she blinked more than necessary-- the way that her shoulders rose dramatically with each effort to keep from crying-- but overall, she looked nothing like Clarke, just a testament to Clarke’s statement that she was her father’s daughter.

“You’re a fighter aren’t you?” the woman asked, putting a hand on Clarke’s before turning to look at you and Lexa. She smiled, turning her attention to the charts attached to bed for just a moment. Scanning them quickly, she nodded, facial expression dropping even more.

“Are you Octavia?” She asked you, reaching out a slim hand with long fingers towards you. You simply nod, taking them as Lexa stands beside you. “And you’re Lexa then?” she looks over to your friend who is still trying to choke down air as she nods, offering her own hand before the woman could. The older lady smiles, taking her hand and shaking it slightly before pulling Lexa into her grasp. “I’ve heard such great things about you… Thank you for loving my daughter…”

Wait…

Wait…

Clarke’s mother is an asshole…

This woman couldn’t be…

“Mrs. Griffin!” Raven’s voice resounds loudly as she tosses her backpack to the floor, sprinting into the room and wrapping her arms around the woman who released Lexa’s hand just in time. “It’s so
“You too Raven…” Abby begins, running a hand over the top of Raven’s head. She releases Raven, hands holding on to her arms as she looks her over one. “Even if you’re a little worse for wear. I heard about your incident. I’m so sorry…” Raven shrugs slightly, obviously uncomfortable with the interaction that brought her disability to light, but equally understanding of the fact that Abby Griffin has never been one for interaction. “Have you gotten to see her yet?” Abby asks, motioning over to Clarke and Raven shakes her head, swallowing down whatever lump has formed in her chest.

How are they both so calm about this situation when Lexa is falling apart and you’re slowly chipping away?

What the fuck is even happening anymore?

---

LEXA

Something about the silence of Clarke’s hospital room around you was actually soothing. After having your breakdown in front of Octavia earlier, you really just craved solitude…

Well actually, you craved Clarke, but Clarke and solitude had become synonymous these days…

And for a couple of hours, you were comfortable…

As comfortable as you could be at least…

That was until the sound of footsteps approaching broke all focus and the body entering the room and speaking caused you to snap closed the copy of the neuroscience text book that you were attempting to read, covering it quickly with other papers.

“Working hard?” Abby Griffin asked, causing you to panic to cover your trail, hiding all notes on car crash victims and survivors under a pile of blank papers. When you look up, you’re met with large, almond eyes, swollen with unshed tears. “Don’t hide it,” she says, making her way over to you with her long, thin legs covered in black, pinstriped slacks, topped with a fitted black button-down. Taking a seat next to you, she slid the heels off of her feet, standing them up next to her as she crossed her legs, gathering your papers and stacking them neatly by tapping them on the book twice before starting to skim through them.

"This is all dependent on brain chemistry, impact, and a thousand other influences… You know that right?” she asks you as she skims the papers with an outstretched thumb, tracing the words across the page. Her mannerisms in this moment remind you a lot of Clarke, making you understand where she gets the way that she tucks her tongue out of the corner of her mouth when she reads, tapping her fingers on the back of the book. You nod slightly at her after a couple of seconds of watching her, your heart missing Clarke’s presence even more. "I’m talking, velocity, brain development, diet, oxygen levels, blood glucose, type of vehicle, environmental conditions, response time… We’re looking at millions of variables…And you know personal will has been suspected to have a lot to do with it right?” Clarke’s mother looks up at you from the stack of papers, placing them down next to you and putting a hand on your knee. "People who have a reason to wake up do so more often."

Something in you wants to call bullshit on her, but when she stands and walks over to Clarke, leaning in to kiss her forehead and pat her hair while whispering something into her ear, you can’t. Something in you wants to scream at the woman who Clarke basically blamed for her self-image issues. Something in you wants to shout at the woman who pushed her daughter away and refused to
acknowledge her victories. Something in you wants to yell at the woman who is here now, acting like she’s always been a part of Clarke’s life…

But the other part of you just wants to hug her, understanding that at least some part of her is Clarke—the good in her is Clarke…

Instead, when the tears begin to roll down her face and her body begins to tremble, you stand, beginning your migration out of the room to give her a moment with her essentially lifeless daughter. Reaching the threshold, you place a hand on the frame just long enough to hear Abby’s voice ring out against the machinery.

“Please say,” she requests, not even turning to face you. You turn quickly on your heels, surprised by the plea coming from Mrs. Griffin’s lips. Instead of finding the terrifying, strong willed, stubborn, pushy woman that you believed Abby Griffin to be you see a broken, scared mother grieving over her dying daughter. Instead of the woman who pushed your love into an eating disorder, you see a woman wrecked with grief and guilt. Walking over to the chairs behind her, you take a seat in one, leaving the one directly behind her open for her. “So, Lexa,” she sighs after many moments of silence between you. Taking the seat that you left for her, she turns towards you, wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her button down before turning to face you. “Clarke really loves you.”

You smile as a small chuckle exits the woman’s mouth, a small choke joining it.

You nod again, wondering for a moment if she’s even heard your voice yet or if you’ve just been dodging words since she entered the room earlier this morning.

“I love her,” you finally respond, eyes rising from your lap to meet hers.

Her smile lifts again as a small “good” exits her mouth and her hand finds its way to yours. “I’m going to be present from now on… Is that okay with you?” she asks, catching you off guard.

With no hesitation, you smile, nodding as you respond, “I’d like that.”

If you and your family wasn’t enough reason for Clarke to come back to you, maybe adding her mother to that equation would be.

Maybe…
Here I stand on the edge of the ledges I've made

Chapter Notes

Chapter 26 where Lexa has to make a lot of decisions, we meet Roma, Bellamy throws up everywhere, everyone gets extremely angsty, Costia begins to fuck up things and things start to look a little better for a little while

I promised to take care of you and I'm going to do just that. Hang with me as we hash out Clarke's condition in the next chapter.

Also, the playlist was updated again... Check it at: http://8tracks.com/roliver4/learning-to-breathe-by-roliver4/

AND Add me on tumblr so we can be the very best of friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

Let me know what you think.

LEXA

“Miss Woods, we need to begin talking about the options,” the younger resident spoke to you in a voice that sounded like he was begging for your attention. His fingers tapped on the clipboard as your eyes skimmed back and forth between him and Clarke on the bed behind your conversation. From your peripheral, you could see the younger man, no older than yourself, tremble as he spoke about removing Clarke’s feeding tubes and taking her from life-support. 20 days was long enough, according to her paperwork, and by 30, she was to be declared dead…

Why was she so organized?

Why had nursing school made her create a living will?

Why had she put you in charge of these decisions?

Why was Death Cab right when they said ‘Love is watching someone die’?

“Miss Woods?” the young man, Dr. Keigwin, asked of you, drawing your attention back from Clarke’s next to lifeless body.

“Yeah,” was all that you could say, shaking your head as you blinked way your emotions, determined to keep it together, at least now.

Keigwin sighed, folding his papers back over the clipboard and shoving the pen back into his spotless, white coat’s pocket, taking a seat in the chair next to you. “Look,” he began as he wiped his hands on his knees, the clipboard occupying the seat next to him. “I’m not even going to pretend to understand what you’re going through…” You exhale slightly, not feeling like having another pity party conversation full of half-hearted apologies from people who you will never talk to again after Clarke either walks out of this building or…. But you turn towards the man anyway, appreciating his efforts to show concern none the less. He was different, however. Something about him seemed genuine and unjaded and because of this, you wanted to hug him and tell him that the world was
going to eat him alive one day. “But I will tell you this, she’s a really lucky girl. I’ve never seen such devotion and such a great friend group in the hospital every day. So when she does come to, she’s going to feel extremely loved.”

When…

He said when Clarke comes to… not if Clarke comes to…

And without thinking, you toss your arms around the man’s shoulders, catching him off guard as his hands lift into the air, avoiding contact with you as he groans slightly at the lack of comfort in the situation.

“I’m sorry,” you mumble as you release him, tears swelling into your eyes. Attempting to blink them away again, you fail miserably as they outline the sides of your face, falling into your lap. He nods, telling you that it’s okay and asking if you need more time to make a decision. Shaking your head, you know the only option that Clarke would have wanted. Taking the clipboard from the man, you sign the second paper, scribbling your sloppy signature across the line.

Within 1 hour, Clarke’s feeding tube would be disconnected from her chest…

12 hours after that, her I.V.s would be taken out…

Within 24 hours of your pen leaving this paper ventilator would be removed…

And according to everything that you’ve read, within 7 or so days, Clarke would either be hanging on still, pushing to come back to you…

Or she will be gone forever…

Either way, Clarke would have to learn to breathe on her own…

Lifting your pen, you sigh, knowing that there’s no going back now.

The ball’s in her court and as the doctor reaches for the clipboard, you hold on to it a little longer, struggling to let go of the paperwork that you know is deciding her fate.

It’s over…

There’s nothing else you can do…

---

BELLAMY

Sitting on the floor outside of Room 633 with your knees pulled into your chest, cradling a styrofoam cup of lukewarm black coffee between your hands, you can’t even pretend to be apologetic as you watch the custodian empty a trash-bag full of candy wrappers and your vomit from the trashcan across the hallway. What did they expect when they began pulling tubes from Clarke’s chest, mouth, and nose and allowed you to sit there, watching as the life support exited your best friend’s body? As you sprinted out of the room, knocking into two separate nurses who you remember from your time served monitoring security on the I.C.U. floor, your throat heaved violently, forcing anything that it could from your body in an attempt to rid yourself of the dread and anxiety that was flooding your insides.

It worked…
Because now, instead of apprehension and terror…

You felt nothing…

Not the cold air exiting the vent above you, blowing your hair in front of your face…

Not the touch of your sister’s body as she slid down the wall beside you, linking arms with you and laying her face on your shoulder, burying herself into you.

Not Lincoln’s as he sat down on the other side of you, placing a hand on your shoulder before pulling his knees into his chest much like you.

Nothing…

“Is this it?” you ask, looking over to your old work friend, expression unchanging from the blank, bland stare that you’ve held for the past few minutes.

Lincoln’s body shook slightly as he fought back similar emotions to those that you felt before you threw up all feeling, turning his head towards you, offering a look of question, not even knowing how to answer you.

It’s not like you expected an answer.

He wasn’t a doctor… Hell, Abby was and she couldn’t even tell you anything that you hadn’t already read on your phone, scrolling through countless articles while you sat in the hospital room at 3am waiting for your best friend to respond to something… to anything…

As the doctors and nurses left the room, wheeling a cart with a sheet over it, you resisted the urge to dive to your feet and throw your fist out to the eldest man who was the first to enter 633 and begin tugging at the machinery keeping your best friend alive. The feeding tube was gone. The I.V.s were removed. Now all that remained was the ventilator that still held a slight, rhythmic click and groan as air pumped through Clarke’s lungs. Listening to this sound from the hallway, you savored it in your ears for a brief moment, knowing that within the next 12 hours, a switch would be flipped, the tube would be pulled out, and Clarke would be on her own with breathing—whether that meant continuing the constant rise and fall in her chest on her own, or giving in to the pressure of the world.

“I feel like…” Octavia begins, lifting her face from your jacket sleeve just long enough to start speaking before sucking in enough air to shudder from her chest, rattling your whole body as she threw herself back down onto your arm, unable to finish her phrase.

Glancing down at her for a brief second before returning your stare to the white wall directly across from you, you breathe in yourself, sensing a similar tremor in you. Opening your mouth, you allow the first word that crosses your brain to finish her sentence.

“Falling.”

---

RAVEN

As Bellamy bolts from the room, you become suddenly envious of your friend’s weak stomach. If your resolve wasn’t as strong as it was, you wouldn’t have to stay here as you watch the scene before you unfold. A story 26 years in the making and at any moment, right before your eyes, it could end.
As the older doctor with gloved hands pulled the I.V. from Clarke’s arm, placing the syringe on the table, you couldn’t help but watch the two younger doctors. The man with whom you had become acquainted with through the last 6 days while visiting shivered as he watched, holding Clarke’s other arm down ‘just in case’. Supposedly it wasn’t uncommon for coma patients to reach up and hit the doctors as the I.V.s and ventilators were removed… but this fact seemed foreign to you.

6 days… you’ve been here for 6 days and you haven’t seen so much as an eye twitch from Clarke and they’re expecting her to start taking swings at this old man removing a needle from her arm?

As he reaches his hand under the sleeve of her gown to remove the sensor pads from her shoulders and neck, you grit your teeth, reaching for Abby’s hand. She tightens her grip around yours, interlocking her warm fingers between your frigid ones without losing eye contact with procedure on her daughter. Since you and Clarke met, Abby had been your mother, replacing every terrible shit-show of a foster mother that you ever had, offering more support and guided love than any skeezy foster-father that the state had ever offered. Abby, for what it was worth, wasn’t a terrible mother—she wasn’t great, but she wasn’t a monster-- and you had seen enough monsters to know this. With your eyes shifting elsewhere, you caught sight of something new.

Lexa, who was standing next to her brother beside the door held tight to the muscular man’s arm, eyes fixated to the floor just below her. Her chest was rising and falling slowly, but deeply. ‘How the fuck is she so put together?’ you beg yourself, trembling once hard enough for Abby to pull your arm closer. With a pat of her back and a kiss on the side of her head, Lincoln releases his sister’s grip, following a crying Octavia out the door towards where Bellamy turned just minutes before…

Was it minutes?

It felt like hours…

Fuck, it felt like days at this rate…

Unable to control it anymore, you allowed your mind to wander back to Afghanistan…

- “She’s losing a lot of blood,” you heard the medic’s voice say as your partner rolls you onto your side. With each breath that he takes, pain shoots through your spine, but you’re unable to verbalize anything over the screams of agony exiting your throat.

“No shit Jackson,” Miller screams over you, pushing the gauze onto your back, sending another spike into your body. “She was fucking shot in the spine!”

Just when you think that things can’t get any worse, the helicopter takes a bump, shaking the table that you’re on and rattling everything around you. Another cry exits your lungs, beyond your control as you try to stuff it back, knowing that your incessant screaming isn’t helping the doctor work at all.

“There’s nothing that we can do until we get to the hospital,” Jackson explains, handing Miller more gauze and taking the dripping mass from his hands.

“I can’t feel my leg,” you explain in the clearest voice possible, not even knowing if you’re speaking words or just screaming at this point.

“It’s going to be okay, Reyes,” Jackson lies in the best doctor voice that he can muster as he removes his gloves, placing his hands on your face. “I’m going to save you… I promise.”

-
The doctor didn’t break his promise… per say.

He did save you… just not all of you… and as you awoke in the Afghan Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan to a Dr. Tsing attaching another morphine bag to your I.V. drip, it becomes more clear to you exactly how well Jackson kept his promise to you.

“Good morning Lieutenant,” the woman spoke as she squeezed the bag, sending the drugs into your arm quicker. Almost immediately, you feel their affects, drowning out the pain that had been aching in your back. “You’re a very lucky woman,” she spoke as she scribbled on her clipboard. Clicking her pen shut, the doctor looks to you, brushing her dark hair from her eyes. “It’s good to have you back Raven… Now let’s get your leg back, alright?”

- Of course Tsing was ambitious. Of course your leg was never healed. Of course you were removed from field research and transferred back stateside to work behind a desk…

But of course this wasn’t your pity party. This wasn’t your time to dwell in the past. Right now, in this time, in this city, there were 12 people who needed you present. Right now, in this time, in this city, there were 12 people who would look at you and ask you about your emotions as soon as you entered one of the 4 hotel rooms. Right now, in this time, in this city, there were 12 people carrying equally heavy as baggage as you-- even if not all of theirs showed like a leg brace or scarring across their backs. Right now, in this time, in this city, there were 12 people who loved you…

And then there was Clarke…

And that was all that mattered…

---

OCTAVIA

As you sat quietly in the room, you watched as the younger doctor who had been in and out throughout the day to assist with Clarke’s closure prepared to flip the switch that would cease artificial air flow into Clarke’s lungs. He exhaled slowly, obviously rattled by the situation and you can’t help but wonder if this is the first time that he’s taken someone’s life. I mean, it’s all too easy to flip a switch, but knowing that someone’s air is attached to the other side of that must be terrifying… or at least you guess because your brain hasn’t even processed what’s actually occurring yet.

Glancing around the room, you take in the expression of everyone around you.

Lexa stands closes to Clarke with a blank stare towards the blonde, her arm wrapped tightly around Abby’s with fingers interlocked. Who would have guessed that Lexa would be cuddling with Clarke’s Ice Queen of a mother, but desperate times…

Abby’s expression flips between concern and grief-- or at least that’s what you’re assuming. You don’t even know what feelings look like anymore. You don’t even know how to read people anymore so when Abby’s eyes meet yours, you only know that your clenched jaw and swelling pupils portray an accurate image of what you’re feeling.

Lincoln stands beside you, an arm wrapped around you to hold you up, but in reality, you wonder how much of that is holding him up. His eyes are puffy and he looks like he hasn’t slept in days, but, unlike his sister, his face conveys exactly what he’s feeling. He’s exhausted. He’s miserable. He’s overwhelmed. He’s falling.
Sitting in a chair next to the window, Murphy reclines with his arms crossed, eyes focused on his shoe that is propped on his knee. If his face didn’t give away otherwise, you’d assume that he was disinterested in the General Hospital type drama that was being written in front of you, but that wasn’t the case. John Murphy had tears streaming down his defined cheekbones as he grinded his teeth slightly, refusing to look up from that left foot.

And then there was Bellamy… lurking behind Lincoln with all of his weight staggered between his right leg and the doorframe that he was leaning on. With his left leg crossed over his right and his arms hugging tightly to his chest, his head was dropped to the floor so far that you could practically see his spine over the top of his matted, black hair. After the way that his body rejected the earlier display, you were honestly surprised that he showed up to the removal of Clarke’s ventilator. Even after begging him to stay in the hotel and rest, your brother was here and none of you could stop that. Even after everything, he loved Clarke and was going to see this through to the end-- whatever that meant.

Reaching a shivering hand out, the young doctor held the top of the machine beside Clarke, thumbing the switch before looking over at Lexa, who had the ultimate say. The brunette dropped her head, her freckles taking refuge behind her brown locks as the doctor pushed the red switch down, silencing the groan of the machinery and walking towards the exit, exhaling slowly and hiding his face behind his sleeve.

Yeah, definitely his first time ending a life… or whatever the fuck was happening now…

Watching as the nurses on duty withdraw the tubes from Clarke’s nose and throat, you wonder how long she’ll survive now. It’s either going to be instant or she’s hold out for a little while longer, waiting and giving you hope until she slowly ceases to be… or she could survive, but you’re not even remotely holding out for that option.

As the nurses leave with the tubes and wires, another doctor enters, asking Lexa to step out into the hallway to talk logistics and planning with him. You can’t help but feel sorry for her as she stagers along, shoulders dropped and hands shoved in pockets. This must be shit for her. Not only is she watching the girl that she loves most in this world disappear, but she’s also single-handedly responsible for signing every paper involved… meaning, in Lexa’s mind, she’s responsible for Clarke’s death…

---

LEXA

“We’ll be moving her tomorrow to a more permanent room for the duration of her remaining time with us,” the older man, Dr. Dante, spoke, moving his hands as the words flowed from his mouth as if they meant nothing.

For the duration of her remaining time with us…

Did that mean until she died?

Because that’s what it sounded like…

You just nod, hoping that your signature was all that he would need to get this process moving. You just wanted to be out of this hospital. You just wanted to be in a bed… or surrounded by people who loved you… or alone… or anywhere other than here.

Once you signed the papers authorizing them to move Clarke, you lingered in the hallway, not yet
ready to return to where people knew your name. That was until…

“Lexa?” a somewhat familiar voice questioned from behind, kicking you right in the stomach as you realized who it was before turning. There’s no way… there’s no way it’s…

“Costia…” you reply, spinning around almost too quickly to catch yourself on the wall behind you. The girl standing before you was not quite as you remembered. Her short dark hair was now just slightly past her shoulders and a hazel color tinted with streaks of red. The thin cheekbones that once held no emotion were glowing, slightly rounder as she smiled in your direction, reaching up to hug you. “It’s really good to see you.” Without moving, you allowed the woman to wrap her arms around you before she realized the awkwardness in the situation as well, releasing you from her grasp and quickly backing away. It was then that you caught it-- the feeling between you two. Glancing down, you notice the reason-- between you and Costia is a large bump… She’s pregnant.

“You look…” you try to begin, attempting to be cordial or something, but words fall short as emotions flood over you.

This is not the time for this. You can’t handle this right now. You can’t deal with this son-of-a-bitch surfacing after everything that you’ve been through today… especially not coming into your life and fucking shit up with her pregnancy and her lack of a ring on her finger and her just overall existence. There’s no time for this… There’s no energy for this…

She smiles, snorting a small laugh as she places her hands on her swollen belly. “This?” she asks, glancing down before returning her eyes to you. “Any day now I guess…” And just as your eyes glance her over, a figure appears behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist and resting his chin on her head much like you used to.

“Ready to go, babe?” The man asks, running a hand through his dark hair to recenter it on the top of his head. He looks you over before offering you the same hand, extending it over Costia’s small shoulder. “Cage Wallace,” he speaks what you’re assuming to be his name. Staring at his outstretched hand, you count the scarring on his fingertips before accepting it, giving it a slightly shake. He withdraws his suit coat covered arm back to cover Costia’s grey shirt, kissing her cheek.

“Cage, this is Lexa,” she speaks to him as if he should know you… And apparently he does… or at least of you.

“OOOH!!” his eyes widen as does his mouth. “This is The Lexa.” What the fuck does that mean? “Well, I guess I owe you my life…” Why would you do that?

A million thoughts flood your brain as a simple “why?” manages to escape, summing up everything perfectly.

