The World is Brighter Than The Sun Now That You’re Here

by Pammcasso

Summary

The World is Brighter than The Sun Now That You’re Here (though your eyes will need some time to adjust)

As a child, Clarke liked to refer to someone's colour-match as their soulmate. For months she would talk loudly about how she couldn’t wait to meet them... But that was a long time ago. Reality is more complicated.

Colour sure is pretty though.
Prologue

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

**Clarke, Earth-date: March 12th  2138**

Tiny Clarke Griffin bounds through the Ark’s Alpha Station, scanning every individual she passes with intense focus. Her eyes are stretched wide open, straining her eyelids with the effort. She pauses at a corner in the hall and peers around it intently, like a hunter stalking prey.

“Nope!” she exclaims. “No one there! Maybe next time!” Clarke tugs insistently on her father’s hand, running down the corridor on her short legs. Every trip down the hall is a new chance. “Maybe next time!” she repeats after every corner she turns, every crowd she passes, every new person she encounters.

“It’ll happen when it happens,” her father tells her gently, squeezing her small hand in his. “Or it might never happen, and that’s okay too.”

“No it isn’t!” Clarke insists. “I want to see colour!”

She’s determined; she will find her colour-match. The idea thrills her. She expects at any moment to cross paths with the one who will make her vision spark to life. Clarke’s impatient for the moment when she’ll finally be near them. When she can see, at last, the Ark as it’s meant to be seen – in colour. While she waits to meet her match, Clarke has dedicated herself to memorizing what colour everything’s supposed to be. She’s learned that blood is red and her hair is yellow and trees are green. She would nod earnestly and try to understand when her mom explained the difference between orange and yellow.

She wants to be prepared, for when she needs them one day.

Soon enough, Clarke arrives at her destination, her father still firmly in tow. No colour sightings yet, but it’s only midday. Clarke stops in front of the grey bulkhead door and presses the intercom.

“Wells!” she calls into the microphone. “It’s me!”

After a moment the door draws back to reveal Thelonious Jaha, huge and imposing in the doorway. “Clarke,” he says in his curt, not entirely unkind, way. Then, to her father, “Jake.” Jaha greets Clarke’s dad, high above Clarke’s head. Clarke ignores him, darting inside past Jaha’s legs.

Wells is sitting at a large metal table in the corner of the open living room, his dark head bent over some scrap metal. He’s folding a piece of wire with his hands, forming it into a shape.

“Hi!” Clarke says excitedly, grinning at her best friend. He looks up and grins back, dropping his work to the table.

“Hi!” Excitement shines all over Wells’ face. “I’ve got something for you.” Leaning across the table, Wells holds up a glass jar, full of pencils. From among the various shades of grey, white, and black, he pulls one out. It’s unmistakably new: the pencil’s much longer than Clarke’s normal stash, and it’s a shade of grey that she’s never seen before.
Clarke reaches the table in a quick bound and accepts the gift from Wells’ outstretched hand. She cradles the new pencil in her cupped palms, holding it up and inspecting it closely. “What colour is it?” she asks him. In the moments before he answers, the pencil could be anything. It might even be a colour Clarke has never heard of!

“It’s blue,” Wells tells her. Clarke’s disappointed. She already has a blue; she doesn’t need more than one blue. Wells, of course, understands her look immediately. “It’s not like the blue one you already have,” he insists. “This one’s different.”

Clarke inspects it even closer, holding it right up to her eye line. Maybe, if she tries really, really hard, she’ll be able to see the colour herself. “Different, how?” she asks, sceptical.

Wells laughs at her, and Clarke’s cheeks burn in frustration. “It’s just different,” he says. “The blue you already have…” he rifles through the glass jar and pulls it out. The pencil’s short and stubby from overuse. “This one,” he continues, holding up the old pencil, “is darker. It’s like the colour of the oceans on earth. The new one is lighter. It’s the colour of Earth’s sky. I thought you could use it when you draw pictures of the ground.”

Clarke holds up the old one and compares it to the beautiful new pencil. She supposes the old one does look darker. Slowly, a grin blooms across Clarke’s face. Sky. She can colour in the sky.

“I love it,” she tells Wells earnestly, throwing her arms around him. He hugs her back easily.

“Come on, then, let’s get to work!”

Clarke draws for hours while Wells picks up working on his little sculpture. Slowly, it takes the shape of a little animal. He uses screws for the body, bolts for paws, and the wire forms a little tail. It’s cute, Clarke tells him.

Every so often, Clarke leans over to Wells and asks him to check that the colours in her drawings look okay. Can horses be orange? How about red? No? What about yellow? Patiently, Wells would set down his sculpture and explain in great detail the differences between each one, lining up and sorting the coloured pencils. No, the red is too bright. Not green, try the brown instead. When she finally finishes, Clarke hands over the drawing to him triumphantly.

“Yeah,” Wells says, inspecting the scene she had sketched. “Looks good, Clarke.”

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Clarke likes to refer to someone’s colour-match as their soulmate. She read the word in one of the ancient books they still have on board the Ark, from before the Earth was lost. For months she would talk loudly about what she’s going to do when she meets her soulmate and how she can’t wait to finally be able to see in colour. And that she’ll make sure never to leave that person’s side, because colour is going to be so amazing, she would never ever want to be without it. And what would they be like? Would he have a cute smile? Would she have freckles? Every week Clarke would imagine someone different, but she loved them all. Every time she loved them. And wouldn’t it just be awful if they didn’t see colour too? Wouldn’t that just be so embarrassing?

Eventually, her mother has to pull her aside – her grip tight on Clarke’s upper arms – and tell her sternly to stop.
“Can’t you see you’re hurting Wells?” Abby asks her.

Clarke hasn’t been able to see it. She’s always been jealous of her friend; it doesn’t seem fair that Wells has been able to see colour for as long as she’s known him, when she still can’t see any. Not even one. She always assumed that the colours could only be a good thing – why would talking about it hurt him? Doesn’t he want to see in colour?

The horrible, humiliating truth washes over her then, while Abby’s grip continues to dig into her arms. Understanding sags through her, followed swiftly by gut-churning shame and humiliation.

It’s the first time in her life that Clarke feels the cold sink of regret.

She never speaks of colour to Wells again.

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A couple of months later, when Clarke is still too young to know better, she asks her mom when she knew that Dad was her colour-match. Abby isn’t even able to meet Clarke’s eye when she replies evasively that she can only see colour some of the time. The tone of her voice makes Clarke change the subject.

When, later that same day, her father tells her that he’s never seen in colour, Clarke vows never to bring it up with either of her parents again.

The truth is, no one else wants to hear about colour. So Clarke stops mentioning it entirely.

Bellamy, Earth-date August 23rd 2138

“Story! Story!”

Octavia, at only five years old, has a minimal ability to leave well enough alone. Bellamy, himself only ten, has a similarly poor ability to deny his little sister anything.

“One more, then bed,” he allows, sparing Octavia a gentle smile.

“Quiet, both of you,” their mother hisses from her table. She looks up briefly from the medical uniform she’s mending to fix them both with a stern glare. “Someone might be passing outside. Keep your voices down.”

Octavia gets that sad, confused look on her face that Bellamy is coming to recognize. “Why do the outside people hate noise so much?” she asks for what feels like the hundredth time.

Bellamy sighs and wraps his arms protectively around her tiny frame. Sooner, rather than later, he
will need to explain the truth to her. She’s illegal, he would have to explain, pausing to define each word to her as he goes. If anyone apart from Bellamy and Mommy ever find out about her, bad things would happen. He doesn’t know how to explain ‘bad’ to her without explaining laws and death penalty and floating and one-child policy and even pregnancy. You’re special, he would say, because you’re my sister. They’re the only people in the whole world with siblings.

Bellamy has been planning what he would need to say for months. It will need to be him, of course. His mother would never do it, or if she did, it would come out wrong. It would be about punishment and secrets and lies. It would make Octavia feel like it was her fault. As though she asked to live under the floorboards.

“Don’t worry about them, O. Which story do you want?” Bellamy lifts her easily in his arms and deposits her down on his bed.

“The party one,” she exclaims.

“The party one again? I told that one yesterday!”

“The party one!” Octavia insists, grinning at him.

“Okay, okay.” Bellamy sits down on the bed beside her. He shuffles up on the bed until his back is pressed against the headboard. Octavia scurries over to him and lays her head on his knee, clutching the stuffed rabbit he made for her in one hand and Bellamy’s pillow in the other.

“One, a long, long time ago,” Bellamy begins, “there was a place called Italy, on Earth. It was a beautiful place. There was art and music and animals. The sun shone all day and everyone breathed fresh air. There were flowers in all the gardens and all the children learned to ride horses. But not everything in Italy was so happy. There were two families in Italy who didn’t like each other very much. They were called the Montagues and the Capulets, and they were always fighting. There was a girl in Italy called Juliet and a boy called Romeo. Juliet was a Capulet and Romeo was a Montague, so they were supposed to hate each other—”

“But they didn’t, did they?” Octavia asks, even though she must have already memorized the whole story, from how many times she’s demanded Bellamy tell it to her.

“You’re getting ahead!” Bellamy chastises her, ruffling her hair. “Anyway, Romeo was really sad because he wanted to fall in love, but he’d never met his colour-match. His friends who had were all really happy, because they could see how beautiful the world was, but he couldn’t and so he was sad about it. So to cheer him up his friends Benvolio and Mercutio convinced him to come to a party at the Capulet house, even though he wasn’t supposed to because he’s a Montague.”

“So he snuck in?”

“Yup, he wore a mask so no one could see him, and went to the party anyway. He knew it would be dangerous, because he was a Montague, and if he got caught he’d get in big trouble, but he really wanted to go.”

“That was brave,” Octavia says.

“Or it was really stupid,” Bellamy replies. “If he’d been caught he might not have felt so brave then.”

Octavia frowns at him. “But he wasn’t caught.”

“That’s right, he wasn’t. Instead, while he was at the party, the most amazing thing happened. He started to see in colour. First just a little bit, then all at once. It was like magic. And that’s when he
saw her. Juliet was looking right at him, and as they walked towards each other, they knew for sure. They were matched to each other and they fell in love right on the spot. They danced and danced and danced all night. He was a little sad when he found out that she was a Capulet, but he loved her so much that he didn’t care. When the party was over, Romeo snuck back to Juliet’s window to talk to her more. He didn’t want to leave her side, because then he wouldn’t be able to see in colour anymore. She knew he was outside because she could see in colour too. Even though their parents were enemies, they decided to get married so that they never had to be apart.”

“But it goes wrong,” Octavia supplies.

“It goes a bit wrong. Romeo got into a fight with Juliet’s cousin and got banished from Italy. Juliet was sad, because she didn’t want Romeo to leave without her. And, Juliet’s dad wanted her to marry someone else. He didn’t care whether they were colour-matched or not. And Juliet was scared to tell him that she was matched to a Montague. So to escape, Juliet pretended to kill herself. When her family thought she was dead, then Romeo could come and get her and they could run away together. At first, Romeo thought that she was really dead and didn’t know she was faking. But when he arrived at her tomb, the colour came back when he got near her, so he knew that she was still alive. So he waited until she woke up, and they ran away together, happily ever after. Once their family found out the whole story, and that they were colour-matched, they finally agreed to end all their fighting. Because if fate wanted them to be together, then their families needed to respect it.”

“That’s a good story,” Octavia says against Bellamy’s knee.

“Yeah,” Bellamy agrees.

“Juliet should have just told her dad that she loved Romeo. He might have listened.”

“Maybe,” Bellamy says. “At least they made peace eventually.”

“Bell?” Octavia’s eyes slip close and her voice slurs with sleep. “What does colour look like?”

Bellamy cards his fingers through her hair. “I don’t know,” he says. “If I ever see it, I’ll describe it to you.”

“Promise?”

“I promise. I’ll describe every last one of them, until it’s like you can see them yourself.”

“Will I ever meet my colour-match?”

“Maybe,” Bellamy’s heart constricts painfully against the lie. “Maybe one day.”

“That’s enough, Bellamy.” Their mother’s voice is crisp and hard and cuts through their peaceful bubble. “Bed now.”

“Can I sleep up here with you?” Octavia asks, burrowing closer to her brother.

“Not tonight.” Not ever, he doesn’t say. “Come on, O, let’s get you tucked in.”

He gently pushes her off him and stands to lift the loose metal floorboard open for her. She eyes it warily for a moment.

“I’m not afraid,” she mutters, clutching her stuffed rabbit to her chest. She climbs down into the hole and settles against the lumpy cushions. Bellamy holds the floorboard open for a moment and smiles down at her. “Night, O.”
As it does every night, Bellamy’s heart breaks when he closes the door of her tiny prison. Maybe, one day, things could be different.

Finn, Earth-date: October 13th 2138

The stack of biscuits wobbles precariously. A handful of them have been carefully piled, one on top of the other, into a small tower. Finn Collins splays out his tiny hands on either side of the stack, stabilizing them. With nimble fingers, he swipes another from the tray of a passing Ark Station worker and adds it delicately to the top of the pile.

Out of the corner of his eye, he watches the guard at the end of the mess hall. The guard is supposed to be monitoring the entire canteen, but for some reason he refuses to move more than ten paces from Finn. He stands, his large arms folded across his chest, watching Finn with narrowed eyes. It’s almost like this guard suspects him! Finn is offended. Where is the trust in this world? Carefully angling his body to hide the pile of stolen treats, Finn twists to look over his shoulder and meets the guard’s eye. He flashes the guard a toothy grin, the wide gap between his front teeth, where his baby teeth have fallen out, proudly on display. The guard seems satisfied that Finn is just a kid and doesn’t need permanent babysitting. He turns his back and starts to move across the room. Finn leaps at his opportunity. He grabs the biscuits, as many as he can hold in his small hands, folds them into the bottom of his shirt and makes a beeline for the exit.

Just as he crosses the threshold of the mess, he hears a shout behind him. “Hey! Kid! Come back here!”

Finn chances a look over his shoulder and spots the guard, beefy face twisted in anger, striding back towards him. Okay, Finn hikes up the bottom of his shirt, protecting the biscuits. Time to run.

Tiny feet race down the familiar halls of the Ark. Finn skids down a tightly packed corridor and weaves through the crowd, wending his way against the current of workers coming off shift and heading to the mess hall.

The guard is still yelling behind him. Don’t these people have anything better to do? Finn ducks down a small passageway and spots an air vent at the end of it. That will work. He kicks loose a corner of the paneling and slides through it. Once inside, he flattens himself against the wall of the vent. Chest heaving in sharp staccato breaths, he waits as the stomping of the guard’s boots move past him and continue down the hall.

Finn smiles to himself. Victory is sweet.

Still high on adrenaline, Finn slumps back for a moment against the warm metal of the air vent and takes in his new surroundings. He knows these vents are everywhere on the ship. So that must mean he can get anywhere through them.

Finn keeps an eye on the blue of his sleeve as he starts to crawl through the vent. At the first fork he reaches, he goes right. It takes a little while, but the colour gradually starts to fade from his jacket, so he backtracks and turns left instead. This time the blue gets brighter. He continues this way for some time. It’s a slow process, going first one direction, and then the other, as he lets his colour-sight guide
him back home. Finally, he finds his destination. He peers through the slats in the vent, into familiar living quarters that are drenched in colour. Raven is here.

He kicks open the vent and drops down onto the metal floor.

Before he’s even stood up straight, a little hand wraps around his wrist and yanks him out from the centre of the living room and into a small closet.

“What are you doing here?” Raven’s familiar voice hisses in his ear.

Finn carefully unwraps and holds out the biscuits to her in response. She lets out a stifled noise of surprise and pleasure at the sight of them. Finn notices with a lurch of dread that she’s looking more ragged than usual today: her hair is lank and unwashed, her clothes smell, and a new tear is spreading across the left shoulder of her over-large green t-shirt, exposing her thin brown shoulder. But her eyes are bright and dancing with pleasure as she accepts one of the biscuits.

“How did you get these!?” She lifts the biscuit to her nose and breathes in the smell. It doesn’t smell good, in Finn’s opinion. All the food on the Ark tastes and smells the same - like dust and chemical. But Raven’s reaction fills Finn with pride.

He preens and winks at her. “I have my ways.”

Gingerly, Raven breaks up one of the biscuits and starts to eat it.

“I knew you were coming cause I could see everything get more colourful,” she tells him around a mouthful of food.

“Yeah I know!” Finn grins toothily at her. “That’s how I found your room through the vents. I just followed the colour on my sleeve!”

“Wow! That’s so handy.”

“Yeah. Colour is the best. I don’t understand how other people do anything without it.”

“I know me too!” She leans forward, “I feel sorry for them.”

“Same!”

Finn’s laugh is cut off by an abrupt noise from the living room. A crash like the shattering of glass cuts through their tiny haven. A moment later Finn can hear angry adult voices echoing from the next room. Raven shrinks at the sound.

“Is that your mom?”

“Yeah,” Raven whispers, “she has one of her friends visiting,” the way Raven says ‘friend’ sends a chill down Finn’s spine, but he doesn’t know why. “I’m supposed to stay in here.” Raven motions to the closet they are both crouching in.

“Hey, I’ll stay with you!”

Raven’s eyes brighten but her voice is small as she shrugs. “Okay. Only if you want to.”

She doesn’t say she wants him there, but Finn’s pretty sure she does. Well anyway, it’s nice and bright here, so he’ll stay.

Together they share another one of the biscuits.
Lexa, Earth-date: April 17th 2145

The first colour that Lexa kom Tri Kru ever sees is the red of her own blood. It gushes from a gash on her arm, staining her skin a dark maroon.

A cry of pain rips from Lexa’s lungs, but dies when she catches sight of the blood. She blinks at her arm for a moment, startled by this change in her world. She pays for her distraction. The enemy she was fighting breaks free of Lexa’s attack, landing a sharp blow to her abdomen in the process. Lexa doubles over as the wind is knocked from her.

Her keryon-ai might be somewhere in the battle, but there’s no time for such thoughts. Lexa stumbles back a pace, her boots scrambling for purchase on the mud of the battlefield. She snaps back to the fight at hand and lashes forward, cutting through her enemy’s defence with hard, brutal strokes. She cuts down the Azgeda warrior without sparing a thought to whether they’re her keryon-ai. Still, she can’t help the rush of relief as the Ice Nation warrior collapses, dead, but Lexa’s soul-sight remains.

“Leksa!” Anya’s shout cuts across the battlefield. Lexa looks up and finds her mentor rushing past to take on a pair of oncoming Ice Warriors. Anya lost her horse early in the battle, but is now gamely meeting her enemy on foot. Her braid whips in a high arc as she dives around the blade of an attacker. “Keep your head firmly on your shoulders, sha?” Anya shouts at Lexa, even as she parries and re-engages with the Ice Nation warrior she’s fighting.

Only Anya could manage to tell her off even in the midst of battle. Lexa ignores her. Everything, even Anya, looks so new – so entirely other. Her mentor and the sky above them and the mud beneath their feet and the trees and mountains and life all around them; every particle of the world has altered. The very battle blooms before her in more detail than she could have ever imagined. Lexa barely has the words to understand what’s happened to the world.

Her people call it keryon-ai – her soul-sight. But it’s more than that. It was like living all of her life in a shadow, and finally stepping out to feel the sun on her face. The colours had been there the whole time, she knows, but the reality is staggering. Like carrying a burden for miles and finally setting it down. Like falling into a dream, where the rules that bind them all to the earth no longer apply.

Lexa gazes across the field, her eyes roaming up to the brilliant sky, and down to the blood-soaked earth. As she looks across the field, her eyes lock on the most beautiful warrior she has ever seen. Their gazes meet and Lexa knows they’re matched; she has never been so sure of anything in her life. She recognizes her own astonished joy reflected in this woman. Her keryon-ai. Cautious, feeling suddenly like a child, Lexa steps forward, towards the warrior. With each step the colours of the earth sharpen. Lexa does not care that this woman bears the markings of the Ice Nation. She does not care that only a minute ago Lexa would have killed her where she stood. All that matters is the brilliant flush in her cheeks and warm colour in her eyes.

They’re standing before one another now, breathless and armed, as the battle continues to rage all around them. They’re enemies, but every bone in Lexa’s exhausted body tells her to protect this woman at all costs. She understands now why a keryon-ai is strength. She has never before felt so powerful.
“Hei,” Lexa says, her voice shaking. “Ai laik Leksa kom Tri Kru.” She holds out her hand to the warrior.

The Ice Nation warrior hesitates for a moment, then reaches forward and accepts Lexa’s am, gripping it tight. “Costia,” she replies, her voice rich and deep. “My name is Costia.”

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**Clarke, Earth-date: January 30th 2148**

“Clarke?” Jackson calls to Clarke from across the Medical Bay. “Can you come help me for a minute?”

Clarke only came to Medical so she could have some lunch with her mom, but – as usual – she quickly found herself getting drawn into the fray. The Medical Bay is busy, and Abby had been called away within minutes of sitting down to lunch.

“Sure,” Clarke calls back, striding over to where Jackson’s inspecting a new patient.

There’s a young mechanic sitting up on Jackson’s operating table. She’s built like most mechanics: lean and toned, with upper body strength that Clarke can only dream of, and a half-crazed look in her eyes. Clarke figures all mechanics have to be at least halfway crazy to want to walk around in open space.

The mechanic has a piece of bandage strip held firmly to her forehead. Blood’s pouring fast and heavy from a head wound across her temple, the dark grey blood covering the slightly lighter grey of the mechanic’s skin. But the cut is shallow and looks like it would probably heal up without stitches.

“I’m fine,” the mechanic is saying as Clarke approaches. “Just a stray piece of shrapnel – I’ll watch for the recoil next time. I’m good to go–”

“So help me, Raven, if you do not sit down, I will strap you down,” Jackson says, more forceful than Clarke is used to hearing him.

“Clarke,” Jackson says, turning to her, “can you go pick up a new batch of bandages from the ration station? We’re nearly out here.”

“Okay,” Clarke says, turning from the Medical Bay and leaving the disgruntled mechanic behind.

Clarke has long-since stopped looking around every corner for her colour-match. Maybe one day she would find them, maybe not. Her dad never has, and he’s happy. And, Clarke thinks with a shudder, it’s certainly better than finding and losing them. Clarke never knew Wells’ mom – she died giving birth to Wells – but Thelonious always talked about the colour of her eyes. Clarke thinks it might be one of the last things he still remembers in colour.

For her part, Clarke’s convinced that colour-matches are overrated.

So, naturally, that’s when she sees her first flash of colour.

One of the designated hours for lunch is just finishing when Clarke arrives. The mess hall is
swarming with people: the warm press of bodies on all sides, the shuffling of feet on the metal floor, the buzz of conversation. A wave of people are returning to their stations, catching Clarke like a fish swimming against the current. Clarke has to elbow her way through the tide of people moving in the opposite direction. She’s weaving through the crowd when it happens.

For a moment Clarke thinks she’s hallucinating. The sleeve of her shirt looks different. Pink, she realizes with a jolt. Her mother had told her the shirt was pink. As Clarke watches, half in horror and half in joy, the shade bursts to life: bright, vivid pink!

Clarke looks up, her eyes casting wildly around the room. The whole world has been lit on fire. Colours surge to life all around her, so sharp they knock the air from her lungs. No sooner have her eyes adjusted to the onslaught, than they start fading again. Clarke looks around frantically at the people passing by. Is anyone else experiencing the same thing? All she can see are the backs of retreating heads. Of all the colourful heads of hair, none turn. No one looks back at her, and in the space of a minute the whole ecstatic miracle is over. Her vision fades back to the familiar black and white, suddenly so much less than it ever seemed before. Whoever had been causing it must have continued down the corridor and out of sight. Clarke stands stock still for a moment, letting this sink in. They must not have seen what she did.

Her match must not be reciprocated.

Clarke returns to the Med Bay with the new ration of bandages and a sober attitude. She banishes the memory of that afternoon and vows never to tell anyone what she saw. Maybe, if no one knows what happened, she could pretend the whole stupid colour-match thing doesn’t exist at all.

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Bellamy, Earth-date: January 30th 2148

A young man with slicked-back black hair and expressionless features is shuffling from his lunch break back to his janitorial duties in Factory Station. His eyes never lift from his own black boots as they tread across the grey metal of the station floor. He does not see the clothes of his fellow commuters as they shift into colour, he does not see his own skin brown in front of his eyes, and he does not see a desperate blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl scan the crowd behind him. All he sees is black on grey as he marches on.

Bellamy Blake has not given a single thought to colour-matches for well over a year. Without anyone to describe them to, he fails to see the point. He has no desire to see the world in any greater detail.

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Chapter End Notes
Interested to hear what you all think. Stay tuned for more coming soon...
The Days Before

Chapter Notes

If you're curious, this fic takes its title (and some inspiration) from the song "Light" by Sleeping at Last.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Lexa, Earth-date: June 1st 2149

It’s the third day of Costia’s capture, and Lexa is crawling out of her skin. Four days since Costia left Polis on a simple hunting trip to the northern lakes, three days since the first messenger delivered news of her capture by the Ice Clan, and two days since Lexa last saw a hint of colour. She’s voiced this last item to no one, not even Gustus and Anya. She cannot put her fear into words, refuses to consider it. It must be the range. The colour had just vanished, gone in a quiet blink. And surely, if Costia were gone, Lexa would have felt it. She would know.

So she does not voice her fears. Instead, she sits around the roaring grey fire in the centre square of Polis, agitation quietly eating at her. Beside her, Gustus talks her through a rescue plan that they hope can both save Costia and ensure that their peace talks remain alive. Gustus and Indra had been all for storming the northern Azgeda town with all the forces they could muster. But Anya firmly countered that if they mount a full attack on the Ice Queen, their dreams of an Allied Clan would crumble, and Costia would likely still be killed at the first sign of attack. As much as no one wants to say it, the truth is that Costia is bait. The Ice Queen is begging for an attack, so that she no longer has to feign an interest in peace. It’s moments like these that Lexa needs Costia’s advice the most. Costia, who never likes to waste life, who helps to keep Lexa’s dreams of peace alive. Costia, who is always quick with a joke or a warm touch if she thinks Lexa hasn’t smiled in a while. Costia, who looks after Lexa while Lexa looks after everyone else.

Ultimately, Lexa agrees with Anya, even if the more diplomatic alternative means several additional days of delay while they try to negotiate through scouts and messengers. Even if the more diplomatic alternative means that Lexa may already be too late.

(There are some who feel that Lexa’s decision to abandon her own match to torture shows bravery, self-sacrifice, and a willingness to put the needs of her people above all else. There are others who feel it shows a borderline sociopathic lack of affection for her own keryon-ai. There are still others who think that Costia, turncoat Ice Warrior that she is, deserves whatever she gets at the hands of her old queen. Anya and Gustus are quick to silence those voices before they reach Lexa’s ears, but she hears the whispers all the same.)

Gustus is midway through describing the plan for scouting Costia’s prison cell when the messenger arrives.

“Azgeda at the gate!” One of the guards shouts down from her post at the top of the watchtower.
In an instant the square is a flurry of movement. Lexa’s warriors are on their feet, armed in a flash, surrounding her, flanking her, guarding her, filling the square. Children too young to hold weapons are whisked away by those too old to defend the square.

“How many?” Anya shouts up to the watcher as she charges forward out of her tent.

“Just one,” the guard calls back. “Armed, on horseback. He wears the band of a message-bearer!”

Anya turns to Lexa, her expression hard. “Heda?” she asks, awaiting orders.

There is still no whisper of colour in the square. No blue in the sky, no spark of amber in the fire, no blush in Anya’s cheeks. The square is teeming with life, but Lexa feels removed from it, like a wall of monochrome has been thrown up between her and her people. Without the colour to signal Costia’s arrival, Lexa knows to fear whatever the messenger is here to say. A screaming, agonized part of her brain can feel her life teetering on a knife’s point. She grips at the dagger in her belt, a gift from Costia on the day of her naming as the new Commander. She wishes she had her armor, her kohl, her sword. Dressed only in a tunic, plain pants, and not even made up for battle, Lexa feels naked and exposed. But she rises all the same and marches towards the gate with her shoulders thrown back and her head held high. She is not one to run from her fate.

“Open the gate,” Lexa commands.

Her voice rings through the main square, up to the soldiers on the gate. They nod down at her and crank the large doors back. As the gates part, Lexa looks to Anya and Gustus. They have both taken up positions by her side. She is grateful for their silent support as the messenger trots his five-legged horse through the gate.

The messenger is dressed in the thick furs of the Ice Clan. His coat buckled up to the top of his neck, his face just visible under a cowl. The fashion is too warm by far for a Polis spring, but he seems unconcerned.

“Heda Leksa?” he asks in the thickly accented voice of the North.

Lexa steps forward. Above her, she can hear the strain of longbows from the guards on the towers. Two dozen of her best fighters surround them. Lexa could have this man killed in an instant if she desired it. This fact brings her little comfort.

“What message do you bear?” she asks him.

She wishes he would dismount, or else she wishes she could have met him on horseback herself. As he approaches, mounted above her, Lexa feels like nothing more than a girl. Powerless, no matter what the spirits said.

“No message,” he tells her. “Gift. From the true Queen.”

That’s when Lexa sees it. Her carries a parcel, large and lumpy, in a saddle bag at the base of his beast’s neck. He reaches towards it now, and a horrible rush of dread swamps Lexa so badly that it’s all she can do to remain standing and looking forward.

She knows what it is a moment before he drops it – her – unceremoniously at Lexa’s feet. The world tilts on its axis. Costia. Her beautiful Costia, cut off at the neck and doused in grey. Her eyes blank and sightless, the hair that Lexa herself braided not a week before, her expressive face, all of it cold and grey. Lexa has never seen her in grey before.

The nausea comes on fast and hard, along with the yawning, cavernous grief that is threatening to
swallow her whole right in the middle of the square. Screams of outrage fill the square on all sides, a roar of fury from the surrounding warriors. Lexa can barely hear them over the ringing in her own ears. She cannot fall apart. Not yet. She reigns it back, all of it. She wrenches her eyes up to the messenger. His expression is closed off, resigned perhaps, to the idea that he will not be able to leave Polis alive. She wonders how he obtained the job of making the Commander of Polis and the Allied Clans a colour-widow.

She wants to kill him. Rage and grief and bloodlust are roiling through her. And at least killing him would be doing something. Maybe the violence would help to assuage her grief. She doubts it, though.

“You can go,” she tells him sharply. Her voice is thin and tight, but she still has the power of speech. She can still breathe, still command, still think through the haze. Killing him will not being her soul-sight back. He is just another bait, and Lexa will not rise to it.

Around her, a dozen voices scream in murderous protest. Even Anya is twitching at her side. Lexa cannot look at her friend. Cannot see the grief in Anya’s eyes.

“You…” Lexa’s voice cracks as she looks down again at Costia’s head at her feet. “Tell your Queen that I will have the head of the one who did… this…” she motions down at her love. “And no others.”

She needs him to leave. She needs everyone to leave. Because she cannot keep looking at Costia. Cannot keep standing, cannot keep speaking. Her hands are shaking, her legs are shaking, her voice is shaking, but she will do this.

“Leave now!” she shouts, and the messenger does not need telling again. He whips his horse around, and is out of the gates as though a host of Reapers were on his tail.

Instantly, Gustus and Anya are at her side, escorting her from the square. In a quick, careful movement, Anya has gathered up what remains of Costía and passed her off to the Healer to prepare the burial rites. Then she joins Gustus in ushering Lexa out of the crowd. They support her on either side and Lexa is grateful, so grateful, because her legs give out almost instantly. They carry her, together, down into the tunnels of Polis. Deep into the underground network. Only when they are alone does Lexa collapse.

Anya holds her as she grieves, great gasping wails that are half screams and half sobs. Anya’s arms are warm and strong and unyielding. She barely says a word, offers nothing in the way of spoken comfort. She’s just there, cradling Lexa as though she were a child.

Without needing to be told, Gustus leaves them. He stands guard at the entrance to the tunnels, blocking anyone from approaching, ensuring that no one else hears her cries.

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**Nathan, Earth-date: June 2nd 2149**

The last thing Nathan Miller ever wanted was to see colour.

He didn’t need some stranger soulmate to make him into a “better person” or some shit like that. He
didn’t need anybody. He’s no idiot, he knows he’s not perfect. And yeah, he’s definitely made his 
fair share of bad choices, but he has no desire to change. After all, most of what got him here was 
bad luck. He’s still not convinced that any of the choices he made were mistakes. He refused to 
abandon his friends in Factory Station when their miniature black market was caught and raided. 
And he refused to let his father get himself floated for hiding evidence against his son. So when 
Nathan’s arrested, he marches to the Sky Box with dread in his heart, but his head in the air.

He makes his own mistakes; no one else will ever go down for them.

In the Sky Box It’s easy for him to earn a place among these pariahs of the Ark. He might even call it 
home if the thought of that wasn’t so damn depressing. At least in the Sky Box, none of the bullshit 
from the Ark matters anymore. They’re all dead anyway. Chilling in space purgatory, just sitting 
around till they reach 18, so the Ark doesn’t have to feel bad about killing a bunch of children for a 
handful of stupid reasons.

About a year after his arrival, Miller notices it for the first time. The sludge they have the audacity to 
call food in front of him turns from grey to a putrid brown. It looks worse. Fuck. The Sky Box 
canteen is full of people. He keeps his eyes trained dead ahead, willing the colour to just go away. 
After a few moments, it does. Miller pushes his bowl away; he’s lost his appetite now that he knows 
how shitty it looks in colour. He goes back up to his cell, keeping his eyes on the dull metal floor and 
refusing to look at anyone.

His 18th birthday is in six months. He doesn’t need a reason to care about what’s left of his pointless 
fucking life. What is there even to see? The whole damn Ark’s grey anyway.

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**Finn, Earth-date: June 3rd 2149**

Finn finds her in the mess hall after hours. He wishes he was more surprised. Two women are sitting 
together in the far corner of the empty canteen, heads bent low towards each other. At the canteen 
entrance, a pair of large men flank the doors. On noticing Finn’s approach, the men shift to stand 
shoulder-to-shoulder, blocking Finn from entering. They take up the entire doorframe with their 
considerable bulk. Finn peers between their arms to get a view of the figures inside the canteen. The 
women at the far table are much too far away for Finn to overhear their conversation, but they’re 
both immediately identifiable. As he watches, the younger of the two accepts a wrapped package 
under the table with one hand and shuffles it quickly under the folds of her jacket.

“Raven!” Finn shouts across the quiet canteen, drawing the attention of both women.

Raven looks up at the sound of her name and meets his eye. Her whole posture sags in resignation. 
“What are you doing here, Finn?” she calls back to him.

“What do you think?” Finn struggles and fails to hide his frustration, “looking for you!”

The other woman at the table laughs. “Fun’s over, little bird. Your colour-boy’s come to rescue you 
from the big bad wolf.”

“Shut up, Nygel,” Finn and Raven snap in tandem.
Raven stands stiffly. “Same time next week,” she tells Nygel. Finn’s blood freezes at her words. Slowly, Raven pushes away from the table and heads towards Finn and the bodyguards. She angles past them with a well-placed elbow and rejoins Finn outside the canteen.

“Come on,” she hisses under her breath, pulling him down the hall. Her eyes cast over her shoulder every couple of steps until they’re safely outside of Alpha Station.

Finn follows, tension slowly seeping from his shoulders as they put more and more distance between themselves and Nygel. “What are you doing with her?” Finn demands as they march through the familiar corridors of the Ark, back towards their home station. “She’s nothing but trouble!”

“Let it go, Finn,” Raven can barely look at him, her eyes glued to her own tattered boots.

“Like hell I will!”

“Finn!” Raven pulls up short and glares at him. “This isn’t your problem.” Again her eyes cast about nervously before she takes off down the corridor, half-walking, half-running back to their quarters.

This statement might have been funny if Finn wasn’t so sick with worry. “What are you talking about?” he says faintly. “You are my match. My entire family. All your problems are my problems. What do you think you’re doing?”

His protests fall on deaf ears until they’ve finally returned to their quarters and safely bolted the door behind them. Only when she’s sure they’re alone does Raven unzip her jacket, removing the wrapped package. She shucks her jacket from her shoulders and tosses it onto their couch. Cold panic spasms through Finn, and he has to fight hard to keep himself from smashing the bottle on sight. Instead he watches as, cradling the package in both hands, Raven tucks it, still wrapped, into a trick panel in the floor. Finn has seen those packages often enough as a child, when Raven’s mother would careen home, wasted and tripping. Nygel’s moonshine is the best on the Ark, apparently.

“What did you give her for it?” Finn asks. His voice is strained, a medley of aggravation and terror.

“Finn…” Raven’s anger has abated, leaving her quiet and ashamed. She moves towards their bed, still avoiding eye contact. “It’s late, I’m tired…”

“No. Tell me.”

“It doesn’t-”

“So help me Raven, if you try to tell me it doesn’t matter I will actually lose my mind.” Finn’s anxiety has been steadily ratcheting up for weeks, as he’s watched Raven withdraw from him.

She’s never been the type to wallow, but losing out on the chance to spacewalk has done something to her. The spark, that determination, the drive to achieve, it’s dimming. And Finn is downright petrified. He’s afraid that what happened to her mother will happen to Raven too. He’s afraid that she’ll spiral, descend into a bottle of moonshine and never come back out. Most of all, he’s afraid that he won’t be enough for her.

In his experience, all the people who claim to understand colour matches are the people who’ve never had one. He’s been matched to Raven his entire life, long enough to know that a colour-match won’t stop them from fighting. It won’t put food on their table when Raven’s mother - or Raven herself - trades away their rations for booze. It won’t cure Raven of her heart murmur. And hell, Finn’s not perfect, and even colour isn’t enough to stop him from being attracted to other women. He loves Raven, as a partner, a friend, a lover, as his whole family. But, as Raven’s mother used to say, ‘some people just aren’t built for soulmates.’ And for all that Finn wants to be better, he’s scared that
the vile woman might have been right all along. That all the colour in the world can’t help them. And a perfect match isn’t the same as a perfect relationship.

“Can we just not fight, please?” Raven pleads with him. “I know. I get it. Just, can you please let it go?” She reaches out her hand to him, and Finn accepts it, winding his fingers through hers before pulling her towards him. She moves softly, fitting perfectly at his side. His lips brush her forehead as she settles her head against his collarbone.

Well fuck colour. Colour can’t help Raven, but Finn sure as hell can. What she needs isn’t a soulmate, it’s a chance to live her dream.

What she needs is a spacewalk.

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**Nathan, Earth-date: June 5th 2149**

Even without the colour acting like a great big arrow pointing him out, Miller would have still noticed him eventually. Monty. It was impossible not to. Most people in this place are terrified and subdued, but not Monty. Him and his friend Jasper came into this mundane, monotonous hellhole as a double-act of cracked jokes and joie de vivre.

Miller is on the other side of the Sky Box canteen, but he can still hear Monty’s laugh ringing out over the rest of the din. Miller is far enough away that everything is pretty grey, everything except Monty. As he watches, Monty looks over at him. Miller quickly looks away. He hasn’t spoken to him. What he would say? The guy’s attractive, no argument there, but not *I’ll-give-you-everything-I-have* attractive like matches are supposed to be. At least, Miller doesn’t think he is… Whatever. The point is, it doesn’t matter. It’s not like he could do anything for him even if he wanted to, they’re all going to die when they turn 18 anyway.

So Miller watches from afar as Monty and Jasper squirrel away some of their rations to feed the rodents in the vents (“Their ancestors were lab rats!” Jasper exclaims, “for all we know they could be genius rats! We can train them to spring us from the Box!”). He keeps his distance as Monty invents a new game with a piece of thread and a stray bolt and Jasper turns it into a complex Sky Box-wide tournament. And he stays in his cell when he hears them blasting music through the com system speaker that Monty has somehow rewired to broadcast the Ark radio station.

What could he offer a good-looking, fun-loving, genius like that anyway?

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**Raven, Earth-date: September 12th 2149**

“Where’s the part?” Raven storms into Engineering Station, already beyond her patience.
“Well good afternoon to you too.” Wick, his stupid smirk firmly in place, pops up from behind one of the work benches. He spreads his arms wide in greeting. “Welcome to Engineering Station. I’m good, thanks so much for asking, Raven. It’s so nice to see you–”

“Well good afternoon to you too.” Wick, his stupid smirk firmly in place, pops up from behind one of the work benches. He spreads his arms wide in greeting. “Welcome to Engineering Station. I’m good, thanks so much for asking, Raven. It’s so nice to see you–”

“Wick!” Raven clenches her fists at her sides. “I needed the new depressor valves yesterday. I told you five times–”

“You know, sometimes I feel like you only want me for my ship parts.”

“I don’t want you for any of your parts,” Raven snaps. “You know what I want? The damn depressor valves that you promised would be ready yesterday.”

Wick sticks a wrench between his teeth and grins at her, impish and infuriatingly delighted. “Anyone ever tell you that you worry too much? It’s bad for your complexion.” He speaks around the head of the wrench.

“My complexion is fine, which is more than I’ll be able to say for yours when I’m through with you.”

“Promises, promises.” He winks at her and Raven thinks that it would be worth getting floated if she could stab him with one of his screwdrivers.

“Look, do you want the Ark to fall out of orbit? Because that is actually what will happen if you don’t–” A tremor rocks through the floor, cutting Raven off mid-sentence. She and Wick stagger, grabbing hold of the workbench. The wrench clatters onto the bench as the floor judders. The screeching sound of metal on metal fills the station. It builds to a fever pitch, loud enough to set Raven’s teeth on edge. Then it dies quickly away, leaving nothing but a tense silence in its wake.

“What…” Wick’s smile has slipped clean off his face. “What was that?”

“It sounded like…” Raven trails off. Her breath dies in her throat as she stares at Wick. The pink in his cheeks is turning grey, the red in his hair is receding like the tide. It starts slowly, and then suddenly, before Raven has time to process what’s happening, she’s plunged into horrifying black and white.

When the dropship fell from the Ark and plummeted to Earth, Raven Reyes was in Engineering Station, screaming.

Chapter End Notes

So this fic will cover lots of different POV characters throughout the first and second
seasons. But never fear, lots more Bellamy and Clarke to come in the next chapter, coming soon...
Clarke, Earth-date: September 12th 2149

When she awakes on the descending dropship, all Clarke can feel is a pounding in her head as the tranquilizer wears off, and the burning in her blood when she registers Wells sitting beside her.

“Didn’t think I’d let you go without me, did you?” Wells is asking her. His voice is shaking, but Clarke’s too angry to care. “I like seeing in colour too much.”

It’s his weak attempt at a joke, and it does nothing to quell the rage burning in Clarke’s heart. Is he trying to make her feel guilty for hating him? To remind her that he loves her? Some love that is, if he betrayed her trust at his first opportunity.

The dropship shakes violently as they burn their way through the Earth’s atmosphere. “I’m sorry I got your father arrested,” Well shouts over the screeching of the dropship. “I don’t want to die thinking that you hate me!”

That’s too much for Clarke. She rounds on Wells, livid. “They didn’t arrest my father, Wells, they executed him! I do hate you.”

She shuts her eyes, trying to block out her rage and terror. The ship drops like a stone to the ground. It’s only as she descends to the lower level of the dropship that the changes in the world around her start to come into sharper focus. Her head was so full of stress: about Wells, about the Spacewalker and the kids he got killed, and about their more-than-likely imminent death, that she hadn’t even registered the way the grey around her was morphing into something deeper. She nearly loses her grip on the ladder when she realizes what’s happening. She looks up to where Wells is standing above her on the ladder. His skin gleams, more rich and warm than she has ever seen it. Brown, Clarke realises. That’s what brown looks like.

She drops off the last three rungs the ladder and lands hard on the floor of the dropship. Her knees and ankles jolt in pain, but it’s easy to ignore. Everything is easy to ignore in the wake of what’s going on around her. Just like it had once in the Ark canteen, colour has flooded back into the world like air into a pressurized container. Clarke’s dizzy with it. The girl next to her is wearing a jacket unlike anything Clarke has seen before. It stands out, bright and strong against the girl’s tanned skin. The Spacewalker’s hat is like grey but darker and deeper and more intense. Blue, Clarke’s mind supplies the word intuitively. Clarke looks down at her own hands. She always assumed they were one colour, but they aren’t. Palms up, her hands are creamy and pale, but her knuckles and the tips of her fingers are raw and red. When she clenches her fists she can see wisps of colour – the blue of her veins– criss-crossing along the backs of her hands. Suddenly, she doesn’t care whether her match is reciprocated or not. Either way, colour is the most amazing thing she has ever seen.

Clarke only just manages to catch what the boy at the front of the group is saying and interjects. She has no way of knowing for sure who among the prisoners has given her this gift, but even if she does, now is not the time to be worrying about how pretty her own hands are.
Bellamy, Earth-date: September 12th 2149

Of all his many concerns that day: the approach from Shumway, his fear for Octavia, assassinating Chancellor Jaha, and stealing away onto the dropship, finding his fucking colour-match is one issue too many.

Bellamy wants to enjoy it, when the Ark shifted before his eyes and colours assaulted his senses. He wants to be able to root out the person causing it, to match all the names of the colours to what he’s seeing. He wants to be able to sit down with Octavia for hours and talk about each one in detail.

Instead, he’s surrounded by a pack of criminals, finally reunited with Octavia, and battling an oncoming panic attack when he thinks about how he’s going to survive his act of treason. Not to mention the radiation, which has probably killed them all by now anyway.

“We’re back bitches!” Octavia’s screaming in front of him, punching the air. The first person on the ground in nearly a century. The swell of pride that rushes through Bellamy takes his breath away.

He’s barely ever seen Octavia outside of their room. To see her now, drowning in colour, ecstatic with joy, and free for the first time in her life, it’s more than he could have hoped for. Bellamy laughs, overwhelmed.

He’d signed his own death warrant that morning, but it was worth it: worth it to see Octavia happy, worth it to go to Earth, worth it to see the whole glorious thing in colour for the first time in his life.

The honeymoon doesn’t last. Now he’s had this first, tantalizing taste of freedom, how can he be expected to give it up willingly?

“O,” Bellamy pulls her away as soon as he can. “I can’t stay with them.”

The pleasure slips from Octavia’s features. “Why?” Her eyes are brown, like the bark of the trees surrounding them. Bellamy feels a pang of regret that he won’t get to enjoy the colour for much longer. He’ll have to leave his match behind, lost among the rest of them.

“I did something, to come down here. Something they will kill me for when they find out.”

Octavia frowns at him. “What did you do?” The accusation in her voice is unmistakable. She’s not wrong to suspect him of the worst.

“I can’t tell you that just yet,” he says, his throat suddenly tight. She’s changed so much since the last time he saw her. A little colder, less trusting. She’s distant and suspicious, even with him. Especially with him. He’s not prepared for her distrust. It’s like the ground rocking beneath his feet, setting him off balance. “I need you to trust me. You do still trust me, don’t you?”

If she doesn’t come with him, then that’s it; he’s dead. He’ll die before he leaves her again. His stomach churns as she eyes him up, considering. Then she nods slowly, and Bellamy releases the breath he was holding.

But he barely has a chance to feel relief before Octavia’s volunteering to join the trip to Mount
Weather.

“I’ve been locked up, one way or another, my whole life. I’m done following orders.” I’m done following you. She doesn’t say it, but her meaning is clear. Bellamy tries – he really tries – not to feel betrayed. “I need to have fun, Bell!”

Please don’t leave, he wants to beg. Please stay here. Please stay safe. Please stay with me. Please just stay. But he nods instead and watches as her face lights up and she plants a kiss on his cheek – like she’s a child again and he’s brought her a present from the ration station. For all that he wants to keep her, this isn’t about him. And she’s right. She’s been in chains for too long; she deserves a chance to run. Even if it terrifies him.

“Were you trying to take your wristband off?” Bellamy’s attention is drawn to the girl Octavia has joined up with. The same girl, he realizes, who tried to stop him opening the dropship door. “Do you want the people you love to think you’re dead? Do you want them to follow you down in a month? Because they won’t if they think we’re dying.”

Bellamy listens, intent. The ghost of an idea begins to take form.

Maybe he can still have it all.

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Clarke, Earth-date: September 12th 2149

As she leaves the camp with Octavia, Monty, Jasper, and Finn, Clarke can be sure of one thing: none of them are her match. It only takes a minute for the greens of the trees and the blues of the sky to become muted and fade. The further they walk, the more the colour seeps away. But they faded more slowly than they had on the Ark, like an elastic band being worked to stretch further and further. Soon enough, though, the colour is gone entirely and Clarke knows that her match must be back at the camp.

She can’t help but wonder about them. Whoever they are, they too might be watching the colour fall out of their vision. It’s nice, to think her match is reciprocated, but Clarke knows it’s a lie. They didn’t react back on the Ark, why should it be any different on Earth? Dwelling on it will do her no good.

 Whoever her brain is reacting to, they are not her concern. She’s not in love with anyone. And besides, there’s no such thing as soulmates. She has a forest to survive, a mountain to find, and a hundred people to feed.

Colour sure is pretty though.

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Bellamy watches his sister leave for Mount Weather, side by side with that blonde girl. Quickly, his colour melts away as though it had never been there at all. It’s not definitive proof of anything. There are a lot of people around camp, maybe someone else is walking away as well. But something in his gut tells him it’s her.

The colour is gone completely within minutes. He already misses it. He rubs at his eyes, trying to bring it back. He can’t help himself, he needs to know. He sidles up to where the Jaha kid is still nursing his ankle. Bile rises in his throat when he looks down at the boy he just orphaned. Bellamy swallows it back and adopts a mask of indifference.

“So, who is your friend? The one who thinks she can give orders around here.” Bellamy crosses his arms over his chest, leaning against the bulkhead of the dropship.

Wells blinks owlishly up at him. “Clarke?” he asks, a little bewildered. “That’s Clarke Griffin.”

Bellamy’s mind reels. That’s Clarke Griffin? The absurdity of his match being one of the wealthiest, most privileged kids on the Ark makes him want to laugh out loud. He’s heard her name all his life, though he’d never met her. Well of course he hadn’t, why would he? She’s the daughter of two council members and he, well he... was a janitor. All this time, his match has been Clarke Griffin? Bellamy tries to remember what he knows about her. He thinks her father might have been floated a while back, maybe. Something about treason? Bellamy hasn’t exactly been keeping track of Ark news this last year.

Wells’ voice brings him out of his reflection. “You know she’s not trying to give orders just for the fun of it. We need a leader if we’re going to survive out here. Going to get the supplies makes sense. She’s smart. She would make a great leader. She’s just trying do what’s best for everyone.”

Octavia’s words echo in Bellamy’s head, I’m done following orders. These kids have all been locked up, victims of the Ark’s strict code of conduct. The last thing they need is another government; they need a revolution. And if Bellamy can inspire them into one, then maybe he can ensure that no one from the Ark will ever come down here. If he plays this right, no one will ever need to know about the crime he committed. Bellamy is reminded of one of his favourite books back on the Ark, a play called Julius Caesar. Crowds are easy to manipulate with words. And while a logical argument is good, an emotional one is better.

“We’ll see about that.” Bellamy pushes off the dropship with one foot and surveys the rest of the hundred delinquents he’s stuck himself with.

Wells is right about one thing: they will need a leader if they’re going to survive this. And Bellamy’s going to tell the mob exactly what they want to hear.

As for the fact that his soulmate is apparently the Princess of the Ark herself, well, he can only assume that this is some kind of cosmic mistake.
Hope you're all enjoying the story so far. Would love to hear your comments, lots more to come!

Feel free to say hi on tumblr too at Pammcasso
“Chek au, hod op, dig au. Oso gonplei don jos stot au, Linkon.” Indra stands in front of Lincoln, eyeing him like a piece of horseshit on her boot. “Do you think you can handle that?”

Indra has always thought Lincoln was weak. Ever since he was child, Indra would glare at him as though she expected him to burst into tears at any moment.

She does not think him equal to this mission. But she’s sending him anyway, and that must count for something. Maybe, if he does well, she might decide he’s a worthy warrior after all.

Lincoln nods to his leader. “Sha, Indra. I will do it. I will not fail you.”

“It is not me, but the Commander you must answer to if you fail.”

Lincoln nods again.

“Remember, Lincoln. You are to watch them only. Do not engage until you have been given the order. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Indra,” Lincoln repeats. He looks straight ahead, his hands clasped firmly behind his back.

“Good.” Indra draws the word out between her teeth. Her disdain could not have been more evident if she were spitting right in his face. “You may go. Nyko will escort you to the edge of the village. He has some information for you.”

Lincoln nods again and leaves Indra’s tent as quickly as he can, keen to put a bit of distance between himself and his leader. Despite Indra’s conviction that he’s worthless, Lincoln’s determined to prove otherwise.

“You’re going to watch the Sky People?” Nyko accosts him as soon as he leaves Indra’s tent. He falls into step beside Lincoln as they cross the village together.

“Yes,” Lincoln replies. “Indra wants me to report back. She thinks they’re dangerous.” They stop at the supplies tent in the heart of the village square, where the weapons and provisions are stored and maintained. He rifles through the stalls, picking up a scout’s helmet, some fresh kohl, and a sharpened dagger.

“They are dangerous,” Nyko replies, following him inside the tent. He picks up several vials of medicines and antidotes, tucking them into a compact metal canister as he goes. When the container’s full, Nyko clips it onto Lincoln’s belt. “They were caught taunting the Mountain Men.”
Lincoln raises an eyebrow at his friend. “No one could be so stupid. Why would they provoke the Mountain?”

“I don’t know, but they tried to enter it. Anya had to take a Sky Person down when he was caught crossing the river into Mountain territory. Either they are friends of the Mountain, or they are very stupid. Either way, they are dangerous. Be careful, my friend.”

Lincoln frowns, considering this. “How do you know all this?” he asks Nyko. They leave the supplies tent and are on the move again. Lincoln needs to find the enemy camp before last light; he has no time to spare. Nyko follows him for a while, walking with him until the noise of Tondc falls away behind them.

“I saw the enemy boy,” Nyko explains. “The Commander sent for me to fix up the boy that Anya speared down. She made an excellent shot, he almost died before I could get to him.”

“You healed him?” This surprises Lincoln. “Why?” Why would they spare precious medicine on a friend of the Mountain Men?

“Because the Commander demanded it,” Nyko replies simply. “She strung him up alive and left him out for his people to find.”

“As a warning?” Lincoln uncorks the kohl as they walk and smears it under his eyes.

“As bait.” Nyko puts a hand on Lincoln’s shoulder, pulling him to a stop. “I will go no further, my friend, Tondc still needs me and I cannot leave again until the new dangers are known. But listen. The Commander left the Sky Boy out in the easternmost animal trap, near the mouth of the river.”

“Why?” Lincoln asks, even as an idea begins to fall into place.

“Because she knows that his friends will come for him. If you hurry, you can beat them to the trap. Lay in wait, they will bring you back to their camp.”

Lincoln nods, slipping his helmet on.

“Good luck,” Nyko says, gripping his friend’s arm firmly.

“Leidon ,” Lincoln replies, smiling at his friend through the mask of the helmet. “Mochof, Naikou.”

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Abby, Earth-date: September 13th 2149

Her feet echo in the freezing Sky Box as she paces from one end of the small cell to the other. A shiver rakes through her, radiating outwards from her heart. She wraps her arms around her chest and keeps moving. Her toe hits one edge of the cell and she pivots back on her heel, spinning around to retrace her steps until she hits the opposite end of the cell. Toe, heel, pivot. Toe, heel, pivot. Her feet skirt the sketches on the floor, careful not to disturb them. She tries not to imagine Clarke, trapped in this room for nearly a year. Because of her. Because of choices Abby made, her own daughter spent nearly a year in solitary confinement. Now Abby will never get a chance to apologize. Never get a
chance to atone.

The metal door of her cell squeals on its hinges as it’s rent back. The noise is deafening after hours of silence and Abby cringes, moving away from the door. A subtle shift in the grey walls of the cell is the only warning Abby gets before Kane enters alone. For a moment, Abby considers charging him and making a break for the closing door, but she knows it’s useless. How far could she get? There is, quite literally, nowhere to run.

Abby stops pacing in the middle of the room, levelling Kane with as impassive a look as she can muster. He moves towards her, but stops just outside of arm’s reach. His features swim in hues of peach and copper.

“Abby…” Kane begins, but trails off, clearly at a loss.

A canyon of silence stretches between them, a gulf that neither of them know how to cross.

“How’s Thelonious?” Abby asks eventually.

“Jackson tells me he’ll live,” Kane replies, his tone dry and edged with hostility.

Abby nods. “Good, that’s… good. And the kids?”

“No change.”

Abby nods again.

“When you make contact, can you tell Clarke–”

“Abby. You can’t honestly think they’ll survive that long. The Earth is a wasteland–”

“It’s our last chance,” Abby cuts in firmly. “This will work. It has to.”

