Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We've Shed) ORIGINAL! DECEASED! NEW VERSION UP!

by shadowsofvanity

Summary

A pillar of flame. A hidden crypt. An ancient secret. A timeless war. Nothing is true, everything is permitted. The Princess of the Sky is come. The Wanheda will rise. Featuring Assassin!Mentor!Clarke, Clarke/yuri harem, morebadassthancanon!characters, and more. First of its kind! This is not just an excuse for smut! Less than five pages of smut in the entire story so far! Empire-Building! Political Games! alsoosmuttho...
Hello my friends, and welcome to my latest and greatest story Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We've Shed)! As you obviously saw in the summary, this is a The 100 and Assassin's Creed crossover. There are, however, a few more points I want to address immediately.

First, this story is already finished. I have pre-written and typed the entire thing as of the moment you are reading this sentence. The content of the story will not be changing based on reviews, unlike my other stories. Though to be fair those don't change much either. (Actually, it's not as finished as I wanted it to be, but thanks to that episode in S3, I had to post it. I just had to! I am about 10 chapters ahead, so it won't ever be a 'dead' story.)

Second, I will still be responding to reviews in the author's notes at the beginning of each chapter.

Third, this story is going to be a bit AU (obviously) and some of the characters will be a bit OOC, given the fact that the story is AU and certain things haven't occurred yet. I.E. Costia hasn't died, and so Lexa won't be all "love is weakness" and shit. Still gonna be the cold and implacable Commander in public (most of the time) but in private she will be much more relaxed.

Fourth, the pairing for this story is Clarke/Lexa/Octavia/Raven/Harem pairing. I listed those three specifically right now for the sake of story organization and because naming those names won't ruin the plot. The others will be a surprise. However, you can make the assumption that if an actress was from the same age group as Clarke, or at least relatively close to it, and reasonably attractive, they might be involved to a greater or lesser degree. This does NOT mean everyone in the show is going to be paired with her. I will be reasonable. Furthermore, there is (much like what you will see in Mists of Avalon) going to be a solid plot basis for the harem, as opposed to simply excuses for gratuitous lesbian smut. Not to say the smut won't happen, but that isn't the point of the story.

Fifth, I added some things to the story thanks to what I find likely, such as the Grounders and Arkers being stronger/better/etc. than normal humans, thanks to exposure to radiation for generations. Clarke herself will be even more so later on in the story thanks to...certain elements from AC I am taking great liberties with.

Finally, the major Assassin's Creed elements may take a while to come in. This is very deliberate and various AC universe things being discovered or encountered is a vital, integral part of the story's plot progression. Up until that point, it will be relatively minor bits and pieces of AC lore.

As an aside, remember that I have a Facebook group, a blog, a forum page, a twitter, and various other places you can chat with me or watch for information about the stories. I am also going to start streaming a "State of the Fandom" address once a month on twitch, to let you guys know what's what. All of these links are on my profile, though you will need to tweak them a bit from the page to make them work. FF.net doesn't like foreign links.

Alright, that's it! Enjoy the hell outta this stuff, guys!
Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We Shed)

Chapter One

Firefall

The air screamed and shuddered as a pillar of fire and smoke connected earth and sky for a few short moments before specially shaped charges roared, sending three parachutes rocketing into open air. They fluttered briefly like limp leaves on the summer wind, before they caught the air and blossomed, snapping to full size instantly.

Clarke Griffin, daughter to a murdered father and an absent mother, slammed forward in her shock harness with a grunt of exertion, hands clenched tightly on her armrests as the 100 year old drop-pod vibrated violently around her, the internal temperature skyrocketing as it brute-forced its way through Earth's atmosphere. She knew it was a miracle that the damn thing had launched at all, of course, and the fact that the heat shield was operational was even more incredible. Still, it wasn't over yet. She was approaching the ground fast...

Abruptly, the rising temperature began to drop as she entered the lower atmosphere, the parachutes finally managing to slow her descent from two hundred miles per hour to a 'gentle' forty in ten seconds, and she slammed into her harness once more, forehead striking the inside of her helmet sharply. A spike of pain went through her at the impact, but she ignored it as her eyes locked onto the ancient, cracked, but still functional altimeter, watching the numbers continue to plummet. Less than one hundred yards to go, now, and she prayed to God that she survived her impending 'landing' on mankind's birthplace.

Fifty yards. She checked that all of her gear was secured. The last thing she needed was anything flying around the cabin and hitting her on impact.

Thirty yards. She triple checked her harness, slapping each buckle and tugging on each strap. The harness was the only thing that would keep her from being broken into pieces like a handful of toothpicks, and it was no younger than anything else in this rust bucket.

Ten yards. She made one last, fleeting prayer for survival. She might not last ten minutes on the ground, but she wanted to reach it before she died, damnit!

Impact. A cacophony of sounds and tumbling, twisting, grinding, sliding. A barrage of movement and noise that overwhelmed her for a sheer moment before blackness consumed her without so much as a whimper.

Commander's Hut

Ton D.C.

Ruins of Washington D.C.

Former United States of America

"Well, Indra?" Lexa, Heda of the Coalition of Tribes, asked of her top general and,
though neither would admit it aloud, de-facto mother. When the now tall, athletic, and beautiful
twenty-year-old brunette had been nothing more than a child, not yet even Anya's Second, her
mother had been slain in a battle with the Ice Clan. With her father long since dead, spirited away
by the Mountain Men to be bled like a pig, the future Heda had been left without a guiding hand.

That was when Indra had swept in, and implacable wave, deftly taking a bitter and resentful child
firmly in hand and turning her into a mature, calculating, and extremely deadly young woman.
Now, besides Anya (who had become the older sister Lexa had never had and often felt like she
never wanted. She loved Anya, but damnit that woman was infuriating!), she was Lexa's top
advisor and the current leader of the Tree Clan, whose capital village they were in at this very
moment.

"The mounted scouts have departed, Heda, but it will be some time before they reach the
place where the fire fell. Some one and one-half hours to reach it, then the actual scouting, and
then returning. If they manage to return at all." The ebony-skinned warrior woman responded
promptly, and Lexa bared her teeth in a frustrated grimace. There was nothing to be done,
obviously. Unlike the Lost World, here and now one could only move as far and as fast as a horse
or one's own two feet could carry oneself.

Which meant it could be anywhere from six to eight hours before she knew if there was a new
threat to her people. Eight hours of ignorant vulnerability, and that infuriated her to no end. Yes, it
may turn out to be nothing, and it isn't like it was eight days but if the Mountain Men had a new
weapon, even a few minutes could mean all the difference in her people's continued survival.

"Very well, but double the patrols and put everyone on a higher readiness level. I have no
wish for us to be caught flat-footed and helpless, vulnerable to either whatever fell from the sky or
any actions that might result from it doing so." She commanded, and Indra nodded her
understanding, not moving from her place. While most might have thought that a dismissal, Indra
knew Lexa well enough to know there was more to be said.

"Such as the Mountain Men attacking or something equally unpleasant." Indra
responded, and Lexa nodded tightly. The last thing they needed were those butchers attacking in
force with the powerful weapons of the old world, especially not if the villagers and warriors were
distracted by the fire-fall. The commander was silent for a long, long moment before speaking
again, voice contemplative.

"Perhaps it is the First Sign?" she mused, half to herself and half to Indra, and the general
looked at her sharply, eyebrows raising enough to show her suprise and disbelief.

"You are referring to the Prophecy of the Sky?" she asked, skepticism bleeding into her
voice noticeably, and Lexa frowned at her slightly in disapproval.

She knew her mother-figure placed no stock whatsoever in the tales of the Chosen Few, some
10,000 individuals chosen to live in the place above the sky, up in 'space', before the Old World
had destroyed itself with the global nuclear war that had annihilated most of humanity and left their
homeworld a radioactively poisoned wilderness. The Prophecy foretold that they would return to
rebuild a new world from the ashes of the old. They would be lead by The One Who Is Promised, a
great warrior and leader of men descended from the First Ones (whomever they were). It was also
said that The One would claim the Commander and the most worthy warriors of their generation as
their wives, and rule the new world beside them.

"I am. I know that you are skeptical, Indra, but I have always believed that The One Who
Is Promised would come and show us, at long last, the way to peace and plenty. This, the soul of
the Heda, the soul of my forebearers, tells me." She responded firmly, her tone making it clear that
she had no interest whatsoever in arguing on the subject at that moment in time.

"Well, we won't know either way for several more hours, if that. Regardless, I'll pass along your orders to the patrol captains." Indra said, inclining her head in a slight bow before sweeping from the throne room, leaving the Commander alone with her thoughts, her hopes, and her fears.

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Drop Pod Impact Site

Twenty Five Miles From Washington DC

Clarke moaned in pain, hand going instinctively to clutch her inured forehead, before bouncing off the faceplate of her too-large space suit. Naturally, the gesture didn't do a damn thing but make a loud thunking sound and shift her helmet awkwardly.

Pushing the pain aside again, she quickly stood, automatically running through a physical and mental checklist as she tested her limbs and joints for breaks or sprains, and her internal feelings for any sign of a concussion.

Satisfied that her body was in working order, she turned to the control console before her. Taking a deep, steadying breath, the punch the button that would activate a series of small shaped charges to blow the canopy clear. When nothing happened, she growled in frustration and twisted the small override knob below it before hitting it again. This time the charges fired, though more than a few were far less controlled than they would have been otherwise.

Clambering out of the mostly-intact drop-pod, Clarke took hardly a moment to appreciate the wild, untouched beauty of nature around her before turning her focus onto the next task. A task that could end her journey, and her life, before she took more than a handful of steps. Removing her helmet and inhaling the air of mankind’s cradle.

Slowly, her hands rose to pop the large, ungainly helmet's seals, and she slowly pulled it free, shaking her blond hair loose. Bracing herself, Clarke took a deep breath, and almost immediately collapsed to her knees. But it was not poisonous air or radiation that laid her low, no. There was no death in this air. Quite the opposite, in fact.

The air was filled with a barrage of scents and sounds, and she could almost taste the life of it all on her tongue. Her heart pounded, her mind raced, and her breath came in harsh, rapid pants as she struggled with herself, forcing the darkness back.

NO! She couldn't- wouldn't- allow herself to fall apart, not now. She would be failing her father, her friends, her entire race, if she gave up now. Her fingers dug groves in the ground as she forced the darkness back.

With a snarl of stubborn refusal to yield, she forced herself to her feet and begun the slow and laborious process of shedding her spacesuit, starting with the large and ungainly gloves. Seven minutes later, the cumbersome suit finally hit the ground, and Clarke took a moment to stretch like a satisfied cat, her long sleeved shirt and short-sleeved undershirt riding up to expose a toned and
muscular midriff. Taking only a moment to bask in the warm light of the sun as it filtered through breaks in the canopy her landing had created, she spun on her heel and clambered back inside the pod for her gear.

First, she strapped on the bullet- and blade-proof body armour that she had received from Ark Security at her mother's...request'. Though hot and heavy to wear over her jeans and shirt, it would protect her from anything (or anyone) that might have survived The Final War. Not to mention help her be more capable of surviving such unfortunate things as falls, trips, and other impacts of the bone-breaking nature.

Many who had known of the plan to send Clarke 'as a preliminary scout for humanity's triumphant return to Earth' had scoffed at the idea of anyone and anything surviving a global, worldwide nuclear war. Fortunately, more cautious heads had prevailed, she reflected almost happily as she settled the sheath of her eighteen inch parang-style machete at the small of her back. The long bladed weapon, made for tasks such as cutting through the foliage and vegetation she was sure to encounter, chopping firewood for warmth, and even skinning any animals she might have to hunt, had been forged from a lightweight titanium alloy and was far sharper than any mere whetstone could have ever dreamed of making it, thanks to the machining department.

After buckling her utility belt, which contained such essentials she needed to have on hand (compass, map, and the like) she carefully retrieved a worn, scuffed leather thigh holster. It, like the Smith and Wesson .500 Magnum it held, was a family heirloom. Once gifted to her great-great-grandmother for her leadership, valour, and heroism under fire during the Radicalist Wars of the early two-thousands. It had been passed down ever since, still as functional and overwhelmingly deadly as it was all those years ago. Now, it was to be her long-range defense against any threat that might prove to powerful or to great for her to evade or kill with her machete. Strapping it into it's proper place, she picked up her equipment-filled hiker's backpack and slung it on, clipping the waist and chest stabilizers into place with a chorus of soft clicks, rotating her hips from side to side for a minute to settle it properly.

"Alright Clarke, time to move it out." She told herself firmly, though quietly, as she stepped out of the drop-pod and pulled out her map, compass, and GPS unit. While the unit was small, and an enormous number of satellites had been destroyed during the war, several hundred had managed to survive unscathed, allowing both her to track her location. While the portable unit was also rechargeable, the batteries would deteriorate eventually, and she didn't want to waste them. Turning the unit on, she quickly found her position on the map, found her objective, and shut it off again, tucking it away in its holster on her belt. "Well that just fucking figures, doesn't it? They couldn't just drop me in the wrong place, oh no, they had to drop me twenty fucking miles from Mount Weather. I realize that orbital drops aren't exactly the most accurate of things, especially if you've never done one, but come on!"