The man laughs slightly, pulling your ex-girlfriend in closer to him. “Well, when you two broke up, Costia got clean,” he explains, almost as if it’s a well-known story. He tells it like it’s a fairy tale passed down from one generation to the next, making it sound like the anthem that rocks children to sleep at night… He makes it sound like you were the reason why she used drugs… He makes it sound like it was your fault…

---

LINCOLN

As soon as you heard that voice in the hallway, you knew what was happening. As soon as you heard that voice in the hallway, you knew what was going to happen. And as soon as you heard that
voice in the hallway, your heart dropped. After years of healing and years of distance, that girl was back… and of course she was back now…

Stepping into the hallway after the voice and her mate disappeared, you stop just in time to watch your sister slide down the wall, grasping her knees as she touches the floor. Taking a seat next to her, you turn your body slightly to face her, pulling a Ziploc bag from your pocket and twirling it through your fingers a full time.

“She’s pregnant,” your sister says, staring off into the distance. Sitting in silence for a brief moment, you hand her the bag, watching her closely as she flips it over before looking back at you.

“It’s yours,” is all you can muster, allowing her to open it before continuing. “I’ve been saving it for the right time…”

The piece of paper inside is dingy and splattered with brown residue that you’d rather not question and when Lexa does, you deny, asking her to not think too hard about it… I mean, it did come from Clarke’s pocket…

---

Alexandria McKenna Woods,

My sweet love, I want you to know that I love you dearly and I always will… from the moment I met you, I knew that I had found my muse, but all of that is useless now. I’m afraid that I’ve lost my chance… and that’s why these words will never be spoken. Instead upon this canvas I shall spill my soul’s inner-most desires for you. I know you love the artist in me, but right now, the artist in me hates the rest of me. Right now, the artist in me has lost the ability to speak and is taking the backseat. I love our conversations and the way in which you draw words from inside me so easily… even if right now nothing comes out but bull-shit. It was great when we got into heated debates about pointless things like movie themes or the amount of sugar contained in those little paper sachets. I love how you always insisted you were right, even though all the evidence was against you, and you’d get all heated and flustered if I tried to prove you wrong. Darling you look so cute when you are angry, did I ever tell you that?! I should have. I should have said it more. I should have just said more.

Anyway, I heard a song today that made me start thinking of you and prompted the start of this letter, but now I’m not so sure that I want it to apply. Noah Gundersen says “It's the first defeat. It cuts you to your bones, knocks you off your feet and you discover that home. Is not a person or a place, but a feeling you can't get back…” As I heard this, I knew it was written for us-- because all great things are… but then I continued listening and the chorus destroyed me. “This will be the last time… you take me…” Lexa, I beg you, please, for the love of everything good, don’t let this be the last time. I know I left you thinking that it was, but I'm not ready for the last time. I'm not ready to face this world alone. I need you. Please, stay strong for me. Please, stay for me.

Forever indebted to you, Clarke

---

LEXA

She wanted you. More than anything else, she wanted you.

More than life, she wanted you.

More than Costia, she wanted you.
Looking over at Lincoln, you start to ask him how before he cuts you off, raising a hand between you two. “The doctor who did her intake gave it to me. It’s yours.” Without waiting, you throw your arms around your brother, welcoming him as he hugs you back. “Lexa, you can’t give up on her… Not yet.”

You nod, knowing where his fear is centered from-- knowing that a fear inside of you is bred from the same space.

Bu he’s right, you can’t give up on her yet.

And you won’t…

Not ever.

---

TRIS

When your phone vibrated with that specific text, your heart sank deep into the pits of your stomach. Roma wrapped an arm around you on the couch in her mother’s apartment as you read it over and over again, once or twice in your head before out loud, confusing your girlfriend even more.

BROSEIDON (8:24 PM): Costia’s here…

“Who’s Costia?” Roma asked? Her brown hair falling in front of her face as she cranked her head around to look at you, not wanting to move her body. You didn’t want her to move either. Feeling her next to you was comforting, especially when there was the potentiality of everything you’ve worked for falling apart on the other end of this phone.

Tris (8:31 PM): Should I come?

Waiting for a reply, your loving girlfriend sits patiently, brushing your hair from your face as she bides for your attention. “Tris? What’s the matter?”

The last couple of weeks have been extremely weird for her. When you two started dating, she knew that you had baggage-- more in particularly, she knew that your baggage wasn’t even your own, but she still agreed to be with you, no matter how hard it was… And now you felt like a total ass because this was not what she signed up for. She didn’t sign off on a half-ass relationship as you lived in perpetual worry for your sister. She didn’t sign off on you living in a hotel with around 15 other people as you wait for one of the best people you’ve ever met to either wake up or… No. She didn’t sign up to pick you off of the floor as you cry and to find you curled in the shower, unable to lift yourself out of the water. She didn’t agree to any of this, but yet she was here-- and yet she remained.

Looking over at her, you want to smile. The devotion in her eyes as she strokes circles on your shoulder, waiting for your answer, tells you that she’s fine with this, but still, that lingering voice makes you question everything. “Are you sure that you want this?” you ask her, clicking the lock button on your phone and tossing it beside you, curling up with your head in her lap. Moving her arms to better accommodate for you, she begins running one hand through your hair while the other rests on your hip.

“More than anything… no matter what…”

Is this what Lexa felt lying with Clarke?
If that’s the case, then you don’t even understand how she’s getting out of bed anymore…

And now you admire your sister even more…

She’s stronger than she’s ever known.

Before you know any better, your eyes are closing and you’re drifting into sleep with the feeling of love surrounding you and Roma’s hands on the side of your head and your stomach, anxiety at bay for at least the moment.

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**BELLAMY**

Sitting in room 343 alone at 3:27AM, you begin to wonder about the shit that you’ve read in Lexa’s articles that she’s left thrown about the new room. After they took Clarke off of the ventilator, she was moved from the I.C.U. into a smaller room on the third floor which allowed for more silence and more time to think. Whether or not this was a good thing was still up for debate, but you honestly enjoyed the silence as words flowed from your mouth as if you were speaking to Clarke herself. It would help, they said in the packets, but more than helpful, you felt like a fool talking to yourself in an empty room.

“…And I know that it’s hard to believe, but Tris actually has a girlfriend,” you continue to update Clarke’s still body on all the things that she had been missing out on since she entered into her seemingly never ending sleep. “I’m not sure how she’s even finding time for that, but she seems happy— so that’s good… OH! And you missed seeing Lexa’s ex-girlfriend… She’s not much. You’re way better.” A small chuckle exits your lips as you look over your friend again, watching the slow rise and fall in her chest. “Look Clarke, I really need you to wake up now,” you mumble taking her hand in yours.

Her fingertips are cold and that fact terrifies you.

Cold means no blood flow…

And no blood flow means death…

And death means…

Death means that Clarke is gone forever.

Laying your head down on the bed, you stroke your thumb back and forth across hers as you say over and over again, “I really need you to wake up…”

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**CLARKE**

Slowly lifting your dense eyelids, your nostrils burn with the stout smell of antibacterial, invading your sinuses and reminding you of your mother’s devotion to her job after your father’s death. Things were never the same after that and a similar feeling of dread rushes over you just enough for you to realize that you don’t remember your father right now… All you can recall of him as your eyes force themselves shut again is your mother’s reaction as the police officers knocked on your door.

Your mouth was dry, reminding you of a similar feeling that is just close enough in your memory for
you to know that it’s real, but, again, you can’t exactly grasp it. Why does this feel like it’s happened before? Smacking your lips a few times, the panic begins to set in.

Where exactly are you?

Attempting to open your eyes again, the flood of light blinds you still, the result being exactly the same.

Is someone holding your hand?

Twitching your fingers slightly, the muscles in your arm ache, feeling each movement surge through your shoulder and into your chest.

How long have you been here?

It feels like years. It feels like moments.

Shifting your hips slightly, a similar pain and soreness shifts through your legs as you note the thick sheet wrapped so tightly around your body that you wonder if whoever put you in it worried that you’d roll out of the bed at any moment.

And then it hits you…

The smell of rubbing alcohol… The quiet beeping in the corner… The pinching on your right index finger…

This was a hospital…

But you sort of figured this out long ago.

Opening your eyes one final time, you squint slowly into the world, easing into the shallow end rather than diving in head first, watching as

Light from the window reflected off the white, almost barren walls, basically forcing your eyes shut again as you tried to scan your surroundings.

Nothing felt real.

Your head felt like you had slept for years but exhaustion was like that of when you first dose off and jolt yourself awake quickly and almost immediately.

Listening to the sounds of the beeping of a machine to your right, you slowly turn your head towards the source of the noise. The muscles in your neck were stiff and sore and screamed out to you as you tried to move too quickly.

And then something beside you moves, causing you to startle.

If you weren’t awake before, you are now as Bellamy jumps from his chair, knocking it over as his eyes widen and his mouth gapes, hands raising to hold on to his long hair.

Has his hair always been past his ears?

You can’t remember…

Opening your mouth to speak, you inhale and choke on the air slightly, and then the alarms begin to sound, warning the nursing staff of the changes in your condition. It wouldn’t be long before they
were here to take care of you. Closing your eyes, you relax, hearing Bellamy’s voice as she whispers, “Welcome home Clarke.” With the feeling of his hand heavy on yours, you drift off, suddenly unafraid of what’s coming next.
Here, I stand in the land of the rocks in the valley

Chapter Notes

Alright! Thanks for holding out with the delay on this chapter. I struggled a lot with the direction that I wanted to take this plus a lot of shenanigans came up with work and life and school and shit so yes... It's late... It's not exactly what I expected it to be... but you can all stop threatening me now haha.

Chapter 27: the chapter where Clarke breaks my heart, Lexa learns to let go and move on, and things might actually start looking pretty again.

The 8tracks playlist is updated as well with new songs that helped inspire this chapter and some others that may be applicable. Check it out at http://8tracks.com/roliver4/learning-to-breathe-by-roliver4/

Also, add me on tumblr and let's be best friends! shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

I always comment and message back, so hit it up and tell me what you're feeling!

Thanks for reading! You're the best!

LEXA

Closing time at the bar was extremely slow for you today. Being your first day back, all of your regular customers were extremely excited to see you and all of the new customers were tipping really well, but all you really wanted was to be back in the hospital with your friends. All you really wanted was to be back in the hospital with Clarke.

That was all you felt until your phone vibrated in your back pocket. When you pulled it out, sitting down the glasses that you were busy packing away after all of the customers had been booted into the streets, you yawn, swiping it open.

Bellamy (4:08AM): SHE’S AWAKE!

You read it over again, three more times, before looking to your coworker who is closing with you.

“Fox,” you shout over the loud music playing still to keep you two awake. She doesn’t respond. “Fox!” Again, nothing. Placing the last of your glasses under the bar top, you ball up your dishtrag, still wet from drying the glasses and wiping the bar, and toss it over at the younger girl, laughing slightly as she slaps it to the floor.

“Now pick it up,” she orders you jokingly as you grab your backpack from behind the bar, zipping a jacket over your body. The neon strobe lights danced across you as you failed to hold back the smile any longer

“She’s awake, Fox,” is all you can explain as you jog slightly, feeling the sudden urgency as you embrace her, the girl hugging you and jumping up and down with you.

“Go then!” she’s practically shouting as she pushes you towards the door, handing you a wad of
cash from the tip jar. “Don’t even bother counting it… your boobs earned it all tonight.”

Normally, you’d reply to her comment, making some remark about her ass in the black jeans that she always wore on your shared shifts, but today, you didn’t have time. You had to go.

The 15 minute drive to the hospital is the longest you’ve ever made. Every red light seemed to be against you. Every breath that you took seemed to drag for years. Every turn that you made got you one step closer to Clarke, but seemed to take forever. Even entering the hospital seemed to take years as the sliding glass doors took hours to open up-- or at least that’s what it felt like.

After pushing the up button on the elevator, you can’t help but bounce with the anticipation building up inside of you. A million questions flood your brain as the doors open slowly and you practically charge in, smashing the 3 button over and over again as if it’ll make the metal box move any faster.

You’re nearly twitching with excitement when the doors open to the new floor that Clarke had been moved to. Unlike the I.C.U., the 3rd floor was decorated with wall murals and colorful floor tiles, welcoming and warm instead of the distant and withdrawn vibe from Clarke’s previous occupation. Walking out into the open hallway, you’re immediately met with a hand against your arm, pulling you off to the side and against the wall. Fighting at first, your first instinct is to begin swinging, but catching the familiar sight of brown hair against a dark, olive skin, you immediately calm, allowing yourself to be pushed for a moment.

“Lexa, we need to talk,” Raven says, pinning you slightly by your shoulder. The wall behind you is cold, even through your black tank and suddenly the warm disposition of the floor melted into something less-- something darker.

Brushing off her arm, you push her away gently turning to your right in an attempt to escape. “Can it wait?” you ask before you realize the look written across her face.

“No,” she says, expression matching tone. There was no waiting. There was no putting it off. But what could be more important than seeing Clarke?

Just as you start to walk away anyway, Bellamy’s palm connects with your collar bone, pushing you tightly against the wall and holding you in place. “It’s about Clarke,” he explains, hand still restraining you. As your eyes meet with his, it becomes more apparent-- this was more important than you walking into that room.

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CLARKE

Doctors have filtered in for the last hour and a half, refusing to allow you to sleep in spite of how tired you are. It’s beginning to show as you begin snapping at people you love now, having told Raven to shut up and leave you alone when she asked if you needed anything and screaming at your mother when she tried to move some of your hair from your face. Who have you become? Have you always been this mean?

Honestly you couldn’t answer that question. You can say what you were like growing up, for the most part… It comes and goes in waves, but for the majority of your life, you remember things-- until everything goes dark… The timeline is still fuzzy, but your last vivid memory is simple: you were at Jaha’s academy, lifting a box to take downstairs to Lincoln and then it disappears. Despite Bellamy’s telling you over and over again that your last memory was actually over 5 months ago, you can’t
help but feel like it just happened… Like maybe you fell down the stairs while carrying that box… Like maybe you hit your head and woke up here… but that’s not it…

It also feels like you’ve slept for years. That feeling of oversleeping when you wake up more exhausted than before-- yeah, that’s your life. But then she enters the room, and everything changes.

Something about the way that she holds herself makes you think that you should know her-- or at least that you want to know her. Is this your new doctor or nurse? Because if so, you’re totally okay with this…

“Clarke?” she asks hesitantly as she inches into the room, hands rising to cover her face. Surely she’s not a doctor if she’s crying at you being awake… but still, she seems familiar with her brown hair pulled back into a tony tail, deep, gold-flicked eyes filling with tears as she approaches you. Her eyes remind you of something-- like from a dream or a memory. Perhaps you know her? If not, you’d really like to-- this much is obvious by the way that you can hear your heart in your ears.

As she takes the seat next to your bed, she leans her elbows on your mattress and it’s almost like her name is on the tip of your tongue, but you just can’t produce the correct sounds to form it. Her freckles remind you of a map, marking all of the places that you should remember visiting, leaving a stamp across your passport to explain the story of your life-- in case you ever forget.

And you have… You’ve completely forgotten this woman… But she obviously hasn’t forgotten you.

Without thinking, you lift a hand to her face, almost as if your hand was magnetized to her cheek. With your thumb tracing the lines between the constellations across her cheek bones, you experience a Deja vu of sorts, remembering that you’ve been here before, but you’re still unable to place it. Everything seems familiar, the sound of her voice and how if gives you chills through your entire body… the softness of her skin and how it makes you crave for her to touch you more than the hand on your arm… the way that her eyes reflect the light from the lamp beside your bed and how you feel like they’ve looked to you before with adoration and desire… Why the fuck are you feeling this way?

“Clarke?” she asks again, reaching in to hug you and without even noticing it until it’s too late, you’re wrapping your arms around her as well, breathing in the scent of vanilla and liquor that should be familiar to you. It smells sweet and soft, like coming home.

“I should know you,” you mumble, tears filling your eyes for reasons that you don’t know. “I’m sorry… I really should…” After you speak, the sigh that exits her lips and dances its way across your neck is enough to begin the spiral of grief, guilt filling your insides as it threatens to flood over, tickling your throat with a small catch, shuddering as you exhale.

She sucks in air, pushing her way onto the bed next to, never removing her arms from around your shoulders before pulling you into her chest as she rolls her body into a ball next to you. For more reasons that you can’t explain, you’re alright with this though. I mean, this woman is a stranger, or at least that’s how it feels, but yet you allowed her to crawl into your bed and wrap herself up in you.

“IT will be okay,” you hear her speak through the tears that are racing lines down her face and falling onto your forehead. Unsure if she’s talking to herself or to you, you can’t help but hope for the latter as you breathe in the somewhat familiar scent, suddenly feeling more comfortable than ever before.

You know you should remember this feeling… Hell, you do remember it, but you can’t recall why… The touch of her skin as she pulls you in closer, the sound of her breathing as it catches in her throat, the feeling of her raspy voice rattling in her chest as she repeats over and over again that it’s going to be okay. Opening your eyes, you catch sight of Bellamy sitting in a chair across the room, allowing
this random girl to hug you as he rubs his eyes, dropping his head into his hands. With the rapid rise and fall of his shoulders, you hear a shudder from his mouth over the sound of the woman who you find yourself wrapped in. He’s crying too…

And before you can stop it or even understand why, a tear rolls down the side of your face.

What the fuck is happening to you?

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Lexa

Waking up in Clarke’s hospital bed with her arms wrapped around your right arm, legs interlocked with yours, sheets stolen entirely from your left side should have been wonderful… It should have filled you with ultimate joy… you should have been happy… But it wasn’t… it didn’t… and you weren’t… It was everything that you’ve begged for over three weeks now, but yet, it wasn’t.

“Who are you?” the question drags out into the silence, causing your heart to break as you attempt to even form the words needed to reply. How could she not remember you? How could she not remember anything?

“Clarke,” you begin as she breathes deeply, obviously catching on to your emotional despair. “My name’s Lexa…” You allow the last letter in your name to exit your mouth slowly, hearing her shudder under your grasp. “We were in love and then I fucked it all up,” you explain as softly as you can, kissing the top of her blonde head. When your lips meet her scalp, she twitches slightly and you can only hope it’s a tinge of recognition.

“I don’t remember,” she complains, a hitch gathering in her throat as she buries her face into your chest. Sighing deeply and slowly, you catch sight of Bellamy outside of the door, holding onto the frame for support as he shakes his head, talking with Raven in hushed tones. You can’t see the woman, but based off of his actions, his free hand slapping at the air as he pushes himself from the metal frame, throwing both hands into the air and storming off, the conversation isn’t going well. You silently hope that Clarke isn’t watching the same scene play out as you are… for her sake.

“I know,” you begin, pursing your lips and clearing your lungs through your nose. What can you say to comfort her? With darkness building up a fortress around you… with your fingertips shaking violently around her small frame… with your breath trembling as it exits your lungs… with your eyes swelling with tears… what could you possibly offer this woman as far as support goes? Hell, you’re not even holding yourself together right now, how can you breathe for her too? “… But you will,” you say after clearing your throat, attempting to sound calm and collected. It appears to work as Clarke nuzzles into your neck, breathing in deeply.

“I hope so,” you hear her mumble before her breathing stabilizes onto your throat. Kissing her forehead, you can’t help but offer a slight ‘Me too,’ as your eyes close.

The woman under you sleeps silently, gripping tightly to your arm as you shuffle your weight, attempting to fold the pages of your book back without waking her. You were failing as she shifted around violently, pulling your arm closer to her chest and digging her face uncomfortably into your ribs, but you can’t bring yourself to distance-- not after waiting this long to have her back… even if she didn’t know who you were…

“Remember her hair in the morning before it was pinned, black, rampant, savage with loveliness. As if she slept in perpetual storm…” you read the line from Cormac Mccarthy’s *Suttree*, glancing over at the woman attached to your now cramping arm, remembering her rampant hair flooding your nostrils
as the light danced through the blinds of her apartment, highlighting her blonde locks and blinding you all at once. You think back to the way that she tossed in her sleep, turning against you many times in one night until you would wrap an arm around her waist, pulling her back against you and then she’d suddenly still, quietly sleeping through the night once she was completely wrapped in your embrace. You remember your first night together, so controlled yet so uninhibited, throwing caution into the wind and taking a chance for the first time in years. Over 4 months that you spent together and she can’t recall one moment… but yet every single one of them flashed before your eyes quickly as you blink away tears, looking up to make sure that you’re alone. You’ve cried enough in front of others-- this one was just for you.

Glancing around, you look for an outlet, any way to pull yourself form her grasp without disturbing her any more than necessary before you finally give up, tugging your arm free and allowing her to grumble slightly as she repositions herself with a whine, pulling the blankets into her chest as she did hundreds of times before when you would spend the nights together before… everything.

Slipping through the door, you lean your head against the metal frame, suddenly overwhelmed by how absolutely alone you are. When you fell asleep with someone who only knows you as a complete stranger as you burn with desire for them in your arms, you had hoped and prayed to wake up to something different… but there was no god… at least not in this waiting room. Sighing deeply, you nod over at Monroe who closes the distance, hugging you gently before offering her support and dismissing herself to answer the pager buzzing at her hip.

“I love you,” she says to you for the first time ever as she slips away, unclipping the device with a sigh. You offer a small ‘love you’ in return, not really sure how to reply and not really caring if the nurse heard you or not. It was a nice gesture, but you didn’t crave those words from Monroe’s mouth. It was a nice gesture, but Monroe didn’t really know you. It was a nice gesture, but the woman who you wanted to hear say it, didn’t even know your name… not anymore.

Of course he knows you. Clarke knows everyone in this hospital… everyone except for you… and they all now you because of her… but of course you know no one.