A flash of frustration runs through Kane’s eyes, but he doesn’t argue. He just scrapes a hand through his pale brown hair, agitation clear in the sharp line of his shoulders. They lapse back into silence.

All the things unsaid well up in the space between them.

“You don’t have to do this,” Abby says, trying and failing to keep her voice level. She won’t beg, but she doesn’t want to die.

“I don’t have to?” Kane parrots back to her faintly, derision undercutting his tone. “Of course I have to! This is on you, Abby. You broke the law. You’re the one who forced my hand. You’re the one who would rather die than see me become Chancellor–”

“I have a daughter who might be dying as we speak,” Abby snaps. “I need to protect her – and everyone else on this ship – from you. I need to protect you from you!”

“And what is that supposed to mean?”

Abby steps forward into his personal space. Around them, colours flare like a flash bulb, hot and bright. “It means,” she says slowly, “that becoming Chancellor would destroy you. It would strip you of the last shreds of your morality. It would let you hide behind the law, absolving you of your guilt. And I will be damned if I’m going to sit back and watch that happen.”

“And what, exactly, do you THINK–” Kane’s voice snaps off, rising sharply in pitch and volume.

He’s breathing hard through his nose and his pupils are contracted to pinpoints. He takes a step back, as though trying to distance himself from the colour that’s sparking around them. It fades sharply as
he steps away. He runs his hand again through his hair. “And what…” Kane tries again. “What do you think…” His voice quivers on a knife’s edge. “What do you think killing my own match will do to the last shreds of my morality?”

Abby forces herself not to flinch, not to show any weakness at all. Inside her pockets, her hands ball into fists. “Maybe I’m counting on you to show mercy.”

“Well you counted wrong.” The pain she’d seen in his eyes is gone. In its place is nothing but cool resolve. And Abby can barely breath. He’s going to do it. After all this, he’s really going to kill her. “The law… it’s more important than any one man’s match.”

Her knees feel weak and her heart constricts painfully as she steps forward again. She needs him to confront what he’s doing. Force him to experience the colour he’s about to lose forever. “The real tragedy, Marcus, is that you honestly believe that.”

Still, after all this time, she wishes she could comfort him. He’s about to kill her, and she still clings to the hope that they can go back to a time when she could look into his eyes and feel safe. She wishes she could wrap her arms around him and rest her chin on his shoulder, feel his heart beating against her chest. She wishes she could go back to the way things used to be. When the Ark used to sing in colour. When they would talk of plans and politics and the Earth, and all the ways they were going to do things better than their parents. They used to have so much hope. And a love that Abby thought she would always be able to count on, that by its very nature should have been unconditional. Trust Marcus to prove her wrong.

“We’ve floated matches before,” he says. As though that’s a defence.

“We were wrong before. Every single time, we were wrong.”

“You’re one to talk. Turning in your own husband–”

The accusation hits Abby like a punch in the gut. “We’ve all made mistakes,” she says tightly. “But it’s not too late to atone–”

“Be realistic, Abby! I’m not doing this because I want to. I have an obligation–”

“Bullshit,” she snaps. “We have an obligation to all the people who have died to keep us alive. We have an obligation to remember what kind of road we’ve paved in the name of survival.”

Again Kane steps back and again Abby steps forward into his space. “Stop that,” he snaps. “Please stop.” The cold exterior Kane had been working so hard to maintain snaps again, and Abby can see a glimpse of the war raging in his mind. And for a moment, he looks wretched. She wants to push, to force him to recant his verdict. But she knows it won’t work. Kane, once his mind is made up about something, is immoveable.

“So long as there’s someone left to remember what we did. That’s the only victory here,” he insists.

Abby shakes her head, swallowing against the lump in her throat. They’ve been having the same fight for years.

“Follow me,” he says, his voice barely above a whisper. “It’s time.”

“I always knew it would be you,” she bites out. “I always knew you would be the one to float me.”

In the moment, it’s the cruellest thing she can think of to say.
Clarke, Earth-date: September 13th 2149

In the day since arriving on Earth, Clarke has helped rescue Octavia from a sea creature, watched Jasper impaled by a spear, been hunted by Grounders, found Wells – the most passive man alive – holding a knife to someone’s throat, and on top of it all, she’s been exposing herself to a constant level of radiation that could kill her and everyone else at any moment. And now this? This is too much.

Bellamy Blake or John Murphy, really? REALLY? Those are her choices?

Clarke’s so livid that she’s seeing red – while also, in fact, seeing red.

If she had been asked to choose the very last people from the Sky Box that Clarke wanted to be her match, she would have named Bellamy Blake or John Murphy. And yet, here they are, marching away with her to rescue Jasper. And there’s Clarke, forced to face the whole situation in crisp colour-vision. With each step Clarke had expected her vision to fade away again, just as it had when she went to Mount Weather.

Instead, if anything, the colours around her are sharper now than they have ever been. This can only mean one of two things: either Bellamy or Murphy are her match. The deep, ridiculous injustice in this is driving her halfway crazy.

She scratches absently at the skin under her wristband.

Inside the camp, she’d noticed the strength of her colour wax and wane a little, as her match moved around, but with so many people coming and going, they’d been impossible to hone in on. But here, as she steps farther and farther from camp, there can be no mistaking it.

Either Bellamy Blake or John Murphy are her colour-match, and Clarke is about ready to throw up in one of the ferns they stomped past. It’s a good job she stopped believing in soulmates.

“Take off that wristband and we can go…”

The colours behind Clarke’s eyes spark as Bellamy’s fingers grab her wrist. Oh fuck.

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Thelonious, Earth-date: September 13th 2149

He dreams in colour. Warm browns and vivid blues and a smear of reds and yellows and pinks. So beautiful and yet he knows, with every year that passes, they fade from his memory, further and further from the original. Further and further from the glory he will never again experience. And
every time he wakes, the onslaught of grey brings his grief back in full force. Every single morning is a battle against reality. And however hard he tries, he can never quite hold on to the memory of colour.

Today, consciousness returns to him in a slow wave. His muscles feel unusually heavy. Even blinking is a struggle. A deep, throbbing pain is radiating outwards from his chest. There’s a rhythmic beeping of machinery over his head. Where is he? How did he get here? Gradually, his memories slot into place. There was a young man, his eyes glistening and his hands shaking, and then there was noise and pain and… and now he’s here. With the dawning awareness of someone who’s been drugged for some time, Jaha puts it together. He’s been shot. Well. He probably had that coming.

Jaha blinks again, trying to make sense of his surroundings. He’s in the medical bay. He’s not alone in the room; a medtech is sitting at a desk some feet away, flicking through a tablet. Jaha opens his mouth to call out to her, but the only noise he manages to make is a loud exhale, somewhere between a groan and a sigh.

It does the trick, anyway. The medtech looks up sharply, dropping her tablet to the table with a clatter. “Chancellor,” she exclaims, striding quickly towards him. “You’re awake…” It’s obvious, even to Jaha’s still addled senses, that the woman is extremely distressed. Her hands shake violently as she goes to check his IV and she has tear tracks on her cheeks.

“What’s wrong?” Jaha asks. Or, tries to ask. The words come out slurred together in a single syllable.

The medtech seems to understand him. “I– ah –I don’t…” She stammers so badly that she has to bring a hand up to cover her mouth.

“What’s happened?” Jaha tries again to make himself understood. “Where is Abby?” His voice is improving, his tongue remembering quickly how to wrap around words.

“Oh!” The medtech explains. “I can’t, uh. Jackson will be back… soon… he can… he can help with…”

The medic trails off. Shock and understanding crash over him like a dose of ice water. He wouldn’t… the masochistic bastard… What kind of lunatic floats his own match?

“She broke the law. To save my life?” Jaha finishes, saving the woman from having to explain further. Eyes still brimming with tears, the medtech nods.

“Where is Abby now?”

She flinches. “It’s… Kane, he… it’s happening now. It might already be too late.”

“Take me to them.”

He’s already pushing himself off of the bed, scrambling to wrap his hospital gown around himself. His legs shake violently when he tries to put weight on them, and his vision whites out as the pain in his chest spikes with a sickening lurch. He ignores it, adrenaline pushing him forward. The medtech
supports him most of the way, half carrying, half dragging him to the airlock.

When he finally rounds the corner, shouting for Abby’s pardon, he finds them exactly where he expected. Abby, her head held high, but her face pure white with terror. Shumway, his finger hovering over the trigger. And Kane, on the other side of the glass, his gaze fixed on Abby. To his marginal credit, at least, Jaha has never seen his friend look such a mess. His hair is completely on end, his eyes are blown wide and terrified, his hands are balled into fists at his sides, and a thin sheen of sweat glistens across his grey forehead.

“Dr Griffin is pardoned,” Jaha manages to say around the steady tightening in his throat. The run from medical has winded him and he has to lean hard against the cool metal of the wall to keep from collapsing. He manages to stay upright, but it does little to ease the nausea that’s overcome him since he left the medical bay.

Abby leaves the airlock on unsteady footing. She fixes Jaha with a look of gratitude mixed with consternation and immediately goes back to barking orders for him to get back to the medical bay. Jaha doesn’t need telling twice. His vision has started to tunnel, and now that the adrenaline has worn off, he thinks he might need a couple more hours of sleep before he’ll be able to stand up again.

Just as he’s turning to go, he glares at Kane. “I’ll deal with you later,” he promises.

Kane nods. There’s a kind of frozen horror on the man’s face and Jaha wonders what would have happened if he’d arrived a minute later. As he watches, Kane and Abby lock eyes and immediately look away again.

And Jaha doesn’t need to wonder. He knows Kane would have done it. Because Kane is a stupid sonofabitch. As though doing it would prove something. Kane might really believe that floating Abby would finally free him from his obligation to her. To the morality she’s so desperate to find in him. But he’s wrong. It wouldn’t work. Eventually, Kane will learn that the guilt, the culpability, cannot be outrun. They must bear it up, or succumb to it.

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Bellamy, Earth-date: September 13th 2149

Bellamy catches Clarke on instinct, when she tumbles into the animal trap.

As he stares at her, dangling below him above the spikes of the trap, he feels a cold rush of panic at the idea of her death. His fingers tighten around her wrist, refusing to let her drop. It was a lie, of course it was a lie, when he told Murphy he would cut off Clarke’s hand if he needed to. Even the idea makes his stomach churn. He tries not to imagine her falling. He tries not to imagine the colour around him clicking off like a light switch. He imagines it anyway, and suppresses a shudder. It takes him a moment to get his bearings and start pulling her to safety.

He likes to think he would have saved her whether she’d been his match or not. He likes to think he would have saved her either way.

He wants to believe that for himself.
Lincoln, Earth-date: September 13th 2149

The Sky People are pitifully easy to track across the forest. They take nearly half an hour to cut their friend down from the trap and prepare him to travel. Once they’re on the move again, they plough through the foliage like horses, leaving a trail a mile wide for Lincoln to follow. They could not have been easier to track if they had been actively waving him on.

Dangerous, maybe, but Lincoln thinks they might be more stupid than threatening. Still, one of them has a gun, and guns always need to be taken seriously.

It’s dark by the time they arrive back at the camp. Lincoln skirts the perimeter, scaling a nearby tree and setting up watch. He starts with their number, counting and recounting them until he’s sure they’re all accounted for. He’ll count them again in the morning, and again the next day, just to make sure he hasn’t missed anyone.

In the dark of the night, it takes a while for him to notice. It’s the campfire that finally tips him off; its flames dancing brighter than usual against the night sky.

His *keryon-ai* is a Sky Person.

Lincoln is completely fucked.

Chapter End Notes

PS: The Thelonious section was - no joke - written on a bet. It's his first and only POV, I promise. But lots more from the others coming soon!

As always, looking forward to hearing your thoughts.
“Go back to camp. You too, Charlotte.”

Atom is letting out a horrible, squelching, gurgling noise. Bellamy has never heard anything like it and never wants to again. He kneels by Atom’s side, guilt and terror churning in his stomach. The whole clearing stinks of blood and burning flesh and a rank acidic burn of chemical. Bellamy might have been sick if there had been anything in his stomach to throw up.

“Kill me,” Atom begs, his voice coming in ragged wheezes through bloody teeth.

The colour of Atom’s skin is swimming in and out of focus, like light under water. Clarke must be nearby, Bellamy realizes with a jolt. He should finish it before she arrives; prove to her that he can make the hard choices. Prove to her that he isn’t weak, that he will do what needs to be done. Instead he sits, paralyzed with fear and some distant, remote hope that Clarke might be able to save Atom. She claims she can save Jasper, why not Atom too? Looking down at his friend, though, Bellamy knows it’s a fool’s hope.

He hesitates too long. The boils on Atom’s skin steady to an angry red as the sound of snapping twigs cut through the clearing. Bellamy looks over his shoulder and isn’t surprised to see Clarke standing behind him, her eyes wide as she takes in the scene.

“Charlotte found him,” Bellamy tells her, his voice hoarse. “I sent her back to camp.”

Clarke nods and rushes around silently to Atom’s other side, checking him with nimble fingers and a quick eye. When she looks up and meets Bellamy’s gaze he knows, even before she shakes her head, what her expression means.

“Okay,” Clarke speaks softly to Atom, like a doctor to her patient. Like a sister to her brother. “Okay, I’m going to help you.”

He watches as she runs her hand gently over Atom’s dark hair, humming a tune Bellamy doesn’t know. He’s so frozen in horror that he barely notices when Clarke eases the knife from his loose grip.

Gently, smoothly, she slips the knife into Atom’s neck and back out, still humming softly under her breath. How could Bellamy have been so wrong about her? His own match, and he doesn’t know her at all. Clarke isn’t afraid to make the tough decisions, and she certainly isn’t weak. She might be the bravest person he’s ever met.

He wants to thank her or to apologize or maybe just burst into tears right there in the forest. How has everything become so fucked up? All he wants – all he has ever wanted – is to protect Octavia. Instead, he’s brought nothing but pain and death down on her head. She’ll never forgive him for this, and he isn’t sure he deserves it anyway.

And there’s Clarke, drenched in the dancing yellow and gold light of the sun, and Bellamy wonders what he could have possibly done to deserve someone like her for a colour-match. What could he possibly have to offer someone like her?
There’s a cruelty in fate. For however much he might imagine otherwise, he cannot fool himself that she would ever be matched to someone like him.

Wells, Earth-date: September 14th 2149

“How can you ever forgive me?” Clarke asks him. Her eyes are swimming in tears and her voice is desperate, and Wells almost laughs the question is so ridiculous.

“It’s already done,” Wells tells her, simple and kind, pulling her into a hug.

She’s stiff in his arms for a moment, before she takes a deep breath and relaxes into his touch. He can feel as she processes his complete and utter forgiveness, and then as she takes solace in it. He smiles into her hair.

Wells does not have any memories of being truly without colour. Even while Clarke had been in lock up, the ghost of her colour had remained with him, lighting the world like a pale dawn. They had known each other for so long, and he had loved her as long as he had memories to recall. It would take more than the distances on the Ark for Wells to ever be completely removed from Clarke’s colour.

On this new world, maybe one day the distance of his bond to her would need to be tested, but it won’t be that night. As he holds her in his arms, colours spark vividly behind his eyelids. He should not be pleased that Clarke no longer holds him responsible for her father’s death. In knowing the truth, Clarke must now shift that blame to her mother, which is not a burden Wells ever wanted her to bear. But still, the selfish bones in his body are rejoicing at having her love returned to him.

“You okay?” he asks her after a while. His thumb rubs small circles on her shoulder blade.

Clarke pulls out of his hug, wiping her damp cheeks. “Yeah,” she says, her voice small. “I’m okay. Thanks.”

“It’s what I’m here for,” Wells assures her. He means it. He’d missed Clarke like a hollow ache in his chest. Tonight, basking in the warmth of her forgiveness and the strength of her colour, Wells feels like he can breathe again for the first time in over a year. Clarke collapses onto the ground, near the graves that Wells has just finished digging. She looks exhausted. “You should rest,” he tells her, taking a seat on the ground at her side.

“Yeah,” she agrees softly, “maybe soon.” Wells wraps an arm around her shoulder and she collapses against him again. “How are we going to do this, Wells?”

“We’ll figure it out,” he promises her.

Back on the Ark, everyone always assumed that Wells was in love with Clarke. Sometimes he wishes it were that simple. They sit together now and her head’s heavy on his shoulder, her breath is warm on his neck, her hair is golden, and he loves her. More than he’s ever had words to express. But he doesn’t want her. Not in the way that Finn clearly does, with his sharp eyes and sharper tongue. All Wells wants in the world is for Clarke to be happy and healthy and preferably near him. She’s his best friend and his colour-match and his soulmate. But she will never be his lover, and
that’s fine by him.

“Wells?” Clarke sits up a little, lifting her head from his shoulder to look him in the eye. “I need to talk to you about something.”

“Anything.”

“It’s about my match.”

“Okay,” he says, feeling only the faintest pang of jealousy. “Have you…”

Wells trails off when Clarke sits up straighter, her back stiffening. “Shh!” Clarke hisses at him.

“What is it?” Wells listens to the quiet forest around them. “Did you hear something?”

“No, it’s—” Clarke’s cut off by a rustling of bushes. From the foliage behind them, Bellamy emerges into the graveyard. He’s carrying a light from the dropship as a flashlight and holds it up in the air to get a better look at them. “It’s Bellamy,” Clarke finishes under her breath.

Wells looks at Clarke sharply. She’s staring intently at the grass, clearly unwilling to meet his eyes. Had she anticipated Bellamy’s arrival? Does she know when he was nearby? Is Bellamy –

“Wells,” Bellamy says, drawing Wells’ attention away from this revelation. “It’s your turn to take watch. Until we can get some proper defences around camp, we need people to look out for Grounders.”

Wells nods. The logic is good, even if Bellamy himself is a loose cannon. “Sure,” Wells replies. “Just give us a minute.”

“No, it’s fine,” Clarke says, finally raising her eyes to him. “We can talk later.” Whatever she had wanted to say, the moment seems to have passed.

Wells nods again, slowly. “Okay.” He reaches out to squeeze her shoulder. “Get some rest? I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Sure.” She forces a smile for him. He can tell it’s forced from a mile off, but he lets it slide.

Wells pushes himself up from the ground and offers a hand to help Clarke. She accepts his hand and hoists herself up to standing. They walk in silence back to the dropship. With Clarke back at his side, Wells can’t help but think that they might just be okay.

It had been an impossible, horrible couple of days, but as he takes up his watch, Wells can’t help feeling optimistic about this new world.

Lincoln, Earth-date: September 14th 2149

They’re quite sweet, in their ignorance.

Keeping watch is smart, but they choose the worst possible locations to do it. For one, their watch is
way too close to camp. If they were attacked, there would be no time for the watch to warn the camp before their enemy was upon them. For another, while it has the advantage of high ground, that advantage is wasted because the view is surrounded on all sides by tall trees. Trees that could easily hide an enemy force. Trees like the one that Lincoln himself is hiding in.

If he wanted to, Lincoln could have killed the watch, and murdered half of the camp before the other half even realized he was there.

But he has his orders. And besides, Lincoln has little taste for bloodshed.

The Sky People, as far as he can tell, are poorly organized, ignorant, and doomed to die from the elements, the Mountain Men, his people, or their own folly. All the same, Lincoln can’t help but sympathize with them. They know so little, but they parade around like they own the whole Earth. It’s almost endearing.

Almost.

It seems like a normal night. Their watcher this night is a young man with dark skin and a smile on his lips. As Lincoln watches, the smallest of their tribe joins him on watch. They speak a little, out of his earshot. Without warning, the girl lurches, stabbing one of her own in the neck. Lincoln gapes, perched above them, as she severs the man’s fingers from his hand. Then the girl, tiny and weeping, watches the boy die, humming all the while.

Well.

Lincoln will need to re-evaluate. They might be more like his people than he thought.
Clarke only gets two steps out of camp before Octavia stops walking and sighs. “You following me?” She swings around, her hands on her hips, glaring at Clarke.

The gold leeches a little from the sun as Clarke takes a breath and steps further away from camp. Further away from the dropship, where Bellamy is inside organizing the building of the wall. The range is definitely improving, but not by much. During the rare moments when she has time to wonder about this, Clarke is curious what it means. How far will she be able to go and retain her colour? A mile? Five miles? One day, will she be able to see in colour without needing to be anywhere near her match? Clarke’s heard that different people are able to stray farther from their match than others, but she’s never understood why.

“What do you want?” Octavia’s still glaring at her.

“I wanted to talk to you,” Clarke says, feeling suddenly self-conscious and awkward.

“You on Octavia-watch this time? Be careful, the last guy with that job got himself dead.” Octavia is sparking with vicious fury. Clarke wonders if it’s a family trait to mask pain with anger.

“I’m really sorry about Atom.”

“Yeah, well, whatever. The ground sucks. What else is new?” Octavia pauses. The tension drops out of her shoulders. “I’m sorry about your friend, too. Wells. He seemed nice.”

Clarke nods, wondering how long it will take before she can hear Wells’ name without wanting to scream or burst into tears. “Yeah. He was.”

Octavia turns away from Clarke and resumes walking down the path. “Either come with me or turn back, blondie, but make up your mind. You look like an idiot just standing there.”

The words are harsh, but Octavia’s tone is mild, so Clarke takes it as an invitation. She jogs forward, catching up to Octavia in a few short strides. “Where are you going?” she asks, curiosity getting the better of her.

“I need a bath. And so do you by the smell.”

“You Blakes are real charmers,” Clarke mutters.

“It’s a gift,” Octavia replies idly. “Come on. This way.” Without pausing to check that Clarke’s following her, Octavia veers a sharp right and strides confidently into the thick of the trees.

They walk in silence, listening out for any of the myriad dangers that the forest might pose them. Step by step the colour drains away from Clarke’s vision. Eventually it’s gone entirely, plunging her back into the familiar – and increasingly unbearable – monochrome world she grew up in. It’s like going blind. Like some part of her has been stripped away, lost entirely. She feels like she’s lost a leg
when only moments before she could have run a mile. It makes her furious. She never asked to be
dependent on anyone, let alone Bellamy Blake. Why? Why, of all the people in the whole, wide,
Earth and Ark, did her soul need to be linked with Bellamy? Even worse, why did no one ever tell
her how horrible it is to see colour and lose it?

She thinks of Wells who, for the past year, must have been trapped in black and white while Clarke
was in solitary. Her best friend, all alone, like he had been two nights ago, when a Grounder killed
him. Cut off his fingers and slit his throat. She should have been there. Even if she couldn’t have
helped, Wells shouldn’t have had to die alone in the dark.

Clarke thinks she will lose it if she keeps obsessing about this. She can bear the silence no longer.

“Octavia, can I ask you something?” Clarke is careful to keep her voice low as they walk through the
forest. They’d learned the hard way how making noise could bring a world of violence down on
their heads.

Octavia shrugs. “Go for it. You want to know how I went to the bathroom if I was locked under the
floor? That’s one I get all the time. Or how I managed to avoid scurvy? That might be more your
speed. The story of how I learned to talk? That’s a good one. Bellamy could tell it better, though.”

“Nevermind,” Clarke says quickly. She can’t imagine what Octavia’s life had been like. Anything
she imagines, Clarke’s willing to bet it was several times worse. Then she’s struck with the image of
Bellamy as a child, teaching Octavia how to talk. She can’t imagine what his life had been like
either. “Forget it.”

She knows Bellamy is a selfish ass, but he is also her match. And compared to how much Octavia
must knows about him, she really doesn’t know anything at all. It feels unfair. If her soul is going to
be linked to someone, doesn’t she deserve to know something about them?

Okay, this might have been a part of the reason she’d followed Octavia out of the camp in the first
place. She’s curious. But now that she’s here, she has no idea how to broach the subject.

“Say what you wanna say, Clarke,” Octavia says, cutting through Clarke’s reverie. “It’s nothing I
haven’t heard before.”

“Are you two still close? I mean, does Bellamy know you’re matched?”

Octavia stops dead, turning to Clarke with a stunned and accusatory look on her face.

The words have barely finished passing her lips before Clarke wishes she could call them back
again. “It’s just… you called me blonde. I thought…” a terrible thought occurs to her, ”Oh god…”
Her voice now very small, “was it Atom? I’m sorry I…” Clarke trails off, wishing the ground
beneath her would just swallow her up.

Octavia crosses her arms in front of her chest, her posture small and defensive. Then she continues
walking. For a while she says nothing at all while Clarke follows at her side. After a few minutes,
Clarke thinks she might just ignore the question entirely. Finally Octavia answers.

“I thought so, at first. I… I thought so.” Octavia shakes her head as though trying to clear it of
memories she doesn’t want. “About a day after we arrived, I started to see in colour. Not… not all
the time. Just some of the time, and usually only for a couple of minutes. When I met Atom, I
thought maybe he… maybe he was the one doing it. But I was wrong. Last night it happened again,
and for a bit longer this time. I went nearly half an hour with the whole damn spectrum. But it’s gone
again now.”
“Could Atom see in colour when he was with you?” Clarke has no idea what prompts her to ask.

“I don’t know,” Octavia says, her voice suddenly hard. “I never asked. What does it matter now, anyway?”

Octavia’s right, it doesn’t matter. Clarke drops it.

Before long Octavia veers again without warning. “It’s just down here,” she calls over her shoulder. The ground falls sharply away under their feet, as they half-ran down the steep side of a long, dry gully. They grind to a halt at the bottom and Octavia takes off again along the ravine floor. The path winds forward, flanked on either side by the trees at the top of the tall incline, where they had been standing only moment ago. Wherever they’re going, Octavia has clearly been there before.

“How do you know about this place?” Clarke asks as they walk.

Octavia speeds up the pace, marching swiftly forward and barely looking over her shoulder. Either Octavia’s suddenly very eager for her bath, or she’s realized the same thing that’s slowly dawning on Clarke: if the Grounders attack them here, they’d be sitting ducks.

“What,” Octavia answers, glancing over her shoulder to check that Clarke’s still there. “Finn’s the only one who’s allowed to go exploring on his own?”

That brings Clarke up short. Has Finn been exploring alone? She feels a whoosh of concern in her gut that she files away as ‘something to think about at a more convenient time’.

“You shouldn’t go exploring on your own,” Clarke admonishes, trying to focus on the situation at hand. “It’s dangerous.”

“Yeah,” Octavia replies, her tone flippant. “But it’s dangerous everywhere. I could just as easily die without leaving the Dropship from a poisoned berry or something. I for one would rather see this world before it kills me.”

Clarke would love to argue the point, but Octavia beats her to it. “Hurry up, we’re nearly there.” Octavia says as she picks up her own pace even further. Her voice is quieter and has an urgent edge to it.

“Have you seen someone in the trees?” Clarke looks up at the tall trees looming over their heads, feeling suddenly horribly vulnerable.

“No...” Octavia trails off. “But I just started seeing in colour again.”

It takes Clarke a moment for that to sink in. “Someone from camp is following us.”

Clarke keeps her eyes peeled on the treeline above them, but can’t see anyone. As they continue to walk, the earth becomes soft and wet under Clarke’s boots. They have to be nearly there.

Finally, after far too long in the open, exposed ravine, the ground slopes back down to meet them, and the trees swallow them back up. What was once a dry ravine has turned into a gentle brook, which they follow to a deep, clear, secluded pool. Lush forest circles the pool on all sides, providing a quiet, hidden space.

“Wow,” Clarke breathes as she takes in their destination. “This is amazing.”

She wonders what the trees and water would look like in colour – the dark greens and browns of the ground contrasting with the clear, cool water. She wonders whether even the water would look
green, under the canopy of trees. She imagines bringing Bellamy back with her some day. The idea is so ridiculous that Clarke nearly laughs out loud. But then, when she thinks that she might never know what the clearing looks like in colour, a wave of sadness washes over her.

“Can you still see in colour?” Clarke asks Octavia, glancing around at the low, closely-knit trees.

“No,” Her voice is trembling. “It was only faint. Whoever they are, they’re gone now. Come on. Have I mentioned the water is warm?”

The rest of their outing is hurried and uneventful. They wash quickly and leave again within a few minutes. Clarke’s plagued with a feeling of being watched, and is abruptly desperate to get back to camp. They only slow when they’re within a quarter-mile of dropship.

As they approach, Clarke can see the tall spires of their new defences. The building of the wall has come a long way, even in the last day. Bellamy certainly has a way of motivating the hundred, she can give him that much. Doesn’t mean she has to like him.

“I’m glad it wasn’t Atom.” Octavia hadn’t spoken since they left the pool.

Her sudden confession jerks Clarke from her thoughts. Octavia’s jaw is clenched hard, her eyes on the ground before her. “When he died,” she continues, “I thought… I couldn’t help thinking that I might never get to see in colour again. This world is amazing and I didn’t want that to go away. He died and I just didn’t want to lose my sight. How fucked is that?” Octavia’s voice is dripping with anger. “When the colour came back last night I was so relieved. What does that say about me? Atom – he was a good person. He was kind and smart, and he didn’t deserve to die. And all I could think about was the purple colour of those stupid fucking butterflies.”

All through her speech, Octavia never stopped walking, never looked back at Clarke. Her eyes are glassy with unshed tears, her face screwed up with the effort to stop herself from crying.

“It’s not horrible,” Clarke says, her voice firm. She considers reaching out to comfort Octavia but thinks better of it. She can’t imagine Octavia reacting well to any suggestion that she’s weak. “Of course you’re going to be relieved that you didn’t lose your match.”

“But I still could, Clarke. I have no idea – not a clue – who it is. The colour comes and then it goes and I can’t figure out who’s causing it. Don’t you get it? People are dying on the ground every day. One day, it might just slip away and never come back. Whoever it is could die from the Grounders, or the radiation, or the acid fog, or a fucking jaguar, and I’ll never even get to meet them. The colour will just fade and never return. And then I’ll…” Octavia breaks off. “Whatever. I just I wish I knew who’s causing it.”

Clarke can sympathise. She takes comfort in knowing that the greenery around her will spring back to life as she approaches the dropship, where – more than likely – she will find Bellamy marching around inside, barking orders to Murphy. The thought is oddly comforting and feels something like coming home. Clarke suppresses a shudder and vows never to voice such a ridiculous thought out loud.

This unbidden thought reminds her of her original question. “So, Bellamy doesn’t know? About your match, I mean.”

Octavia looks over at her, meeting her eye for a moment before shaking her head. “No.”

Clarke wants to ask why, but worries that she’s already overstepped. Fortunately, Octavia goes on without prompting.
“Something’s going on with him. I don’t know what it is, but since we landed… Look, he’s always been protective, but you saw what he did to Atom, hanging him from a tree just for being with me. I’m worried he’ll react badly. And until I know who it is, I just don’t want to make a big deal about it.” She spins on her heel to level Clarke with a stern look. “You won’t tell him, will you?”

“I won’t,” Clarke assures her quickly. She can understand the desire to keep colour a secret. “I promise.”

Octavia nods and continues walking.

“I’m sure you’ll find them,” Clarke tells her. It’s an empty platitude and they both know it. There’s every chance that whoever it is could die before Octavia finds them. Or Octavia herself could die at any moment – nothing’s sure, in this new world of theirs.

Still, Octavia doesn’t challenge the weak comfort, and they both march on in renewed silence, heads filled with questions they have no answers to.

Chapter End Notes

Glad to hear you're all enjoying the story so far, thanks for all the comments and kudos!!

Short(ish) chapter today, but expect another update tomorrow because: Good news! Most of the story is now written, so there will be a new chapter every day. If the timing works out, it should be finished just before the new season starts (!!!)
Bellamy, Earth-date: September 21st 2149

Colour throbs in Bellamy’s vision.

His attack is relentless, fist after fist against Murphy’s pathetic, broken face. Bellamy is aware of a corresponding pain in his own hands with each hit he lands. But it’s dim, more like a pain remembered, compared to the immediacy of his rage. All he can see in his mind is Charlotte’s wide, bright eyes. She was a child. And now she’s dead. And it is Murphy’s fault. His. Murphy is to blame for this.

Abruptly, Bellamy’s fists connect with nothing but air as he’s wrenched back.

“Get off me!” Bellamy can hear himself screaming. “He deserves to die!”

And he would do it. He thinks he would probably do it. He’d murdered the Chancellor; he could kill John Murphy too. If he could have the man strung up, he could be the one to kill him. God, what is wrong with him?

"We don't get to decide who lives and dies," Clarke tells him, her voice breaking with strain. "Not down here."

As quickly as it had come on, Bellamy’s bloodlust drops out of him. Nausea, cold and relentless, is left in its place. He’s filled suddenly with a rush of vicious gratitude. Gratitude for Finn’s arms holding him at bay, and for Clarke standing – pale and sweating – in front of him, blocking his view of Murphy. He doesn’t want to be a killer, but what other options do they have?

“So help me Clarke if you say the people have a right to decide-”

“No,” Clarke cuts in quickly. “No, I was wrong before, okay? You were right.” Bellamy wrenches deep heaving breaths, wrecked with grief and adrenaline he tries to listen and focus on Clarke. He zeros in on the blue in her eyes, the colour still pulsing in time with Bellamy’s erratic heartbeat.

“Sometimes it’s dangerous to tell people the truth,” Clarke continues, her own breath coming in sharp gasps. “But if we’re going to survive down here, we can’t just live by ‘whatever the hell we want’. We need rules.”

Her cheeks are pink, cast orange in the firelight. Her hair is yellow, bright even in the dead of night. Slowly, he starts to find his breath. She’s right. He knows she’s right. ‘Whatever the hell we want’ was about gaining power, it was never going to work for maintaining it. They need someone to be in charge. And obviously it’s going to be her. The Princess of the Ark, reigning on the Earth as well. High above them all.


“For now we make the rules.” She says it with such conviction. As though it’s that simple. As though it’s obvious that the way forward is to work together. “Okay?”
Something unfamiliar and warm snakes through Bellamy’s chest. Trust. Okay, together. He could do that.

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**Murphy, Earth-date: September 21st 2149**

John Murphy hunches his shoulders against a torrent of rain that started at some point in the night. He doesn’t know why everyone keeps going on about the Earth like it’s so great. Water is seeping into every pore of Murphy’s skin, drenching his socks, cutting through his jacket like it’s not even there. It’s freezing on the ground, there’s never any food, and there are a million-and-one ways to die at any moment. At least the Sky Box had climate control and three square meals a day.

Murphy hunkers down under the minimal shelter of a huge pine. He slips on the slick mud under the tree, but pulls his knees up tight towards his chest, digging his feet into the ground for purchase. He angles his back against the worst of the wind and attempts to take stock of what he has to work with. So, banishment. Not on his list of ideal situations, but he can work with this. What’s he got? One jacket, soaked through, but still holding together. One knife condescendingly dropped for him by Finn, but he’ll take it. It’s hardly longer than his thumb, but at least it’s sharp. If he’s careful, he might be able to source food with it. A pair of boots with only a couple of holes in them. And… that’s it. That, and Murphy’s sub-par Earth Skills training. He’d always hated Earth Skills as a kid – he’d never seen the point, since he was probably going to die long before the Ark ever made it back to Earth.

Ha –fucking– ha, Universe.

So that’s it. He’s either going to die of starvation, exposure, animal attack, or some fun combination of the three! Murphy eyes his knife, wondering if he should take matters into his own hands… but he slips it back into his belt instead. Suicide isn’t his style: he’s too damn stubborn to go quietly. Besides, he can’t die yet. If he’s going, he’s sure as hell going to take Bellamy with him before the end. Bellamy, and every other asshole who was ready to string him up just because he annoyed them. His hatred for the people left at the dropship is like a fire burning under his skin. Killing them is the only thing he has to look forward to.

Eventually, as the night beats slowly on and the rain gradually relents to a slow trickle, Murphy feels himself drop off.

When he awakes, the rain has stopped. For a moment, Murphy thinks life might finally be giving him a damn break. Then his eyes adjust to the dim white-grey moonlight, and he finds himself face-to-face with a half dozen Grounders. One, his face covered in a metal mask, has knelt down to Murphy’s level. He’s peering at Murphy curiously, sword drawn and loose at his side. With a jerk, Murphy lurches to his feet, adrenaline already fueling his legs. He takes off at a breakneck run away from the hunting party. Behind him, he hears the hoard of Grounders speaking in a language he doesn’t recognize. They don’t seem to be chasing him – could they be letting him go? – then he hears a puff of air and the sharp sting of a dart sinking into his neck.

His last thought before the poison takes hold is that he would take the exposure and starvation any day.
Chapter End Notes

So, because this is a short chapter - and because it's Christmas! - you can expect another chapter later today. :-)  

Happy Holidays, everyone. Thanks again for all your support!
Kyle Wick isn’t surprised when his colour drops out like a power failure. He isn’t surprised because he’d been looking out the porthole window in Engineering Station at the time. So he’s watching when a metal piece-of-shit, which he can’t even charitably call a ship, held together with duct tape and a prayer, ejects itself from the bowels of the Ark. Watches as it kamikazes itself toward the Earth.

Yeah, it figures.

Fucking mechanics.

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Clarke, Earth-date: September 22nd 2149

“What do you think it means? The colour.”

Finn runs a hand loosely up and down Clarke’s bare back, under the thin blanket they found in the bunker. His fingers are light and warm on her hip. The sweat is still drying on their skin, and Clarke thinks this might be the first time she’s felt completely content since arriving on the ground. Certainly the first time she’s smiled since losing Wells.

“I don’t know,” Clarke replies. Sleep tugs lightly at the corner of her brain and she burrows a little into the crook of Finn’s neck.

“It’s a sign of something, though, right?” Finn persists. “Do you think it’s always about romantic love?”

The very notion makes a shiver run involuntarily down Clarke’s spine. “I hope not,” she mutters.

Finn frowns at her, his eyes narrowing in the dark. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing. Just that whole idea of destiny, of being made for one person and that one person only…it’s ridiculous. My dad never saw colour his whole life, and he was perfectly happy.” – until his wife, who’s matched to someone else but married him anyway, had him floated into open space – Clarke’s brain adds, unhelpfully. She ignores this part. “There’s no magic there. It’s just a neurological reaction in the brain. A distinct genetically-marked hormone reacting to the same hormone in another person. That’s why they need to be nearby for it to work. It’s just science.”

“You really believe that?” Finn asks. His hand has stopped stroking her back and comes to rest on her shoulder blade.
“I do,” Clarke says, feeling less sure than she sounds.

“What about twins? Isn’t that the same genetics? But people only match to one person, not both.”

Clarke bristles. “I’m not a scientist, Finn. I’m sure there’s an explanation.”

“Why are you so upset about this?” From the way he’s looking at her, Clarke feels sure that the truth of her match must be branded on her forehead.

“I’m not,” she insists, “I just don’t think that a match automatically equals some kind of great destined love.”

Finn looks at her for a long moment before seeming to accept her explanation. The pillows shift against the cement floor of the bunker as he lies back down and resumes exploring her back with his hand.

“Do you think it’s possible to be matched to more than one person at the same time?”

The candles in the bunker are burning low. Clarke buries her face back into Finn’s chest, trying to ignore the decidedly grey world they’re in.

“I don’t know,” Clarke replies. “I never thought about it.”

This isn’t entirely true. As a child, Clarke had been very interested in this question. The truth is that no one knows. There are no examples of it on the Ark. When your colour-match is gone, so is your colour, and that’s that. But this is Earth, and Clarke sometimes thinks that anything might be possible down here.

Finn hums, the sound rumbling through Clarke, where she’s pressed up against him. “But do you think it’s possible?”

Clarke pushes herself up from off of Finn’s chest to look him in the eye. She knows his eyes are blue, but now she can see only grey. The feeling of overwhelming wrongness that accompanies this makes her a little dizzy, but she shoves it aside.

“I don’t know, Finn,” she repeats. “Why do you ask?”

“No reason,” he says, entirely too quickly. “I was just thinking about it.”

“Finn…” Clarke doesn’t want to ask. She doesn’t want to know. No good can come from knowing. But she just can’t help herself… “Can you see colour when you’re with me?”

Finn looks away. “I think so,” he says at last. Clarke leans forward, bracing her elbows against the cool cement. Shuffling a little across the floor, she aligns herself so she can look Finn in the eye. “I see colour now,” he says softly.

“Not a lot, just here and there.” His eyes trail from her eyes, to her hair, to her lips. “The candles are a little yellow, the blanket a little blue, your lips…” he trails off and surges forward. One hand on the back of her neck, he pulls her in, his lips and teeth and tongue aggressive against hers. Clarke responds initially, leaning into the security of his arms. But as his movements become more insistent, Clarke pulls away. Finn’s last words are still strong in her mind.

“But you’ve seen colour before,” Clarke persists, a hand firm on his chest, pushing him gently away, “not just with me.”
Finn can’t meet her eyes. His gaze falls to the blanket, now pooled in a heap around their hips. The fabric is ancient and smells like damp mould, but it’s warm and hardly used. Finn picks at one corner of the blanket, where a loose thread is making a bid for freedom.

“Yeah,” he says at last. “There’s someone. But she’s gone now. She’s trapped, orbiting hundreds of miles above us. I haven’t seen a speck of colour since we arrived. Not until last night, with you… I thought maybe on the Earth it was different. Maybe lots of people can be colour-matches.”

“Maybe,” Clarke allows slowly. She’s never heard of it happening, but then again, ever since finding her own match, she’s realized that she doesn’t have the first clue about how it all works.

“Are you mad?” Finn eyes her cautiously. “I’m sorry, I should have told you about Raven–”

“It’s fine,” Clarke cuts him off curtly. Though it really isn’t fine at all. It isn’t so much that she’s jealous, or wants Finn for herself. But she likes Finn, she’d trusted him, and the idea that he would betray someone he loves upsets her.

She pushes herself up to stand and starts rooting around the shelter for her clothes.

“No sooner had Clarke stepped outside than she watches a shooting star fall to earth.

Inside the bunker, Finn Collins’ colour jumps to life.

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Raven, Earth-date: September 22nd 2149

There’s music in the air, light and bright, permeating through the clearing with such force that it seems to come from everywhere. It takes Raven the space of a confused heartbeat to realize that they’re birds. The birds are singing, and the air tastes sharp, rich with soil and moisture and so many smells that she has no context for. And the ground crunches and rustles with every soft step she takes. And it’s quiet, so damn quiet, without the familiar constancy of the engines beneath her feet. But there are birds in song and wind whistling through the branches, and leaves crackling under her boots and it’s loud too.

But none of it, not even the ghostly music in the air, holds a candle to the colour.

Her whole life, Raven never knew how many shades of red and green and brown and yellow she had been missing. One leaf, caught between her thumb and forefinger as it tumbles to the earth, holds more shades than her entire living quarters on the Ark. She takes another shuddering breath of the sweet, warm air.

“Welcome home.”
And of course, Raven turns out to be smart and tenacious and wonderful. Because that is just Clarke’s luck these days. And of course she would be so clearly matched with Finn that it hurts. Clarke feels sick.

How could Finn – sweet, kind, thoughtful Finn – have betrayed his own match? Clarke ruthlessly stamps out any remaining attraction she may have felt for the Spacewalker. And if her heart aches a little, well. She can handle a little heartache.

As usual, they have more pressing issues at hand.
September 23rd 2149: The Culling

Chapter Notes

A look into what's going on up on the Ark this chapter - Enjoy!

Abby, Earth-date: September 23rd 2149

Earth. It hardly seems real from up on the Ark. Abby looks down on it from a porthole window. Endless questions gnaw at her. Did Raven get there okay? Is she still alive? Is Clarke? Have they found each other? It’s a beautiful thought, but Abby knows in her gut how unlikely it is. If the kids are alive then this, what they are about to do, is beyond barbaric. But what if she’s wrong? What if she should have let Kane cull citizens a week ago, when far fewer would have needed to die.

She has no end of questions, but very few answers. Lost in thought, Abby doesn’t notice Kane approach. He simply arrives at her side, coming to rest against the frame of the porthole. Abby doesn’t react to his presence, doesn’t even turn her gaze from the stars outside. She can barely stand to look at him, these days.

“It’s time, Abby. The volunteers…” he breaks off, “…well. We should be there.” His voice is soft and patient and it reminds her so forcefully of the man he used to be that suddenly she’s fighting tears. She blinks, still refusing to look at him.

“How did we get here?” she asks him, her voice so quiet that she can barely hear herself over the hum of the Ark’s engines. “How did we become this? Since when is this what we do?”

Of course he doesn’t answer. She hadn’t really expected him to. He just shifts, leaning his shoulder against the window to gaze at her profile. She can feel his eyes on her cheek like a caress. In her peripheral vision, she can just make out the exposed grief in his expression. Gently, he raises his right hand and extends it slowly towards her. For a moment, she’s sure he will try to touch her. Try to rest his warm palm on her arm or her shoulder. But he doesn’t. His hand arrests mid-air and falls again, clearly having changed his mind. Abby can’t decide if she’s relieved or bereft. Either way, it’s probably for the best; she thinks if anyone tried to touch her today she would shatter like a pane of glass.

Kane balls his hands into fists at his side. The blue veins on the backs of his hands are stark against his tanned skin. Kane always looks so much more alive in colour. The rest of the world is so flat and bland by comparison. Their range is almost nonexistent these days, but even now, in spite of everything, that hint of colour, that hint of life still surrounds him.

But today is not a day she wants to experience in any great detail.

She turns, finally, to meet his eyes. “Okay,” she says, her voice tight. “Let’s go.”
Alpha Station has never been so quiet. The thrum of the floor vibrates through Kane’s boots as he stands, ramrod straight, forcing himself to watch the monitors. One by one, the figures on the screen die in front of his eyes. Their faces go slack, their eyes slip close, their limbs weaken and go limp. It looks almost peaceful, and Marcus would like to believe that it’s painless. But there’s no such thing as a painless death. All souls, Marcus is sure, fight tooth and nail before they’re ripped from life. Agonized minutes pass. On the screen, a young woman with honey-brown hair and pink lips falls back against the bulkhead as she loses consciousness. Abby is by his side and he feels her flinch away from both the monitor and him as they watch.

Just because he knows it is a necessary sacrifice, doesn’t make it any easier to watch.

The minutes extend in silence; the distant-echoing engines of the Ark are the only sound filling the room. Sinclair is shaking as he checks the readouts from Sector 17. “It’s done,” he says quietly, his voice as unsteady as his hands.

Jaha nods from where he’s standing by Marcus’ side. His hands are clasped behind his back, his chin high, his expression sombre and assured. “Okay then.”

“I should—” Abby starts and then chokes on the word. “I should go… see to them.”

Jaha nods again without even looking at her. “Go.”

“I’ll come with you,” Jackson says from his position by the door. He’s making no attempt to hide the tears streaking down the cheeks, but his voice is steady and his shoulders are set.

Abby turns to him, pivoting on one heel. Her eyes fill with sympathy. “I would never ask that of you—”

“You didn’t ask,” Jackson replies swiftly. “I offered. You need help, and I’m your apprentice. Let me help you.”

Abby’s face cracks and reforms, her hands twisting together in front of her. Finally, she nods, the movement jerky and hard. “Thank you,” she says tightly.

She joins him by the door, and the pair of them leave the room quickly.

Kane thinks again of the tortured look in Abby’s eyes when he found her by the window of the Ark looking out at the Earth. She’s lost so much. He knows she would rather hold on to the foolish, childish dream that the Earth is survivable. She would probably hold on to that wish right up until the moment when everyone on the Ark suffocates. He may not agree with her short-sighted sentimentality, but he does understand her pain at the loss of life. And he hates seeing her suffering. He wishes he could do something for her. She shouldn’t have to do this alone. This was his plan, and it may well end up saving thousands of lives, but those lost today will still weigh heavy on his shoulders. And he doesn’t want that weight for Abby too.

He looks back up at the monitors, dropped back into grey as soon as Abby crossed to exit the room. “Wait,” Marcus says to the room at large. His feet are moving before his brain has caught up, and in a couple of quick strides, he’s drawing level with Jackson and Abby, a few feet down the corridor. “Wait,” he repeats, when he’s caught up with Abby. “I can come with you. I can… help.”
“No,” Abby says with a sharp shake of her head.

“Abby, you shouldn’t have to be the one to… It was my…I should…” The words won’t come.

“We’re all responsible for this,” Abby tells him, her voice soft and sad.

“That’s not– I meant–”

“You’re not coming, Marcus.”

Why does she have to make everything so difficult? Marcus clenches his hands into fists at his sides.

“Please…” And suddenly Abby is there, moving tight and fast into his space. The dull lights of the Ark spark with life as she nears. Her jaw is hard, eyes bright, and her hand is on his forearm, the grip somehow painful and comforting at once. His lungs seize in his chest as he looks down at her.

“Please, I need you to not be there.” Her words are hissed into the air between them. And she’s close, so close that she is in real, true, vivid colour. He can count the light freckles on her cheekbones, a darker brown against the pale pink of her cheeks. Unbidden, he thinks of the brown-haired girl with the pink lips, lying dead in Sector 17.

“I can’t have you there,” Abby is saying, her fingers flexing against his arm. “It’s… it will be… easier. If you’re not there.”

Oh. And suddenly, he understands. Oh .

He wants to help, but all he does is make things more difficult.

“Okay,” Marcus says at last, his throat working hard. “I’ll… go. Jaha might need some help, controlling the crowds…”

Abby nods, not able to meet his eyes.

Only as he moves away, into the surrounding grey, regaining his personal space, does he feel he can breathe again.
September 25th 2149: Discovery

Bellamy, Earth date: September 25th 2149

He sees the way they look at him now. Now that they know.

The news that the Chancellor survived was such a relief that Bellamy’s still dizzy with it. That blood is not on his hands after all. But now, as he watches the bodies of 300 people from the Ark burn up in the atmosphere far above them, he feels the full weight of his failure and fault. He can’t meet Clarke’s eye. He’s too afraid of what he might find there.

But he can’t think about any of that right now. Because right now his sister is missing. There is so much he can’t control. But this, he has to. He has to find her. It’s his responsibility.

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Octavia, Earth date: September 25th 2149

The night air is still and cold when Octavia returns to consciousness. Her head spins so badly and her knee is screaming in such pain that it’s all Octavia can do to pry her eyes open. It’s dark. Hours must have passed since she collapsed. Just as she’s summoning the courage to pull herself up, she sees it. The coarse grasses are green under the weak moonlight. Her muscles go rigid in fear as she feels the presence of someone behind her. Slowly, Octavia turns her aching head and sees him. A massive, imposing figure looms over her. An intensity that Octavia can’t name burns in his gaze. Clad in dark furs, heavily armed, and with black war paint lining his face, Octavia has never seen a brown so vivid as the colour in his eyes.

*It’s you,* she thinks as the mounting agony in her head pulls her back under.

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Lincoln, Earth-date: September 25th 2149

She’s gone by the time he returns from securing the perimeter. Because of course she is. Lincoln knew he should have chained her up while he’d had the chance.

No one had ever warned him that *keryon-ais* are so much goddamn trouble. Lincoln throws his armour back on in a rush and leaves his makeshift shelter in quick, leaping strides. Time is already
working against him. The Sky People have breached the Trigedakru borders - no doubt searching for Octavia - and Lincoln heard Anya’s horn blasts well over an hour ago. By now, the hunting party will have assembled and be out for blood. If they get to Octavia before he does... Lincoln picks up his pace, sprinting flat out into the blinding light of the forest.

The foliage around him is still fit to bursting with colour. He lets out a breath he hadn’t known he’d been holding. He still has time.

Tracking by colour proves to be much easier than the traditional methods. Lincoln knows immediately if he’s going in the wrong direction and backtracks, honing in on the steady sharpening of the rich greens and browns of the forest. Finally, he sees her. Wide-eyed and still injured, she’s limping with a ferocity - a wild strength - that he wouldn’t have thought possible in her current state. She’s tougher than any Tri Kru he’s ever met.

A minute noise, softer than a snapping twig, draws Lincoln’s attention towards the western bank of trees. With a lurch of panic, Lincoln sees Rivo through the dense thicket. A spear is held firm in his grip, his eyes scanning his surroundings for the enemy. And Octavia - Octavia! - is about to blunder into his line of sight. It takes all of Lincoln’s effort to keep from calling out to her. He runs instead, reaching her just in time to grab her bodily from behind and force her to the ground, pinning her hard against the earth with his weight, one hand clamped tight over her mouth. If Rivo sees them, if he discovers Lincoln protecting her...

Rivo’s spear finds a new home. It buries into the chest of a Sky Girl who Lincoln recognises but couldn’t name. Beneath him, Octavia reacts violently, trying to wrench herself from his grip. Lincoln holds on tighter, digging his fingers into the fabric of her jacket. They can’t waste any more time here. Silently, he whisks her away from the hunting party.

Later, as he’s carrying her the remaining distance to his temporary home, she finally meets his eyes. He’s been waiting to look at her eyes for what feels like a very long time. They glint in the afternoon sun, a green as bright as the trees around them.

“Thank you,” she says. His whole left arm vibrates against her back as she speaks. “You saved my life.”

Yes, he wants to say. I hope it doesn’t get me killed. But even if it does, I would do it again. I would always come for you. You would do the same for me. I think you would. I hope. Hope, Octavia. I can’t remember the last time I hoped for anything. What do you hope for?

He says none of this. He can’t risk it. She might be his match, but her people are still his enemy. Rumour has it that the Commander already learnt that lesson the hard way, and Lincoln refuses to repeat her mistakes. He needs to protect Octavia from the risk he poses to her. So he glazes his expression and keeps his features impassive.

“Why did you do it?” Octavia persists, narrowing her eyes at him. The effect, rather than making her more menacing, is oddly endearing. He wants to smile at her, but he bites the inside of his cheek, hard, against the urge. Octavia looks away for a moment, then back to him, her eyes boring into his. “I’m your match.” It’s not a question. Lincoln’s Gonasleng isn’t perfect, but he understands enough of the grammar to know this isn’t a question.

He hopes that he’s managed to keep his expression as neutral as possible. He tries not to react at all, to give no indication whatsoever that he’s understood her. All the while, he can barely dare to breathe.

“I hope you are,” she says after a while, her eyes again sliding back to the forest surrounding them.
“The colour here is beautiful.”

Lincoln’s chest tightens, sharp and painful and wonderful. He’d forgotten how good it felt to hope.

--

Raven, Earth-date: September 25th 2149

Raven stares at the metal figurine of a two-headed deer in front of her. She wishes it didn’t all make sense to her. She wishes she had more trouble believing that Finn, her soulmate and match, would sleep with someone else, would make *gifts* for someone else.

Behind her, she hears Clarke enter the dropship and ask what’s wrong.

“I’m fine,” Raven replies evenly.

“Do you need help?”

“Sure thanks.” The test is simple, “Pass me that blue wire over there,” she motions vaguely to the pile of parts from the radio that are all drying out. Sharp-eyed, she watches as Clarke reaches out for the blue wire on the far side.

As soon as Clarke moves to reach for it, she realizes her mistake and retracts her hand. She meets Raven’s eye.

She has to ask, she has to know… “Is it Finn?”

“No,” Clarke replies quickly. Raven doesn’t know whether to feel relieved or more angry. “Raven, I-”

“But you were sleeping with him, right?”

“He thought you were dead. We thought everybody we knew on the Ark was dead and there was nothing we could do about it. Then I think as you were coming down he saw some colour again and thought maybe it was me…” Clarke trails off lamely. That’s not how matches work and they both know it. At least Clarke has the good sense to look sheepish and apologetic about the whole thing.

“So who are you matched with?” It’s a blunt question but Raven is long past giving a shit about match manners.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“You really don’t get it, do you?” Raven snaps. If she weren’t so hurt, she might feel sad for Clarke. Anyone who says a match doesn’t matter clearly doesn’t understand themselves very well.

Clarke goes to leave the dropship.

She doesn’t want to ask, but she has to. Without turning around, Raven calls out. “Do you love him?” Her words echo around the metal interior of the ship.
“I hardly know him.”

Chapter End Notes

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts!!
Clarke, Earth-date: September 26th 2149

Is this who they are now? She looks at the Grounder strung up in the dropship, his arms stretched wide.

They’d found a way to fix the radio. They’d contacted the Ark. She’d even spoken to her mother. She’d done everything she could to save Finn. But it will all be for nothing, because he’s going to die anyway. Because no amount of careful stitches can cure poison, so without the antidote there’s nothing she can do. After everything they’d been through, Finn is going to die and Raven will be left in grey. Clarke will not let that happen.

Bellamy looks to her. Silently asking her permission.

Co-Leaders. That’s what they are now. And if they are going to do this, if they are going to find a way to save their people - to save Finn - then they are going to do it together. The responsibility is shared between them both.

Clarke doesn’t know if this is the right thing to do. But as she meets his rich brown eyes, fearful and determined, she nods.

She nods because they have to save Finn.

She nods because she doesn’t have any other solution.

She nods because she trusts him.

Lincoln, Earth-date: September 26th, 2149

He wishes Octavia wasn’t here.

It would be so much easier to die in black and white.