Orienting herself in the proper direction, the blonde sixteen year old set off through the woods towards her goal, the massive military base, fallout shelters, and supply caches safely secured beneath Mount Weather. Her only hope for communicating with the Ark and surviving long enough for them to join her on the ground and reestablish civilization.

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Control Center
The Ark
250 mile geosynchronous orbit over Washington D.C.
"I'm sure that Clarke will be fine, Abby," spoke Thelonius Jaha, Chancellor of the Ark and someone she had once thought of as family. "She is strong, dedicated, and as well trained and equipped as we could have been able to make her.

The tall and beautiful brunette Chief Medical Officer gaped at the slightly taller African American Chancellor, her expression a twist of confusion at the sheer temerity he had to say something like that after threatening to have her locked away in a tiny cell until he could have her killed.

"How dare you, how dare you pretend to have any sort of care or interest in her well-being whatsoever! You have no right!" she hissed furiously, brown eyes filled with burning rage. Despite her anger, however, she was at least able to keep her voice down, well aware and wary of the numerous others in the room. It would do neither the staff or the people at large to see and hear a member of the Council arguing with the Chancellor.

"I have every right, and I don't need to 'pretend' to care about Clarke. I think of her as..." he rebutted calmly, but Abby seemed to swell with indignation as her eyes flashed dangerously.

"You had better not finish that sentence, Jaha! You lost any right of affection towards my daughter when you murdered her father and threatened to do the same thing to her for trying to be loyal to his memory!" she snarled, and Jaha sneered slightly in response, though he worded his next salvo carefully. Chancellor he may be, but only an idiot or a suicidal person pushed a member of the Griffin family to far. Much like their mythical namesake, the Griffin family was proud, strong, and pure-hearted. They were also incredibly dangerous when their anger was roused, and they never forgot when someone wronged them or their family. Not to mention that, again like their namesake, the females of the species were particularly vindictive and dangerous.

"Lest you forget, Abigail, it was you who betrayed your husband to Marcus and myself and got him killed." His voice was careful even, and he allowed none of the savage satisfaction he felt to show on his face, ashamed of his own words and emotional reaction to her pain, and knowing that any further words or expressions of pleasure or satisfaction would ruin any chance he might possess of reconciliation, slim though it might be.

"A regret that I shall take to my grave. The regret of trusting you to try and save your best friend's life instead of killing him for a popularity boost. You did not even try to convince him to change his mind, Jaha, and don't think I'm not aware of that fact." She retorted as coldly as she possibly could manage, and a small, cruel smirk played across her lips as that particular salvo slammed home, the Chancellor turning away with pursed lips and an interminable flinch. Turning on her heel, she swept from the room with her long white doctor's coat billowing rather dramatically.

"Keep a close eye on her and the Blake girl, Kane. Reyes and Fox's little group too, for that matter." Jaha ordered the Head of Security, and the tall, moderately muscular man named Marcus Kane nodded silently before withdrawing. With no one in earshot, he felt safe enough to continue, almost whispering. "And may the Father of Understanding guide us home at last."

Octavia Blake stared listlessly out the window of the small room she shared with her older brother, Bellamy. The olive-skinned, hazel-eyed brunette was widely considered one of the most beautiful girl's in her age group, the only person considered to be her true superior in looks being one Clarke Griffin. Like the blonde, the sixteen year-old girl had long hair, a slim and fairly athletic build, a modest chest, and an overwhelming tendency to do things her own way, damned whatever anyone else has to say.
"Clarke..." she murmured softly, her train of thought halting as she thought of her best friend, savior, and sort-of-secret-crush. Her heart clenched as she remembered watching the 'accidentally launched' drop-pod hurtling towards Earth in a streak of flame, taking the other girl to almost certain death. She knew that Clarke was no pushover, a strong and unwavering young woman that was in good shape and well trained, but she knew that no matter how well trained or healthy one was, burning up in the atmosphere or dying of radiation on the ground made those traits irrelevant. Sure, she knew the theory that, since the Arkers had been adjusted to survive in space without any kind of ill effects, either from the lower gravity or the space radiation, Clarke and indeed all humans would survive just fine on Earth.

She wasn't comforted.

She thought back to how this had all started, how she had been pulled into Clarke's orbit become a part of her crushes life. Indeed, it was the same day, and the method in which, her crush on the charismatic blond medic had begun. The day of the Unity Dance ...

Flashback Begins

"What's someone as pretty as you doing hiding over here in the corner? The boys annoying you?" Octavia yelped softly and twitched violently at the soft voice that had come from the blonde girl that had somehow managed to get almost right next to her without her noticing. True, her attention had been on the writhing dance floor, the heavy bass pounding and throbbing through her very bones. Thanks to the masks they were all wearing, the only things about the older girl is that she was blond, had blue eyes, an incredible figure, and...yeah, that was it.

"Ah, oh, um..." she stuttered, desperately trying to formulate some manner of coherent response without giving herself and her secret away to a total stranger. While the boys were annoying her, she preferred to lurk in the shadows. She didn't wanna chance someone realizing they didn't recognize her or, worse, accidentally knocking her mask off and revealing her decidedly un-recognized self to the entire room. "Yeah, something like that at any rate. Not the biggest fan of boys, really. Loud, smelly, childish, and entirely too interested in my tits and ass."

"I can see why..." the blonde gave her a wicked smirk that made her blush brightly as she was admired, Oddly, she didn't feel nearly as dirty or violated as she had when boys had been doing it. Instead, she felt...excited. Thrilled even. Of course, she attributed some of that to the fact that the blonde was being friendly and funny while checking her out, instead of just ogling her like a slab of meet on display. "My name's Clarke, what's yours?"

"Octavia. My name is Octavia." She responded, glad that the other girl had ommitted her last name first, allowing her to do the same without seeming suspicious or rude.

"Octavia..." her stomach seemed to flutter at the the way Clarke said her name, the word rolling around on her tongue as if she was savoring a treat. Clarke smiled warmly at her, making her flush slightly, before continuing. "Wife of a legendary general, sister of the first Emperor of the Roman Empire. An old name. A strong name, one filled with a rich history."

"Thanks, I guess...?" Octavia mumbled, not quite getting it, but glad Clarke seemed to like it. Why she cared was beyond her, but quite frankly she had felt more alive, more human, in the last ten minutes than in the last ten years.

"You're so very welcome, Octavia." Clarke said cheerfully, coming over to lean against the wall beside her and slinging an arm around her shoulders with relaxed ease. "So, you're not a big fan of boys? Can't say that I blame you too much, at this age most of them are idiots that I want to make bleed a bit."
At Octavia's chocked, almost horrified, expression, Clarke laughed softly and shook her head, blonde hair swirling around her masked face, and Octavia found she rather like the sound of her new friend's merriment.

"No, I wouldn't really hurt them badly. I'm not nearly as insane as I sound, I don't go around attacking people without a good reason." She waved one hand in a brushing-off gesture. "Anyway, they seemed to think that since this is a dance and a masquerade, they could get handsy with me and get off scot-free. Idiots."

Octavia laughed in amused understanding and agreement, shaking her own head slightly. Time passed quickly as they got to know one another. Clarke even introduced her to some of her friends, two girls and three boys named Fox, Raven, Finn, Jasper, and Monty. Although, to be honest, Finn seemed more like a hanger on to the group, even to Raven, who was supposedly his girl friend. A barely tolerated hanger on at that, from the way they seemed to be acting around him. Polite, but in a frigid, ultra-formal way, one that seemed to preclude any sort of true emotional connection.

The party was nearing it's end, something Octavia dreaded as she knew the chances of her seeing Clarke, or any of her other new friends again. No, she would be forced to return to her existence (one couldn't even call it a life) inside a hole in the floor, praying that she was never found and be killed for the crime of simply existing. It was then that a massive, mingled disaster and blessing struck. A massive solar flare had sent the station's systems haywire, and security had been ordered to escort everyone home for safety. The situation had deteriorated rapidly, leading to Bellamy and herself being ousted as siblings, and their mother as a grievous law-breaker.

Octavia had been dragged before the Council not minutes after they had floated her mother right in front of her eyes, and was forced to sit and listen as they plotted how to lock her away once more until she was old enough for them to float. Some had even argued to float her now, as if any of this was her fault, but Councilor Griffin had rallied to her defense savagely, something she appreciated.

It was then when Clarke had stormed into the room, visage consumed by anger and contempt.

"Pathetic, the lot of you. Sitting here discussing ever so casually locking away a girl until you can murder her simply for being born, as if it were any fault of her own! I thought this Council was supposed to stand for Truth, Justice, and the Law?" she had said, almost spitting in contempt as she moved to stand behind Octavia who, though shocked, took solace in her presence and support.

"Councilwomen Griffin, control your daughter!" the Councillor had growled out at the woman who had stood up for her, and Octavia gasped softly as she realized that Clarke the Blonde was Clarke Griffin. The same Clarke Griffin her brother had told her about. Her father had been floated recently, for what no one knew, and she had been on virtual house arrest ever since.

"No one controls Clarke except Clarke, Thelonius. If you haven't figured that out after all these years, I despair for the future of Humanity. Never mind the fact that I agree with her entirely." The elder Griffin sniffed in amusement, and Octavia had to silently agree. Though she barely knew her, she knew that Clarke was no wilting wall-flower.

"I'm going to make things as utterly, totally simple as possible. Even for people as incompetent as you lot. You will leave Octavia and her brother alone. No sanctions, no house arrest, nothing. Their mother has already paid the price for the crime, if we can even call it that. Making them suffer beyond that for such things as being born and protecting his sister, his family, is beyond inhumane and unreasonable." Clarke rejoined, folding her arms across her chest. "Even if basic human decency doesn't appeal to you, the people will appreciate that you won't punish them for someone else's crime...often."
The immense bite in that last word caught Octavia off-guard, and she watched with wide eyes the Council flinch or grimaced, several even looked deeply ashamed of themselves.

"Very well. Bellamy and Octavia Blade will not be imprisoned or otherwise punished for their mother's actions. However, any further law-breaking will be harshly punished." The Chancellor finally acquiesced, albeit very grudgingly. Clarke simply smirked victoriously and guided Octavia from the room.

*Flashback Ends*

After saving her, Clarke had quietly told her why her father had been executed, and why she had been put on house arrest. Not to mention why she could get away with talking to the Council the way that she had.

The Ark was dying. After nearly a century of constant use without fresh supplies or materials from Earth, it was falling apart at the seams. Clarke's father had estimated that the Ark had less than two years before the system began to suffer widespread, cascading catastrophic failures across its primary systems, most grievously in the oxygen systems.

Mr. Griffin had wanted to warn the people, to get the whole of the Ark working together to on solutions. Instead, he had been caught and executed by his so-called best friend. Clarke had tried to carry on his mission, only to be similarly caught. The Council had intended to imprison her until she was old enough to be floated.

Somehow (and Clarke had never fully explained), they had instead decided to train her for a year in wilderness survival and basic combat, before loading her up into an old and rickety drop-pod and sending her to Earth, to see if it was survivable.

Thus, today, she had watched Clarke sent away in a ball of flame. Unable to do a single damn thing to help her saviour except watch and cry. True, she had the utmost faith in Clarke, and knew she had the best supplies and training to help her survive (if doing so was even remotely possible), but Clarke was still alone in a totally new reality. A literal new world.

"We'll see each other again, Clarke. Just make sure it's on this side of Saint Peter." She murmured aloud, before going over to the compartment in the floor that used to be her whole world, extracting a thick book entitled "Complete Krav Maga" and thumbing open the worn pages. Clarke had managed to give her the numerous books she had been taught from, and she was resolved to master everything within each of them. She didn't know when or how she would join her best friend on Earth, but she would *not* be a burden when they were together again.

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*Location: Unknown*

*Earth*

"She is here at last. The heir of all we have tried to accomplish for so many centuries. The result of every success and failure."

"But which shall prove the influential factor? Success or failure? Victory, or defeat?"

"Only time will tell. She will be with us soon enough."

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And that, as they say, is that! Please make sure to leave a review, which will be responded too at the beginning of the next chapter. While the story content itself is done, I will still be interacting through ANs and such things with you guys! See you next time!
Leaps In Time

#################################
Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We Shed)
Chapter Two
Welcome Home
#################################

Drop Pod Crash Site

Linkon kom Trikru, warrior of his people and one of Indra's best scouts, carefully eyed the recently-enlarged clearing for several for several minutes, eyes and ears unceasingly searching for any indication of a threat to himself, his unit or, most importantly, his people. It had taken he and his team of three scouts (another Trikru, a Rockkru, and an Azgeda) nearly two hours on horseback to reach the impact site of...well, they would be finding out soon what it was. Like his Heda, he hoped it was the first sign of the Prophecy. He was a warrior, proud to serve his clan, but his entire life had been lived under the fear of being captured and being bled by the Mountain Men. Or, worse, turned into a Reaper and forced to fight his own family and friends, perhaps even deliver them to the same fate.