“Marcus Kane,” he offers a hand which you take, surprised at how soft his burly looking fingers are. You tell him your name out of formality, knowing that he already knows it and he smiles as you do, catching on to your awkwardness.

Awkwardness probably wasn’t even the word to describe you anymore. Within the past 24 hours, you’ve gone the full spectrum of emotions… so if anything, you were more of a void, catharsis having eliminated any amount of feelings that you could possibly be portraying anymore.

“How’s Clarke doing?” he asks, you just shrugging a response. He’s doctor. He should be telling you. “I’ve been popping in from time to time, but I’ve missed you every time. I’m glad I caught you here.” Was that a joke? I mean, he did literally catch you in the hallway, but his eyes didn’t seem to be portraying humor. In fact, they really didn’t give off any emotion other than compassion. Much like Clarke’s eyes when she talked about work, his eyes were that of the doctor that you could trust, and suddenly you wanted to grill him on everything he knew about memory loss. Opening your
mouth, no words came. Instead, you just stand there, looking like a fool as the surgeon waits for you to speak.

Catching on to your selective mutism for the moment, he reaches his hand into the white coat’s large pocket, producing a roll of stapled papers. Unrolling them, the doctor hands them off to you, watching you as you read the top two lines. Waking up from a Coma… Making a Comeback: What Happens After the Coma? Glancing up at the man, he chuckles slightly before saying “I saw all of your notes and I can tell that you’re a smart woman.” He pauses, waiting for your interjection, but you can’t bring yourself to do anything other than finger the corner of the pages, grip tightening as if you’re afraid someone will steal them at any moment. “You just need the right information.” Placing a hand on your shoulder, Kane takes a step past you, patting your arm before walking in the direction of Clarke’s room, leaving you at the intersection of the two hallways without anything else.

Exhaling all of your emotions, you mumble a small ‘thank you’ before rolling up the papers and tucking the tube into your back pocket, pushing towards the door and down the stairs to the outside… to fresh air.

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**BELLAMY**

Holding tight to the smoke in your lungs as if it would escape, stealing what little air occupied the same area with it, you exhale slowly, watching the clouds as they dance circles around you head. When the door opens beside you, you don’t even turn to look. When the body crashes down beside you after closing the heavy sheet of metal behind it, you don’t even turn to look. When the small, shaking hand takes the cigarette from your mouth, placing it in hers and taking a deep drag, you don’t even turn to look… even if a small grin dances across half of your face. It’s not until you pull the gold and white box from your pocket, producing another death stick and lighting it in your mouth that you turn towards your best friend, joining Lexa in surrounding your bodies with a cloud of dispelled nicotine.

“What are you reading?” she asks, pointing at the book that’s facedown beside you. Without words, you flip over the collection of Edgar Allen Poe poems and short stories, allowing your eyes to fall back to the ground in front of you. You can feel her nod beside you as she takes on a similar posture; knees pulled close to your chest, body slouched over legs.

“So, I read something today,” you finally say, extinguishing the cigarette in your fingers on the concrete below you. “And I think you need to read it…” As you flip through the pages, you laugh internally at this interaction, feeling Lexa shift closer to you slightly. How many moments like this had the two of you already had? How many quotes had you read to her and she left on sticky notes for you or in the books that you shared with each other? “Here,” you motion softly, handing the text to her and pointing at the small poem inside, title underlined and highlighted with her name scribbled in the margins next to it.

“It was many and many a year ago, in a kingdom by the sea, that a maiden there lived whom you may know by the name of Annabel Lee; and this maiden she lived with no other thought than to love and be loved by me,” she reads out loud, tracing each word with her fingertips as they danced across the page to the song exiting her mouth. Glancing up at you quickly, she returns to the text after you nod gently, ushering her on. “I was a child and she was a child, in this kingdom by the sea, but we loved with a love that was more than love—I and my Annabel Lee,” she mumbled, tears building in her eyes about half way through the quote. After reading the last two lines out loud a few more times, she wraps her arms around your stomach, pulling herself closer to you.

“It’s going to be hard,” you explain, wrapping your arms around her shoulder and hugging her
tightly, her face dug into your shoulder. “But she needs you now more than ever.”

You hear a sigh exit her lips into your shirt, heat building on that part of your arm. “Is it wrong to blame myself?” she asks you, making your stomach sink even lower as you hear the depression in her voice. You’ve been wondering how long it would take for this to surface-- this residual feeling of guilt that she’s shouldered for years now. Exhaling deeply, you rest your chin on the top of her head, breathing in her familiar scent of vanilla as you prepare yourself for the conversation that you were about to have.

“No,” you say at last, hearing a small puff of laughter escape her lips. “It’s not… but it’s not right either.”

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LEXA

Walking back into that room was considerably easier with a plan of action in place. At Bellamy’s convincing, you enter the room, bag in hand weighing down on your shoulder, but your head was high when Clarke greeted you.

“Hey Lexa,” she says, the words sounding almost foreign when you lay the bag down on the rolling table next to the bed, pulling it over as you crawl into the bed next to her. Pulling an envelope from the backpack, producing a bunch of pictures from you and Clarke’s relationship, you begin from the beginning-- that first weekend spent together where your nose was taped together and Clarke’s smile blinded you with joy.

“I’ve loved you since you broke my nose,” you laugh after flipping through a few pictures, answering the questions that arise with each. So-far-so-good as Clarke questions everything from the time of day in each photo to her wardrobe choice. She’s starving for information and you’re giving it to her… and whether she knows it or not, she’s been inching closer to you, her arm now interlocked with yours as her head rests on your shoulder sending waves of excitement through you.

“Why did I do that?” she questions almost instantly, concern destroying her as she rattles off the words. You can’t help but laugh as you explain to her your accidental meeting, telling her every detail as if it happened yesterday. “Will I remember it?” she asks you, your heart cracking at her fear. She seems genuinely terrified of not remembering you… That should count for something right?

“God I hope so,” the words flow from you as you flip pictures to one of Clarke sitting on the floor with her sketch pad pulled close to her face. “This was taken after we went to the art gallery,” you tell her, your thumb tracing the side of the laminated paper.

“What’s your favorite?” she asks you, turning her head on your arm to look up at you. The innocence in her eyes melts you a little bit as you simply nod, unable to open your mouth to even speak. “What’s your favorite?” She turns her attention back towards the picture. Her fingers dance lightly across the skin of your arm as she runs a hand up your forearm to your hand, taking the picture from your fingers.

“You’re really good at this,” she says, your eyes apparently giving away your questioning as she answers the inquiry in your brain. “This making me like you thing.”

You can’t fight the chuckle as you tighten your fingers around hers, feeling her lean her head back
on your shoulder as you pull another picture from the envelope. “This is us at my sister’s soccer game,” you say, pointing out each of the family members in order.

“Lincoln’s your brother?” she asks as you point to your brother’s handsome smile. Another shudder exits your body quickly without your permission. Of course she remembers Lincoln—he’s been in her life for years now… but it doesn’t soften the blow that she remembers him and not you.

“Yeah,” you say with a small nod, taking in the photo, examining every detail to take your mind off of the inevitable sadness that’s attempting to engulf you. As fun as this was, it was getting old now and you’re only reminded with every picture that things will probably never be the same again.

As you stare at the photo before you, Clarke’s voice breaks the silence, shaky and weak as she asks, “Do you still love me?”

And that’s it. You lose it, tears beginning to line your face as you produce a small “yes”, knowing that anything else will be drown out by the trembling in your chest.

As you clench your jaw, you feel her do the same on your shoulder, turning her head downward—probably to avoid being seen, but it doesn’t matter. You can feel her tears falling onto your arm as she asks her next question. “Even if I don’t remember you?” the words tremor through the air, as you offer your small ‘yes’ again and nothing else. “Why?” she asks almost without thought, not wasting a single second before beginning the interrogation.

“I don’t have a choice. I still choose you. I always have.” Pointing your head down to hers, your eyes meet with hers just like on the day that you met.

Blue like the heat of a flame.

Blue like constant.

Blue like calming.

Jesus Christ those eyes.

Your brain floods with the millions of ways that you’ve chosen to describe Clarke’s eyes in your brain… happiness… sunshine… wind… laughter… light… clarity… drowning… salvation.

Leaning down slowly, you maintain eye contact with Clarke in spite of your desire to look away. You’re drowning in her again and, even though you never thought you’d feel it again, you’re nervous around Clarke Griffin… and this anxiety is only lessened once your lips meet, sending the same electricity through you that you felt on day one, kissing her for the first time in the parking lot of that terrible bar.

As you continue to kiss her, turning slightly in the bed to welcome her into your arms, you can’t help but remember the last words you just spoke.

I…

Always…

Have…
Alright guys... here it is... The chapter where Lexa is somewhere... Bellamy rips Abby apart... Abby rips Clarke apart... Tris comes back for a bit... and then rips Clarke up... I had this one and the next one written together originally, but i've decided to separate them because i have a plan... Enjoy a chapter without Lexa because the next one is... ooph... can't say any more... just get excited because... reasons...

So, I don't know if you realize this, but Clarke has seriously been my least favorite character because there's a lack of development and discovery after the first few chapters (and then that little bit when she ran away), but i'm about to change that because i have some pretty grand plans for her. butttttttt anyway...

Just get excited for the next chapter... because this one's okay... but the next one is making me cry at work while I write it... a hint: it's being written to THE CIVIL WARS: POISON AND WINE...

CRYINGGGGGGGG

Also, thanks so much for all of the great words of encouragement. I love love love love love getting your comments and tumblr messages. On that note, follow me and let's be buddies: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

And one last thing... playlist is updated constantly while writing.. check it:

CLARKE

You wanted to wake up and everything be normal. You wanted to wake up and find that your memories had returned and that you knew this woman in your bed to be exactly the same person that she said she was. Hell, you even kissed her, hoping that the simple action would spark something inside of you…

But nothing…

Nothing changed…

Nothing was different…

Nothing was new…

And when you woke up alone in your bed for what seemed like the ten thousandth time, you honestly hoped that she wouldn’t return. The disappointment on her face each time that you asked a question made you feel a little guiltier with each and every breath that she exhaled.

It’s not that you couldn’t place her? There were small things…

The way that your hands felt like they fit perfectly in hers…
The way that she always smelled like vanilla…

The way that she mumbled in her sleep…

There were small things that seemed to jog something in your brain… but it was never enough.

When she reaches for your hand, you remember the words “Katie, it's amazing how you were made for me,” which, as far as you know, mean nothing to you…

When you breathe her in, the view of light dancing through the wooden slats of your blinds flashes across your brain…

When she begins to toss and turn lightly in her sleep next to you, you have the sudden urge to pull her close, wrapping your arms around her…

But none of this makes sense…

None of this is rational…

None of this is logical…

And when you wake up alone, you pray that she won’t come back…

For your sake…

And for hers…

As Bellamy enters the room, shaking his hair out from the beanie that he pulled off just moments before, he tosses an ipod in your direction, headphone following soon after. “Tuneage, princess,” he says, sliding a chair up to the bed next to you. It’s been almost a week since you woke up to your friend next to you and every day since then, Bellamy has been steadfast, spending almost every waking moment catering to your every desire. Never in a million years would you have thought that you’d rely on him this much-- which prompts the question of how much have you used him in the past? “By the way, your music choice sucks,” he adds, pull a bag of starburst from his jacket pocket and opening them, picking out a handful of yellow ones to hand to you.

He always knew your favorites.

With the thoughts of Lexa still lingering in the front of your brain, you take the starbursts in one hand, plugging in your headphones with the other as you grin over at your friend who is basically lying in the bed with you as he leans over the edge, making camp on the corner of the mattress.

“Bellamy?” you question as if pulling his attention from the sugary snacks was going to be complicated. He mumbles a ‘mhmm’, shoving three or four of the plastic-seeming candies into his mouth before looking up at you. “Did I really love Lexa?” you ask before you can stop the words, throwing your hands up to cover your mouth as soon as you do.

Smooth Griffin… Real smooth…

Bellamy cracks a smile, snorting a little bit before swallowing deeply, unwrapping another starburst for his mouth and balling up the wrapper, tossing it towards your face as he replies with “probably more than anything…” After a few moments of silence, he turns his attention back towards you, this time dismissing everything, shoving the discarded wrappers and remaining starbursts back into the bag before rolling it up and sitting it to the side. “You going to tell me why you’re asking or do I have to guess?”
You really just want to drop it now, but you’re in too deep. His large, almond, puppy-dog eyes are staring at you, attempting to read your expression and, just like before, he’s basically drawing an answer out of you without even doing anything.

You’ve never really been good at lying to Bellamy Blake…

You guess a head injury and a coma didn’t change that at all.

“I don’t…” you begin before changing your approach with a sigh and a deep swallow. “I can’t…” nope… that’s not it either. Exhaling again, you rub your eyes, already feeling the burn of tears as they’re forming before Bellamy places a hand on your leg, gathering your attention and stopping you from the eminent panic attack just before you reach that ledge.

“Look… you’re not ready… that’s okay…”

“No,” you stop him, pushing your hands out as if you’re pushing him away. He gets this message, withdrawing slightly, taking his hand with him. As he leans back in his chair, distancing himself from you in order to give you space, you breathe out deeply and quickly, puffing air as you think about the words that you want to say. “I don’t love her… I can’t even remember her…”

Your friend looks shocked and confused as he leans in slightly, taking careful steps to still give you room as he slides his chair back further from the bed. “But you kissed her?” he asked, sounding a bit more like a declaration than anything. You clench your jaw, breathing heavily as the pressure begins rising in your chest. “I… just… You don’t remember anything?” he stumbles through his words, never breaking eye contact with you as he does.

You shake your head, knowing that that’s not entirely true…

You remember the taste of liquor drinks that you don’t know the names of…

You remember lyrics to songs that you feel like you’ve never heard…

You can smell things that you can’t place and that no one else smells and you remember things that no one else recalls…

Honestly, you remember a lot…

But none of it seems to matter…

None of it connects…

“But I want to,” you finally say, eyes focused on your fingers as you pick at the skin around your nails-- a habit you’ve picked up since waking up. Glancing up at Bellamy briefly, you catch a small nod from him before you look over at the stack of pictures on the table beside your bed. “I want to so bad.”

---

BELLAMY

The new information is ripping a hole in your heart as you sit in the lobby of the hospital, coffee cup cradled between your hands as you wait. You never thought that you’d find yourself here, swiping your phone open over and over again as you wait for a response from one of the few people that you can genuinely say you’ve hated for most of the time that you’ve known them
As Abby Griffin rounds the corner, you stand up, trying to not seem so excited, but let’s be honest… if you have questions about Clarke’s brain, who better to ask than the number 1 neurosurgeon in the country.

“Dr. Griffin,” you greet her, extending a hand out to the woman who takes it, but appears slightly shocked as she does, pulling you in closer to hug you. You return her surprise during the awkward embrace, holding your breath until it’s over.

“Bellamy, it’s good to hear from you,” she says as if she hasn’t seen you every day for the past couple of weeks. You guess she has reason to be excited though… you’ve never really actively pursued conversation with Abby… especially not after everything that she’s put Clarke through.

“I have a question Dr. Griffin,” you begin before being interrupted.

“Abby…”

Exhaling slowly, you correct yourself before continuing, “Abby, I have a question.” The doctor nods, folding her thin hands up together on top of the table. She looks a lot like her daughter when she sits like this, waiting patiently for your next move. In fact, the more that you stare at her, the more similarities in her and Clarke you find, but shaking off the matching game that you’re playing with their faces in your head, you try to begin again. “Clarke is remembering a lot of things… which we’re very excited about…”

“But?” The doctor prompts you, popping a few of her knuckles.

You resist the temptation to push her away, asking her to let you finish until you realize that Clarke does the same damn thing. “But she’s not remembering Lexa.”

Your bluntness and honesty seem to catch her off guard as Abby blinks a few times, bringing her hands to her face to rub her eyes before folding them back over the table again. “Oh boy…” she says, exhaling slowly. “It is not uncommon for the memories of events occurring close to the time of trauma to return over the ensuing days to weeks,” she begins before you can’t fight back the rage anymore.

“Okay, Abby, cut the shit,” you say, slamming your hand down on the table. Everyone within a two table radius of you suddenly turns towards you, buying into your drama. “This isn’t some cadaver in a lab or a statistic on a fucking page of some textbook that you’re coauthoring…. This is your fucking daughter in there and it’s time you fucking admit that you’re useless…”

“Excuse me?” the doctor interrupts you, cocking her head to the side a bit and raising an eyebrow. Now you know where Clarke gets it. “I’m the number one…”

“Yeah yeah,” you interrupt her again, not allowing her to finish the power trip that she’s used as leverage her entire career. “Number one neurosurgeon in the United States… I’ve heard it all before from your daughter who wanted nothing more than to be in your life…” Abby’s mouth has now stopped moving and instead rests wide open as she stares at you. She’s either ready to kill you, or congratulate you and neither really seem like great ideas right now… “But if you’re so important, why aren’t you up there helping her?”

“If you’re so smart, why aren’t you running her physical and cognitive therapy?”

“If you’re so good at this, why has mother fucking WebMD given us more answers?”
Pulling your wallet from your jacket pocket, you produce a five dollar bill, tossing it on the table before shoving your hands and wallet back into the depths of the leather surrounding you. “I promised you coffee. There you go,” you say to her before pushing yourself from the table, turning towards the elevator.

No more than four steps from the doctor, you hear her voice ring out over the sounds of echoing footsteps and small scale conversations around you. “Her GCS score is 14,” she says, stopping you in your tracks.

“Her what?” you ask, turning on your heel to find Abby standing at the same table that you just left, offering you a seat.

“Sit down Bellamy,” she says, pleading more than demanding as she pulls your chair back out for you. After watching her for a second, you agree, making it known in your body posture that she has your attention, but that’s it. “The Glasgow Coma Scale is used to measure brain injury based off of three criteria,” she begins before glancing over your expression, noticing that she’s already lost you. “Okay….” She tries again, laying her hands out on the table in front of you. “On a scale of 3 to 15, Clarke is 14… She lost a point for her lack of control in her right leg… She’s going to need physical therapy but there’s no reason why she can’t make a full recovery.” You sigh, watching as Abby crumbles in front of you, leaning forward to place her elbows in the table, laying her face in her hands as her shoulder rock back and forth, a small shudder escaping her lips as she bites back tears. “I haven’t been working on her case because I can’t bring myself to enter that room.”

And now you feel like an asshole.

The words continue to flow from Abby’s mouth as you sulk deeper into your seat, trying to disappear entirely.

“I can’t look her in the eyes and tell her that I have no clue how to help her.”

“I can’t look her in the eyes and say ‘hey, I’m sorry, but you’ll have to wait.’”

“I can’t look her in the eyes and say, ‘I know I’m your mother and I promised to protect you, but I am useless.’”

“I can’t look her in the eyes and say, ‘I know I’m a neurosurgeon but the best I can do is give you a band-aid and hope for the best.’”

By the time Abby looks up at you and finishes with “I can’t,” you might as well be a puddle on the floor, flooding over and merging with her tears as they stream lines down her thin cheeks onto her neck.

“What I can do,” she says, tossing the five dollars back at you before exhaling to regain her composure, “is what I do best… I can continue to lobby for Kane to administer a norepinephrine receptor agonist into Clarke’s brain that could potentially help speed up the process of recovery… but other than that, only you guys can help her…” You turn your eyes up to Abby who is now staring at your with wide eyes filled with tears. “You’re the only ones who can tell her who she really is… I missed that opportunity.”

Without thinking, you lean forward, placing a hand on Abby’s, suddenly overwhelmed by her acknowledgement of her absence in her daughter’s life.

“We need you too,” you say to her, not sure why, but thankful that you did when you see the smile crack across her broken, sad face. “We’re going to need all of us.”
Making your way through the crowded hospital for the first time since Clarke woke up almost a week ago, you can barely control the excitement bubbling inside of you. It feels almost wrong to be this happy while pacing through the white walls, watching as others suffer while you smile, knowing you’re about to see one of your favorite people on earth.

Honestly, it took almost losing Clarke and watching your sister basically rise from her own ashes to realize how much this family meant to you. It took almost losing Clarke for you to realize that you really needed a mentor.

You sister was great, but she wasn’t Clarke. Lexa expected things from you… things that you felt like you could never give. She wanted straight As. She wanted soccer scholarships. She wanted high energy and constantly go-go-go while Clarke simply wanted you to be happy… and something about this made you extremely comfortable around her.

Rounding the corner, two-pound bag of yellow starburst in hand (you can’t even begin to explain the hell you had to go through to find this stupid fucking bag, but you remembered Bellamy mentioning that these were her favorite at some point or another and decided ‘why the hell not’) it becomes more clear, however, that this was not a good time. As you approach Room 343, a voice that you’ve never heard echoes loudly though a cracked door, causing your stomach to twist and turn inside of you.

Leaning your pony-tailed head against the wall, you listen carefully, brushing some of your bangs from your eyes.

“I don’t understand where the fuck this is coming from!” Clarke’s voice calls out, shaking as if she’s breathing through tears. “I know you’ve been disappointed in me since…”

“Please stop,” the other woman asks, the sound of her heels echoing across the floor as she paces towards the door, making you almost want to run in fear before she turns again, taking strides away from you. Crisis averted. “I honestly couldn’t give any less concern with your little hospital that you and Kane have built here. The fact stands that you’re stagnant Clarke.”

“Mom…”

This was Clarke’s mother? A small gasp escapes your lips as you turn your head, trying to peek through the crack in the door to catch sight of the woman who you’ve only heard about in passing. Honestly, Dr. Griffin was kind of like a unicorn to you… You’ve heard all about her, but never seen her… You’ve wanted her to be real, but you always kind of guessed that she wasn’t. I mean, how could one person be so mean?