But the red of the strap is vivid in Lincoln’s swollen eyes as the Sky King swings his weapon. Hard metal slams again into Lincoln’s ribs. He clenches his jaw to keep his screams at bay. His teeth ache with the pressure. His chest is on fire.
The brown of his own skin is dark with dirt, glistening with his sweat, tacky with his blood. A dozen colours smear across Lincoln’s vision as pain drives, endless and searing, through his hand. His legs are shaking so badly that he needs to lock his knees to keep from collapsing against his restraints. He will not break for them.

Lincoln can’t stop himself from flinching at the electric fire that the new girl pulls from the wall. For the first time, he feels a flash of real fear. This white-hot pain is so foreign. So new and terrible and so much like something the Mountain Men would do.

He locks his jaw, he locks his knees, he locks his heart against them. Fuck them. A ringing has started in his ears. He doesn’t give a shit about them. He’s freezing. Their stupid friend can die for all he cares. His hand has gone numb from the wrist down. He’d rather die than-

“He won’t let me die.” Octavia’s voice, calm and clear, cuts through the haze of his failing consciousness.

Fuck.

Indra was right all along, it turns out.

He is weak after all.

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**Bellamy, Earth-date: September 26th 2149**

“He won’t let me die.”

Bellamy watches, as if in slow motion, as his sister slices her arm open with the poisoned knife.

“Octavia, no!” By the time the words are out of his mouth it’s already too late.

His blood, full of adrenaline from torturing the Grounder, turns to lead in his veins. He’s tried everything he can think of to get information out of the Grounder. Now his sister’s life is in the balance, and he’s out of options.

He’s frozen. The whole room has fallen deathly still. Everyone except Octavia. She’s on her knees with the vials of antidote in front of her. Bellamy watches as the Grounder suddenly comes to life in front of him. He’s been staring at this bastard’s impassive face all night, but now, for the first time, he looks alive. Scared, even. Octavia was right; he’s not going to let her die.

She’s done it. As soon as they have the correct antidote Clarke and Raven race back down to Finn.

Bellamy moves towards Octavia, but she flinches away from him.

“Don’t touch me.”

“Octavia, what were you thinking…” He starts, still trying to process what she’s done.
“I’m his match.” Octavia stands and faces off against Bellamy, “and he’s mine.”

_No._ His mind rejects the idea. _No, no, no, this can’t be happening._ His stomach lurches. The room seems to swim before Bellamy’s eyes. His hands still sting from the rope burn of the seat belt. His arms are still splattered in the Grounder’s blood. Everything about this suddenly feels wrong. It’s all wrong.

There are a million things Bellamy wants to say. He wants to protest that this must be some kind of mistake, that she’s being manipulated, that it’s not true. But as he meets her bright green eyes, there is a fierceness there that he’s never seen before. And he knows that it must be true.

A chasm opens up between the two siblings. _How long has she been seeing in colour?_ How long had she been keeping it from him? Then he remembers that he also has a match he hasn’t told her about. Time was he couldn’t imagine keeping this a secret from Octavia. Now he can’t imagine telling her.

Bellamy turns to the rest of the room. “Everyone clear out. The prisoner is to be under guard at all times and no one else,” he looks pointedly at Octavia, “is to be allowed up here. Miller, you take first watch.”

Miller nods as everyone else starts to climb down the ladder.

He turns back to Octavia, unable to meet her eyes again. “He’s still the enemy, O.”

He watches as Octavia turns her back on him in disgust. And tries not to think about the little girl he used to read Romeo and Juliet to.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for your awesome comments. So glad you're all enjoying this!

Lots more to come!!
Finally! She thought Miller would never leave. She watches his retreating back as he leaves the dropship to speak with Roma’s parents. And, at last, Octavia is able to race up the ladder. Her heart beats wildly in her chest as she pushes off from the final rung and pulls herself to standing on the top floor of the dropship.

It reeks in here. The stench of warm bodies and sweat and blood and what Octavia sincerely hopes isn’t piss (it probably is). She doesn’t react to the smell; she’s too busy zeroing in on the only thing in the room that matters. Her grip on the rag in her hand tightens.

The man – her match – is watching her. His left eye is swollen shut, purple and black and blue, and it’s equal parts repulsive and fascinating. Even with his eyes hidden behind his wounds, Octavia can feel the pressure of his gaze on her as she approaches. She wants to cut him down, to run away with him, or to just sit down with him on the floor of the dropship and talk. But first things first.

“We don’t have much time.” She unslings the canteen of water from her shoulder and offers it to him, tipping it gently until he’s able to take small sips. “It’s good, right?” The man is shivering with cold or shock or sickness or pain, and Octavia can hardly stand this. “Sorry I haven’t seen you since everything happened, my brother’s been keeping me away.” She can feel herself babbling, but she can’t stop. “He’s a total dick, which you probably already figured out.”

The grounder’s lips quirk in a smile and Octavia feels a rush of triumph. “You do understand me. I knew it.”

His smile slips away and his face shutters back to cool neutrality. Octavia’s stomach twists. Why won’t he speak to her? She swallows against the growing lump in her throat. “At least let me get you cleaned up quick.” She tips some of the water onto the rag and tries to wash the blood off his face without disturbing his injuries. It too little – much too little – but it’s the most help she’s able to offer in their stolen moment together. “This is all my fault because I freaked out so bad when you locked me up in that cave. You’d totally understand why if you knew how I grew up.” She’s babbling again. She runs the cloth along the hard line of his jaw, washing away a layer of crusted blood. Her heart is still making a bid for freedom beneath her ribs and it feels wrong to be this connected to someone and not know even the most basic facts about him. What is she doing? She doesn’t even know his name.

“Lincoln.” His voice is slow and cracks with strain. For a moment Octavia thinks he might be speaking in a language she doesn’t know. Then he clarifies, as though reading her mind. “My name is Lincoln.”

“Lincoln.” She rolls the name across her tongue, testing it out. “I’m Octavia.” Maybe he already knows her name. There’s no doubt he’s been watching them, and he probably figured out they were matched long before Octavia did. If the familiarity in his eyes in anything to go by, her name is no surprise to him. “Was that it? Is that all you’re going to say?”
“It’s not safe for us to talk,” he tells her. His accent is strange, but his English is clear and fluent and it’s more than she’d dared to hope for.

“Well if we shouldn’t talk, then why did you tell me your name?” But she knows why, even as she’s asking. Because she deserves to know. Because it would be wrong, horribly wrong, to never learn the name of her own match.

“I want you to remember me after I’m dead.” He looks away, casting his gaze around the room instead.

As if she could ever, ever forget him. But that’s not the point. The point is, “you’re not going to die,” she snaps at him. “Don’t say that.”

“Octavia,” he cuts her off. And she loves the sound of her name in his accent. “This? This only ends one way.” His eyes are back on her, wide and warm brown and achingly resigned. And suddenly Octavia hates Bellamy. The foreign, viscous fury is unfamiliar and satisfying, and it helps.

Fuck that. “No,” she tells him. “Lincoln, you’re my match. There are – there are rules about this, right? We can’t just let them…” But even as she says it, Octavia’s certainty wavers. She remembers to cold, distant look in Bellamy’s eyes when she told him of her match.

“Look, just talk to them. Tell them you’re not the enemy.”

Lincoln’s eyes flash in the dim light of the ship. “But I am.”

And before she can argue, Miller is back and shouting threats, and Octavia has no choice but to leave. She stays just below them, as close to Lincoln as she can get, well within their range. She hopes that the colour gives him some hope, at least. It’s the best she can do for now.

When she discovers Jasper, high out of his mind on a newly foraged intake of nuts, a plan emerges.

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Monty, Earth-date: September 27th 2149

Air is so fucking weird.

It’s oxygen and nitrogen and carbon dioxide and whatever else the nuclear war might have left behind in the atmosphere. It can be broken down to constituent parts. 7809N2 and 2095O2 and 93Ar and 3CO2 and 1H2O. It’s not magic, it’s science. It goes in, blood takes in the good bits and spits out the bad bits, and on and on it goes.

All the while, oxygen is toxic. Free radicals, ripping apart humans from the inside out. Killing us to keep us alive. There’s some fucking irony.
Monty thinks about all the people on the Ark who died so others could have the privilege of being killed by oxygen.

He pops another handful of nuts into his mouth and chews with aggressive enthusiasm. He knows this isn’t quite right. He’s been high often enough to be able to tell when he’s not operating with a full deck, but he can’t, at the moment, bring himself to care.

“Monty?”

Raven’s face is swimming before him. Her eyes are huge! Are eyes supposed to be that big? They’re big like golf balls. Monty has never seen a golf ball, not in real life anyway, but he’s read about golf, and he thinks her eyes are probably that big. He’d like to try going golfing one day, he thinks it might be fun. It would be nice to get to hit something without it being a life-or-death type situation. Monty’s not sure how he feels about needing to hit stuff when it is a life-or-death situation. You would think that he would be more in favour of it, on account of the life-or-deathness of the situation, but it sure seems like it would be a lot less fun than if he got to do it in a more recreational, golf-course-type situation. He wonders what it would take to make a golf course. The trees might pose a difficulty. Maybe they could cut some of them down and build a–

“Monty!” Raven’s shaking him now; his head jostles as she does it.

“Raven!” he echoes back at her, grinning. “Your eyes are huge!” She should know how big her eyes are. It’s important.

“Great,” she says. She doesn’t seem that concerned. Maybe her eyes have always been that big. Monty can’t remember. “Take a seat down here, buddy.”

Monty falls down and finds a log underneath him. He leans back, expecting to find a backrest. There isn’t one, and he topples backwards over the log. “Ow.” That was fun! Monty laughs. He should do that again.

Raven throws her hands up over her head. She looks funny from this angle, upside-down and backwards. Her face twists like a kaleidoscope. Monty reaches up towards her, trying to touch the dancing crystals on her face. “You know what?” Raven’s disembodied voice says. “Fuck it. Have fun down there, boy wonder. I’ll catch you in the morning. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t.” She disappears in a puff of smoke. Or was that from the campfire? Doesn’t matter. Either way it was majestic.

Monty’s not sure how long he lies there, a minute or an hour or a year. But then Miller’s there beside him, naked from the waist up and looking around frantically. He sits down on the log at Monty’s side.

“Hey!” Monty calls to him. He reaches up to Miller, who takes the hint and hauls Monty up to sitting on the log. It takes Monty a while to find his balance, teetering on the rounded slope of the seat. “Nathan!”

“Have you seen the squirrel?”

Monty doesn’t know what to do with this sentence. “What’s his name?” Good. That was logical.

Miller frowns. “He didn’t tell me. I followed him down here. He told me to take off my clothes because we’re going to go swimming. So I followed him here, but…” Miller breaks off and looks Monty dead in the eyes. “There’s no swimming pool, Monty. How am I supposed to go swimming if there’s no pool?”
"I would need a lawnmower," Monty thinks aloud, "for the golf course. Maybe I can build a lawnmower. Can't have a golf course without one."

"That's true." Miller nods.

Monty notices, suddenly, that Miller's naked from the waist up. Warmth floods across Monty's cheeks as his eyes trail the smooth pane of Miller's chest. He has a sudden desire to shout something anything to distract himself.

Monty's opened his mouth to shout - he still hasn't decided what - when Miller beats him to it. "Is the moon normally green? I feel like I would have noticed."

Monty opens his mouth and closes it a couple of times. "I have no idea. What colour is the moon normally? You just need to recreate it."

"I think it's like..." Miller trails off, "I can't remember. Yellow? Is that right? Maybe blue. Blue moons, that's a thing, right? What does that actually mean? I'll ask the squirrel when he comes back."

Monty's not listening. He's already halfway through building a lawnmower from the scrap metal of the dropship and some wiring that they can probably do without. Maybe. He'll need to make sure not to blow up the only power cells they have. That's easy, though, he'll just need to route the remaining power through the coupling--

"Can you remember what colour it is?" Miller asks, cutting off Monty's trail of thought.

"Can I - what?" Monty asks. He can spare the power so long as he leaves the main circuit connected to the--

"See colour." Miller's frowning at him. "Can you see colour?"

"Nope, never have," Monty answers absently. Power's not a problem then, the real trick will be finding blades for the lawnmower. Bellamy might not want to let him use blades if they could be used as weapons instead. Maybe he could turn the lawnmower into a weapon--

Miller's staring at him. Something in Monty's brain, distant, like a shout from far away, tries to tell him to pay attention. This is important. But it's so hard, when equations for rotation and speed and distance are swirling in his head, vying for his attention.

Before Monty has a chance to process the look Miller's giving him, it's too late. Miller's eyes glaze over and slide past Monty's shoulder.

"The squirrel's back!" Miller exclaims, whatever he'd been thinking clearly driven from his head.

He's already clambering off the log and rushing away into the night, following the elusive squirrel. Monty sits alone for a moment, trying and failing to process what just happened.

"Tough break kid," a pinecone says to him.

Monty looks down at the pinecone. It's lying on its side, near the campfire. It's looking at him with unmitigated disdain. Monty thinks this is a bit rich, coming from a pinecone. "Shut up," he tells it. "What do you know about it?"

"Eat me," the pinecone retorts.
Clarke, Earth-date: September 27th 2149

The ground wants them dead. With every passing day, this becomes the only thing that Clarke can focus on.

“I spend every minute thinking about how we’re going to keep everyone alive.”

Her head is still spinning as the effects of the nuts they ate begin to wear off. She feels ruined, like she might splinter apart at any moment. The bark of the tree is stabbing into her back. The dirt is seeping into her skin. Her abdomen is screaming in pain from where Dax knocked the wind out of her. The blood on her face is drying in the cold night air. She can feel a thin trickle of blood snaking its way down the back of her neck. And Clarke heaves breath after breath, trying to hold her wreaked self in one piece.

Bellamy – looking every inch as shredded to pieces as she feels – is crying silently beside her. Tears track down his cheeks, collecting dirt and blood as they go. Down his torn cheeks, across his cracked lips. He sniffs like a child with a skinned knee. And Clarke can’t remember how she ever thought he was selfish.

“But you can’t run, Bellamy,” she continues. “You may be an ass half the time, but…” The words stick in Clarke’s throat. “But I need you. We all need you.” The truth of this is a little overwhelming. Her already spinning head lurches with the force of it. She can’t do this without him. She can’t hope to keep any of them alive without him.

Bellamy’s eyes snap to hers. He must know. Even if she’s not his match, he must know he’s hers. How could someone have such an effect and not be aware of it? If he does know, he gives no indication. He simply tears his eyes from hers and nods.

It’s not a promise, or an agreement to stay. It’s just a plea for mercy. A silent beg for peace. And Clarke gives it to him. She falls silent and they breathe together. Clarke’s legs go numb as they sit, but she doesn’t care. The cold bites at her cheeks, but she ignores it. They just breathe, their shoulders pressing against each other.

“What am I going to tell them?” Bellamy’s voice is hoarse and cracked, like it’s been dredged up against its will. It’s a harsh scrape against the silence of the forest.

Bellamy’s eyes are trained on Dax’s prone body. He’s lying a few feet from them, barely visible in the dark. There’s so much blood, deep and tacky and pooled around his neck. His eyes are open, sightless.

“Tell them the truth,” Clarke says. “They’ll understand if you explain. They…” They love you.

“They trust you.”

Bellamy doesn’t answer. He’s stopped crying, but shows no signs of moving. Clarke can sympathise. For all that they’ve been through, this is the closest to a moment of rest that either of them have had for days.
“Today’s my birthday,” Clarke says into the silence.

She has no clue what made her say it. What does that matter, now? What use does a birthday have down here? Besides, if she were still on the Ark, she might have been floated by now. Floated for a redundant secret. Her father had died for nothing, and Clarke would have too. Maybe. Or maybe she would have been released. Pardoned just in time to suffocate on a dying spaceship.

“I didn’t know,” Bellamy says. Obviously. She hadn’t told anyone. “Happy birthday, Clarke.”

“Thanks.”

“I didn’t get you anything.”

Clarke laughs, the sound too sharp and too short and too surprising to her own ears. “That’s okay.”

“Unless you count a bunker full of assault rifles?”

“It counts,” Clarke assures him. The smile feels foreign on her lips. The skin of her bottom lip cracks with the effort.

Bellamy smiles too, but it dies halfway up his face. “It’s not enough,” he says, his eyes again finding hers.

“Of a present? I think it’s plenty–”

“For them,” Bellamy says, his voice clipping back to business. “It’s not enough.”

“What isn’t?” She blinks slowly at him.

“The guns, the blankets. Survival. It isn’t enough. They have to live, Clarke.”

This. This is why she needs him. Because it wouldn’t have occurred to Clarke that there was anything else. It wouldn’t have occurred to her that living and surviving are two different things.

“What do you have in mind?” she asks.

The ghost of a smile tugs at the corner of Bellamy’s cheeks. “It’s Unity Day next week, right? We should celebrate.”

A swell of relief crashes through her.

He’s decided to stay.

Nathan, Earth-date: September 27th 2149

A hard wind rushes from the east and cuts over Miller, who shivers, huddled against the side of the
It’s cold, he thinks. This might be the first coherent thought he’s had all evening. It takes another moment for Miller to notice that he’s shirtless. Well. That explains why he’s freezing his ass off. It takes him a few minutes to track down his clothes. He finds his hat first, perched on top of a stake in the wall. Next, his jacket, tucked up near the dying embers of the fire. He can’t find his shirt at all, and settles for stealing one from Connor’s tent. As he reassembles himself, Miller tries to retrace his steps from the previous night. What the hell happened last night? A sudden memory accosts him, bringing Miller up short. He pauses, his hand still midway through fastening up his jacket. He doesn’t see colour. Monty has never seen colour.

For weeks Miller has been stressing about it. Grappling with whether to ask Monty about it. Trying to figure out how best to mention it. Since landing on the ground, they finally had a chance to be happy, if Miller could just get over his fear of rejection and talk to Monty. Ever. Now that they aren’t about to be floated, Miller figured why not try to actually enjoy having a match? But it’s not exactly the easiest thing to bring up in conversation, and every time he’d had an opportunity, Miller had chickened out. Because Monty never seemed to react to Miller’s presence. His eyes never lit up when Miller neared him. He never sought Miller’s eyes in a crowd (Miller knows, because he has been seeking Monty’s constantly) and so he lost his nerve. Because it seemed pretty damn clear that his match wasn’t reciprocated. And now he knows for sure.

Miller is not Monty’s match.

He shouldn’t be surprised. The cold slice of rejection should not be stealing the breath from his lungs. He had been setting himself up for this fall for weeks. But still, it feels like the universe just played a monumental cosmic joke on him. Tease him with this amazing, talented, attractive match, and then just when he’s finally ready to do something about it, reveal to him that it was all for nothing.

If Monty isn’t matched to him, then what’s the point? Monty doesn’t feel the same way about him, and fuck why would he? What could Miller possibly have to offer? He feels stupid for even daring to imagine that he would be matched in return.

Well fuck it. He refuses to be some desperate clinger-on. Those sad, lonely, half-matches, following their unmatched pair around like a stray dog, hoping desperately that one day they’ll change their minds. That’s not Miller. If Monty doesn’t want Miller, then fine, it’s not like Miller’s about to force himself on someone who’s not interested. Not for the first time, Miller thinks colour might be the worst fucking thing that ever happened to him.

Head still throbbing from the come down, he climbs the ladder up to the top level of the dropship to check on the prisoner—

**OH FUCK.**
Really excited to hear your thoughts on this chapter!
October 1st 2149: So Romantic

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Fox, Earth-date: October 1st 2149

The bolt bounces into the tin cup in front of Fox with a loud clang and a plop of splashing liquid. The others gathered loosely around the table cheer.

“Drink up, Fox!” Sterling taunts. He’s louder and more animated now he’s had a couple of his own drinks. His hands and arms punctuate every statement, swingly wildly around him.

Fox winces as she pours the cup of Monty’s Moonshine down her throat. It tastes awful. She’s never drunk any alcohol before tonight, and she wants to ask if this is what all alcohol tastes like. But she’s not about to admit her lack of experience to the others. So she drinks it all and slams the cup back on the table in triumph. Only to start coughing violently as the aftertaste of the harsh liquid burns its way from the tip of her tongue all the way down the back of her throat.

Sterling claps Fox on the back as the others whistle in admiration. Fox smiles and sits up a little straighter. This is the best Unity Day ever.

Miller fishes out the bolt from Fox’s cup and passes the cup over to Sterling, who refills it from a jug under the table. Miller spins the bolt between his fingers, preparing to take aim again, when Monroe and Harper sidle up to join them.

“Where did Clarke go?” Monroe asks, swaying a little and grabbing the edge of the table for support. She sits heavily on a stump between Miller and Sterling. “I was looking forward to partying with the Princess.”

Sterling raises his eyebrows meaningfully as he replies, “She went off with Finn.”

“Oooo!” Harper squeals gleefully, taking up her own seat between Miller and Fox. “What’s going on there?”

“Nothing,” Fox cuts in. “He’s a perfect match with Raven.”

“Oh Fox, I hate to break this to you,” Sterling’s tone is dry and mocking, “but that means nothing.”

“What!” Fox splutters in protest. “Of course it means something!”

She can’t believe what she’s hearing. Sure, she hasn’t met her own match yet, but she’s read all about them. Up on the Ark there had been a weekly column called ‘Soulmate Stories’, and she couldn’t get enough of them. Colour-matches are amazing; a person made especially for you. Someone to complete your vision and your life.

“They’re soulmates!” Fox persists as Sterling gives her a patronizing smile. “Raven came down from the Ark in a pod she built herself from scrap metal just so she could be with him again! They’ve both been in colour since they were kids! Their story is so romantic.” She swoons just thinking about someone risking all that for her.
“Whatever, look what it got her,” Monroe cuts in. “He’s such a fucking flirt! He’s been into Clarke since we landed, and then there was that night a while back when neither of them were anywhere to be found…” She trails off, wiggling her eyebrows suggestively.

With a scow, Miller flicks the bolt into Monroe’s cup. It shuts her up for a moment, while she winks at him and downs her cup of moonshine. She picks up the bolt from the bottom of her cup.

Fox is still thinking about Clarke and Finn. “Do you think Clarke is matched to him?” she says after a moment. That might explain it.

“Oh my god, Fox,” Monroe laughs, “Sometimes it’s not about colour, it’s just about sex.”

“Clarke can see colour though,” Harper volunteers, spinning her cup between her palms.


“I was picking berries with her a couple days ago and she was really quick at it. Like too quick.”

“Oh yeah, and her berries all tasted delicious!” Monroe flicks the bolt and it splashes into Sterling’s cup.

Sterling toasts her with it, “Unlike yours, which are all sour pieces of crap.”

“Fuck you,” Monroe shoots back. “I know for a fact you couldn’t do better.”

Sterling swallows the moonshine. “True enough.”

“So, it’s agreed then.” Monroe sits forward conspiratorially, “Clarke has a match down here on the ground. The question is: who is it?”

“But if you know she can see colour and you know something happened between her and Finn, how are you so sure he’s not her match?” Fox argues.

“I don’t know, but it seems to me that fucking the Spacewalker is the kind of thing you do when you’re trying to run away from your match,” Monroe shrugs. “Besides, if anything, they seem to be avoiding each other since Raven arrived. Doesn’t seem like something a match would do.”

“Yeah, like you know anything about what a match would do,” Sterling jabs her lightly in the side with the bolt he retrieved from his cup. She bats at him, fending off his attack with one hand.

“Bet you anything it’s Bellamy,” Miller says thoughtfully, cutting across them.

“Wow, do you think so?” The idea takes hold of Fox. She can’t help but get excited. They would be so good together. She hopes someone is matched with Bellamy, ’cause if not... well, that would be such a waste. She wishes she was matched to someone like Bellamy. Or, even better, that someone like Bellamy was matched to her.

“Oh yeah, it has to be!” Sterling leans in, casually flicking the bolt back into Monroe’s cup as he shifts forward. “Have you noticed the way they always stand next to each other whenever possible?”

“So true,” Monroe agrees, downing her drink for a second time. “They totally orbit.” She retrieves the bolt from between her teeth and spins it through her fingers.

“That is so romantic. Do you think he’s her match too?”

“It would make sense.” Harper shrugs.
“Where is Bellamy?” Sterling looks around.

Fox looks too. She thought he’d been over at the still with Monty and Jasper. Monty is still there, but she can’t see Bellamy - or Jasper for that matter - anywhere.

“Wherever Clarke is, that’s probably where he is too,” Miller offers.

“Our fearless leaders,” Monroe sing-songs as she tosses the bolt into Harper’s cup.

“More like Mom and Dad,” Sterling laughs as Harper drinks. “Did you see the way they told off Drew when he fell asleep on his watch two night ago? They made him clean out the fire pit and sent him to his tent without dinner. My parents could have taken a leaf from their book.”

“I hope they’re having sex,” Harper ponders thoughtfully as she flicks the bolt way too hard. It hits the corner of the table with a пиинг, and flies off at a sharp angle.

“They’re probably off fighting Grounders or some shit,” Miller responds, retrieving the bolt from the ground and dusting it off.

“Ha, yeah, probably.”

“Speaking of matches...” Sterling smiles. “Did you hear Octavia is matched to that Grounder Bellamy tortured?”

“What?” Fox, Monroe, and Harper say as one.

“Yeah, and she’s totally the one who helped him escape.”

Miller bristles visibly.

“Oh my god that’s so rom-”

“Shut up, Fox!” Miller snaps. “Colour matches aren’t romantic. They’re not some fairytale for your damn amusement. They just cause trouble and fuck shit up. Now, thanks to Octavia getting all excited about a little colour, that Grounder is out there, and it’s only a matter of time before he brings all of his friends back here. And then what do you think is going to happen? I tell you what’s not going to happen: we are not going to all live happily ever after, like one of those fucking “Soulmate Stories”, just because one idiot sees some stupid colour.”

Heat burns Fox’s face, and she looks down at her cup. Shame and embarrassment churn her already unsteady stomach.

Harper gives Miller a pointed look, “You okay there, buddy?”

“Fine.” Miller glares at the table as he downs the cup in front of him. “I’m going to go get more.” He pushes himself up from his chair and snatches the jug without looking back, elbowing his way through the crowd to get to the still.

Once he’s out of earshot Monroe leans over to Harper, “What’s Miller’s story?”

“No idea,” she replies, her eyes still on his retreating back.

“Well, mark my words, that kid has definitely got one.”

Logically, Fox understands what Miller was trying to say. She knows that soulmates aren’t some magical solution to all of life’s problems. They are someone who forces you to become better, and
that’s not an easy thing to do, so of course the stories are always hard. She knows that. She believes that whatever Miller’s story is, it’s probably a tough one. But she reflects sadly that at least he has one. As the party winds down and Fox moves off towards her tent, she wonders how much longer she’ll have to wait for her own story to begin.

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**Clarke, Earth-date: October 1st 2149**

“You started a war you don’t know how to end.”

The Grounder’s gaze is hard as flint and Clarke has to remind herself not to break eye contact. Don’t look away. Hold her ground. Don’t look guilty.

But aren’t they? If Anya’s right, then their flares had killed people. Innocent people. Somehow, Clarke thinks the ‘but we didn’t mean to!’ argument isn’t going to convince this Grounder Chief of anything. And really, Clarke isn’t even sure it matters. Is intentionality important in acts of war?

The brown in Anya’s hair grows brighter in increments. Bellamy must be nearby, flanking them in the trees. Clarke feels immeasurable relief in knowing he has her back. She wants Finn’s peace talks to work, but she doesn’t kid herself that the Grounders are big on forgiving and forgetting. Having Bellamy follow them was a tactical decision. The fact that it brings Clarke some small measure of comfort is entirely immaterial.

The truth of this is confirmed when Anya surges forward, peace talks abandoned. She’s drawing a blade from the folds of her coat, and before Clarke can even register the threat, Bellamy’s there. She’s not surprised that he takes the shot, or that his aim is dead on Anya’s outstretched arm.

What surprises her is that she’d known it would be.

Because it does bring her comfort. And it’s not just the colour. It’s not just the aesthetics of the world that she gains when he’s around. She can trust herself when Bellamy’s nearby. Her sight, her plans, her own judgement come into sharper relief when she has Bellamy to check and balance her. Her pulls her forward and holds her back, weight and counterweight. And she’ll need that - they both will - to protect their people.

They lock eyes across the mounting violence on the bridge.

In his features, she can read her own steely resolve for the battle ahead.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was really fun to write. I have a lot of feelings about poor Fox.
Marcus, Earth-date: October 2nd 2149

Marcus Kane is used to seeing the Ark in black and white. Sometimes, he can even manage to fool himself into thinking that this is what the Ark is supposed to look like. Sometimes he can forget about colour entirely. Sometimes. This is not one of those times.

As he moves through the damaged, dark halls of the ruined Ark, the lack of colour pushes in on him. It assaults his senses, reminding him at every turn of what he’s lost. Everything about this is wrong. Somewhere in the distance, he can hear the ringing siren of an automated alarm. It warns them that they’ve lost pressure, or life support, or something else vital to their ongoing survival. It rings relentless in Marcus’ ears. He feels lightheaded as the alarm blares in his mind.

“Anybody there? Hello?” Kane calls out.

He tries not to remember how alive and bright these halls used to be. Years ago, when he and Abby were never far apart. And when their match was so strong that there wasn’t any distance on the whole Ark that the colour wouldn’t follow. Every corridor, every hatch, every room used to blaze in colour. The Ark was his home. Now, all he sees is a tomb.

A shout for help echoes across the bare metal walls. One of the young engineers - Sinclair’s apprentice, Wick - is trapped in a door.

As Kane tries to free his arm, Wick asks, “What the hell happened anyway?”

“We were betrayed. Councillor Sydney took the Exodus ship by force. The damage to the Ark was catastrophic.” The biggest threat of all was right under their noses and they didn’t see it. I didn’t see it. I failed. Over and over again, I do nothing but fail.

As he moves with Wick down the halls, looking for more survivors, Kane wasn’t prepared for the sight of them. Dozens of people, half-dead, huddled together in a corner by the one remaining air vent. The image of the bodies after the culling flashes in his mind. 300 lives lost. His mother dead. Countless others floated. And for what? For this ? This was not the greater good he spent his life fighting for. This could not be what all that they had sacrificed was for.

And Abby too. After everything they’ve been through, to lose Abby now when all their reasons for animosity have finally crumbled to dust. Well, maybe it’s no less than he deserves. She had warned him. For years and years, even as they pushed each other away, even as they fought and their range fell away to nothing, as they willfully abandoned their match. As she married someone else and as he tried to float her, throughout everything, she had tried to warn him. All along she had known where this road would lead them. Start choosing some lives over others, and all you’ll end up with is a floating catacomb where there should have been a civilization.
The cold metal of the Ark floor presses into Abby’ back. She’d escaped the Exodus ship, only to suffocate on the Ark instead. Maybe she should have stayed on the ship. Maybe. As she stares at the sealed hatch door, her vision starts to blur. For a moment, her oxygen-deprived brain can swear the hatch door is a cool blue under the emergency lights. But it’s just a memory. From a time when all the hatch doors were in colour…

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Abby, Earth-date: March 12th 2130

“Abby please, stop! Talk to me! Look at me, please.”

Ducking into an empty storage room off the busy Alpha Station corridor, a 21-year old Abby spun on her heel to face a 22-year-old Kane, slamming her hand on the hatch button, letting it close behind them. The door was in colour. Everything was in colour.

“Is it true?” she whirled on her match in blind fury. “Did you write that proposal?”

“Abby, you know what the medical stock is like right now, we simply don’t have the resources-”

“Marcus, without medicine that infection is going to start killing people. They are going to die, and soon.”

“And if we give out all of our medicine now, what’s going to happen down the road, huh? You read the report same as me, we don’t have the resources.”

“Leaving everyone over 60 to die is barbaric.”

“The proposal never said ‘leave them to die’, it just suggests a priority scheme for the limited medical resources we have.”

“It’s the same thing and you know it,” Abby snapped.

For the first time, he looked away, unable to meet her piercing brown eyes.

“Please Marcus,” Abby pleaded, “there has to be another way.”

“Show me then.” His voice softened, and his whole posture sagged with the weight of his choices. He was really asking, really watching her with hungry dark eyes, really hoping that she had a solution.

Abby wished she’d had more to offer him. “All I know,” she told him, “Is that we can’t start ranking the value of different lives. Only death lies that way. There has to be a way to save everyone.”

“Well there isn’t.” Kane’s back straightened and his face shuttered. And in the years to come, when Abby would think back on this moment, she always remembered the cold distance in his eyes. That was the moment when she lost him. They had been counting on each other to find a better way, and
they had both failed. They just disagreed about who was to blame. “Look around you,” he told her, “our responsibility is to the survival of the human race. Our job is to somehow keep enough of us alive in this disintegrating piece of junk for another hundred years before humans can return to the earth. You’re being naive and letting your own personal feelings cloud your judgement.”

“Refusing to let innocent people die is not weakness!”

“Yes it is!” Their raised voices bounced across the metal walls, filling the room. “Let’s not pretend that this isn’t personal. This is all just about your grandmother.”

Abby voice cracked and fell away to a whisper, “How can you be so cruel?” How could her own match have become a stranger to her?

For a moment, regret flashed on his face and he made a motion to reach out for her, but she pulled away.

“I thought you were better than that. I thought you were a good man. I guess I was wrong.” Her words cut him and she knew it, but she was beyond caring.

Kane flinched, but refused to give her the high ground. “I can’t talk to you when you’re like this,” he muttered dismissively, turning to go.

In a flash of irritation, Abby let fly the last weapon in her arsenal. “Jake proposed to me again last night.”

Marcus’ hand froze just above the release for the door. “And what did you say?” He kept his back turned, making it impossible for Abby to read what distress may have been written in his features.

“I said I’d think about it.”

“Good. You should do that then. Marry him.”

He slammed his hand against the button and left without looking back.

Before he’d gone three steps down the hall, the colour had faded from them both. He shouldn’t have been out of range already, but he was. He left and took the colour with him.

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**Abby, Earth-date: October 2nd 2149**

Feeling the cold metal of the Ark creak beneath her, Abby thinks about that day. The last day that she got to see the Ark in its true colours. She thinks about all the many years since then. All the time she had spent telling herself - and anyone who would listen - that her life was her choice and she didn’t need anyone. But she could use someone now, a voice whispers in her head. She’s lost, dying in a distant section of a devastated Ark. How is anyone supposed to find them here?

She thinks about that night 20 years ago. She had spent the whole rest of the night in the empty storage room after Marcus had left. Her arms wrapped around herself, battling a splitting headache as the dark loneliness of the Ark surrounded her. Part of her had wanted desperately to reach out for
him, to call him back to her side, but she didn’t. Instead, she banished him from her world. Something inside of her closed that night. Something was severed. Broken.

Now, as her consciousness slowly starts to slip away, it’s so desperately obvious. And it’s the easiest thing in the world, to unspool the thread of her soul and reach out. With one tiny thought she feels something inside of her open again. *Find me.*

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**Marcus, Earth-date: October 2nd 2149**

Kane ignores the order to leave Jaha behind, and side by side they look over the data from the damaged Ark. At least 1500 dead. It’s unfathomable.

Wick comes over with news that one of the service doors of the Exodus ship had been manually closed from the Ark side before the launch. Some of the hostages could have re-bordered the Ark in time. *Abby*. It’s a long shot, but at the prospect of even this wildest chance, Kane could swear that the room starts to brighten. He has to try. He has to do *something*. The weight of all of the lives on his conscience threaten to overwhelm him. If there is a chance that he can save anybody, he has to try. He hardly hears Sinclair talk about how the maintenance shaft will be hot as hell. He’s already made up his mind.

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Turns out Sinclair was right. The air is so hot it scorches his lungs as he takes great gasping breaths. His head spins worse than ever as the metal pipes sear his palms. His progress is agonizingly slow and he thinks he might just die here, overcome by the endless, unendurable heat. He’s moments from resigning, from lying down on the white-hot metal and not rising again, when he sees it. The cables beneath him are glowing a faint red. It’s subtle, but unmistakable. It’s been well over a decade since he could last see colour without being within a foot or two of Abby. It’s so unexpected that Marcus whips his head in either direction, half-expecting to see Abby pressed up against the side of the air shaft. She’s nowhere to be seen, but still, there are the cables, red in her absence. And that must mean something. She’s near. She’s alive. And she’s waiting for him to find her.

As he clamber out the end of the shaft, the cool colours of the Ark sharpen around him. He’s in the right place. Dozens of bodies, weak but alive, are lying on the floor on the other side of the door. The image of the culling flashes again in his mind, haunting him. Abby was right about the cost of their choices, and now he’s going to have to live with it. But no one else. From now on, he will do better. No one else is going to die for their cause. Not these people. Not *her*. He fumbles with the battery Wick gave him to open the door.

As the door slides open and he enters the hatch, colour washes over him with an intensity that he had forgotten existed. He sees her curled up in a corner. In an instant he’s at her side, cradling her head in his hands. “Abby, wake up.”

As her eyes slowly open, he swears they have never looked a more vivid and lovely shade of brown.
Bellamy, Earth-date: October 3rd 2149

The whole camp is falling apart.

It’s been nearly two days since the Exodus ship crashed out of the sky, two days of waiting for the Grounders to retaliate for the events on the bridge during Unity Day. Two days since Clarke last came out of her tent.

She’s barely spoken a word since they watched the Exodus ship fall, and Bellamy feels her loss around camp more than he could have imagined. He tries not to question or probe his feelings too much, he can’t see how anything could be gained by that type of contemplation. He misses her because they are a team, they are co-leaders and she has an important role to play in keeping this camp together. But the indisputable fact remains that she is also his match, and he just feels better when she’s around.

He’s been trying to hold their people together while she grieves, trying to allow her that time. But everywhere he looks, all he sees are scared teenagers. These are kids, terrified that they might have just become orphans. And they are not handling the news well. All of them have taken to drinking. A lot. At this rate, they’ll drink themselves to death long before the Grounders ever get around to attacking them. And that’s saying something, because Bellamy spends every second of the day waiting for the Grounders to finally mount their attack. The waiting is almost as bad as the violence. But right now, the Grounders are not his most imminent problem: his own people are. Bellamy needs them to focus. He needs Clarke.

The sun is just cresting the eastern sky on the morning of the second day after they lost contact with the Ark. Bellamy wishes he could give Clarke more time, but they have none to spare. So he gathers some fruit and a handful of nuts, piling them onto a piece of scrap metal, repurposing it into a plate.

Quietly, cautiously, he enters Clarke’s tent. He’s not sure what he’d expected to find: maybe Clarke crying, or sleeping, or at least curled up on the floor of the tent trying to sleep. Instead, he finds her hard at work. She’s taken the radio from the dropship and is pouring over it with such intensity that she doesn’t even seem to notice Bellamy enter.

“Hi,” he says awkwardly from the mouth of the tent.

He manages to draw her attention, but only for a moment. Clarke looks up, registers his presence, then quickly returns to her work. She must be determined to contact someone, anyone on the Ark.

“Didn’t Raven say we lost contact?” Bellamy knows for sure that’s what she said. Technically what she said was, there’s nothing wrong with the radio, if it’s not working, that’s a problem on their end. Either their radio is broken or there’s no one left to answer it. Either way, there’s fuck all we can do about it from here.

Clarke ignores him. Bellamy steps forward slowly to stand behind the radio, trying to get her to look at him again. Her clear blue eyes are hard and vacant as they bear down on the unresponsive machinery. Her expression sends a chill down Bellamy’s spine.
“Clarke, hey,” he tries again. He sets the plate of food down beside the radio. She ignores it. “Listen, I could really use your help out there...” he trails off and Clarke continues to work, barely even glancing at him.

Colour pulses around him as he sits down on the tent floor across from her. Bellamy draws his knees up to his chest and stares down at his own hands, knotted up in his lap.

“I wasn’t there when my mother was floated,” he says, speaking more to his own hands than to Clarke. “I couldn’t face it. The whole thing... it was my fault and I just... I couldn’t bear to look her in the eye as she died, knowing that it was all my fault. So I stole a bottle of alcohol from the supply closet and I drank the entire thing alone in my room. I couldn’t even remember the last time I had been alone in that room. But anyway. To be honest, I don’t remember much from last year at all. It’s just a blur of grey monotony.” Clarke looks up sharply, and a look Bellamy’s never seen flickers across her face. The word grey hangs heavy in the air between them. He should tell her. He should tell her that she pulled him out of that monotony. That back then he never imagined that the world could be as alive as it is now. When he’s with her. But instead he looks away, back down at his hands, shaking his head to try and erase the moment. He can’t put that all on her right now. Maybe he’s trying to not be selfish. Maybe he’s being a coward. Either way, he takes another breath and continues with his story. Because she deserves to know that she’s not alone in experiencing this pain. At the very least she deserves that.

“Anyway, it was only later that I realized that they hadn’t let Octavia be present at Mom’s floating. So she wasn’t there either. My mother, who gave up everything she had for her children, died alone without either of them there to say goodbye.”

He chances another look up at Clarke to find her bright blue eyes have softened. “I know it feels awful Clarke, and I’m not here to tell you that it’s going to get better or that the feeling will ever go away. But I can tell you that there is a camp full of people out there who are scared and they need you.” He hesitates, thinking of her own words to him under the tree. “I need you.”

She nods slowly. “We’re on our own now.”

“Yeah, we are. But we’re not alone.”

They exit the tent together.

To find Derek, who is supposed to be on watch, vomiting into a bush.

Bellamy looks around at the listless camp. Is everyone in this goddam place hungover? He looks to Clarke as she surveys the mayhem.

She turns to him. “How much have they all been drinking?”

“I don’t know. A lot.”

“Okay.” The business-like tone is back in her voice and before she’s even finished speaking he starts to feel relief washing over him. “I’m going to talk to Monty. I’ll put a limit on the amount of moonshine allowed per person each day.”

He nods. It’s a good idea. A perfect idea. Exactly the kind of idea he knew Clarke would have.

She surveys Derek, who looks half asleep and is leaning on the wall for support. “You need to make an example of him.”
“Right.” Bellamy grabs a bucket of ice-cold water that they had gathered from the river and dumps it unceremoniously over Derek’s head.

As Derek splutters and squeals, Bellamy roars, “Enough!”

The whole camp stops to watch.

Bellamy looks around at them all. “This is it. The Exodus ship is gone. For all we know, the entire Ark is dead. Help is not coming, but the Grounders are. It’s not a matter of if but when.” He rounds on Derek. “You want to be a gunner? Fine. But that gun is not a right, it’s a responsibility and one you have to earn. When you report for watch, you’re responsible for the lives of everybody in this camp. So you better be damn sure you’re up to the job. And if I ever catch you hung over or in any way impaired on duty again, you’re done. Derek, get your shit, you’re moving in with Connor.”

Then as an afterthought, Bellamy sees Jasper at attention nearby. “Jasper, you can have his tent.”

Chapter End Notes

I know, so much angst. Excited to hear your thoughts on this one!
Clarke, Earth-date: October 5th 2149

Clarke is sketching and categorizing all the edible nuts and berries they’ve found so far. After the Gobi Nut fiasco she figures it’s important for them all to get better at identifying what they can eat and what they should stay far away from. The catalog is growing slowly but it’s time consuming work. That’s good. That’s the best part. She needs to stay busy because if she doesn’t stay busy she’s going to end up listening to the dead air on the radio to the Ark all day long again. And she can’t let herself do that. Not anymore.

Raven approaches quietly and places a mint leaf on the table next to her.

“For your database thingy,” she offers. Clarke looks up at her for the first time and nods her thanks.

Raven starts to go but hesitates for a moment, clearly trying to figure out how to say something. “I’m sorry about your mother.” She finally says. There is a genuine quality to her voice that encourages Clarke to meet her eye. “She was amazing. She deserved better.”

“Thank you.” Clarke remembers Raven saying that she and her mother had worked together on Raven’s pod. Come to think of it she may now be the only other person who actually knew her mother.

“I just wish I knew what happened.” Clarke voices the thought that has been haunting her for the last four days. “Why did it launch early? Why did it crash? And why haven’t we heard anything from the Ark since?”

“Well, you know, if we go to the crash site I might be able to find the black box or any of its communication or navigation logs. It would be a good start to finding some answers.”

Clarke shakes her head. “It’s at least a full day’s journey to the crash site. Grounder retaliation could happen at any time. We need stay where we can protect ourselves.”

Raven’s mouth twitches up. “You’re sounding more and more like Bellamy. But I bet if you ask him, he would come with us and bring along a group of his gunners for protection.”

Clarke doesn’t know why Raven would be so quick to think that Bellamy would let them take an expedition so far outside of camp.

“We all deserve answers,” Raven presses gently. “Think about it.”

Well, she thinks as she watches Raven leave, there is no way he’ll say yes, but it couldn’t hurt to just ask Bellamy about it.
“Their talk of peace is a distraction. They were the first to fire on the bridge, killing two of my men. When the rest of their people arrive, they won’t hesitate to strike again.”

Anya kom Tri Kru stands with the other Trigidekru Unit Leaders as they all report and await their orders.

Across the war tent, Lexa appraises her Generals from her position in the Commander’s throne. In full armor and fighting gear, her fingers spin a long hunting knife in one hand as her eyes shift from Indra, to Anya, to Tristan. Not long ago, the sight of her young Second in this position would have been profoundly strange for Anya. But Lexa – once slight and small as a warrior – has expanded to fill her new chair. She fills the room now, drawing the eye and attention of any who would approach. Enormous pride rushes through Anya when she looks at her once Second, now Commander.

“Indra,” Lexa speaks first to the General on Anya’s right.

On hearing her name, Indra snaps her gaze up to the Commander’s. “Yes, Heda.”

“Tell me of your traitor who arranged this ambush.”

Indra bristles at this. She is clearly still angry that it was Anya who the Commander sent to meet with the Sky people, despite the fact that Lincoln is under Indra’s command. “He is nothing, Commander. A fool-”

“A fool who is matched to our enemy,” Lexa persists.

“Yes, Commander.”

“And so he is a threat.”

“I’ll take care of it,” Indra says firmly.

For a moment Lexa seems to hesitate. She blinks slowly, then nods. “Do what you must.”

The irony of this situation is not lost on Anya, but she is not such a fool as the voice the hypocrisy. Anya had loved Costia too, in her own way. As the keyron-ai of her Second, and later of her Commander. But matches are a risk in this life, a vulnerability that must often be sacrificed in war. Anya had been wary, at first, to welcome a turncoat into their clan. But Costia had a warm soul and easily won the heart of the Trigidekru. Perhaps that was what killed her, in the end. She was talented with a knife and quick on her feet, but she was too kind, perhaps, to make a truly great warrior. What happened to her was an outrage, and yet… and yet, when put in the same position as the Ice Queen had been, Lexa is able to make the same call. Able to make a colour-widow of the unknown Sky Person who will mourn the traitor, Lincoln. And when Anya looks at Lexa now, she sees a Commander. A strong and fearless leader, who is finally ready to go to war. And she wonders quietly, whether losing Costia wasn’t for the best. Matches, colours, are a distraction. An illusion, nothing more than a trick of the light, that turns warriors to lovers. For herself, Anya is glad she has never yet encountered her own keyron-ai.

“Until this traitor is dealt with,” Lexa continues to address Indra, “you and your gona will remain in
reserve. We cannot risk that sentimentality might affect your other warriors—"

“Heda, my warriors are true!” Indra flares with indignation. “Lincoln is the least of them—”

“Enough.” Lexa’s voice is a whip-crack. “You will hold your people in Tondc until I say otherwise.”

Anya has to bite the inside of her cheek to keep from smiling. Indra clearly does not know the Commander very well at all. The more she complains, the less willing Lexa will be to accommodate her.

“Anya,” Lexa turns her attention to her now, and Anya snaps to attention.

“Yes, Heda.”

“Are your warriors ready to destroy the threat of the Sky People?” Again Lexa spins her knife against the edge of her chair.

“We are,” Anya assures her.

Lexa nods and looks up, past the Generals, to meet the eye of someone at the back of the tent. Anya pivots in place to look behind her. Gustus is standing in his usual position at the mouth of the tent, silent and watchful as ever. “Gustus,” Lexa continues, “Is the contagion ready?”

“It is, Commander.”

“Do it.” Lexa nods simply.

“Yes, Commander. As soon as the exposure takes we will deposit it. The bleeding sickness will be at full strength the following day at first light.”

Lexa nods again. “In that case, Anya, you will lead the assault from the North.” Lexa’s commands are steady. There is no sign of weakness in her heart anymore. No sign of reserve: only strength. “We will have one shot at this, do not fail.”

“I will not,” Anya assures her.

The look of steady trust in Lexa’s eyes is a comfort, until she speaks again. “If you should, Tristan and his Rangers will remain in place to take over.”

Anya bites her tongue from any retort that may have passed her lips in friendlier days. *You hate Tristan! Not two months ago you called him a pig-brained maniac with the agility of a five-footed boar!*

Instead, Anya manages to say, “yes, Commander,” through gritted teeth. At her side, Tristan gives her a smug grin, and it’s all Anya can do not to hit him across the face.

She looks back to Lexa, only to find her Commander’s’ eyes dancing with barely-concealed amusement. Oh, you *joken natrona*! You are *enjoying* this! Again Anya has to bite her tongue.

“That will be all, Generals,” Lexa says. “Good hunting.”

Anya exits the tent to find Tris standing with the other Seconds. The young warrior rushes to Anya’s side.

“Are we going to battle?” Tris asks, excitement causing her to practically bounce on her toes.
Anya surveys her new Second. Tris still has a lot to learn. And this new enemy is unpredictable. They are young and speak innocently of living together in harmony, but they also fire guns with more reckless abandon than even the Mountain Men. Anya has no doubt her warriors will be able to wipe them out with little trouble, but she is still hesitant to take Tris into her first battle against such a volatile foe.

“We are,” Anya answers at last.

Tris’s eyes go wide with excitement. “Am I to march with you?”

Anya pushes aside the worry in her stomach. She remembers this same fear when she first took Lexa with her into battle too. It’s the only way to learn.

“Well, you are a warrior are you not? Where else would you be?” Anya can’t help but smile as she watches her young Second fill with pride at being called a warrior.

And now to work. They have a war to win.

Chapter End Notes

Comments are welcome as always!
Monty turns his back as Jasper follows Finn out of the tent, intent on finding Raven and detonating the bomb.

The whole camp is in chaos. Monty checks himself in the shallow wash-basin in the corner of the tent. Angling his head in the swimming reflection of his own image, Monty peers down at his own face. Looks pretty much the same as always. No blood yet. Maybe he won’t get sick after all.

When Raven left with the bomb, she told him to stay in the tent and guard the weapons. Monty isn’t about to complain. Despite the dropship quarantine, the entire camp has been completely overrun by the bleeding fever. By Monty’s estimation, hiding out in the ammunitions tent is probably the safest place to be anyway. Besides, since Jasper kicked him out of their tent, he doesn’t really have anywhere else to go.

Monty takes up Raven’s vacated seat at the work table. Grimacing, he carefully clears away the shell casings and live gunpowder. Weapons aren’t his thing. Instead, he makes a space for the salvage he pulled from the Exodus crash site. He’s found the data log box, now he just needs to crack it open and make it tell him all its secrets. With any luck it might be able to give them some answers as to why it crashed. And maybe why they haven’t heard from the Ark since. Progress is slow and painstaking, but it’s the kind of work Monty can dig into, and at this point he welcomes any distraction he can get his hands on.

He’s only been at it for a couple of minutes when Miller bursts into the tent like a wrecking ball. Monty jerks up in surprise, accidentally knocking a stray pair of pliers off the workbench. The tool falls to the ground with a heavy thud as Monty twists around to look up at the tent entrance. Miller is wild-eyed and breathless. He looks pretty awful. His eyes are dark, probably bloodshot, and a sheen of sweat is glistening on his forehead.

Monty waits for him to say something. What does he need? Bullets for his gun? Searching for Bellamy? or Raven? But despite his apparent rush into the tent, Miller just stands there, leaning on a crate of broken rifles for support. He doesn’t seem to need anything. As Monty watches, Miller’s eyebrows crease into a familiar frown. Miller seems to spend a lot of his time frowning.

Silence extends between them longer than really makes sense. Finally Monty asks, “What’s up Nathan?”

“What? Oh. Nothing.” He looks like he regrets being there at all, though he makes no move to leave.


“Better, yeah. I just woke up. Much better. And you, how are you?”

“I’m fine,” Monty says. “I haven’t gotten sick.”
Miller looks genuinely relieved to hear this. He sags a little heavier against the crate of
decommissioned rifles.

Monty wishes he knew Miller better. He seems like a cool guy, if a little… aloof. Monty’s always
seeing him around, but he never seems to want to talk.

Monty swings his arms idly at his sides. Patiently, he waits for Miller to say something. Anything.
After what feels like minutes, Miller seems to realize that it’s his cue. He opens his mouth to speak at
the exact same moment that Harper ducks into the tent. She’s dressed for watch, her hair tied back in
a complicated pattern of braids and one of the better rifles slung across her back.

“Monty!” She strides over to him, oblivious to Miller. “Where’s Jasper? Is it true he’s the one who’s
going to set off the bomb?”

As soon as Harper enters, Miller pushes past her in the opposite direction. He beats a hasty retreat
from the tent, mumbling something about needing to be somewhere else. Monty still has no idea
what Miller was doing there in the first place.

Trying to dispel his confusion, Monty shifts his attention to Harper. “Yup, Jasper’s gone off to kill
some more Grounders, so now you can think he’s even cooler.” It comes out more bitter than he
intended, but not more bitter than he feels.

“I don’t think he’s cool because he’s killed Grounders.” Harper glares at him, crossing her arms
tightly. She bears down on Monty, her voice strong and matter-of-fact. “I think he’s cool because
he’s willing to put his life on the line to protect us all. Look around, Monty! We’re a mess. The
Grounders are coming, now, and we can’t defend ourselves. By morning, we could all be dead. If
Jasper’s out there right now, risking everything to try and save us all, then I don’t think that’s cool. I
think that’s amazing.”

Harper unslings the rifle from her back and drops it off with the other weapons. “If you see Connor,
tell him it’s his turn to take watch,” she snaps, exiting the tent without looking back.

A wave of shame and regret washes over Monty. What am I doing, sitting here? Hiding away in his
tent, feeling petty, while his best friend is out there trying to save all of their lives.

Monty’s eyes fall on the rifle Harper dropped off. She’s right, they could all die today, either from
the virus or from the Grounder attack. But he knows one thing: if he’s going to die today, he’s going
to do it side by side with his best friend.

Bellamy, Earth-date: October 7th 2149

They can’t win.

He arranges the pieces on the map in front of him and runs the numbers. Then he tries a new tactic
and runs them again. Then again. Each time, he lands back at the same, gutting conclusion. They’re
all going to die. And he can’t stop it. Blowing the bridge bought them time, but it won’t be much.
They don’t have enough people, enough food, enough medicine, enough weapons, enough training.
They don’t have enough anything, but all they have is all they have. So he runs it again, because
either way they’re going to go down fighting.

And he must be missing something. There must be a way; an option he isn’t seeing. There has to be a way out that won’t get them all killed. He can’t let them die here. He won’t. They’re counting on him to keep them alive.

“Hey.” Clarke’s warm palm presses against his shoulder blade in greeting. He’d barely even seen the colours on the map shift as she’d approached. She moves to stand beside him, shoulder to shoulder, inspecting the map with him.

He gives her a tight nod. “Hey.” As he looks up he sees a sliver of light coming through from outside. The sun must have already risen. Clarke doesn’t look like she’s slept either.

“How’s Sterling?” Bellamy asks softly.

“Good,” Clarke says. “But Connor died in the night.”

*Fifteen dead.*

“I think the fever’s finally passed now though. If Lincoln’s right, it shouldn’t be a risk anymore. Apparently it’s an acquired immunity.”

Bellamy frowns at her.

“If Lincoln’s right. Big if.” Even as he says it, Bellamy’s conviction waivers. He feels like he should hate Lincoln on principle, but instead he just feels a cold, nauseating guilt when he thinks about him.

“We have no reason to think he’s lying,” Clarke says, her voice a little unsure.

“I can think of a couple of reasons.”

“Maybe,” she allows, “but I don’t think he’s trying to hurt us. If he wanted to, he could have killed us all by now. Besides, Octavia’s his–”

“I know.”

“Bellamy–”

“I get it. I just… I need a bit of time.”

“Yeah,” Clarke mutters.

Clarke reaches out and picks up one of the carved wooden figures on the map. It’s as close to a representation of a grounder that Bellamy could manage. Her lithe fingers trace over the crude edges of the figure.

Bellamy looks over at Clarke and his heart clenches at the sight of her. She’s curled in on herself, hunched over. She looks terrible. He wonders when she last slept. And being passed out with some kind of brutal blood fever really doesn’t count as sleeping.