A birdcall echoed suddenly through the forest, drawing him from these contemplations, and he smiled slightly as he recognized a perfectly performed 'all-clear' signal from one of his subordinates, an up and coming Trikru warrior named Tris. Rumour had it that the young woman was on the fast track to become Anya's new second, something he actually knew for a fact. After all, he had been 'spoken' to privately by the general, who had informed him in no uncertain terms that he was to return with her whole and relatively healthy, or he had best not return at all. He believed her too, the general was not fond of gross exaggeration with her soldiers.

He warbled his own call in return, acknowledging the all-clear and ordering his subordinates into the clearing. Dropping from his perch in a massive, ancient oak tree, he silently slipped into the clearing and had to restrain a pleased smile as the other three members of his team filtered out of the trees simultaneously from the other cardinal points. Perfection, he mused happily to himself, was what saved lives.

"There is a single set of footprints heading towards The Mountain. A young girl, probably in her sixteenth or seventeenth year. Carrying a fair amount of equipment." Tris reported as they met at the start of the long, jagged trench that the fire had carved into the planet where it fell. Broken and smoldering trees clearly marked its path through the canopy, and Linkon was quite glad that the last few days had been wet. Otherwise, he was sure that a great conflagration may have broken out, and that would have put thousands in the path of death, either through fire and smoke, or the local wildlife fleeing the flames and leaving the area, consigning them to starvation.

"She must be one of them, somehow. We should hunt her down and give her blood to the soil." The Azgeda scout growled out darkly, fingering the long sword slung at his hip, and Linkon frowned at him in displeasure.

"The Mountain Men do not send their women outside, certainly not one so young, and never alone. No, she came from the Sky, and that means she may be the One Who Is Promised, the
SkaiPrisa." He retorted firmly, and the Azgeda snorted in amused contempt, giving him something rather close to a pitying look.

"The SkaiPrisa is nothing more than a children's story, an illusion of hope to keep them strong until they can become warriors. It serves no purpose to the strong. Join the ranks of men, Linkon." He rebutted, his voice mocking, and Linkon's jaw clenched in anger at the insult as his fingers drummed on the hilt of his own blade.

"Enough, both of you. Heda wants us to find out what we can, so we search the metal from the sky, and we track the girl. Try to turn her away from the Mountain and towards Trikru lands." Tris interrupted the growing argument with a strong voice, catching Linkon off guard, and he smiled at her slightly in response, as she immediately looked nervous when their gazes fell to her. Yes, she would make a fine Second for Anya, if she was willing to involve herself in a quarrel of honor between two seasoned warriors like themselves.

"Why not just find the chit and take her back to camp ourselves? If she is the SkaiPrisa, we would know quickly enough. If not, we could kill her and have done with it. No need to wait for her to stumble across a patrol so that they can bring her in." the Rockkru grunted, folding his arms over his chest with a scowl of irritation, and Linkon shook his head. While it was a good idea, those weren't their orders.

"No, we have no authority to bring a stranger into our camp. We are here simply to find out what we can about her origins and purpose, and leave the rest up to the Heda and her generals. I'll not risk the Mountain Men catching up to us if she tries to flee from us, because you know as well as I that they will soon be here to investigate." He told the group at large, and the two males simply grunted while Tris nodded her head and began to speak. What she was going to say, however, was cut short by the deep, bone-shaking roar that billowed forth from the direction of The Mountain. A roar that all of them knew and feared.

"Pauna..." Tris whispered fearfully, and the three males nodded in grim agreement. The great pauna was the ultimate danger to all in this land, while for all the tribes feared the Mountain Men, they could be bested, tricked, avoided, slain. The pauna, in all of its towering, monstrous strength, was rarely even wounded. Once it began to hunt, nothing and no one could deter it for long. She was the apex predator, and all who heard her roar knew fear.

"She must hunt the SkaiPrisa, no doubt her ire was drawn by the noise and stench of fire and smoke created by the SkaiPrisa's arrival. Quickly, search the metal box." Linkon ordered, and the group scrambled to obey, swarming carefully over the strange object and ensuring they did not damage anything that the Heda or the generals might want to look at later. It was quickly decided that the only item of interest that was transportable by their capabilities was a small pile of heavily padded white armor of some kind. "Tris, put this in your pack and return to TonDC as fast as your horse can take you. Inform Heda that we are following the trail of the SkaiPrisa and the pauna. We will try to rescue her and divert its attention towards the Mountain."

"No, Linkon, I will not leave comrades to fight without me! I am a warrior of the Trikru, not a child hiding behind its mother!" Tris protested forcefully, glaring angrily at her clansmate, and Linkon nodded in agreement.

"You are a warrior of the Trikru, true. And that is why you must reach the Heda. You must tell her what we have found, and she must bring soldiers to claim this device." He gestured to the metal box, and Tris' gaze inadvertently followed his hand. "I do not know what, if anything, the Mountain Men might gain from this, but we cannot allow it to fall into their hands regardless. If you came with us and we all perished, our people would be helpless against whatever might come
of all this. If you want to serve your people, you will do as I say."

Tris nodded in agreement, unslinging her pack and dividing her supplies up to the young men before refilling it with the white armor and helmet. She, like many, had read the ancient texts. She knew how advanced those who went to the Sky before the Last War had been, and she knew that any advantage the Mountain Men might gain could mean the death of her people.

"Maker keep you safe." She said stoically as she slung her pack back onto her back, quite convinced that she would never see any of them ever again. Only a handful had ever survived the Pauna, and even then they were the wounded survivors of large parties of warriors. Three warriors with only their blades would likely accomplish nothing, but they would do this task regardless, and so must she, lest it all be in vain.

"And you also." Linkon inclined his head in response, and she turned to flit into the trees towards where they had secured their mounts, and from there to TonDC. Squaring his shoulders, Linkon turned in the opposite direction and, with his back towards home and safety, marched to meet his death as a warrior.

Forest, A Few Miles From Drop Zone

Clarke snarled in frustrated anger mixed with fear as she vaulted yet another in what felt like an endless series of fallen trees and branches, breath coming in steady, even pants as she regulated her gait and breathing to textbook perfection. She would be sure to brag about it to her fitness instructors, provided she was still alive to do so.

She had been walking for several hours, taking her time to document what her five senses were experiencing, not only for posterity but also to help her cope with all of them. Spotting a flock of birds with shimmering, rainbow-colored wings (due to radiation exposure, she was sure) she attempted to draw them, her inner artist gleeful at the prospect of capturing so magnificent an image. However, the slightest of over-excited movement on her part had startled them into shimmering, magnificently beautiful flight, and oh, how she had wished she had a camera! Instead of staying on her course and finding them another day (as in, after she had secured shelter and supplies!), she had darted after them without thinking, turning away from Mount Weather and heading parallel, towards the Capitol.

The next thing she knew, a massive gorilla had appeared bellowing from the dense forest, smashing aside ancient trees that had weathered nearly a century of exposure and radiation as though they were paper. Blood was dripping from numerous small wounds, and the beast was very clearly enraged and looking for something to take its fury out upon. The moment it's eyes locked onto her, Clarke knew that she had to start running.

She had tried to trick it a few times, leaving small drops of blood on several trees from a scrape on her hand, but whether the gorilla had mutated to possess more intellect or a better sense of smell over the years, such measures had never done more than by her a little bit of time and piss it off even more. Quite frankly she was amazed she had managed to outrun it this long, but she thanked her instructors and her own radiation-altered body for that. While space radiation might not be as...horrible in its results as nuclear fallout, it did still affect the body, change it to become something stronger. Either that, or you died young as your body killed itself from the inside out.

Her mind was racing as desperately as her feet, creating and discarding plans at the speed of thought. She could only outrun it or distract it for just so much longer. Even as fit as she was, it was both far more massive and far more strong than her own more-or-less human body, and those facts
allowed it to move at literally superhuman speeds for a long time indeed. Not to mention the fact that this was it's home turf, and it had no trouble whatsoever finding the quickest route to its objective.

However, she did have one hope. In the lead-up to the Third World War, tens of thousands of nuclear-hardened fallout shelters had been constructed all across the United States, with the major cities receiving higher concentrations than the more rural areas. The nation's capitol had, of course, received not only more shelters than anywhere else, but both the shelters and their stockpiles were of significantly greater than other, 'less significant' areas. If she could find and seek shelter inside of one of those, she would be safe and supplied long enough for the beast to lose interest, allowing her to reach the Mountain and alert the Ark that earth was more-or-less habitable. She would have to remember to mention guns, though. Big ones.

Easier said than done, of course. She did know that she had to be fairly close to the outer layers of the city proper. While earlier she had been ever so savagely cursing The Ark for dropping her so far away from Mount Weather, she was now overwhelmingly grateful that she had been dropped near the city and thus the shelters. Besides, she might get lucky and find one that had a communications capability of some kind. She would be able to bring the Ark, and her friends, down that much faster.

Seeing a large break in the trees up ahead, her heart soared with hope and she poured her energies into a burst of speed as she vaulted one last tree and hurtled into empty air over what she had hoped was a large, grassy plain that would lead her to a shelter or a cave or somewhere else she could hide from her pursuer.

She was partially correct.

There was, indeed, a large clearing in the trees, and she was indeed now outside of the forest’s main body. However, she discovered, she had just leapt off of a ledge over a significant drop, and a short shriek of surprise and fear was audible for a mere instant before she dropped, feet hitting the loose stone and dirt slope. They promptly went right out from under her, and she tumbled down, yelping in pain every-time her body impacted, even as she tried to curl up into a defensive ball. It even worked, a little bit, as the impacts on the vital parts of her body became more limited. The downside however, was that her limbs and back began taking more and more hits.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, she skidded to a halt. Wincing at her scrapes and bruises and more than a few shallow cuts, she tried to push herself back to her feet, only to collapse with a howl of pain as her wrist collapsed, red-hot knives of agony stabbing at her. She must have broken it, or at the very least badly sprained it, during the fall. Trying again with only her right, she was relieved when it didn’t do the same, allowing her to stagger to her feet.

Examining her surroundings, she found herself standing in the center of what seemed to be a fairly large crater, maybe one hundred feet in diameter and a dozen feet deep. Cradling her left arm close to her body, she carefully scrambled up the far side. Sapphire eyes scanned her surroundings carefully, before widening in shock.

At least another half dozen craters just like the one she had fallen into lay scattered before her. Though, perhaps scattered was not the right word, as there was in fact a very deliberate spacing, almost pattern-like, to the craters and it dawned on Clarke that she was standing in the middle what was once the target of a conventional missile barrage or bombing attack.

A faint gleam caught her eye, and she raised a hand against the glare of the sun and tried to discern what it was. Her heart leapt again as she spotted the source. A large, flawless metal door set into a squat, wide concrete bunker. It looked to be a few hundred yards away at most, even in her battered
state she would be able to make it there, given enough time…

The sound of her pursuer exiting the trees made her wilt. She had barely been able to outrun the beast when she had been uninjured, well rested, and in the cover of the forest. Now it would be all but impossible.

A deep, harsh braying sound that was similar enough to old movies she had seen to be identified as a war-horn shattered the stillness of the air, and she spun around in shock only to find herself face to face with…a boy?

"Heda!"

Lexa looked up, startled, as her successor to the post of Anya’s Second rushed into her throne room clutching a bulging pack tightly in both hands. Fully aware that she had been a member of the scouting party Indra had sent, she set aside the ancient text she had been reading, the battered hardcover carrying a barely discernible title: “Off Armageddon Reef” by David Weber*. It was the first book in a series, apparently, one that she desperately wished she had the sequels for.

“Yes, Tris, what news do you so desperately bring? I assume from the lack of blood and how tightly you are clutching that bag that your unit found something important?” she asked with almost believably casual interest, little to no sign of her internal excitement showing. Not much garnered obvious emotional responses from her besides anger and contempt from her, not since she had taken her place as Heda. Still, the idea of being the Heda to meet the One Who Is Promised was more than sufficient cause to put a few hairline fractures in her façade.

“Sha, Heda. We reached the place that the sky-fire fell quickly and found a large metal box at the end of a fresh, deep trench gouged in the earth. There was little of interest to our knowledge save for the contents of this pack and the hour-old tracks of a well-equipped sixteen year old young woman.” Tris reported, placing the pack on the ground and reaching into it to withdraw a bundle of white clothing. It unfolded to its full length in her grasp, and Lexa couldn’t restrain a soft gasp as she saw it. “Heda?”