“No Clarke, this isn’t up for discussion… I just wanted to talk to you about the options for your therapy and you somehow turned this into me being a terrible mother again…”

Well maybe if she wasn’t…

“Well maybe if you weren’t,” Clarke begins, as if she’s reading your mind.

Dr. Griffin sighs and you can basically feel her rubbing her temples from across the room. “You just don’t get it, Clarke… You’ve quit. You stopped trying to become anything more… You stopped trying to be…”

“To be you?” Clarke asks as a nurse walks past you, attempting to ask if you need anything before you blow her off like she’s trying to interrupt your own conversation.
The silence lingering in the room just beyond this wall makes your skin crawl and you have to wonder how Clarke is feeling… I mean, she’s basically being attacked right now…

“No, baby,” Dr. Griffin finally replies, her naming of Clarke making your blood curdle. Who was she to try to be nice suddenly? “It’s just… you had so much drive… you had so many plans…”

“And then what? I found out they weren’t mine? I let you stop planning my life? I grew up?”

The doctor exhales so slowly that you can almost hear her pain, almost making you feel sorry for her… almost.

“No, Clarke,” she says with a small whimper. “Then your father died.” And that did it. A tear begins to fall down your cheek and you suddenly realize-- Abby Griffin is probably just as broken as you are… just as broken as all of you are…

---

CLARKE

Who the hell is she to talk about your father as if she ever gave a damn about either of you?

“You don’t even know me,” you remind her, making sure to add in statements like ‘you were never even there’ and ‘when did you start caring?’ This was exactly what the doctors said to avoid-- deep and upsetting conversations that could trigger an emotional outburst, but this was exactly where you wanted to be-- hashing out years of unresolved tension with the woman who birthed you into this world.

Your mother nods, saying “That’s true, but I did… and for a while there, I thought you were going to make it work, but then you gave up again… just like in high school.

“What the fuck does that mean?” You’re raging at this point. Honestly, your mother has no clue what she’s talking about. You pushed yourself all through high school, just like she wanted you to-- and it only got better after your father died. You only got faster and stronger and smarter and…

But then you didn’t…

And now you remember…

_Sitting inside of the guidance counselor’s office was much like sitting inside of a dentist waiting room. There was some sort of weird smell from a fabreeze air freshener plugged into the wall as well as a random assortment of old magazines thrown about, a picture of Mr. Fernandez with someone who looks entirely too old to be his son, and a copy of the man’s diploma-- proof of absolutely nothing as far as you’re convinced._

“So Clarke, what brings you in today?” he asks, spinning his chair around to face you. “Getting ready for city finals?”

_Honestly, you had forgotten about the meet. Honestly, you had forgotten about everything except for the sealed envelope in your hands. Sliding it over the desk top to the man, your hands and eyes drop back to your lap as he opens it, eyes shifting to read it carefully, expression dropping with each word._

“So,” he begins awkwardly, _folding the paper up and returning it to the envelope. “Now you know, bulimia isn’t always about food, right?”_
His tact seemed a little bit unprofessional at the time-- and honestly, it probably was… but it was exactly what you needed…

And your mother…

Here…

Now…

Was exactly what you needed…

“I…” you begin, taking a breath before trying again. “I just don’t want to be hurt again…”

You watch as your mother’s expression travels the full spectrum from angry, to void, to sad, to, basically, grief as her hands drop from her face that she was rubbing to release tension. With mouth and arms dangling in front of her, she takes the seat beside her, laying her face in her hands and her elbows on her knees before speaking through the cover. “I never meant to…”

No… no no no… that’s not where this was supposed to go… you weren’t supposed to break her too…

First Lexa…

Then everyone else…

Now her…

And you can’t handle this…

“Mom, I don’t… You need to know something…”

It’s time that your mother knew the entirety of your situation. She had been kept in the dark long enough about how bad your illness had gotten and keeping this secret was just too much weight on your shoulders… especially now.

She needs to know why you’re afraid you try harder.

She needs to know why you’re afraid to be her.

She needs to know why you’re afraid to push yourself.

She needs to know that you have no control.

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**OCTAVIA**

**BabyAlexMorgan (2:42 PM):** Hey do you have a minute

**Octavia (2:46 PM):** What’s up Allstar?

**BabyAlexMorgan (2:49 PM):** Coffee in the lobby?

**Octavia (2:54 PM):** You asking me out on a date?

**BabyAlexMorgan (2:55 PM):** 10 minutes?
Octavia (2:59 PM): I’ll be there

It wasn’t necessarily out of the norm for Tris to text you, especially since Clarke’s waking and Tris not having been allowed into the hospital due to paperwork or HIPPA or some other bullshit, but it was unusual for her to ask to meet up. After all, the girl had been filling her time with 2-a-day practices, working out with her brother (which you weren’t opposed to at all…), and her new girlfriend. It was bizarre that she suddenly NEEDED to see you… but you weren’t arguing. Tris was like family…

Hell, Tris was family-- especially if that jewelry store receipt that you found in Lincoln’s bathroom had any merit like you were reading into it…

“What’s up short-stack?” you ask the taller, younger girl, flipping her ponytail from behind with one hand while the other dragged a chair over to the table that she was sitting at.

She smiles, leaning in to hug you before you can even actively respond. “Tell me about Clarke’s disorder,” she says bluntly, knocking the wind out of your lungs as she does.

“Her what?” you ask, hoping that you’re talking about two different things. You see, when Clarke was released from therapy, you took an oath to her to never talk with anyone who didn’t already know about her issues with her body and with food-- and more in particular, with control.

“I overheard her and Dr. Griffin talking and I know all about it, but… Why didn’t I know about it?”

Tears are now swelling up in the younger girl’s eyes as you watch her crumble in front of you.

“How do you go about explaining to a child that they don’t understand?

How do you go about telling a child that the world is extremely hard?

How do you begin this conversation?

“Okay,” you finally sigh, giving up the internal debate and just deciding to go with it. Looking around to make sure everything’s all clear, you begin the story from the top with, “I received a call at 4:36 AM from Bellamy at the hospital…”

You can’t clearly remember, but if you had to guess, you’d say that Tris never took her eyes off of you the entire time-- not until you reach the words “Clarke Griffin is terrified of stress because Clarke Griffin is terrified of relapse.”

And some small flash of recognition in her eyes allows you to know that the point has gotten across.

Clarke Griffin doesn’t try because Clarke Griffin is always scared.

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TRIS

Walking through that door was entirely too easy after meeting with Octavia (it couldn’t hurt that Dr. Griffin wasn’t around to look judgey or overly critical either). In fact, you didn’t even feel the need to paint a fake smile over your face as you barged into the room, tossing the starburst bag at the woman who you needed to be strong so that you could have hope for healing and order her around.
“You need to get over this and be great,” you say to her, pointing a finger at her while your other hand sits on your hip. “My sister deserves someone great… I deserve someone great… For fuck’s sake Clarke, you deserve to be someone great.”

There’s not a single question across her face while she watches you basically shout at her… not until she looks around and says, “I’m not sure that I remember you…”
I don't love you but I always will

Chapter Notes

I regret nothing. This chapter has been 5 days in the making now and after having to take 2 tests, a rank test in Taekwondo, classes beginning, working insane hours, and planning insane events, I finally have something of substance to offer you.

First, let me tell you how awesome this project has been to work on. With one more chapter left to post, it's bitter sweet, but I have had so much fun working on this for you and I hope you had just as much fun reading it.

Second, let's not be strangers. I've loved getting to know a lot of you on tumblr. Follow me and let's continue to be friends! Getting messages from everyone has been the highlight of this writing experience! shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

Third, the playlist is updated and will be for the last chapter as it's completed. Check it at: http://8tracks.com/roliver4/learning-to-breathe-by-roliver4

Fourth, don't forget to subscribe to me or whatever on here. I've started working on a new The 100 themed fan fic based off of the SOCIAL MEDIA AU posts that have been circulating on tumblr and I'm really excited to see where that goes. I'm hoping it'll be a pretty big project so get excited!

Finally, here's chapter 29, the next to last chapter, where Clarke gets sad, Octavia gets mad, Lincoln loses his shit, Bellamy breaks our heart, Lexa has to talk to Costia and I keep my promises. Leave comments and scream at me if you hate it.

I love you guys! Thanks for making this the best thing ever!

CLARKE

It’s become sort of normal for Bellamy to come crashing into your room, tossing you random food items that you’re technically not supposed to be eating (but who the fuck really cares when you’ve been in a coma for 20 days… you don’t!) and it had sort of become like home with starburst wrappers and twinkie boxes scattered across the tables. In fact, the custodian named Gustus, a large, burley sort of man who wielded his mop like a sword, had begun asking that your “brother stop eating so much if he’s going to live like a slob,” causing you and Octavia to erupt into a fit of laughter as Bellamy simply blushed, pulling his leather jacket tighter over his arms. In that moment, you got a glimpse of what Bellamy was like as a child, curly hair shielding his eyes that cast a small shadow over the protruding lower lip, sulking like he just got caught doing something that he wasn’t supposed to. In that moment, you almost felt normal.

Because of how typical hospital life had begun seeming, nothing was unusual when Bellamy burst into your room wielding a bag of skittles and laughing about your jello container pyramid on the table next to the bed…

Nothing except for the fact that tears were streaming down your face for reasons that you couldn’t explain…
But sadly that had sort of become normal too…

At least for you and Bellamy.

“What are you thinking about?” your friend asks, rolling the table away gently so as to not disturb your sculpture of sorts. When his task was complete, he pushed his way into the bed, not even waiting for you to offer, kicking off his boots and throwing his legs over yours, poking a skittle from his pocket towards your face to sway you into eating it.

Instead, you pull away, shaking the single ear bud from your ear before attempting to respond, simply groaning instead. There’s really no way to explain what you were thinking of…

Because you still had no clue what you were thinking of.

Shaking his head, Bellamy sighs, obviously fighting back slight amounts of frustration as he bites his lower lip, thinking really hard before shoving another handful of skittles in his mouth and smiling at you awkwardly, skittle pieces poking out from between his teeth. “I guess I should ask you an easier question, huh?” he asks of you, swallowing down the sugar when he realizes that you’re not laughing with him. “How’s the whole Lexa thing going?”

And how the fuck was that supposed to be easier?

Turning your head to glare at Bellamy, you almost miss the nurse who is coming in to change out your IV and check your stats quickly before leaving the room again. You’d think that after 10 days of being awake and alive that they’d let you home, but nope… apparently being in a coma necessitates being on watch… especially when you haven’t completely regained the feeling in your right side… but that would come with physical therapy or something.

“I’m only asking because we never finished that convo,” he adds, shifting his weight to sit up taller in the bed.

You sigh deeply, brushing your hair back from your face and pulling it into a pony tail, nails scratching across the small scar forming just above your eyebrow, a constant reminder of where your head impacted with the steering wheel and where you were supposed to have died… and of that damn hula dancer…

You can actually play out the memory of every scar on your body clearly, but none of them as clear as this one-- which was particularly surprising saying that the months before it were still a blur, coming and going in flashes of song lyrics or random smells and tastes.

And today, more than anything, you’ve had one line of one song stuck in your head over and over again, screaming out, reminding you that it’s important, but not explaining why.

“Listen to this,” you finally say to Bellamy after many minutes of silence between you two where you picked at your fingers and he shoved more processed sugar into his system. Unwrapping the earbuds from your ipod, you hand him one, tucking the other inside of your left ear before pushing the back button and starting the song over, still not knowing why it should mean anything at all to you.

And then the prechorus…

“She said it's alright. She said no don't die alone. There's no goodbyes…”

And then the chorus…
“Lightning comes and lightning goes…”

And for some reason, you find yourself swallowing down a lump in your throat…

“And it's all the same to me…”

And then there’s a familiar burn of tears in your eyes, but you don’t even notice them until it’s too late…

“Let it in…”

And when you try to blink them away, new ones form in their place…

“Cuz I want you so…”

But you’re not even sad…

“I can hardly breathe or release…”

And thinking back to this song, you can almost place it…

“Into one thousand pieces I have broke into over you…”

Like you heard it before...

“The chain will soon be gone…”

In the arms of someone you love…

“I keep burning on and on and on…”

By the end of the song, tears are streaming down sides of your face and for some reason, all you want to do is see Lexa, but as Bellamy hands you back the earbud, shrugging his shoulders and apologizing, you exhale slowly, regaining yourself and remembering that you’re the one that has to make things happen… She can’t just sit around and wait on you…

Even if you want her to…

“Sorry dude,” Bellamy says again as you wrap the cable around your ipod, rubbing your eyes with the palms of your hands. “I like Third Eye Blind… but all I can offer is the reassurance that you were completely and utterly in love with Lexa…” swallowing deeply, he pops his knuckles as you wait for the silver lining in the situation. I mean, he’s told you that same fact at least thirty-seven times before and it’s never helped anything. “But,” he begins, catching you slightly off guard as all of your questions dissipate into the air around you. “Maybe, knowing that will be enough… and if not,” he continues, sliding his legs off of the bed and shoving his feet into his shoes. “Maybe knowing that Lexa is still completely in love with you will be.”

As you exhale slowly, pushing back the darkness that was inching towards you, Bellamy reaches behind his body, taking the ipod from your hand and shuffling through the songs, grumbling about your poor taste in music. Once he stops scrolling, he pushes play then pause and hands the device off to you, staring you straight in the eyes as he speaks softly and slowly, saying “Listen to that,” before walking towards the door, turning back quickly to kiss your forehead and then return out the door.

Once his body was far out of the way of the metal frame, the tears began to flow again just as the guitar medley opens into a rhythmic verse of harmonized voices.
“I trace your hair back from your face. Will you tell if I, if I pull too tight? We can hardly stand alone, but we won’t fall down…”

With a shaking thumb lingering over the pause button, you want it to stop, until you get to the bridge that is.

“I’ll wait for you but only if you want me to. We’re all scared to have to feel something or let someone in. You’ve successfully found your way under my skin.”

Pulling your phone from the bedside table, you swipe open your text messages, clicking on the fourth name on the list, fingers dancing through the air above the keyboard as you ponder what to type. This waltz continues through the song on repeat three times before curiosity takes over you. How has it taken you this long to scroll through the old texts on the cracked iphone before you? How have you not realized what a valuable resource this could be? How did you not know?

Swiping over, you read out loud the last text that you sent to Bellamy before your car wreck, shivering as the words leave your mouth. “She was never supposed to mean this much to me. She was just some girl. I accidentally loved her and now I can’t stop…”

And that’s exactly what you felt…

It felt like breaking…

It felt like healing…

It felt like losing hope…

It felt like finding life.

It felt like wanting to flee…

It felt like coming home…

Suddenly, you remember the first word that she said to you… ‘Fuck’ as you knocked her over, breaking her nose in the process.

Suddenly, you remember the feeling of her lips on yours that first night, alcohol coursing through your veins as you pushed her against your bedroom door, hearing Bellamy’s music grow louder in the room next door.

Suddenly, you remember the butterflies in your stomach as you heard her whisper the words “I love you” while Divergent in the background of your bedroom.

It’s not a lot, but it’s enough…

“We’re all scared to have to feel something or let someone in. You’ve successfully found your way under my skin.”

It’s enough.

Clicking on Lexa’s message, you stare at it for what seemed like ages as the same song played on repeat again and again. And then the words flowed through your earbuds into your fingertips.

**Clarke (9:07AM)**: We’re all scared to have to feel something or let someone in. You’ve successfully found your way under my skin.
LINCOLN

Hearing that terrible voice of that terrible girl behind you made you shiver, but hearing your name slip from her terrible tongue was even worse. You snap around quickly, catching those terrible eyes and that terrible smile which almost drowns out everything around you. As your sights close in on this terrible woman, you note a few differences in her appearance that you weren’t expecting.

First, there’s the obvious-- she’s pregnant… which is surprising saying how staunchly, proactively gay she was… is… whatever… her sexual identity and expression was and is none of your business. She could totally be gay and still be with a guy if she wanted to be… That was her M.O.

“Lincoln, it’s great to see you…”

Second, her face was rounder-- and not just due to the pregnancy. She seemed like she filled out-- like she was clean. Again, it’s none of your business. Drugs were her thing and as long as she wasn’t hurting anyone else, and as long as she stayed way the far away from your sister, she could do whatever she wanted-- but she didn’t look like a drug user (whatever the fuck that meant). Her cheek bones were defined yet filled. Her eyes were no longer sunken back, but rather welcoming and inviting.

“I was wondering if you could do me a favor…”

Third, the woman was dressed modestly in a simple green v-neck tshirt that covered most of the tattoos that you knew for a fact that she had, topping a pair of jeans and converse that actually didn’t look like they had been fed through a wood chipper… all of this being said, clothes are superficial… but she looked put together… No leather… no safety pins and patches… She looked like an adult-- whatever that meant…

“I was hoping to get brunch with Lexa today if you could ask her to meet me…”

Finally, she spoke with a sense of purpose, using words to convey feeling rather than appearing isolated and withdrawn. She spoke as if she actually cared what conversation you were having and as if she actually gave a damn about what your reply would be.

“I’ll be downstairs in the lobby today after an appointment…”

And then you realize-- all of these things that you’ve been naming, you’ve been trying to find a reason to criticize, but there wasn’t any. Everything that you had against Costia was 5 years in the making. Everything that you had against Costia should have had an expiration date. Everything that you had against Costia had changed.

As she smiles at you, handing you a small sheet of paper with 10 digits scribbled across it, you find yourself nodding, agreeing to every word that she had said before you even knew any better.

“Great thanks! You’re the best!” And with that, the brunette was gone, taking her adult life and well put-together aura with her, leaving you with her phone number and the knowledge that you had just signed your sister up for brunch with her ex-- whether she wanted to go or not.

“Fuck,” you mumble as you glance over the scrap of paper with her phone number, contemplating how easy it would be to happen to lose it. Lexa didn’t have to know… I mean, it’s not like it would make the biggest difference if Lexa didn’t meet with her-- it’s not like she’d have to see Costia regularly and be reminded of the event that never occurred.
“What’s this?” You girlfriend asks, hopping up to you, jumping slightly to kiss your cheek as she takes the paper from you before you can stop her. “Did someone give you their number?” she asks when you don’t respond, a small laugh exiting her lips. “Who do I have to kill?”

Glancing Octavia over once, you can’t help but feel a sense of pride in your girlfriend. Everything about her was perfect for you. She was beautiful and stunning, patient and kind, funny and selfless, and she challenged you daily to be a better, stronger, and more considerate man-- especially lately.

“Okay, what the fuck is your deal?” Octavia’s voice rings out from her bathroom as you rummage through a bag in the kitchen space, pulling the groceries from it, only half listening to your girlfriend’s argument. “You’ve been a walking tampon tassel for days now and I’m about over it.”

Scoffing slightly, you ignore her, knowing that responding with what you have to say will just make the situation worse. Yes, you’ve been a dick lately, but that shouldn’t excuse her lashings towards you.

“I mean, you have nothing to say?” You can feel her head popping around the corner of the bathroom door, most likely with a hair straightener attached to her brown locks or with a toothbrush exiting one side of her mouth.

“Nope,” was your only reply as you juggle between avocados and oranges, opening the fridge with your foot and placing the fruit in their homes.

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me,” a muffled groan exits the bathroom. Toothbrush.

The conversation at hand was weeks in the making and the bubbling of anger within your chest was rising as you heard footsteps approaching you from behind, the sound of her bare feet echoing against the wood floors. Turning quickly, your shoulder is immediately met with a shove from her right hand, pushing you into the counters.

“What the fuck, Octavia?” you shout as you knock over a bag full of pasta, hearing it hit the floor as your eyes focus on your angry girlfriend.

“Fight fucking back,” her voice demands, another shove to your shoulder pushing you against the counter to again.

Rage washes over you and it must be obvious as her expression drops quickly from anger to fear, eyes glazing over as she takes a step back. “I’m done with this bullshit,” you say before you can stop it, grabbing the sides of her arms tightly and giving her a slight shake. Well, it’s done now… better go with it. “You need to stop with this hot and cold shit. Do you fucking hear me?” Her fear intensifies. “I don’t know what the fuck is going on, but it’s not my fault.”

And it wasn’t…

None of this was…

“I didn’t drive through that red light…” A tear. “I didn’t almost kill your best friend…” A shudder. “I didn’t deliver the bad news…” A deep inhale. “I didn’t do any of this…” A broken outward breath. “And I’m not going to let you blame me any more… Do you understand?”

She nods as you release her arms, watching her body slump slightly, making you realize that you were almost lifting your petite girlfriend from her toes. You stare at each other for what feels like ages before she falls forward, wrapping her arms around your waist, exhaling into your chest with a tremble that breaks your heart more than you thought could ever happen again.
“I’m scared,” she admits almost silently, your arms finding their way across her shoulders. “Things are going to change… Nothing’s ever going to be the same.”

She wasn’t wrong…

The doctors had discussed it with Lexa earlier that day-- Clarke was going to need months of physical therapy... Her right leg my never heal entirely and the right arm would always be weak. She’d probably never practice medicine again… at least not for a long time, if at all. She’d never be able to hold a paint brush properly with her right hand and she’d never be able to hear fully from her right ear.

For Clarke, everything was going to change the minute she stood from that bed…

For you on the outside, everything would change too… Everything would have to change in order to help Clarke adjust…

Family game nights would have to be different.

Vacations and family gatherings would have to be different.

Hell, even dinner would have to be different.

Everything would change, but that’s what was needed…

That’s what you did to get by…

“All great changes are preceded by chaos.” You mumble into her hair, quoting Deepak Chopra, feeling her breathing steady under you. “I’m not the best at dealing with this,” your explanation begins as you shudder at your own feelings. “But I want to be… for Clarke… for Lexa… for you.”

“Earth to Lincoln, you piece of shit,” Octavia jokes, jumping up and down into your line of sight as you return to reality. “What’s this?”