Clarke lets out a sigh, dropping the figure back in place and scraping one hand over her face in an expression of frustration and exhaustion that Bellamy has come to recognize from her. He fights a suddenly overpowering desire to touch her. A hand on her shoulder or her arm or her back. He
wants to give her warmth or strength or compassion. But he thinks she would probably shy away from any touch he tried to offer her. She would take it, not as a sign of comfort, but as a presumption of weakness. She doesn’t need his comfort. Maybe he needs hers.

He curls his hands into fists at his side.

“We’ll figure something out,” Bellamy says at length, echoing her words back to her. He’s been trying to convince himself of it for weeks.

“You don’t know that,” Clarke snaps, anger sparking behind her eyes.

Bellamy gives her a half-nod and looks away. He tries not to take the rebuke personally, but he can’t help the way his muscles clench like he’s been slapped. When did her good opinion become so important to him?

“Sorry,” Clarke says after a moment. She rubs the heel of her hand across her forehead. Another gesture he recognizes.

“When did you last sleep?” he asks her quietly.

She levels him with another look along the lines of: don’t ask stupid questions. “I have no idea. What day is it?”

Bellamy lets out a reluctant chuckle. “Come on, Princess, you need some sleep.”

“The sun’s coming up, I need to–”

“You need to sleep,” Bellamy tells her firmly. “You’ll be no good to anyone if you’re too tired to fight the Grounders when they come.”

Without thinking, he reaches out his hand and places it gently on the small of her back, guiding her away from the map. She allows herself to be led down the hatch, which alone is a sign that she’s not herself. They walk in silence out of the dropship and across the camp to her tent.

He ushers her inside. The tent is just as cold as the rest of camp, but there are blankets salvaged from the bunker and a pelt Octavia stitched from the fur of the jaguar covering the hard-packed earth. Bellamy watches as Clarke steps inside. She looks dead on her feet, but he wonders whether she’ll actually go to sleep if he leaves her here.

Unbidden, he feels a staggering desire to stay with her. To take his own advice. To wrap her up and keep her safe. To warm her hands and smooth the stress out of her shoulders. His mind wanders as he thinks of having Clarke in his arms. Of running his hands up and down her body...

“Umm, I don’t need an audience.” Clarke’s awkwardly looking down at the blankets on the other side of the tent, avoiding his gaze.

Bellamy blushes, caught in his thoughts. “Right, uh, yeah. Of course. Sleep well, Clarke.”

He retreats hastily from her tent and marches back to the dropship, his cheeks still burning.

Well. That is fucking inconvenient. He tries hard to push all sexual thought of Clarke out of his head. His feelings towards Clarke have become increasingly overwhelming. And this. This is the last thing he needs right now. He has a war to fight. He needs to get past this, or something.
Chapter End Notes

Alternative title for this chapter: Awkward losers in love who don't know how to use their words.
October 9th 2149: Time to Move On

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Raven, Earth-date: October 9th 2149

The thing about meeting your colour-match in infancy is you end up taking it all for granted.

And not just seeing in colour; you take the person for granted too.

Raven knows that her and Finn’s relationship hasn’t always been perfect, but he’s her match for a reason. Without Finn in her life she would probably be dead right now. Or she would be worse than dead, deep in a moonshine coma, just like her mother. And for that she will always value Finn above anybody else. She will always love him. But that doesn’t mean she has to hang around as his girlfriend while he takes her for granted and falls for someone else. She won’t stand for that.

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Watching Finn run off into the forest on some hunting trip with Clarke the first chance he gets is a kick to the gut. And when they don’t return in the evening, her worst fears are confirmed. How was it so easy for him to move on?

Raven has to do something. Has to prove to herself that she can still make her own choices. She finds herself in Bellamy’s tent.

“They don’t waste time, I’ll give them that,” she comments dryly to him. “What’s it been, a day and a half? What happened to your whole ‘not allowed out of camp after dark’ rule? Huh?”

“They’re not far.” Exhaustion is etched all over Bellamy’s face. He doesn’t seem to realize what he’s just said.

“I know that,” Raven says slowly, narrowing her eyes at him from across the tent. “How do you?”

Bellamy tenses. A muscle twitches in his jaw. He meets her eye, but doesn’t say anything.

And she understands. Of course. Of course it would be Clarke.

Raven wonders if Clarke is matched to him in return. Well, if so she clearly doesn’t value the bond much. God, do soulmates mean nothing to people anymore?

Raven is the one to break the silence. “I won’t say anything.”

“You’re mistaking me for someone who cares.” Bellamy’s voice is hard, but she catches something like regret in his expression. “Time to move on.”

Raven quirks an eyebrow at him. He meets her gaze head on, intent clear in his eyes. Well, she’s hardly going to turn down an opening like that. She crosses the space between them in quick strides.
If Clarke and Finn don’t give a shit about who they’re matched to, why should they?

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After, as Raven is grabbing her jacket to leave Bellamy’s tent, she notices the remaining red drain away to grey. Not instantly, but quickly. Quicker than the pace of someone walking. How could they travel that fast out of range? Fear burns hot and fast in Raven’s stomach.

Across the tent, Bellamy sits up sharply. Their eyes meet and it's obvious he's seen the same thing. Concern is clear as day on his ashen face, and for a moment Raven wonders how she never noticed his match before.

Because the truth is that neither of them can fuck their way out of their matches. And, more importantly, Raven doesn’t want to. Hey, sex is fun and all, but Finn will never stop being her priority, whether they're sleeping together or not. Hell, that’s the whole point of having a match in the first place. At the end of the day, she'll never give up on him when he's on trouble.

And right now, he’s in trouble.

Chapter End Notes

Don't judge these kids too harshly - they just have a lot of feelings they don't know how to deal with, but they're getting there!

A short one today, but there are some longer chapters coming up as we move towards the Season 1 finale.
October 10th 2149: Rage Against the Dying of the Light

Nathan, Earth-date: October 10th 2149

Monty, Clarke and Finn are gone. Probably dead.

Miller stands guard on the wall and watches as Bellamy and Raven yell about whether or not to go after them. Neither of them are taking this very well.

Miller knows exactly how they feel.

Bellamy, Earth-date: October 10th 2149

Bellamy’s head aches with the strain of trying to see through the grey.

Their time is running out. They have to get these defenses finished. And the accusatory look Raven is giving him as she plants landmines is not helping.

“Stop looking at me like that,” Bellamy snaps at her, more forcefully than he’d intended.

Raven says nothing, just glowers at him from her position a few feet from the camp entrance. Her knees dig into the soft dirt as she covers a fresh landmine and marks it with an inconspicuous round pebble. She stands up, the denim of her jeans tracked with wet earth and her eyes still flashing in reproach.

“You think I don’t care?” Bellamy lowers his voice as he stalks towards her. “Of course I care. I hate this. But look around—” he gestures towards the camp, where his people are out in full force, preparing for the upcoming battle. “You can see as plain as me, they are gone. But we have to think about the people who are still here. You heard what Miles said. Grounders.”

Raven looks away, her eyes casting up to the swooping foliage over their heads. She stabs her hands into the pockets of her jacket.

“I have to do what I can to protect my people,” Bellamy presses, “Clarke would understand. She would make the same call.”

“Well then you’d both be wrong,” Raven snaps. She looks back at him, her gaze grey and piercing. “You are both as stupid as each other. Do you even know how to be matched with someone? You can’t just give them up for dead because they’re out of range. You can’t ever give up on them. You want to protect your people? Fine. Maybe start by showing them them you give a damn.”
Raven, Earth-date: October 10th 2149

Pain, hot and molten, radiates down her side. It's excruciating, sucking the breath from her lungs, and Raven knows immediately that she’s in serious trouble. FUCKING MURPHY.

Clarke stops her from getting up, forcing her back down with a heavy hand on her good shoulder. Her face is very close, blonde hair forming a halo of gold around her pale features.

“Hey, listen to me. That bullet is still inside you,” she speaks in slow, calm sentences. Abby used to do the same thing, and Raven wonders if it’s a doctor-thing or a Griffin-thing. “If by some miracle there’s no internal bleeding, it might hold until we get somewhere safe. But you are not walking there. Is that clear?” Raven nods. Clarke’s assuring presence is a welcome comfort. It’s a relief to have Finn back by her side in screaming colour, but it’s also really great to have Clarke back too.

Bellamy and Finn are getting into some kind of pissing match about the plan. Ugh. Men . Could they be any more predictable?

“We’re wasting time,” Finn is clearly crawling out of his skin. Raven can recognize his agitation in the rapid tapping of his fingers against his thigh, in the way his eyes dart around, unable to settle on anything or anyone for more than a moment, in the sharp line of his shoulders. “If he wants to stay, he can stay.”

“No he can’t,” Clarke cuts in as Finn storms out. She rises from her position at Raven’s side and moves to intervene.

Raven watches as Clarke pleads with Bellamy to stay with them. That they can’t do this without him. Bellamy’s match is definitely reciprocated, it’s so obvious that Raven has to roll her eyes. Honestly, she’s surrounded by idiots .

Raven leans back down as she watches Clarke exit, leaving her and Bellamy alone in the dropship.

“Never give up, huh?” Bellamy looks down at her, a small half-smile twitching at the corner of his lips. He’s clearly made up his mind.

“Never give up,” Raven echoes, nodding at him.

Clarke, Earth-date: October 10th 2149

Clarke meets Bellamy’s eye as he looks up at her. “Looking to you, Princess.”

They’ve come a long way to build this home together. Now it’s time to fight for it.
October 11th 2149: Battle is the Fucking Worst

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anya, Earth-date: October 11th 2149

This is always her favourite part.

The anticipation, the still serenity, right before the world descends into chaos… it is like a blank slate. Like the strategy games she used to play with Lexa, where any tactic, any plan of attack, could still be played out. There is a world of possibility in the moments before a battle.

Anya and Tristan stalk silently through the trees, an army of warriors at their back. They bring no fanfare with them this time. No horses, no horns, no waving banners. These Sky People have proved themselves to be much better at staying alive than Anya had anticipated. It has called for a change in tactics: she will not lose anyone else to this enemy.

With a sharp wave of her hand, Anya sends a handful of her scouts to draw out the Sky People’s fire. After a moment she hears the first crack of gunfire pierce the still night air.

And so they begin.

Bellamy, Earth-date: October 11th, 2149

Battle is the fucking worst.

Hundreds of Grounders turned up to storm their defenses, and Bellamy’s gunners were running out of ammo before the fighting had even begun. Raven - the lynchpin in their whole ‘rewire the rockets’ plan - is fading fast, and now his little sister had been shot with a goddamn arrow.

Bellamy hauls Octavia to relative safety, a patch of ground sunken low behind a large boulder and far enough from the fray to provide minimal shelter from the chaos of battle. But they can’t stay here long. They’ll need to act fast if they are going to get back behind the wall and into the dropship before the rockets are ready to launch.

As Bellamy’s busy finding the safest path back to camp, Octavia is looking around frantically, her gaze skirting the battle around them.

“Bellamy,” she says, drawing his attention. “Bell, you need to leave me. There’s no way you can make it back to the camp-”

“That is not going to happen,” he snaps, refusing to even consider it.

“It’s okay,” Octavia insists, “Lincoln-” As though on cue, Lincoln is suddenly by their side,
dropping down into cover behind their boulder, his eyes fixed on Octavia. Bellamy has just enough time to glimpse the intense relief on both their faces, before they wrap their arms around one another. Lincoln’s fingers bury tightly into Octavia’s jacket, gripping the fabric like a lifeline.

And finally, all of Bellamy’s denials slip from his grasp. Octavia and Lincoln are matched. And that means something. He looks up at the green of the tree above him. Clarke is in the dropship several meters to his left. He’s not really sure what it means to have a soulmate, but he knows in his bones that with every heartbeat he has left, he will defend her every breath. It was what Raven had been trying to tell him when they went missing, and it was a realization that had finally crashed upon him while Murphy had him strung up by the neck taunting him that Clarke was dead. He had known in that moment that he would never give up on her. And he knows at this moment that it is the same for Lincoln and Octavia.

In the end, letting Lincoln take Octavia to safety is an easy decision to make. His throat tightens as he says his farewell to his baby sister and he watches as her eyes cloud with tears.

“May we meet again.”

“May we meet again.”

He exchanges a look with Lincoln and he knows even as he instructs “Keep her safe,” that he will.

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**Nathan, Earth-date: October 11th 2149**

Maybe it’s for the best that he’s forced to experience all of this in black and white. This is a nightmare. There are so many Grounders. And they’re tearing through the walls of the camp like it’s made of tissue paper.

Earlier that day, Miller had watched from the top of that same wall as Clarke and Finn returned. He had known long before they told the rest of the assembled camp that Monty was not with them.

A wave of fear the likes of which he had never known before washed over him as he thought about Monty, out there, somewhere, on his own. It knocked the breath out of him for a moment. He had been so focused on telling himself that it didn’t matter, that he barely even knew the guy, he was completely unprepared for the discovery that he might, in fact, care. He might care a lot.

As Bellamy and Clarke had debated standing to face the approaching Grounder army, or making a run for it, Miller had wanted to scream. What about Monty?

But he didn’t scream. He didn’t say anything at all. And when Clarke said pack what you can carry, he’d led the way out of their camp.

He remembers something his dad once told him. “Sometimes the noblest thing of all is to follow.” At the time, Nathan had called him a coward. As far as he’d been concerned, his dad was an embarrassment. Nothing better than a grunt soldier, blindly following Jaha and Kane’s every whim. Nathan had seen so much suffering on the Ark, and he had seen his father stand by and let it all happen. “I believe in them,” his dad had said. “I believe in the greater good they want to achieve. They are trying to keep us all alive.” Miller’s disgust at these Ark politics and the role his father
played in them was one of the reasons he had helped create the black market on the Ark in the first place.

And now here he is, fighting tooth and nail to protect the hundred. Putting the needs of the many above his own.

As the Grounders swarm the camp, he’s glad that it’s in black and white. He’s glad that Monty is nowhere near this hellhole. Miller clings to the hope that wherever Monty is, there is still a chance that he’s okay. He chooses to believe that Monty is still alive, because he needs to. Because believing that Monty’s alive is keeping Miller on his feet.

For his part, Miller has taken some bad hits during the battle. Blood is pouring thick and fast down his right arm from a stab wound on his shoulder, and he has a deep gash on his left side from a Grounder’s blade. He can feel blood soaking his jacket, and it’s all he can do to stay on his feet. His vision is starting to swim. Miller is forced to face the very real possibility that he might die here, among his friends, fighting for their home.

At least Monty’s far from here. And at least he won’t die in this massacre. That’s a comfort.

The gate is down. Time’s up. They need to fall back to the dropship, initiate the next phase of the plan.

“Clarke,” Miller’s voice is hoarse from shouting. “Clarke! They’re taking down the gate!”

There’s no time left. He has to make the call. “I am closing that door.”

“Wait!” Clarke calls back to him. “We still have people out there. Bellamy’s not back yet.”

He already had a strong suspicion that Bellamy and Clarke were matched, and the look on Clarke’s face now confirms it. Without arguing, he follows her back to the mouth of the dropship, trying to provide as much cover as he can. But they’re out of time and out of bullets and Bellamy is too far away. He’s never going to make it.

“Clarke, you can’t save everybody. Let’s go.” Even as he says it, he wonders if he’d be able to do the same if it was Monty. If he’d be strong enough to make that call.

He watches Clarke close the dropship door, tears pooling in her eyes. She did it because she had to. For the greater good.

Turns out his father was right after all. He just needed to find someone worth following.

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**Abby, Earth-date: October 11th 2149**

She hasn’t voluntarily sat this close to Marcus in a long time, but it’s no accident that they are here together now. Packed into a bunker, shoulder to shoulder, about to hurtle themselves down to the surface of the Earth and risking almost certain death on the way.

Colour had flooded back into her life since she had awoken to find Kane by her side and the Ark
dying. Seeing the world in colour again felt like waking from a long dream. But it’s not until she sees him move to get up and leave, that she’s hit with the weight of how much she really wanted - needed - him there next to her.

“What are you doing?”

“Someone has to stay behind, Abby,” Kane’s voice is pitched low and steeped in regret.

“There has to be another way.” Every inch of Abby absolutely refuses to even entertain the idea. And infuriatingly, the world grows brighter and bolder in colour as Sinclair spells out their dire situation.

Abby is pulled up short by a look in Kane’s warm brown eyes that she has not seen in a long time.

“Salvation comes at a price.”

As he stands and squeezes her hand, everything they’ve never said rises up like a swell, catches in her throat, and falls silent and heavy on her tongue. As he moves away, the bunker continues to pulse in such vivid colour that she has to close her eyes against the force of it. Tears are burning on the back of her eyelids when the ship lurches hard, shuddering around them.

They are away. And Marcus is still here.

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Their splintered section of the Ark lands with a force so violent that Abby’s teeth slam together and her bones rattle in their sockets. But they land. And as the shock wears off, the reality begins to sink in. Earth. They made it. They survived.

She and Kane are the first on their feet. Her hands shake as she opens the escape hatch in the ceiling, hardly willing to believe they made it. What would they find outside? Is the Earth a wasteland? Is it a nuclear winter? Clarke had said it was survivable, but what does that mean? Would it look like the old-Earth films they had on the Ark?

It’s Marcus who hoists her up through the escape hatch, to stand on the hull of the Ark. The sight that greets her is beyond any expectation. It’s more colour than she’s seen in her life: blinding blues and dazzling greens, and a world so teeming with life that tears spring to Abby’s eyes. And she’s grateful, so grateful, that it’s Marcus who pulls himself up to join her. It’s Marcus who takes her hand, and that they’re together to share colour as it was always meant to be seen.

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**Clarke, Earth-date: October 11th 2149**

The last thing Clarke remembers is the red gas that fills the dropship camp. The ash was white, the skeletons were black, the sky was grey, but the gas. The gas was red. She remembers it clearly. This
means, it *must* mean, that Bellamy did not die in the fire.

Clarke repeats this to herself as she sits in the sterile white room, looking across at Monty’s grey face. Wherever she is now, Bellamy isn’t. But the gas was red. So he’s alive – he has to be.

And she’ll find him.

Chapter End Notes

So we're at about the halfway point with the season 1 finale! Looking forward to hearing your thoughts as we go into Season 2...
Maya, Earth-date: October 12th 2149

Colour-matches in the Mountain are rare. Perfect matches are almost unheard of.

When Maya was younger, her mom used to tell her that she was blessed. “The child of a perfect match will live a long, happy life,” her mother would tell her.

And Maya believed her. Her parents were matched. She was the only child in the whole mountain to have perfect_matched parents. For years, Maya thought this made her lucky. She was wrong.

All the love in the world wasn’t enough to save her mother from radiation.

Maya spent years hating her own mother. Hating her for allowing herself to die. Hating her for not taking the treatment and for leaving them behind. It had been so hard for Maya to understand the depth of what her father had lost. The world her father sees now is the same world Maya has always lived in – what’s so wrong with it? Why could her dad barely look her in the eye? Why could he barely stand to enter the dining room? What was so wrong with monochrome?

Maya hadn’t understood. She hadn’t understood why her mother would refuse the treatment, hadn’t understood what her father had gained, and what he had lost.

She understands now, though.

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Maya first notices in the dining room as she’s having her supper. She’s absentmindedly playing with her food while staring at a large painting of some people all gathered on a hill looking out at the water. When slowly something happens to it. She gets up and walks towards it. She had always assumed that the shapes in this painting were solid; that the ground was all one colour. But now, unmistakably, she could make out that it was actually made up of hundreds, thousands even, little dots of different colours. It was definitely there, it was light, but it was colour.

Maya’s pulse races. Who had just entered the Mountain? She goes down to the quarantine level and signs up for the first work shift she can.

Her supervisor tells her that they have rescued some kids who had come down from space. She reads each of their files with excitement, already in love with them all. It has to be one of them. One of these 48. Her soulmate has arrived.

At least she hopes it’s one of these 48. Because the alternative…

It had only happened once that she knew of, but it had been a friend of hers. Her friend had woken up one morning seeing dim colour for the first time and had gone into a frenzy to figure out who the
The colour was drawing him to. He walked up to every person living in the Mountain, but nothing helped. Then he wandered the halls following the colour until he found himself in the medical bay. When he realized that his colour match was inside the restricted area he raged at the guards to let him in. He managed to knock one of them out and get inside the room, but there were four guards on him before he could search any of the cages. He screamed horribly as they took him away and put him in lock up. As he tells the story, he speaks of the vivid green of the light and a voice in a cage calling back to him.

By the time he is released from lockup the colour is gone.

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She has already been into most of the rooms when she enters his. She had been in awe of the hint of colour she had seen up in the dining room, but that’s nothing compared to this.

Patient 36 of 48 – identified by Monty Green as Jasper Jordan – is tall and thin, with a mop of dark hair and sharp, angular features. He’s still unconscious, his narrow chest rising and falling with slow, deep breaths. The gas will take a couple more hours to wear off. Maya considers just staying here until he wakes up.

Colour is nothing like she expected. The quarantine rooms are still white, the corridors still grey – though both are brighter, somehow, than they’d been before. But it’s people who really look so different in this new world. Maya wants to see Jasper’s eyes, wants to know what colour they are. She wonders what she’ll be able to read in his features. Wonders what his smile will look like. Wonders whether he’ll smile at her.

She sees her supervisor walk past and she knows she has to move on.

She finishes replacing his IV. The colour fades again as she leaves quarantine.

Jasper, Earth-date: October 12th 2149

The room is so bright. And white. Blindingly white. What kind of new torture is this? Jasper feels himself slowly slip into consciousness. He’s never seen anything so white; it’s giving him a headache. Well at least it isn’t a spear to the chest. Or a gun in his face. Or an army of Grounders coming to kill him. If a headache-inducing white wall is the worst these new people can throw at him, he can handle that.

Every time he closes his eyes, he sees the burnt out skeletons of the Grounders around the dropship. Feels the wires spark between his fingers as he connects the circuit. Hears the screams and the heat
of the explosion. So he doesn’t sleep. Instead, he spends his time looking at this really bright, white wall.

The door opens and in walks someone in a hazmat suit. But it’s different. There is something different about it. Colour? Colour. ...COLOUR! Jasper jerks upright. Maybe it’s the shock, maybe it’s the after-effects of the drug they used to knock them all unconscious, but whatever the reason he just sits there with his mouth hanging open, staring. They are wearing a mask and it’s hard to make out their face, but Jasper knows, knows with every fiber of his being that they are it. His match. He wants to say something, he wants to say a million things, but his brain is really not helping him out at all right now. All too quickly the person is done checking the medical equipment by his bed and is turning to leave.

“THANK YOU.”

He’s much too loud, and it doesn’t entirely make sense. But it was really the best he could do under the circumstances.

The person turns to acknowledge him at the door. It’s hard to tell through the mask, but he swears he sees a smile.

Jasper lies back on the bed and smiles to himself. Things were finally looking up.

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Bellamy, Earth date: October 12th 2149

Who the hell does this Kane guy think he is? Everything’s going to be okay. And why’s that? Because the ‘adults’ are here now. God, the superiority of the Council knows no bounds. If the situation wasn’t so dire, if he wasn’t covered in the blood of so many of his friends and enemies, Bellamy might have laughed. The trite shortsightedness of the privileged. It’s almost funny. But it’s not. Because something is wrong.

Bellamy can’t see any colour. They are still a ways from the dropship, he tries to assure himself. It’s probably nothing. He’s probably just too far away. But his radius has been pretty strong lately, and Clarke should be in rage. She should be well into range by now. Panic swells like a storm in his blood.

“We need to get back to the dropship,” he snaps, completely ignoring whatever Kane had been saying.

It takes a long time - too long - to finally reach the edge of camp. He doesn’t look at the felled remnants of the wall that they spent weeks building. He tries not to look at the scorched earth, where the fire incinerated the best home Bellamy has ever known. Most of all, he tries not to look at the bodies that litter the battlefield. His fallen soldiers. Dead children.

All he sees is grey. Everything, all of it, is grey.
“It’s too quiet,” he says. What he means is it’s too grey. Much too much.

“Wait,” Kane tells him, “we’ll take it from here.”

This is unbelievable.

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Bellamy paces in front of the guards that stand between him and the dropship. At his side, Finn fidgets anxiously.

“They must be around here somewhere,” He says in an undertone. “At least I know Raven can’t be far. Maybe they had to hide somewhere.”

The panic is blinding. Could she be dead? Is this what it would look like if she were dead? He tries to think when he last saw colour. When he was tracking that Grounder that had Finn captive… he definitely thinks the leaves had some green on them then... It was a slow fade out. He assumed he was just moving away from her...

Over at the dropship, Bellamy hears someone shout for a stretcher. Okay, enough of this child’s table bullshit. He exchanges a look with Finn and knows he’s onboard.

The tunnels it is.

The camp is barren. Clarke is gone. They’re all gone. He’d known they would be, but to be confronted with the empty camp - save for Raven, clinging to life and Finn’s hand - and… Murphy?!

At the sight of Murphy emerging from the dropship, something in Bellamy just snaps. The look of their camp, their home, in black and white like this feels alien to him. It’s a completely different place.

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“The Grounders took them, and you know it.”

Yeah, he did know it. Because they were gone, but not dead. He had to believe they were still alive. Had to believe that he could still save his people. And Clarke… Clarke is clearly too stubborn to die, Bellamy thinks with a wry smile.

Chapter End Notes

Here we go, Season Two!!!
Octavia, Earth-date: October 13th 2149

Octavia opens her eyes with a snap.

Something is wrong.

Her head feels clearer than it has since before the battle for the Dropship. The swooping branches of the trees overhead are sharp in her vision; she can hear the call of blackbirds overhead; she can feel the rough, jagged rocks under her legs. The poison that had been clawing its way through her blood is gone. She’s healing.

But Lincoln is not here. Judging from the anaemic green of the ferns beside her, Octavia judges that he must be at least two miles away. If not more. As she watches, the colour continues to drip out of her vision. Octavia blinks, swallowing back the bile that rises in her throat. The Grounder who had come to her aid is still there, washing bandages in the stream. He’s larger than Lincoln, with thick dreadlocks and broad, hunching shoulders.

He notices her watching him. “You’re feeling better.” It’s not a question.

“Who are you? Where’s Lincoln?” Octavia asks immediately, casting her gaze around her grey-drenched surroundings.

“I’m Nyko,” he tells her, ignoring the question. “Lincoln is my friend. He told me about you. It’s why I helped you.”

Octavia drags herself to her feet, staggering under her own weight. A stabbing pain shoots from the wound in Octavia’s thigh all the way through her leg, from her ankle to her hip, but she lets out only the smallest grunt of pain. It’s okay. It’s good. The pain grounds her, focuses her mind.

“You can stand,” Nyko comments. “Good. Because now you should run.” His voice is soft and intent and there’s no small amount of pity in his eyes. His kindness drives through Octavia like a spear to the chest.

He feels sorry for her. And there’s only one reason why he would.

“Where is Lincoln?” Octavia repeats, harder this time.

“He’s answering for what he’s done.” Nyko rises and approaches her, his face sickly grey behind black tattoos. “Because he helped you, our clan is vulnerable. If the Reapers come we can’t even fight them off.”

“Wait.” Octavia holds Nyko in place with a hand on his chest, preventing him from pushing past her. “Are you saying that they caught him?”

Nyko doesn’t answer. He doesn’t need to. Octavia already knew anyway. Knew there was only one reason why he would have left her alone. One reason why it had been Nyko and not Lincoln who
gave her the antidote. But still, she can’t take the pressure in her chest and the twisting terror in her gut.

“They’ll kill him,” Octavia says, partly to herself and partly to Nyko. “We have to do something…” Her voice shakes with dawning horror. She can’t – she won’t – lose him. This is not how their story ends.

Seemingly unmoved by this, Nyko pushes past Octavia, crouching back down to reassemble his pack.

“You said you were his friend, we have to do something!” Octavia’s voice rises with her mounting anxiety.

Nyko glares at her. “I did do something. I saved your life. I saved his match, because he begged me to. Now run. It’s what Lincoln would want.”

Fury spikes in Octavia’s blood. “Bullshit. If you know we’re matched, then you know I will never leave him behind.”

Nyko looks up at this, his expression hard. “There’s nothing to be done, Sky Girl. It’s out of our hands.”

“Like hell it is,” Octavia mutters.

As Nyko turns back to his pack, Octavia kneels to the ground and silently closes her palm around a rock. The surface is smooth and cool under her hand as a plan begins to take shape. It’s reckless, unlikely to work, and very likely to get her killed. But she is not afraid.

Her fingers tighten around the stone in her grasp and she swings, hard, at Nyko’s temple. The blow connects with a satisfying thud. Nyko falls back, stunned, and looks up at her in shock. She swings again, before he can regain his equilibrium. She aims carefully and puts all her strength behind it, just the way Lincoln taught her, to knock him unconscious. As the second hit lands, Nyko collapses face down on the rocky earth.

“Thank you for saving my life,” Octavia says, breathing hard through the pain in her leg.

Her head swims violently and she sways on her feet. When did she last eat? She has no idea. The pain in her leg peaks in intensity as Octavia bends down and heaves Nyko to his feet, dragging his weight across her shoulders and setting off in the direction she had seen Lincoln go.

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**Jasper, Earth date: October 13th 2149**

This is more like it. Clean clothes, central heating, good food, colour, and - Jasper’s personal favourite - not feeling like at any moment he is going to get speared in the chest. This is the life that had always been promised to them on those old recordings they had on the Ark. This is what life on Earth was supposed to be. This is what life was supposed to be.

And on top of everything else, Jasper knows his soulmate is somewhere in this room. Now all he has to do is find them. How, though? In the stories, people always say they *just knew*. But that’s not really any help to him right now, because there are a lot of people in this Mountain and Jasper
doesn’t feel like he *just knew* anything. He considers walking up to everyone in the room to check if the colour gets brighter around any of them. Or he could always just ask them all, “Hey, can you see colour now that I’m near you?”… not the perfect opener. He would have to work on that. First up dessert, then find soulmate.

Clarke is tense as she takes a seat beside Jasper and Monty. She talks about the Mountain with the same intensity she used to have when they were going to war with the Grounders. How can she not see that they had been saved? The nightmare is finally over. This is the happily-ever-after part of the story. It has to be. How could she not see that? How could she be talking about a way out?

“Way out? Look around you, Clarke. There’s no one hunting us here. First time in our lives we’re not hungry, why would we want to leave?”

“Because we have friends out there who need our help.”

Ah, right. Of course. Guilt washes over him; he should have realized it sooner. Clarke’s match isn’t here. Jasper had never heard either of them confirm it, but he was like 90 percent sure her match was Bellamy. Harper had once bet him that it was Finn, but smart money around the camp was on Bellamy. Either way, neither of them are here now.

Monty comes to his rescue. “They’re looking for survivors,” he tells Clarke, “and they’re way better equipped to find them than we are.”

Clarke’s unmoved. “This place is too good to be true.”

Jasper blinks, thinking of the smorgasbord of colour in front of him, all in dull grey to Clarke.

“You’re bumming me out. I’m going to get more cake.”

Tragically, there’s no more cake left on the side table. But as Jasper stands there, dejected, a piece slides into his view.

“Take mine,” an unfamiliar voice says.

“Thanks,” he replies, turning to greet the cake-giver. His eyes land on her, and… holy crap, she is beautiful! *God, I hope it’s her*, he thinks. *Please, let me be that lucky, let it be her.* Jasper extends his hand to introduce himself.

“Jasper.”

“Maya.”

He is so shocked by the coldness of her hand as it touches his that he speaks before he even fully processes the thought. “Cold hands.”

*Great. Really great going there, buddy,* he thinks to himself. *You meet your stunning potential soulmate and the first thing you say to her is that her hands are cold. Real smooth.* His inner-monologue sounds disturbingly like Monty.

Fortunately, Maya doesn’t seem bothered by his comment and laughs it off. He sits down to the cake. A safer topic. And oh man, it is better than anything he’s ever eaten before. He looks up at her smiling face. Honestly he can’t decide what’s more amazing: the taste of this chocolate, or the vivid colour in her cheeks. He’s giving the edge to her.

He wants to say something. He wants to know if the world looks as good to her as it does to him.
His eyes are drawn to the paintings hanging all over the walls. He doesn’t know what these would look like in black and white, but in colour they are breathtaking.

“What’s the deal with all this stuff anyway?” Jasper tries, “I mean these paintings, they’re beautiful. I especially like that one.” He gestures to the largest, most colourful painting, filled with more shades of green and blue than he even knew existed.

Maya twists around to see his painting of choice and grins. Her smile. Holy crap, her smile. “Yeah. I never used to really get that one, but now I think it’s one of my favourites. But that’s nothing, there is this whole room full of paintings on Level 2. I’d love to see it with you sometime.” She gives him a meaningful look and Jasper swears he’s going to lose his mind, he’s so excited. Before he has a chance to organize his thoughts enough to reply, Clarke arrives to apologize to Maya.

He knows that this whole situation is not ideal for Clarke, but it’s Clarke. If anyone can get through this, it’s her.

And then Maya notices her key card is gone. Aw, fuck.

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They catch up to Clarke just as she has her hand on the lever to open the outside door.

“Clarke! No!” Jasper’s heart pounds so hard in his chest that he can barely breathe. “If you pull that lever, these people will die. Even a little radiation could kill them.”

Maya doesn’t hesitate as she grabs a gun and aims it at Clarke.

“Don’t make me shoot you.”

He didn’t need the pulsing colour all around him to tell him that this woman is his perfect match. He knows. He just knows. And he will be damned if he’s going to let anything happen to her now.

But he also is not about to let Clarke get shot. There has to be a way out of this. Enough people have died already. This is supposed to be their happy ending. Without hesitating, he moves in front of Maya’s gun, blocking Clarke from the line of fire.

“Clarke, don’t do this.”

“I don’t believe them.”

“Why would they lie? Clarke, listen to me. We’re safe here. Because of you, we’re safe.”

“Not all of us,” her voice cracks, straining with barely-contained grief.

A horrible idea creeps up on him. Bellamy and Finn. What if it’s not just the distance? Does Clarke know something more? The ring of fire. Jasper can still feel the heat as it flared against the metal of the dropship. Can still smell the overpowering reek of burnt flesh. Can still see the charred corpses. Doesn’t think he will ever forget it.

“I’m the one that fired the rockets,” Jasper says, the words quiet and pained. “Should I not have done that?” Did I kill your match? The words catch in his throat, too horrible to voice. “Clarke, when you pulled that lever you saved lives. Don’t throw that away by pulling this one.” He looks back at
Maya, watching him. She’s lowered her gun, but still looks ready to shoot if she needs to. “Clarke, there is good here. I found my match. Please don’t take her away from me.”

Clarke’s eyes widen as she absorbs this, slowly lowering her hand from the lever. She looks at him and nods. An unspoken agreement. Tears pool, unshed, in her eyes and Jasper pretends not to notice.

As the guards rush upon them, Jasper steps back, throwing his arms up in surrender. As he does this, he looks over at Maya. No one’s ever looked at him the way she’s looking at him now, and as he gazes at her beaming face, the colours dance around them.

Wick, Earth-date: October 13th 2149

The moonshine is odorless, colourless, and seems innocuous enough. Wick takes a tentative sip, and the taste – like rocket fuel laced with paint stripper – punches through the back of his throat. He flinches, then downs the remainder of his cup in a long swallow. The liquid burns all the way down into his stomach. A familiar warmth quickly fills its place, leaching from his heart out to the tips of fingers.

He still can’t believe that he’s actually here.

Before the crash, he’d tried to calculate their odds of survival, but had to stop when they catapulted into the millions. No matter how he did the math, he definitely should have died by now, several times over. And yet here he is, on Earth. They’re calling this place ‘Camp Jaha’, apparently, but it really isn’t much of a camp. A better name at this point would probably be ‘Wreckage Site Jaha’. But it’s only been 24 hours since they crashed, and, well, it doesn’t seem like they have a lot of choice - this is their home now.

At first Wick had been anxious and eager to start designing what they could do with this wreckage. He’s the only talented engineer left, and there’s a list of things to do a mile long.

He sets down his cup with a shaking hand and sits back in his carved wooden barstool in the new canteen (of sorts) that has been set up next to the grounded Ark. At least they had their priorities right: no sleeping quarters yet, but they have alcohol.

He’s sitting here contemplating a third cup instead of working in the remnants of the engineering bay, because twelve hours ago colour burned back into his world. And two hours ago the screaming started.

When the colour first re-appeared, Wick thought he must have been hallucinating. He didn’t understand how it was possible. It defied all probability. How could she have survived? A patrol had picked up only a handful of the hundred kids that they sent to the ground. Apparently most of them had either died in battle or been captured. Of the six they managed to rescue, two of them are now in lock up for some reason. So much for a clean slate.

Wick surges to his feet and immediately stumbles as his centre of gravity shifts. Staggering, he grabs hold of a nearby chair for purchase. This moonshine might have been stronger than he thought. Good. He knew he could trust Monty to make the strong stuff. A new wave of a very familiar grief rises up in him as he thinks of his old friend.

With a swipe at the table, Wick retrieves his cup and carries it back to the still. One of the guards
looks him up and down as he refills his cup. He thinks the guard might try to challenge him, but something in Wick’s face must warn her off.

“Watch yourself,” is all she says as Wick returns to his seat. He gives her an exaggerated salute.

“Yes ma’am.”

The guard scoffs at him and returns to her watch. Wick, meanwhile, returns to his drink.

He’s barely had two seconds of peace before a familiar figure saunters up beside him.

“Go easy on that stuff, huh? It’s barely noon.”

Wick looks up as Sinclair pulls up a stool and perches himself at Wick’s side. Distantly, Raven’s screams pitch higher in volume for a moment, cutting clear and sharp across the canteen, before fading back into the murmur of camp. Wick suppresses a shudder.

Because Sinclair is a goddamn asshole, of course he notices. His friend casts a quick glance at the medical tent, then back at Wick. Sinclair leans hard on the bar counter and ducks his head towards Wick. “You could go see her, you know,” he says.

Wick shakes his head tightly. “It’s not my place. She’s not… she’s not my… I don’t…”

He doesn’t know how to explain it. But he can’t see her, he doesn’t have any right to see her. Any right to hold her hand or tell her it’s going to be okay. She has Finn. More to the point, they have each other. Wick has no part in that.

“It’s fine.” Sinclair sets a hand on Wick’s arm, his grip firm and steadying. “You don’t have to explain.” Again Sinclair looks out to the tent and back. “But is she okay?”

Wick blinks at Sinclair, trying to understand the question. “Well, if the screaming is anything to go by, I’d say she’s pretty much not okay at all.”

Sinclair looks ashamed for a moment. “Right, but the…” he casts a quick look around the canteen to check they’re not being overheard. “The colour’s okay?”

“It’s fine,” Wick snaps. “It’s – it’s fine.”

It’s not Sinclair’s fault. He doesn’t have a match. He doesn’t understand how it works. He doesn’t understand that just because the world is in colour does not mean that everything’s okay.

How could they both defy the odds for so long only for him to have to sit here and listen to her die slowly and painfully in surgery? The universe was either a miraculous thing, or a cruel sadistic bastard. Wick gulps down his third cup.

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**Indra, Earth-date: October 13th 2149**

“Intruder at the North gate!”
Ginia, one of Indra’s youngest scouts, marches fast into Indra’s tent, shouting the news.

Indra looks up sharply at this, from where she had been studying the tactical maps. She flits her eyes over to where Lincoln is tied, hands and ankles bound around a tall post in the far corner of the tent. She leans hard on the wood table, leering at Lincoln.

“It seems your Sky Girl is as stupid as you,” she comments. “It is clearly a perfect keryon-ai.”

Lincoln struggles – like an idiot – against the knots at his wrists, but doesn’t say anything. That, at least, shows the barest minimum of intelligence. What could he say, anyway? Don’t harm her. She’s innocent. Please. As though anything this traitor might have to say could sway her.

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It takes almost no time to assemble her warriors at the northern edge of Tondc. Her warriors were more than happy to volunteer for the trip; all of them, it seems, want to get their first look at the famed Sky People. Indra lets many of them come, leaving only a thin guard back at camp. The Reapers are still a risk, but Indra’s vision is a clean, clear grey: they still have time.

Indra sends her guards to their posts as she inspects the welcome party they have laid in wait for the Sky Girl. It’s an excellent location for an ambush: Lincoln’s girl will be forced to walk the dry ravine floor, allowing Indra’s warriors to flank her on the high ground. This meeting will not take long.

These Sky People are so predictable – it’s like leading a horse to its death. They are just so willing to get themselves killed. Even so, Indra can’t forget the news of the slaughter at the foreigners’ camp. A blazing inferno. Flames as high as the treetops. And just like that, two hundred of her people were felled like trees in a wildfire. Anya among them. Indra can’t believe it, can’t reconcile this massacre with the reports she’s heard of the Sky People. They are weak. They cannot fight. They cannot even kill their hostages. How could they have destroyed two hundred gona? How could they have killed Anya?

Indra herself is curious to finally come face to face with one of them.

“Ai laik Oktevia kom Skai Kru and you have something I want!” The words rip through the air, each one echoing through the clearing. This girl is force and power and control, all in the face of almost certain death.

Indra raises an eyebrow, taking in the scene around her. The girl has a knife to Nyko’s throat. Nyko, his feet digging into the soft earth, is blinking slowly, clearly still disoriented. It might be a while before he’s in a position to fight back against his captor. The girl – Oktevia – must have gotten the drop on him, knocked him unconscious. But Nyko is a seasoned warrior. This girl should not have been able to take him down. Indra wants to see this girl’s eyes; she needs to know whether the threat is real. Would she really be willing to kill Nyko if Indra refuses to hand Lincoln over? Indra thinks about Kolum and knows that the answer is yes. Where keryon-ai are involved, a warrior will do anything for their match.

Indra would burn down the whole of Tondc if it would get Kolum back. And she knows, without reservation, that this girl is the same. There are no lengths she won’t go to.

The bows of her warriors strain. Indra can hear the creak of the bone against the tension of the drawn arrow. They ache to put the Sky Girl down. But they will not release their attack until Indra
commands it.

“*Ai laik Indra kom Tri Kru,*” Indra replies, sweeping down the sharp incline towards them. “*chit dyu wat?*

Octavia cocks her head, eyes casting around to the assembled warriors. She too has heard the creak of their bows. Indra lands at the bottom of the ravine to greet their guest. There now, she can finally see the girl’s eyes. Even in grey, they’re easy to read; they’re scared and hard and a little feral. Indra approves of this. Fear shows sense, hardness shows resolve, ferocity shows a will to survive. This girl will need all three.

“I said what do you want, Octavia of the Sky People.” Indra repeats, though she already knows the answer.

“Lincoln.” Naturally.

“No.” Indra enunciates the word, drawing it out slowly.

Clearly expecting this answer, Octavia kicks hard against the back of Nyko’s knees, driving him to the ground. Their healer grunts in pain and falls. Above their heads, Indra’s warriors tense, tightening their grips on their weapons. Indra eyes them, ordering them without words to hold their positions. She can’t risk one of them hitting Nyko by mistake. And maybe – against all odds – maybe she wants to see what else this Sky Girl is capable of.

“Nyko is our only healer,” Indra tells Octavia, keeping her voice steady and commanding.

“Good. Then you’ll do as I say.” She wrenches Nyko’s head back, her blade digging harder against his flesh. “Bring Lincoln to the place I saw him last. He knows where that is. Just you and him, no one else.” Whether she realizes it or not, this girl has started mimicking Indra’s slow, calm speech pattern. “If I see *anyone* else, I’ll kill your healer. You have until dark.”

Without waiting for Indra to respond, Octavia has hauled Nyko to his feet and hastened a retreat out of the clearing. Smart girl. Why would a girl like this be matched with Lincoln, of all people? A spirit like hers could do much better.

“Would you like us to go after her?” Ginia appears at Indra’s shoulder, glaring into the forest.

Indra considers it. No doubt her scouts could easily catch up to Octavia and rescue Nyko themselves. She wonders what Anya would do in this situation. What advice would she have? Would she call Octavia’s bluff? Refuse to hand Lincoln over? Kill him right in front of her and find out what happens when you murder a *keryon-ai*? Indra doesn’t know, but she thinks not.

“No,” Indra replies, not looking at Ginia. “I’ll handle her.”

She thinks Anya, too, would see the potential in this girl.

She hates her colourless world most of all at night. At night, when any remaining detail in her vision smears together into a dark grey. It’s closest of all to being entirely blind. She hates the firelight, casting eerie grey spectres across the trunks of trees. She hates her own shadow – black against black
– shifting their way through the night. But it’s still better than those rare moments when the firelight flares to life. She hates the dark, but she lives in fear of colour.

“Looks like you’re going to have to kill me,” Nyko’s voice floats across the dead of the night. Indra suppresses a smile. Trust Nyko to call the girl’s bluff.

She steps out from under the shadow of the monument, approaching Octavia and Nyko. Lincoln limps at her side. Nyko and Octavia notice them and step forward, twin expressions of relief just visible on their faces.

“He’s hurt,” Octavia snaps.

“He should be dead,” Indra counters. This shuts her up at least.

Gradually, Lincoln and Nyko shuffle across the no-mans-land between Octavia on one end of the clearing and Indra on the other. As he steps incrementally closer, Nyko comes into clearer focus. He looks tired and a little ashamed – as well he should be, captured by a Sky Girl – but otherwise unharmed.

Indra extends her hand to him, but freezes mid-movement. Her hand is dark brown. A swoop of terror rushes through her. They’re here.

“Reapers!” Lincoln and Indra shout as one. Colour washes through Indra’s vision a mere moment before the Reapers are upon them.

Where is he? Is he among the Reapers attacking them, or is he hanging back? Would she even recognize him anymore? If he is among them, then their range must be getting worse – she had barely any warning at all this time. What does that mean? Can a soul-bond be broken? Would that be easier? Indra has no time for these concerns, but she can’t fight the reeling of her own thoughts. She slams against a Reaper who comes for her, driving him back a pace. She has just enough time to draw her sword and run him through before another is upon her. She fights him off too, trying to ignore the bloodshot red in his eyes.

Before long, they draw back into the trees and disappear. The colour goes with them.

Nyko and Lincoln are gone.

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**Nathan, Earth date: October 13th 2149**

The first time he wakes, he thinks he must be dead. It’s white and it’s quiet and he’s trapped in his body, unable to move. But there’s a yellow tinge to the light shining in his eyes. And that’s interesting. His thoughts come to him slowly, like figures emerging from thick fog. *Is the afterlife always in colour? Or does that mean Monty’s dead too and already here…* A conflicting sense of failure and selfish comfort course through him as his thoughts fracture and fade to nothing.

The second time he wakes, he’s not alone. There are figures shuffling through the room and the noise of conversation buzzes around Miller’s head. It takes longer than it should for him to recognize the figures as people in hazmat suits. Again, he tries to move. He raises his arm about a foot off the bed before his whole body spasms in painful protest. Right. Definitely alive then. That’s something. And that hazmat suit is definitely blue. That’s something too. So if he’s not dead, then where the hell
is he? And more importantly, where the hell is Monty? Gritting his teeth against the anticipated pain, Miller tries to push himself up to sitting. He barely gets his weight onto his arms before one of the blue suits is at his side and pushing him back down. On instinct, Miller takes a swing at the blue shape. He misses. He misses by a lot. Belatedly, he realizes they might have drugged him. Sure enough, he has just enough time to register the IV protruding from his arm before everything goes black again.

The third time, he jerks awake with a jolt. His dreams were of fire and screaming and hands covered in blood. But the pain in his side has faded to a dull ache, and Miller figures he’ll take his victories where he can get them. As he shuffles off the shackles of his dream, Miller slowly takes stock of his new surroundings. Someone moved him since he was last awake. The yellow-tinged light is gone, and his room now is clean, white, and sterile. Miller has spent enough time in prison to recognize a cell when he sees one. His eyes linger on a funny-looking painting of yellow flowers in a vase on the wall. Yellow flowers. The thought crystallizes, his mind feeling clear for the first time since the fight at the dropship. Monty is alive. These people have him.

He sits up, noting with some relief that the pain, which once raked through his body like a fever, is now downright bearable. He examines the IV in his arm. That’s good, he can use that. Gingerly, he pries the needle from his arm. It hurts more than he expected when he pulls it out, but it’s worth it. The needle is thin, but it’s strong and it’s long and it’s very sharp. Definitely long enough to do some damage to his guard’s throat. Now he’s got a weapon, he just needs-

Miller’s plan stops dead when the door to his cell opens. With the deft sleight of hand he once prided himself on as a thief, Miller palms the needle, holding it tight against his wrist, waiting for his chance...

A girl enters his cell. The hazmat suit is gone, revealing a young woman with dark hair, a light purple dress, and very pale skin. She’s carrying a pile of clothes, a file folder, and an apple. Not your average prison guard. She doesn’t look like a threat. But then Miller thinks of Charlotte, and thinks of the Grounder children who marched to battle, and decides that looks can be deceiving. He tightens his grip on the needle.

“Your friends are fine,” she tells him quickly, “so if you’re thinking about taking me hostage, or trying to escape, can you please not. Clarke has already tried to kill me twice today, and I’m kind of tired.”

Okay… not exactly what he was expecting. Miller grins, despite himself. That definitely sounds like Clarke.

“I’m sure you did something to deserve it,” he tells her, not bothering to hide his hostility.

The girl sets the clothes she’s carrying down beside him. “We rescued 48 of you from the Outsiders.” She holds out the folder for him.

“You mean you kidnapped us from our camp.” He snatches the folder from her.

Inside, Miller finds short profiles on each of them: names, photos, blood type, lists of injuries. He flips through the profiles quickly. Monty’s information is among them and Miller feels a rush of relief when he skims the list of superficial injuries. Alive and apparently uninjured. It’s more, really, than Miller had been prepared to hope for.

When he gets to the last page he feels his stomach drop. One profile is conspicuously absent. Miller goes back to the beginning and checks again, just to be sure. Still nothing. Bellamy’s profile is not in the folder. He’s not here. Did he die in the fire? He must have known what was coming when he
saw the dropship door closing, he should have had enough time… Miller feels the loss harder than he would have expected.

“No Bellamy,” he speaks aloud before he can stop himself.

The girl shakes her head, her eyes flashing in understanding. “Is that the one Clarke’s matched to?”

A laugh bubbles on Miller’s lips. “I highly doubt she told you that,” he comments dryly, quirking an eyebrow at the new girl. “Who the hell are you people?”

“We’re the people that saved you.”

“We had things under control.” He tosses the folder down on the bed.

“Oh really?” The girl crosses her arms over her chest. “So we didn’t find you bleeding to death, stabbed in three places, suffering from organ damage, internal bleeding, and a dislocated shoulder? So we didn’t just spend the last two days saving your life in three consecutive surgeries?”

Well. If she was going to say it like that...

Not wanting to concede the point, he presses on, “So. What happens now?”

“Now, get dressed and I’ll take you to the rest of your people. Here.” She tosses him the apple, forcing Miller to catch it awkwardly with his left hand, his right still clutching the needle. “You missed dinner.”

“Uh… thanks.”

She turns to go and then hesitates at the door, turning back to him. “My name’s Maya. I’m matched with your friend Jasper. I’m not going to hurt you.” The sincerity in her voice strikes him. He gives her the smallest of nods. “I’ll wait outside. When you’re dressed we can go. Make sure you leave the needle here.” She leaves the room without looking back.

Miller eats his apple in three bites as he pulls on his new clothes. He’s not sure he trusts his new friend, but he’s glad now that he didn’t jab a needle into her throat.

Chapter End Notes

Really excited to hear your thoughts on this one, as we have quite a lot of perspectives going on!
Clarke, Earth-date: October 14th 2149

She knows the gas was red. She didn’t imagine it. She didn’t.

She repeated this to herself when she held a broken shard of grey glass to Maya’s grey neck. Repeated it as she sketched a map on white paper with a black pencil.

Repeats it now as she and Anya launch themselves into the grey water at the bottom of the Mountain Men’s dam.

She’s sick of this black and white bullshit. It’s time to find her her way back home.

Finn, Earth-date: October 14th 2149

They kneel in the dirt outside the Grounder camp. Finn’s pulse races as he spies Clarke’s watch around the neck of a Grounder. Finally, they are getting close. His blood pounds in his ears.

“That’s Clarke’s watch,” he hisses to the others. “It was her father’s. She wouldn’t give that up without a fight.”

“I know,” Bellamy replies from Finn’s side. His expression is closed and hard as he looks on, scanning the camp. Murphy, Monroe and Sterling crouch around them, looking to Bellamy for orders. Bellamy blinks and shakes his head. “They’re not here.”

The calm authority of Bellamy’s statement sets Finn’s teeth on edge. “How can you say that?” he demands, “Clarke’s watch—”

“Something’s going on here,” Bellamy agrees, cutting across Finn. His eyes are steely and determined, but unfazed. God, it’s like he doesn’t even want to try and find Clarke. “But Finn,” Bellamy continues, “Clarke is NOT here. Trust me.” There’s an edge, a pointed determination, in his voice.

Holy shit. Unbidden, everything falls into place.

“All along?” Finn says. Bellamy doesn’t even pretend to misunderstand. He just shrugs one shoulder in a tacit admission. Finn feels a rush of jealousy and frustration. “Say it.” It may be childish and
petty, but the idea of a secret connection between Bellamy and Clarke makes his blood boil. Vague hints aren’t enough. He needs to know.

Bellamy hesitates but doesn’t flinch. “Clarke is my match. She’s currently well out of radius. We need to move on.”

“Are you hers?” Finn ignores Bellamy’s other points.

Bellamy falters, “I don’t know.”

She can’t be. Clarke hates Bellamy, doesn’t she? Okay, Finn knows Clarke can see colour. He found her once sorting medicinal plants by colour. But that doesn’t mean Bellamy needs to be her match. If anything, doesn’t it make Finn more likely to be her match? He was nearby, after all, when he’d seen Clarke sorting the plants. And Bellamy had been on the other side of camp! Clarke told Finn once that she wasn’t matched to him, but what does that prove? People lie about this kind of stuff all the time! Because if he isn’t - if he and Clarke are both matched to other people - then what was it all for? He’s Clarke’s match, he knows he is. And Bellamy… well, his match must be one-sided.

Even so, he hates the jealousy that’s rising like bile in his throat. He loves Raven, he really does, but he envies Bellamy’s match to Clarke.

Fuck it. Soulmates are stupid. Clarke has always said that. And just because Finn’s not matched to her, doesn’t mean she’s not matched to him. Finn’s going to find her. He’s going to rescue her. And then she’ll finally admit that she loves him. That she’s matched to him after all.

Finn will save her. He will.

Raven, Earth-date: October 14th 2149

Raven’s back is killing her. Her injured side, her spine, her good leg, every inch of her body feels like it’s somewhere between pained and absolute fucking agony. But dwelling on it is much, much worse than trying to ignore it. The first day after Finn and the others left to find the remaining hundred is downright torture. Her colour fades away quicker than it ever has, leaving Raven feeling cold and lonely. Her match is deteriorating, her body no longer obeys her commands, and if Abby tries to tell her one more time to ‘focus on her recovery’, Raven thinks she will actually lose it. In this world, those who can’t run are the first to get picked off. Raven’s on borrowed time. She knows this, but she refuses to go down without a fight.

She is unspeakably grateful when Wick sends for her, though she’ll never admit it to him. (Arrogant ass, what gave him the right to send for anyone?) She’s been crawling out of her skin without a task to take her mind from her useless good-for-nothing leg. So she dives into working with Wick. She’s a little barbarous, maybe. She’s short with him, argumentative and petty – even more than usual. But at least she has a goal to achieve, and it focuses her. Slowly, she feels she’s coming back to herself. She’s a mechanic down to her bones: put something broken in her hands as she’ll fix it. That’s what she does. It’s some high cosmic bullshit that she can’t manage to fix her own damn self.
Against all odds, it’s Wick who patches her up. Wick who takes none of her shit, who recognizes what she needs. And maybe, what she needs most of all is a bit of help.

Chapter End Notes

Shorter chapter for you today. But you can look forward to a much longer chapter tomorrow. There is a pretty important day coming up...
October 16th 2149: Reunion

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Octavia, Earth-date: October 16th 2149

She’d known, of course, even before removing the last hood of the prisoners that Lincoln wasn’t among them. But she’d needed to be sure, completely sure. Maybe their range had been damaged, maybe he was so sick that colour was affected, maybe—But no. He just wasn’t there.

The scream that ripped from Octavia’s throat could be heard for a mile.

She collapses onto a nearby boulder, feeling more alone than she could ever remember being. The Grounders around her speak a rapid-fire broken mixture of their own tongue and English, so fast and fractured that Octavia can only make out one word in a dozen. She gives up trying pretty quickly and allows herself to drown in her own thoughts.