“This, Tris, is called a ‘space suit’. It allows the people who live above the sky to breathe when there is no air, and to survive the rigors of returning to the ground. At least, that is what the ancient books have led me to believe it does. Regardless, this is certainly evidence that someone has come from above.” Lexa explained as she uncoiled herself from her throne and descended to take the suit. Turning it in her hands, she reverently inspected it before forcing herself to refocus on other matters. “And what of the others?”

"The Sky Girl was being followed by a yong pauna, and they went to try and help her escape it, as well as keep her from going to the Mountain."

“I doubt the Sky People know that anyone still lives down here, so trying to find shelter in someplace like The Mountain would make a great deal of sense.” Lexa mused, and Tris nodded in agreement. The Commander was opening her mouth to speak when Indra burst into the throne room much like Tris had, a decidedly out of character move for the reserved general.

“Heda, patrols report that the Mountain Men are already well on their way to where the fire fell! From what they were able to see and hear from cover, the Mountain Men know just what it was and who might be in it, and they injured and enraged a yong pauna before herding it in that
direction. They mean to claim what and whomever fell for themselves!” the ebony general reported, and Lexa snarled angrily.

“Get every warrior we can on horseback and prepare to move out. Have another force escort a wagon an hour behind us. I’ll be damned before the Mountain Men get their hands on the Sky Girl or the technology within the sky-box.” She commanded, turning to her armor rack as Indra vanished to obey her commands. Her incumbent successor at Anya’s side sprang into action, helping the founder of the Coalition arm and armor herself, pulling straps tight and tying leather ties.

“Tris, put the space suit into that trunk and lock it. Bring me the key when you’ve done so.” The command was given with a gesture to a large, worn-looking trunk, a family relic from her mother’s line that she used to keep what few artifacts of personal and sentimental value she had allowed herself to keep when she had become a blooded warrior.

Carefully opening the trunk, Tris absently noticed another, slightly smaller but no less worn trunk beside it, the faint words still carved into its cover reading: “General of the Armies, Skylar M. Griffin”. Placing the space suit into the Commander’s trunk, Trist put the second one from her mind as she closed it and locked it securely, before presenting the key to her leader.

Nodding her thanks, Lexa slipped its chain over her head, allowing the small piece of shaped metal to take its place between her full, though securely bound, breasts.

Settling her sword on her back and her long knives on her hips, the founder of the Coalition strode from the room and into the organized chaos of her army preparing to ride out or defend the village from possible attack. All movement stopped and the air itself seemed to grow still as the entire village turned to look at her, every ear waiting to hear what the supreme leader of the tribes would say.

“All of you know that a great flame fell from the sky not hours ago, and landed not far from here.” The crowd murmured their agreement, as even someone blind and deaf couldn’t have missed such an event, simply from the way the air itself shook. They fell silent once more as she continued speaking. “That fire was in truth a box from the sky, its inhabitant sent by those who live in the sky as an emissary.”

Even her peoples’ stoicism and determination couldn’t contain their reactions to those words. Each and every one of them had been told the stories as children, stories of the Old World and the Chosen Few who had been taken into the sky until such time that the Sky Princess would lead them back and become the Queen of all who lived on the ground. Chatter and shouted questions filled the town, and Lexa eventually had to command them to silence, an absolute first in her memory, and it took nearly a full minute for them to pull themselves together again.

“Our task is two-fold. Ensure that the Sky Girl is unharmed and out of The Mountain’s grasp, and to secure her metal pod before they can claim any secrets it might hold. I will take our mounted warriors and secure the area, then send for the cart to carry it here. We move out in five minutes.” She commanded, and the camp scattered to finish their duties and preparations.

Five minutes later, three hundred horses thundered through the gates of TonDC, surging towards the place where the fire had fallen. Lexa, at the head of the column with Anya and Indra, could only hope that they made it in time. Not only for her people, but for her own future.

“what the fuck…?!” Clarke’s attempt at a scream came out sound more like a strangled
gasp despite her best efforts.

The boy, who looked like her was around her age, was heavily tanned and wearing heavy black leather armor with black fur trimmings that added a menacing and almost intense feel to the armor. His dark, expressionless eyes were surrounded by soot-black warpaint of some kind. With the added touch of a sword on his back and knives on his belt, he cut a savage and imposing figure.

“\textit{I am Lincoln, warrior of the Tree Clan. I mean you no harm.}” He said in heavily accented English, and Clarke raised an eyebrow at him. She opened her mouth to respond in a decidedly skeptical fashion (ignoring for the moment that he was A) A human alive on earth besides her and B) he was speaking English) when there was another hornblast, followed immediately by the enraged bellow of the massive mutant gorilla and, shockingly, the staccato chatter of automatic gunfire. He tensed, shooting a look over his shoulder and the woodline. “You must flee to safety. My companions may have led the yong pauna away and towards the Mountain, but its rage only grows. It will return for you soon enough.”

“\textit{Look, I don’t know who the fuck you are or what is going on, but if we can get inside that bunker over there we will be safe from the gorilla.}” Clarke responded as human screams and crunching sounds echoed from the woods. Lincoln looked again and shook his head.

“\textit{There is no time, SkaiPrisa. Flee while you can.}” He refused, turning on his heel and darting back towards the woods. Calls for him to stop or come back went unheeded, and Clarke growled in anger before limping after him. She would be damned if she just ran and hid while he died in some stupid, self-sacrificing manner. Drawing her firearm, she weaved her way through the trees towards the sounds of fighting.

When she arrived, it was immensely obvious that the battle against the giant gorilla was not going well, not that she was terribly surprised. A half-dozen men in some sort of radiation suits were in crumpled heaps, the assault rifles she had heard being fired lying near their corpses, as was another male dressed and equipped like Lincoln. He, along with one other, were busy ducking and weaving through the wounded gorilla’s wild and powerful blows. It was obvious even to her relatively untrained eye that they were slowing down, each blow coming closer and closer to landing an impact that could end only in death.

Casting about, her eyes fell upon a tree with low branches and a perfectly placed V fork between two of them. Quickly shuffling over to it, she rested the long barrel of her magnum and cocked the hammer. Even as she took careful aim at the monster, Lincoln’s companion was caught in a sideways swipe that sent him smashing into a nearby tree with a sickening splatter, his flying corpse clipping Lincoln just enough to send him to the ground, dazed and disoriented from the impact.

The gorilla slowly approached, confident and taking its time. It knew that this pray was to injured to fight back now, and in its anger and pain it wanted to savor this moment. One powerful hand darted down and rose again, Lincoln squirming desperately in its unyielding grasp. Massive jaws opened wide, jagged teeth gleaming, and…

Clarke’s magnum boomed, sending a fifty caliber bullet into the gorilla’s head. Although, to be honest, it didn’t have a head anymore. In fact, when a fifty caliber, 400g hollowpoint bullet impacts anything at two thousand feet per second with over three thousand foot-pounds of force at a range of less than five yards, the target simply…disintegrates. And disintegrate it did, with…spectacular results, if exceptionally gory. The gorilla’s head exploded in a welter of gore, showering the boy in its grasp with blood, brains, bone fragments, and shredded flesh. Feeling thoroughly exhausted, Clarke sluggishly holstered her gun before turning to rest her back against the tree. Her legs
wavered beneath her and she collapsed, all the pain her adrenaline had been keeping at bay rushing back at once. Darkness consumed her vision and her head lolled limply to the side as unconsciousness claimed her.

The horns of her warriors had fallen silent not long ago, meaning they had either been knocked unconscious or (far more likely) slain. Lexa hoped that Lincoln was still alive, he was one of her best scouts and was something very close to a friend to her. She jerked in shock as thunder clapped, and she instinctively looked to the sky, though she knew perfectly well that there was not a cloud in the sky.

It had to have been one of the Mountain Men’s guns, but it sounded nothing like the usual chattering sound that their preferred weapons made. Still, they were close enough now that they could catch any surviving Mountain Men off guard. Hefting the long, iron-tipped spear that served as her lance, she pumped it in the air twice, the non-verbal signal to attack, and prodded her mount into a gallop.

Her’s was the first voice to be raised in a howling war cry, her warriors echoing her, and the first to fall silent in confusion as a ragged sounding ‘all-clear’ horn signal echoed from up ahead. Gesturing for the warriors to slow down and dismount, she gave hushed orders for half the warriors to remain with the mounts, and the others to spread out and search the area. She, Tris, Anya, and Indra led a small group directly towards the area the horn-blast had come from.

There, surrounded by a half-dozen Mountain Men corpses, two dead warriors, and a wounded Lincoln, lay the mostly headless corpse of a yong pauna. It was obvious a gun of some kind had ended its life, no sword, spear, or arrow of any kind could even hope to do such catastrophic damage, and no warrior had ever slain a pauna of any age.

“Lincoln, what happened here?” she asked softly, as she and Nyko knelt beside him, the healer pulling out his medicinal pouch, hands shaking slightly at the sight of his brother in all but blood in such a state. “Is this blood yours?”

“No…the pauna’s. Was going to eat me, the Sky Princess killed it. She is hurt…over there.” He grunted out painfully, clutching at his ribs in obvious agony before falling silent as Nyko began his work. Lexa’s eyes widened and she spun to her feet, trying to keep her inner excitement and apprehension from being too obvious. Rounding the tree Lincoln had indicated, she felt her breath catch in her chest.

She was breathtaking. Tight black armor accentuated an athletically mouth-watering build, one she was sure would only look all the better without the bulk of the armor in the way of her vision. Long, golden hair spilled down her back in a tousled, curly wave, and Lexa also noted with approval that she had more than a few weapons on her person.

Reaching out with one hand, she prepared to gently shake the princess awake. However, the moment the lightest of touches fell on the girl’s shoulder, eyes as blue as they sky she had come from snapped open, and her right hand blurred into motion. Lexa had a sheer instant to hurl herself out of the way before thunder boomed again. Shaking her head to clear the ringing from her ears, Lexa prepared to get back to her feet, but an ominous metallic clicking sound made her freeze. Slowly raising her head, she found herself face to face with the gleaming length of the biggest pistol she had ever seen in her life. A cracking sound distracted her for a heartbeat, long enough for her to look back and see a young tree, perhaps only a decade or two in age, go toppling sideways, the massive chunk ripped out of the trunk telling her just where the bullet she had avoided had gone.
“Well, I guess I know how you killed the yong pauna now.” She said light-heartedly, and the blond eyed her appraisingly, gun unwavering and eyes full of steel.

“If you mean the giant gorilla, then yes. I couldn’t very well let it eat Lincoln or whatever his name was, now could I?” she grumbled in response, and Lexa laughed softly in response, already liking the girl’s fiery nature.

“My name is Lexa, Lincoln is one of my soldiers. I thank you for saving his life. What is your name, SkaiPrisa?” she asked, and the girl eyed her again for a long moment before responding.

“Clarke, Clarke Griffin.” She said, finally lowering her gun, through she didn’t holster it, Lexa was pleased to see. She also felt a jolt rush through her as she recognized the Sky Princess’ last name, the same name engraved on a large wooden trunk in her throne room. One more piece of evidence that this girl was whom her people had been waiting for all these years. “So, what happens now?”

“Now, you come with us and heal. You are in no danger from anyone loyal to me, SkaiPrisa.” Lexa assured her, receiving a scrutinizing, evaluating look in return before the blonde sighed and nodded her acceptance. Suppressing a pleased smile, Lexa settled for simply offering her hand, which Clarke took tentatively in her own. Lexa marveled for a moment how soft it was in her own. She couldn’t wait to introduce Costia to their future lover and Queen. She was everything they had hoped for.

The Coalition rejoiced as their leader introduced a new Queen.

“Hope you guys are still having fun with this story! This will be getting updated once a week on Fridays, so look forward to that!
*this is an actual book, the beginning of yet another amazing sci fi series by the same man, David Weber. Read his shit if you like sci fi action, its gonna change sci fi the same way Star Wars did when the movies start coming out for his flagship series, the Honorverse.
Not much to reply to specifically in ANs for the reviews, so I will thank you all for your support and ask you to continue doing so!

# Nothing Is True (Save For the Blood We've Shed)

Chapter Three

Grounders

“Are your wounds being aggravated by this pace, SkaiPrisa?” Lexa’s warm breath on her neck, and the soft whisper of her voice in her ear, did nothing to help mitigate the hot blush that had been present on her face from the moment she felt Lexa’s muscled body and soft breasts press into her back, one arm circling her waist almost possessively.

“Not really, most of my injuries are simply scratches, nothing more. The only other thing is my left wrist, and that’s badly sprained at best. But, since I’m not using it at the moment…” she trailed off, and heard Lexa give a low hum of acknowledgement. They continued to ride in semi-comfortable silence before Clarke spoke again. “I’m sorry for nearly killing you back there. We didn’t expect anyone to still be alive down here, never mind as many of you as there seem to be.”