Shaking your head slightly, you bite your lip before taking the paper back from her and pocketing it. “Lexa’s ex,” is all you say, wrapping your arms around your girlfriend and kissing the top of her head.

Octavia hisses a little before speaking a small “Boo, hiss…” asking you if you’re going to give it to her. Nodding, you don’t exactly understand why, but it just seems the right thing to do. If nothing else, you need closure yourself.

And almost as if on cue, Lexa rounds the corner as you release Octavia, smiling with a slight wave over to you.

“Why are we in the hallway?” she asks, approaching the two of you with a small fear spreading across her face. Hugging Octavia first, your sister then wraps her small arms around you whispering a small “hello brother,” to you as you kiss her forehead, reassuring her that everything’s fine.

“Just chatting,” Octavia lies, offering the floor to you to decide.

Reaching your hand into your shirt pocket, you produce the small, blue piece of paper containing that terrible woman’s name followed by ten numbers that could ruin everything for you. “She wants you to meet her downstairs this afternoon for brunch.

Octavia’s face scrunches up in her obvious ‘You didn’t tell me that’ look as she turns against your
sister, glaring you down. You simply shrug, not knowing what else to do. Lexa just exhales, her brown eyes gliding over the numbers as if she’s read them a thousand times.

“Okay?” she asks before glancing back up at you. “Is that… it?”

“Can… can you handle her?” you stumble, looking your sister up and down as if you were looking for new damage like you had done thousands of times before. It was almost second nature at this point to glance her over, wondering in what ways she’s pondered the death of her body-- even if it’s been years since that was a valid concern.

She laughs slightly, reaching up on her toes to kiss your cheek before shoving the paper into her back pocket. “I’m fine little brother.”

She’s fine… Even if it was a lie… She’s fine

You’re fine…

---

LEXA

You’re not fine.

In spite of what you told Lincoln, you’re not fine and you’ve never been fine. This was not how you wanted to spend your morning-- meeting with your ex-- that ex-- over coffee and rehashing years of therapy and hundreds of terrible thoughts. But you didn’t get to choose what happened to you and this was becoming more and more apparent daily.

And this becomes more apparent when the elevator opens and you see her, leaning over her phone at the first table, smiling at whatever text message or cat meme she was looking at. Running would be easy. Allowing the elevator door to close with you still in it-- returning to the third floor-- climbing into bed with Clarke-- ignoring your ex in the lobby waiting in you-- it would all be easy. Glancing up, another smile spreads across her face as she notices you, standing from her chair and embracing you when you arrive at the table. Too late.

“Lexa, It’s so good to see you!” her voice pierces you, wounding you deeply as you approach.

She can’t be nice to you.

You can’t find reason to see her as human.

Instead of offering words as a response, you nod, taking the seat across from her.

“I’m sorry to hear about your girlfriend…”

Whoop, there it is… She can’t speak of Clarke… That’s not allowed…

“If there’s anything that Cage and I can do, let us know.” And again, you nod… and finally she’s catching on. As her brows furrow, she stares at you, cradling the small cup in her hand. “Look, I know this is probably weird…”

You can say that…

“And I know I kind of fucked up in the past…”

Kind of is an understatement…
“But a lot of things have changed since then…”

Again… no shit…

Your body is pleading to flea as you tap your foot on the floor, shaking your leg and knotting your fingers up in your lap as you wait, listening to the words exiting her mouth almost too slowly for you. By the time that this conversation played itself out, you had sat in silence for a grand total of 11 minutes, listening to Costia explain away the years of abuse that you endured not only her hands but your own as you just nodded in acknowledgement, craving more than ever to just get up, the other woman in midsentence, and leave…

But that wasn’t you.

That was never you.

“Look,” you say, placing your hands out on the table in submission. Costia looks surprised, dark eyes blinking against her tan face. “This is great… really, I’m happy for you and all, but I can’t do this…”

“No, Lexa…” her voice interrupts your speech, a hand reaching out to touch yours throwing you off guard. Pulling back your hand, you hold it close to your chest, protecting it from her touch. You weren’t expecting a fight… You weren’t expecting her to touch you… You weren’t expecting any of this… “That’s the point that I’m making… I’m sorry… for everything…”

What?

“I ruined a lot of things for you…”

Well yes.

“And I caused you a lot of pain…”

Well yes.

“And I’ve often thought about you and wondered if you ever thought of me…”

Well yes.

“And I just need to know that you’re okay…”

Well yes.

“And I need you to know how sorry I am… for everything. And then you’ll never have to do anything again…”

And that was enough. The look in her eyes, the tears beginning their paths down her face, the tremble in her voice and the shake in her hands… Everything, for the first time since you met Costia that day outside of your dorm building running on sidewalk was real. For the first time, Costia was real.

She was sober. She was clean. There was nothing coursing through her veins. There was nothing clouding her brain. And for the first time ever, you saw the real Costia under it all…

And honestly, it wasn’t worth it…

None of it was worth it…
Biting your lower lip, you nod, fighting back your own tears.

“I’ve always loved you Lexa…”

“I’m glad to see that you’re well.”

“Lexa?” a soft, familiar voice rescues you from the awkwardness that was basically bleeding from you, just in time to help you catch a breath. Turning to your right, you catch your sister standing almost too close to you, duffle bag in hand. “What are you….”

“Tris!” Costia interrupts, standing from her chair and embracing your sister who doesn’t move. Instead, Tris’s eyes meet yours, glaring deeply into you as you mouth ‘I’m sorry,’ to her. When Costia releases the younger girl, she exhales slowly, obviously still uncomfortable with everything. “Well, I’ll let you two get to Clarke.”

Fuck. She did it again… She mentioned your… Clarke…

“It’s been great, Lexa,” your ex says, pulling you in for another hug before turning against you, making her way towards the exit.

Turning her immediate attention towards you, Tris stares you down for a moment before you shrug. “Well that was awkward,” her voice finally laughs as she reaches an arm out, wrapping it around your shoulder.

Awkward was an understatement, but that was closure and if there was any one thing that you knew, it was that you needed closure.

As you exit the elevator on the third floor, you immediately lose your sister into Clarke’s room, excitement rushing over her face as she turns that corner, Clarke’s greeting loud enough to hear a few steps off.

Even with her lack of memory, Clarke was welcoming to your sister, trying hard to relearn their relationship and this amazed you. If nothing else, this whole amnesia thing, or whatever the hell was actually happening with you two, was showing you one thing in particular-- Clarke Griffin’s heart was far too large for this world. Even when she had no clue who your sister even was, she welcomed the girl in, knowing and understanding that she needed someone-- and boy was that ever true.

“Come with me to get snacks,” Bellamy basically orders you, pulling you around towards the elevator that you just left, turning you against Clarke’s room. “Give them a moment.”

You can’t help but chuckle slightly as the doors close, Bellamy noting your laughter and smiling back. “So how’s everything going with Clarke?” you ask him, wondering about any new information that the doctors may have given.

Just as the speaker dings and the L.C.D. flashes the number 2, your friend turns his head towards you, shoving his hands in the pockets of his leather coat. You know that look… That’s the look that strikes fear into your life. That’s the look that explains how uncomfortable you’re about to be. That’s the look that you hate.

Ding-1.

The doors open to reveal a nearly empty lobby, the lunch rush having dispersed to their own places and leaving just you, Bellamy, and two other patrons in the corner sucking on smoothies through
brightly colored bendy straws. “I should really be asking you that question, shouldn’t I?” your curly haired friend asks, stopping at a table and pulling out a chair for you to sit in, taking a seat across from you.

Taking his offer, your body slumps into the chair, unable to hold it anymore. How does he always do this? How does he always know?

“Have you read The Prince by Machiavelli?” you ask your friend whose face instantly lights up as he nods violently. Throwing a finger out between the two of you, he pauses you before sprinting to the empty counter, placing a quick order and receiving two cups from the cashier, paying and then returning to his seat in front of you, handing you one of the Styrofoam cups that you’ve grown accustomed to living out of while Clarke’s been here. Taking it from him, you lift it to your face, smelling the hot chocolate with a small smirk. He remembered that you don’t like coffee… “I feel like I’m living The Prince right now,” you explain finally after taking a few sips of the hot chocolate. It was warm and the feeling of the liquid sliding down your throat comforted you slightly from inside of your chest. But nothing could completely comfort the tremble that was building inside of you.

“Where the willingness is great, the difficulties cannot be great,” Machiavelli’s quote flows from your mouth before the cup returns to your lips.

Bellamy nods through his own cup, silently pondering your words before he sets the Styrofoam on the table, turning his attention up to you. “Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are,” he quotes back in return, a smile flashing across his beautiful, cocky face. You can’t help but smile back, the feeling of contagion spreading to you. “Look, I don’t have a lot to offer you,” he begins, turning the cup in his hands.

Shrugging, you turn your cup around in your hands in return, watching the liquid on the inside turn around the edges. As tears begin to swell up in the pits of your eyes, you try to blink them back down, releasing them across your face instead. “I just wonder what would have happened if….” Pausing, you sigh deeply, your chest rising and falling with the tremor inside of you. “If I had stayed, would any of this have happened?”

Bellamy just shrugs, drinking from his cup again, finishing it off. “I just need one thing from you.” You glance up from the remains of your drink, looking your friend in his dark eyes. His pupils are massive, flooding into the rest of his eyes as he takes a deep breath, fighting back his own demons. “Just promise me you’re going to be okay-- no matter what…”

As you lift your hands to cover your face, Bellay intercepts them in his, pulling you from your chair and into the space beside the table with him, embracing you and holding you close. “Who we are and who we need to be to survive are two very different things,” he repeats to you the words that he spoke that morning when you were opened into his world of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but this time in a different tone. This time he was comforting instead of pushing away. This time he was begging instead of ordering. This time he was your friend instead of your fuck-buddy’s roommate. This time you loved him and this time he loved you.

“Look up the song Blossom by Noah Gunderen,” he orders you, releasing you and taking your cup from the table. “I promised Griffin some skittles, but I need you to hear that song before you go back in there, okay?” You nod as your friend kisses the top of your head, tossing your cups and napkins into the trashcan beside your table and making his way towards the cashier again before heading to the elevator with a smile and a wave, leaving you and your tears at the center table, alone and silent.

Sliding your body back into your chair, you pull your phone from your back pocket, immediately opening youtube and typing the words with a shaky hand. Every time that someone has introduced you to a new song over the past few months, it’s destroyed you in one way or another… and
honestly, as you press enter and wait for the results to pop up, you wonder how much more destruction you can take.

Not enough apparently because even as the guitar intro begins, the tightening in your chest escalates to the point of exhaustion as you attempt to hold yourself up.

Failing miserably, as Noah Gundersen’s voice echoes like a ghost during the first line, you collapse on the table, head hiding under your arms as your phone continues to sing to you.

“Forego your hope. Save it from the ashes of the will you wrote. Everything passes away”

And then the piano begins, playing the symphony which accompanies the ballet that your tears perform across the table top, dancing away from you as you exhale deeply.

“Hold out for what you thought you were making just long enough to realize you’re going the wrong way.”

As the bass line chimes in, pounding deeply in your chest, you hear every note echoed within your heart, pumping through your veins, supplying your body with not only the blood that it needs, but the numbness that’s rushing over each appendage. If you thought you were going to escape, those plans expired the moment your fingers began tingling as you shudder, unable to catch your breath.

“Oh you hold my heart forever but I can’t hold onto what’s not there. May you blossom like a flower. May you go dancing in the air.”

And of course there’s a fucking violin and djembe. Why wouldn’t the djembe and violin begin just as you’re about to break down. Listening to the sweet strings whine out just before the pre-chorus, you feel melting in your chest, the warmth spreading into your arms.

“Give up. Give back all that was taken. Return. Relax. This feeling is not here to stay.”

As the violin exits and leaves a near silence of the simplistic guitar for the chorus to begin, your breathing breaks, the sound of crying escaping your lungs and the feeling of anxiety rising in your chest. You’re not okay. You’re not going to be okay. If Clarke doesn’t remember you, you’re never going to be okay. Your entire life has centered around this woman and everything has changed, but you will never be okay.

“Oh you hold my heart forever, but I can’t hold onto what’s not there. May you blossom like a flower. May you go dancing in the air.”

Just as the last word enters your ear through the air around your head, you choke, forcing the contents of your stomach up into your throat. Shoving your body from the table, you sprint towards the bathroom, pushing into the first stall just in time to vomit into the toilet as your body collapses onto the floor next to the porcelain bowl. Heaving again, your body doesn’t let up, emptying everything, purging all emotions-- the ultimate catharsis.

“Oh you hold my heart forever.”

There’s absolutely nothing that you can do to save yourself.

“But I can’t hold onto what’s not there.”

If Clarke has given up on you, then you’re done.

“May you blossom like a flower.”
You need to let her go. You promised Bellamy.

“May you go dancing in the air.”

But you don’t even know how.

Sitting for a few more moments with snot and vomit running down your face, your back against the cold metal walls of the bathroom stall, you’re unfazed by the fact that you’re sitting on the public restroom floor, covered in your own filth and god knows what, with legs drawn into your chest as tears stream down your face. Nothing fazes you now except for those words. “Oh you hold my heart forever, but I can’t hold onto what’s not there…”

Leaning your head back, you pull some of the toilet paper from the dispenser, blowing your nose and wiping your face just as your phone vibrates. It’s probably Bellamy asking if you’ve listened to that song yet. Dismissing it, you close your eyes, feeling the cold metal against your head and neck, breathing in deeply and out slowly before reaching for your phone after you feel ready to take it on.

It wasn’t Bellamy…

And the words that you read take your breath away, cracking a smile across your face as tears begin to fall again-- for a different reason.

**Clarke (9:07AM):** We’re all scared to have to feel something or let someone in. You’ve successfully found your way under my skin.

---

**CLARKE**

Watching Lexa enter the room made your heart jump. As cliché as it seemed, you couldn’t help but get excited, suddenly wanting her closer to you. Smiling over at her, she grins back slightly, taking the chair next to your bed and making you crave her even more.

“Don’t look at me like that,” you mock as she slides her chair closer, placing her elbows on the bed. Reaching for her hand, you watch a smile spread across her face and you want more than anything to just say ‘I know you’, but words don’t come. Instead, when you open your mouth to speak again, your tongue dries out, leaving you speechless to watch the brunette smile at you.

“Like what?” she replies, lacing her fingers through yours, electricity surging from your fingertips into the rest of you. Almost instantly, words come to your mind and you can’t control them. *Katie, it's amazing how you were made for me.*

Shaking them off, you blink a few times before shifting your eyes from your hands to Lexa’s face. The way that her eyes are reflecting the light from the window to your right reminds you of home… of lying in bed with music playing and the sheets pulled over your head, whispering back and forth to each other. “Like I’m you’re everything,” you reply after a slight pause of admiring the woman attached to you. And then more words… *When you're not here in my bed, I can hardly sleep.*

Snorting a small laugh through her nose, Lexa’s eyes look you over once, starting at your fingertips and tracing up your arm, down your side back up to your eyes in a way that you can almost feel. Her eyes trail across your jaw line, a ghost sensation like fingertips before a kiss leaving you almost begging for her lips on yours. “But you are my everything,” she finally speaks, her voice rasping over as her words drill into you, creating a space for more lyrics to invade your brain. *But a part of me is lost inside these sheets.*
Reaching up to rub her eyes, Lexa exhales slowly before returning her elbows to the bed, leaning in to rest her chin on her hands. Without even realizing it, you reach a hand out, cupping the side of her head before running you fingertips through her silky hair. “Are you tired?” you ask, noticing how quick she is to close her eyes and the slight yawn that she’s fighting off as you stroke her scalp. Nodding, she explains how she hasn’t been sleeping well in her own bed and how work has been exhausting, but all you hear are those words invading your brain with no source: When you're not here in my bed, I can hardly sleep. Moving your hand away from her head, she opens her eyes quickly, looking in your direction with a small smile. Scooching over a bit, you pat the bed next to you, ushering the woman up with you.

Without hesitation, she climbs up, crawling under your arm as you lower the back of the bed slightly to more of a laying position, allowing her to curl up into a ball under your grasp. “Lexa?” you ask her after she’s done moving, receiving a small and groggy ‘mhmm’ response. Smiling with a small snort, you ask her “do you know the words ‘But a part of me is lost inside these sheets,’” another ‘mhmm’ coming from under your arm before the woman begins reaching around to her back pocket, producing her cell phone. As she scrolls through the apps and types stuff into search bars, you simply listen to her breathing beside you, wondering if she knew what you knew-- that you were, and are, and will forever be completely in love with her. “Does it mean anything to you?” you ask before a familiar guitar pattern rings out from her phone.

“It means everything to me,” she explains simply, placing the phone in your lap and curling back into her ball under your protection.

“I've written you a dozen tunes to try and make you mine. I guess it worked, cause here we are, a family”

With the light dancing off of her tanned skin, Lexa purses her lips, burying her face deeper into your side as you tighten your grip around her.

“But I feel lost, and I feel down. I can't think straight. So come right here, take my hand. Let's get away”

Exhaling slowly, you feel a surge of emotion rise up in you, but for the first time in days, you don’t want to cry.

“Katie, it's amazing how you were made for me. When you're not here in my bed, I can hardly sleep. But a part of me is lost inside these sheets”

Instead, you want to kiss her… you want to tell her… you want to ask her to stay forever with you, no matter what.

“I know that it seems silly 'Cause the other three sixty four you are laying in my bed, girl but I want more, I want more”

Instead, you want to pull her close… you want to plan your future… you want to run away with her.

“Katie, it's amazing how you were made for me. When you're not here in my bed, I can hardly sleep. I know that tomorrow you'll be staring back at me. But a part of me is lost inside these sheets.”

But instead, you close your eyes, sliding down slightly to hold the woman tighter in your grasp, inhaling deeply the scent of her hair as it floods around you--

Vanilla--
LEXA

As Clarke shivers herself awake, you smile at the woman who somehow, in her sleep, managed to roll herself into a ball in your lap. When you awoke, you found the blonde rolled up in your grasp, hair everywhere, arms flailed across your body, hot breath breathing down your chest. When you awoke, you found the woman that you love completely wrapped up in you and for the first time in months it felt like home.

For the first time in months, you were home.

Clarke nuzzled into you, exhaling slowly before her eyes shifted open slightly and a smile cracked across her face. “Good morning,” she says between yawns, voice rasping with sleep as she drags herself up your body, kissing your neck and sending a shock through your entire body. God, she’s perfect for you.

“You’re home,” you respond looking down to kiss her forehead. You want to tell her that you love her. You want to tell her that you will always love her, but words don’t come. Instead, you just watch her breathe, monitoring the rise and fall of her chest, simply thankful for this moment.

“Lexa?” Clarke’s voice asks of you in the darkness of your closed eyelids, only countered by the steady sound of her heart rate monitor that has become background static for you that you almost can’t sleep without. Every pulse, every beat, every sound is a part of your surroundings and a part of your life, keeping you grounded.

“mmhmm,” you mumble, inhaling slowly and deeply through your nose, exhaling the same way. You were comfortable with her head in the crook of your shoulder, breathing on your neck while her fingers wrapped themselves tightly in your two day old t-shirt.

“I’m sorry,” she begins before you shut her down, turning your head downward to look at her, shushing her in the process. The blonde looks shocked, her blue eyes lifting to meet yours, reminding you of a Nikita Gill poem. ‘She is the sea. She loves in floods, with the intensity of ten tempests. Or not at all.’ Clarke is the sea. Except Clarke loves in floods, with the intensity of at least ten thousands storms… but it’s that last part that still scares you the most… or not at all.

“You’re amazing,” you whisper, placing your hand on her head and pulling her closer to your chest again. She turns her head against you, laying her ear on your chest and sighing as she listens to your heartbeat, singing a familiar song that had been playing in your head for days now, crying your deepest fears.

You only know what I want you to… I know everything you don’t want me to.

For a few more moments, you sit in silence, simply listening as the other breathes and lives, arms wrapped tightly around each other before the tension begins rising and you can feel the words in Clarke’s chest, putting pressure on the air leaving her lungs. She wants to speak, but you terrified to hear what she has to say…

Oh your mouth is poison, your mouth is wine… You think your dreams are the same as mine.

“Lexa?” she begins again, this time not turning towards you. Instead her head stays resting on your chest, the vibrations of her voice rattling your internal organs, shaking you to your core. Your heart skips a beat as the sound waves reach it, causing you to breathe in slightly deeper than before. “We need to talk.” And here’s where the fear begins…

Oh I don’t love you but I always will… I always will.
Shifting slightly to face her, you turn your shoulders, faces just inches apart as you take a breath, trying to still the nerves inside of you that are screaming out to you. “I don’t remember a lot of things,” she begins, biting her upper lip as her eyes search for anything other than yours to stare at. “I can’t tell you what your birthday is… I can’t tell you what your favorite food is… I can’t tell you barely anything about the time that we spent together…”

*I wish you'd hold me when I turn my back… The less I give the more I get back.*

As you sigh deeply, a small shudder escaping your lips, your eyes meet hers as tears swell to match the blue seas before you. “I can’t tell you about when we fought or how we made up or when we loved… I can’t offer you a lot…”

*Oh your hands can heal. Your hands can bruise… I don't have a choice but I'd still choose you.*

There’s a pause in conversation and you swear in that moment that she can hear your heart as clearly as you can hear hers through the L.C.D. monitor behind her. Swallowing deeply, you try to not choke on the feelings that are building up in your throat, compacting into a solid mass, waiting for Clarke to finally break the silence. “But I want to learn… I always will…”

*Oh I don't love you but I always will… I always will…*

Without thought or consideration, just like that first night in the parking lot, you lean forward, your lips meeting hers. Even if it’s awkward and even if it’s fumbly and even if you two don’t move well together like you learned to do over months together, it’s safe and it’s home and finally, you’re actually learning to breathe again.
I'M SORRY

My dear friends, I promise that Chapter 30 is coming but i was well over 10K words, over 14 pages worth of awesomeness... and then I lost my flash drive that had not only all of my work stuff on it but also Chapter 30 as well as the first chapter and notes for the new fic i'm starting... so it's going to be a hot minute as i attempt to re-write this chapter. i'm sorry.
I don't even know what else to say guys...
The last chapter...
The chapter where Italics are present time and everything else is flashbacks...
The chapter where I refused to give you anything short of 14K words after how long you waited...
The chapter where Harper and Bellamy made me face too much of my own insecurity...
The chapter where Lexa and Clarke continually tore me apart...
The chapter where I finally came to terms with the fact that I robbed Murphy of a backstory...
The chapter where I finally made Abby not quite so terrible...
The chapter that I had to retype after being over 3/4 of the way through it and couldn't be happier with how it turned out...