She’s wandered further, now, than she ever had with the hundred. She has been carefully mapping the land in one of Lincoln’s old notebooks. She’s sure she could find the way back to the dropship from here, but no idea what she would find when she gets there. She knows from the gossip among the Grounders that the explosion worked, but who had been left? Who had even survived the attack? Did Bellamy make it back to the dropship in time? Or was he dead already, burnt to a crisp by his own peoples’ defences? What about Clarke and Jasper and Monty? Octavia has no love for the rest of the Ark, but these are her people. The only friends she’s ever had. Her heart aches for Bellamy and for Lincoln and for the hundred. For all Octavia knows, she’s the only one of them left.

She closes her eyes and bends forward, resting her elbows heavily on her knees. Her hair falls in a lank curtain around her face as she tips her head forward, exhaustion getting the better of her.

“You can’t leave your hair in your face like that,” a young boyish voice speaks from directly above her. Octavia looks up into the face of the young Grounder who had saved her life during the battle. Artigas. His father had been among the rescued Tri Kru. He’s frowning down at Octavia now, his expression more consternation than malice.

“Why not?” Octavia asks.

“Well,” the boy allows with a sly smile. His English is slow and deliberate, as he thinks about each word before he says it. “You could, but a warrior would not live long if they cannot see.”

Octavia smiles despite herself. “I guess not.”

“I could fix it for you, if you want?” He crouches down beside her boulder. They’re at eye level now, and his gaze is warm and expressive, despite the washed-out grey. He’s a far cry from the angry youth Octavia had just been fighting with, but then, he succeeded in rescuing his father. Why shouldn’t he be happy?

Still, suspicion spikes in Octavia’s blood. She levels him with a hard look. “Why help me? I’m the baga, remember?” Octavia flexes what little of their language she’s managed to learn on their journey.
Artigas gives her a one-shouldered shrug. “Maybe. But the Reapers and the Mountain Men are also our enemies, and you helped me get my father back. You fought well, and – though you will never hear her admit it – you saved Indra’s life. Plus thanks to you I didn’t have to be the bait this time. I think you have earned a braid.”

She shrugs. “What could it hurt?” Octavia can’t think of anything better to do. And if she’s honest, her hair is starting to get uncomfortably greasy, so fine, whatever.

She shifts off the boulder and sits down on the damp ground beside it. Getting her drift, Artigas takes a seat on the boulder directly behind her, so the back of her head is at his eye-level. He runs his hands carefully through her hair a couple of times, holding it in certain positions briefly, before apparently deciding on the best way to keep her hair out of the way during battle. He starts knotting a braid along the left side of her head with quick, sure fingers.

Octavia winces at the abrupt pain. “Nou bilaik,” he admonishes.

“I don’t know what that means,” Octavia responds mulishly.

“It means stop that,” Artigas says slowly, wrestling with a tangled patch of her hair.

Octavia stops squirming and sits still. Eventually, she allows herself to relax into Artigas’ touch. It’s the closest thing to calm she’s felt for weeks.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” Artigas says quietly after a moment. “It’s a grave thing to lose a keryon-ai.”

Octavia’s eyes prick in unshed tears. “He’s not dead,” she says. She looks down at her own pastel-coloured palms. It’s weak, but it’s still there. He’s miles from her now. Octavia would like nothing more than to pursue him still, but Indra will not risk her warriors on someone who should be dead anyway. And much as she doesn’t want to admit it, Octavia does not think she could track him through the forest on her own, even with the colour as a guide.

“There are fates worse than death,” Artigas replies, which is not what Octavia was expecting him to say.

“Oh yeah?” She tries to twist around to face him, but he grips harder on the hair in his hand and wrenches her back to face forward. Her scalp screams in protest, and Octavia decides not to risk moving again. “Like what?” she asks, keeping her gaze forward, out across the quiet forest around them.

Artigas’ hands still in her hair for a moment. “What do you know of the Reapers?”

This brings Octavia up short. “Uhh… they’re like an enemy clan, right? The nuclear radiation or whatever did something to them—”

“No,” Artigas cuts in. The soft, boyish quality in his voice is gone. He sounds much older than he did a moment ago. Again Octavia would like to see his face, but she resists the urge to move this time. “It was not the cataclysm that made them what they are.”

Dread sinks like a stone into Octavia’s stomach. “If it wasn’t the radiation, then what was it?” She has a horrible feeling she already knows.

“The Mountain.” Artigas spits the name like a curse. “We don’t know how or what happens, but the warriors who are taken into the Mountain do not come out. At least, not as they were. The Mountain Men do something to them. Many are simply killed or lost, turned to food for the Reapers. But some…” Artigas pauses to tie a knot in the braid on Octavia’s left side before shifting over to begin
the same process on her right side. “Some of them return as Reapers. They’re always men, never the women. We don’t know why. But they return as dogs, shadows of the warriors they were. They do not recognize their clan or their family or even their own keryon-ai. They are cursed, forced to kill and feed on their own people.”

Octavia’s heart is roaring in her ears. “Can they be turned back?” she asks, her voice tight and sharp.

“No. Or if they can, the medicine is not in our power. The only mercy we can give them is a quick death.”

Octavia nods, numb. Well, she’ll just need to make sure she gets Lincoln back before the Mountain Men have a chance to do anything to him.

“I couldn’t do that,” Octavia says after a moment. “Kill him, I mean. How could anyone do that to their own match?”

“You would not be the first warrior to hesitate when faced with such an act…” Artigas falters.

“What?” Octavia asks, sure she must be missing something.

“I should not be telling you this,” he says. But even as he says it, his head has dipped towards her ear, and he’s whispering, fast and soft. His accent grows stronger as he speaks and Octavia has to focus to catch his words. “Indra’s keryon-ai is a Reaper. I never met him, it happened when I was still a goufa , but there are those in the clan who still remember him. We never speak of it in her presence, but it is known among us: she is too weak to kill him.”

“I don’t think that’s weak,” Octavia says. “She has hope.”

Her gaze casts out to the small band of Grounders, busy setting up their camp for the night, or else preparing the meat for their dinner. Indra stands among them, speaking with Nyko. Their heads are bent towards each other so as not to be overheard. Indra must be able to feel Octavia’s gaze, as she looks up and meets her eyes dead on. She glares when she sees what Artigas is doing, but makes no move to intervene. Caught staring, Octavia drops her eyes back to her own palms. She can’t imagine Indra being afraid of much.

“You have clearly never met a Reaper,” Artigas says, almost laughing. As though he finds Indra’s hope funny. “There is no hope to be had.”

“Well, you’ve clearly never met your match,” Octavia counters. “So long as they’re still alive, there’s still hope.”

Artigas ties off her second small braid and starts in on twisting together the hair along the top of her head. “What’s it like?” he asks after a stretch of silence.

“Colour?”

“Yes. What does colour look like?”

Octavia pauses. She has a sudden, vivid memory of asking Bellamy the same thing once. It feels like several lifetimes ago, now. It takes her a while before she can think of what to say. “It’s… like… imagine if you’d been deaf your whole life. And then, suddenly, without any warning, you hear music for the first ever time. The sound of someone singing, or a birdsong, or a beating drum. Whatever it is, imagine the most beautiful music you’ve ever heard. And imagine that you’d never heard any sounds – none at all – your whole life, then suddenly you’re listening to the most beautiful music in the whole world. That’s what it’s like.”
“Okay…” Artigas sounds unconvinced.

“Does that make sense?” Octavia asks, this time going to the trouble of twisting around to look at him.

He has an eyebrow raised at her and is smirking slightly. “No, it doesn’t.”

Octavia huffs. “Look, just wait until you meet your match. You’ll understand then.”

“I might never meet my match, now,” Artigas’ face falls.

“Sure you will.” Octavia nudges him with her shoulder. “Why wouldn’t you?”

“I’ve met everyone in my clan. And I attended the gathering of the Clans last solstice. If I had a match among them, I would have known.”

Octavia grins at him. “You never know,” she insists. “Maybe your match is a Sky Person.”

Artigas frowns at this. “I don’t think my father would approve of that.”

“Oh, some of them aren’t so bad,” Octavia says, thinking of a choice few in particular.

“I guess not,” Artigas allows, tying off her last braid. “There you go. Now you’ll be able to see when you go hunting for your keryon-ai.”

Octavia runs her fingers across the ridges of the braids, trying to get a mental picture of them. “Thanks,” she says, accepting Artigas’ hand as he lifts her to her feet.

He nods. “The braids don’t make you a gona,” he tells her earnestly. “Only you can make yourself a warrior.”

“Artigas!” Nyko barks at him as he strides towards them both. “Your father is searching for you. It’s your turn to tend the fire.”

“Sha, Nyko,” he replies with a small bow. “You see around, Sky Girl,” he tells Octavia with a smile.

“May we meet again,” she tells him.

With that he’s off running, back towards the throng of Grounders around the fire. Octavia smiles after him.

“You need to leave,” Nyko tells her without preamble.

“I know,” Octavia snaps, her brief moment of pleasure falling away immediately. “I need to go find Lincoln.”

“It’s your choice how you get yourself killed. But—” Nyko hesitates. “You should know that Indra’s scouts have spotted some of your people trespassing in our territory due north, by the cliffs. Do you know the way?” Octavia nods. She and Lincoln once went to the cliffs when he was teaching her how to forage for the fruits that grow up there. It’s no more than an hour’s walk from here, if her sense of direction is holding up. “They’ve been tracking your people for some time. Indra has been debating whether to take them alive, but she’s just decided it wouldn’t be worth the hassle, so she’s going to give the order to attack. Her scout has just gone ahead with the order. If you hurry, you might still be in time to help them.”
Octavia’s heart kicks up in her chest. “Do you know who–?”

“No,” Nyko cuts her off. “Does it matter? They’re your people and you have the power to help them.”

It does matter. Octavia can’t stand the thought of Lincoln being in the Mountain Men’s clutches another second, let alone hours or days. But Nyko is right. She does not know how to rescue Lincoln from the Mountain, but she knows where some of her people are, and she knows they need her help. And she knows the choice Bellamy would make.

“Thanks,” she tells Nyko, already stashing her meager weapons and provisions for the journey. “I owe you. And… I’m sorry about the… attacking you…”

Nyko waves this off like he’s swatting away a fly. “Teaches me not to turn my back on a gona of the Skaikru. He reaches out a hand to Octavia, and she accepts it gratefully, grasping his forearm.

“May we meet again, Nyko.”

“Osir gonplei ste nowe odon ,” he replies. “Good luck, Octavia of the Sky People. I really hope that you find Lincoln and your friends in time. Now go before Indra changes her mind and kills you after all.” Octavia might have taken him seriously but for the smile on his lips.

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**Murphy, Earth-date: October 16th 2149**

The rifle flies in a high arc and Murphy catches it on instinct, meeting Bellamy’s eye across the open cliff top.

“You’re really not coming?” Murphy quirks an eyebrow at Bellamy. “If the Princess is your match, wouldn’t you be able to help? I mean, you can like… sense her, or something… right?” Murphy has no fucking clue how matches work, but that seems like something they should be able to do.

“I need to get Monroe and Mel back to camp,” Bellamy answers. Octavia has already gone to work setting Monroe’s leg for the journey back to Camp. She sits with the others across the clearing. As Murphy watches, Octavia kneels in front of Monroe, gingerly checking the arrow for poison. “We… we don’t know what’s happened to the others,” Bellamy continues. “I need to focus on the people I’m able to help. It’s-” Bellamy breaks off, looking out over the cliff to the valley below. “It the right thing to do,” he concludes. “Chasing phantoms of colour isn’t going to help anyone.”

Murphy can’t pretend to understand whatever nobler-than-thou instinct is churning through Bellamy, but it doesn’t matter. His mind’s clearly made up. “Yeah, okay,” Murphy says. “You got it boss, we’ll find them.”

“Make sure you have his back,” Bellamy says, nodding towards Finn, already several feet away down the path towards the village the Grounder told them about. There’s a warning in Bellamy’s voice, a tremor of tension like a plucked bowstring, but Murphy can’t tell if Bellamy’s worried about what Murphy might do, or Finn.

Either way, Murphy nods a tight reassurance. He can’t speak for whatever demons are working their
way through Finn at the moment, but for his own part, Murphy’s eyes are clear. Revenge got him nowhere fast, and very nearly got him dead several times in a row. He might be a stubborn fuck, but he knows when he’s beat. Killing Bellamy or Finn or anyone else for that matter would be the fastest route Murphy can see to getting himself tortured. Again. Going solo isn’t an option if he wants to remain breathing, so for now, he can play by Bellamy’s rules. Besides, against all judgment, he might kind of like these assholes. Sometimes.

“Hold up,” Murphy shouts ahead to Finn, who’s already forging ahead so quickly that Murphy has to jog to keep pace with him.

“We don’t have any more time to waste,” Finn dismisses. “We already wasted way too much time on the cliff.”

“Yeah, I mean… you know I’m not really the ‘save the children’ type, but… well, we did save that girl’s life—”

“We saved one girl, but what if the time it took means that we don’t get to our friends in time? What if stopping doomed everyone else to die?”

Err, holy shit. Murphy is already starting to regret leaving Bellamy and the others behind. He is… yikes, Murphy is not the right person to be dealing with this situation.

“Let’s just find them,” he mutters.

He picks up the pace in Finn’s wake, a sickening sense of dread settling into his stomach.

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Octavia, Earth-date: October 16th 2149

The sun is mocking her.

She can feel it, warm and gently burning on her exposed skin. She can feel it, but she can’t see it. It had been weakly clinging to a dim yellow glow for the past day, but even that’s gone now. Whether it’s because Lincoln’s moved or she has, Octavia might never know.

She wants to hunt the colour like a bloodhound. She wants to run after it, chase it as hard and as fast as she needs to, until the life is back in the world and Lincoln’s returned to her side. She wants to abandon everything – everyone – and go pelting after it.

But she doesn’t. Because Bellamy can’t get this sorry bunch back to camp without her. Of course he can’t. Because Octavia knows these woods. She knows these valleys and these hills and these cliffs. She’s explored further and deeper than anyone else from the Ark. She can navigate by the sun and the stars and the direction of the wind. Lincoln taught her and she taught herself, and she’s better at it than any of the rest of them. So she takes the lead, Bellamy bringing up the rear, ushering their bruised, battered company back to new camp. Octavia’s never been there, but from Bellamy’s description there’s only one place it could be. Only one valley large enough in the area. She knows the way.

“You okay?” Monroe asks. She has an arm slung heavily across Octavia’s shoulder, leaning into her
with every other step, “because you look like shit.”

Octavia glances at Monroe, raising a mud-crusted eyebrow at her. “This coming from the girl with an arrow in her thigh?”

Monroe shrugs, flinching as she puts weight on her bad leg. "Not saying I'm smelling like a bundle of roses, over here. Just saying you look worse. And this coming from the girl with an arrow in her thigh."

Octavia would like to be able to argue, but she knows she must look awful. A reluctant smile twists the side of her mouth. “Anyone ever tell you not to piss off the one currently carrying most of your weight on her shoulder?”

Monroe shrugs again and falls silent.

They struggle on for another hour before Monroe speaks again. “So what ever happened to that Grounder you went off with? Aren’t you matched?”

Octavia flinches. “He’s gone.”

“Gone like… dead?”

She doesn’t answer.

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It takes most of the day to get back to camp. The ghost-sun is just dipping beneath the jagged peak of Mount Weather as they near the Ark base.

Monroe is halfway dead on her feet, but as far as Octavia can tell, the arrow wasn’t poisoned, so that’s something. She and Mel have slowed considerably as the hours passed, but they’re still on their feet. Octavia and Bellamy flank them on either side, checking their surroundings for threats. As they break past the tree line and into the clearing, Octavia gets her first glimpse of the downed Ark. It’s huge, a towering structure so impressive that Octavia almost forgets how much she used to hate it.

She glances over at Bellamy, wanting to share her wonder, but the look on his face is so distracting that all thoughts of the Ark are driven from her mind. He’s pinching the bridge of his nose with his right hand, blinking hard. The fingers of his left hand dig into his temple. He looks pained.

“Bell?”

“Huh?” Bellamy flinches, startled.

“What’s the matter with you?” Octavia calls to him across Mel and Monroe.

Bellamy blinks hard again, his eyes watering with the strain. “Nothing,” he mutters. His eyes slide away from her.

Well, Octavia doesn’t need colour to read her dumbass brother like a book.

“Bullshit,” she calls. “What’s wrong?”
“I’m fine,” Bellamy tries to assure her. But he pinches the bridge of his nose again, undercutting any idea of being fine. “Come on,” he huffs. “Let’s get back.”

Octavia has never seen Bellamy so agitated. As they cross the open valley towards the camp, Bellamy’s eyes cast furtively around the clearing, restless and wide. The nearer they get to camp, the more worked up Bellamy becomes. By the time they’re approaching the gate, he’s crawling out of his skin with some unknown anxiety. He looks about ready to bolt towards the camp, but only Mel, walking slowly at his side, keeps him apace with them.

He enters the camp ahead of Octavia and Monroe, and immediately accosts the first nearby guard who comes to relieve them of their weapons.

“Where is she?” Bellamy asks.

“Seriously, Bell, what the hell-” Octavia starts, but the words die in her throat.

Clarke - Clarke - is careening towards them, sprinting through camp as though her life depended on it, eating up the ground beneath her feet. “Bellamy!”

“Clarke!” He’s ready for her when she launches into his arms. He wraps her up like they’ve been parted for years.

Octavia almost laughs. Well, of course. No one less could be matched with her brother.

“There’s something I thought I’d never see,” Octavia comments wryly.

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Clarke, Earth-date: October 16th 2149

When Clarke wakes in Camp Jaha, her first instinct is to panic. Where is she? How long has she been out? Where are her people? What or who are currently holding her? Are they a threat? She wonders if this crushing, gripping, wrenching terror is her new normal.

It takes her nearly a full minute to remember where she is. She wants to be able to relax. To feel safe, back at the camp with her mom and the other Ark survivors, but all Clarke feels is guilt. It crushes on her heart and weighs her down like a physical burden. She abandoned her people. Monty, Jasper, Harper, Miller, Fox, all of them. They’re trapped and she escaped alone with Anya. She should have gone back for her people. She should have opened all the cages. She should have done more.

She can barely breathe through the anxiety.

“Clarke, you need to rest.” Abby’s speaking, but Clarke barely hears her. Her mother’s comfort is not something Clarke can afford; it’s something she hasn’t been able to allow herself for a long time, and she’s not about to start now.

“I’m fine,” Clarke assures her absently.

Clarke leaves her mother behind and exits into the wan light of the camp. She thinks the sun might have a tinge of yellow, as it swoops low across the mountains, but it’s probably just wishful thinking.
Bellamy could be anywhere by now, busy searching for her. Fear for all of them is eating away at her, but finding Raven outside is a welcome relief.

Clarke embraces her friend, clutching to the familiarity. One friend found. All the rest to go.

“It sucks, but, I’m dealing,” Raven tells her with a wry smile, leaning heavily on her uninjured leg.

Clarke opens her mouth to reply when she sees it. She’s not imagining it, Raven’s jacket has been steadily building in colour as they’ve been speaking. As she watches, it sparks like a lit match, flaring suddenly to a vivid red.


Raven narrows her eyes. “You see something?”

Raven asks so casually it takes her a second to realize that she’s asking about colour. She knows. Who else knows? Does everyone know? Does Bellamy? Clarke looks back at her. An intense rush of pride fills her as she nods. Owning up to the truth. Proud of the truth.

“They’re back,” Clarke tells her. “Can you? Is...”

Clarke stops as a troubled look passes over Raven’s features. “Finn must not be with them.”

Clarke cranes her head to try and get a look at the gate. She can hear her own heart thudding in her ears, anticipation and impatience itching under her skin.

Raven gives her a tight, pained smile. “Go on. I’ll catch up.”

Clarke doesn’t need telling twice. She shoots like a bullet through the camp, racing towards the main gate, where she can already see a small band of people approaching. Every step she takes, the world looks brighter. The colour is so bright, brighter than the sun, it stings her eyes.

Even better than the colour is the feeling of warmth that washes over her. Suddenly he’s there, right in front of her, and Clarke almost sobs the relief is so profound. She doesn’t hesitate; she just leaps. As she throws her arms around him, it’s like she can breathe for the first time in days. And as he hugs her back, his arms warm and strong across her lower back, she allows herself to finally feel the comfort of home that she’d been denying herself. And she swears, just for a moment, she can see in ultraviolet.

She thinks she hears Octavia speak from Bellamy’s side, but whatever it was Clarke doesn’t catch it.

After what feels like a very long time, they finally part, pulling back from one another. Clarke reluctantly removes her arms from Bellamy’s neck and allows them to drop to her sides. They feel suddenly empty. Clarke meets Bellamy’s eyes, and they are so brown. Rich, warm and so alight with exhilaration that Clarke feels a rush of self-conscious pleasure. There’s no mistaking her own overwhelming relief reflected back in his eyes. It’s suddenly so clear to her that she is his match as well. She must be. She has always been. How could she have ever thought otherwise?

They are a perfect-match.

“Got something you want to tell us, there, big brother?” Octavia says, looking significantly between the two of them.

A muscle in Bellamy’s jaw twitches, but he ignores her. “How many with you?” he asks Clarke instead. His eyes are drinking Clarke in like he’d been blind for months. She knows the feeling. It’s
all Clarke can do to break from his gaze and greet Octavia.

She wants to say a million different things to him. But not yet. First, they have work to do.

“Just me,” Clarke says at last. “Come on. We have to talk.”

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**Marcus, Earth-date: October 16th 2149**

In peace, may you leave this shore. In love, may you find the next. Safe passage on your travels, until our final journey to the ground. May we meet again.

The Traveler’s Blessing cycles through his head as he stands in a small enclave of trees, the sun warming his face. This is it. This is what his mother had been waiting for; after all these years, it’s finally time to plant the tree.

Marcus digs with his hands in the soft dirt, relishing the feel of it slipping between his fingers. Reverent, as though in prayer, his knees press into the ground, his back bows towards the earth. His senses fill with the rich smell, the cool moisture of the ground. It’s soothes him, somehow, like a balm to an exposed wound.

As he continues to dig into the grey dirt, he is haunted by the memory of Abby’s rich brown eyes, staring him down yesterday as he ordered her to be tied to the posts.

“We don’t have to do this down here,” she had pleaded calmly.

But we do. We still need order. We still need rules. A man had died for no reason. A victim of fear, and the senseless chaos of the mob. As if they didn’t have enough lives to mourn. Whatever this new world holds for them, Marcus knows it cannot be a world without rules, without consequences.

He shudders as he remembers the sight of her, blazing in colour under the bright afternoon sun. He’d been standing several feet away from her, but the camp had pulsed with colour, vivid and bright, each time the shock lash made contact. Not long ago, at that distance, there would have been no colour to speak of. It might have been easier without it. But instead the colour had burned in his vision, as if it needed him to bear witness, needed him to remember at every second that passed that it was his match he was inflicting this on.

Oh Abby. He wonders how she’s doing as Chancellor back at the camp. If any of them are worthy of the role, it’s her. In a flash, he wonders if he will ever see her again. As quickly as the thought has come, Kane banishes it. He refuses to linger on that particular question. He knows he has long since forfeited any right to her affections, he just hopes that one day she will see that he is not the bad guy of this story. He hopes that one day he can earn the right to be seen as more. He wants to be so much more. He wants to figure out what this next unwritten chapter of their civilization will be. And he wants it to be peace.

He knows he’s taking a risk in trusting this Grounder to lead them to his Commander. A Commander that by all accounts has tortured, crucified, and captured his people already. And maybe the new history books will remember him as the moron who walked right into a Grounder trap and forced them into a war that they could not possibly win. But if there is even the slightest chance that he can
be the one to bring his people peace, Kane is willing to do whatever it takes.

When he’s pleased that the hole he’s dug is big enough for the tree, Kane places it gingerly into the ground. We made it mom. We’re home. Maybe his mother had been right after all: there is strength in the earth. Maybe there is forgiveness too.

Abby, Earth-date: October 16th 2149

Her daughter is back. She’s alive and she’s healthy and she’s no longer under direct threat of death from either the Ark or the Grounders. Just a few days ago Abby would have considered this a miracle beyond anything she dared to hope for. They’re together now, and they finally have a chance to start over, free from the shackles that had bound them both on the Ark. She has failed as a mother so many times in the past, but she’ll do better now. All Abby wants on this perilous Earth is to protect her daughter and keep her safe. She’s a mother; that’s her job.

Well that’s one of her jobs. She’s been Chancellor for barely more than a day and already she can feel the threads unravelling in her hands. Marcus has entrusted her with their people, and she’ll do better there too.

So that’s her life. By rights she should feel overjoyed to be reunited with her long-lost daughter, but as it is Abby can barely stand under the weight of the responsibility that’s smothering her.

“Abby?”

Abby’s eyes snap open to find Jackson lingering in the entrance to the Medical Bay. Hesitantly, he steps inside and moves towards her. Abby sits up from where she had been resting on the Medical table. Sleep was pretty much a non-starter at this point. Short snapshots of napping have been the best she could hope for. The lashings on her back scream bloody murder as she stands, but Abby shakes it off with a grimace and an aborted stretch.

She trained Jackson far too well to hope he wouldn’t notice. “Do you want some more painkillers?” he asks her quietly, despite the fact that they’re alone in the room.

Abby shakes her head hard. “We can’t spare the medicine.”

“We’re on the ground now,” Jackson protests, “we can send a team out to strip willow bark-”

“I appreciate the thought.” Abby forces herself to meet his eye and give him a tight smile. “But I’m fine.” Jackson looks unconvinced, but he knows her too well to argue. “Any news?” Abby asks instead, hoping he’ll drop it.

“No word from Chancellor Kane,” he says, correctly guessing what she’d wanted to know.

Marcus. Clarke is adamant that the Grounders are not responsible for what happened to her and her friends. This intel has been twisting Abby into knots for hours and she’s no closer to figuring out what to do about it. No closer to figuring out how to help Marcus. This very moment he’s on his way to make a deal with the Grounders. His mission is dangerous enough, but now he has the wrong information. He has no idea what he’s walking into.
Abby doesn’t know how close Kane is to the Grounders’ camp, but she knows he’s gone far enough now that Jackson’s whole face is swimming in grey before her. She looks down at the scabs on her wrists, where the restrains had cut into her skin. Even her blood is a dark grey. He’s completely out of range. Not too long ago this would have meant nothing, but since they landed on Earth, their range has been steadily building. None of that matters now, though, because he’s far away, walking into danger, and could die at any moment without her knowing. He needs help. They have to send someone after him and bring him back before the peace talks with the Grounders turn sour.

Then there’s the issue of the Mountain Men. According to Clarke’s reports, they have resources that the Arkers can’t hope to match. And until they have a better idea of their numbers and weapons, it’s impossible to attempt any type of full scale rescue mission. So first, they need to learn what they can about this Mountain.

Third and finally, there’s Finn Collins and John Murphy. They haven’t returned with the rest of the kids that Abby sent in search of Clarke. But there simply aren’t enough guards. There aren’t enough people. If they’re going to survive down here, they need Kane’s peace talks to go well. The priority has to be with him.

She’s made her decision.

After assuring Jackson that she’s fine, Abby sets off to meet with the rest of the council and put her plan into action.

Clarke intercepts her the moment she exits the council chamber. She must have been waiting outside while they met.

Clarke is not happy. What happened to the sweet girl who would volunteer to work in the medical bay everyday after school just so they could spend time together? They had been so close once, Abby reflects sadly. She wishes she knew how to get that back.

There’s a wild, determined look in her daughter’s eyes that Abby has never seen before as they square off against each other. There’s something cold in her now that Abby doesn’t recognize. If she’s being honest, it scares her more than she’d like to admit.

Then the boy, Bellamy Blake, moves to stand by Clarke’s side. He volunteers the two of them to go out on the rescue mission for Collins and Murphy. He says it as though it’s the most obvious thing in the world, and if she was scared before, she’s terrified now. But there’s something familiar in their dual expressions. Clarke and Bellamy, they share the same hard, set look. They look so similar standing there. A united front. They look like matches, Abby realizes. A chill shoots through her at the thought.

She had missed Clarke every single day when she’d been imprisoned on the Ark. Abby had suddenly found herself living alone, her quarters too large by far for one person. She had thought of nothing but Clarke and how to protect her. The Council was set to kill her on her birthday, the plan to send them to the ground was the only reprieve possible. Every moment she had since then had been devoted to worrying for her daughter. And now here she is in front of Abby at last, and somehow Abby’s still missing her.

She gives the order for constant surveillance on the gates. If this is what she has to do to protect her now, so be it.
Chapter End Notes

This was one of our favourite chapters to write - very excited to hear what you think!

And thanks so much for all your comments, we're really pleased people have been enjoying the story so far.
Clarke, Earth-date: October 17th 2149

The first unmistakable crack of gunfire turns Clarke’s blood cold. At some point in her life, she became the kind of person who runs towards gunfire as opposed to away from it. But this is her instinct now, as she tears across the forest floor, making a beeline for the rapid-fire clickclickclick of a rifle. Before she even crests the hill into Tondc, she knows that she will hate what she finds.

And there is Finn, breathing hard, rifle braced against his shoulder, firing into a crowd of Grounders. Murphy is by his side, screaming himself hoarse, begging Finn to turn and run. Bellamy had been afraid of this, but for Clarke the sight is dizzyingly wrong. What happened while she was away? How did peace-loving Finn descend to this?

She walks, half in a daze, down the hill into the village. Clarke barely registers when the firing stops, but suddenly Finn is gazing at her. He looks at her like a man lost at sea would gaze at his rescuer. “Found you.”

He takes a step towards her and every instinct in her body screams run! But she only manages to take a single step away from him. The horror must be clear on her face, because Finn stops, looking at her in puzzlement for a moment. Slowly, like coming down from a high, Finn looks around, taking in the scene. Realization dawns on his face as he comes back to himself. His face crumples in misery. “Artigas!” The grief in Octavia’s voice sends a shiver down Clarke’s spine.

She can only watch as Octavia collapses to the ground beside a young Grounder boy, her hands pressing hard on a wound in the boy’s side. “Clarke!” Octavia’s shouting. “Help me!”

Clarke has no help to offer. She’s stricken, rooted to the Earth, barely able to breathe let alone tend to any wounded. All around them, mayhem is reigning among the Grounders. Several of them are crying, cradling limp bodies or tending to wounds. Many more are screaming obscenities in a mix of languages.

Clarke can hardly stand to look at them. Crimson pools of blood fill the square, seeping into the earth, staining the dirt. But she can’t look away, mesmerized by the violent chaos. Only when Bellamy’s hand closes like a vice around her elbow, does Clarke draw back to herself. She tears her eyes away from the massacre and turns to him. The freckles on his cheeks are smeared with sweat and mud. His eyes are blown wide with fear, and she can already recognize the misplaced self-recrimination in his expression.

“We have to go,” he hisses, his voice low in her ear. “Now.”
Lexa raps her fingers slowly across the exposed blade of her favourite knife, thinking carefully. Nyko stands before her, sweat and tears still fresh on his cheeks.

“Seventeen in total, Commander.” Nyko’s voice trembles with rage.

The words are a physical blow. Every loss, every death, falls at Lexa’s feet. The life of every gona is intrusted to her. Their deaths are her failure. Not for the first time, she wonders what she did to bring this curse upon her people. She had lost so much in the course of pursuing peace among the clans. No sooner had she achieved it, than the worst enemy they have ever faced dropped out of the sky to burn their way across the land.

Lexa shifts in her throne, digging the blade of her knife into the armrest of her chair. “Emo gonplei ste odon,” she mutters under her breath. Inside her war tent, Nyko and Gustus nod solemnly in response.

“It was the boy,” Nyko continues. “Finn.” He spits the name like a curse. “One of the others named him as they escaped.”

“Thank you, Nyko,” Lexa turns her steady gaze to him. He makes no show of hiding the tears that continue to track down his weathered face. Why should he? There is no shame in grief, though it is a luxury that Lexa cannot extend to herself. “Go tend to those who can heal. Mourn those who cannot.”

“Chof, Heda.” He bows and leaves without another word.

From his position at the tent entrance, Gustus spits onto the tent floor. “We shall destroy them.” His sword hand flexes over the hilt of his blade, clearly ready to go back to war.

The idea is tempting, Lexa must admit. She too feels the irresistible thirst for vengeance. Jus drein jus daun. But then there’s the Sky Man they have trapped in their tunnels, who swears to any gona who will listen that he seeks peace. He would claim to end the bloodshed between their people, while his soldiers are massacring her village? It must be a trick. But… but what if it is not? Lexa would be condemning her people to death for the sake of her pride. Certainly, destroying the Sky People completely would also see an end to the bloodshed, but how many more of her people would die in the pursuit? Would the cost be worth it, to destroy the threat of the Sky People? She has worked hard, since the moment she became Commander, to build a peace between the clans. She would be a fool to waste another opportunity to save her people from bloodshed. If the offer is genuine. Lexa cannot see which course is wisest.

She feels the loss of her Mentor like a physical absence. A gap in the air where her closest ally should be. How would Anya proceed?

“Listening is often more valuable than speaking. People say many foolish things when they think only fools are listening,” Anya’s advice, given a lifetime ago, rings through Lexa’s mind like a bell, clear and reassuring. They are sitting cross-legged on the floor of her Mentor’s tent. A game of Commander lies sprawled across the ground around them. Lexa has lost to Anya for the third time that day, and she’s feeling petulant. She crosses her short arms over her chest, pouting like the sore loser she was at twelve-years-old. Anya leans forwards towards her young Second. She ensures that Lexa is holding her dark gaze before she speaks again. “You lost,” Anya explains patiently, “because you did not consider all options available to you. A real Heda knows when cunning cuts
sharper than any blade.” Anya is lost to her now - scorched to ash by the ruinous and reckless Sky People - but her Mentor’s wisdom remains. Lessons passed to the living is the only legacy any of them have.

“Send me in,” Lexa speaks into the waiting silence. “I will know the truth of their intentions.”

Across the tent, Gustus frowns at her, processing her words. Ghost-grey sunlight filters through the burlap netting of Lexa’s tent. For a fleeting moment, Lexa tries to call to mind what her General should look like, bathed in criss-crossing patches of dying sunlight. But she can’t recall the tint of sunlight in his hair or the rich tone of his skin. The colours shift in her mind from burnt orange to tarnished bronze to a brown the colour of rain-soaked earth. Try as she might, pinning them down in her memory is like catching rainwater with a net. She blinks away the memories, trying to focus. It’s for the best that she cannot remember. Colour is for the weak.

The weak like Gustus. Gustus, who looks at her like she’s the sun. Lexa recognizes the expression – the desperation, the joy, the fear and the love, all wrapped in a warrior’s heart – but does not return it. Gus is her consort, her aide, and her General. She relies on him, but he is no Costia.

“I will know their minds.” Lexa stands from her throne and rolls her shoulders. Sheathed and strapped against her back, she feels her sword shift under the movement. Absently, she cracks the knuckles of her left hand against the flat edge of her knife. “You will present yourself to them as the Commander.”

“Heda,” Gustus replies, moving across the tent to stand at her side. Though she is dwarfed by him considerably in size, he is, in every movement, the subservient of the two. “We already know the filth of their minds. We should just kill them both–”

“I have made my decision,” Lexa cuts him off.

“You heard the report from Nyko. They attacked Tondc! Murdered our people! The infirm, the elderly–”

“I am aware of this.”

“They are not worth the shit you would tread on to access the prison. The bodies of the slain are not yet cold and you would listen to their pathetic begs for peace?”

“Enough!” Lexa snaps, her patience at an end.

“You do not make requests anymore”, Costia’s smooth voice ripples through Lexa’s memory. Fingers are threading through her hair, braiding it, kissing it, caressing it. Her calloused hand is under Lexa’s chin, lifting her face to the sun-drenched sky, the colour-soaked canopy of trees above their heads. “You demand, Heda. Your people must comply.”

“Does that include you?” Lexa asks, leaning back against her match, stealing kisses along Costa’s jaw.

“Everyone save me,” Costia returns with a wicked grin. “You look after our people. Let me look after you.”

“I did not ask for your opinion.” Lexa bites off the words, glaring down Gustus. With deliberate gravitas, she flexes the muscles of her back, throwing her shoulders back and lifting her chin. Gus recognizes the threat inherent in the movement. Showing the first sign of wisdom all afternoon, he falls silent.
Bellamy, Earth date: October 17th 2149

Clarke is up ahead, leading the way through the forest as they silently make their way back to camp. Bellamy wants to talk to her, but even if she was next to him he doesn’t know what he would say. What he could possibly say, in the wake of Finn’s actions.

He wonders what it would be like to talk with Clarke about something that isn’t life and death, guilt and absolution. What would it be like to talk to her about colour? Even in the dark evening, the world is so rich and beautiful around them right now. Ever since they were reunited, since he saw her bright eyes looking up at him - so full of the relief that he himself was overwhelmed with at seeing her again - he’s felt that Clarke must be matched with him too.

He wishes he could know for sure though. He wishes there was a way to test it. He wonders if Clarke is as aware as he is right now of the tiniest fluctuations in the world around them as they edge nearer and further apart.

Camp Jaha is dark and silent when they return with Finn and Murphy. Octavia had tied Finn’s hands together behind his back and stripped him of all weapons herself. A hasty exit had been the only way to keep Nyko from killing Finn on the spot, but Octavia seems more than happy to provide some retribution herself. Every few steps she shoves Finn roughly forward. Tears are still drying on her cheeks, but she doesn’t let that stop her.

Sergeant Miller is at the gate when they arrive. “Weapons,” he instructs them.

Wordlessly, Murphy, Clarke and Bellamy hand over their guns. Octavia hands over the largest of her blades, but Bellamy knows she has at least two more tucked in her jacket and boot.

“What happened?” Miller Senior asks them, eyeing Finn warily. No one speaks. The words are sticky on Bellamy’s tongue. “Wait here,” Miller says when no explanation is forthcoming. “I’ll get the Chancellor.” He marches quickly away from them, disappearing under the shadow of the towering Ark.

Of course. Abby will want to know that they’ve returned.

“You’re back!”

Raven is limping hurriedly towards them from out of the dark of the camp. “I saw you coming!” She pulls up short as she nears them, taking in the tense scene. Her eyes land on the way Finn’s hands are held behind his back. A frown creases across his face. “What’s going on?”

“If we’re going to do this, I need a drink.” Murphy announces, ambling off towards the canteen area.

“Come on,” Octavia says, her voice iron. “I’m taking Finn to lock up. He –” Octavia gives Finn another rough shove forward “–can explain himself on the way. The Council – in their infinite wisdom – can decide what to do with him.”
Finn, Octavia, and Raven move off in the opposite direction, leaving Clarke and Bellamy alone inside the camp entrance.

By the time Miller returns with Abby, Clarke and Bellamy are the only ones left to explain.

Chapter End Notes

Your comments and thoughts are always welcome.
They sleep in the infirmary that night. Early the next morning, Clarke and the others are woken by Byrne and ushered into a quiet section of the Ark that Clarke thinks used to be a storage room. Now, it’s the new headquarters for the makeshift council.

Byrne deposits them in a dark section of corridor. They’re told to wait here; they will be seen individually. They each take up position in the hall, not speaking or making eye contact with each other. Clarke can feel Finn’s eyes on her, but she can’t look at him. She’s terrified of what she might see in his expression.

When the door opens, Octavia volunteers to go first. She practically leaps to her feet in her urgency to get this over with. Clarke understands that urge. She does not want to talk about what happened, but she wants to sit in this corridor even less. Clarke folds her hands on her lap, not looking at any of them. She wonders what the council will make of this. Wonders how to convey the horror of what they discovered in Tondc. Silence stretches, long and awkward, between the four people in the hallway. Long minutes pass before Octavia reemerges. Her eyes are red-rimmed again, but her hand is steady as she motions for Murphy to go in next. She and Bellamy exchange a brief look, and then Octavia disappears down the hall without a word.

With the seat beside Clarke now vacant, Finn sits down at her side. Again she feels the intense, insistent pressure of Finn’s gaze, willing her to look at him, but she refuses. She’s relieved when, after Murphy is done, Finn gets up to go inside next, so she is not left alone with him. Once he’s gone, Clarke chances a look up from her hands across to where Bellamy is sitting against the opposite wall. He meets her eyes and she is not surprised to see a reflection of her own guilt.

Finn’s testimony takes a long time. Eventually he emerges and sends Bellamy in next. For a moment Clarke worries that Finn will stay with her. He hesitates on his way out of the corridor, but Clarke keeps her eyes on her knees. After a prolonged stretch, he seems to give up. The pounding of his boots echo down the hall, fading until he's out of earshot. Clarke is left alone to wait for her turn.

A series of horrific and haunting images from the past few days cycle on repeat through her brain as she sits there. This world keeps surprising her with new and terrible ways to inflict violence. When Clarke finally goes to give her testimony, she recites the events of the day with clinical precision, answers all of their questions with short, succinct statements of fact, and then walks out without waiting to be dismissed. It’s a sign of how tired her mother is that she lets her go.

The sun has risen high over the camp while Clarke had been inside. The sudden shift to the brightness outside burns Clarke’s eyes. Blinking hard, she looks around the camp as her eyes adjust to the light. She spots Bellamy immediately. She thinks he might have been waiting for her, sitting expectantly at one of the rough wooden tables in the newly erected canteen. She gives him a weak smile as she approaches and slumps down opposite him.

A small pile of mostly blank paper and a couple of dark pencils are sitting on the table between them. The paper is yellowing at the edges, and looks like it might have once been the back pages of a user
manual. Clarke pulls the paper and pencils towards her.

“You mentioned something about a map of the Mountain,” Bellamy mutters, looking at the paper under her hands. “I thought you might be able to draw it?”

Clarke’s weak smile blossoms into something resembling real pleasure. Finally. Something productive.

They work together late into the evening. They may not have much at their disposal, but they have each other, they have their will to save their people, and they have colour. And that is enough to be carrying on with. Together the colour helps fuel their shared obsession: how to get their people back.

By the end of the day, the locations are all mapped out: the Mountain, the mines, the dam. The people are all analysed: the Mountain Men, the Grounders, the Reapers. Everything is talked over, and over and over. Clarke needs this. Their plan is the only thing she can think about that doesn’t make her want to scream or cry or break something. Thinking about their plan, talking about their plan, it’s the only thing keeping her on her feet. She needs it like she needs air to breathe, and she knows without being told that Bellamy is just the same.

Eventually, as night falls on the camp, Byrne comes to impose curfew. It’s the first night since arriving at Camp Jaha that Clarke hasn’t slept in the infirmary. Instead, she’s pointed towards a large tent on the edge of camp that has been set up as sleeping quarters. The tent is divided in two, separated by a long canvas wall down the middle, with dozens of cots in rows on either side. Clarke is handed a rolled up blanket as she enters. She recognizes it immediately as one of the blankets she and Bellamy found in the bunker, a couple of weeks earlier. It feels like a lifetime ago.

Clarke makes her way to a cot in the corner of the tent, against the dividing wall. She looks down at her blanket, bright orange, even in the dim light. She lies down on the cot, comforted by the knowledge that Bellamy can’t be far.

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Over the next two days, Bellamy stays close to her side. Or maybe she’s the one staying close to his side. It’s hard to tell. Either way they spend all their time side by side in vivid colour.

The next evening, Clarke is sitting up in her cot, adding more detail onto her map of the Mountain. She can’t sleep. The map is finished, but every time Clarke closes her eyes, her mind wanders. To Finn, awaiting the council’s judgment. To Octavia, who now walks around camp with the haunted look of someone trapped in monochrome. To Raven, who despite insisting to everyone that she’s fine, winces with every step she takes. To the 47 of her people that are imprisoned and even now could be going through untold torture and abuse. To Anya, who should not have died the way she did, shot in the back by people she had been willing to help. And to the faces of all the others who have died since coming to the ground. To Wells and Charlotte and Atom and Connor. So instead of sleep, Clarke continues to work.

As she sits outlining the edge of the mountain, she notices the colour of her blanket fade and then strengthen again. That’s odd. Bellamy must be pacing in the tent next to her. The bright colour drains away a third time and this time it stays pale in the dim light. Clarke waits a moment, but Bellamy does not return. Acting on impulse, Clarke puts her map down and follows him. Technically, there is a curfew, but it’s laughably easy to slip out
the back of the tent and avoid the meager number of guards on duty. Clarke follows the colour and finds Bellamy sitting looking out at the forest by Raven’s gate.

He doesn’t look around as she approaches, but his posture is tilted a little towards her, like he knows she’s there.

“Did you mean to call me?” Clarke asks before she thinks to stop herself.

Bellamy looks up at her, a smile twitching on his lips. “It worked.”

“Yeah,” Clarke breathes, all the oxygen suddenly sucked from her lungs.

That’s it. He knows.

He was testing her and she fell for it. They might have abandoned all pretense of not being matched, but until now the subject had lingered between them. Acknowledged, but somehow resolutely undiscussed. This is different; there’s no going back now. He knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that she’s matched to him. Meanwhile, Clarke still only suspects that her match is returned. Her stomach twists into a tight knot, feeling suddenly awkward and exposed.

Missing nothing, Bellamy’s sharp eyes rake over her, taking in the tense line of her shoulders.

“I, uh, I wasn’t sure it would work.” Bellamy plucks a blade of grass from the dirt, avoiding her eye. “I didn’t know if…if our ranges were the same.” A blush creeps across his cheeks, bright crimson against his tanned cheeks.

Heat blooms in Clarke’s chest, relaxing the mounting tension in her frame. The relief that sweeps through her is heady and potent, like a shot of Monty’s moonshine.

She can’t help but grin as she takes a seat beside him on the dew-soaked grass. “That was smart,” she tells him, attempting to calm her suddenly racing heart.

They lapse into a comfortable silence for a few moments.

“Tell me something happy.” Bellamy is still gazing out at the trees, his hands twisted together in his lap. “Everything we’re up against, I could use some good news.”

Clarke hesitates. You’re my match.

She bites her tongue against that response. “Jasper met his colour-match,” she tells him instead.

“Really? Wow, good for him.”

“He was kind of insufferable, actually.” Clarke chuckles dryly at the memory. “He kept talking about how beautiful everyone’s eyes were. And what a great colour chocolate cake is. I thought Harper was going to punch him for sure.”

Bellamy lets out a laugh and Clarke allows herself to smile, thinking of their friends in happier times. God, she hopes they’re all still okay.

“Who is it?” Bellamy asks, “one of the people in the Mountain?”

“Yeah. Her name’s Maya. He’s her match too.”

“What’s she like? Can we trust her?”
“Well, when I first met her I held her hostage and used her to break out of my cell.”

Bellamy raises an eyebrow at this. His look speaks of admiration and wry exasperation, along the lines of why am I not surprised. Clarke feels her cheeks flush in response.

“Anyway,” she says, forging ahead, “she seems nice. I don’t know if we can trust her, but she’s loyal to Jasper at least, so I think maybe we can.”

“If we’ve learned anything from Lincoln and Octavia, it’s that people will go to any lengths for their match.”

Clarke nods, “I get that.”

“Yeah.” Bellamy agrees, looking at her earnestly, “I get that too.”

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The next day, as they are going over their plans again, Bellamy is restless.

“If your mother doesn’t sanction a mission soon, I’m going by myself.”

“You won’t be by yourself,” she corrects him.

Whatever it takes, any lengths, they are in this together.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed this chapter - as usual, very much looking forward to hearing your thoughts!
Maya, Earth date: October 19th 2149

Maya wakes feeling the healthiest she’s felt in a long time, maybe ever. Jasper is still asleep on the bed next to hers. She could happily just sit here and watch her brave match sleep peacefully in this beautiful nest of colour that surrounds them.

But it’s clear that Dr Singh want her to leave. Monty is still here, asleep in a chair in the corner of the room and Dr Singh is visibly uncomfortable with his presence. Or at least he looks asleep. But he’s very still. Maya wouldn’t be surprised if he’s just pretending to be asleep so Dr Singh can’t try and convince him to leave. She drops Maya’s clothes at the end of her bed and gives her a pointed look when she doesn’t immediately move to pick them up and get changed.

There is something about Dr Singh that always makes Maya a little uneasy. So, not wanting to cause trouble, she gets dressed and crosses the room to squeeze Jasper’s hand in parting.

“You’re a lucky girl to have such a match,” Dr Singh remarks casually over the top of her clipboard.

Maya’s insides turn to lead and her heart thumps like a drum in her ears. It takes every effort to look up, smile, and nod as casually as she can. Every instinct in her body tells her to run, but she manages to slow her feet enough to slip out of the room at a natural pace until she is halfway down the hall. When she’s sure there’s no one behind her, Maya breaks into a sprint around the corner and out of sight. Immediately doubling over to empty the contents of her stomach on the floor.

They knew he was her match. None of this was an accident.

Monty, Earth-date: October 19th 2149

The blood transfuser clicks and whirs at a smooth, constant rhythm. Every two minutes, a machine monitors Jasper’s vitals and lets out of a soft, reassuring beep. Monty sits, counting the time in two minute intervals, watching the machine. Jasper’s chest rises and falls at a regular, reassuring measure, his limbs splayed over the edges of the hospital bed as he sleeps. He’s going to be fine, empirically all evidence says he’s going to be fine. But Monty will be damned if he’s going to leave his best friend alone in this place. He has an irrepresible feeling that if he leaves the room, he would never be allowed back in.

Paranoia has taken root in the back of his mind. The more he looks around, the less sense all of this makes. Attendants will beam as they read Jasper's chart, but their smiles stutter and die when they notice Monty in the corner of the room. The transfuser clicks at a faster frequency when Jasper’s blood toxicity level passes a certain threshold. At first, every time it happened, Monty had rushed to his feet to read the machine's output. This is advanced technology; it had taken Monty hours to make sense of it. But none of the attendants that have come in to check on Jasper look confused about how to use them. For a new and experimental procedure, they sure know a lot about the medical devices
required. They all know what they're doing. A new attendant comes in every hour. They check Jasper’s chart, grin like loons, frown when they notice Monty, check Jasper’s blood toxicity, grin some more, and leave. Every hour, like clockwork, it’s the same. And with every passing visit, Monty’s suspicions ratchet up. Why would all of the medical attendants in this tiny underground civilization know how to use blood transfusion technology like its no more complicated than a hand-crank flashlight?

Clarke had seen it right away. A fresh wave of guilt washes over him every time he thinks about it. He should have listened to her. He should have helped. As soon as Jasper’s fit to stand, they’re getting the hell out of dodge. If Clarke could do it, they can too, right? And then once they find Clarke, Monty swears to himself that he is never going to doubt her again.

Jasper stirs. He blinks and looks over at the now empty bed beside him, where until recently Maya had been.

“She’s fine,” Monty tells him, reading the building panic on Jasper’s face. He pushes forward in his chair, “They released her this morning.”

Jasper takes a breath and collapses back onto his pillow. “I know,” he speaks to the ceiling. “I can tell from the colour.”

“Right. Yeah.” The colour. He forgot about Maya. Maya will never survive outside the Mountain, Jasper will never leave without her, and Monty will never leave without Jasper. Fuck.

He wants to be happy for his friend. Statistically, that fact that he found a match who also found him is an incredible thing. And he really wants to just be happy for Jasper. But he can’t. It’s not that he’s jealous; it’s just that whenever he thinks about it, he feels painfully sad.

A memory has been playing on a loop in his head recently. They were seven and Monty had been upset because some kid in their class had just started to see in colour and had talked all day about how much better their life was now that they had a soulmate. He remembered crying in a corner over because he didn’t think he would ever get to see in colour. Jasper sat down next to him and told him simply that he wasn’t sad about anything, because colour sounded stupid and pointless and he didn’t need to look for a soulmate because he already had Monty. He and Jasper had been soulmates all their lives, no matter what the colour said. But now, here was Jasper, prepared to risk his life for Maya. His new soulmate. And no matter how Monty tries to reason with himself, he still feels an overwhelming sense of loss. Okay, so he might be a little jealous. He’s not proud of it.

“You look terrible,” Jasper cuts through his reflection.

Jasper’s probably not wrong. Monty’s voice feels like nails against the back of the throat, his eyes burn when he blinks, and any good that the shower had done when he arrived at the Mountain has been wiped out by the stress of the past day. The shirt that had once been crisp and fresh has become rumpled, the sleeves tightly rolled to the elbows, the fabric soft with wear. Monty scrapes a hand across his eyes, battling away his fatigue.

“Says the guy who spent the last day and a half puking.”

“Have you eaten or slept at all?” Genuine concern rings in Jasper’s voice. “I’m fine. You should go back to the dorms and rest.”

Monty doubts he’ll ever be able to rest in this place again. With a flick of his eyes, he notes the surveillance cameras. One, wedged in the top-right corner of the room. Its only blind spot is covered by another camera in the hallway, positioned to capture the space through the window in the room’s
door. The camera is sleek, black, and unobtrusive. Monty might not have noticed it at all if he didn’t know what to look for. There’s a pin-prick of a hole directly below the camera, built into the protective casing. Monty can’t study it too closely without drawing copious amounts of attention to himself, but he knows what it is. A microphone. A twitch flicks in Monty’s eye. They’re everywhere. It would be suicide to attempt any discussion with Jasper about his suspicions or plans for escape. So he has no choice but to agree and leave.

His legs are stiff as he stands. “They said you should be released this afternoon. I’ll come back and check on you if you’re not.” He hesitates, “You’re sure you feel alright?”

Jasper smiles, the grin wide and goofy and familiar. “Never felt better.”

A chill runs down Monty’s spine. He really means that. Lying in a hospital bed, half-way dead, playing russian roulette with experimental medical procedures and Jasper has never been happier in his damn life. Monty tries, very hard, not to take that personally.

Maya, Earth-date: October 19th 2149

_They knew he was her match._

They manipulated their bond. They knew he’d do anything for her and so they exposed her to severe radiation. She was a lab rat, and he was a human blood bag. Anxiety wrenches its way through her body. Now that they know the treatment works, how long before they have all of Jasper’s people in cages like the other outsiders?

Maya slumps against the wall of the hallway, trying to steady her frenetic breaths.

They used her. Her own people used her. Used them both. They think that their match makes them vulnerable, easy to manipulate.

But they don’t understand. They don’t know. _How could they?_ They’ve never been matched.

She isn’t about to stand idly by as her soulmate and his people are used so violently by her own. She needs to warn him. To tell - better yet, to show - him the truth. She’ll have to be careful, her people have eyes and ears everywhere. Well, they have ears everywhere, but their surveillance system isn’t perfect. And she knows all its weaknesses. There are bugs in the dorm, but no cameras. She’ll have to approach Jasper there as soon as he is released.

She feels sick when she thinks about what her people are capable of. But then, she thinks with a sudden rush of power, they have no idea what _she’s_ capable of.

Clarke, Earth-date: October 19th 2149
“You’re not going to stop are you?”

“Not until my friends are safe.” Clarke holds her mother’s gaze, refusing to back down.

“Alright,” Abby concedes. “But I’m coming with you.”

Clarke nods and turns to Raven. “Pack up what you need,” she instructs her friend. “We’ll leave at first light. I’ll tell Bellamy and Octavia.”

“Sure,” Raven agrees, turning back to the array of communications around her. Quickly and efficiently, she goes to work sorting through what she’ll need for the journey.

Adrenaline spikes in Clarke’s blood as she takes off in the opposite direction, pushing through the flap of the communications tent and back outside. Her boots pound across the hard-packed ground as she takes off in search of Bellamy. This is it. They finally have their chance. This is what she and Bellamy have been preparing for these last two days. The next stage of the plan takes shape in her head as she crosses the open expanse of camp. She pulls up short when Abby sidesteps in front of her.

“Woah, Clarke slow down.” Abby clamps a hand on Clarke’s arm, forcing her to stop. “We can bring six trained guards. Octavia’s just a kid, and Bellamy is not a guard. We don’t need them.”

Clarke bristles at Abby’s description. With a sharp twist of her arm, she forces her mom to let go. “This isn’t up for discussion.”

“Clarke, stop.” She can feel Abby follow at her elbow, but she refuses to negotiate on this one. “Talk to me,” Abby insists, keeping apace with Clarke’s sharp stride.

“There’s nothing to talk about.” Clarke doesn’t slow down as she crosses the dark camp. The floodlights around the new make-shift mess hall are vivid. Bellamy must still be in there. She scans the tables for him. “He’s coming with us, end of story.” Obviously Bellamy has to come, this conversation is a waste of time. If their plan is to go into action, he has work to do.

“He’s your match isn’t he?” Abby’s words bring Clarke to a grinding halt. It’s not surprising that Abby would guess about Clarke’s match. Clarke has no doubt that the rumour mill has been churning overtime. But it’s the way Abby levels it like an explanation. Like this is the answer, the sole reason Clarke could want him on the mission. It’s beyond offensive. To both of them. She rounds on her mother.

“You think I want him to come with us so the trees are a brighter shade of green?” She advances, trying her best to keep her voice steady. “This has nothing to do with Bellamy being my match, and everything to do with him being the right person to have our backs out there. Him and Octavia both. They know these woods, they know what’s out there, and when it comes down to it, I trust them with my life. We’re going to war, Mom. Believe me when I say we want them on our side.”