“I can imagine. Why is it that you decided to return now, Clarke? Especially if you thought everyone here on the ground was dead?” Lexa asked, fishing for information as calmly and subtly as she could manage. She had no interest in giving Clarke a reason to distrust her, and asking questions that she might perceive as endangering to her people was sure to do that. Her companion was silent for long enough that Lexa feared she had done so anyway, or that they had somehow missed a significant wound.

“The Ark, where I lived, is dying. After one hundred years of constant use and half-assed repairs, the machines that give us air and food are falling apart.” She said at last, voice so sad that Lexa reflexively tightened her grip comfortably, and felt Clarke squeeze it in response. Still, the brunette was glad that the blonde couldn’t see the incredulous look on her face. She could hardly believe that the Chosen had anything less than perfection, but perhaps it did make sense that their machines would break eventually. Or, perhaps it was some sort of cover story, to keep her people from growing to alarmed? No, she decided, that was too bizarre and inefficient.

Musing silently, she began to compile a list of (polite) questions to pose to the Skai Prisa during the feast and, perhaps after. Her grip shifted absently as she noticed Clarke had fallen asleep, likely exhausted from everything that had happened to her today. She would have Nyko triple check her once they got back to TonDC.

“IDIOTS!” Abby Griffin roared at the Command Center staff, who wilted before her fury as she paced before them. Behind their huddled forms was a massive bank of screens and consoles, all of which were showing either static or nothing at all. “You incompetent pack of feckless ingrates! How did you manage to not only miss the primary drop zone by a dozen miles,
but the secondary by over twice that? It's not like the target was a fucking mountain!"

“Doctor Griffin, could I perhaps talk to you for a moment? Please?” Marcus Kane asked politely from his new vulture-like position at the door. She leveled a truly fearsome glare at him for interrupting her lecture, but he was able to remain unmoved and simply gestured to the door. Growling, Abby turned back to the staff.

“Get back to work! I had better get some good news when I come back in here, or the lot of you will be begging me to float you by the time I’m through!” she snarled, before turning on her heel and just about stomping towards the door. Once they were outside, she returned to leveling a dark look at the Head of Security. “What the hell do you want, Kane?”

“Aren’t you being a little harsh, Abby?” he asked carefully, and received a harsh glare and a sneer in response for his trouble.

“Harsh? Kane, not only did those fools manage to drop her on the wrong damn mountain but also, God only knows how, lose every radio and satellite feed we had left! At the same time!” she hissed back at him, fortunately mindful enough in her anger to keep her voice down. The general population didn’t know about Clarke’s mission and they fully intended to keep it that way until it bore fruit. Or, as the case may be, didn’t.

“And both those mistakes are horrific, yes, but bear in mind that they have never done anything more than monitor the movement of weather systems. They have no idea how to do anything else and,” he held up a finger to stop her as she opened her mouth to speak. “And neither do you. Or I, for that matter.”

“I don’t particularly care whether or not they can’t tell their asses from their elbows if it might mean my daughter is dead!” Abby shot back sharply, and Kane grimaced slightly. Further disagreement would simply redirect her ire onto him directly as opposed to only peripherally, something he wasn’t too eager to experience. Especially because he understood, intellectually, how she must be feeling right now

“Abby, you know as well as I do, better even, that Clarke is no pushover. She has technology, training, smarts, and a stubborn streak wider than a planet. One that she inherited in full from a certain couple that I know.” He said gently, with a pointed look at the brunette, garnering a wry and reluctant, but honest, laugh from her. Emboldened, he pressed on. “Clarke is going to be fine, because anything less would be failure. And Clarke doesn’t fail. Have some faith in her, hmm?”

“Yeah…yeah, you’re right Marcus. Screaming at people won’t do much good. I’m going to go apologize to them and see what I can do. Take care of yourself, Kane.” She sighed after a long minute, turning around and reentering the Command Center as purposefully as she had left it, but with none of the rage.

Smiling slightly to himself, Kane turned and walked away, confident that he had settled the situation down. It was about lunchtime anyway, and he was feeling a bit peckish.

So, those idiots in Command managed to fuck up pretty badly. They dropped her almost twenty miles from where she was supposed to be.” Raven sneered in disgusted contempt, having heard the entire debacle from her favorite place to spy on the Command Center, a large ventilation shaft that broke down so often no one even bother to pay attention to it anymore. The minute Doctor Griffin had left the room to talk to Marshall Kane, she had retreated to the room belonging
to the Blake siblings, wanting to ensure that they (but really, she was here to tell Octavia, Bellamy was kind of…irrelevant these days) knew what had happened. Fortunately, she had managed to avoid Finn whilst enroute.

Finn. Her lip curled into a sneer at the thought of him. While they had been friends since childhood, Finn had started to change once they hit puberty, always noticing other girls a little bit too much. Even when they were truly dating, she knew he had started sniffing after other girls, even cheating on her, when she refused to have sex with him before she felt ready. Hell, once Clarke had started training for her mission (and even before, if she was going to be honest), he had started panting after her, the ‘Ice Queen of The Ark’. Every boy and young man on the station had wanted to bag the gorgeous blonde, daughter of one of the most powerful people on The Ark. Oh, how she had wanted to hate Clarke for drawing his attention, for being more than some nameless ass he played around with, but she couldn’t. Clarke was too loyal, too kind, too honest for her to hate her, and so the pair had quickly become fast friends.

Now, she was really only still ‘with’ Finn out of respect for their many years of friendship, her hopes that continued exposure to Clarke’s group would straighten him back out, and because having a preference for girls (even if one was bisexual) was illegal on the Ark. To do anything but help create and care for the next generation was a crime, a heinous one, as if severity mattered when all crimes had the same punishment. Raven could understand, intellectually, that given such a small population it couldn’t be afforded for people to flout their ‘duties’, but she just hoped they got back to Earth before she was ‘encouraged’ to ‘get married’ to a ’suitable canidate’.

“Fucking pathetic.” Octavia spat from next to her. The two girls were both laying down on Octavia’s bed, cuddled up to one another due to the less-than-large amount of room that said bed possessed, not that either girl minded particularly. Thanks to Clarke, they were fairly close friends now, bound first through their loyalty to the blonde, and second through their strengthening ties to one another. Raven, of course, knew about Octavia’s infatuation with their friend (one that Raven had started to feel as well, to be honest, though not as strongly. After all, Clarke hadn’t swept in, forced the Council into submission, and saved her from execution!), as the younger girl had told her not long after the Unity Day Dance, when Raven had dropped by and found her practicing an exercise from one of the books Clarke had left her.

Though Raven still preferred verbal solutions (if necessary) and technical solutions (whenever possible) to her problems, she had no problem with being fit enough to be able to survive on the ground and help Clarke when they arrived. Naturally, increasing her own physical appeal had nothing to do with the decision.

“Listen, O.” she said seriously after a minute of silence, using the nickname that Clarke had coinied not long before she had left. “Some of the older mechanics have been working on the big drop-ship in block fifty-four. The Council is keeping it quiet, and it will take a couple of years to fix up enough for reentry, but…” she trailed off, and Octavia looked at her, eyes bright. Both knew that the only reason a full-size drop ship would be getting repaired was if they planned on sending more people to the ground to test it.

“We had best figure out how to get ourselves on board when the time comes then, hadn’t we?” she said, smiling slowly as her mind raced through the implications, and Raven grinned in response.

Their comradely moment was ruined when the door opened abruptly, a dirty and scowling Bellamy Blake coming in and just about slamming it behind himself. After Octavia had been revealed, as well as Bellamy’s part in hiding her and sneaking her into the dance, he had been kicked out of ArkSec and assigned to janitorial duty. Since then, he had a tendency to scowl constantly and act
childishly whenever remotely possible. As much as Octavia loved her brother, it was starting to get really old really fast. It wasn’t like he was the one who almost got condemned to years of imprisonment before execution. She just hoped he grew up and realized that there was more to life than moping about missed opportunities.

Totally ignoring the two girls, he slipped into the small attached bathroom, not doubt to take a ‘refreshing’ sonic shower. Not particularly interested in dealing with Bellamy and, probably, another bitter rant about how unfair life was and how much he hated the Council, the two girls quickly pulled on their shoes and departed, electing to go hang out at The Skylight. Officially known as the Starboard Observatory, it was the only place on The Ark that the kids and teens of the population could hang out and cut loose. The Skylight was a massive room, large enough for a couple hundred people, with the huge banks of windows that had given the room its name constantly looking down upon Earth. Finding some empty seats away from the main clusters of kids, the pair returned to their previous discussion in low voices.

“So, the Council isn’t going to send anyone useful or important down on that dropship, so it seems pretty obvious to me that they are going to send kids from the Skybox.” Raven reasoned, and Octavia sneered in agreement. Of course the Council would send ‘the delinquents’ down to the homeworld. It wasn’t like their lives mattered or anything, right?

“So then, all we have to do is get ourselves locked up in a year and ten months. We can easily convince the Council that your technical know-how would come in handy on the ground to make them send you down instead of floating you.” Octavia said with a nonchalant shrug of her shoulders, and Raven rolled her eyes in fond exasperation. Only Octavia (and Clarke, now that she thought about it) would act so utterly unconcerned about getting locked up in a 100 year-old piece of scrap metal and launched at a most-likely hostile and fatally dangerous planet.

“It’s a plan, or at least the start of one.” Was all she said out loud, and Octavia smirked slightly at the trace of weariness in her tone, knowing full well why it was there and feeling endlessly amused by it. She liked being difficult and playful, like messing with her friends, simply because every time she did she reveled in actually having friends, and she would remember the person who made that possible.

“Hey guys!” a cheerful voice said from beside them, and both looked up to see Fox standing there. The five foot nine, hazel-eyed ginger was one of the sweetest people that they knew, and one of Clarke’s closest friends outside of themselves.

“Hey, Fox, long time no see!” Octavia smiled warmly at the other girl, exaggerating somewhat. They had seen each other a couple of days ago in this very room, but she didn’t quibble over the little details. Still, her sudden appearance was shocking and potentially worrisome, based on what she might have overheard.

“Well, me and the others were wondering if, since we’re all friends or at least friendly with Clarke, you wouldn’t mind joining us? We’ve all got to stick together, after all, now more than ever.” Fox said with an equally warm smile, though her tone was deliberately bland, and both Raven and Octavia couldn’t help but narrow their eyes slightly at the implications.

“So sure.” Octavia said instantly, getting an incredulous look from Raven while Fox beamed happily. Standing as the auburnette turned and headed back towards a particular table (which the pair saw had a half dozen girls their age looking at them with interest) the pair slowly began to follow. Fox had barely sat back down when they all leaned towards her, chatting together before she responded, which resulted in even more excited chatter and eager looks being thrown their way.
“And you did that...why, exactly? She already sounds like she knows a bit too much than she should.” Raven asked in a low voice as they approached the group at a languid pace. Octavia smirked at her again (she was spending way too much time with that expression, Raven grumbled mentally) before responding.

“Allies, my dear Raven. Allies that either have a deep infatuation with Clarke, or at the very least admire her for her strength and charisma. Either way, they can provide a great deal of support to us, and to Clarke when we meet up with her on the ground.” Octavia explained, rather smugly in her opinion, and Raven raised her eyebrows in response.

“You seem quite sure that they have a thing for Clarke, O. To one degree or another, anyway.” She observed mildly, and Octavia shrugged again (something else she seemed to do a lot) with a small, soft smile full of emotions.

“Well, it takes one to know one, doesn’t it?” was all she said in response, though she did shoot a knowing look at her, one whose implications Raven was too uncomfortable with contemplating right now, even in the privacy of her own mind.

“Hey guys, thanks for joining us!” Fox said cheerfully as they took seats at the table. “That’s Mel,” here she pointed to a brunette with a somewhat stern and serious disposition. “That’s Roma, Munroe, and Harper.” She indicated another brunette and a pair of blondes in turn. "Guys, Raven and Octavia, two of Clarke's other friends."

"So, did Clarke make it to the ground okay?” Harper asked almost breathlessly, though at least she had enough sense to keep her voice down, leaning across the table to make sure she was heard despite that. Still, her 'precautions' weren't enough to keep the rest of the table from flinching rather badly and looking around for prying ears.

"Are you a total idiot?! Don't mention any specifics in public, how many times do I need to remind you?!” Fox snarled softly at the sometimes foolish and brash blonde, who looked sufficiently scolded.

"Sorry, Foxy.” Harper blushed, getting a shaken head in response, before looking back at the pair and whispering. "Seriously, can you tell us, though?"

"Her pod made it down fine, but the geniuses topside managed to drop her almost twenty miles from the food and shelter she was supposed to be able to reach by nightfall.” Raven answered shortly, feeling rather miffed with Harper blurtting out decidedly sensitive information.