Thanks for taking this journey with me! You guys have been the best!!!

Please find me on tumblr and let's be friends: shaneycakes-1131.tumblr.com

also check out the playlist of songs that inspired and are included in this fic:

Don't forget to subscribe and check out the new THE 100 based SOCIAL MEDIA and music themed AU that i'm writing called COFFEE BREAK SOUNDTRACK... I've got some epic plot twists planned in that one so don't give up on me yet (Lux...)

Leave some comments... I'll still reply to every one of them. I promise :-)  

Can't wait to see you on the other side!

Thanks everyone!!!
~SHANEYCAKES

LEXA

Entering this room, as he had done at least thirty times today, your brother closes the door quickly behind himself-- No one could see you like this. It would ruin everything if the people waiting for you outside of this door saw you cry… more in particularly, the people here for Clarke couldn’t see you cry, because let’s be honest… this was all for Clarke. It was always for Clarke.

As Lincoln approached, you wiped the tears from your cheeks with the back of your hand, letting out a small chuckle as you did at the absurdity of this-- of all of this. This was a celebration of life, so why are you crying?

“You ready?” he asks, helping your sister up from the chair beside you. Her black, dress flowed gently against her toned legs, having been built up by Division 1 soccer and you notice now more than ever that your baby sister had grown up.
All of you had.

It was necessary.

After the last 15 months that you all shared, there was nothing that could be done except growing up.

“I’ll never be ready,” you explain to him, taking the arm that your little sister isn’t attached to and pulling yourself up. Your black pants and white button down match his, his black tie the only differing factor between you two. “But I’m just ready to get it over with so that we can move on with our lives.”

The words burn in your throat as you think about all of the people waiting outside of these doors to shake your hand and embrace you.

Shit-- the last time you were at one of these things was for your parents… well, there was that one friend in college, but everyone in your classes went-- it was almost expected when you all spent that entire year together… but still, even now, it felt weird.

Wasn’t this the natural order of things? You’re born. You live. You fall in love. You get married. You have kids. You die. Normally the order of the inner sections changes up sometimes, but the last two are pretty much a given. You’re born and then you die.

So why is this weird if it’s just a part of this process?

It’s weird because it’s you… It’s weird because it’s actually happened to you.

“Hey,” your brother’s voice echoes into your mind, dragging you from the pits of your thoughts just in time for you three to reach the door. “We love you,” he says, Tris nodding from beside him. “We’re going to be right there the whole time.”

Tris takes a step towards you, embracing you and Lincoln tightly as she kisses your cheek, offering a small, “Yeah, right beside you,” as she breathes deeply, swallowing back her own, overly emotional tears.

It was all so weird….

Because it’s actually happening to you.

---

CLARKE

“Let’s go,” Lexa mocks you, stomping her foot from the doorway. “Fieldtrip day is nothing to be wasted!” You can’t stand her sometimes… and by that you actually mean that you’re falling in love with her more and more each day.

You, Clarke Griffin are falling in love with this woman…

Each…

And…

Every…

Day…
“Alright, let’s go!” you say, almost sarcastically, throwing your bag over your shoulder. It was just a couple of weeks ago that you were struggling to find it in yourself to even stand and now you were walking. Although limping, it was still walking and that was progress. “You know,” you say as you read the elevator, two of the nurses at the counter congratulating you as you push the down button. “If you told me where we were going, I might…”

“Nope,” Lexa cuts you short, wrapping an arm around your waist and kissing the back of your neck just under your ponytail. “Not allowed.” Turning into her, you plant your lips on hers, allowing her to pull you in by your waist, your body against hers as your back arches slightly. For a moment, you forget that there are others around. This happens frequently with her.

But your isolation is short lived as a Manilla folder finds its way to the side of your head and Monroe’s voice speaks a loud and noticeable, “Get a room you homos,” in passing.Lexa’s smile is the first to break your kiss as you feel her weight shift, hearing Monroe stumble beside you. “Fuck off Woods… no one like you anyway.” As Lexa retracts the foot that tripped your friend, the elevator dings behind you, doors opening slowly.

“Let’s go,” Lexa orders you, pushing you to turn around and enter the metal box. “We’ve got places to be and it’s already 4pm.”

As the tires of Lexa’s Jeep roll across the highway going east bound, you can’t help but note a change between the two of you. One thing that you do remember is that Lexa has always been afraid of driving. Until recently, you couldn’t remember why, but you knew that the idea of being on the road terrified her. It was you now, however, who lived in fear. With each turn, you shuddered at the thought of what could be waiting on the other side. At every stop light, you took a deep breath, just thankful for the lack of motion-- for the illusion of control. You were now the scared one-- and you hated this.

“Years ago I met my lover on the banks of the stormy Jordan. Years ago I met my love, how I wish that we could meet again,” Paper Route rings from the speakers, comforting you slightly as you hear the bass pounding through the floors. “Have I lost my faith in you? Are we all forgotten too? Don't you break my heart. Don't you break my heart again.”

“Lexa, I have a question,” you ask as the brunette turns the wheel to the left, merging lanes as a sigh escapes from you throat. She replies with a simple ‘mhmm’, turning the wheel more to make a complete left turn. Loosening your grip on the seatbelt underneath you, your hand cramps, proving that you’ve been holding too tightly. “Why did you break up with me?”

“I still believe that change can happen though it’s hard and it happens slowly. I still believe forgiveness comes with love and God when it washes over me.”

She sighs, changing the settings on the air conditioner before even attempting to speak, obviously buying time. “I told you,” she finally replies.

Cop out.

“No, I get that… the whole ‘you were scared’ thing… but what prompted it?” you ask, pushing a little deeper, not really even knowing what you were asking. “Like… what made you want to leave?”

“What?” Lexa asks, the tone in her voice changing dramatically as her shock bleeds through in every letter of the word. “I never wanted to leave, Clarke,” she attempts to explain, her eyes leaving the road for just a moment. You tremble as her eyes meet hers, not because of her but because of the road.
You’re not afraid of her… You’re afraid of the road.

And she notices this, turning her attention back to the stretch of pavement before you just long enough to merge into the shoulder, hitting the button for her emergency lights before putting the car in park and turning to you.

“I never wanted to leave,” she repeats, her hand falling to your knee. Even through your jeans, you can feel the warmth of her soft hands. “I never wanted to leave.”

“You can say that as much as you want,” you begin, suddenly finding yourself more upset than you thought you’d be. “But let’s face it, you walked out.”

Where is this coming from?

Why are you suddenly angry?

You don’t even remember the break-up.

Hell, you don’t even know if that’s what it was.

All you know is that when you hear the song FIRST DEFEAT, you can’t help but feel like it was written for you-- for one reason or another.

All you know is that when you try to remember the car crash, all you can think about is how you were headed to the outskirts of town-- for one reason or another.

And all you know is that when you listen to Matt Nathanson’s WEDDING DRESS, you can’t help but think about Lexa, even if the song is about a break up-- for one reason or another.

Lexa swallows deeply, the lump moving slowly down her throat as she looks into the air around your head as if she’s searching for the answer above you. “Look,” she begins, rubbing her eyes with one hand. “I fucked up, alright.”

No shit.

“I walked out of you when you needed me-- all because I couldn’t handle the idea of you walking out on me…”

“That makes no sense,” you snort before you can stop it. Catching her dropping expression, you place your hands over hers quickly, tightening your grip around them. “No… Baby I’m sorry,” you apologize, bending slightly to her line of sight and drawing her eyes back up to you. “I’m sorry…”

Her jaw clenches tightly twice before she swallows and speaks again. “I regret it so much.”

You nod, wrapping your arms around her neck. “I don’t blame you,” you begin, breathing her in. “For anything.”

Feeling her arms around your waist, you smile into her hair, kissing her neck gently. “Let’s go,” she says as she pulls away, turning to face the steering wheel again. “We don’t have a lot of time.”

She’s right. You’ve only been given three hours to play out in the real world before you have to go back to the hospital. This is your trial run. If all things go well today, you should discharge within the week.

Nodding, you turn your own body, buckling your seatbelt back and resuming your clenched-fist, tightened body position, afraid to move any other way.
With a few more stop lights and a couple more turns, the Jeep finally comes to a complete stop outside of the police station within the first parking spot, the engine dying out with the twist of a key as Lexa turns to you.

“This is going to suck,” she prefaces, placing a hand on your knee, “but I think this is important.”

Swallowing deeply, you know exactly where this is going…

And as such, you’re not surprised when the young cop on duty, Sergeant Miller, escorts you to the back, opening the door to the junk yard and telling you to take your time. Even with the knowledge of why you’re here and even with Lexa’s fingers woven through yours, it doesn’t make it any easier to see you little blue Ford Focus smashed up in spot A42, the entire driver’s side obliterated to the point where you wonder how they even got you out. In fact, most of the car looked like it belonged in a different place. The steering column was pushed to the side, warped with the doors that arced inward, taking up three quarters of the driver’s side. The top of the little hatchback was smashed inward as if a giant sat on it, cramming it closer to the ground than would ever be possible.

“You rolled,” Lexa explains, eyes scanning you over as you stare at was once your car in front of you. “He ran through the light, smashing into the driver’s side and throwing your car across the three lanes. You rolled at least twice they said, but probably more. They said that you shouldn’t have survived.” With that, you can hear the shudder in her voice as her fingers tighten around yours. “They said that you’d never walk again if you even woke up.” You couldn’t help yourself as you tightened around her fingers as well, pulling her arm closer to yours. “They’re destroying it tomorrow,” she adds, finally explaining why you’re here. “This is the last chance…”

Her words trail off as you release her hand, walking towards the fragmented remains of your car. As you place a hand on the hood, you can’t help but tremble a bit, the cold metal prompting a lot of feelings inside of you.

You should have died.

“I want to go,” you mumble to her after a few minutes, your hand still on the hood.

“Alright,” she replies calmly as you begin to crumble on the inside. Wrapping her fingers through yours again, she tugs you through the door and out into the parking lot where you can’t take it anymore.

Finally breaking loose, you fall to the ground, Lexa falling with you as she tries to catch you. “I should have died,” you repeat over and over again, not even knowing why this is the only phrase that you can produce. There are tens of thousands of other slogans and saying passing through your brain right now—hundreds of memories—millions of song lyrics—and yet all you can say is “I should have died.”

With a deep breath, Lexa shushes you, stroking your hair from behind as she pulls your body into her chest. “Yes, but you didn’t,” she reminds you, kissing your temple after every time you speak the same words.

“I should have died….”

“Yes, but you didn’t…”

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LEXA
“This is totally a breakup song,” Clarke’s laugh bounces through the hospital room as she taps the beat to BONFIRE on your thighs. For the first time in days, she’s happy again after the car situation and for the first time years, you’re wearing shorts, and for the first time in years, you’re unafraid of the scars that lie just under her forearms-- especially since the conversation that the two of you shared earlier that day where you told her everything. It was easier the second time-- mainly because you knew that you couldn’t run out… not this time… not anymore.

Laughing deeply, you lay your head on her shoulder, kissing the bare skin there peaking around the black tank top around her small body. She glances over quizzically, asking why you thought that was so funny before you could even offer your explanation. Taking a deep breath, you smile at her, laughing again before replying with “That’s what you said last time.” It doesn’t seem as funny to Clarke, and you have to choke back more laughter, remembering her frustration at not remembering a lot of your moments together. “Hey,” you say to her, pulling her clinched chin back up so her eyes are facing you again.

That ever-loving fucking blue that drew you in from day one.

The same blue that broke holes in your walls.

That same blue that reeled you back in when you strayed away.

That same blue that made it impossible to run again.

“It’s going to be okay,” you remind her for probably the nine-hundredth time in 24 hours. “Kane said things should start coming back-- we just have to work on it.” She nods slightly, not seeming convinced at all, but you’ve become good at picking your battles. “How about this one?” You ask her, clicking play on the ipod as she slides the left earbud back into her small ears.

“White lips, pale face, Breathing in snowflakes. Burnt lungs, sour taste. Light's gone, day's end, Struggling to pay rent. Long nights, strange men,” the words to Clarke’s once favorite song ring out, singing one of the saddest stories that you’ve ever heard to the two of you as you sit wrapped up in each other’s embrace on the noisy, uncomfortable hospital bed under entire too many blankets. The wires that your love were once wrapped in have now since been removed and the beeping sound that used to accompany her pulse had been unplugged and stashed away for another client, leaving the two of you with only each other to listen to-- and you’re okay with this.

A small smile escapes Clarke’s lips as a small breath follows, her hands lifting to cover her mouth as if trying to trap in all in quickly. “I love this song,” she explains through her hands. “Did I tell you that?” You nod, not knowing what else to do.

Sometimes, you wish that you could lie to her-- if nothing else to make her feel better.

When she explains a story about her past to you and you’re forced to remind her that you’ve already heard it, the look in her eye breaks your heart.

When she asks you if you’ve ever been to an art museum and you have to explain your first weekend together where she and Bellamy dragged your hungover body across the city, her dropping smile destroys you a little bit more.

And when she asks if you’ve ever tried a SkyLab and you tell her of your meeting again, the way that she sighs kills you…

But the excitement in her eyes when she remembers something small, like how your favorite color is green because it reminds you of the mountains and that you like dogs better than cats… how your
favorite type of music is classical because it helps you concentrate… or that you like historical documentaries and football like it’s no body’s business.. The joy that she brings into the room when she remembers makes the therapy and the heart break and the frustration worth it.

She makes it all worth it.

“My turn,” she calls out, taking the ipod from your hands and scrolling through it as the final verse continues to play in your ears. “I want to see if you… OH YOU HAVE IT!” she interrupts herself, bouncing slightly as she clicked play, a small violin and drum accompaniment filling your ears as a smile spreads across your face.

Of course you have this song.

She says I smell like safety and home. I named both of her eyes “Forever” and “Please don’t go”. I could be a morning sunrise all the time, all the time yeah. This could be good, this could be good.

“You know,” Clarke says, flattening her hand out on your thigh, her thumb stroking your exposed skin slightly. “I bet most people haven’t even heard this song… Not the full version… they only know the one that Macklemore uses.” You nod again, just praying that she doesn’t move her hand as your eyes close. Leaning your head back on the pillow behind you, you allow the words to drift into you… through you.

And I can’t change, even if I wanted to. My love, my love, my love, my love. She keeps me warm, she keeps me warm.

Smiling deeply, you feel her shift beside you as you wonder if truer words have ever been spoken.

I’m not crying on Sundays, I’m not crying on Sundays. Love is patient, love is kind.

“Lexa?” Clarke’s voice brings you back in from the stasis that you found yourself, completely wrapped up in the idea of her… only her. Opening your eyes slowly, you turn your head to look at the blonde who is still staring at her hands holding the ipod in her lap. “Thank you,” she almost mumbles, a smile spreading across your lips as you cup her cheek bringing her face to yours, lips meeting softly.

I’m not crying on Sundays, I’m not crying on Sundays. Love is patient, love is kind.

Just as you separate, her eyes open slowly looking into yours. “I…” Before a finished thought passes her lips, however, the girl in your hands begins to fade, beginning with her eyes which suddenly become less engaged before rolling back into her head, a stream of blood flowing from her nose as her head follows the trail that her eyes have set forth.

“No,” you begin to shout, pulling her head back up into the upright position that it should be in. “No… no… no,” is all you can repeat over and over again, laying Clarke down on the pillow and shaking her shoulder slightly. “No… Clarke.” You’re screaming…

You’re screaming…

“No… no… no… no…”

And no one is coming…

“No… no… no… no…”

You’re screaming…
“No… no… no… no…”

And Clarke is convulsing…

“No… no… no… no…”

You’re screaming…

“No… no… no… no…”

And now there’s a set of hands pulling you from the bed and away from Clarke as her body violently jolts against the bed, a mixture of spit and blood flowing from her face as the arms around you pull you tighter, distancing you from her.

“No… no… no… no…”

You’re screaming, and you’re not even sure if you’re shouting at Clarke or the massive man holding you back at this point…

“No… no… no… no…”

*My love, my love, my love. My love. She keeps me warm.*

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**TRIS**

This hallway is infinite-- especially when you have to stop every six steps to drag your sister back to the right direction.

With arms wrapped around her torso, you are literally dragging her feet back to the main room as she attempts to make her way back in the direction that you just came. After entering and exiting the room at least four times, Lincoln finally exhaled slowly, pushing her into the hallway and closing the door behind you, standing between Lexa and her shelter.

“I can’t do this,” she explains, shaking her head violently as your hands tighten around her arms. She may be the big sister, but you’re the stronger one now. Her brown hair dances over her shoulders as she squeezes her eyes shut tight, shaking her head still.

“Lexa, relax,” you say, almost ordering her as you give her a slight shake, her eyes bouncing around to meet yours. “Look at me,” the words slip, almost out of habit. “You knew this day was coming.” She swallows, nodding. In fact, you all knew this day was coming, but that didn’t make it any easier to digest.

*Not for Lexa.*

*Not for Lincoln.*

*Not for you.*

“I’m not ready,” she says, shaking her head again as tears begin to form in her eyes. “I’m not ready.”

Nodding, you smile, pulling her into your grasp as you tighten your grip around her. “Look, we’re all scared and weird about the change, but that’s what happens. Change happens.” As you speak, she folds her arms up your back, holding tight at your neck and resting her chin on your shoulder.
The light is shining through the window panes behind her and illuminating the hallway around you in a very specific stained-glass pattern, reds and blues reflecting off of every surface in the hallway, including the flowers placed outside of the main room. The same flowers that Clarke picked out months ago, knowing that this day would come. The same flowers that you watched Abby cry about, asking if Clarke was sure that Forget-Me-Not was how she wanted to be remembered.

You laughed at the irony then, and you do now, embracing your sister a slight bit tighter before you release her, wiping the tears from her eyes with your thumbs as you cup her cheeks, pulling her forehead to yours. “It’s going to be a great service,” you say to her as Lincoln shuffles awkwardly behind her, checking his watch multiple times.

You’re running late…

You know this…

But Clarke did always joke that she’d be late to her own funeral…

“You promise you’ll stick with me?” Lexa asks you, the stumble in her words almost breaking your heart. Your sister… the rock that you’ve always relied on… the one who lived through your parents’ deaths… the one who survived depression and suicide… the one who busted her ass to get you and your brother through school… the one who held her girlfriend as she died in her arms on at least two separate occasions… the one who always supported everyone and never herself… that one was terrified, trembling in your arms.

“Are you kidding?” you ask her, separating your bodies to look her dead in the eyes. “There’s nowhere I’d rather be.”

And although that’s true, so was your previous statement. The idea of change was terrifying. The idea of Lexa moving on is terrifying. The idea of this next step in your life is terrifying. The idea of facing all of these people that you don’t know who only came because of Clarke is terrifying, but the next step is here-- whether you, your sister, Lincoln, or anyone in this building is ready or not.

It’s time…

Whether you’re ready or not.

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**BELLAMY**

The doors in this damn hospital aren’t opening fast enough for you… and to make matters worse, you have to push the metal disk on the wall every time that you turn down a new fucking hallway in order for the doors to even let you pass. Every fucking time that you turn, closing the distance between you and Clarke, another door stands in your way… Just like everything else, another door blocking your path.

“Bellamy,” Harper calls out to you, pulling you back slightly. “You can’t go in there like this.” As you spin around on your toes to reply to her comment, her hands catch your cheeks, gripping the sides of your head tightly and pulling your head to hers. “You’re going to have to breathe,” she tells you, her dark eyes looking into you. “Breathe with me please.”

“Harper,” you attempt to speak, each letter of her name stealing more than its allotted air. “I can’t.” The words escape too quickly for you to play off being alright, and she pulls you back as you try to walk away, grabbing your hand to turn you again.
“Bellamy Blake, you’re going to fucking breathe.” Her sass and charm explodes in the middle of the hallway of Blue Wing as people pass, watching your theatrical-worthy performance. “So you can either breathe with me, or watch me walk away to see Clarke and Lexa, leaving you here to try it on your own.”

She wouldn’t.

You know this.

But the threat is enough to righten your wrong.

“Okay.” you mumble, blinking a few times as you attempt to regulate your breathing with Harper’s as she inhales slowly, exhaling loudly.

“Again,” she demands after the first breath, pulling in another full set of lungs worth of air with you before letting it out again. The third time, she doesn’t have to ask as you inhale with her again, exhaling slowly through your pursed lips. “Better?” she asks, placing a hand on your chest.

She has a way of doing this-- every single time. In fact, she has a way of doing whatever the fuck she wants, and it working out perfectly. Her take-no-shit attitude knows the exact time to take a backseat to the compassionate and nurturing nature that is needed to care for your disorder, but she also knows when to call you back to reality.

Honestly, Harper had quickly become your everything and you can’t help but think the lyrics to Green River Ordinance’s ENDLESSLY when you think of Harper.

She is my rock and my rolling thunder. I’ve been the spell she was under. I, I love that girl. She is my cigarettes and champagne. She's got me strung but I'm not running. I, I love that girl.