Clarke turns to go without giving her mother time to respond. Outrage courses through her. She doesn’t think she can stand to listen to anything else from her right now.

She spots Bellamy standing with Monroe and Mel near the still. She gives him a significant look as she walks past him, not stopping until she gets to the far end of the mess, away from everybody. She knows that he’s following her before she turns to face him.
“Raven’s found something,” Clarke jumps in without preamble. “Mount Weather is jamming our radios. My mom’s sanctioned a mission to go blow up their transmitter.”

“And then what?” Bellamy crosses his arms over his chest. “So we blow their transmitter, that gets us no closer to getting into the Mountain—”

“I know,” Clarke cuts in, “that’s why I just convinced my mom to let you and Octavia join us on the mission.”

Bellamy nods, already anticipating her train of thought. “So we can take the opportunity to scout the area. That’s perfect.”

“There must have been other buildings connected to the Mountain at some point. They’ll be ruins now, but look for anything man-made.”

“Good plan.”

Clarke catches sight of Abby watching them from the other side of the mess and a fresh wave of anger floods Clarke’s veins. Bellamy notices her agitation. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Clarke responds instinctively. She looks up at his warm brown eyes as he waits for her to elaborate. “My mom just basically accused me of only asking for you to come on this mission because of our match.”

“Oh.” That was clearly not what he had been expecting her to say.

Clarke is suddenly aware that neither of them had ever used that word before. Feeling the blood rush to her cheeks she plows on with her point, not wanting to linger.

“Which is ridiculous. She doesn’t understand what she’s up against, and she can’t accept that we know, better than her, what’s really out there. Have you seen these guards from the Ark? Most of them haven’t taken an Earth Skills class in over a decade. They look terrified.”

“I know. Yesterday I overheard one of them asking what the difference between wood and bark was.” A smile creeps over his face. It isn’t funny. It really isn’t. And yet somehow she feels a smile slowly curl the corners of her mouth as well.

“It’s true, they don’t know anything,” Bellamy continues “But they’ll get there. And so will your mother. Let her think what she wants about your motives. If it gives us a chance to locate an access point to the Mountain, what does it matter?”

Clarke nods. She feels her anger begin to ebb away. As usual, talking to Bellamy has a way of focusing and clarifying her thoughts.

“It will be useful, you know,” he says. “When I split off, you’ll be able to tell where I am.”

“Just so long as you don’t wander out of range.”

“It’s a lot stronger than it was,” Bellamy says, seemingly without thinking. A look of pride crosses his features as they look at each other.

“It is,” Clarke agrees.

A relaxed silence falls between them. Now what? It feels so weird to discuss their match like this. So matter of fact. They’re soulmates and sure maybe not all soulmates are romantic, but most are. For a
brief moment, Clarke entertains the idea of bringing this up, but the thought of complicating their relationship right now makes her head spin. Bellamy is the only person left in her life that she knows she can 100-percent rely on. If she is going to survive this, more than anything else she needs that right now. She needs him by her side. As he is now. Her match.

“You should take Finn with you too,” Bellamy says, cutting through her thoughts. Clarke opens her mouth to protest, but he continues. “He’s the best tracker we’ve got. He’ll be useful. And besides, I don’t think it’s a good idea to leave him on his own at camp right now.”

“Okay.” She turns to go. “Can you find Octavia and tell her? She can go with you. I’ll find Finn. We leave at first light.”

Nathan, Earth-date: October 19th 2149

All things considered, this Mountain could be a lot worse. He doesn’t like the way that every move they make seems to be watched by these people. It reminds him of being a child back on Alpha Station, their every moment regimented. He misses the freedom they used to have on the surface. But then again, at least the food here is good. And there are no Grounders trying to kill them all every moment of the goddamn day. That’s a plus.

Miller notices immediately when Monty enters the dining hall. He looks up to find him hesitating by the food table. Monty is worried. Miller doesn’t know when exactly he become an expert at reading Monty’s moods, but he has. He knows, long before Monty has made his way over to him, that something’s wrong.

Monty smiles in a superficial manner that Miller is not familiar with as he approaches. His grin is tight and strained and looks nothing like the reckless abandon of Monty’s true smile.

“Hey Miller!” Monty’s voice is wrong too. “Are you heading back to the dorms?” He’s speaking much louder than the situation calls for.

“Err. Yeah?”

“Great! I’ll walk back with you.”

Miller feels the need to return Monty’s overlarge smile with one of his own. Clearly this conversation is for someone else’s benefit. He allows himself one glance back up at the head table where the Mountain’s Council - or whatever they call it here - are still sitting. Sure enough, at least two pairs of eyes are trained on them as they move towards the exit.

Monty doesn’t speak again until they have turned out of sight and started down the hall towards to dorms.

“Can I trust you?” Monty asks, his voice low and his eyes trained straight ahead.

The question blindsides him. Miller is struck with a sudden sadness that Monty has no idea of the extreme lengths Miller is willing to go for him. An impulse to explain the extent of his loyalty shoots through him, but he lets it pass by unacted upon, and instead he simply nods.

With an incisive flick of his eyes, Monty looks Miller up and down, appraising him for a moment.
Whatever Monty’s thinking, Miller can’t guess, but after a moment he comes to an unspoken decision. Without another word, he turns to a door Miller hadn’t even noticed at the end of the hall. He produces a white keycard from up his sleeve, swipes the lock, and ushers Miller inside. Completely nonplussed, Miller can think of nothing else to do but follow Monty’s lead.

Inside, Miller is momentarily taken aback by the sheer size and magnitude of the colours that surround him. Brightly coloured paintings cover every inch of this warehouse-sized storage room. Miller has seen some of these types of pictures around the Mountain already, of course, but seeing this many of them at once, and being so close to Monty at the same time, he has to admit it’s quite something. He hopes the awe isn’t too visible on his face.

In any case, the moment is short-lived. One glance at Monty’s distressed face soon pulls Miller’s attention back to the matter at hand.

“What’s up?” Miller asks, concern creeping through him.

Monty takes a deep breath and then dives in with no further preamble. “The Mountain Men are lying to us. They’re not what they say. They have a room filled with hundreds of Grounders in cages, who they routinely drain for their blood so they can treat themselves for radiation poisoning. They’ve already manipulated Jasper into donating blood for Maya, and now they know that our blood is better than Grounder blood for curing them. There’s no way they’re going to let us leave if they think we can cure them. For now they’re only asking for volunteers, but if we keep saying no they probably have a room full of cages with our names on them that they won’t hesitate to use.”

The words come out of Monty in a rush, barely breathing until the whole situation has been explained. Miller stands, arms folded across his chest, silently processing the situation. Of course they’re evil. Miller wryly reflects that he doesn’t actually feel the least bit surprised. At worst, he’s a little disappointed. Of course this was all too good to be true. Of course it’s just their luck that they would end up prisoners again, this time trapped by people with an even more fucked up sense of morality than they had on the Ark. And that’s saying something. Whatever else the Grounders are, at least they’re upfront about their desire to kill everyone.

“So we volunteer,” Miller concludes at last.

“That’s what we’re thinking too. We need more time. And we really need to stay on their good side.”

Miller nods in agreement. “Who’s we so far?”

“Maya showed both Jasper and me the truth, and Jasper’s talking to Harper right now. They can’t know that we know, so the fewer people who know the truth right now the better.”

“Well, I’m in. You, me, Jasper, and Harper,” Miller repeats back, thinking it over. That’s good. Harper would have been Miller’s choice too. “We got this. Sign me up for the vomit cleanse.”

Monty’s eyes brighten at his joke and Miller painfully reflects that he wishes he could devote every hour of his waking life to making Monty’s eyes brighten like that. But these are the kind of idiotic sentimentalities that get them nowhere, Miller chastises himself, shaking off the moment of weakness.

“Thanks Miller.”

“Anytime,” he shrugs.
Lexa, Earth-date: October 20th 2149

With a shout of pent up frustration, Lexa swings her longsword in a wide arc and brings it crashing down against Gustus’ defensive parry. The impact sends a shudder of force all the way through her arm and into her shoulder, but Gustus’ defensive position holds strong. She pulls back and faces off against the taller man, trying to find a weakness in her sparring partner’s defenses. Gustus keeps his sword raised in a defensive position, but Lexa knows from experience that his attacks can be surprisingly fast despite his large frame. With a telltale dip of his shoulder, he charges forward, and Lexa is there, countering his attack with one of her own. The sounds of their clashing swords and heavy breathing fill the secluded clearing they found to spar in.

This is good. Lexa really, really needed this. The strain of muscle, the weight of her unsheathed swords in her hands, the trickle of sweat down the small of her back. She has been too idle lately. Sitting in her high throne while her generals fight and die for her. It is not what being a leader should mean.

Plus, she could use the distraction. The chance to get outside of herself, to think about the situation at hand with fresh eyes. Time was, she would have turned to Costia’s bed for these moments of clarity, but… well… fighting will have to do.

She pulls back again, boots digging against the grass. The movement gains her a bit of space as she and Gustus face off across the clearing. They resume pacing around each other for a moment.

“Marcus is a noble man,” Lexa says aloud. She needs to talk this through, understand all of her options before she can decide what to do with the prisoners in her underground cell.

Gustus doesn’t shift his fighting stance when he replies, “if he were noble, he would not send one of his butchers to murder our weak and innocent.”

Rushing, Gus attacks again, but his swing is too high. Lexa bobs under his sword and plants the hilt of her weapon against his exposed thigh. Unbalanced, Gustus stumbles and falls back.

“Marcus insists that the coward acted alone, without his permission or knowledge,” Lexa counters.

“But that is no better!” Gustus shouts as Lexa resumes her attack.

For a while, all conversation dies under a flurry of movement. Their swords ring like bells in Lexa’s ears, drowning out even her own thoughts. There is only attack, parry, attack. After several minutes of this, Lexa falters. She swings a little too wide, and Gustus manages to land a punch to her exposed side. The wind momentarily knocked out of her, she pulls back again.

Panting, Gustus picks up the discussion where they left off. “If this leader cannot control his own gona, how will he maintain a peace between our people?”

Lexa nods. She has the same fear. And her concern goes deeper than mere control. Some part of Lexa is sure that destroying the Sky People is the wise course of action. But some other part of her is
desperately curious to learn more about them. Most of all, there is the question at the heart of everything: who is leading the Skaikru?

Marcus claims to speak for the Sky People. But during Lexa’s interrogation of their motives, he deferred frequently to the violent and volatile Thelonious. What’s more, neither of these men were even present in the battle that killed two of her generals and destroyed their armies.

Where is the warrior Clarke in all this? Was Finn acting under her orders? Until Lexa knows who their real *Heda* is, any attempt at peace would be pointless.

“Even if the offer is genuine,” Lexa speaks at last, “it cannot be accepted. The massacre in Tondc must be answered.”

Gustus nods, apparently relieved at her conclusion.

Lexa drives forward again, her renewed attack furious and unrelenting. Gustus is on his back in moments, his own sword pressed at his throat.

A pang of boredom runs through Lexa. She knew she would beat Gus: she always does. More often than not, she can feel him pulling back. He softens his blows, or he does not take advantage of every weakness in her technique. Quite unlike Anya, who used to take some kind of savage pleasure in dropping Lexa on her ass. When confronted, Gustus denies any pulled punches, but it’s plain as day. The thing that tortures Lexa is that she does not know why. Is it because she is his commander, or because she is his match? Either is an insult, but at least Lexa can understand the instinct inherent in protecting a match. Likely it’s both, which makes him an unsatisfying sparring partner.

But he’s the only friend she’s got left. So she pulls him to his feet and returns his weapon to his hand.

“Once more,” she instructs him, readying to resume their fight. “Then you will send one of our guests with a message.”

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**Octavia, Earth-date: October 20th 2149**

It’s freezing in the underground parking lot. The only light to see by is Bellamy’s small flashlight, swinging its wide beam across the abandoned lot with each step he takes. Distantly, Octavia can still hear the flat, tinny music from the toy that idiot of a guard was playing with. Honestly, it’s like these morons want to get eaten by Reapers.

“Do you hear that?” Bellamy asks her suddenly. She hadn’t heard anything, but when she listens now, she can hear it too. A sound, low and liquid, underneath the music from the child’s toy.

“Yeah,” she answers slowly. Whatever is causing that…squelching… she knows she isn’t going to like it.

It’s not until the sickly colour washes through her vision that she realizes just how much she’s not going to like it. It comes on like an illness. Muted colours sweep through her vision, and Octavia
wants to feel relief, but the terror is choking her. Because they would never have let him go, they wouldn’t, so this...

“Bell-” her voice cracks. She swallows hard against the rising bile in the back of her throat. She stops dead, her feet cemented to the cracked pavement, unwilling, unable, to move. The wet sound is louder now. It’s all Octavia can hear, the slipping, slurping sound of something – someone – and she can’t, she can’t...

Bellamy pauses when he notices Octavia has stopped and looks back at her, concerned. The light is dancing around his face and his brown eyes watch her.

“I – I think-”

The hunching, gurgling creature, which Octavia’s gaze has been deliberately avoiding, lets out a grunt. Bellamy whips around, casting his flashlight across the figure.

Lincoln looks up from his meal and bears his teeth in a red snarl.

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**Macus, Earth-date: October 20th 214**

A crack of impact echoes through the cell as the Grounder backhands Thelonious across the face. Thelonious staggers back, only for the Grounder to grab him again and punch him full across the jaw. On the other side of the cell, Marcus can only wince in sympathy from where he’s trapped, crouched and shackled, against the near wall of the prison.

“Please,” Marcus tries again, refusing to give up. He looks to the girl - the Commander - standing stoic and proud at the prison entrance. “Please, you don’t have to do this.”

She looks down at him and her expression seems to soften for a moment before the resolve hardens on her face. As her lackey continues his assault on Thelonious, Lexa takes a few sharp strides forward and bends to Marcus’ level. Kneeling in front of him, Marcus can study her features. Even in the gloomy grey, her eyes are noticeably young behind all the finery and makeup.

“I believe your desire for peace is genuine,” she tells him. “But it is not enough.”

Marcus opens his mouth to argue - *it is enough! It could be!* - but she rises her hand quickly, cutting him off.

“Understand,” she continues. “I have no interest in slaughter, but you leave me no choice. Your people are a threat. They defy your apparent orders, they kill indiscriminately. They fire-bomb villages and gun down the infirm. Your people have single-handedly been responsible for more death and destruction in the space of a single season than the Mountain Men or the warring Clans have ever managed in years of combat.”
Marcus’ protests die on his tongue. As he listens to her speak, he wonders how he ever could have mistaken her for a servant. Despite her child’s eyes, she is a leader in every word she speaks.

“She doesn’t have to be like this anymore,” Marcus maintains. “We can do better.”

“Maybe.” Lexa looks at him with such a focused intent that Marcus feels exposed under her scrutiny. “We can speak again when your people have more than death to offer us.”

Chapter End Notes

So I know this day/chapter is a bit quieter, but don’t worry I promise there are some epic days/chapters coming up!!
Bellamy, Earth-date: October 21st 2149

Bellamy didn’t like leaving Octavia alone with Lincoln when he was like that. There was no hint of the old Lincoln left behind his eyes, just a terrifying wildness. But Octavia had insisted, and she was right of course. They need Clarke. So he secured Lincoln with the same chains he had used - what seemed like a lifetime ago - to chain Lincoln up in the same spot. How long ago had it actually been? It was hard to keep track of the days, but it can’t have been more than a month… how was it possible that so much had changed in so little time.

There’s a distant, sad look in Octavia’s eyes as he leaves her. It’s not fair. She’s already endured more pain than any one person should ever have to. He has to save Lincoln. He can not let his little sister’s world go dark. She deserves so much better than that.

And so he set off towards Camp Jaha. Towards Clarke. As he nears the camp, he watches as the colours strengthen around him. Clarke will have been wondering why he hadn’t met at the rendezvous point when he was supposed to. But he never went fully out of range so she will have known that he was okay. She’ll understand when he explains about Lincoln.

At the front gate of Camp Jaha he’s stopped by a guard. “Turn over your weapons.”

Bellamy was expecting this. He holds up his empty hands innocently. “I’m unarmed.” Tired of surrendering and having to negotiate back his gun all the time, he’d hid it in a tree stump just on the outset of the clearing before he approached the camp.

The guard gives him a suspicious look but doesn’t stop him as he slips past. Something’s clearly going on in camp. A huge crowd has gathered, listening to someone speak on the steps of the Ark.

His stomach drops, and for a split second he thinks he’s going to be sick. It’s Thelonious Jaha. In a flash, Bellamy is back on the Ark, his hand shaking as his finger squeezes around the trigger of the handgun. He had been ready to kill this man. He had tried, wanted even, to kill this man. And yet here he is. Alive. And on Earth.

At some point, he will have to face this man. But then he remembers the look in Octavia’s eyes as he left her. They have bigger shit to deal with today.

He catches sight of Clarke near the front of the crowd and makes his way towards her.

Lexa, Earth-date: October 21st 2149

Lexa hasn’t felt this level of unease in some time. She shifts in her throne, fidgeting restlessly with Costia’s knife. Standing at attention beside her, Indra casts her a sideways glance. Lexa glares at her until Indra looks away, her gaze again shifting back to the tent flap. Gustus is standing just outside
the entrance, awaiting their guest.

The real Sky Commander.

At last, Lexa will get to meet the Sky Girl she has been hearing so much about. From Anya’s report of their meeting at the bridge, from Indra’s traitor of a scout, from Nyko, and from her new prisoner Marcus. Everyone walks away from encounters with the Sky Leader having a different opinion. Anya found her naïve and recklessly prone towards violence. Indra’s scout – though certainly biased by a colour-match – argued for her level-headed and honest desire for peace. Nyko’s report is largely second-hand, but he described her as cunning and cowardly when she fled from the Tondc massacre with the murderer Finn. And Marcus, confusingly, has little to say about her. He dismisses her as a child, as inconsequential in their negotiations.

That last report, at least, Lexa is sure to be false. Perhaps it’s a method of protecting their leader from threats, as with Lexa’s gambit in sneaking into the cell with Marcus and Thelonious. In any case, Lexa will finally be able to learn her own opinion of the Sky Leader. And by extension, she may finally understand who the Skaikru truly are.

Outside the tent, Lexa hears Gustus’ low growling voice and she knows that the time has come. A moment later, the tent flap is pulled back, and Clarke of the Skaikru steps inside. The young leader approaches Lexa, unafraid. Her eyes are hard and her shoulders are set. And though she cannot be much larger in stature than Lexa herself, there is something irresistible in her. She draws the eye, fills a room, takes up more space than a typical warrior of her size. She is, in every way, a clear leader. Already Lexa is intrigued. She wonders, in a moment of foolishness, what Clarke would look like in colour.

“So you’re the one who burned three hundred of my warriors alive,” Lexa remarks, keeping her voice as level as possible. Intent, she spins her knife between her fingers.

“You’re the one who sent them there to kill us,” Clarke counters. It’s not even an accusation, merely a statement of fact. Despite herself, Lexa is finding herself drawn to this stranger.

When Indra, predictably, offers to kill Clarke on the spot, Lexa raises a bored hand to cut her off. Every time Lexa is forced to work with her, she remembers again why she chose Gustus and Anya over her. Indra lacks imagination. She is too full of rage, too full of a grief that has no outlet. Losing her keryon-ai she way she did has affected her. It is worse than being a colour-widow, because she must constantly face her loss, over and over again. It would be better if she could just kill her match and get it over with. Holding on to false hope will cause nothing but undirected pain.

“I can help you beat the Mountain Men,” Clarke cuts in.

Interesting. “Go on.”

The rush of information that Clarke deposits at their feet has Lexa’s head spinning. Her people are used for medicine? Clarke escaped the Mountain? Somehow Lexa has no trouble imagining it. Clarke destroyed an entire army of Lexa’s best fighters using only a handful of pitifully trained Sky People. If anyone could break out of the Mountain using nothing but brute force and a bit of luck, it would surely be the unkillable Clarke.

“No one escapes the Mountain,” Indra growls.

“I did. With Anya.”

Lexa’s stomach bottoms out. Anya survived the firestorm? She escaped the Mountain as well? She
knows the shock must register on her face, but she makes little attempt to hide it. If Anya survived all that, could she possibly… hope kindles like a small flame in her heart. Surely if she were still alive she would have reported back by now, but maybe, maybe…

“She told me you were her second,” Clarke says. And no. Of course not. Lexa had been a fool to believe in the impossible.

She accepts Clarke’s gift silently. Anya’s braid is smooth under Lexa’s fingers. She remembers tying the knot herself, a strip of leather from her own armor used to hold the tie in place. Absently, Lexa smoothes her fingers over the worn leather. So it’s true then, Anya really is dead. She exchanges a look with Gustus and sees her own grief reflected in his eyes.

“We don’t know it’s hers,” Indra says.

_Idiot._ Lexa can’t even look at her.

Carefully, she places Anya’s braid to the side. There will be time enough for burial rites after the battle is done. “Did she die well?” Lexa cannot help asking.

“Yes,” Clarke assures her firmly. “By my side.”

Jealously knocks Lexa sideways for a moment. What right does Clarke have to Anya’s final moments? Why should she have been there while Lexa was across the world, ignorant of her mentor’s last fight? For all Lexa knows, Clarke killed Anya herself. But she thinks not, somehow.

“I’m still waiting for an offer, Clarke,” Lexa snaps.

“The Mountain Men are turning your people into Reapers. I can turn them back.”

Lexa stops dead at that.

“Impossible,” Indra snarls. Fury is clouding her judgement again as she begs Lexa to let her kill Clarke.

Lexa ignores her. Indra cannot be trusted where Reapers are concerned. She is a live wire of pain so intense that Lexa can feel it like a heat rippling off her in waves. She bears down on Clarke, who does not flinch, does not blink.

“Pleni!” Lexa barks, calling Indra off like a disobedient dog.

At last, Indra relents and moves off, distancing herself from Clarke and her false hope. A hope too dangerous to put into words.

“You say you can turn Reapers back into men?” Lexa challenges, approaching Clarke at last. “Prove it.”

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**Octavia, Earth-date: October 21st 2149**

Octavia kneels beside Lincoln on the cold steel of the dropship floor, watching as the world around
her suddenly free falls into darkness. For a moment she can’t understand what it means. It must be some kind of mistake. Lincoln is right here beside her. Their range is excellent. This isn’t possible, unless…

Beside her, Abby stops pumping on his chest and moves away.

“You’re stopping. What’s wrong?” Octavia demands.

“I’m sorry. He’s gone.”

In a split second Octavia sees her whole future flash before her as one dark, lonely blur. She might as well be alone under that floorboard in her mother’s quarters again. That’s all that lies ahead for her.

She refuses to accept this.

“No it’s not possible. You’re wrong.” She pushes in front of Abby and continues pumping Lincoln’s chest. She only just found him. She only just found so many things in this life. She’s not ready to go back into the darkness. She won’t, she can’t do that again.

Bellamy’s hand presses softly on her back. He’s comforting her. Comforting her because Lincoln is dead. Her soulmate is gone. And she’s alone. Octavia gasps for breath as sobs choke out of her.

Dimly, Octavia’s aware that the Grounders have arrived. They’re out of time. They failed. She failed. She has failed her match. And now every day for the rest of her life she will have to live with the consequence of that, as she faces the cold grey world that she now belongs to.

Without warning, Abby is moving faster than Octavia thought she was capable of. She slams the electronic rod into Lincoln’s chest. For a terrified moment, Octavia thinks she’s attacking him. She wants to cry out for Abby to stop, but her lungs aren’t working, and Abby is moving again, raising the prod and slamming it back down.

Colours race back into the world, burning twice as bright for having been absent. Tears are still swimming in Octavia’s eyes as they flare around her.

Lincoln gasps for air, and Octavia’s head is spinning with relief and ebbing grief.

“Lincoln.” Octavia holds his face in her hands, hardly daring to believe her luck.

“Octavia,” he croaks.

And as she looks in his eyes, she sees him again. Not the reaper, no longer dead, her own Lincoln.

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**Indra, Earth-date: October 21st 2149**

Indra blinks down at Lincoln, sputtering back to life. Her eyes can barely believe what she is seeing. Lincoln was worse than dead, and now he is alive again. Struggling to stand, leaning heavily on his match. But he knows her, calls her by name, caresses and holds her. And he is alive.

At his side, Octavia is supporting him, speaking to him. She is relieved, certainly, but she does not
understand – could not possibly understand – the magnitude of the gift she has been given. She is the only person in the world to restore their match from the reaping curse.

Only a lifetime of training is keeping Indra on her feet, keeping her from screaming or from breaking something. Her hands are shaking as she descends the ship and exits back through the graveyard of Grounder bones surrounding the old Sky camp.

Clarke of the Skaikru has done the impossible, and Indra knows now that she will work with them for as long as it takes to get Kolum back from the same fate.

Monty, Earth date: October 21st 2149

They check the Hospital Bay first. Monty tries to tell himself, over and over again, that of course she’ll be there. Of course she will. Everything’s fine, she’s just in the Hospital Bay. It’s the obvious place to look. After all, the four of them had spent most of the last few days faint and vomiting after volunteering themselves as extreme blood donors. So it would make perfect sense that Harper might have gone down to see one of their doctors for some reason. What makes less sense, the paranoid section of his brain screams, is why she would have split in the middle of their heist in Dante’s office. And why she would have been gone all night. And why she would still be AWOL at breakfast this morning. Paranoia isn’t paranoid if he’s right, and every fiber of Monty’s being vibrates with the certainty that something is wrong. But they have to start looking somewhere, and the med centre does make some sense.

Miller strides along at Monty’s side as they march in quicktime down to medical. As soon as they noticed she was missing, Miller was the first to volunteer for the search. In truth, Monty’s very grateful for the company. He can’t really put his finger on it, but there’s something reassuring in Miller’s presence. When they’d been living in the dropship, Monty had never really paid Miller all that much attention. He had that fierce, quiet competence that instantly gained him respect among the Hundred. But he was Bellamy’s right hand: loyal to a man that Monty’d had decidedly mixed feelings about. Besides which, he’d barely said more than two words to Monty in all the time they’d been at the dropship (not counting that one time with the talking pinecone, which Monty has only scattered memories of). But since finding themselves in the Mountain, Miller has started appearing at his side more and more. Still quiet, still a little shuttered, but he’s always there. It’s nice. Attraction isn’t something Monty has a lot (or any) experience with, and maybe that’s still not exactly what he feels for Miller. But he definitely feels… something. Having Miller around is comforting in a way Monty doesn’t have the words for. Maybe Miller is just lonely without Bellamy, but whatever the reason, Monty feels better when he’s nearby.

“What are we going to do, just ask if they’ve seen her?” Monty asks in a hushed voice.

“Oh yeah and I’m sure they’ll welcome us in and give us a lollipop.”

“Right. Maya could get in to check for us?”

“No.” Miller gives a decisive shake of his head. “We’re looking for ourselves.”

“Okay. Do you have a plan, then?”
“I’m going to faint. Make a fuss. We should be able to at least take a peek to see if anyone is inside.”

Monty nods. It’s a good plan. Well, it’s a plan at least.

As they round the corner and spot the guarded door to the medical centre, Miller flashes Monty a wink and a split-second grin. With an exaggerated stumble, Miller staggers forward and slumps very convincingly to the floor. The sight might have been terrifying if Monty hadn’t known any better. As it is, he leaps into action.

“Nathan, Nathan!” He drops to Miller’s side. “Can you hear me?” Careful to keep his eyes wide and innocent, he looks up, appealing to the guard at the door. “Can you help me get him inside?”

The guard has clearly never been briefed on what to do in a situation like this. He hesitates, gaze darting from the door to the prone boy on the floor.

Monty carries on as if he hasn’t noticed. “He’s been saying he feels faint ever since he donated blood for the treatments. Dr Singh told us to come by if the side effects didn’t go away within 24 hours.”

He’s said the magic word. Even the guards seem to fear Dr Singh. He swipes his card and the door opens with the satisfying snap of a magnetic lock disengaging. Monty ducks his face to hide his relief as the guard bends down to help lift Miller off the floor and into the Medical centre.

Every bed in the medical bay is unoccupied. Harper isn’t here. Monty’s eyes dart automatically to the security cameras tucked in each corner of the hospital. Watching, watching. They’re always watching. They know where she is. And Monty would give anything for a crack at their computer network. Just let me in, you assholes. I’d find my friend, then I’d raze your system to the ground.

The guard drops Miller unceremoniously onto one of the beds. It takes a few moments, but Miller slowly rouses himself, blinking slowly, eyes unfocused and confused. Monty leaves Miller to the act and turns to the guard.

“Thanks so much for your help,” he says, lacing his voice with as much saccharine naïveté as he can muster given the rage pumping through his blood. “I don’t want to keep you from your post. You can go back. I’ll just get him some water. I’m sure he’ll be fine now.”

The guard hesitates again, still unsure of what the brief would be in a situation like this. Again he looks at Miller, who’s doing an excellent impersonation of a barely conscious child, and seems to decide that they are safe to leave alone. With a curt nod he leaves Medical and goes back to his post at the door.

As soon as the door closes behind the Guard, Miller sits up. “Nicely done.”

“It was a good plan,” Monty says with a shy smile. It’s hard to tell - Monty’s eyesight has never been the best - but he could swear he sees Miller’s eyes soften at the praise.

“What now?” Miller asks, ignoring the compliment. “She’s clearly not here.” He motions to the six empty beds that fill the room.

“Check the medical charts, see if she was here.”

They rifle quickly through the recent patient files, stacked in a haphazard pile on one of the desks. Miller finds Harper’s chart first, and drops it down between them.

“Here, look.” He leans forward, pointing out her log. “The last record of her being here was two days ago when we donated,” Miller tells him. “Nothing since then.”
“We’re not going to find anything here.” Monty’s eyes flick back to the security cameras. “We should get out of here.”

Two, three, four times his eyes flick up to the cameras and back down again. If they’re lucky, no one’s watching the medical bay feed. If they’re unlucky? Well, at least they’d find Harper.
The chanting from the Grounders surrounding the camp is steady and terrifying. They are demanding Finn. Demanding his blood.

Clarke has lost so many of her people, failed so many. She can’t fail Finn. His confession of his love for her echoes in her ears, but she can’t think about that now. She doesn’t know how she feels about him. They have been through so much together. When she thinks of him, she can’t stop thinking about the bright optimism he had when she’d needed it the most. He’d made her smile and offered her comfort at a time when she didn’t think she could have either of those things anymore. He was the first to imagine a world on the ground where they could have peace. They all have so much blood on their hands, how could Finn of all people be the one asked to pay for it?

She can’t let him die. Her mother stands beside her, and for the first time in what feels like ages, they are on the same side. It’s a good feeling. Clarke grips Abby’s hand, sharing in her strength.

Holding back, Clarke watches as her mother walks down to the gate to face the riders on the other side, waiting for Finn. Her head held high, Clarke feels a surge of pride as she watches her mother send them away. She is a fighter after all.

A horn sounds, calling the Grounders at the gate back to their camp.

Clarke assumes a place at Bellamy’s as he readies his gun. Calm and assured, he calls to the other guards to watch the treeline for movement.

There’s a sound from the treeline, drawing Clarke’s attention. She nods in the direction of the movement, “Bellamy-”

“DON’T SHOOT.” Abby shouts before any action can be taken. “Don’t shoot,” she repeats as she takes a step forward.

And then they all see it. A figure emerges from the trees. Chancellor Kane.

The truth sinks in slowly and undeniably. There’s no way Abby could have seen who it was that quickly. She can’t have reacted to seeing him, so it must have been something else that tipped her off.

…The only thing she could have been reacting to is colour.

*Holy shit.* Her mother is matched to Chancellor Kane.

Her mind reels as Clarke tries to slot this information into her memories growing up. Clarke tries to recall what she knows or ever heard as a child about Kane, but she can’t think of much. She knew - because everyone on the Ark knew - who he was and that he was a big supporter of the most strict and extreme policies on the Ark. So she always assumed that her mother and he must have often disagreed on the council. But thinking about it now, she has no proof of that. His name was never mentioned in their home, which... now that she reflects on it... was weird considering they must have been working together everyday.
From the moment Clarke had learned that her mother was matched to someone other than her dad, Clarke had tried to let the information go. She never asked about it, never tried to investigate it. What good could it have done? Her parents were happy, and she didn’t want to disrupt that. Like Wells’ match to her, Clarke had filed it away as a painful subject and tried to avoid raising it. As she got older, Clarke figured her mother’s match must not be reciprocated. This always made sense to her. Sometimes matches just don’t work, and you can love someone else just fine without them being your match. That’s what Clarke had always believed. That’s what she had always needed to believe.

But as Clarke watches Kane greet her mother at the gate of Camp Jaha, there can be no doubt. One undeniable fact is staring her in the face. Maybe it’s something that she would have missed, never noticed, a few months ago, but she knows better now. And she can’t unsee it. They are looking at each other like perfect matches.

As she watches them walk away together towards the Ark, she senses Bellamy, still at her side, lean in slightly.

“Did you know your mom and Kane were matched?”

“No,” Clarke responds evenly. “No, I did not.”

Raven, Earth date: October 22nd 2149

Raven is going to punch someone if they don’t get out of her face with their cold, suspicious glares and hushed whispers.

“...She’s matched with the Spacewalker…”

“Yeah, him, the one the Grounders want…”

“We’re all going to die for this one kid?”

“...heard he killed a whole village of them…”

Raven balls her hands into tight fists as she pushes past a small crowd, half-running in her desperation to get clear of them. She ignores the flaring pain in her back as she does so. Finally, she rounds the last corner and arrives in the compact new Engineering Station that she and Wick have set up for themselves. As she knew she would, Raven finds Wick sitting at a chair under the only window. His broad frame is twisted to prevent blocking the light from the window as he bends over a broken solar panel, a small welding torch in one hand.

“I need your help,” Raven says without preamble. She knows her voice is tight with anxiety and pain but she pushes past it, hoping Wick won’t notice.

Without looking at her, Wick tosses his welder onto the work surface. “Don’t you always?”

“Wick!” Raven’s tenuous control is hanging on by a thread. “This is important.”

He looks up at last, his demeanour sobering instantly when he registers the state she’s in. “You’re
Raven’s good leg shakes violently for a moment before she gets the tremor under control. “I need you to turn off the power to the fence between the mess and the back of the medical bay,” she tells him, praying that he won’t ask any follow up questions.

“Sure,” he agrees easily. “You know they’re calling that Raven’s gate? I think you’re getting a reputation, jail bird.”

“I don’t care what they’re calling it,” Raven grits her teeth. “Do it now, then turn it back on exactly half an hour from now.”

“Okay,” Wick draws the vowel out along his tongue, clearly hesitating over something.

“What?” Raven crosses her arms defensively. Every inch of her is already edging to get back to Finn, to make sure he’s safe, and make sure he stays that way.

“Nothing, just… what exactly is your plan here, Raven?” Wick shifts forward in his chair, leaning towards her across the table dividing them.

“My plan is to get Finn as far away from the people trying to kill him as possible. Finn can’t stay here. I can see it… these people? They’re going to turn on him, hand him to the Grounders. And I won’t let that happen.” Raven’s skin crawls at the very idea, and she tightens her arms across her chest.

Wick lets out a short sigh of impatience. “Sure, but, I mean… look, Raven, I can turn off the power, no problem, and I’m sure you’ll find a way to leave without being seen. But what's the end game? How do you see this playing out?”

Raven has not had time to plan that far yet. Bellamy had seen it first. The people from the Ark are going to give Finn up if they don’t leave. There is no way in hell that Raven will let them take Finn, so she doesn’t have a choice. They have to get out of Camp Jaha. That’s the only thing that matters right now.

“We’ll figure something out,” she tells Wick.

“But the Grounders aren’t going to stop. They’re out for blood, they’re not going to be satisfied unless they get it”

“I don’t have time to fight you on this!” Raven shouts, cutting through his argument. “Can I count on you or not?”

Wick blinks at her, his expression unreadable. “That’s not a question you ever gotta ask.” He stands and moves towards the fence’s power generator, where it’s jammed up against the far wall. “Of course you can. I’ve got your back. Good luck.”

Raven nods once in thanks before turning back the way she had come.

Wick’s words echo in Raven’s mind as she limps away, as fast as her wasted limbs will carry her, back towards the blind spot in the fence. The sick terror in Raven’s gut tells her that Wick’s right. This can only end in bloodshed. But she’s going to make sure, with every breath she has left in her lungs, that it won’t be Finn’s.

As she’s crossing the wide expanse of the camp, she spots Murphy striding around the corner.
How is Murphy still able to walk freely through camp? It’s his fault that she’s never going to be able to walk without a brace again. He was the one who sold their camp out to the Grounders and sabotaged their defenses by using up all their gunpowder. He killed Connor and Miles, he strung up Bellamy to die. He was the one who went with Finn to that village. If he hadn’t been there, Raven’s sure things would have gone differently. The massacre. It’s all so out of character for Finn that it hardly seems real for Raven. She just can’t picture Finn doing anything like that. But she can picture it of Murphy. The Grounders are demanding the blood of a murderer. Well, they just happen to have one right here.

“Hey, Murphy!” Raven calls out, forcing her voice to remain smooth and steady. “We’re taking Finn to the dropship,” she whispers as he approaches. “To protect him. We could use an extra gun.”

Murphy is much easier to convince than Raven anticipated. He agrees immediately and promises to watch their backs and follow behind them as soon as he’s sure they got away clean.

If Raven didn’t know him better, she’d think he actually cared.

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**Finn, Earth date: October 22nd 2149**

Just when Finn thought he couldn’t possibly fuck anything up worse than he already has.

“Clarke!” A halo of pale gold hair is splayed around her where she lies, still and unresponsive, on the forest floor. Finn scrambles over to her, fumbling with shaking fingers to find a pulse at her neck. “Open your eyes, Clarke,” he mutters to her. “Please, open your eyes.”

She doesn’t. But after several prolonged moments of terror, Finn finds her pulse, beating steady and firm under his fingers. Alive. Thank fuck, she’s alive. The rush of relief does little to stop the fear and panic threatening to overwhelm him.

Gently, Finn gathers her up and lifts her into his arms. Her hair - a very pale shade of yellow, where rivulets of blood haven’t stained it a copper red - falls across his shoulder. He sets off as fast as he can for the dropship, aware that it’s only a matter of time before they meet another Grounder scout. And next time, he doubts they will leave when he asks them to.

And then what will he do? Will he have to kill the next Grounder he sees? And how many more will he have to kill after that? How had it come to this? All he had ever wanted was peace. Clarke, Bellamy, and even Raven had all told him he was foolish to even try for peace with the Grounders. But this - all out war - was exactly what he had been trying to avoid. How many more people were going to have to die before they could ever find peace again?

Every time he closes his eyes, he’s back in Tondc. The burst of machine gun fire, as loud and unrelenting as the blood pumping in his ears. The heavy weight of the weapon in his arm, the recoil thumping like a drumbeat against his shoulder. The acrid smell of gunpowder and blood. The Grounders, rushing towards him, loathing and bloodlust and murder burning in their eyes. Terror, so thick that Finn can still taste it on his tongue. He had been so afraid, so desperately scared of what the Grounders might do to him, of what they had already done to Clarke. And he had just wanted it
to be over. Why couldn’t they go back to how it was, in those first few days, when the Grounders had mostly left them alone? Why couldn’t the Grounders have just gone away? And for a moment, so fleeting that he barely remembered what it had felt like, Finn had wanted them to die. But one moment was enough when he had a machine gun in his hands and a swarm of people rushing towards him. This wasn’t what he’d wanted.

Luck, for the first time in months, is on his side. Clarke has barely stirred in his arms throughout the journey, but at least Finn manages to make it back to the dropship without encountering another Grounder. He’s barely pushed past the tarp and into the dim interior of the dropship when Bellamy is upon them, demanding to know what happened. He hovers at Finn’s elbow, eyes darting restlessly across Clarke’s still unconscious form. Finn gently sets Clarke down on the floor on the dropship and steps back as Bellamy kneels beside her. Finn has never seen Bellamy like this before. Anxiety immediately has Bellamy twisted into knots, despite Finn’s assurances that Clarke will be fine.

Raven is there at his side, in an instant, her eyes wild around the edges.

“We’ll figure this out together,” she promises him. Her voice is strong and reassuring and god he wishes he could believe her. But It’s a lie. It’s the same lie Clarke had been clinging to, and she nearly died risking her life for him.

Suddenly he can’t breath in the confines of the dropship. He can’t stand to look at these people, his only friends in the world, who would throw themselves to wolves for his sake. He flees the dropship at his first opportunity, desperate to escape their sympathetic gazes and unflinching protection.

The worst part is that he knows Clarke would do it again. She would do it again and again, right up until she got herself killed. Together. Against all sense, Bellamy and Clarke had his back, were willing to go up against Arkers and Grounders alike for the sake of protecting him. But they’re at war. And if Finn knows one thing about war, it’s that there are always casualties. So, no. They are not all going to get through this together. The only question is who and how many of his friends are going to die for him.

He thinks of the horror on Bellamy’s face when we saw Clarke limp in his arms. What if Clarke really had been dead? How could Finn ever have faced Bellamy again, knowing it was his fault his world had gone dark. And what if it had been Raven? What if it was his world draining away into monochrome next? How could he ever live with himself?

Horrible scenarios lineup in his brain, one after another. There is no way out of this where people don’t get hurt. One thought slowly crystallizes in the back of his mind. He would rather die himself than watch any of these other scenarios play out where the people he loves get hurt.

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**Lexa, Earth-date: October 22nd 2149**

Her people are crying for blood as Lexa steps out of her tent. Lexa can just spot the murderer, Finn Collins, through the smoke and crowd. His hands are tied behind his back, under guard by a handful of her men. Lexa’s stomach turns a little at the sight of him, at knowing what he must endure. But blood must have blood, and anyone who would slaughter the unarmed deserves no less than to die at the hands of all who he has wronged.
The Skaikru camp is a sea of light in the distance, bright and white against the dark black surroundings of the clearing. From its depths, Clarke emerges. Even from the distance and the dim grey light, Lexa can see that she looks awful. A hard line of defeat and misery runs across her shoulders. But she holds her head high, and the rage in her eyes is unmistakable.

For a moment, Lexa falters. She had been sure she’d had the measure of Clarke. Clarke is a bold fighter. New to leadership, certainly, and as yet untamed by the Ground, but she understands sacrifice. And she’s not afraid to take a risk if she thinks she can save her people. Clarke is smart, and will surely recognize that if she fails to give up Finn as a tribute to Lexa’s grieving warriors, then the losses on both sides will be much worse.

Indra is the first to meet Clarke as she approaches. The warrior, unrelenting as always, holds Clarke at bay with a spear, gently gouging a hole in Clarke’s abdomen.

The Sky Leader does not flinch, barely even blinks. “Let me through,” she breaths. Still making demands, even with a spear at her chest.

An idea suddenly occurs to Lexa. Something she hadn’t stopped to consider in the rush of the past day. What if Finn is Clarke’s match? Idiot, she berates herself. That should have been your first consideration! Who, among the Skaikru would be willing to burn the earth for the sake of the boy on the whipping post? If there is anyone among them who would, they must be your first concern. If Costia had been with her, she would have asked Clarke directly the moment that the treaty deal was offered. Costia would have made it her mission to find out everything about the boy they’re about to execute. Grief briefly swamps Lexa, but she shoves it back, hard and ruthless. Mourning is not something she has time for anymore.

“Let her through,” Lexa calls to her General, stepping out of the shadows and towards the pool of light that Clarke had been moving towards.

Indra hesitates for a moment, but relents, shifting slightly to allow Clarke to pass and approach Lexa.

Lexa shifts her boots against the soft mud of the hill. This is not good ground for a fight, but she will be ready for an attack if Clarke should attempt to launch one. A warrior with their keryon-ai hanging in the balance is always a dangerous thing.

“You bleed for nothing,” she tells Clarke gently. “You cannot stop this.” Even if Clarke were to kill her, the murderer would still die. The only difference would be that Clarke and peace would die with him.

Clarke’s protests, while heartfelt, fall on deaf ears. There is still so much she doesn’t understand about the Ground. All crimes are not the same. Bloodshed in war is noble, but the murder of the unarmed cannot be abided. Finn is guilty in a way that Clarke is not and her offer to take his place is misguided. Anya would chastise her for it if she were here. Your life, she would say, is worth more than this boy’s.

Somehow, Lexa doesn’t think that argument would sit well with Clarke.

Finally, Clarke’s shoulders fall, her options run through. “Can I say goodbye?” she asks at last. Lexa nods, still wary.

She’s not surprised when Clarke’s hands come away stained dark with the boy’s blood. Some part of her is a little relieved. She doesn’t relish these ceremonies, and this is enough. The people have demanded blood and now they have it. They can move on. And now she knows: Clarke is not matched to the dead boy.
Across the valley, Lexa hears the wail of a colour-widow.

Marcus, Earth-date: October 22nd, 2149

She did it. She killed him. A wave of relief washes over Kane. The boy’s death is a tragedy, of course, but his death had been quick and painless. And now there is a chance for peace. This is by far the best outcome.

At his side Abby, the shock of witnessing her daughter with blood dripping from her hands now wearing off, starts moving along the fence. He falls into step behind her, calling to the guards to open the gate ahead of them. As they pass through the edge of the camp he sees Raven scramble to her feet beside Bellamy and run towards the gate. The grief of a colour widow is hard to watch; especially in colour. There is nothing that can be said or done to ease the magnitude of her loss. He knows that she needs to see him again, to see his body. But Marcus also knows that this was not how the Grounders had intended this to go, and they might be angry that Clarke took matters into her own hands. If this is to be the start of their peace, they need to not offend or provoke any more than they already have. They need to be smart.

So as the gate creaks open, Marcus maneuvers himself to block the exit. Both Abby and Raven look up at him with hard, accusatory expressions as he blocks their way.

“All weapons stay here.” His tone leaves no room for discussion.

He knew Abby was unarmed, but they both watch as Raven removes a knife from the inside of her jacket and lets it fall to the ground.

Satisfied, Marcus moves to the side and lets Abby go with Raven to collect the boy’s body.

Bellamy, still armed, moves forward too.

“I’ll go with them.” Marcus turns to Bellamy. “You stay here and make sure no one else follows us.”

Bellamy nods. It’s a relief to have someone he can rely on in this delicate time. This boy may be an odd choice, but Kane’s inclined to trust him. He recognizes so much of himself in Bellamy; he’s clearly willing to do whatever it takes to protect their people.

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Kane enters the Commander’s tent behind Abby and sees Clarke, gasping for air through her sobs as she tries to scrape Finn’s blood off her hands.

He watches as she collapses in her mother’s arms. Kane wonders if maybe this will prove to be Clarke’s breaking point. There is no shame in her grief, but there is a lot at stake for all of them here, and grief is a dangerous emotion in a leader.

But his fears are proven to be unfounded as, moments later, Clarke rises and dries her eyes. She readys herself quickly for the Commander’s entrance.
She stands tall to face Lexa as she negotiates the burial rites. It’s too much, Marcus thinks. The boy should be buried with his own people. But Clarke agrees and there is iron determination in her voice. They will participate in whatever funeral rite the Grounders wish, but after, they will prepare for war with the Mountain.

Kane watches as Clarke dismisses Abby’s worries and marches out of the tent after the Commander.

Clarke has done it. Single-handedly she has fought, negotiated, and sacrificed to bring peace to their people. Lexa looks to Clarke as their leader and, Kane realizes with a jolt, so does he.
October 23rd 2149: Blekfaya

Chapter Notes

This chapter goes deeper into the mythology and magic of a match... It was super fun to write. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gustus, Earth date: October 23rd 2149

The bodies of the murdered and the murderer are ready on the pyre. His heda and the Sky heda are standing at the head of the piled bodies, preparing to set them alight. Gustus glares at the Sky Girl. She’s going to be the death of Lexa. This alliance is a mistake, and the mere sight of the blonde leader so close to his match sets Gus’ teeth on edge. He will not - he cannot - allow this alliance to stand. He will save Lexa, even if it means betraying her.

But that is a problem for later. Right now, he has his orders. A keryon-ai died in this massacre, and their loss must be honored. Blekfaya. It’s time for a Black Fire Ceremony.

Lexa allows Clarke to set the bodies alight. “Yu gonplei ste odon,” the Sky Girl says, as though she has any right to say the words. She honours the villain who murdered Gus’ people. How can Lexa stand by and allow this perversion of their rituals?

The pyre catches quickly, blazing hot and bright. As the flames lick their way through the wood and flesh of the dead, Gustus prepares the Black Fire. Reaching into a pouch in his leather outer coat, he withdraws a handful of crushed black powder.

He steps forward, towards the side of the growing blaze. Hot air and the acrid stink of burning flesh beats against his skin, but he ignores the assault on his senses. Calmly, he raises his closed fist high in the air, the black powder held tightly in his palm. His voice booms over the crackling fire, “To honour those newly plunged into the grey, we all face the fire and the earth in its raw form.”

The Skaikru twitch. Good. They are not familiar with the Ceremony. That will make it all too easy to identify those who are vulnerable. Those with a weakness among them.

It was an ancient custom amongst the Trikru, meant to honour those grieving the loss of a keryon-ai by forcing everyone to share in their pain. In practice, it is used much more often as a training tool. A way to test young warriors. To discover if they have a keryon-ai, and to train them not to fear the loss of their soul-sight.

Gustus himself has looked into the Black Fire many times. He learned a long time ago how to face visions of Lexa’s death without flinching. It was excruciatingly painful every time, but he faced it. After all, it was only a vision. He would not let her fall. Not in reality. Never.

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Lincoln


Lincoln should have seen this coming. This has nothing to do with honouring Raven’s loss or the loss of the grieving Grounder widow on the other side of the fire. This is about power. Gustus wants to know who among the Sky People have matches, especially matches present.

As Gustus raises his fist over the pyre, Lincoln leans forward to warn them. “Whatever happens, whatever you see, don’t react,” he hisses, “it’s a test. It isn’t real.”

Bellamy, Marcus and Octavia all look round to him. Octavia. Fuck. It’s never easy to face the Black Fire, but Lincoln has never had to do it with his keryon-ai present before. By all accounts this is going to be much much worse.

He looks deep into the fire, steeling himself. Repeating under his breath. “It isn’t real. It isn’t real.”

Gustus releases the powder onto the fire, and immediately the flames turn a dark black. Smoke billows, thick and fast into the air. Lincoln fights a mounting panic as he breathes it in. The smoke hits the back of Lincoln’s throat, bitter and sickly sweet. Too late to fight it, now. The Ceremony has begun.

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Bellamy

Bellamy is walking through the charred black remains of the dropship battlefield. The burnt-out husk of their old home. Dread floods through him as he looks around at the faceless mangled bodies on the ground. He knows what he is about to find before he finds it. He wants to turn back, to run away, but his feet carry him forward. And then he sees her.

Her eyes are open, vacant and lifeless. None of her determination, of her subtle humour, is left in her expression. Her hair, her cheeks, her lips are all the dullest grey. Everything is grey. She’s gone. Bellamy drops to his knees, and gathers Clarke’s body into his arms, as though he could spread life back into her through osmosis. But there’s nothing left. She’s dead, and he missed it. He wasn’t here to protect her. Across the eerie silence of the battlefield, a voice echoes. Her voice. Of course you couldn’t protect me, it says. You can’t protect anyone. Bellamy wants to protest, but he can’t. It’s true, after all. And as he looks around at the anonymous bodies littered around him, he finds they’re not faceless after all. Octavia, Raven, Jasper, Monty, Miller, and Harper are all dead around him.

Lincoln’s words of warning is like a half-remembered dream in the face of this onslaught of loss. And the bodies just keep piling up. His mother, Finn, Roma, Mbege, Atom, Dax, Charlotte, and the 300 culled from the Ark all pile high at his feet and Bellamy would scream if he could find his voice.

He couldn’t save any of them. What makes him think he can save Clarke?

Where he stands at the side of the pyre, Bellamy’s hands start shaking. His eyes remain locked on the burning black fire, transfixed, trapped in its visions.
Abby

The sudden contrast makes Abby’s head swim. The fire had been so bright a moment before. And now the darkness is suffocating as it presses around her.

But Abby has lived a lifetime in self-inflicted monochrome already. She is not afraid of the dark.

She’s almost not surprised to find Marcus in the darkness with her. His body is cold, his limbs splayed at an awkward angle on the grey earth. And something about the image feels inevitable. You did this, his voice echos from somewhere. It’s only a matter of time before you sacrifice me too.

Maybe, Abby answers in her mind. I might need to sacrifice you one day. Maybe you will need to sacrifice me. We’ve known, all along, that this might be our fate. But for now, we are not alone.

Abby tears her eyes from the fire, breaking away from its snare. She’s back in the light of Tondc, and Marcus is still at her side. She reaches out and finds his hand. His fingers lace through hers and grip tight.

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Octavia

Octavia is back over Lincoln’s dead body in the dropship.

Is this all you got, crazy-ass fire drug? she thinks with fierce determination, Is this the best you can do? I’ve already lived this hell. Some half-baked memory is not going to scare me.

She stands firm, breaking easily from the fire’s gaze.

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Indra

The fire holds nothing for Indra that she hasn’t already experienced worse.

Predictably, the Sky People are weak. The Sky heda’s second is shivering like a leaf. The colour-widow is crying silently at his side. None of them were prepared for the Black Fire.

She watches Lincoln with disappointment. He wasn’t good at the fire before he found his keryon-ai, and now she can read the pain and weakness written across his face like a map. He has learnt nothing.
But she has to admit, his *keryon-ai* next to him is impressive. She is clinging tightly to Lincoln’s arm. She has been rattled by the vision, and she is doing a terrible job of masking her fear, but she has already broken the fire’s hold, and that’s something.

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**Marcus**

Marcus is on the Ark. As he looks up he sees Abby in the airlock in front of him, and as he looks back down, he finds his own hand resting on the release.

As if it’s coming from someone else, he hears himself say, *I was ready to kill you once before, I’m just going to end up doing it again. Why would you ever trust me?*

The trigger clicks beneath the pressure of his fingers. As he watches her body get sucked, distorted out into space, his world is plunged into darkness.

He gasps, reeling backwards, breaking away from the fire. Abby’s hand is already in his, steadying him. His pulse is racing in his ears, but she’s here, and for all they’ve put each other through, her hand is still in his. And that’s enough. It’s more than he deserves.

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**Clarke**

Clarke is looking into Bellamy’s eyes. He’s very close, leaning towards her. Except something is wrong. His eyes are dimming. Greying around the edges, the life bleeding from them. He’s dying. She steps back, horror overwhelming her. The blood is everywhere. Bellamy’s chest is drenched, and Clarke’s own hands are dripping with his blood. She’s killed him. Just like she killed Finn. She looks around to see a river of blood flowing from her hands, staining her skin.

He trusted her, and she gave him nothing but death. She kills everyone who loves her. This is her fate.

Clarke drowns in the fire’s visions.

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**Raven**

Raven stares on into the fire. It shows her Finn’s ashen, grey face. She blinks and the vision is gone. Why would she fear the fire? It shows her nothing but the truth.
Lexa

Sometimes, Lexa will allow herself to indulge in the Black Fire’s horrible visions. The sight of Costia, her beautiful head separated from her body and sent back to her as a message, will always haunt her. But in the Black Fire, at least Lexa is able to see her again. And in the vision, sometimes, she is still in one piece. In darkness and dead, but at least she’s there, brief and terrible though it may be. And how else will Lexa make sure she remembers every detail of her love’s face?

Lexa is not proud of this weakness, and does not allow herself to wallow in the fire’s visions very often. And now is certainly not one of those times. This time, Lexa breaks from the fire’s hold within moments. The Ceremony holds little power over colour-widows. How can they dread something that has already come to pass?

The vision is over before it’s begun for Lexa, so she is able to give her full attention to the others gathered around the pyre. Lexa has made it her business to know every member of the Skaikru’s party. There’s Raven, the colour-widow, staring vacantly at the pyre as tears dry on her cheeks.

Near her, there’s the noble Marcus and the Chancellor, Clarke’s mother. The power structure of the Sky People is still unclear to Lexa, but among these people, the mother of the heda seems to be a position of power. Marcus and Abby reach for each other as they break from the fire. Interesting. Lexa wonders whether Clarke knows about her mother’s match. It seems likely. The Sky People do not seem to guard this secret as closely as they should.

Octavia, the girl matched to the traitor Lincoln, frees herself quickly from the visions. She holds her keryon-ai as he battles much less successfully with his torment. He is the last of them to break from it, and when he does he buries his face in his match’s shoulder for some time before he can face the pyre again.