"Clarke won't let adult stupidity slow her down or stop her.” Monroe said with a gleam of admiration in her eyes and expression, and the table nodded together, though all looked concerned to some degree. While they had faith in Clarke, there was a difference between faith and self-delusion, and unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on your point of view) they hadn't crossed that particular line yet.

"Listen, my brother is working a twelve hour shift tomorrow, nine to nine. Come by my room around one, we all need to talk about what's what.” Octavia instructed the group, having come to a snap decision in that moment. If they knew about Clarke, that meant they could be trusted, which meant she could try to get them in on the plan she and Raven were concocting. Many hands make light the work, and the more hands Clarke had ready to help her, the better. Gesturing to Raven, she pushed back from the table and strode away.
"It's confirmed, Clarke Griffin reached Earth alive." Security Commander Shumay, Marshal Kane's second in command, reported. Somewhat on the short side, the middle-aged Asian man had spent his entire life as a member of the Ark Security forces, carrying out his duties with precision and excellence that quickly saw him elevated to his current rank, the trusted right hand of the Head of Security.

Unfortunately, that trust was horribly misplaced.

"Good, well done Commander. Once the second dropship is sent to the ground, we will make our move. In the meanwhile, keep quietly feeling out Security staff. My people are loyal to me, but without any additional security forces, accomplishing our goals will be impossible." Diane Sydney, ousted predecessor of Thelonius Jaha for the position of Chancellor, responded with a carefully crafted expression of praise and warmth.

Shumay visibly swelled with obvious pride at both the 'compliment' and the 'trust' that the former Chancellor placed in him. To wouldn't stop him from betraying her to take power for himself, of course, but it was still nice to be appreciated.

"I understand, but I will have to be cautious. I talk to the wrong person..." he trailed off, the implications obvious, and Diana nodded once before dismissing him.

The moment he left, her expression changed to one of amused contempt. It was blatantly obvious that he planned to betray her at the most profitable opportunity. Anyone so easily tempted into betraying both an oath and people who thought of you as family, all for nebulous promises of sated lusts and power, was someone who would betray you just as easily for even greater power.

He would be disposed of once he had done his part to her satisfaction. In the meantime, however, she had work to do. Coups to plan, spying to arrange, treachery to plot...

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TonDC

Earth

"Lexa, what are the odds of your people deciding I am some sort of threat, or demon, or something else that will most likely result in a painful and messily permanent end for me?" Clarke asked the brunette warrior nervously, immensely aware of not only the eyes and whispers focused on her, but also the fairly significant eyes and whispers that were focused on how close she and Lexa were, as well as Lexa's arm tightly curled around her waist.

At the slow and gentle pace of their mount, it had taken a good two hours for them to finally reach what Lexa had called TonDC, a nearby village that she and a portion of her army were billeted, and from whence they had come to find herself and Lincoln. The village was fairly large, with a wooden palisade wall around the perimeter and guards patrolling both below and on the ramparts, and she glanced back at the large, slowly moving cart that held her drop pod. Lexa had been deliberately vague about why they were bringing it, but she was too tired, too uncomfortable, and too out of her comfort zone to make much of a protest or inquiry. It had been fascinating to watch a dozen strong, massive warriors from what Lexa called the Stone Clan simply dead-lift it into the cart, but then she supposed that radiation exposure made them stronger than humans before the war would be. She knew that she was.

"From my clans, minimal at worst. They will be uncomfortable at first, you are so very different from what they are used to, but in time they will grow to accept you. Especially given the
fact that you saved Lincoln's life and slew a yong pauna, a young gorilla. This has never been done before, and my people will respect your prowess." Lexa responded, deciding not to mention the likes of the Azgeda or the tribes more sympathetic to them then to herself. They wouldn't dare act so openly against her, not with the SkaiPrisa and a slain pauna, even a yong one.

Only partially reassured by her words, Clarke held back any further questions as Lexa's warm body vanished from behind her, the brunette lithely dismounting before holding her hands up in offering. Blushing heavily once more, Clarke swung her (better) leg over the horse's broad back before sliding off completely, landing in Lexa's strong arms. She whimpers softly as the movement jostles her damaged wrist and legs, and Lexa steadies her, touch lingering gently before pulling away.

"I cannot help you walk now, Clarke. You must show them the strength that let you slay the pauna, else my people will doubt you and hold you in contempt. Once you have shown that you have the strength to carry on despite injuries, to press forward despite your pain, we can call the healers without concern." She explained in a soft voice, an undercurrent of worry and regret in her voice. Clarke's gnaws on her lip slightly, knowing that if she tries to move under her own power to much her injuries will be exacerbated greatly, but trusts Lexa's judgment. Not that she has much of a choice but to do so. She meets Lexa's eyes and nods, the other girl nodding back and stepping further away, a stoic mask sliding into place. Giving Clarke a look that clearly said 'follow my lead', she headed for an elevated platform that looked out over the center of the village.

Squaring her shoulders (and wincing ever so slightly as her barely-scabbed-over wounds split open again), Clarke strode after her, proud to be displaying only the slightest of limps to uncountable eyes staring at her unceasingly. Only the smallest of tics at the corner at her mouth and slightly narrowed eyes betrayed the immense pain that was lashing at her with every movement of her body. She didn't even know how she was still upright. Genetically modified and mutated by radiation or not, her studies on human anatomy and health told her that she should be dead, or at the very least bedridden for months. She was glad neither was the case, of course, but damnit if being in this much pain didn't suck!

"I have returned victorious. Six Mountain Men lie dead, their danger to our people that much weaker. But that is not all, for the Skai Prisa has appeared at long last." She stepped to the side, gesturing to Clarke, who took the hint and ascended the few stairs to stand at her side. The Gathered people murmured to one another at the sight of the battered and bleeding blond, clad in armor unlike any they had ever seen. With streaks of blood and dirt on her face, hair untamed and wild, she cut an image of primal, warlike-beauty that none of them would ever forget.

Still, they seemed to be regarding her with something other than fear or hostility, so she wasn't going to complain about a few strange looks and mutterings in a language she didn't understand. Now that she thought about it, why was Lexa speaking English and they weren't? Was it for her benefit? Were her people all polylingual? Did it really matter right now? No, she decided, it didn't.

Seeing the carcass of the yong pauna she had slain approaching the gate of the village, being dragged by several mounted warriors, she found herself shutting down her mental rambling and, against what most would call wisdom or common sense, spoke aloud as she gestured to her prize.

"As a gift to your leader and you, the people of the land, I offer you this. The body of the yong pauna," she is proud that she manages to say the foreign words with little difficulty. Whatever language it was, that part at least was partially bastardized english. "that I slew not hours ago." She announced, causing the crowd to turn and face the direction indicated, with much louder chatter and more excited movement. The chatter turned into baying howls of triumph, and a very primal part of her exulted in the sound, knowing it was praise of something she had accomplished.
Lexa watched as her future queen earned the positive regard of hundreds with a few simple words and one simple gift. While they weren’t going to throw themselves at her feet (just like she wasn’t going to simply bend over and let herself be taken), killing a pauna and giving it to them as a gift had proven her merit and strength, or at least started to.

She also saw the sense of power and pleasure that gleamed in her eyes, a smirk spreading across her lips as she regarded the cheering crowd with obvious satisfaction. It seemed she was rather pleased with her opening move to fulfil her destiny, currently unaware though she may be. Good. She would still need to prove herself worthy of it, however, no matter how beautiful and strong she was. Physical features and strength were only two facets of a good leader. Their true worth was determined with how they treated their people, and their enemies.

Lifting her own voice over the noise, she announced that there would be a feast in Clarke’s honour, with the pauna as the main dish, three days hence in Polis. Commands were given for the beast to be skinned and prepared to be taken to the Coalition’s capitol in the morning with the announcement. More riders were ordered to travel to each of the tribes’ capitols and inform them of the event.

As the village’s inhabitants dispersed, Lexa led Clarke down from the podium and through the door into her throne room. The instant the door shut behind them, Lexa had to scramble to catch the blonde, who collapsed almost instantly. Fear gripped her heart as Clarke was barely responsive, shaking badly and mumbling nonsense that she didn’t understand. A snarled order to Gustus had her trusted guard and friend scrambling from the room for Nyko. Powerful arms scooped the badly injured sky girl into a bridal carry, and Lexa kicked the door to her personal quarters open as she carefully rushed to place her burden as gently as possible onto her bed. Still, it wasn’t gentle enough, as her damaged wrist flopped down and struck one of the chairs at Lexa’s table as they passed, wrenching agonized scream from the blonde, shocking her out of her stupor and into full wakefulness again.

“Maker Clarke, I’m so sorry!” Lexa cried apologetically, trying to settle her charge as comfortably on the bed as she could.

“A’hm fyne…” came the slurred reply as her eyes closed, and Lexa cursed to herself. She knew she had to keep Clarke awake, otherwise she might never wake up again. “Did I do good? Was’h I shtrong enough, Leksha? All I wanted to do was’h reach Mount Weather and save my peoplsh, not run into a demon monkey and real live Xena…”

“Clarke, you were amazing, you were so strong. Come on now, stay with me. Who is Xena, Clarke?” Lexa coaxed, getting a bleary blink from the injured girl, as if she couldn’t believe someone was asking that question.

“Xena was’h a warrior princesh, Leksha. She had brown hair and eyesh like you, and you both sho pretty and shtrong.” Clarke drawled, attempting to sound chastising and instead sounding petulant. Pushing aside the flutter in her stomach at Clarke calling her pretty, Lexa looked up with relief palpable in her eyes as Nyko flew into the room, already unslinging his medical supply pouch as he rushed to kneel beside her. Clarke blinked at him in confusion before rolling her head limply to look over at Lexa again. “Whosh dish, Leksha?”

“This is Nyko, Clarke, he’s a healer. He’s going to help you, okay?” Lexa said softly, pulling away as much as she felt comfortable doing so in order to give him more room to work.

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Three hours later, Nyko was packing up his supplies, a much more coherent (though still drowsy) and freshly stitched and bandaged Clarke now sitting up and leaning against the wall beside the bed, naked save for her bra and panties. A pink-cheeked Lexa was fastidiously looking at anything but her, though if one watched carefully enough one might see that she kept shooting small, admiring glances at her guest. Mostly Naked Clarke was everything Lexa had thought she would be and more, powerful muscles rippling beneath smooth skin. Of course, now her body was covered in ointment and bandages, but they detracted nothing from her beauty. Indeed, they seemed to enhance it. Still, she needed Naked Clarke to make sure her wounds weren't aggravated, according to Nyko.

“Clarke, you’re going to need to take the rest of your clothes off, understand?” she said stoically after Nyko had left, and Clarke gaped at her slightly, a bright blush working its way from her face down to her…shoulders, yes those are what Lexa was looking at, certainly not anything softer and…lower.

“Is that what you say to all of the girls, Lexa?” she said finally, and Lexa frowned slightly at her tone of voice. It was…off. She couldn’t think of any other way to describe it. Any response she might have made, however, was lost as a voice from the door spoke.

“No, just you and me right now, but I’m sure that circumstances will change… deliciously. Not that I blame her in either case, of course. People as utterly gorgeous as you and I should flaunt it when we can.” Lexa and Clarke both turned their gazes towards the door, in which stood a green-eyed, red-haired beauty dressed in loose clothing that did nothing to hide her impressive bust or her excellent figure, nor was she trying to hide the broad smirk on her face as she eyed Clarke lustfully. “Costia, Lexa’s partner and the only red-head in TonDC, at your service. But you, you can call me lover.”

So…yeah… Obviously, we have no idea what Costia looks like or how she acted, so I decided to make her a generally playful red-head to offset Lexa’s more serious nature. As this is two years before canon starts, she is still alive and kicking. Or flirting, as the case may be.

In my opinion, Finn had to be on some level unfaithful even before going to the ground. He didn’t waste any time whatsoever trying to impress Clarke and get into her pants on the ground. Hell, he started flirting with her on the drop-ship for God’s sake! So, it’s not a big stretch for me to imagine him cheating on Raven on The Ark. Plus, I really kinda hate him, so I’m removing him from the romantic scene early. At least, the requited romantic scene, he will still try later on. Finn bashing will be rather prominent in this story, to be honest.

As for my law on sexuality on the Ark, like the story says, it really only makes sense for marriage and children to be compulsory. In an environment like that, laws like that are inevitable even if only to help keep the population up.

Finally, I am going to continue making clear in this story that the Arkers and the Grounders will be much stronger, faster, etc than a normal human would be, due to radiation-born mutation. Clarke will be on another level entirely due to…well, you’ll find out! This is somewhat hinted at with her durability and charisma during this chapter.
Recovery

LuLu (on AO3): I agree, it never made sense to me that the only sign of radiological mutation was people with bad scarring and shit like that, or animals with extra heads. Sorry, but no. Not only is that kinda unrealistic but...BOOOORRRRIIIINNGGGG!