She allowed you to distance yourself when needed, but somehow knew when to pull you back when you floated too far out to sea.

She is the days I can't get over. She is the nights that I call home endlessly. For you I'll always wait. Caught in the waves of hesitation. Lost in the sea of my own doubt endlessly. For you I'll always wait

She knew to find you in Clarke’s room when she came to your house one day when you wouldn’t answer your phone, pulling you from the carpeted floor when you couldn’t even find it in you to stand.

She is the flame and the fire she's raging. I've been the spark and the war she's waging. I, I love that girl. She came along and she spoke so sweetly. Changed everything, took my heart completely. I, I love that girl.

She slapped your face hard when you took the first and last swing at her with balled fist during an episode after you threw dishes to the floor and punched the drywall, but immediately pulled you in, showing absolutely no signs of fear.

And the city buzz and empty cars. It's 3 a.m. I wonder where you are. And the crooked smiles and worn out miles between us. Now I wonder where you are.

“Okay,” she finally speaks after you nod at her, pulling you in from your shirt that she had balled up in her fist. She kissed your lips, resting her forehead on yours and exhaling slowly. “Let’s go see Lexa.”
She is the days I can't get over. She is the nights that I call home endlessly. For you I'll always wait. Caught in the waves of hesitation. Lost in the sea of my own doubt endlessly. For you I'll always wait

Even with Harper by your side, you weren’t prepared for what was about to happen… more in particularly, what didn’t happen. You expected to turn the corner and find results. Instead, you turned a corner and instantly had a sobbing Lexa collapsed into your arms and no answers to any questions that crossed your lips. Glancing over at Harper for support, she noted your terror, joining you in trying to lift Lexa back to her feet.

“She was fine,” she says repeditely, following it up with “and then suddenly, she wasn’t.” The script is the same eat time, just with a different twist at the end.

“She was fine… and then suddenly, she wasn’t.”

“She was fine… and then it happened.”

“She was fine… and then she just started bleeding.”

“She was fine… and then her eyes…”

Giving Lexa a small shake, you silenced her just long enough to look her straight in her eyes before you pulled her into your arms again, no longer holding up her body weight, but rather just holding her.

“She’s going to be okay,” you lie, not actually knowing anything about what’s going on. Instead of arguing, Lexa simply nods as you remind her that Clarke is strong.

There’s no lie in that.

At this point, you can’t tell who is stronger-- Clarke herself, or you guys in the waiting room, waiting for her.

Pulling Lexa away from you, you hold tight at her shoulders, watching her eyes shift rapidly between yours before they drift off behind you, focusing on something in the doorway that you came from. Her jaw clenches and you can see it in her eyes-- she’s fucking pissed.

“You son-of-a-bitch,” she begins angrily, balling a fist as she pushes past you towards the door. Turning quickly, you try to grab at the brunette, missing the corner of her shirt as she swings wildly in the direction of Abby Griffin entering the waiting room.

Throwing his body in between the two, Lincoln absorbs the blow, only flinching slightly as Lexa’s fist connects with the side of his neck before he takes his older sister by the wrist, turning her quickly with her arm behind her back.

“Lexa,” your friend speaks softly to his sister as she struggles from his grip, shouting profanities and threats at him. “Lexa, stop.”

She doesn’t.

“Lexa, calm down.”

“Lincoln,” she shouts at him, pushing off of her brother who has finally decided to release her. “Ask her yourself then…” She throws a hand in the air to point at Abby as you stare, unable to do anything else. “Ask her what took her so long… Ask her why she hasn’t been here… Ask her why it
was 2 weeks before she actually showed up to Clarke’s side…. Ask her yourself if you don’t want me to… Ask the coward…”

You watch as your friend storms off towards the door, throwing open the metal barrier to the outside sunlight and disappearing into the white that filled that side of the room before the door sealed between the two of you.

Watching the door for a moment later, hoping for Lexa to return, your eyes finally find it in themselves to turn to Abby who is now sitting in the I.C.U. chair’s, Lincoln occupying the one next to her with a hand on her back.

“I can’t do this,” she mumbles as Lincoln shakes his head, trying to explain away Lexa’s behavior before Abby cuts him off. “No, she’s right… I didn’t come because I can’t take it.” Before you know it, you’re diving deep into Abby’s life and you’re watching at Dr. Abigail Griffin, the number one neurosurgeon in the country falls apart in front of you for the second time, for the same reason, but with different factors at play.

For the first time, you get the full picture.

Taking a seat on the other side of her, you fold your hands in your lap, giving her your full attention as Harper disappears out the door after Lexa.

“I wanted to help Jake,” Abby began, head in hands. “But they have rules… and I could only watch… as my husband died on the operating table… and I… I couldn’t… I couldn’t do that again… If I stayed away… Then I wouldn’t have to watch her fade too… I wouldn’t have to see her disappear… I wouldn’t… I could control it… I could control how much it affected me.”

As Abby continued, her breathing shortened and her sobs grew more extreme, filling her hands and flooding over into the atmosphere around the group. As tears begin to form in your eyes, you realize how easily you could have done the same. In fact, you realize that on certain nights, you did do the same.

That night when Maya stumbled in on you in the recliner in the hotel, pondering whether or not your life was worth it.

The day that you chose to sleep in rather than drive to the hospital because you couldn’t emotionally handle watching Clarke try to unsuccessfully walk again.

The evening that instead of joining everyone for family night at the hospital, you stayed in bed, faking like you were reading when in reality, it took everything you had to simply not fall apart.

You and Abby Griffin were a lot alike in this. Where it took her 13 days straight, your story probably stole at least that over the course of the last few months.

“I can’t do this,” she finally replies standing and straightening her pants legs, wiping her eyes with the backs of her hands. “I can’t handle this now.”

And with that, the doctor disappeared out through the door that she came, leaving you and Lincoln standing where you were, both reaching out to stop her with mouths open, but no words to console her…

Because she was right…

She couldn’t do this…
None of you could…

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LEXA

The warm air on the outside was crisp and clean, unlike the stale, awkward, pumped oxygen that filled your lungs inside of the I.C.U. waiting room. As you pace back and forth, your right hand pulsating with pain as it begins swelling due to its interaction with the concrete wall behind you, you hear the metal door that you came from click open and shut quickly again, a new body outside with you.

“Look, Bellamy, I’m not coming back,” you say, turning quickly to find Harper standing where you expected her boyfriend, her long, dirty-blonde hair cascading over the leather jacket wrapped tightly around her shoulders. “Oh,” is all you can offer in the lines of an apology as you lean against the brick wall, sliding down to the cigarette butt covered ground below.

“You know,” she begins, scaling down the wall beside you, pulling her knees in tight to her chest. “My father killed himself…” Releasing your temples that you had begun rubbing, you stare forward for a moment before turning your head to face the woman, completely taken back by her statement. You weren’t expecting that at all.

“He came back from the war and I watched him fade away.” Her story sounded all too familiar. Of course her father had P.T.S.D. That’s why she was so good with Bellamy at his darkest moments. “And one day, I came home to find my mother holding my father on the floor, covered in his blood and screaming at me to call 911… as if it would change anything.”

She continued to speak with a brokenness and a separation that made you question if she was simply reading you a story-- something so distant that you can appreciate it but not really relate… something that you’ve heard a thousand times before, grown up reading and rereading as the pages turn a dingy brown and crease downward on the top corners. But that wasn’t the case. Her attention to detail and recollection of emotion gave it away-- this was really her life. And she had learned to handle like the rest of you.

“And then it was contagious… As if wallowing in my father’s blood spread the illness to my mother, and I watched her disappear too.” The young woman cleared her throat, choking back what you could only imagine to be tears… but it’s hard to imaging Harper crying. She always dealt so well. “I came home from school to find my mother in the shower, vomiting up enough pills to supply a malaria clinic. I did the only thing that I knew to. I shoved my fist down her throat and sat in the shower with her until she stilled. It didn’t matter in the long run-- she killed herself a year and a half later anyway, but for that year and a half, we talked and bonded as if nothing was wrong.” Harper paused and in this half second where she was taking in air, you noticed the slightly tremble in her chest, the shudder in her breathing, and catch in her throat as she proceeded to say, “Even though I knew it was.”

As the two of you sat in silence for another couple of minutes, you wonder what else the blonde had to tell you. She had met death, much like you. What other sort of experiences and challenges had your friend faced that you never even knew.

“Mom said that she hadn’t done enough… And I said the same thing… You know,” she stumbles through multiple thoughts, grabbing your arm and tapping your scarred wrist with two fingers. “I’ve got them too… I’ve been wounded by people who walked out too-- whether they meant to or not…” You pull your arm back almost too quickly, suddenly afraid that you’ve offended your friend. She
doesn’t seem bothered, but just in case, you slide a hand onto her knee, apologizing without words. “I also know what it’s like to not know how to handle watching someone fade away.”

And suddenly it all makes sense. Within the next three minutes of silence between you two, it all becomes clear-- how much of an asshole you were… how incapable Abby is to watch her only child die… how impossible it is to actually blame her for being afraid… how much baggage the doctor has that you could never have even fathomed…

Without any more words between you two, Harper stands, pushing off of your knee and retreats back inside through the metal door beside you. As you hear it click shut, the tears that had been filling the corners of your eyes as you fought them back to hear Harper speak began to stream down your face, dropping onto your bare, scarred legs.

“God damn it,” you mumble, lifting your own body to your feet and entering the door back into the stale room where all of your friends waited.

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TRIS

The larger main room was bright, much in contrast to the hallway that it took you entirely too long to coax your sister down. Once inside, the anxiety didn’t slow any as you waited, glancing around at the people filing in through the back doors, grabbing the small paper with Clarke’s name written across the top before taking a seat, chatting softly amongst themselves. A few walked up to you and you siblings, embracing you gently, commenting on how nice all of you looked, offering Lexa comments on their emotions. She simply smiled and nodded-- typical Lexa. When people tried to comfort her, she’d shell up. She never accepted emotions from others, not for any reason at all.

“Hey,” you whisper, nudging your sister from beside her. “If you act excited to see them, they’ll leave you alone,” you attempt to make your serious faced sister smile as her eyes glanced over the slowly filling room, a deep breath exiting her lips.

“Doubt it… if you feed the stray, it comes back,” she chuckles, glancing from the corner of her eye to you. Did she just crack a joke? You can’t help but laugh as you wrap an arm around her waist, tugging her gently into an awkward side hug.

“Did you just call Aunt Joyce a stray animal?” you whisper almost too softly to hear, remembering how your father’s second cousin would hear you and Lincoln’s plotting when you spent weekends in the summers on her farm in North Dakota. It was as if that hearing aid and terrible floral print dress gave her super powers.

Lexa smiles, shooting a quick glance over to you as you release her. “Your words, not mine,” she says as your heart melts at finally seeing your sister relax-- even if only for a minute.

That’s all it took-- separating her from everyone around her and reminding her that she was loved-- no matter what.

“If you two get me exiled from Christmas because you insult Joyce, I will murder you,” Lincoln laughs, waving quickly to an older relative en route to the three of you. “Just keep breathing,” he says, noticing the terror spreading across Lexa’s face before you. “It’ll be over before you know it.”

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LINCOLN
One thing about your friends: no matter what was going on, there was always room for fellowship over pizza and beer. Much to Murphy’s dismay, the hospital wouldn’t let him bring in the beer, but pizza was a necessity these days and often frequented your waiting room adventures. As Harper’s small frame slid through the door, you waited to see your sister follow closely behind…

But nothing…

And what made it worse was when Harper walked straight past you three guys and down the hall, disappearing without a single word. Glancing up at Bellamy, you watched as he sat with a piece of pizza hanging from his mouth as his girlfriend passed, sniffling and she made her way across the room.

“You gonna get that?” you ask him, pointing to where Harper disappeared behind you with your thumb. Your curly haired friend simply nods, lifting himself from the chair across from you as he tosses his pizza back into the box and making his way into the hallway after his girlfriend.

“Man, that’s why I don’t have a girlfriend,” Murphy speaks, removing another piece of pizza from the box on the table in front of you and taking a bite of it before he puts his combat boot covered feed on the table, leaning back in his seat.

“No,” you correct him, shoving his feet from the table. “It’s because you’re an asshole.”

“And you’re better?” your sketchy friend laughs back at you, tossing the napkin he had been balling up between his non-pizza filled fingers.

“Of course he is,” Lexa’s voice chimes in as she wraps her arms around your neck, kissing your cheek as she apologizes first to you, then looking up to Murphy. “I’m sorry for being an asshole sometimes,” she adds, Murphy just shrugging. Even though he wasn’t there for the moment that occurred earlier, you and Bellamy had talked him through it and he even agreed when you said that she was just stressed.

“Hey,” he says, balling up another napkin and tossing it at your sister’s face. “You’re allowed at least one melt down.”

“More like one million,” you sister sighs, taking the seat next to you and rubbing her eyes before taking a slice of the pizza for herself.

The stress that covers her face is the same as what you saw before…

Before Clarke woke up…

Before Clarke remembered anything…

Before Clarke…

The conversation that began slightly weighted took a turn for the light-hearted as Murphy continued to make jokes at your sister’s expense while Lexa played into it, mocking him back in return. For being as much of a skeez as Murphy is, he’s a good friend. In fact, he’s probably been one of the most constant friends, always there when you needed him and expecting nothing back in return. All he wanted was a home… All he needed was a home… And he found that within your little group of ruffians.

You see, when Murphy found you guys, he was young, toxic, and destroying himself slowly. If it wasn’t drugs and alcohol, it was losing himself in strip clubs and fraternity parties. See, Murphy wasn’t like most of you. Murphy wasn’t struggling through this life-- not entirely. Johnathan James
Murphy the Third came from a privileged life of wealth and well-to-do parties with very important political figures and fashionistas in upstate New York. He was a private school bred, high-class, high-profile child on the path to be the next senator or diplomat when Murphy found the same vices that tore through Costia with no remorse… And when you and Bellamy stumbled down the wrong alley-way three years ago, walking straight into the fidgety, high-strung 18 year old with dreads, dressed in a torn Guns N’ Roses t-shirt and a matted leather jacket that was so large that it almost covered the studded belt holding up his ill-fitted, plaid skinny jeans, you knew he needed a family. You knew he needed a home…

And that’s where Clarke and Bellamy came in. Whether it was some weird sense of retribution or some kind of cosmic debt that the two felt they owed, Bellamy and your blonde friend took the man in, housing him on their couch as he sweat and vomited for days. With Bellamy holding the man down while Clarke checked his blood pressure and heart beat while he bottomed out for days on end, the drugs finally took their course and the seizures, night terrors, and delirium ended, leaving you with another friend in your group and whether it was like Murphy felt like he owed them something or whether he actually loved everyone or not, he was there to stay and slowly but surely grew on everyone.

And even if he still gave off this sketchy, shady aura, Murphy was genuine and Murphy was there to stay… even if he was an asshole most times.

“I mean… I’m not sure how you could even think that Oklahoma stands a chance against West Virginia this year… Hell, they barely made it out of the first half with Tennessee and let’s be honest about Tenne…” Murphy’s attack on your sister’s favorite team is cut short when the outline of Abby Griffin appears in the doorway, her eyes glued to the floor as she apologizes for interrupting.

As Abby passes through the room, your eyes migrate to your sister who is watching every step that Abby makes, breathing in and out with each click of her heels. She almost lets the doctor escape without apologizing and with each step worth of distance between your group and the doctor, you beg Lexa to apologize, knowing that her soul needs the catharsis-- even if words don’t leave your lips.

“Abby,” she finally calls out, a deep breath exhaling from your lungs, grateful that your sister has finally given in. Without any other words, your sister holds up a slice of pizza to the doctor who has turned quickly on her heels to face you. A small smile cracks across Abby’s lips and flows onto Lexa’s face as the doctor decides to take her up on the offer, closing the distance between you and her before taking a seat next to Lexa.

“Thank you,” she mumbles, greasy pizza slice in hand as Murphy continues his attack on Lexa and Oklahoma football.

*Thank you,* you can’t help but think, smiling over to Lexa who is now blushing under her brown locks.

*Thank you.*

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**BELLAMY**

The inside of girl’s bathrooms are weird, but when Harper refused to exit, you decided that stepping in was a better option than waiting it out. Now, you somewhat regretted it, but you know it was the right choice. From the outside, you could talk to Harper through the door, deciphering her words through small snifflies and minor trembles. On the inside, however, you’re forced to face the reality of...
everything.

Harper’s on the floor.

Tears are streaming from her eyes.

And she’s asking you to leave.

Not like leave the bathroom… You asked her to clarify…. No, your girlfriend is repeating phrases like “You’ll be better off if you just leave now…” and “how much longer do you honestly think that we can keep borrowing time”. She’s trying to break up with you and the tinge inside of your chest that feels like someone is digging their fingers between your ribs only proves this even more. The cramping in your legs and sudden gurgling of your stomach that makes you unexpectedly want to vomit even though you had no urge before the words “maybe this just isn’t going to work,” escaped her lips.

There was more than the physicality though.

The feeling in your chest reminds you of Septembers, the red circle on a calendar every year telling you to call your sister. The red circle that reminds you of when your mother died.

The feeling in your chest that was radiating into your arms was much like that of when the summer air fades to the crisp, cutting breeze of fall, announcing its short life before the chilling daggers of winter stab through your jackets, bringing the darkness of seasonal depression with them.

The feeling in your chest felt like that damn phone call…

Like that damn highway drive…

Like pulling over on the side of the road to vomit at the sight of Clarke’s car mangled across the highway…

The feeling in your chest felt like breaking…

Your heart is breaking…

“No,” is all you can mumble, sliding down the wall next to Harper, pulling her still body into your embrace. “I’m not letting go.” She doesn’t argue and after a few moments of your girlfriend shuddering in your arms, her tears painting artwork on your forearms wrapped tightly around her chest, she finally takes a deep enough breath to speak.

“I don’t want to talk right now. I just want your arms wrapped around me and this moment before it runs out,” she mumbles, quoting a song that you remember hearing from Clarke’s ipod in the hospital room flights above your head just days before.

With a small tremble in your voice, you quote the second verse into her hair, your lips staying on the back of her head as you nearly whisper, “I can't pull you closer than this. It's just you and the moon on my skin. Oh, who says it ever has to end.” She plants a small kiss on your wrist, her thumb tracing circles on the back of your hand as she attempts to steady her breathing. “I’m not leaving,” you explain to her, leaning your forehead on the top of her head and breathing in her familiar scent that was some mixture of flowers and what you could only assume Hawaii would smell like. “I’m not going anywhere… ever. I mean, I don’t know if you’ve realized this, but I’m planning on being with you forever-- whatever that means… Marriage, children, cats… whatever…”

When a small snort of laughter escapes the snot-covered face of your still beautiful girlfriend, you
smile, knowing that you’re doing just fine… you’re doing your job. “Are you proposing on the bathroom floor?” she asks, turning into you and laying her head on your chest, falling into your arms that migrate up to her shoulders. Breathing in for a moment, she adjusts her head, clearly listening for your heartbeat.

“Is that what you want?” you ask her, the thoughts of forever racing through your mind. I mean, this wasn’t how you were planning on doing this… No, your plans were a little but more extravagant—involving more of a dinner in the park, a projector screen and you down on one knee, but is this is what she wanted, then you’d settle for the cold tile of a women’s bathroom. If it meant that she’d agree to marry you here and now, you’d settle for cheap antibacterial soap and generic, economy paper towels. Thankfully, Harper finally shakes her head under you, a small ‘no’ and a giggle escaping her lips.

Nodding, you kiss her head again, whispering “Good, because you deserve better than this… better than all of this…”

And in that moment, the lyrics that sang you to sleep, alone, in the hotel room that lonely night pop into your brain, but this time, they take on a different meaning. This time, they mean so much more.

_Here, I stand on the edge of the ledges I've made, looking for a steady hand. Here, I stand in the land of the rocks in the valley, trying to be a better man-- For you._

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LEXA

One turkey and swiss on wheat bread.

One veggie delite on white, extra avocado.

One chicken salad sandwich toasted with provolone on honey wheat.

As you unpack the sandwiches from the bag, laying them neatly on the table, you listen to the beeping of Clarke’s heart on the machinery that has reassumed its position in the room right behind her bed, thankful at least for its steady rhythm. Their emergency surgery found nothing except for a minor infection, but now the waiting game began as they sent off for tests around the country, trying to decide what exactly was attacking your girlfriend from the inside out.

Girlfriend… That was a nice word that you thought you’d never be able to say again. In fact, you’ve wondered a hundred or more times if you’d be about to think that word ever again without the tinge of loss building up in your chest.

When a sudden knock interrupts your thoughts, you turn quickly enough to see Clarke’s face light up as Kane enters the room, walking over and embracing your girlfriend in a hug. “You scared us there for a minute, Griffin,” he says, tapping her forehead. “You gotta stop doing this.”

“Fix me and I will,” Clarke laughs as the doctor pulls a chair up to her bed, sitting next to her.

His face drops slightly in the way that you’ve only begun picking up on since you’ve basically started living in the hospital again. It was subtle and controlled in the way that only a doctor about to give you bad news can do. “What’s why I’m here Griffin…”

“Wait… Rhino-what-what-cosis?” you ask for clarification, sliding into the bed next to Clarke. Both of them chuckle slightly at your attempt— at least you tried. Biology wasn’t your strong point in school, hence business school… but this medical terminology had begun to be more digestible over
the time that you’ve spent here with Clarke… except for that… Names of diseases and illnesses were always, and would always be foreign to you.

“ Rhino-cerebral mu-cormy-cosis,” Clarke repeats the word that sounds more like gibberish to you, wrapping her fingers in yours. “It’s an opportunist infection…” Bringing your fingers to her lips, she kisses them softly, sending a title wave of emotions through your body. An infection? That caused her to have a seizure?! Turning towards Kane, she opened her mouth to speak, but no words came. Closing it quickly, she tried again, finally able to speak her brain. “What caused it though?”