Beside them, stands Clarke’s second, on his own. His hands are balled into tight fists at his sides and he does nearly as badly with the visions as Lincoln. When he wrenches himself free at last, he is breathing hard, and sweat has plastered his hair to his forehead. Lexa watches as he scrapes a hand across his face and his gaze fixes, desperate and intent, on Clarke. That’s unexpected. Lexa looks sharply at Clarke, to gauge her own reaction to this turn of events. Lexa is a little surprised to find that Clarke remains in the fire’s hold. She’s unmistakably transfixed by the fire, and there is a grim determination in her shoulders, and a resigned exhaustion in her eyes. Whatever she is seeing, Clarke bears up well under its influence, though seems unwilling to break herself free from its punishment. Could she be inflicting it on herself willingly? Fascinating.

When she breaks free, it’s with nothing more than a slow blink. Her face shows no other signs of distress. And, Lexa notices, she does not return Bellamy’s gaze, but keeps her eyes trained on the dying embers of the black flames. What was it showing her?

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Clarke, Earth-date: October 23rd 2149
Finn’s pyre is still throwing out heat as Clarke and Lexa stand before it. The rest of the funeral party has retired inside for the feast, but Clarke and Lexa remained to watch the fire burn out. Clarke’s legs feel like water following the Black Fire Ceremony, but she’s determined to hold steady. She already tipped her hand by falling prey to the Black Fire’s visions. She refuses to show any more weakness in front of the Commander.

Clarke watches the wisps of ash that fly up and spin away on the strong western wind. All that once made Finn a person is gone; nothing’s left but ash and dust and the people who remember him. And Clarke wants to feel sad or angry or guilty, but instead she just feels tired.

“Finn was important to you,” Lexa says, breaking the long stretch of silence between them.

Clarke nods, but doesn’t look up from the pyre. “Yes.”

“But he was not your match. That much was clear from the Black Fire Ceremony.”

This does get Clarke’s attention. Her eyes snap to Lexa’s sharp profile. “What does that matter? Matched or not, I loved him. And now he’s dead.”

Lexa meets Clarke’s eyes, her gaze firm. “It matters,” she says slowly, “because if he had been your match, I would be the one burning in a pyre right now.”

“That’s not true,” Clarke bristles. How could Lexa even say that? As though Finn could have survived if Clarke had just loved him better?

Lexa give a little half-shrug, and it couldn’t be clearer than she doesn’t believe Clarke in the least. “Perhaps. But then maybe you don’t understand what a match is. I too have lost someone special to me.”

“Your match?” Clarke can’t help asking.

“Her name was Costia,” Lexa says, giving the barest of nods. “She was captured by the Ice Nation, whose Queen believed she knew my secrets. Because she was my keryon-ai. They tortured her… killed her… cut off her head.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s not a pain to be lightly endured. I did not think I would ever get over it. But I did. And now I am truly free from fear.”

“What do you mean?”

“Keryon-ai are a strength, Clarke. The one person in the world with whom you are strongest. But they are also the greatest weakness we have. To rely on one is to open you both up to danger and death. If Finn had been your match, I would certainly be dead right now, but then again, so would you.”

Clarke opens her mouth, but no defense comes to her. Unbidden, the Black Fire’s visions return to her. Bellamy tied to that post instead. Bellamy’s blood flowing down her fingers. Bellamy’s brown eyes fading and clouding over. She had meant what she had told him earlier that day, she could not lose him too, but surely the duty to protect their people would always come first...

Lexa interrupts her thoughts before she can work out what she would have done. “If you have a
match, keep it secret. Among our people it is nothing more than a weakness to be broadcast to your enemies. A match is a liability, especially for a Commander. We cannot be selfish, Clarke. Our people are hungry, and matches are a luxury we cannot afford."

Without waiting for Clarke to respond, Lexa turns from the pyre and walks back towards her people.

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**Jasper, Earth-date: October 23rd 2149**

The adrenaline pulses through Jasper’s veins as he interlaces his fingers through Maya’s and together they speed back up to the dorms. They had done it! They had set up a radio to broadcast to the others on the ground, they had narrowly escaped the guards discovery, AND he had kissed Maya. Okay, if he’s being honest with himself a lot of the adrenaline is from that last thing, but the other stuff too. It’s been a pretty badass day. It feels good to take charge, to take action. Okay, yes there was the problem of the signal still being jammed, but he has no doubt Monty will be able to fix that on their next mission together.

As they enter the dorm, Miller - who is anxiously pacing like a caged animal between the bunks - immediately turns up the volume of the music and speaks quietly under it.

“They find the radio?”

“No,” Jasper replies looking around. Something is wrong. “Where’s Monty?”

“I thought he was with you.”

Miller’s words slowly sink in as Jasper’s insides turn to lead.

“I haven’t seen him,” Maya answers in a small voice.

Miller looks like he is fighting the urge to punch something. “I’m going to go find him.”

Maya moves slightly to the side to stand in his way. “You can’t. The guard just told us off for being out of bounds, and now they are standing at the door to the dorm. You won’t get far, all you’ll do is draw attention to yourself.”

“I’ll take that risk,” Miller seethes through clenched teeth.

“Listen, you don’t know that he’s been taken. He said he wanted to get access to the mainframe to unjam the radio signal, maybe he’s tried something. Let me see if I can find out and help. Please, let me try.”

Miller doesn’t back away, but he nods. With a parting look to Jasper, Maya slips away.

Jasper listens to all of this as if through a hazy fog. It doesn’t make sense, doesn’t seem real. Monty can’t be gone. No. Not Monty. Maya’s right. He’s probably off doing something brave and foolish and he’ll be back here any minute with tales of his heroic deeds. Yes. That’s the only option.
Bellamy, Earth-date: October 23rd 2149

Bellamy is still clutching the map that she thrust into his hands.

Clarke, barely able to look him in the eye, had blown through like a firestorm, listening to the recording that Raven picked up, and issuing her orders. Sending him away. The dim flickering firelight had cast her stony features in sharp angles of light and dark as she’d agreed with his plan and sent him to the Mountain. *I was being weak*, she’d told him. There was no sympathy in her gaze, no regret in her features, and Bellamy had felt every word like a body blow. Then as quickly as she had come, she was gone again, turning on a sharp heel and leaving without so much as a backwards glance. Bellamy had watched her retreating back for a long moment, his heart beating uncomfortably in his chest, tight and quick and off-rhythm.

They don’t delay.

“We should go,” Lincoln says as soon as Raven has explained to Bellamy how the radios work, and what to look for when they’re inside Mount Weather. Lincoln has already shouldered his supplies, handing Bellamy his own pack over the top of the campfire. Bellamy accepts it, the warmth of the fire throwing a brief heat across his hand before he pulls it back and shoulders his own small set of supplies. Carefully, he tucks Clarke’s map into the outside pocket of his jacket.

“It’s the middle of the night,” Raven begins, looking back and forth between the two of them. “Won’t it be safer if you travel at sunrise?”

“We can’t spare the time,” Bellamy says. And his chest still feels tight, but it’s fine. He can do this. Because it’s their best bet to save their people. And because it’s what she needs.

“This is bullshit,” Octavia bursts out, aggravation rolling across her shoulders.

Bellamy blinks and focuses his gaze on his sister. “O—”

“Don’t,” Octavia jabs a threatening finger in his direction. “Don’t you dare try to defend her.”

“It was my idea,” Bellamy says. And it’s true, but it feels like cold comfort now.

“And it’s a stupid fucking idea.”

“Octavia,” Lincoln says. “We’ll be –” his sentence falters and dies. What could he say? We’ll be fine? Every one of them knows how hollow a reassurance that would be.

“We’ll be together,” Bellamy picks up the sentence for him. Lincoln looks up and meets Bellamy’s eye, giving him a firm nod.

Octavia looks between her men, and finally nods. “Yeah. Okay.”

Bellamy reaches out and wraps a reassuring arm around his sister’s shoulders. She leans into his touch for a moment, her weight warm and comforting against Bellamy’s chest. “Bell, wait…”
Octavia drops her voice to a whisper and walks purposefully away from the small campfire, pulling Bellamy with her. They leave Raven to take Lincoln though how to work the radio.

The woods darken quickly as they abandon the warmth and light of the small camp, but Octavia doesn’t stop walking until she’s sure they’re out of earshot. She pulls to a stop under the thick branches of a pine tree. She faces him, crossing her arms protectively over her chest.

“What’s up?” Bellamy asks, concern starting to gnaw at his stomach.

“I’m worried about Lincoln,” Octavia says under her breath, her eyes darting to where Lincoln and Raven can still be seen, bent towards the light of the fire.

“I know,” Bellamy says, putting a reassuring hand on her arm. “Of course you’re worried, he’s your match. But I promise I’ll look out for him.”

“It’s not just that.” When she looks back at him, Octavia’s eyes are wide and a little desperate. “I don’t think he’s ready for this. Whatever they did to him… he’s not the same. He’s edgy, skittish. I’m worried we didn’t get all of the drug out of his system or something. I think the Mountain might still have a hold on him.”

This is really not what Bellamy wants to hear, but he takes it on board, swallowing hard. “I’ll keep an eye on him,” he tells her. “I promise.”

Octavia nods. “This fucking sucks, you know?” she says after a moment.

Bellamy chokes on a humourless laugh. “Yeah, I know. But Clarke’s right. Doing this, rescuing our people? It’s more important than anything. It’s worth the risk.”

“But that shouldn’t be her decision to make!” Octavia snaps. “It’s your life–”

“I asked to go,” Bellamy cuts her off. “I want to do this, Octavia…” he hesitates for a moment, the words balancing on his tongue. “Clarke is my match. We’re matched.” Because he needs Octavia to understand. The trust runs bone deep, so much a part of Bellamy now that he wouldn’t know how to distance himself from Clarke, even if he wanted to. “But even if we weren’t? I would still trust her to make the right call.”

“Gustus was matched to Lexa, and it got him killed,” Octavia replies, low and matter-of-fact.

Bellamy’s eyes narrow. “How do you know that?”

“Didn’t you see him at the ceremony thing? It was obvious.”

“Yeah,” Bellamy says, running an agitated hand through his hair. “I was a little distracted. Look, O, that’s not the point. With or without a match, if I’m going to get myself killed, I’m going to do it trying to save our people.”

Octavia lets out a sharp breath of irritation. “You know,” she says thoughtfully. “I think I liked it better when you were spending all of your energy trying to keep yourself alive. All this nobility is hazardous to your health.” Her smile betrays her. She relents, leaning her shoulder into Bellamy’s side. Bellamy grins and wraps his arm around her back.

“Hey,” Octavia says after a quiet moment, “that’s the first time you actually admitted to me that you found your match.”

“Ass,” Octavia elbows him in the ribs. And it hurts. When did she get so strong? “You should have told me ages ago!”

“Sorry.”

“Why didn’t you?” Octavia twists around to look at him. “You promised me, years ago. You always promised you would tell me what colours looked like.”

“I guess I don’t need to now, huh?” He indicates with his head to where Lincoln is still pouring over the radio with Raven.

“That is so not the point. You should have told me. Why didn’t you?”

“I don’t know, O.” Bellamy sighs and leans back against the trunk of the pine tree. “Back when… when it first happened… so much was going on, it didn’t really seem like the most important thing at the time. And my match…” Again he scrapes a hand through his mess of curls. “It’s not like you and Lincoln. Me and Clarke? We’re not… I don’t know how to—” Bellamy clamps down on that sentence before it could take shape into something he’d regret. He takes a breath before trying again. “It’s different. And complicated. And at first I didn’t even like her, let alone… Well, anyway. It didn’t seem worth mentioning.”

Octavia shakes her head, a grin blooming across her face. “You are such a fucking idiot, big brother.”

“Whatever, at least I didn’t go all Stockholm Syndrome with my match.” Octavia narrows her eyes at him and takes a swipe at his shin with her booted heel. It connects, hard, and Bellamy winces. “Ow!”

“Ass,” she says again. “Come on, it looks like they’re done over there.” Raven was gone from view, likely returned to the tent, and Lincoln had resumed his seat by the fire, warming his hands over the flames and re-checking his supplies.

Octavia starts to move back towards him, but Bellamy snags her arm, holding her back.

“Hey, you know I don’t mean it, right? About Lincoln. I— I know I never really said it, but he’s a good man. I’m glad you found each other. And I’m glad you got him back. You deserve to be happy, O.”

A wry smile quirks on Octavia’s lips. “Thanks, Bell. Hopefully we’ll keep being able to find each other.”

Bellamy pushes off from the tree and walks with her back to where Lincoln is waiting for them. “That’s what the colour is for, I think,” he says as they near the fire. “To lead you back to each other.”
Really looking forward to hearing your thoughts on this one!
October 24th 2149: What Clarke Would Do

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jasper, Earth-date: October 24rd 2149

When Monty still hasn’t reappeared the next morning, it’s harder to ignore the truth. They’ve taken him. They’ve taken him and they are currently doing god knows what to him right now in some kind of cage.

The panic is so intense it’s all Jasper can do to keep breathing. A profound guilt washes over him every time he thinks of Monty and Harper. It was his plan, they trusted him, and look where he’s led them. The thought What would Bellamy do? runs through his mind on a loop. He asks himself What would Clarke do? too, but whenever he asks himself that he spirals in shame over how he didn’t listen when Clarke was telling him what he should do, and now look at the mess he’s in. He clings to the thought of his old leaders like a talisman in his mind. They will come back for him. They will come back for all of them. He just needs to hold on. He is incapable of even considering the idea that they might not be coming, that they might be dead. Because if they are dead then it’s almost certainly Jasper’s fault. And that thought is incapacitating. No they are alive, and they are coming. And if Bellamy was here, he would tell them…

The door to the dorm opens and Jasper’s heart lurches as he leaps up to see who it is. It’s Maya. She makes her way over to them as Jasper sits back down. He didn’t really expect Monty to just come walking through the door now. Not really.

Miller is here too. Except he doesn’t sit. It’s like he can’t be still, insisting on pacing relentlessly back and forth across the short distance between the bunks.

Maya sits down next to Jasper. Above them, Miller stills just enough to hear her report.

“No sign of him in the medical bay, or in any of the common areas.”

“Obviously he’s not just going to be sitting around somewhere!” Miller spits at Maya. “Your people have him locked up in one of those cages, hanging him upside down to drain him of all of his blood. We stupidly gave them a taste of our blood and now they’re hungry for more!”

“Miller keep your voice down.” Jasper doesn’t know what Miller’s deal is, but he’s taken Monty’s disappearance really badly.

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“This is stupid, I’m going to go look for him.” Miller starts towards the door.

Jasper stands to block his way. “And what good is wandering the halls going to do? You’re right, they’ve taken him for his blood and that means we know where he is. We need to get into the Harvest Chamber.”

Miller looks like he wants to snap and yell at Jasper but he doesn’t.

Instead they both look to Maya.

“I can volunteer for the evening shift in medical and then slip in when the guard changes.” She
stands as she worriedly surveys both of them. “But I won’t be able to do that if you do anything to raise the alarm. Please, they can’t suspect anything. Just go about as if nothing is wrong.”

Okay. Okay they could do that. It was a plan at least. Stay calm and search. Is that what Bellamy would do? Honestly, Jasper had no idea.

---

Murphy, Earth-date: October 24th 2149

Murphy roams the halls of the Ark, keeping a sharp eye out for anyone with delusions of leadership who might try to put him to work.

He hates this camp. He hated the dropship too. And the woods. And Tondc most of all. He runs the pad of his thumb across the smooth tips of his fingers, where the nails used to be. His hands have healed, but he doesn’t think the nails will ever grow back. He tries not to remember the bed of dead leaves, the dank dark of an underground cage, and the choking stink of blood.

Murphy shakes his head, trying to dispel the panic attack that’s lingering in the back of his mind like a wild animal preparing to pounce. A very primal part of him would like to give into it, to drown in his own memories and not resurface. But that would mean they won, and fuck them. He’s John fucking Murphy, and he’s not going to give the Grounders the satisfaction.

He hates the Arkers, and he hates the Grounders, and he hates the Hundred. Well, most of the Hundred. Some of them were okay. And he can’t help looking for Finn. He keeps expecting to see him, leaning casually against the bulkhead of the Ark, that careless grin on his face. Idiot. Finn was broken by the Earth, and got what was coming to him. But he’d had Murphy’s back more than anyone else in this godforsaken shithole of a planet. And Murphy had kind of liked the crazy bastard.

Murphy drags his fingers against the wall of the ship, feeling the cool metal of the downed Ark against his skin.

“Fuck!” Raven’s voice echoes down the hall from a room just ahead.

Murphy edges forward and finds her in the new Engineering Station. He leans against the doorframe, watching her. Raven might be the only person in the whole camp who Murphy could stand the sight of. Sure, he nearly killed her that one time, but she tried to kill him right back. Twice. He figures that makes them even. At least their ledgers are balanced. And hell if that wasn’t the closest thing to a friend he’s had in years.

Raven is leaning over a large metal table, pieces of exposed wiring splayed out in front of her. The heavy dropship radio is at her right elbow, the volume pumped full and filling the room with a hissing static.

“You know you’ll murder the battery, leaving it on all the time like that,” Murphy comments dryly.

Raven flinches, twisting around. She locks eyes with Murphy, and John can literally feel the moment when she registers his presence and wishes it had been someone else. He tries not to let it get to him.
“I’m waiting for Bellamy to radio in,” Raven snaps at him.

Murphy frowns. “What do you mean? He didn’t come back with you?”

Raven lets out a huff of a laugh. “No, he didn’t.” She slams a wrench down onto the table and crosses her arms aggressively. “He went to Mount Weather.”

“He did what?” Murphy feels a dull pang of loss. Well. There goes the only other person he can stand on this Earth. “What an idiot.”

“It was Clarke,” Raven bites the word off like an insult, “she sent him.”

Murphy rolls his eyes. “Of course she did. Aren’t they supposed to be matched?”

“Yup.”

“Did she go with him?”

“Nope.” Raven cuts through her words like a knife.

“Fucking colour matches,” Murphy mutters, “more trouble than they’re worth.”

Raven’s expression fractures, twisting in acute misery.

Murphy realizes his mistake much too late. “Sorry.” It’s a weak sentiment, he knows. But he has no idea what else he can possibly say.

When she looks back at him, Raven’s eyes have turned to flint. “What do you want, Murphy?”

Not a clue.

When Murphy doesn’t answer, Raven turns her back on him and returns to the open circuitry on the table. He watches her pick up a series of wires, study each one intently, and slam them back down on the table.

Murphy edges closer, eyeing the wires on the table. Swearing under her breath, Raven picks up a different series and studies them, squinting hard.

All at once, Murphy understands the problem. “You’ve never seen in black and white before.”

Raven frowns as though she’d forgotten he was there. “I - I have. But not… this is… fuck. How am I supposed to do this?” Raven balls the wires in her fist and brings it down hard on the metal table. The radio shudders with the force. “With Finn-” Raven breaks off, her throat closing around Finn’s name. She shuts her eyes and takes a breath. “As though trying to reverse-engineer a lethal acid fog, based on chemicals I know nothing about, isn’t hard enough? Now I can barely tell the difference between copper and nickel-titanium. How the hell does half the population even manage to pick the right fruit, let alone-”

“Bend them,” Murphy says, cutting Raven off. “Nickel’s more flexible than copper.” No one could have credited Murphy with being the most attentive student in his classes on the Ark, but Murphy’s dad had been a maintenance mechanic, and some of his lessons still lingered.

Raven blinks at him, her diatribe dying on her tongue. Her eyes slide away from Murphy’s gaze to rest on the metal table. “I knew that,” she mutters, more to herself than to Murphy.

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and finds strips of plain adhesive on a nearby table. He drops it on the table next to Raven’s balled fist. He finds a pencil on the same shelf and drops it next to the strips of adhesive. “Figure out which is which. Bend them, weigh them, do what you gotta do. Then label them so they don’t get mixed up. It’s what the rest of us do.”

Gingerly, Raven picks up the tape and pencil. “That makes sense.”

No shit. It’s almost like I know what I’m talking about. Shocking though I’m sure that is. Murphy bites back the retort. He just gives Raven a curt nod. Without waiting for her to speak again, Murphy turns to go. He’s had about as much team bonding as he can take for one day.

“Wait,” Raven snaps when he’s at the door. Murphy looks back over his shoulder at her. Raven is running her thumb slowly along one of the pieces of wire. She meets his eyes steadily. “Thanks.”

It looks like it cost her a lot to say it. Murphy feels a flare of irritation. “Yeah, whatever. Who needs colour anyway, right?”

Raven nods, her face twisting again. “Right.”

Chapter End Notes

You guys are the best, thanks for all of your nice comments and kudos, it means a lot. So glad you're enjoying this story!
October 25th 2149: Taking Sides

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Maya, Earth date: October 25th 2149

The gun is cold in her hands as she aims it at Lovejoy. What is she doing? Is she really prepared to kill Lovejoy? She must be. She stabbed him with a scalpel so he wouldn’t kill this friend of Jasper’s. Jasper. She had been so adamant that he not do anything stupid. He had been so shaken since Monty’s disappearance two days ago, that she was sure he would panic and do something rash. Turns out she had been the one to take drastic action after all.

She watches as the Arker struggles with Lovejoy. Then just as Lovejoy is about to strike, the Grounder in the cage next to them grabs his arm through the bars. She holds him there as the Arker positions his hands around Lovejoy’s neck. It should have been obvious, but the realization still hits Maya like a slap in the face. The Arkers and the Grounders are on the same side. She stands there with a gun in her hand, doing nothing to save Lovejoy as his eyes roll back in his head. She thinks of his son. But still she does nothing. She is on their side too. She is now at war with her own people. With a grim clarity, she thinks that this is not the last time she is going to have to watch someone she’s known all her life die.

--

Of course this is Bellamy. She wasn’t sure what she had expected from the leader she had heard so much about. But there is something kind in his eyes as he asks her if she’s okay that makes her understand why everyone looks to him for guidance.

He tells her that she should go now. Just walk away. As if this next move is the point of no return, and she could still go back now. He’s wrong, though. She isn’t sure when she’d crossed that point of no return. But she knows instinctively that she’s already in far too deep to ever go back.

She’s seeing this through - whatever the cost.

Octavia, Earth date: October 25th 2149

Lincoln should have returned to camp last night.

Octavia balances her throwing knife between her fingers. She aims at her target - a tree she’s been trying, and failing, to impale for over an hour - and lets the blade fly. Her aim is good, and there’s
plenty of force behind her throw, but the hilt lands against the trunk with a dull thud and clatters to the ground. The tree remains uninjured.

Octavia swears under her breath.

“Again.” Indra’s command echoes across the yard. It’s the only word she’s said to Octavia all day. Octavia quickly walks forward to retrieve her knife. Under the shade of the tree, she can’t help glancing up at the leaves above her head. There’s definitely some green there, but it’s way too faded. Lincoln is still far from camp. If he’d been captured by the Mountain, he would be totally out of range. And clearly he’s alive - so what gives? Could he have gotten lost? Delayed somehow? It doesn’t make any sense.

Octavia returns to her position before Indra can tell her off for dawdling. Every muscle in her body is on fire. Indra had insisted she be up before the sun, running drills and sparring with the other Grounders. But Octavia refuses to let anyone see how sore she is. She relishes the feeling. After a lifetime of never moving beyond the little exercises Bellamy would bring home from school and teach her as a child, it’s exhilarating to feel so present, so alive, and so powerful in her body.

As the knife flies out of her hand again, she hears Clarke call her name behind her. Octavia twists around, looking for Clarke. Behind her, she hears the knife sink into the bark of the tree with a satisfying twack! Fucking Finally.

“Octavia!” Clarke repeats, jogging over to her from the Ark. “Bellamy radioed in! He’s inside.” Clarke’s eyes are dancing with a palpable relief.

The same relief washes over Octavia. He’s alive. It worked. But then why hasn’t Lincoln returned? Could he be avoiding camp? If so, why?

Clarke turns away before Octavia can voice these questions.

“Indra, I have a plan,” Clarke steps towards the Grounder Captain. Clarke keeps her hands folded against the small of her back. Deferential, but undeniably in control. Octavia admires the approach - Clarke’s clearly getting a feel for how to negotiate with the Grounders. “I need your backup and support.”

Octavia watches as Indra surveys Clarke and then nods.

“Show me.”

--

There is a fierce strength in Clarke that Octavia has to respect as she marches the prisoner, Emerson, right up to the gate and faces off against her own mother in the process.

Octavia watches with growing excitement as Kane and Abby slowly move off to the side, giving way to Clarke. It doesn’t matter what anyone says, Octavia can’t trust the Ark Council, and she doesn’t think she ever will. Why should she? They made it pretty clear that she was never wanted, never one of them. So why should she follow any of their rules now? She is much happier following Indra’s command. Much happier following Clarke’s command too.
But she refuses to follow blindly. So as Clarke turns back to face her, away from the quickly retreating Emerson, she pounces.

“Clarke, you want to explain to me how this helps my brother?”

“I just told him we have a secret army to worry about, the more they’re looking at us, the less they’re looking at him.”

Octavia has to hand it to her, Clarke is smart. A natural at war strategy.

Clarke presses on, “Bellamy is the key to everything Octavia. If he dies, we die.”

And for the first time, Octavia sees it. She sees that Clarke hasn’t just sent her match off without feeling after all. There is something savage in her eyes now. She will stop at nothing to get him back. This is what Octavia wants too. This should be a comfort to her. But instead it sends all the hairs on the back of her neck on end.

Harper, Earth date: October 25th 2149

Every time Harper closes her eyes she feels the searing pain of the drill ripping her bones apart all over again. She opens her eyes, tries to breathe, tries to tell herself that it’s over now. But it isn’t over. Not by a long shot.

She had heard the Mountain President tell Jasper that they could all pack to go home, but it hadn’t really seemed real at the time. And now, with the alarm sounding and the doors to the dorm locked, it definitely doesn’t seem real. If anything, she feels like she’s right back in the Sky Box again.

Gingerly, Harper lies back on one of the beds in the dorm. At least compared to the phantom pain of the procedure - that she relives all too often - the reality of her aching body is much more bearable.

Monty sits by her side, his back pressed against the headboard. Almost unconsciously, Harper curls a little towards him, drawing strength and comfort from her friend’s presence. A moment later, Miller appears beside the bed, carrying two glasses of water for both of them. Monty smiles weakly as he rises to take the glasses from Miller. Harper pushes herself up to sitting and accepts her own glass from Monty’s outstretched hand. Monty resumes his position at her side, while Miller takes a seat across the foot of the bed.

When she’d told her torturers that she wanted to go home, the only place in Harper’s mind had been the dropship. She’d been thinking of Bellamy and Clarke, and the way that every member of the Hundred felt safer when one of them was nearby. She’d thought of late nights on watch with Monroe, where they would discuss earth skills or fighting techniques, or maybe just gossip about who Connor was sleeping with. She’d thought of Stirling and Finn and Octavia and Raven. All the people she missed, who were probably dead by now. Harper had spent so long trying to prove herself. To Bellamy, to Jasper, to anyone who doubted her. She wanted to earn her place among the gunners, among these brave fighters, who she admired so much. She thought she’d failed, as Dr Singh attacked her, again and again, with her medical equipment. She thought she’d lost. But then they came for her. Miller, Monty, and Jasper hadn’t given up on her. They’d rescued her. Her friends. And as Harper rests her head on Monty’s shoulder, she feels a rush of love for them. The last
remnants of her lost home.

On a nearby bunk, Harper catches Fox staring at her. She’s sitting up in her own bed, shaking like a leaf. Harper isn’t surprised to see the look of extreme fear on Fox’s face. Since Harper has known her, Fox has always had that slightly wide-eyed-and-terrified look, even on a good day at the camp. But then again, even their best days on the ground were pretty terrifying. Anyway, she’s clearly spooked now. And Harper can’t really blame her for being shocked. Maybe they should have told the others about what was going on, not kept it a secret for so long. Well, the secret’s out now.

Suddenly Jasper is in front of them, buzzing. “Bellamy is here,” he hisses to the assembled group.

The shock of this statement registers on all of the faces around him. Harper teeters between relief and doubt.

“What are you talking about, Jasper?” Miller demands.

“He’s here. In the Mountain. He’s in a guard’s uniform. With Maya. I just saw him out in the hall.”

“Jasper, are you sure?” Fox is unable to keep the excitement from her voice.

“Yes. He’s here. And that means there is a plan. We are going to get out of this Fox, I promise.”

Jasper is so confident. But, looking around at the uncertain faces of her friends, Harper can see that not everyone is as easily reassured as Fox.

This war has only just begun.

Chapter End Notes

A new POV in this one! Looking forward, as always, to your thoughts.
The alarm sounds again and Maya flattens herself against the wall, Bellamy following suit beside her. Jasper and the others are all still locked in the dorm room. They’d heard the guards enter the dorms and take someone away an hour ago while they were trying to locate the acid fog system. Since then, Bellamy and Maya had positioned themselves outside the dorm so they could watch and figure out what was happening. A faint hope lingers in Maya that the guards might bring the person back when they return. But she doesn’t voice her hope, and she doesn’t even really believe it herself.

After what feels like hours, Dr. Singh and a dozen of the Mountain’s guards reappear. Fully outfitted in riot gear, they march down the hall and into the dorm. All of this is wrong. For one, since when does Dr. Singh stride around the halls like she owns the place? And why are the guards so highly armed? In all the years that Maya has lived in this Mountain, she has never seen the guards outfitted like that. They look terrified.

“This doesn’t make any sense,” Maya hisses under her breath, casting a sideways glance at Bellamy, pressed against the wall at her side. “They look like they’re going to war.”

“They are,” Bellamy grinds the words out through his teeth, his jaw tensing with the effort.

Two guards emerge from the dorm, dragging a tall sandy-haired boy. He’s familiar, but Maya doesn’t know him. Though it’s clear Bellamy does. He sucks in a breath as the figures pass.

They watch in silence as the guards drag him past their hiding place and down the hall. “We need to follow them,” he snaps when they’re finally out of hearing range. “Now.”

Maya nods and they take off in pursuit down the hall. She can barely believe all of this is really happening. She’s always known that her people have a dark history. A secret that goes unspoken, unacknowledged. But for years it had seemed… acceptable. A loss, a tragedy, but a necessity. Now, those days are long gone. To see it for herself, the violence, the violation, the evil of it. It’s sickening that she ever allowed herself to believe that they had no choice. There is always a choice. Her mother died to teach her that lesson, and Maya’s finally ready, now, to learn it.

Silently, she and Bellamy tail the guards to the end of one of the corridors on the 5th floor. Maya knows even before Bellamy tries his key card that it’s no use.

“It’s a classified level,” she tells him. “We won’t be able to get through.”

“There has to be a way.” Bellamy paces his frustration across the hall. He stops short. “What about these vents? Could we get through them?”

Maya looks up, considering. She knows they’re accessible - she saw a repair crew working on the air filtration system just last month. The vents are designed to close off each floor if they need to, but there’s connections between them, there must be, since the air is filtered from a single primary source. “It’s possible,” she allows at length, still considering. “They run through the entire mountain. But they’re a maze, you’d need a map.”

“Can you get me one?”
Two days ago the idea of breaking into her supervisor’s safe and stealing the schematics of the vent system would have been laughably impossible. Now it seems not only possible, but downright easy.

“I can do it.” Maya checks her watch. “We need to get back to the radio to report in, you told Clarke every three hours.”

Bellamy’s sharp eyes are flicking across the grating covering the vent access. “Schematics first,” he declares after a moment. “Then we report in.”

They move off silently together towards the storage offices, deep in the base of the mountain. The journey is clearly slower than Bellamy would like. They can’t risk being seen by any of the security footage, and they need to ensure they avoid the regular patrols. It’s a slow, boring process, that involves more doubling-back and diversions out of their way than either of them would like. Every time they have to duck out of sight to avoid one person or another, Bellamy lets out a frustrated huff in the back of his throat. Eventually, they reach the office door. Maya keys in the code on the panel, and they slip inside.

Low-level strip lighting illuminates the office. As she looks around, Maya’s heart stops dead in her chest. The room is black and white. “I can’t… I can’t see”, she gasps. Her breath is gone and she feels faint. Bellamy is by her side, turned away from her, his shoulders hunched over. He’s doing something with his hand that she can’t see. It doesn’t matter. The room is poorly lit and steeped in shadows, but everywhere she looks, nothing is in colour.

Bellamy touches her shoulder with one hand, bringing her attention to him. He turns her towards him, looking at her intently. It’s a struggle to focus on his ashen face as her vision tunnels in panic. Gently, Bellamy raises his left hand, palm up between them.

“Look at my hand,” he instructs. The fingers of his right hand dig into her shoulder, grounding her. Maya blinks and focuses. A trickle of faint red drips across Bellamy’s left palm. Red. It’s faint but it’s definitely still there. Slowly, the vice around her heart begins to loosen. Her breath evens out.

“I’m sorry.” Embarrassment floods her cheeks. She’d been stupid. He’s fine. Of course he’s fine. It’s just the distance. “I guess I haven’t been this far away from him since we met. I just, I didn’t realize, I didn’t expect it.”

“It’s okay.” Bellamy’s eyes are warm and reassuring, no hint of judgement in them.

“Thank you.”

Bellamy nods, accepting her thanks. “It doesn’t always work, but fresh blood is one of the last reliable markers of colour.”

“Can you see anything?” she realizes as soon as the words are out of her mouth that it’s a very personal question. Bellamy hasn’t even confirmed that he and Clarke are matched, let alone how strong their range is. If he’s offended by the question, Bellamy hides it well. He lowers his hand and looks at it his own cupped palm. His voice is calm and even as he responds.

“Only blood. And only a little bit.”

As though shaking himself from a reverie, Bellamy looks back up at her with a snap of his eyes. As she watches him wrap his hand up, she realizes with a jolt that he had been wearing that bandage already.

She grabs the vent schematics from a shelf in the corner of the room.
“We should get back to the radio to report in. Clarke will be worried.”

“She’ll be fine.”

Maya almost laughs. Does he really have no idea? She had seen Clarke when she’d been stuck here without him. She’d seen Clarke ready to kill everyone in this place to get back to him. She wonders if Bellamy would do the same for Clarke. She wonders if she would do the same for Jasper.

“How much do you want to bet she’s not?”

Bellamy looks over at her and for a split second she sees the ghost of a smile twitch in the corner of his mouth.

Lincoln, Earth-date: October 26th 2149

There is nothing but red. Red that smears across his vision, fills his mind, pumps like the blood in his veins. It pushes him forward, fills his muscles with strength and a hunger that he has never felt before. He hadn’t thought it was possible to fear a colour. But he is terrified of the pounding, blistering red.

In his more lucid moments, Lincoln would wonder what the drug was doing. Is it manipulating his match? Twisting his love for Octavia into something perverse and horrifying? Or is the colour incidental? Nothing more than a random side effect of the hyper-natural strength that has his muscles bursting with a thirst for violence. What does the drug look like to the unmatched? Does it even work?

Mostly, he does not wonder about these things. Mostly, he just drowns, losing himself in the red.

Hours, days, weeks could have passed by the time Lincoln comes back to himself.

The first thing he becomes aware of is a searing headache. A pain so intense that he’s sure his skull will fracture into pieces, killing him on the spot. He’s never wanted anything more in his life. He curls onto his side, only dimly aware of the rocks under his cheek. He would like to pass out, but the pain won’t let him. Minutes or hours of agony pass. He tries to pull himself to standing, but his equilibrium fails and he ends up on all fours, retching up onto the cold earth. He spits blood, forming a dark red puddle against the faintly brown dirt. Brown. It feels like the first colour – other than the hissing, horrible red – that Lincoln has seen in days. It’s like coming up for air. A gulp of life against the red still clawing at his nerves.

Slowly, all of his movements sluggish and clumsy, Lincoln raises himself to sit on his knees. He tilts his head towards the sky. It takes a while for his vision to focus. At first all he sees is a fog of red that churns his stomach. But he knows, he knows that’s not the only colour to see. Finally the images filter through his ruined senses. The world returns to him in increments, beating back the haze of red in his vision. Warm golden sunlight is filtering through a canopy of pale green pine needles above his head. Lincoln lets out a choking sob. Relief, grief, and shame rip through the phantom red hunger as Lincoln returns to himself. Tears burn down his cheeks as his memories – like a Black Fire ceremony
come to life – overwhelm him.

Octavia.

His match, his love, the source of what little beauty remains in the world. She will never forgive him. Will never want to set eyes on him again when she learns what he has done. He abandoned Bellamy. Left her brother to die at the hands of the worst kind of monsters. He betrayed her trust and for what? For the vicious oblivion of the red. He hates it even now, even as every cell in his body cries out for it.

Lincoln wrenches himself at last to standing. He’s paralyzed for a moment by indecision – does he follow his orders from the Mountain Men? Capture others, bring them to the tunnels. If he does this, he will be rewarded. Gifted with the sweet, terrible nothingness of the red. And he wants this. He wants to forget that he ever met Octavia, that he ever had anything in his life worth keeping. Wants to forget Bellamy and the look in his eyes when Lincoln betrayed him. Wants to sink so far that he forgets his own name. But the colour is so beautiful. A lifeline – Octavia, reaching out to him across an unknown distance – begging him, silently, to come home. And he wants this too, though he knows he will never have it again.

A ghost of himself, Lincoln sets off towards Tondc, where he knows he will find more Grounders to feed the ever-hungry Mountain. Maybe, if he is lucky, he will glimpse Octavia once more before she is forced to put him down like the dog he is.

Bellamy, Earth-date: October 26th 2149

Raven’s words echo in Bellamy’s ears as he grips the cold metal rung of the ladder to steady himself. Octavia is in Tondc. She’s there, and a missile is about to be fired at that exact location.

Raven tells him to focus on the task at hand. He has instructions from Dante - if he can irradiate Level 5, hopefully that will buy them all some time. And time is something they desperately need. Time for him to figure out how to deactivate the acid fog. Time for Clarke to march on the Mountain with the Grounders.

They all have their jobs to do. Part of him still aches to keep Octavia out of harm’s way. To protect her, like he always has. But what does it mean to protect her? Does protecting her mean hiding her away? Locking her under a floorboard? The idea churns Bellamy’s stomach. Of course he wants to see her safe, but most of all he wants to see her free. She’s a warrior in this fight too, and as much as it terrifies him, he knows it means she has her role to play, just like the rest of them. And it will be dangerous. But Bellamy will just have to be okay with that.

Whatever’s happening in Tondc, Clarke will take care of it. He assures himself of this as he continues climbing up the ventilation shaft. She will. Will they evacuate the city? Would doing that give away his position to the Mountain? Would that hurt his chances of getting access to the acid fog?

It’s not easy being the one in charge. But Bellamy trusts that whatever decision Clarke ends up making, it will be what she had to do for the greater good of their people. That’s just who she is. She
knows better than anyone what it takes to make the hard call. He still hasn’t forgotten the look on her face as she closed the dropship doors, leaving him out in the battlefield. She had been willing to sacrifice him then, just like she had been willing to sacrifice him when she sent him into this mountain.

The Grounders say that someone’s match is their greatest weakness. For most people, maybe, but Bellamy thinks Clarke must be the exception. She seems to have no such weakness where Bellamy’s concerned. Maybe he should resent her for it, but he can’t. Because he trusts, when it comes down to it, that she will put the lives of their people above everyone else. He’ll do anything it takes to protect her, and she’ll do anything it takes to protect them. And that’s how he knows he can trust her. Above all else.

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**Clarke, Earth-date: October 26th 2149**

So many dead. An entire city, destroyed. And it’s her fault. What kind of leader is she that let so many people die?

They hadn’t had a choice. They need to protect Bellamy. He has a job to do. They need the acid fog disarmed. But even as Clarke repeats this logic to herself, it sounds flat, pathetic, and cowardly. The truth is, she can’t shake the nagging question that if Bellamy wasn’t her match, would she still have let all these people die to protect him?

Lexa was right. Matches, love, are weaknesses. And as Clarke watches Tondc burn around her, she feels like the weakest of them all.

Clarke starts to move towards the cries of the anguished coming from the ruined city when a hand grabs her hard from behind.

“Clarke!” Lexa spins her around. Her face is grey and her eyes are blown wide.

The words fall out of Clarke, “I could have warned them. I could have saved them.”

Lexa’s voice is calm and steady. “If they see us they will strike again.”

And she’s right. They will strike again. Because *they* are the ones that did this, not her. The Mountain is the one that decided to fire a missile at unsuspecting, unarmed people. This blood is on *their* hands. And they will not stop. So they must be stopped. They must pay for what they’ve done here today.

“Victory stands on the back of sacrifice. You know that Clarke.”

Grey flames lick at black trees. Clarke’s ears are ringing and she can barely see. She can’t trust herself in this dark world. But she knows one thing with absolute certainty.

“I want the Mountain Men dead. All of them.”
Cement dust rains down in ashy sheets, coating the world in a tacky layer of grey debris. Smoke and gunpowder fill Abby’s lungs, choking her, as she collapses against a load-bearing chunk of ancient subway tunnel. Broken sections of wall separate her from Marcus. Marcus, who lies still as the grave, a spike of rebar punctured through his leg. Another victim of her own daughter’s leadership. The weight of the suffering above them in the wreckage of Tondc is suffocating.

Abby had known as soon as she arrived amongst the chaos that Marcus must be alive somewhere, and it didn’t take long for the colour to lead her to him. And now here they are, both trapped after the structure around them had started to collapse.

She watches, penned in across the rubble, as Marcus’s breathing slows.

“Marcus…” her voice is swallowed up by the densely-packed concrete surrounding them. “Marcus!” she tries again, louder this time. “Wake up! Marcus WAKE UP!”

Fear courses through Abby’s veins. She can’t remember the last time she had felt this level of terror. Desperate and ferocious, it threatens to overwhelm her. She has spent so long living apart and removed from this fear, she had forgotten how powerful it could be. It’s fear of losing her match.

With a rush of strength she hadn’t thought she possessed, Abby levers her hip hard against the slab of concrete pinning her in place. Oblivious to the pain, she heaves herself out from under the rubble and staggers to Marcus’ side.

“Hold on.” If he can hear her, he gives no outward sign of it. Abby places a shaking hand on his chest for a moment, checking that he’s still alive. In the grey-caked darkness, it’s terrifyingly hard to tell. The gentle, tell-tale rise and fall of his chest against her hand gives Abby a rush of renewed strength. Ripping a strip of fabric off his ruined shirt, Abby sets to work tying a tourniquet around his upper leg.

“Hold on Marcus,” she tells him as she inspects his wound. “You can’t die. You can’t leave me alone here.”

Marcus stirs, his hand reaching blindly for hers. She snatches it out of the air, gripping the back of his hand like a lifeline.

And suddenly a well of words are spilling from her. “We’ve been idiots for such a long time, and I’m sick of it. I’m sick of being surrounded by grey all the time, I’m sick of being on my own, and I’m sick of not depending on you. I have spent so much effort hating you, and I’m sick of that too. I need you. I want to need you. I don’t know how we have survived this long, and I don’t know how we’re going to get through this either, but I know that our chances are much better if we’re together. We need to be able to trust each other again.”

“You can.” Kane’s eyes are open, hooded and a little unfocused, but trained on Abby. “I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t. Please don’t. You don’t have to.”

“I do,” Kane insists, his voice firm. “I really do. I have so much to apologize for.”
“We both do,” Abby cuts in before he can continue, “but if we have to go through every one of our mistakes and atone for each one individually, we’ll never move on. And I really need us to keep moving forward right now, not back.”

Kane nods slowly. “Okay.”

A loud rumble and crash vibrates through the collapsed structure all around them. Abby turns around to see light, daylight spilling through. A figure appears, silhouetted in the entrance. Octavia, she’s calling back their status to people on the other side. They are saved.

Abby turns back to Kane, relief flooding through her. “We’re going to be okay.”

Kane matches her smile and repeats, “Okay.”
October 27th 2149: A (Semi-)Romantic Interlude

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Wick, Earth-date October 27th 2149

The springs of the ancient cot squeak in protest as Raven sits up. Wick looks over at her, adjusting to the absence of her weight against his side. Raven has her back to him, already strapping up her bad leg and tugging her clothes into place.

“You okay?” he asks quietly, knowing the answer, but needing to ask anyway.

“We’re not doing that,” Raven replies curtly. Not angry, exactly, but sharp.

Wick would like to argue with her – would like to force her to confront her emotions – but as always he holds himself back. He can’t be that guy. He shouldn’t have even slept with her in the first place, except that he was weak and lonely and he missed her all the time. He’s been missing her since the day they met.

“Okay,” he says, relenting and collapsing back onto the cot. If she needs him to be the guy she sleeps with to deal with what happened to Finn, he can do that for her. He doesn’t have to like it. This isn’t about him and his stupid fucking emotions. God, sometimes Wick hates his match more than anything in the world. Of all the people in the world, why does he have to be matched with someone who can barely look him in eye?

“Stop doing that!” Raven snaps, whipping around to glare at him.

“Doing what?” Wick looks up, irritation rekindling him. “God Raven, what do you want from me?”

“I don’t know! Just stop being so damned nice,” her voice quivers on the word. “It’s freaking me out.” And she’s joking, but there are tears in her eyes, and her good leg is shaking again, and Wick is up and on his feet in a blink, hands on Raven’s shoulders.

“Hey, sit down,” he instructs gently, lowering her back onto the cot. He kneels down in front of her, his bare knees protesting immediately to the cold, hard press of the metal floor.

“Fuck you,” she replies weakly.

“Another time,” Wick jokes with a ghost of his normal energy. Raven lets out of a choked laugh anyway, so he figures that’s good enough.

“Look, just… it was a stupid question. You’re not okay, and you don’t have to be. That’s fine. I’m here anyway, whatever you need.”

Raven lets out a huff of derision. “You’re making it worse,” she informs him. “Just stop trying to help me.”

Wick pauses, his hands still on her shoulders. “Does that include the bomb? Because I’m pretty sure you’ll get yourself all kinds of dead without my help.”

He smirks at her. And now, finally, the fight is back in her eyes as she screws up her face at him.
“You wish,” she informs him archly.

“Oh, I’m sure you would find someone,” Raven dismisses, leveraging herself against his shoulder to get back on her feet. Even after she’s let go of him, his shoulder still feels warm from her touch. “Get dressed,” Raven says, her tone returned to their baseline level of playful disdain. “Let’s get all this shit packed up.” She indicates with one hand to the series of bombs they finished putting together last night. “We’ve got a dam to blow up.”

It doesn’t take long when they’re working together. There are a couple of minor final touches that they’ll tweak now, ensuring they need to do as little as possible prep of the bombs when they arrive at the Mountain. Raven sits with the final bomb resting in front of her, checking the trigger mechanism.

She swears under her breath, gritting her teeth against a screw that’s protruding from her mouth. She picks it out from between her teeth and holds it up to the mechanism, bent low towards it. “Hey, can you pass me the spline drive screwdriver?” she calls to Wick from her position on the floor.

Wick looks over from the wall of calculations they’d thrown together. He’s already checked their math a dozen times, but one more can’t hurt. His eyes cast about at the range of tools scattered across their work space, his mind going blank. “Err… which one?”

Raven tuts, a dismissive noise in the back of her throat. “Never trust an engineer with a mechanic’s job. Look, I dunno,” she flicks her hand impatiently. “I always just used to call it the ‘red one’.”

It’s a passing comment. Half a joke, and half a reminder of what she’s lost. If Wick had waited for two more damn seconds, she would have found another way to describe it. But what does Wick do instead? He fucking twitches, because he’s a goddamn idiot. His hand, independent of any input from his brain, reaches automatically for the screwdriver resting near him on the bench, chipped red paint covering its handle.

Since the day Sinclair first introduced him to Raven, colour has been a source of fluctuating, infuriating vexation for Wick. From day to day, hour to hour, it would fade in and out like a weak radio signal. Strong one moment, when Raven could deign to visit the old Engineering station in the bowels of the Ark, weak the next, when Raven would spend her days as far from Wick and his wisecracks as possible. Sparking briefly as they crossed paths in the ration station or when he walked past her door on his way home. Maybe Wick preferred it that way. Holding her at arm’s length meant he would never have to be that guy. The guy who shoves himself, uninvited, between a perfect match. So, over time, Wick had become somewhat immune to colour. It was that thing that existed sometimes and then would fade out for a day or a week or longer. It was fine. It was just the way things had to be. But he’s an idiot. And since getting to the ground, Wick has, maybe, come to crave the colour. Working so long, days and days, hour after endless hour, with Raven in putting together this plan… it was intoxicating.

So, he forgot. Forgot about his match and what it means and why he’s been keeping it a secret for years.

The movement is so subtle that if Raven had been blinking, she would have missed it. But as it was, her eyes are clear and sharp and trained on Wick. Wick, who reaches for one of the screwdrivers. He remembers a moment too late and pulls his hand back, but the damage is done.

“I - I wasn’t even trying to test you…” Raven mutters under her breath.
The revelation seems to be taking a moment to set in. Wick watches as the cogs turning behind Raven’s eyes. His heart thrums painfully in his chest as he waits for the truth to settle. Finally, like flipping a switch, everything clicks together, and Raven’s expression shifts hard from mild shock to suspicion.

“You can see colour.” It’s not a question.

Wick says nothing. His brain scrambles desperately from *fuckfuckfuck* to something remotely coherent that he can say in his defence.

“You’re matched with someone.”

Still nothing. *Fuckfuckfuck*.

“Why wouldn’t you have told me? Why would you have slept with me, unless…”

“Raven-” That’s all he’s got.

“Are you-” Raven can’t seem to say the words. She’s still on the floor, looking up at him. But she hoists herself to her feet now, pushing hard on the frame of the cot to stand faster.

She sways as she adjusts her weight under her good leg, and Wick moves on instinct to help her. With a sharp, abortive wave of her hand, she holds him off. “Who are you matched to?” she asks, her hand still raised between them like a wall.

Sick with guilt and something like loneliness, Wick tries to speak. “Please, this isn’t-”

“Tell me.” Her voice cracks on the word, a shock of vulnerability and fear, and Wick is such a sucker, because for all his blustering to the contrary, he’s never really been able to deny her anything.

“It’s you.” The words have been years coming, and he feels like he’s just jumped off a cliff without a parachute. In freefall, he waits to hit the ground. For a long, exquisitely uncomfortable moment, Raven is silent. Wick wonders if maybe she’s willing to let him explain. “It’s not what you think-”

“Oh, it’s not?” Raven looks up at him with steel in her eyes. “Because it sure as hell *looks* like you’ve been lying to me for years.” And Raven is like a dog with a bone now. Fury and pain have taken root, and Wick knows, instinctively, that there’s no escape from this fight. “What is it? You’ve been biding your time? Waiting until Finn was out of the way and you could make your move-”


“Oh yeah, you’re so fucking noble,” Raven drawls, disdain rippling through her. “You waited a whole week before sleeping with me, you’re such a good guy.”

“Hey, you kissed me,” Wick snaps, the defensive retort spilling from his mouth before he can stop himself.

Raven flinches like he’d slapped her. “Last time I make that mistake. Get out.”

“We have to finish-”

“I don’t *need* you.” *Not like you need me.* The barb hangs in the air, unspoken, but Wick feels the attack all the same. “Get. Out.”

Wick folds his arms across his chest, trying and failing to keep his hands from shaking. He casts his
eyes around the room for a moment, unwilling to leave, but unable to find an excuse to stay. “Okay,” he manages at last. Without another word, he leaves.

Grey has completely reclaimed his world by the time he’s back at his tent.

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**Lexa, Earth-date: October 27th 2149**

The tent is still and quiet. Outside, Lexa’s forces are gathering. Their weapons are sharp, their armour is clean, and they are ready to taste blood in the air. Inside the tent Lexa stands alone, steadying her breath.

She can still feel Clarke’s lips ghosting against her own. Warm and yielding and, for a moment, they had both given into it. Clarke’s movements were smooth and cautious against Lexa’s lips. Her scent – like gunmetal and moonshine but stronger, cleaner – filled Lexa’s senses and left her strangely punch drunk. There are no similarities to Costia; Lexa would do neither of them the disservice of imaging Clarke as a stand-in for anyone else.

Clarke is a hurricane, constantly intent on keeping Lexa off balance. She is so different from Costia in so many ways: she is harder, colder, much less prone to laughter than Costia had been. But there is a warmth to her, a love for life and a sense of its *importance* that Lexa has been without for so long now. It’s something she craves, just as much as the warmth of Clarke’s breath on her cheek or the lightest pressure of her hand against Lexa’s forearm.

The moment is all too short-lived. As soon as Lexa touches her, Clarke starts like an animal surprised by a clumsy hunter. Stumbling and unsure, she makes her excuses and beats a hasty retreat. Lexa cannot blame her. Neither of them have time for this, not really. They have their people to rescue and a Mountain to defeat. Moreover, Lexa is sure that Clarke’s bond to her second, Bellamy, goes deeper than she would like to admit. They are more than likely a perfect match, and Lexa has little desire to get between what is not hers to disrupt. So when Clarke runs, Lexa lets her.

For some time after Clarke has retreated, Lexa stands alone in the tent. It takes her much longer than she expected to regain her bearing.

Gently, Lexa lifts her hand and whispers the tips of her fingers across her own dry and cracked lips. Clarke’s impression is still upon them. Lexa’s blood is a riot of pre-war adrenaline, the surge of lust that always accompanies the preparation for battle, and underneath it all the cold hard spike of betrayal. The betrayal most of all is an emotion she does not wish to untangle or dwell upon.

Just like Clarke, Lexa does not have time for this. Not for desire, even less so for grief. Her priority has always been, and will remain, saving her people from the Mountain’s clutches.

The ghosts that haunt her will have to wait.
Raven, Earth-date: October 27th 2149

It takes her an hour to pack up the bombs, her hands still shaking and her mind fracturing in a thousand directions at once. As she packs, Raven obsesses over every conversation, every moment, she’s ever had with Wick. All of it, every damn second they’ve spent together needs to be reshuffled, examined through a new lens. She's furious one moment, on the verge of forgiveness the next, then back to fury a moment later. Her eyes settle on the grey-and-black spline drive screwdriver. How could he not tell her? The overwhelming sense of betrayal burns out the competing feeling of compassion, and she settles finally on a simmering rage.

Only an hour after she dismissed him from the room, from the plan to blow the dam, and from her life, Wick is back. He strides into Engineering Station, his hands thrust firmly in his pockets and his back ramrod straight.

Raven bristles at the sight of him. "I told you to leave."

"I know. I came back." And he's still Wick. Every inch the infuriating and infuriatingly kind man she's come to depend on the past few days.

"I don't want you here," she fights back. And she means it. The sight of him is enough to send her nerves into a riot. She hates him, or she wants to hate him.

"I don't care," he says with a deceptively unconcerned shrug. "I've been thinking, and... What if this, my match, has nothing to do with us?"

Raven blinks at him, confusion temporarily belaying her anger. "You're not making any sense."

"What if my match is trying to tell me something? What if I'm meant to be here? What if I'm matched to you because I'm supposed to help you with this?"

Raven crosses her arms over her chest, leaning heavily against the work table. "You really think that?" She raises an eyebrow at him, "you think this is fate?" She laces the word with as much sarcasm as she can manage.

Wick frowns at her, but doesn't rise to the bait. "Maybe! I mean, I know one thing: I crash landed to Earth on the damn Ark and didn't even break a bone. Do you know how unlikely that is? Because I sure do - I did the damn math! But here I am, and here you are, and somehow we've managed to hold on to our lives by the skin of our teeth. And I don't know if this is fate or just random fucking chaos, but I'm here, I'm here, and I'm willing to walk into almost certain death with you. And frankly, I don't care whether you want me there or not. I'm going to help our friends - and you - whether you like it or not."

Raven looks him up and down. She imagines walking past him and leaving on her own. She sees herself setting the bombs in the dam by herself. She could do it. No question. She doesn’t need him. But as she takes in the hard line of his jaw and the grey determination in his eyes, she can’t help but consider the alternative. Because maybe they are about to walk into almost certain death. And if she’s totally honest with herself, she doesn’t want to do it alone.

"Fine. But you're carrying the boxes."
Things escalate quickly inside the mountain. For the second time in two weeks Miller finds himself fighting tooth and nail for his life. And then next thing he knows he’s staring at the green bed sheet that hangs down in front of his hiding place as he lies flat under the bed of this tiny bedroom. They have all been separated and given hiding places among different families in the Mountain. His heart races faster and faster and he watches the green slowly drain from the fabric. Something must be wrong. Why was Monty moving further away. *Fuck* he swore to himself *Why does he keep letting people separate him from Monty?* He had run through so many nightmare scenarios in his brain by this point he was having trouble keeping track of what had actually happened and what he had imagined.

When he hears someone at the door he wastes no time, he’s not about to stay hidden here and do nothing, he has to attack. He rolls out and is on his feet before he sees that it’s Maya.

“What is going on?” he demands. “Where has Monty been taken?”

His brain is racing through so many horrible fates that he imagines must be waiting for Monty, that he barely registered the look of shock, surprise, and understanding that cross Maya’s face.