Jayc17 (on AO3): I doubt it. As kinda cool as cane swords are, I have a particular plane for what here melee weapon will be, and it relates to AC lore! All I will say about that for now :D

MJandSports (on FF dot net): I think that the daughter of a Council member who was as friendly and kind as Clarke was would have quite the following, personally. Humans like to flock to those kindsa people, as a general rule. And yeah, Costia will be some of the comic relief in this story :D

BDSM elements in this story are not just for fun kinky smut, but also because the Grounder society seems to revolve around strength and power. I believe this dynamic would carry over to their sexual relations as well. Plus, you know, fun kinky smut!

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Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We Shed)
Chapter Four
Recovery
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"Excuse me?! Who the hell are you!" Clarke’s outraged expression was endearing and amusing to both Trikru, and Lexa contained a small smile despite her irritation with her lover for barging in and speaking so…abrasively. Still, Costia had helped to distract Clarke from her pain, which Lexa knew had been her goal, so perhaps she shouldn’t get too angry.

"You seem a bit dim for the SkaiPrisa, but you are rather heavily injured so I’ll attribute it to that. I’ll just repeat myself then, shall I? My name is Costia, Lexa’s Companion and your future lover, just like my sexy brunette that wants you to strip as quickly as possible. And damned if I don't agree with her! Now get on with it!"

Her audacity had Lexa sighing in frustration while Clarke gaped at her, mouth forming words that were never spoken, so great was her outraged disbelief. Not only had this other girl randomly shown up (though if she was Lexa's lover it did make some sense that she would feel comfortable coming and going as she pleased) but she had started flirting with her! In front of the woman she claimed was her lover!

"And why in God's name do you think I am going to strip OR be sleeping with either of you? We've known each other less than three hours, or five minutes in your case!" Clarke finally collected herself enough to speak. Smirking, Costia opened her mouth again to speak, but Lexa cut her off.

"Costia, enough. This is not the time or the place for this. We need to wait until she is healed and comfortable with us before we tell her." She ordered sharply in Trigedasleng. Turning to Clarke, she returned to English. "This is simply her nature. I ask you to put aside your hesitance
and discomfort and do as I ask. Nyko is worried that your wounds will be aggravated by your clothing, and he wants to me dress any injuries that might fall on more...private zones, as I am both a woman and not untrained in the medical arts."

Frowning at Costia, who was nodding in agreement far too eagerly for her comfort, Clarke nonetheless nodded in acceptance and began to remove her underwear.

Or tried to, at least. Her body was crashing from exhaustion and her injuries, which combined with the placement of the injuries themselves, made twisting her arms to reach the clip of her bra utterly impossible. A whimper of pain wiped any trace of lechery from Costia's face as she darted forward to help Lexa steady her and remove the offending garments themselves. Fortunately, they were able remove them without aggravating any injuries.

Both had to suppress gasps and contain sudden floods of arousal and desire as Clarke was finally totally naked before them. Her breasts were large for her age, a handful and a half and topped by pale pink nipples that were rapidly peaking from the cold (and, though Clarke would never admit it, the lustful attention of two highly attractive young women). Two sets of eyes found themselves inadvertently (though not at all reluctantly) following her impressive abdominal muscles down to where her thighs met, and both involuntarily licked their lips as they saw that she was clean shaven. Fortunately for them, the amounts of bruising and seeping cuts on the previously covered areas redirected their attention before she could notice how their observation of her body had...drifted.

In very little time, the pair had cleaned up the blood, bandaged the wounds, balmed the bruises, and covered the young pauna slayer in enough blankets to keep her warm and provide some protection to her wounds from reopening due to friction. The trio chatted for a little while, Clarke asking basic questions (what did Heda mean, how old were they, etc.) before the sky girl finally succumbed to her exhaustion enough to ignore the discomfort she was in, drifting into a deep, heavy sleep.

"Lexa, I need you!" Costia growled in her ear the minute Clarke's breath evened out, pressing herself up against Lexa's back and nibbling at her neck and ear. "Seeing what our Queen looks like, imagining us all together...my desire is going mad right now!"

"I feel the same way Costia, but we cannot quench it now. We must take things slow with Clarke, else we risk turning her away from us. For our people and for ourselves, we can't lose her." Lexa murmured back, her own loins burning with a need that had been growing ever since Clarke had almost killed her. She had been so fierce, so brave, so lethal, Lexa had fallen for her immediately. Now they saw she was as beautiful physically as she was within, even as brutalized as she was. Hearing Costia snarl softly in displeasure and agitated need, she turned and pulled her lover from the room, softly closing the door so as not to awaken the sleeping sky girl.

Tugging Costia up to her dais, she roughly grabbed the other girl's hair and yanked her head to the side before sinking her teeth into her now-exposed neck in a primal gesture of domination, one that earned a throaty moan and a hand tangled in her hair from Costia.

"Control yourself, Costia, or I may not give you to Clarke as quickly as you might like, when the time comes." She said with authority filling her voice, and the redhead mewled in aroused submission to her superior. Satisfied with her obedience, Lexa shoved her hand down the front of Costia's pants to find her sopping wet, much like she herself was, and Costia keened as Lexa curled three powerful fingers into her together. Three harsh thrusts followed before Costia whined in disappointment, Lexa's fingers vanishing as she withdrew her hand and stepped back. A furious glare was met only with a mischievous smirk the likes of which Costia would be proud to wear, and the Commander of the Coalition licked her fingers clean with deliberate slowness, getting a whimper from the redhead.
"Remember, Costia. Control yourself. Don't even think about taking care of things yourself, or you'll find yourself punished rather quickly." She smirked as she turned and left the throne room, leaving Costia drowning in irritated lust and affection.

Control Center

Mount Weather

President Cage Wallace, elected leader of the United States of America (such as it was, and what there was of it), though in reality he led those that the savage clans outside the ancient base called Mountain Men, and not much else, folded his hands on the large conference table before him. He, along with Doctor Lorelei Tsieng and the other high-ranking members of their community, were gathered to discuss the events of the last twelve hours or so.

"In short, my scouts found nothing but a crater where whatever entered the atmosphere landed, and a little ways away the corpses of the six men we sent to investigate." The head of security, General Farnsworth, said. "Even though there were a lot of hoof-prints in the area, they're about an hour older than the injuries that killed my men, according to Lorelei. That means that the degenerates didn't kill them themselves."

"And what did kill them, Doctor?" Wallace asked, looking at her, and she pushed her glasses up her nose before reading aloud from her notes.

"Massive blunt trauma and internal bleeding consistent with previous examples of victims of the mutated mountain gorillas residing in this area." She put the paper down and looked up again. "The most probable explanation is that whatever made the general's crater drew the attention of said gorilla, and it killed our men when it either smelled or heard them in the area."

"I don't know, there was a lot of blood and gore in the area. I think something killed the gorilla that killed our guys. Someone with a high-powered weapon, and someone who was neither one of us, or the savages. Perhaps someone from orbit?" Vincent Vie, the spokesperson for the community at large, asked leadingly, getting disbelieving looks from the rest save Wallace, who simply stilled all movement.

"You're suggesting that Project Ark is still active and they sent....what, a scout down to see if the planet is survivable?" Farnsworth asked in a tone of voice that suggested he rather doubted the sanity of the speaker.

"Project Ark was intended to last a century and redistribute people back onto the planet. It has been 95 years. It makes sense for them to start sending scouts now." He responded with a shrug. "Our guys didn't have anything close to big enough to kill one of those things, and the tribes sure as hell couldn't, not with bows and arrows and swords."

"So, if those people are coming, what do we do?" the President asked, looking around the table, and Tsieng spoke first.

"I take them. They were modified to be more resistant and adaptable to radiation, to be stronger and better than natural humans. With them, I can devise a way to permanently let us survive outside this mountain without radiation gear." Her voice was utterly lacking in any emotion whatsoever, but that made sense. She was the one who had devised the way to bleed the degenerates of their blood in order to lessen the effects of radiation on their people. The totally amoral doctor would have no issue doing it to more...civilized folk, of that no one at the table had
any doubt.

Cage pursed his lips in a soft whistle as he considered the pros and cons of such an incredible coup. On the one hand, they would be free of the mountain, truly free, after so many long years of being trapped within the Mountain itself or the ever-cursed radiation suits. On the other hand, however, they would be far more noticeable, and therefore easier to kill, targets for the degenerates. Not to mention the fact that his people had no idea how to survive outside of the Mountain, to live off the land.

“Alright, we try and find them, but there will be no experimentation or harm of any kind without my express permission.” He ordered sternly, getting nods from all but Tsieng, who simply grimaced in grudging agreement. Dismissing them, he sighed to himself and sat back in his large, worn, but still very comfortable leather chair, swinging ever so slightly from side to side as he swank deeply into thought.

There was much to consider in light of the possibility that a scout sent by Project Ark had arrived planet-side. First and foremost, though his advisors would scoff if he said as much to them, he doubted that they could persuade the scout to join them if the degenerates spoke to them first. No doubt someone from so idyllic a place as The Ark would view his people’s experiments and acts against the tribes as wanton cruelty befitting of death.

He snorted in contempt. Yes, his people had done terrible, immoral things, but the survival of true civilization was far more valuable than something as fleeting and debatable as morality. Besides, the degenerates could hardly be called human anymore anyway, what with their mutations and animalistic behavior.

The second issue was what else might be amongst those from the Ark. Unlike anyone else alive on Earth, only he and Lorelei knew the true history of mankind, the truth of the war that had nearly driven humanity to extinction and turned their cradle into a poisonous tomb.

The millennia long war between the Templar and Assassin Orders had finally boiled into the open, public combat raging across the continents instead of the secret and disguised conflicts of old. His own Templar Order had made the first move, striking openly under the guise of terrorism, civil wars, or coup d’états. All across The East and Europe, Assassin’s and their allies had been located and purged.

They had thought that it was over, that they had finally won, when they managed to destroy the building in which the Mentor and his lieutenants had been meeting to strategize, claiming them all. However, they hadn’t counted on the Mentor’s daughter, a mere soldier unaware of the true nature of the war, reaching her father in time to learn the truth as he lay dying amidst the rubble.

Through incredible feats of leadership and devastating victories against the Templar affiliated insurgents and armies, she had risen to the rank of General of the Armies and given the control of all true, governmental forces. The Templars and their puppets had been massacred, unable to face both the modern armies and the arts of the Brotherhood. So, the Grand Master of the time had done the most idiotic and incomprehensible of desperate moves.

He had taken the war (thus far conventional) to the nuclear level.

A decade-long battle in a millennia long war for the future of humanity had ended in a single, searing instant of fire and ash.

Few enough had survived, and only his family remained of the Order, descended from a lowly soldier of the Templars. All the Assassins had perished, they were sure, but the probability that
Project Ark (devised by that *bitch* General Griffon) had Assassin families was too high to be anything but guaranteed. And who better than an Assassin to scout the Earth, to test its habitability?

No, if this scout was one of that cursed Order and managed to teach the degenerates their arts, both his people and his order were doomed. This time for good.

# The War Room

Command Center

TonDC

“…need to check with the SkaiPrisa, Heda, but we’re quite sure there is nothing useful left in this ‘drop pod.’” Anya finished her, admittedly brief and lacking in detail, report before falling silent as Lexa nodded in acceptance and agreement.

Not long after helping the sky girl into her tent, the Commander had reappeared and summoned the generals of the Coalition together, demanding an update on their investigation into the metal box Clarke had arrived in, as well as Mountain Men movements and reactions to the events of the day. Speaking of which…

“Indra, has there been any movement from the Mountain Men?” she asked, looking at the ebony warrior leader of the Trikru, who shook her head in response, lips pursed in a slight scowl.

“Beyond recovering their dead, no. With any luck, they will conclude that the pauna killed their men and left to nurse its wounds.” She responded aloud, and Lexa nodded to her before dropping her gaze to the map. While she hoped the same, she was willing to bet that they wouldn’t be so easily deceived, not with their machines and knowledge from the Old World.

“That will not last for long,” she voiced a portion of her thoughts after a moment. “They know, even if they are unsure of how or why, that Clarke’s arrival will change the status quo. They cannot afford to let that happen without investigating, or trying to control those changes. Double the scouts watching the Mountain immediately, and keep the warriors alert. An attack may come at any moment.”

“Sha, Heda.” The table chorused, and she dismissed them all, save Indra, Anya, and Gustus. Shifting her weight back onto her right leg, she looked to each in turn.

“What is the general attitude amongst the people?” she asked the trio, none of the apprehension or worry she felt for Clarke’s safety coloring her tone.

“Some are…less than pleased, and those from the Ice Nation are…conspicuously silent. However, most are overjoyed at the prospect that the time of prophecy has begun. After all, it means the fall of the Mountain and that all warring between the tribes will cease. The tribes may be those of warriors, but only the insane or foolish reject peace.” Anya answered honestly, though delicately, and Lexa frowned at the mention of the Ice Nation. The longtime, sworn enemies of her own Trikru and their allied clans (just about every other tribe, really), it had taken the pressure of all eleven other tribes, and the Mountain Men’s never-shifting presence, to force them into the Coalition.