Clinching his jaw slightly, the doctor moved his hands from where they were folded in front of his lips. “Lichtheimia Ramosa…”

“From the accident…” Clarke finished his thought as Kane ran a hand through his dark hair, pushing it from his eyes. Of course they were having this moment and of course you were on the outside-- this had begun to be nothing new… all of these doctors and nurses talked with Clarke with no inhibition. She wasn’t just a patient like everyone else here. She knew things… But you… you did not. Nodding silently, he listened as Clarke sighed, a string of profanity exiting her lips almost too quietly to hear before she looked over to you, faking a smile. It was almost too fake for you to digest. “So surgery?” she asked, her eyes turning back to Kane who nodded again.

“Of course I’ll be doing the surgery… And Dr. Tsing will be joining me,” he spoke, placing a hand on the blonde’s arm, tapping it lightly as he did.

The moment of silence in the room should have given you time to think, but you couldn’t get past the part of the story where Clarke had an infection that gave her a seizure. In fact, you were basically three conversation points behind perpetually…

Rhinoceros… have horns… on their noses… Rhino means nose… so something in Clarke’s nose?

Cerebral means brain or something… so her nose-brain?

Her sinuses? That had to be it.

None of this made sense to you. Everything was foreign… everything was overwhelming.

*This one's for the lonely, the one's that seek and find, only to be let down time after time. This one's for the torn down, the experts at the fall. Come on friends, get up now, you're not alone at all.*

“Wait, I’m confused,” you interrupt the medical experts as they speak, both turning quickly to you. Honestly, you didn’t even know they had been chatting-- your brain was too full of everything to even hear anything else. Most loudly of all was the lyrics to Greg Laswell’s COMES AND GOES-- your fall back to sadness these days.

*And this part was for her. And this part was for her. This part was for her. Does she remember? It comes and goes in waves.*

Clarke offers a fake half smile, not even attempting to convince you of her security anymore. She was scared and this was obvious by the forced turn of the corner of her lips and the tremble of her hand while it held yours.

*This one's for the faithless, the ones that are surprised. They're only where they are now regardless of their fight. This one's for believing if only for its sake. Come on friends get up now love is to be made.*

“Lichtheimia Ramosa is basically a bacterial infection that occurs when junk gets in a wound,”
Clarke explains, lifting your hand to the scar on her forehead. As your fingertips touch the skin just above her eyebrow, your fingers burn with the knowledge of what is happening behind there… Behind that scar, there is a bacteria that is attacking your girlfriend’s basic functioning— that much you understood. “It opens the door for other things… which is where R.M. comes in… It’s opportunistic.”

And this part was for her. And this part was for her. This part was for her. Does she remember?

It’s a parasite…

It’s a vulture…

Got it…

It comes and goes in waves, I am only led to wonder why. It comes in goes in waves. I am only led to wonder why. Why I, why I try.

“When my immune system was compromised by the first infection, R.M. walked into my sinuses and tore shit up basically…” Clarke laughed, but you could tell it wasn’t real. It was about as genuine as the chuckle that escaped Kane as he stood, patting Clarke on the shoulder.

This is for the ones who stand. For the ones who try again. For the ones who need a hand. For the ones who think they can.

“I’ll send Tsing down in an hour to bring you to surgery. If we’re going to fix you up, we gotta get moving,” he says gently, making his way towards the door. “And Clarke,” he pauses, turning to lean against the door frame with his arms crossed across his white lab coat covered chest. “We’re going to have the best doctors on your case.” You feel Clarke nod beside you right before Kane smiles, turning to leave.

It comes and goes in waves, I am only led to wonder why. It comes and goes in waves, I am only led to wonder why. Why I, why I try.

Noting that he never said anything about the success rate of the surgery or about what healing would be like or really anything, you turn to Clarke for guidance, but find none. Instead, you find a tear-streaked face staring at the door, not moving as the tears continue to make lines down her cheeks, racing to the finish line of her chin where they fall to cover the arms that have now crossed over her chest.

“Clarke?” you ask her, wrapping your arms around your girlfriend’s small frame, pulling her into you.

“I don’t know,” she answers pretty much every question that you could have possibly produced, thoughts obviously in the same place as yours.

It’s crazy how she does that…

It’s crazy how she knows…

Even without words, she knows…

She’s always known…

It comes and goes in waves, I am only led to wonder why. It comes and goes in waves, I am only led to wonder why. Why I, why, why I try
With each click of the wheels of the hospital bed rolling down the green wing towards the operating room, your heart drops a little more.

First, they wouldn’t let you walk even though you totally could.

Second, you knew that the minute you reached that last set of double doors, Lexa’s hand would let go of yours and you’d be left completely alone in this battle.

Third, it was just you, Lexa, and Dr. Tsing in this hallway-- you figured at least if you were going to go into what could be your last surgery, you’d at least have Bellamy here too… maybe even your mother…

Octavia was at work, this you knew, and at least she came by earlier in the day to see you.

Murphy was working a shift at the hospital itself, so he was around but stationed elsewhere. He was probably watching you on the monitors though… He’s just creepy like that.

Jasper and Maya were en route to Maya’s mother’s house when you called to tell them.

Harper had not answered her phone…

And Bellamy… Bellamy cried on the phone with you for almost thirty minutes…

But then there was your mother…

Your mother should have been the first to know…

Your mother should have been the first to answer…

You mother should have been here…

But instead, it was just Lexa… which you weren’t opposed to her presence at all… it’s just…

You really wanted your mother…

As far as you can remember, you’ve never really wanted your mother. I mean, when you were little you did, but all of that changed when your dad died…

But now you want your mother, and she’s not here.

Glancing over at Lexa from your inclined position, you push play on the Ipod in your hand, sliding one earbud into your left ear. And as the piano and male voice begins to play, the tears start swelling up in your eyes, but you can’t bring yourself to turn it off. Something about this song seems necessary.

_Hold, hold on, hold onto me. 'Cause I'm a little unsteady. A little unsteady. Hold, hold on, hold onto me. 'Cause I'm a little unsteady. A little unsteady._

“Clarke!” You hear the shouts from behind you as Tsing stops the rolling bed just short of the first set of double doors, your thumb hitting pause out of instinct more than desire to hear this song.

Turning quickly in your bed-almost too quickly as your head begins to spin- you see Jasper and Maya sprinting towards you, Maya’s shoes in her hand and Jasper’s tie being tugged from his body.
by his thin fingers. “Hey,” he gasps as he has reached the bedside, Maya continuing to run with a small wave past you in the direction of the locker rooms. “Didn’t think we’d miss the chance to poke around your brain did you?” he asks, kissing the top of your forehead. You feel Lexa’s always warm hand on your back, signaling her anxiety at the idea of your brain being tinkered with, but there’s nothing you can do. This is what’s happening.

“What do you mean?” you ask him with a smile, wanting to ask about Maya’s mother’s house, but no other words coming from your still open mouth.

Jasper smiles, reaching a hand up to rub his neck while he speaks. “Kane called… Only the best for our princess.” With a kiss on the top of your head a hug for Lexa, Jasper continued on towards the locker rooms to scrub up for your operation.

Mama, come here. Approach, appear. Daddy, I’m alone ‘cause this house don’t feel like home. If you love me, don’t let go. If you love me, don’t let go.

Your operation…

There it was again… even when the thought of the impending doom that was awaiting you at the end of the hallway was brightened by your friends, the darkness returned quickly knocking you onto your back on the rolling bed that was making its way ever closer to the operating room. Your girlfriend seems to notice as she looks over at you, reaching a hand out to yours and wrapping her fingers around your hand. “Hey,” Lexa speaks softly, tightening her grip on your hand. “I’ll be here when you’re done, alright?” she speaks, bringing your fingers to her lips.

“Us too!” Another familiar voice joins in from the other side of the room. Turning your head slowly, learning from last time, you see Lincoln and Octavia standing next to a line of chairs. Octavia’s face is red and puffy from crying as she approaches your bed, throwing herself onto you as you both cry into each other. “You didn’t think I’d actually miss being here when you woke up, did you?” your tiny, brunette friend asks, resting her forehead on yours as she holds the side of your face. “I love you, okay?” You nod, cupping her hands and holding them while she pulls away.

Lincoln steps in, placing one hand on your left ear and kissing the top of your head before he pulls you into his shoulder, bending over the bed so that you don’t have to reach. “You’re stronger than you know, okay?” he says, the statement sounding more like a question… but if you’re going to be honest with yourself, everything sounds more like a question today.

After a few moments of tears and conversation, Octavia and Lincoln pull away one final time, turning towards the door to the waiting room, his arm around her waist. “I love them,” you say, turning your attention to Lexa who is wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

Nodding at first, she finally replies, a small, faint “yeah,” making its way from her lips. “They love you too,” she finally speaks, taking your hand in her shaking one again.

Hold, hold on, hold onto me ‘cause I’m a little unsteady. A little unsteady. Hold, hold on, hold onto me ‘cause I’m a little unsteady. A little unsteady.

As you approach the final door, Lexa’s stride slows, causing Tsing to slow the bed from behind. “Are we ready?” the doctor asks, glancing between you and your girlfriend.

“Can I have a minute?” she asks, the doctor nodding and walking off, pulling a cell phone from her scrub top. “Look, I want to say something to you before you…”

“Wait!” Bellamy’s voice shouts out, causing both of you to turn towards the door at the back of the
hall. He’s running towards you, motorcycle helmet in hand, boots clicking with each step. “Wait,” he requests again, even though you aren’t moving, breath shortening as he approaches. You can see the sweat beads on his forehead and feel the perspiration on his cheek as he leans in, wrapping you tightly in his arms. “You gotta come back to us, okay?” he asks you, the vibrations of his voice shaking into your chest.

“Oh, okay,” you say, unable to create any other words through the tears that are now streaming down your face, joining Bellamy’s curly hair on your chin.

“I mean it Princess. I can’t do this alone.”

You nod, allowing him to release you and pull your face towards his by the back of your neck. He kisses your forehead as your hands find the back of his head, pulling his cheek towards your lips. “May we meet again?” you mumble the first words that come to your mind before he reaches in, pulling you for another hug before turning to Lexa, embracing her just as tightly.

“I’ll see you in the waiting room?” he asks, not waiting for a reply before turning against her. As he walks away, you can see the tremble in his shoulders and hear the catch in his breathing.

You don’t see Bellamy cry very frequently, but every time that you have, it’s been because of your--and today is no exception.

Mother, I know that you’re tired of being alone. Dad, I know you’re trying to fight when you feel like flying. But if you love me, don’t let go. If you love me, don’t let go.

And with that, it was just you and Lexa again. She stood a couple of feet away from the bed, back turned to you as she trembled with the same fear that was coursing through your veins. “Lexa?” you beg of her, reaching out and grabbing her hand to pull her back to you.

Without warning, she reached in, wrapping her arms around you and kissed your lips, moving her hands to hold your face tightly in place. “Don’t let go,” she spoke softly, her forehead on yours and lips just a fragment of space away from yours. “I need you to come back, alright?” You nod, eyes still closed, kissing her again.

“I love you,” you say to her, not even remembering the last time that you spoke those exact words. Since waking up, you’ve told her that you feel like you should love her and that you want to love her but you’ve never told her that you do love her, in spite of the growing emotion in your chest.

She takes note of this, smiling through the tears and snot that are running down her face, kissing you again. “I love you,” she replies before pulling away and wiping her face on the long sleeve of her shirt. “I’ll see you when you get out?” she asks, and you nod at Tsing reassumes the position at the back of the bed, unlocking the wheels.

“Oh alright Nurse Griffin, are you ready?” She asks, your nod and deep swallow enough confirmation for her to begin pushing the bed through the double doors, leaving Lexa standing in between them, watching as you disappear on the other side. As the doors snap back and forth before finally shutting, you watch her disappearing shape, wishing now that you kissed her just one more time.

Hold, hold on, hold onto me ‘cause I’m a little unsteady. A little unsteady. Hold, hold on, hold onto me ‘cause I’m a little unsteady. A little unsteady.

Through the bright light and the mask over your mouth pumping oxygen to keep you calm, all you can hear is the sound of sanitized packages opening and metal clinking against the tray to your left. They’re prepping your surgery.
“Okay Clarke,” you hear Jasper’s voice before you see him hovering over you. “We’re going to be putting you under in a moment, but we wanted to run you through some things first.” Jasper looks nervous, which, to you, is interesting. This man is one of the best practicing doctors that you know and a fantastic surgeon with the steadiest hand that you’ve ever seen, but as Maya hands him some gauze and a syringe, he flinches for the first time ever in the operating room. You apparently have this effect on them.

Kane’s voice begins speaking the words that you’ve heard tens of thousands of times, but this time they’re different… This time they’re to you. Zoning him out, your eyes catch another body in the room that you weren’t expecting and before you can stop yourself, you’re lifting up on to your elbows, pulling the oxygen mask from your face.

“Mom!” you shout as your mother makes her way to you, wrapping her arms around you. “What are you doing here?”

With tears crossing the bridge of her nose, she ties her cap on quickly stating “I’ve been absent too much. It’s time I’m here for you.” Placing a hand on your shoulder, she pushes you gently down onto the bed, stroking your hair with the other hand.

“What about the rules?” you ask her as she pulls the oxygen mask back over your face.

“Screw fear. I’m telling my own damn story,” your mother says, reminding you of a conversation that you and Bellamy had years ago. With a smile across your face, she looks into your eyes once more. “I love you baby.”

“Mom, I’m scared,” you say through the mask as Maya reaches for your hand, offering you a quick ‘I’m sorry’ as she inserts an I.V. into your wrist. You cringe, not due to the pain-- you can handle the small needle, but you cringe knowing that there’s no going back now.

“I know, Clarke,” your mother whispers through her face mask. Kane stands beside her, placing a hand on your head.

“It’s time. Just relax Clarke. Everything will be over before you know it,” his voice speaks through his mask as his hand moves to the I.V. drip behind you, turning the red knob on the bag to release the chemicals into your blood stream.

For a brief moment, you feel the cold liquid invading your body, fighting for space in your veins, but then you begin to loose feeling, starting in your fingers and working its way towards your chest.

“I love you, mommy,” you slur as your vision starts getting fuzzy, reaching your hand out to your mother. Without words she grabs your hand and then everything goes black, the room around you disappearing.

“I love you too, baby girl,” you hear her say before there’s nothing else.

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LEXA

From the front of the room, you can see the doors close and you know that it’s time. With Lincoln, Tris, and Bellamy at your side, you take a deep breath, exhaling slowly. All of the planning and all of the effort and energy that you’ve put into making this day perfect for Clarke has finally come to this point. The man speaking during the ceremony approaches the front, placing a hand on your shoulder as he passes.
She is my rock and my rolling thunder. I've been the spell she was under. I love that girl. She is my cigarettes and champagne. She's got me strung but I'm not running. I love that girl. I love that girl.

And without any other thoughts, the music begins and the doors open from the back, all thoughts of sadness and anxiety disappearing as excitement bubbles up in your chest, making you gasp silently as Abby enters the room, smile shining across her face when she makes eye contact with you. Taking her place at the front, your eyes follow her until Raven appears at the back, walking straighter than you've ever seen her do before. She's shimmering as she grins over at her new boyfriend who sits in the chairs lining the opposite side of the room. Kyle flashes a quick smile back at her before Octavia emerges from the back, practically jogging as her short legs carry her swollen, pregnant body closer to you than she probably should be. “Get ready,” she whispers as Lincoln smiles over at his wife, taking her place next to the other women on that side of the room, their black dresses fitting flawlessly across their bodies.

She is the days I can't get over. She is the nights that I call home endlessly for you I'll always wait. Caught in the waves of hesitation lost in the sea of my own doubt endlessly. For you I'll always wait. For you I'll always wait.

Honestly, you didn’t like the whole Black and White theme, but now, with the black and the bright blue Forget-Me-Nots and the anticipation building in your chest, you couldn’t care any less about the colors or the music or the food or anything else. All that mattered now was the on the other side of the doors that closed behind Octavia.

She is the flame and the fire she's raging. I've been the spark and the war she's waging. I love that girl. She came along and she spoke so sweetly, changed everything, took my heart completely. I love that girl. I love that girl.

And then it happened.

Almost too quickly for you to catch your breath.

And then there was Clarke, making her way through the walkway with the Forget-Me-Nots in her hands, white dress contrasting against the sea of black in the room.

Of course she contrasted…

She always has.

Whether it was against the floor of what was now Holcomb TaeKwonDo…

Or the dark, hazy bar where you two got your first drinks…

Or the dimmed lights of her apartment during family game nights…

Or the hustle of the hospital…

Or the darkness that invaded your mind during her times of trial…

Clarke…

Always…

Contrasted…
And now you don’t doubt a single decision that Clarke has made today… or ever really.

With the blue in her hands matching the blue in her eyes, that same blue that has captivated you day after day, as she takes her place next to you, you can’t help but reach out and grab her hands, leaning in to whisper into her ear. “You’re gorgeous,” you say, a crack in your tone as you swallow down the tears filling your eyes.

She is the days I can’t get over. She is the nights that I call home endlessly for you I’ll always wait. Caught in the waves of hesitation lost in the sea of my own doubt endlessly. For you I’ll always wait. For you I’ll always wait

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CLARKE

“What’s this?” Lexa asks you from across the room, opening a book and skimming the pages with her thumb. Shuddering slightly, a vague remembrance passes through your brain…

Breakfast: Bagel + cream cheese, Orange juice
Snack: Granola Bar
Lunch: ½ sandwich + Apple
Snack: Gatorade + Banana
Dinner: Grilled Chicken Salad + baked potato

“It’s going to be hard,” you mumble as Lexa brings the book over to you, nudging herself in next to your body. Shuffling over slightly, you grab your stinging head, prompting a terrified response from Lexa that you’ve seen too much recently. Ever since your sinus surgery where they pulled the entire infected mass from your sinus cavity, she had been overly protective of you, monitoring the very air around your head as if you were going to die at any moment…

Could you blame her though? I mean, you walked out on her and everyone else, almost died in a car wreck, stayed in a coma for almost a month, awoke with no memory of your entire relationship, then had a seizure in her very arms before finding out that you, essentially, had a brain infection. No, you couldn’t blame her, but you also hated the amount of stress that it placed on her…

And finding this damn book wouldn’t make it any easier… especially not if she didn’t already know.

“Clarke,” she begins, eyebrows furrowed as she turns into you, opening the book to some of its earlier entries that contain little to nothing written in them.

“Look, Lex, it was a long time ago….”

“No,” she stumbles, flipping through a few pages. “This one was nine days after we broke up…”

Of course she remembers that.

“I mean, I knew it was rough, but this says that you literally ate four grapes all day…”

Sighing deeply, you turned to face her, taking her face in your hands. “I was bad…” Inhale. Exhale. “I don’t know what to say though… I’m better now… I mean…” Inhale. Exhale. “It’s going to be hard,” you repeat the words of your therapist that you strangely enough remember. “But I’m constantly getting better…”

“How bad?” she asked, closing the book and licking her lips. Her eyes told you everything that you needed to know in order to start spilling the entire story. You weren’t getting out of here with
anything short of absolute truth.

“I almost died,” the words leave your lips before you know any better, slapping your girlfriend in the face as they pass by. “I was hospitalized and had to do therapy and rehab and… It was bad.” Inhale. Exhale.

Watching as her expression drops, the sadness that floods over her fills you with a sense of remorse that has been all too familiar since the day you awoke to Bellamy standing over you, rubbing your hand with his thumb from inside of the hospital room.

“Do you think I’m crazy?” you ask, choking back the tears that have been flooding you since you began your tale.

“No,” she snorts, shaking her head as she lifts a hand to your cheek. “You just need stability.” Pulling you closer, Lexa plants a small kiss on your nose, pulling you the rest of the way into her arms, holding you tight. “And someone to remind you of how beautiful you are… every second of every day.”

And If you’ve ever felt your most ugly in life, it was this moment here…

It was telling Lexa exactly how broken you were.

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LEXA

15 months ago when you got a phone call at 3:47 in the morning, you could have never guessed that you’d be here now, and that’s okay. Nothing else mattered anymore except for this woman and this moment.

This beautiful, blonde haired, blue eyed woman standing in front of you...

And this moment that you hoped for from the moment that she opened her soul to you in a drunken tangent at a sketchy college bar…

And this moment that you hoped for from the second that you woke up next to her the next morning…

And this moment that you hoped for from the time you heard her whisper ‘I love you’ in her sleep…

And this moment that you hoped for from the very beginning, every second of every day since she broke your nose and refused to let you walk out of your brother’s Taekwondo academy alone.

And this moment…

Where you were invincible…

And this moment…

Where Clarke looked like she finally felt as beautiful as she’s always been.

And the city buzz and empty cars. It’s 3 a.m. I wonder where you are. And the crooked smiles and worn out miles between us, now I wonder where you are

Taking a deep breath, you smile at your bride, knowing that if nothing else, after everything, you’ve finally learned to breathe…
With Clarke by your side.

She is the days I can't get over. She is the nights that I call home endlessly for you I'll always wait.  
Caught in the waves of hesitation lost in the sea of my own doubt endlessly. For you I'll always wait.  
For you I'll always wait
it's coming to my attention that many people didn't know that I started on a sequel. It's still a work in progress, but you can find that here: http://archiveofourown.org/works/4929964/chapters/11312131
I am a piece of shit

And I accidentally deleted my tumblr so if we were followers please go add me back. Shaneycakes-1131
UPDATED

HEY GUYS...

SO I GOT A NEW TUMBLR...

ADD ME ON THERE AND SEND ME NICE (or terrible) THINGS!

roliver901.tumblr.com

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