Her voice is calm and low. “They are searching all of the apartments, we moved them to a place that’s already been checked. We need to wait here till the shifts change and then we’ll move you downstairs as well.”

He slowly processes her words. *He’s okay.* He repeats to himself as he drops down to sit on the edge of the bed. *For now, he’s okay.*

“I didn’t know he was your match. I’m sorry. I would have hid you two together.”

The absurdity of this girl - this child of his enemy - apologizing to him in such a genuine way, over something so trivial as keeping them a few meters apart catches him completely off guard. A laugh breaks out of him.

Maya stares.

“No one knows,” he confesses watching the dim colour of his hands pulse faintly.

“Not even him?”

“*Especially* not him.”

“How?”

He looks up at her, the answer is so obvious he resents her making him say it. “He doesn’t see colour.”

“Okay. So?”
“So?” A familiar frustration builds up inside him. “So it doesn’t matter. I’m not his match, so the whole thing doesn’t matter. There’s no point.”

“Of course it matters.” Maya moves towards him. “He’s still your match, whether it’s perfect or not, and being someone’s match is never nothing. He deserves to know how important he is.” She hesitates for a moment, “You do think he’s important, don’t you?”

“Obviously I think he’s important.” He snaps, “He’s the reason fighting for survival on this whole godforsaken hellhole of an earth is worthwhile. He’s the reason any of it is worthwhile.”

Maya slowly moves to sit down next to him on the bed as Miller resolutely continues to stare at his hands.

“Matches aren’t random. The colour draws us to the people we need to be around to become the best version of ourselves. When we’re around them the world is literally clearer, better, more vivid and alive. But it’s a lot to take in, it can be completely overwhelming, our eyes often need time to adjust. Even once they do, this world is brutal and painful, and it can be hard to look at it in such detail. And of course it’s also terrifying because it’s so fragile. Walk a few feet away from this one person and the world dims. Lots of people say they never want to see colour because then they’ll never know what they are missing. They can stay happy in their ignorance and they will love their grey shadow of the world just fine.

But Nathan, you and I know different, because the colour, that’s just decoration. It’s nothing compared to the person. And the way you feel like a better person, a better version of yourself just for having known them. That’s the important part, that’s the part that can never be taken away so long as you chose to hold on to it. And that’s also the part that people who are matches share in, even if they aren’t matched in return. You should tell him Nathan, because just as having him as your match makes life worth fighting for, for him, knowing you, knowing he’s important to you will give him something to fight for as well.”

Nathan feels every one of her words pierce something inside him. Not trusting himself to speak he gives a jerky nod.

A sharp knock on the door makes them both jump.

“Time to go.”

Octavia, Earth-date: October 27th 2149

“Jus dren jus draun,” Octavia chants along with the others members of the Grounder army as they march on the Mountain.

Among the warriors of the Trigidekru, with Indra issuing orders, and Lincoln by her side, Octavia feels more powerful than she ever has in her life. She chants until her throat is sore, feeling the
strength of an army behind her.

Towards the front of the marching hoard, Octavia catches a glimpse of Clarke and Lexa striding beside one another. There is something about Lexa that Octavia cannot trust, and when Clarke is around Lexa, she has trouble trusting her too. For all that Indra did not blink at their decision to let Tondc burn, Octavia cannot follow commands so blindly. Octavia knows that Clarke has been trying to protect Bellamy – and of course that’s what Octavia wants too – but at what cost?

If the situations had been reversed, and Lincoln’s life were hanging in the balance instead, would Octavia make the same call? She honestly doesn’t know.

Chapter End Notes

Lots happening as we move into the end of season two!!

(PS. Fun fact: Maya's description of what a match is was written pretty early on in the creation of this fic and is one of my favourite passages)
October 28th 2149: Child's Play

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Maya, Earth-date: October 28th 2149

How had it come to this for her people? Killing each other in cold blood.

She’d thought they could still earn some salvation. There are plenty of her people who never agreed with Cage, who – like her mother – had resisted the treatments. She had called on them, and they had volunteered to help, to hide the Arkers, to protect them. And now Cage is ordering them all shot on sight.

She’d known Paul all her life. She had a memory of him fixing her toy plane once when it had broken. He had been a guard. She had felt safe around him. And now she’s forced to watch as he shoots the Petkers in the head. As he pulls a gun on her father.

There’s no coming back from this. From any of this. They should never have used other human beings like animals for their own selfish gain in the first place. Monty was right. They should have just died. They all should have died a long time ago.

Clarke, Earth-date: October 28th 2149

Alone, she stands, facing the door to the Mountain.

Shock roots Clarke to the spot. Distantly, she can still hear Lexa’s army as they descend the Mountain and return to Polis – wherever that is. Hurt and betrayal sink like weights in her chest, along with the powerful fury that accompanies feelings of powerlessness. Clarke’s hands are shaking as she takes stock of her options. The priority now must be to get inside. Get inside, find Bellamy, find her people, get out again. Her feet are carrying her to the tunnels before her plans have developed any further. She can barely trust the strength of her colour as a measure of distance, since physical proximity and access points are two very different things. But Clarke is encouraged to find her surroundings brightening as she moves towards the tunnels. Something tells her this is the right way, even if the rest of her plan is hinging on a prayer.

Surely Bellamy will realize the deal’s changed. He’ll try to free the Grounders and find the cages empty… then what will he do? Could he have been caught by the Mountain Men? If not, will he try to assemble their friends? She hopes, beyond all reason, that Bellamy’s first instinct will be the same as Clarke’s: to find each other. They’ve come this far, she has to trust that he will come for her, that he will open the access door from the inside. If not, then fine, she’ll just have to find a way inside on her own.

Of course, even if she can get inside, Clarke will still need to find a way to locate, liberate, and
escape with her people. But she’ll have Bellamy by then. Together, they must be able to come up with something.

Fractions of plans, half-formed and nebulous, float through Clarke’s mind in cycles as she storms through the tunnels, approaching the door that Indra’s team had been sent to.

“Clarke!” Octavia emerges from the shadows, stepping into a pool of floodlighting by the tunnel door.

Clarke’s relief at finding Octavia is short lived. Octavia is still spitting mad about Tondc. They don’t have time for this. They have to get inside. Get inside, find the others, get out. Clarke can feel her control fraying as she finds Fox. She’s too late. Too late to save Fox, what if she’s too late to save anyone. Desperation is eating away at her. She’s moments from just trying to shoot her way through the door, when she pulls up short. The blue in her coat catches her eye, flaring bright and hot even in the dim tunnels.

Bellamy’s on his way.

Monty, Earth-date: October 28th 2149

It only takes Monty a moment to force his way through the top layer of the security on the Mountain’s computer network. Lines of code burst forward under his command, at once foreign and familiar. The Mountain Men’s technology is antique. Older, even, than the computers on the Ark, who at least had the benefit of space-grade technology before the world ended. The monitor filling Monty’s vision is dim, and the keys of the keyboard are soft with over-use under his fingers. But it’s the same operating system as they had on the Ark. The commands, the prompts, the language is just the same. It’s the same technology. The same stark lines of text order the machinery of their two worlds. A sharp reminder that once, not so long ago, they were the same culture.

Monty has no time to dwell on the implications of this. There will be plenty of chances for reflection later, when his friends are safe. For now, Monty’s fingers fly across the keys, his attention devoted to the immediacy of his goal—Don’t do this! A hysterical voice is screaming in the back of his mind—He smashes his way through firewalls—you have to stop this!–reroutes the security systems—this is wrong—and blocks the access behind him. Any Mountain Man who might be on a computer somewhere in the network, trying to stop him, will be greeted with nothing but meaningless code, looping back on itself. Effectively, locking anyone else out of the system—There are CHILDREN in this Mountain!—With the network open to him beneath his fingers, Monty can get to work. It’s child’s play to find the air filtration system. He rips through the encryption like it’s made of tissue paper—You CANNOT do this—they barely bothered to install security around this section at all. Well, of course. Why would they need to put security around the air filters? It never would have occurred to them that it could be used as a weapon.—What gives you the right to destroy someone’s match? You’ve never even seen in colour!—The voice in his head is starting to sound painfully like Jasper, desperate and petrified. Monty blocks it out, sinking deeper into his work. Like a coward, he flees from the horror that’s threatening to overwhelm him. It feels good to work again. For months, he has felt so useless, so powerless. He’s failed to help his friends so often, from his very first attempt to help the hundred contact the Ark. He was never as good an engineer as Wick, and not even half the mechanic that Raven is, but software? Software is his weapon. Code will sing for him if he asks it
to– and what purpose are you putting this skill to now? What good are you hoping to achieve? – Monty buries the voice in his head, drowning himself in a white noise of intense focus and sky-high adrenaline.

The rest of the world falls away. Bellamy and Clarke are still in the room, planning or arguing, it’s sometimes hard to tell with those two, but their voices fade to static as he works. The Mountain King is dead behind the bank of monitors, Monty can just make out his legs, bent at an awkward angle from his fall. That sight, too, becomes nothing but a part of the scenery. The smells of gunpowder and blood and stale air dissolve away to nothing. Even the screaming horror in his mind goes quiet. In a flurry of coding, Monty coaxes the air filtration system to do his bidding. He flexes it, contorts it, twists it into something wrong, but it works, he knew it would, because it’s so simple, once you know how.

All at once, he stops. Kinetic energy is still buzzing through his fingers as he holds his hands, trembling, over the keys.

He blinks, the adrenaline receding in increments. The howling in the back of his mind is back in full force, raging, hollering for his attention– How could you? This is evil, evil– Monty looks up, his eyes locking on the video footage from the harvesting room. Harper, and Miller, and Raven, and Monroe, and all of his friends, trapped. Jasper, staring down an advancing Cage. And Jasper will hate him, Monty knows he will, but it’s worth it. At least he’ll be alive to hate him.

“Why are you stopping?” Clarke demands. Her voice is trembling, but edged with steel.

Please, please god, don’t do this, PLEASE, Monty –“Because I did it,” Monty tells them.

He’s never in his life been so relieved that he sees in black and white.

Marcus, Earth-date: October 28th 2149

The metal cuts painfully into Kane’s wrists as he struggles wildly and in vain against his restraints.

Not Abby. Please God not Abby.

After everything they had been through, after all they had sacrificed and lost, how could it come to this? How could it end like this?

No one needs to die for bone marrow. They can donate it. The answer is so simple. The path to peace is so obvious.

Kane has always prided himself on understanding what it means to make the hard call. To put the survival of your people before your own needs. But this? Extraction of bone marrow without anesthetic until death. This is insanity. Kane doesn’t understand these people at all.

“WE CAN DONATE IT!” he screams at the mountain leader.

“That will never happen.” The leader’s voice is unfeeling. Absent.
“It can,” Kane insists, pulling desperately away from the wall, “I can make that happen, with her help. We can all survive.”

Please God just once can’t we all survive? So many lives have been lost already. There was no other option back then. This time there is.

The leader doesn’t even turn to look at him. As the drill is prepared Kane meets Abby’s eyes. The colour is so bright it hurts.

Kane feels Abby’s scream run through him like a knife slicing him open.

A lifetime of stupid mistakes: of pride, of arrogance, of loneliness, flash before his eyes. They wasted so much time. He wasted so much time. And now this was it. This was going to be the end of the tale of Kane’s pointless and tragic match. His ultimate soulmate was right in front of him his whole life and he wasted more than half of it fighting with her because he was too proud to listen. What a fool he had been.

Suddenly, Abby’s screams fall away as the drilling stops. For a moment Kane fears the worst, but then his attention is drawn to the Mountain people. The skin of the guards has started to blister. One by one, they fall to the ground.

The kids did it. They’re saved.

Octavia runs in and as soon as she has undone his restraints, Kane is at Abby’s side, helping her up. A second chance.

Within moments, Clarke and Bellamy are there. Clarke falls into her mother’s arms. And as Kane watches Bellamy survey the survivors, he recognizes something in his eyes, a look he knows all too well himself. This is a man who has had to make the hard call. Who has put the survival of his people above his own needs.

“You did good.” Kane puts a hand on his shoulder to pull his attention away from the body of the guard on the ground. If they are going to get through this, they need to look ahead, not behind them.

“Now let’s get these people home.”

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Bellamy, Earth-date: October 28th 2149

Bellamy is so exhausted he can barely stand. It’s all he can do to put one foot in front of the other as he and the survivors from the Mountain make the long trek home.

Home. Is Camp Jaha home?

Bellamy casts his gaze around at the band of travelers. Just behind him, Lincoln and Octavia are marching together. They are standing very near to each other, the backs of their hands drifting against each other’s as they move. Bellamy can recognize the weary resignation in Octavia’s expression. He will never be able to stop worrying about her, not really, but as their eyes meet, she gives Bellamy a tired smile, and he knows that she’ll be okay.
Towards the front of the procession, he can make out the form of a stretcher. Abby is resting on top of it, Kane hovering within reaching distance. They appear to be speaking, Abby’s head turned towards him, Kane’s frame curving down over the stretcher as they proceed.

Beside them, Wick is carrying Raven in his arms. She has her head resting against his collarbone, her eyes closed. As he watches, Wick presses a gentle kiss to the crown of her head. Bellamy’s heart swells in relief for Raven. By all accounts Wick is a good man, and Raven has been through so much; she deserves every moment of happiness she has been able to find.

Bellamy knows without even needing to look for her that Clarke is towards the back of the group. With this many people, it puts her nearly a quarter-mile behind him, but his colour remains as constant as if she were right at his side. And if he wishes she were beside him? If he wishes she would come to him, take his hand, let him share with her the burden of the act they just committed. Well. That’s just the exhaustion talking.

“Bellamy?” A voice speaks right at Bellamy’s elbow. The sudden appearance of Miller beside him makes Bellamy flinch in surprise. And okay, maybe he’s a bit edgy. It’s been a long day.

“Sorry,” Miller mutters. “Didn’t mean to surprise you.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Bellamy dismisses.

He reaches out, clasping Miller warmly on the shoulder. It’s a relief having Miller back at his side – he’s missed having his friend to lean on. On Miller’s other side, Bellamy catches the eye of his dad, hanging back, but unmistakably keeping near to his son. Bellamy gives the Sergeant a firm nod.

“Hey, you okay?” Miller asks him as they walk.

Bellamy shrugs half-heartedly, unsure how to even go about answering that question.

“I don’t blame you for what… what happened.” Miller drops his voice to just above a whisper, his gaze locking on a figure over Bellamy’s shoulder.

Twisting around as subtly as possible, Bellamy follows Miller’s gaze to where Jasper and Harper are walking together, removed from the main throng of the rescued 43. Bellamy’s stomach drops out as he looks at them. Jasper is the picture of a broken man. He is dead on his feet, his legs shuffling forward, more from the pressure of Harper’s arm around his back than any apparent motivation of his own. He leans heavily on his friend, his head dropping onto her shoulder as they walk slowly onward. His eyes barely seem to be registering the ground under his feet, let alone the presence of anyone else around him.

Bellamy squeezes his eyes shut. He can still feel the press of his hand over Clarke’s. The stiff slide of the lever as they pushed it closed. The look of horror and grief on Clarke and Monty’s faces. Bellamy shudders involuntarily, again itching for Clarke’s presence at his side.

“You did the right thing,” Miller continues, his voice still low in Bellamy’s ear.

“Tell that to Maya,” Bellamy shoots back, unable to bite his tongue. Miller flinches and drops his gaze.

Bellamy looks back again at Harper and Jasper. This time, Harper catches him watching them and levels him with a look that Bellamy can’t interpret. Blame? Gratitude? Forgiveness? Maybe a mix of the three. Either way, it makes Bellamy’s stomach twist again, so he looks away.

“Where’s Monty?” Bellamy thinks out loud, realizing suddenly that he can’t see him among the
“Bringing up the rear,” Miller answers immediately. “Last I looked he was with Clarke. I guess… I guess they understand what each other are going through.”

Bellamy nods, trying hard not to take this as a rejection. The fact that he’s chomping at the bit to set eyes on her, to check on her, to make sure — however irrational it may be — that she really did make it through the battle, is his problem. The colour should be enough, a reminder that she’s near, but it isn’t. It’s not about the colour, it’s about her. The way her smile curves to one side when she’s tired. The timbre of her voice, lilting and assured. The familiar sensation — like she’s punched a hand through his chest and squeezed — when she looks at him. But if Clarke needs to process what happened away from him for a little while, he can give her that space.

Another thought suddenly drives out Bellamy’s self-pity. “How’s Monty?” In many ways, Monty was the third hand on that lever, as responsible as both of them for what happened today.

Miller’s face falls, and Bellamy is reminded again of how much the people in the Mountain must have gone through together, and how much it must have united them. Time was, Miller wouldn’t have blinked about Monty’s wellbeing.

“He’s…” Miller hesitates. “He’s been through a lot. But… I think he’ll be okay.” There’s a pause where Miller chews on the inside of his cheek, seeming to think something through. “I’ll do everything I can to make sure he’s okay.”

The intensity in Miller’s tone takes Bellamy by surprise. “Okay,” he replies slowly, wondering if there’s more to Miller and Monty’s relationship that he first thought. “Are you two…?” he trails off into an unspoken question.

“He’s my match,” Miller says in a rush, hissing the words through barely-parted lips.

“Oh,” Bellamy exclaims, surprise taking him aback. “Uhh…”

“He doesn’t know,” Miller continues, barely looking at Bellamy. “He… It’s not reciprocated.”

Bellamy winces in sympathy, “I’m sorry-”

“I’m not,” Miller cuts in. “I don’t…” he looks up from the ground to meet Bellamy’s eyes. “I don’t regret a single thing about my match. Monty is Monty. I don’t love him because he’s my match.” A crooked, affectionate smile passes across Miller’s face. “Actually, I love him in spite of it.”

Bellamy frowns, not sure he understands.

“He doesn’t know,” Miller repeats, seeming to speak more to himself than to Bellamy.

Bellamy feels like he should be offering some kind of advice, but he’s completely out of his depth. His mind is working at half-speed after the stress of the past week (hell, the past two months ), and heart-to-hearts about colour-matches could hardly be considered his strength as a friend. He blinks owlishly at Miller, trying to think of something helpful to say.

Miller doesn’t seem to need his help, anyway. “I need to tell him,” he says, without any input from Bellamy. “We could all die in a firebomb, or at the hands of some shady mole-people. Life’s too fucking short, you know what I mean?”

“Yeah,” Bellamy says after a moment. “I guess so.”
He looks around again at the assembled crowd. Monroe, just ahead, talking animatedly with a group of their rescued friends. Octavia, Raven, Harper, Miller, all of them. And he thinks that yes, Camp Jaha just might be his home after all.

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He waits for her at the gate. He can’t help it; entering the camp without Clarke feels wrong. Eventually, he spots her. What he sees in her face sends a cold stab of dread through his chest. There’s a resigned, determined sadness in her expression as she moves forward and gives Monty a comforting embrace. He recognizes that look. She’s running away.

Arms wrapped around himself protectively, Monty gives Bellamy a nod of greeting before passing through the gates to join the others.

With a mounting sense of anxiety, Bellamy moves towards her. Clarke stands resolutely outside the gate, looking at him as though she’s been expecting him. It strikes Bellamy that this is the first time they’ve been alone together in a long time.

“You could use a drink,” he aims for levity. Maybe he’s misread her expression. Maybe-

“Have one for me.”

“Hey, we can get through this.” Please don’t do this.

“I’m not going in.”

He’s been expecting this, but it doesn’t make Clarke’s words any easier to hear. Bellamy looks out at the crowd of people in the square. Arkers greeting their returned friends, the rescued getting their first look at the downed ship. Their people, home at last. They should be there with them.

They should both be there. Bellamy turns to Clarke, hurt turning quickly to desperation. “If you need forgiveness, I’ll give that to you.” It shouldn’t even need saying. But if she needs it, he’ll tell her as often as she needs to hear it. “You’re forgiven.” He remembers the forgiveness she offered him. The compassion, the trust. At the time, her faith in him was the only thing keeping him tethered to his role as Co-Leader. Why won’t she let him offer the same thing in turn? “Please come inside.” He never asks. Not once has he ever asked her for anything, but he’s asking now. He needs her. Please-

“Take care of them for me.”

“Clarke-”

“Seeing their faces every day, it’s just going to remind me of what I did to get them here.”

“What we did!” It’s always we. “You don’t have to do this alone.” You never have. I’ve always been here.

“But that’s the point, Bellamy.” It’s painful to meet her eyes, sharp and blue as ever, but weighed down with guilt. “How can I look Jasper in the eye when I took from him something I still have?” We, Bellamy wants to correct her again. Then the full implication of her words sink in.

“You don’t think you deserve colour…” Realization dawns at last, followed swiftly by the sharp
sting of rejection. It’s not just that she can’t bear being around the camp; she can’t bear being around him.

Clarke says nothing.

“Where are you going to go?” If she tells him, would he try to follow her?

“I don’t know,” Clarke replies quietly. She moves forward, pressing a kiss to his cheek. Heat blooms from the place her lips touch, radiating outwards across his cheek. “May we meet again.” She speaks against Bellamy’s neck. He pulls her closer, one hand snaking into her hair.

He couldn’t convince her. She’s really going to leave. A tear slips silently from Bellamy’s eye.

She takes one last look at him as they part, as though attempting to memorize his features. Bellamy would do the same, but it hurts too much to look at her. After a moment, she moves away, walking away into the trees.

He looks past her, out to the treeline. The greens are still so vibrant. He can’t help wondering how long it will take for them to fade.

Chapter End Notes

Not done quite yet - two more epilogue chapters to go!

Really hope you liked our version of the finale. It's been a while coming, so very excited to hear your thoughts!
Nathan, Earth-date: October 28th 2149

Nathan still can’t believe that they’ve made it. The Mountain is gone. Monty and most of his friends survived, and - on top of it all - his father is here, every petty difference between them forgotten. He walks through the gates of Camp Jaha beside his dad, feeling sure that this is more than he deserves after everything he’s done in the name of survival. Miller’s eyes rake in the impressive and looming figure of the crashed Alpha station in the centre of the clearing.

He’s home.

As the sun sets, campfires are lit and moonshine is passed around in large quantities. Those rescued from the Mountain gather around one of the largest fires in the centre of camp. Stools and scraps of seating are dragged down from the canteen and set up in a loose circle close to the warmth and light of the growing blaze. Everyone seems to be dealing with the shock and trauma in their own way, but almost no one goes to sleep. Nathan can’t help wondering how any of them are ever going to sleep again.

Monroe, clearly overjoyed to be reunited with the rest of the remaining hundred, is happily playing host and refilling everyone’s cups. Raven is lying down, her head resting on Wick’s knee, close to one of the fires. Her eyes are closed, but a contented smile ghosts across her features. She seems to be appreciating the mere fact of being surrounded by friendly faces again. Miller’s heart clenches, though, when he thinks about what she’s lost. Hearing about Finn had been a shock. And Sterling. And Fox. And Dan, and Nora, and so many more that they were powerless to save. It hurts to think of them all, but Miller forces himself to remember them.

On the other side of the fire, Octavia and Lincoln make an imposing pair. For a while the others give Lincoln a wide berth, warily eyeing him up and down. But as Miller watches, Monroe moves over to him, pulling them into the conversation. She asks him, with the animated cheer of someone well into the moonshine, how to swear in Grounder. For a moment Lincoln hesitates, appearing unsure about whether or not Monroe is mocking him. Though when Monroe insists earnestly that she wants to be able to insult people without them knowing it, Lincoln slowly warms up. After a few minutes, he has many of them chuckling around the fire as he expands their vocabulary.

Harper smiles as Monroe practices her newly acquired language skills. The sight warms Miller’s chest more than the moonshine. It’s good to see her smile. It reminds him that maybe, in time, they can all still recover.

But as Miller looks around, not everyone is smiling. Jasper is drinking heavily off to one side, outside of the light of the fire. His eyes have glazed over, unseeing. He must not want to see any of this pitiful grey world anymore. Miller’s own heart cracks when he thinks of Maya. He didn’t want that for her. She was a good person, and in spite of everything, he had come to see her as a friend. He’d liked her, and she deserved so much better.
Hours dwindle away. It’s gone midnight when Bellamy abruptly stands up and moves away from the fire. He’d been sitting with the rest of their people, but it’s clear that his head and heart are otherwise occupied. Miller watches him walk off towards the south side of camp to look out over the forest beyond. Miller had also been watching earlier that afternoon, when Clarke had taken off on her own in that direction.

The universe is a piece of shit. Why bother giving these people perfect matches if they can never be together? Suddenly, Miller is overwhelmingly grateful to have Monty as his match. Monty. How could he ask for anyone better?

Emboldened, Miller rises from his seat and circles the campfire, searching for his match. He finally spots Monty sitting on his own at the far side of camp, tucked away in a dimly lit corner of the canteen. Miller makes his way over to him. He had meant what he’d said to Bellamy on the walk back: he would do everything in his power to help Monty. And with Maya’s words to him still ringing in his ears, he knows he must tell him the truth.

Miller sits down at Monty’s side, keeping his eyes trained straight ahead. He takes a breath and feels himself leap off into the unknown.

“You’re my match.”

An agonizing silence stretches between them. For a moment Miller isn’t sure Monty’s heard him. He chances a look over and finds Monty staring at him in open shock. The look on his face is so bewildered, Miller is overcome with the need to explain and apologize.

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you earlier. I should have. And before you say anything, don’t worry, I know I’m not your match. That’s part of the reason I never mentioned it before, I knew you didn’t…” Miller falters slightly and takes another breath to force himself back on track. “Anyway, I convinced myself that it didn’t matter. But I was wrong. It does matter. So I know that I’m not your soulmate, and that’s okay. But you deserve to know that you’re mine. You deserve to know how important you are. How important you are to me. I’ve never been a very good person, but around you… around you, I feel better. I want to be better. You make me better. Loving you makes me better.”

He’s rambling. Miller clamps his mouth shut. But as the overwhelming weight of his words fully process, he suddenly worries that he’s said too much. That it might all be too much.

His fears are heightened when he looks up and sees the hesitation in Monty’s expression. “Nathan,” Monty starts quietly. “I don’t… I don’t think I know how to be someone’s match.”

“I don’t think there are any rules,” Miller replies weakly.

Monty nods, unable or unwilling to look him in the eye. “I might not be able to give you everything you deserve—”

“I don’t expect anything from you,” Miller cuts him off, unable to keep quiet. “You don’t have to be any more or less than you. This isn’t even about me. I just wanted to tell you, because you should know that you’re loved. That I love you. I know you’ve been through hell, but you also saved all of our lives. You did what you had to do. And I’m proud of you and just grateful to know you.”

Miller is trying to think what else he needs to say, what else he can say, when he feels Monty’s hand cover his own on the bench between them. Looking down at their hands, Miller slowly turns his hand face up as Monty interlaces their fingers. Their palms clasp firmly together. Miller feels a surge of electric energy flow between them. They are anchored together, both giving and receiving support through their connected hands. And that’s enough; it’s more than enough.
Miller slowly raises his eyes to meet Monty’s, hardly daring to hope what he might find there.

“Thank you,” Monty whispers, his eyes bright with emotion.

Miller gives him a smile and squeezes his hand. Monty smiles and squeezes back in return.

Miller doesn’t know what the future will hold for them on this Earth. Probably a lot more war, death, and destruction, if the past few months are any example. But if gets to keep Monty’s hand in his, then hey, bring it on.

Octavia, Earth-date October 28th 2149

From her position by the bonfire, Octavia watches Bellamy stand sharply and take off away from the crowds. Her eyes follow him down the path and out of sight behind the side of Alpha Station. She considers leaving him to his thoughts, but quickly dispenses with this idea. Bellamy’s not nearly so silent and stoic as he would like everyone else to believe. He’s no good on his own.

Gently, Octavia extracts her hand from Lincoln’s and moves to stand up as well. Lincoln looks up at her with a silent question, everything okay? and she nods, giving him a small smile. She leaves him to Monroe and her language class.

The light of the camp drops away quickly as she leaves the warm circle of fire. She follows Bellamy’s path towards the south gate at the edge of camp. The babble of conversation falls to nothing as Octavia passes the side of the Ark. In the secluded patch of camp, Octavia can hear only a low murmur of distant voices. She pulls up short when the sight of flickering firelight draws her attention. Out of sight of the main throng of camp, two figures have set up their own modest campfire in the hidden space behind the Medical bay. As Octavia approaches, she can just make out the features of the pair in the dim light.

The Chancellors, Kane and Abby, are curled up together, leaning against the side of the Ark. A shared blanket is draped across their shoulders, their heads resting together. Octavia hurries past, keen not to disrupt their solitude, or be caught spying. She knows even as she passes Medical and leaves them behind that she won’t be detected. The way they were just looking at each other, they probably wouldn’t even notice if a gorilla was running rampant through camp.

She finds Bellamy sitting on the grassy knoll by Raven’s gate, staring out at the forest beyond the fence.

Octavia doesn’t say anything, she just walks up silently and sits down beside him.

“It’s almost completely gone.” Bellamy speaks without looking at her. “She’s been walking all night.” He doesn’t need to clarify.

Octavia is momentarily distracted trying to figure out how many miles that must mean their range is. Well whatever the math works out to, it’s impressive.
“She’ll be back,” Octavia replies.

“You don’t know that.”

“No. I guess I don’t.” Octavia sighs. “Listen, I haven’t always been Clarke’s biggest fan, but for what it’s worth, while you were in the Mountain, she never doubted that you would come through. She bet everything on you, and she… she sacrificed a lot to protect you.”

“That’s the problem.”

“Self-pity will get you nowhere.”

Bellamy shoots her a withering look.

“No seriously,” Octavia persists. “Clarke is alive, and healthy, and in her right mind. That’s better than a lot of people can say around here. So she needs a bit of time to get her head screwed on. Fine. She’ll come back when she’s ready to come back. In the meantime, you’ve got a sorry group of lost little ducklings to look after, and a civilization to help build. I think you might have enough work to keep you busy in the meantime.”

Octavia falls silent and leans back on her hands. She casts her gaze skyward, looking up at the figure of Orion in the night’s sky.

“I’ve never had to lead them without Clarke here too. The last time I tried, I was terrible at it.”

“So get better.” Octavia lets out a slow breath. She digs her nails into the cool, hard-packed mud beneath her hands. “Your match doesn’t define you. Not everything about you belongs to her. You were the best brother on the Ark for years before you ever met Clarke, and you can be a great leader now, whether she’s with you or not.”

Bellamy is silent for a moment. “I was the only brother on the Ark,” he says after a pause.

Grinning, Octavia looks over at him. “Six of one,” she shrugs.

He swats at her, landing a forceful hit to the crook of her elbow. Her arm bends reflexively and she falls, her back landing to the ground with a soft thump.

Bellamy laughs. And it sounds a little forced, but she lets it slide.

“Come on,” Octavia stands in a fluid motion and offers a hand down to Bellamy, pulling him to his feet. “We should get out of here before the Chancellors start going at it behind Medical.”

Bellamy pulls a disgusted face and allows Octavia to drag him back to the throng of people still gathered around the fire.

Their friends are still talking in loud voices, and wave in greeting as Bellamy and Octavia approach them. Octavia deposits her brother into a vacant chair at Harper’s side. Immediately, Bellamy is drawn back into the conversation, which seems to be revolving around whether or not Monroe and Mel have been secretly hooking up.

Rolling her eyes, Octavia returns to the space Lincoln saved for her. She curls back into Lincoln’s side, his arms wrapped like a security blanket around her.

“Sochu?” Lincoln asks quietly, his lips against her hairline.

For a moment Octavia doesn’t respond. She looks across the fire at a furiously blushing Monroe, at a
cackling Harper, and at Bellamy. Her brother’s smile still looks forced, his eyes still a little pained. But it’s fine. It’s enough for now.

“Sha ,” Octavia answers eventually, nodding.

Lincoln’s eyes are a warm hazel as he looks down at her and captures her lips in a languid kiss. Octavia pushes herself up, relishing the warmth of his lips under hers, the tickle of his breath on her cheek. They part after a moment, Lincoln’s fingers tracing a line from Octavia’s shoulder blade to her hip. All track of the conversation around them lost, Octavia leans a little heavier into Lincoln’s chest. She feels - for the first time in a very long time - like she’s safe . At last, she relaxes, letting her tired eyes slip closed.

Yes, they’re okay.

Chapter End Notes

Nearing the end now, final epilogue chapter tomorrow!
Clarke, Earth-date: October 15th 2154

Clarke rolls up another bandage and places it in one of the rows of boxes of medical supplies in front of her.

The Medical Centre, usually a buzzing hub of activity, is quiet this afternoon. The final preparations all set, most people have started drinking and celebrating by now.

This will be the fourth Harvest Festival that the Skaikru have participated in, but it’s the first time that they will have hosted it at Arkadia for all of the neighbouring clans. They’ve been on the ground five years now, but they’d all rather forget those first year spent on and off at war. Celebrating four years of peace makes more sense.

Clarke hears boots stomp along the ramp outside, leading up to the door. Clarke sighs. She’d been expecting this. It was only a matter of time before someone was sent to fetch her.

The door busts open and Octavia strides in.

“Stop hiding and get out here,” Octavia dives in without preamble.

“Octavia, how are you feeling? Are your feet still bothering you? I have a new batch of ointment that might help reduce the swelling.”

“Don’t try to change the subject on me, I’m fine. Meanwhile, you have a party to attend that I’m pretty sure you got the invite to.”

Clarke can’t help but smile. Octavia looks so different, these days. The life of a Grounder Ambassador seems to agree with her. Dark charcoal is smeared under her eyes and across her cheekbones. Her hair is kept away from her face in tight braids over the side of her scalp, to join at the back of her head, and her shoulders are adorned with deerskin leather and patches of armour fashioned from the metal of the dropship. If Clarke hadn’t known her for years, she might have been intimidated. She’s also the only person Clarke’s ever met who somehow manages to look even fiercer while eight months pregnant.

“I know,” Clarke replies, a little chagrined. “I’m coming. I’m just trying to finish packing these boxes of medical supplies as parting gifts for the visiting tribes.”

“Nice try.” Octavia crosses her arms, resting them on top of her stomach. “But no one is leaving tonight, so that is definitely something that can wait till morning. Come on, you’re not even ready at all.”

“I am ready.” Clarke protests. Everything’s been planned out. She has spent a long time prepping for this, she is most definitely going to be ready when the time comes. The ceremony isn’t even starting for a few hours yet.

“Oh? So you’re really planning to wear your hair like that to lead the sacred ritual honouring the harvest?”
“I-” Clarke splutters, caught off guard.

She honestly has not even vaguely considered what would be appropriate. She hasn’t slept through the night in months as she stressed about every detail leading up to today. The sacred Trigadasleng she had to memorize for the ceremony, what gifts to exchange with each Clan, who should be present at the event. Her hair had never even remotely crossed her mind.

“Er… what’s wrong with it?”

Octavia moves behind her and sits Clarke down on a stool without further invitation. A sharp tug on Clarke’s hair causes her to flinch away in surprise.

“Ow!” she yelps, glaring over her shoulder accusingly. “What are you doing?”

“Hold still,” Octavia chastises, ignoring her question. “Ugh, when was the last time you undid the knot in your hair? You’re lucky I’m not taking my knife to it.”

“It’s functional,” Clarke says, defensive.

“It’s disgusting. I can do you one better.”

It takes several more sharp tugs and one particularly eye-watering rip, but Clarke feels her tied-back hair give way eventually under Octavia’s determined fingers. It takes all of her effort to hold still as she feels Octavia card her fingers through her hair and begin braiding it in slow, careful movements.

They sit in silence for a moment as Octavia continues to braid.

“So how long are you planning to avoid him?”

Clarke stills.

“You must have realized that he’s back. I mean I thought your range was still really good…”

“It is,” Clarke says quickly. “It’s fine.” This is true. Bellamy had spent the last few months leading a trade delegation in the Rock Line Clan, a full two day’s journey from here. The whole time, he had never gone completely out of range. So yes, of course she had noticed as soon as he started his journey back to Arkadia. That was about the time she had volunteered for a marathon shift in Medical. There had been a lot to prepare, the exchange of medical knowledge at these festivals is a key part of their continued peaceful relations with the neighbouring tribes.

“I’m not avoiding.” She isn’t. Not really.

“Okay whatever, have it your way.” Octavia sighs, “I don’t get you two at all. It’s like you are both terrified of commitment, but guess what? The universe already killed the suspense for you on that one.”

“It’s not that simple, Octavia.”

“I’m pretty sure it is.” There is a laughing certainty in Octavia’s voice that puts Clarke’s nerves on edge.

“I feel like hosting this whole thing is a mistake,” Clarke can’t help voicing her fear into the silence. “What if I make some mistake in the ritual and offend someone and accidentally start another war?”

“Oh, stop worrying, Chancellor.” Somehow when Octavia uses her title it just sounds like she’s being mocked. “The Commander will accept your role in the ritual even if you make a fool of
yourself speaking the ancient words.”

Clarke groans at the thought, covering her face with her hands.

“It’s a great honour, Clarke. Hosting the Harvest Celebration is a big deal. No one can doubt your position as a Clan in your own right anymore, complete with your own self-governance, trade agreements, treaties, promises to war for each other. This is the culmination of years of work. You should be thrilled.”

“I am. It’s just… a lot. I feel like we’ve been working towards this for so long, it’s hard to believe that it might actually be here to stay this time. I keep waiting for something to go wrong. At every moment I’m terrified that it’s all going to fall apart and it will be my fault. That it can’t possibly last.”

Octavia is quiet for a moment as she waits for Clarke to finish. “But what if it can?”

Clarke considers this in the silence that extends between them.

Octavia ties off one braid and starts in on Clarke’s other side. Clarke flinches as Octavia pulls her hair tight against her scalp.

“If you’re going to be this much of a baby about getting your hair done, you should just take after my brother and cut all your hair off too.”

“He did what?” Clarke asks before she can think to stop herself.

“Wow, so you really are avoiding. You haven’t seen him at all?”

“I…” Clarke trails off, unsure how best to defend herself. “I’ve just had a lot to prepare.” She finishes a little lamely.

Octavia purses her lips and hums. “Mmmhm, okay.” There’s a moment of silence as Octavia ties off another braid. “So you’re not just avoiding each other because you had sex during the summer solstice?”

“What?” Clarke tries to jerk away and turn around to look at Octavia but her grip on her hair is too tight, holding Clarke in place. She slumps back, still facing forward. “Of course he told you about that.”

“He didn’t have to tell me, it’s so obvious,” Octavia scoffs, “you two are ridiculous. You sleep together, freak out, and instead of making it work like any normal match would, you go crazy and have a string of affairs with some hot grounder women. You two are the biggest pair of idiots I’ve ever met.”

Clarke crosses her arms, refusing to respond.

Then in a much softer voice Octavia adds, “You can’t just keep waiting for something to go wrong Clarke.”

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When she finally leaves, Clarke isn’t surprised to find Bellamy sitting nearby the Medical Centre. He gets up and comes over to her as soon as she steps outside. It’s good - really good - to see him again. Sunlight flares, warm and bright, as he approaches.

“What did you do to your hair?” is, predictably, his first question.
“Take it up with your Grounder of a sister,” Clarke snaps, feeling suddenly defensive. She runs a hand self-consciously across the tight row of braiding across her temple. “She thought it would be fitting for the ceremony. And besides, you’re one to talk.” She adds, realizing this should have been her first response. Octavia was right, his hair is now very short, sticking up on end and framing his features, just the barely hint of a curl at the edges. In all the time she’s known him, he’s always had his hair long and shaggy, usually covering half his face.

Mirroring Clarke, Bellamy self-consciously runs a hand through his own short hair, though he ignores her jibe. “Come on, your mom and the other council members are chomping at the bit. We’ve got a Grounder party to get to.”

The two of them set off along the familiar paths that connect the various buildings within Arkadia.

“It’s not a party,” Clarke huffs. “It’s an ancient ritual. We still have to be on our guard.”

“Shame,” Bellamy shoots back, giving her a teasing grin. “Here I was looking forward to getting trashed with Indra and dancing on the feast table.”

“You’re hilarious,” Clarke replies, deadpan. She fiddles with the Chancellor pin on her jacket, and looks over at the matching one pinned to Bellamy’s. “Remind me again why I let you talk me into being co-Chancellor? I should have just left you to it.”

“Hey, I didn’t talk you into anything.”

Something feels different as she watches the world around them. Better. The colour is definitely brighter, clearer, but that’s not it. After all, the world never fully went grey while he was away. No it’s something else, but she can’t quite put her finger on it-

“It looks good,” Bellamy says suddenly, his voice louder than normal, cutting awkwardly through the easy silence that had settled between them. “That’s, uh, what I meant to say.”

Clarke blinks at him, bewildered. “What are you talking about?”

“How about your hair.” Is he blushing? “It looks good like that.”

“Oh,” Clarke blinks again, her cheeks reddening. “Thanks, Bellamy.” She raises her hand again to smooth her fingers over the ridges of the new braids. “Yours does too,” she adds.

He runs his hand through his hair again muttering something about “just easier when up in the mountains.”

Clarke isn’t a fool, despite what Octavia thinks. She knows how Bellamy feels about her, just as much as she knows how she feels about him in return. Of course she’s attracted to him, she has been for much longer than she would like to admit. How could she not be? He’s beautiful – the very world sings for her when he’s around. It’s the kind of attraction that takes hold and doesn’t let go. But it’s complicated. Clarke’s relationship with Bellamy is not something she can approach lightly, and her love for him goes well beyond any physical desire that she might – alright, that she definitely does – have for him. Lust is all well and good, Clarke’s certainly not opposed to it, but it’s
something she can count on, and Bellamy is much too important. The one time they did sleep together resulted in a fight so severe that she didn’t see him for months. Now that he’s back, she doesn’t want to give him a reason to leave again. No amount of sexual frustration is worth risking their partnership, risking their match. But it wouldn’t be like that, a persistent voice says in the back of her mind. You wouldn’t lose him. He loves you just as much as you love him. He’d never hurt you. The universe is showing you this for a reason. What are you so scared of?

Clarke walks on a little faster. Thinking about the universe’s grand plan for her makes her feel queasy.

“You okay?” Bellamy asks, always more observant than Clarke would like.

“I’m fine,” she replies, a little quicker than necessary. “Come on. We’ve got an ancient harvest ceremony to prepare for.”

She hears Bellamy let out a frustrated sigh behind her, but he doesn’t speak again.

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The ceremony goes off without a hitch. Somehow as she stands with the rest of the assembled Clan leaders - their Seconds and Ambassadors standing at attention beside them - it all seems much simpler than she’d expected.

Clarke manages to welcome the assembled Clans with the traditional greetings, and recites the Trigadasleng poem giving thanks for the good harvest that year without incident.

Next, the Clan Leaders exchange gifts. Clarke hands out willow-bark painkillers, bandages, and new crank-powered flashlights that Wick and Raven had developed en masse. In exchange, Bellamy accepts offers of fur blankets, cured meats, new armor, and some beautifully-crafted longbows. Octavia will enjoy getting to grips with those.

Finally, the Seconds participate in a ceremonial sparring match – a match that Roan assured Clarke several times was non-lethal – but she still struggles to watch Bellamy get his ass handed to him by a massive Grounder woman from the Broadleaf Clan.

Then, of course, they feast. In Clarke’s opinion, this is by far the best part of the proceedings.

The night is long and exhausting, as everyone wants to confer with her and Bellamy. Finally, as the sun sinks low in the sky, casting brilliant purple and orange shadows across the camp, Clarke finds herself sitting alone by a fire.

Bellamy is sitting by another fire on the other side of the camp, deep in conversation with Jasper and some of the Grounders from the Lake People. It’s not that she’s watching him; it’s just that she can’t help knowing where he is. Jasper is talking animatedly and Clarke is willing to bet he’s pitching the others on his new idea for a machine that he’s been promising to anyone who will listen for the last month that it’ll improve their farm’s harvest tenfold.

Clarke’s thoughts are interrupted as Abby sits down next to her with two metal cups containing a special sweetened batch of moonshine. Clarke is happy to accept the cup from her mother. This stuff is tasty... probably a little too tasty. Plenty of bad decisions have been made because of sweet moonshine, and Clarke makes the mental promise to herself to keep it to just the one cup this year.

“You did really well tonight, Clarke.”

“Thanks Mom.” Clarke returns her mother’s smile. Allowing a relaxed silence to fall between them,
they both look out onto the square full of Grounders and Arkers alike, who have struck up some music together. Using carved wooden pipes, leather drums, chains, metal plates and whatever else can be employed to produce a rhythm, they fill the air with a pulsing beat. Clarke spies Harper among them, playing the drums along with a young Plains Rider Clarke doesn’t recognize.

“You must be glad to have Bellamy back.” Abby says.

Unsure of how to respond, Clarke finds herself gulping down her moonshine instead.

Her mother looks at her a little too knowingly. “Clarke, I wasted a lot of time and energy in my life telling myself that my match wasn’t important to me. Trying to prove that I was in control of my own life, that the universe couldn’t tell me what to do. Now, it’s not that I regret marrying your father. That connection was real, but I regret how I used Jake to push Marcus out of my life. That was wrong.”

Clarke fidgets with her now empty cup, wishing she still had the distraction of more liquid to drink.

“I worry that I have been a bad example for you,” Abby continues, “I need you to know that if I could do it again, I would do it all differently. I would listen to the universe. Life on this Earth is short and dangerous, I don’t want to watch you waste twenty years in muted colour like I did.”

Clarke stands abruptly. She immediately regrets her quick action as the moonshine rushes to her head.

“Thanks Mom. I know.” Then realizing that she’s being rude she adds, “I’m really glad that you’re happy now. You deserve it.”

She means it. It’s not that she’s started calling Kane ‘Dad’ or anything, but she does respect him. Likes him, even. Clarke has seen how much happier and more at ease her mother is when she’s with him.

And yes she sees the parallel.

She makes her way over to the still with her empty cup. One more drink can’t hurt.

Murphy, dressed in a strange mix of clothing from a half-dozen different clans, is working the still.

“This cup’s on the house, co-Chancellor. You like that, come on back. We’re open every day, fifth circle of the Polis market, reduced rates for old enemies.” He refills her cup with a wink.

Clarke accepts the cup with an exaggerated eye roll. She doesn’t think she has ever fully understood Murphy, but she can’t deny that somewhere along the way the slimy dirtbag became a slimy dirtbag that she could trust. So she gives him a smile and moves off into the crowd of dancers that now fill the open square of Arkadia.

The Commander finds her in the fray and they dance together for a while. Animosity long forgiven, they move together now as friends and allies. Her hands dance, lithe and gentle as the rest of her, across Clarke’s shoulders as Clarke pounds her feet along to the music, draining her cup of moonshine again.

“I leave for Polis at first light,” she says, her voice ringing in Clarke’s ear during a brief lull in the music. “As your people may say, don’t be a stranger.”

Clarke grins at her. “I won’t,” she promises. “I’m planning a visit at least once before the frosts set in.”
“I look forward to it.” She gives Clarke a small smile in return.

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Her third drink finds her off to the side again.

She’s ended up in the open Arkadia courtyard. Torchlight dances around the square, casting the revelers in long shadows. Clarke sits on a carved wooden bench, removed from the dancefloor and the thumping music. The base of the drumbeat still pulses through the air, but it’s comparatively quiet in this section of camp. Beside her, Monty and Miller are stretched out lengthwise on a bench of their own. Miller is resting against Monty, his back pressed along Monty’s chest. Monty’s arms are draped across Miller’s chest, his fingers idly fidgeting with Miller’s shirt.

Clarke gives the pair of them a warm smile. She’s happy they were able to work things about between them. For the past few years they’ve made something of a power couple around camp: establishing Arkadia’s school, developing an exchange programme for older Grounder and Sky children, working in their own way to build bridges and repair the damage done from those first few years. Clarke sometimes wondered how they managed all this. Despite a one-sided match, despite all the obstacles and difficulties of this new world, they remained together, united. Worse, they make it look so easy. As though all that’s needed is dedication and love and somehow it all just works out. Clarke envies them that certainty.

Out of the corner of her eye, she sees them shuffling around, as though communicating something without words.

“Clarke?” Monty’s voice filters through Clarke’s half-drunk musings. “Earth to Clarke?”

“Huh?” Clarke looks over to find Monty and Miller both sitting up, looking at her quizzically. “Sorry, did you say something?”

“You okay?” Monty squints at her.

“Yeah, fine. Just thinking.”

“I’m going for another round of drinks, you want one?” Miller asks.

Clarke looks down, studying the mostly full cup in her hands. “I’m okay for now, thanks.”

“Sure thing.” Miller levers himself off the bench. With an affectionate ruffle of Monty’s hair, he departs towards the thoroughfare.

“Okay, spill.” Monty sits forward as soon as Miller has gone, leaning towards Clarke intently. “What’s going on?”

“What’s going on?”

“Nothing!” Clarke says, way too defensively.

A quirk of his eyebrow is all it takes for Monty to convey his skepticism. “How long have we known each other, Clarke?”

Clarke doesn’t answer.

“Long enough, I think, for me to be able to tell when something’s wrong,” Monty persists. “What’s up?”

“Bellamy is back,” Clarke hedges slowly.
“I noticed,” Monty says, nodding. “That’s a bad thing?”

“No,” Clarke says quickly. She takes a sip of her drink as she considers how to continue. “But it feels different, this time.”

“Different because you hooked up during the solstice?”

Heat flares in Clarke’s cheeks. She glares at her friend. “Fuck’s sake! Does the whole camp know about that?”

Unperturbed, Monty grins. “Pretty much, yeah. Is that the problem?”

Clarke hesitates. “No,” she says at last. “But I think… I think we can’t keep going on the way we have been. I… I don’t think I want to keep going on like this.”

Monty just looks at her, as though waiting for her to continue.

And maybe it’s the drink. Maybe it’s the pressure of the past week finally having been lifted. Maybe she just really needs someone to talk to, but Clarke relents.

“Okay, so I might be in love with Bellamy.”

A laugh bursts from Monty’s lips. “Oh, you think?”

“Alright, fine! Everyone knows. Everyone thinks we’re being idiots. I get it. But it’s easy for all of you to say. It’s not so easy for us. What if being with Bellamy gets him hurt? I can’t afford to lose him. Our people look to me to provide for them, to protect them. If I relent, if I let myself be with Bellamy… what if it goes wrong? What if we try it and it falls apart? I need to be able to stay in control. If I give in to the universe and to fate and to my match… if I give up that control, it leaves me vulnerable.”

“Vulnerable to potentially losing him?” Monty asks quietly. He lifts his metal cup and downs the last of his drink.

Clarke nods, her throat suddenly tight.

“Well yeah, Clarke, but that’s true anyway. I mean, if Bellamy had died in the spar earlier today, do you think you’d be any less devastated? You’ve kept him at arm’s length for years, but has it really helped?”

No. It hasn’t helped at all. But it’s different-

“No one’s match is perfect - not even the perfect ones,” Monty continues. “Matches are no different to any other relationship. Sometimes you’ll fight, sometimes you’ll need space, sometimes you won’t be able to communicate. The only difference is that you’ll have the colour in your corner. A daily reminder that you have something worth fighting for.” Monty shrugs. “Or so I hear.”

“Do you wish you had a match?” Clarke asks, feeling suddenly selfish. Does Monty resent her talking about her match with him?

“I don’t need one,” Monty says dismissively. “The universe has already told me everything I need to know.” A fond grin fills Monty’s face, lighting up his eyes. It’s a look Clarke can empathize with.

She knows her mother, Octavia, Monty, everyone means well when they try to convince her that she should be with Bellamy. But the more she hears it, the more anxious it makes her. She has never
liked that the universe has a say in her life, dictating when she gets to see in colour and when she
doesn’t. Everyone telling her that she should be with Bellamy just makes her feel like she has even
less of a say.

“The truth is, Clarke, that of course the choice is still yours,” Monty says, as though plucking the
thoughts from right out of her head. “You don’t owe the universe anything. Of course you can resist
it. I mean, you’re not with Bellamy now.”

Monty pauses, examining her over the rim of his empty cup. “Are you happy?”

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By her fourth drink, she’s moved to join the rest of their friends.

She’s watching as Raven and Wick tell a story to a group of Grounders. Everyone in earshot is
laughing hysterically, though Clarke’s mind is not following the story. As she sits contemplating her
now empty cup, the metal in her hand glints as Bellamy approaches.

“You throw a good party.” At the sound of his voice, she looks up at him.

Clarke laughs. “Thanks. That was quite the fight. How are you feeling?”

“Well, I’ll be sore as hell in the morning. But other than that I’ll be fine.”

They exchange another smile.

“Do you want to dance?” Bellamy offers. It’s an innocent enough offer, but Clarke knows - and
Bellamy must too - that it would not be just a dance. Clarke suddenly feels an electric need to get out
of there. The pounding bass from the music is vibrating through her bones and the sweet moonshine
has started to make her head throb.

She shakes her head a little as she stands. Lashing out at a sudden impulse, she says, “I’m not giving
you another reason to run away again.”

As soon as the words come out, she knows what an unfair accusation it is. After all, she has done
plenty of running away herself. She starts walking quickly away from the centre of camp, towards
the fence on the far side. Bellamy is right behind her, and as the music and the noise of the crowd
starts to die away behind them, he speaks at her back.

“You’re the one who made it clear that we weren’t in a relationship. That we were free to do what
we wanted and see other people.”

Without really thinking about where they are heading, Clarke realizes that they’ve stopped at
Raven’s gate. She ducks around to the far side of the gate with the metal wreckage blocking out the
sight of the party raging on behind them.

“I left because I couldn’t handle that. I couldn’t stick around to watch that, okay?”

Clarke turns to face him again. “Yeah, well, I missed you.” She throws it at him like an accusation
and it’s not until she hears the words herself that she realizes how true they are.

She meets Bellamy’s eye and for a split second neither of them can speak. Then, fueled by that
fourth, probably ill-advised, cup of moonshine, Clarke finds herself continuing, unable to stop.

“I missed you. A lot. And at first I couldn’t figure out what felt so different when you got back.
Because it wasn’t the colour. The colour was always there, so when you came back... I mean, sure, I noticed it get brighter, but it’s not like I had been in grey. The thing is I didn’t care about the colour. So then I couldn’t put my finger on it, what was so different, and then I realized. It’s you. I missed you.”

It seems so obvious now. So blindingly obvious. She doesn’t understand how she didn’t see it to begin with. She has spent so long scared to let the colour make her choice for her, she forgot she still has the power to make the choice for herself. “I don’t care if I see colour forever or never again, but I missed you. I want to be with you. The world is better when you’re around. And that’s not me choosing the colour because of fate or destiny, that’s just me choosing you. I want to choose you.”

Before she can say anything else, Bellamy has closed the distance between them. He wraps her up in his arms, his lips crashing onto hers. Clarke melts instantly into his embrace, kissing him back with abandon. When they had kissed before, it had been passionate and frantic, as though at any moment their time would run out. This is different. Bellamy’s scent is filling her lungs, his hands warm and splayed across her back. His lips part under hers as their kiss deepens. This isn’t frantic, it’s comforting. Relaxed, like they have all the time in the world. His hands slowly move down her back as she reaches up to run her fingers through his short hair. This feels like home.

After a time, Bellamy pulls back, leaning his forehead against hers. He gazes into her eyes from inches away. “Clarke Griffin, I would choose you even if I were blind. I love you. Not because the world is brighter than the sun when you’re near. I love you, for you.”

Tears spill out of Clarke’s eyes as she feels some immense tension within her finally release. She lets out a laugh, overwhelmed at the power of it.

“I love you too, Bellamy Blake.” Her heart sings with the weight of the words that have remained unspoken for so long. “Even if I were blind.” She repeats his words back to him. Fully understanding the truth of them. Because she sees now how true they really are.

They stay by Raven’s gate for a while, enjoying the quiet and the solace they find in each other’s presence. Bellamy’s hand is warm in Clarke’s, his scent familiar and comforting as she leans into him, stealing kisses across his neck and shoulder. She can taste the sweet moonshine on his lips, hear the hitch in his breath as she runs her fingers along his collarbone.

She closes her eyes, no longer concerned with the colour of her own hands as they pull Bellamy towards her.

Chapter End Notes

That's all folks!

Thank you all so much for reading, liking, and especially for your fantastic comments, which have been such a joy to read.

This has been so much fun to write (it's a little surreal that it's done!) so we're definitely not ruling out a spin-off story or two down the line... Guess we'll have to wait and see where Season 3 takes us....

Also, it should be noted again that this story took a lot of thematic inspiration from the song "Light" by Sleeping at Last. If you haven't listened to it, I can highly recommend
it. It's beautiful, and perfectly sums up Bellarke.

Finally, feel free to come hang out on Tumblr - Pammcasso
The Continuation...

This story is now continuing with our version of season three in Black or White or Vivid Colour (after awhile it all runs together)!

Check it out!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!