Everyone was fully aware that this ‘alliance’ would only last as long as the status quo remained
unchanged. It was likely one of the reasons that the other clans were so pleased that the Sky Princess had finally arrived. Since the Prophecy spoke of her ruling the Earth and everyone on it, the Ice Nation would either truly fall into line, or be burned to the ground and its people ruled by the victors. Either way, it suited them just fine.

“Has Echo said anything that might tell us what ‘her’ Queen is planning?” Lexa asked the trio at large, but Indra shook her head. Echo, an elite warrior from the Ice Nation, had long been providing information on their homeland, saying her loyalty lay with her leader. As the Heda, and founder of the Coalition, Lexa out-ranked every other human on Earth, as far as Echo was concerned.

“No, she said that all has been quiet. However, she cautions that such should be considered more alarming than grumbled complaints.” She answered, sounding rather unhappy about the lack of solid information, and Lexa softly quoted an old hunter’s axiom.

“A silent forest makes the hunter, the hunted.”

The saying referred to the way in which the wildlife of the forest fell silent when a true predator was in their midst. For her people, it usually meant that you were about to die, because said predator was right behind you.

“Precisely. She send her affection and regards, and promises to update us if anything changes. I must say, little blade, you are amassing something of a harem.” Anya’s voice was teasing, her eyes shining in amusement, and Lexa flushed both at the old nickname of her childhood, and the word ‘harem’.

“The post of Heda has a long and noble history…” she started stiffly, but Anya interrupted her.

“Of gathering the most fit and beautiful warriors of her generation in preparation for the arrival of the One Who Is Promised. We know. It is still adorable and amusing, little blade.” Her voice was bland as she finished the spiel she had heard many times before, but her eyes danced.

“Anya, would you please just shut up? This was meant to be a serious…” Lexa half-heartedly scolded one of the few people that could survive acting so informally with her. However, the sound of Clarke’s gun booming stopped her short. Their heads snapped around and Lexa began to circumvent the table, and it boomed a second time, and then a third shot sent them all into a run.

The village was crossed in moments, and a roared command from Lexa has the people gathering at the mouth of her throne room and quarters parting before her. A quick glance showed that the throne room itself held no threats, and she burst into her quarters with drawn steel, her three advisors and family following behind her. All four stopped short at the sight before them.

Two warriors of the Ice Clan were dead, massive holes punched through their torsos, while a third was down in a rapidly expanding pool of blood flowing from the shattered stump that was all that remained of his right leg. A slightly bloody and battered Echo was busily tightly binding a fourth, while a mostly-uninjured Costia was tending to an insensate Clarke.

“What the hell happened here?!” Lexa demanded, voice filled with fury and fear as she strode over to the blond girl, who was barely conscious. Her injuries appeared to have reopened from her exertions, blood staining her bandages, and a snarled order had Gustus scrambling for Nyko again.

“They came for the Princess, Heda.” Echo responded, bowing her head in respect and some shame. “I heard some of their plans and followed them unnoticed, so my true loyalty should
remain undiscovered. When I arrived, they had Costia gagged and two were holding her while the other two tried to kill the Princess. She shot them, than one of those holding Costia, while I attacked and subdued this one."

"Traitorous bitch! There is only one ruler of the Earth! Nia is the one, true Queen! Your false…” the surviving Ice Warrior raved, but was silenced as Echo smashed a foot into his face brutally, a furious look on her face.

"Nia is the true betrayer of our people! She breaks her oaths to the Heda spirit and to the Coalition daily, yet she remains free! I will relish the day when her head adorns the Heda’s wall and our people are free from her deprivations!” she snarled, true hatred seething in her voice as Indra dragged the warrior to his feet and shoved him into the arms of the two elite Trikru guards that were standing by in the Throne Room.

"Costia, how is Clarke?" Lexa asked as the red-head joined them, a freshly arrived Nyko pushing past the group to hasten to his patient’s side.

"Fine, more or less. Her wounds reopened, obviously, and she is scared and worried she killed the wrong people, apparently. No new wounds, but she told me she couldn't see too well, only dim colors and movement. She knew which one was me because of my hair, so she blew the leg off of one of my attackers to make sure she didn't hurt me.” Her mouth twisted into something that might be charitably called a smile. "Apparently, it was an ancient technique for capturing people alive, shooting someone in the leg that is. She seemed to have forgotten how much damage her weapon does to an unarmored limb, however. Not that I am in anyway complaining."

"Indeed." Lexa hummed in agreement and understanding, looking down at the one-legged corpse, silently appraising it. She could not find herself to be disappointed, neither by the mess he had made of her rooms nor of the fact that he had bled to death. She had someone to interrogate, Echo had proved herself once again, Clarke had once more proven highly capable, and everyone she cared for was (more or less) alright. All in all, an excellent evening. Once she made sure everyone understood that attacking Clarke meant death, either at her hand or, evidently, Clarke’s, she could honestly end the day without any regrets or unfinished business. Lexa felt rather smug, actually. Her future wife and leader was strong, beautiful, stubborn, morally upright, and exceptionally deadly. Perfection incarnate, if you asked her.

"I've redressed her wounds, but if she doesn't get true, peaceful rest soon, those wounds will not heal enough to avoid infections, her oddly fast healing rate aside. She cannot afford to have more exertions like this." Nyko announced softly as he approached the group, slinging his bag back over his shoulder, face stern and commanding.

"I thought the surface wounds were fairly minor, for all the bleeding they do? That her only real injuries were the sprains to her wrists and legs?" Lexa frowned, hiding worry behind a mask of confused irritation.

"Yes, most of her cuts and scrapes are not life-threatening, simply rather bloody due to placement. However, she was able to mumble a few coherent things while I worked on her. Her mother is the head healer in the sky, apparently, and none of the illnesses we have here exist there. Despite receiving medicine to keep her from catching most of them, catching them while trying to heal from both the external and internal wounds could prove too much for even Sky People medicine. It could prove fatal, because her body would lack the strength to fight infection or illness." The healer explained, getting a nod of understanding from his audience. "Rest is what she requires, Heda, rest without fear that she will be killed in her sleep. Especially if you wish her capable of attending her own victory feast in Polis. Give her until the day of the feast, and she will
be ready to ride at a reasonable pace."

"This won't be happening again, Nyko. I assure you." Lexa's voice was as cold as the land the would-be killers were from, her eyes terrifying as she stared into the throne room at the lone survivor. Nyko bowed and withdrew as she turned to Indra, Anya, and the returned Gustus. "Indra, get warriors in here to clean this up and take the bodies. Display them in the center of town with a sign proclaiming who killed them and why. Anya, I want you to personally select a pair of guards that you trust without reservation. Only we and Nyko are allowed to pass, understood?"

Both generals nodded seriously, and she flicked her hand in dismissal. Stationing Gustus at the door, she sat down beside her Princess to wait.

Little shorter than usual, but it is what it is!

One thing I want you guys to remember is that, just because I create some female OCs and make them hot doesn't mean they will get paired with Clarke and the others. I gotta give love to Lincoln and Co., don't I?

Furthermore, No complaints about Clarke doing inhuman shit. Beyond the radiation and gene-modding I already mentioned, there is a very specific reason she in particular is so different. All will be revealed.

Finally, for the purpose of this story, Polis is Annapolis. I know it isn't in canon, but it is here.
Power Plays

BeserkBookWorm (on AO3): You would be correct, her ancestor is very important to both the Grounders and the Arkers, but that's all I will say now. She has some extra rounds in her pack, but not an unlimited amount. While she may eventually hunt down some of the bunkers, it won't be until the 100 come down. She doesn't really need them right now.

MJandSports (on FF.net): Yeah, they didn't waste any time, but you have to consider that they consider it a grave insult for anyone else to claim to be Queen. While Clarke isn't claiming that, others are on her behalf. Plus, she was still weak and bedridden, which made her an easy target of opportunity.

As a side-note, I shamelessly rip off a scene from Braveheart in this chapter. Why? Because it's awesome.

#######################################

Nothing Is True

Chapter Five

Power Plays

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Clarke resisted the urge to frown, sigh, or otherwise express her irritation as she left Lexa's bedroom and felt the identical twin ravenettes, Kara and Kira, (whom had not strayed from their posts beside the door in the three days that had passed since her arrival, and the prompt assassination attempt against her) fall into step behind her. The two sisters were, according to Costia (who was really rather cool, despite being an absolute pervert) two of the best and most loyal warriors the Tree Clan had to offer. In fact, she confided, they were at the top of a very short list to join the Commander's, Lexa's, personal bodyguard. While that was reassuring and even flattering, she was hardly a child incapable of protecting herself! Hadn't she proven as much already?

Speaking of which...she kept her discomfort hidden at the sight of her three human kills, their decaying corpses hanging by their wrists from the posts imbedded in the ground near the center of the village. As disturbing as the sight was, she had come to, well not peace, but at least a neutral balance over what she had done. After, of course, waking up, getting the details, and throwing up for a couple of hours.

Still, she took comfort in the fact that it had been entirely necessary for her continued to survival, not only in that moment but the future as well. Once the news circulated amongst the clans, helped by an announcement Lexa planned to make at tonight's feast, that members of the Ice Nation who had tried to murder her and been slain at her own hand, her position would be strengthened significantly.

"Kira, Kara, when was the last time that the two of you had something substantial to eat?" she asked, turning away from the sight to look at the pair of twenty-something year-olds.

"We're fine, SkaiPrisa. Our duty is to defend you." Kara responded stoically, and Clarke snorted, folding her arms under her breasts as she stared at the two.
"So it wasn't anytime recent, then?" she guessed. When silence was her only answer, she rolled her eyes and started towards the cooking fires. "I'll take that as a no. Well, I'm hungry, so I guess you'll just have to join me for breakfast, since it would be rude not to eat while I do so."

Despite themselves, the twins couldn't help smiling slightly at her back despite their irritation with her relaxed attitude and odd ways. As the only two people outside of the Heda's closest advisors to interact with the Sky Princess, they had quickly learned that she had a soul of iron. After her initial, emotional first-kill breakdown had passed, she had mastered herself admirably and had grilled them for hours on every subject she could think of. She had never been shy about expressing her own convictions, arguing even with the Commander when she felt that it was needed.

One such conviction was that the people around her were to be as healthy and happy as she could make them. This, they guessed, stemmed from her knowledge and gentle nature as a healer. It also meant, however, that she insisted on them eating as often as possible, and getting 'plenty of rest'. Which in her opinion was a lot more than they had ever had before.

Following the blonde as she threaded her way through the hustle and the bustle of TonDC and its inhabitants preparing to either attend the feast in polis, or protect the village until Heda's return. Both observed with approval as those that saw her coming stepped out of her path, inclining their heads in a slight bow of respect.

Both hastened to close the small gap between them and their future queen when a warrior of the Rockkru, the Stone Clan, stepped deliberately in front of her. Residing in a canyon close to Polis itself, members of the clan were known for two things: their physique and their tempers. They were also a clan that more often than not supported the Ice Clan in the Senate, and thus were considered more exceptional a threat to Clarke.

"Can I help you?" Clarke asked evenly, hand drifting with casual purpose to rest on the butt of her hand cannon, a movement and implicit threat that was neither missed nor misunderstood by anyone. The RockKru warrior dropped a large rock at her feet, which she glanced at before returning her attention to his face. "You ah...you seem to have dropped your rock."

"A test of strength. You who would claim to be the SkaiPrisa, our future Kwin, killed the pauna with a coward's weapon. A weapon of the Mountain Men." he spat the name with contempt and hatred. Staring down at her, he continued. "Amongst my people, the throwing of stones over distance signifies strength, worthiness to be accepted as a warrior of the tribe. Prove to me your strength."

"I doubt that I could pick that up even if I wasn't as injured as I am, three days of recovery or not." Clarke folded her arms over her chest, and the crowd murmured as the warrior sneered at her, puffing out his chest to make himself even bigger. Clarke, however, was utterly unimpressed, and he was compelled to speak.

"As I thought. A weak, pale child like you could never be Kwin. Pathetic, utterly pathetic." He spat on the ground at her feet in contempt, getting quiet snarls from her guards and hisses of indrawn breath from the crowd. Both of those reactions told Clarke that she had just been insulted rather gravely, and ignoring the challenge would be not only foolish, but dangerous.

"Tell me, oh strong and mighty one: could you crush someone with your throw, if you were able to him them?" she asked with a sly smirk.

"I could crush you like a worm." He growled at the slight to his prowess, and Clarke's smirk broadened slightly as she turned to play to the crowd.
"Would you all like to see this big, strong, manly warrior throw his rock at me? See if he can crush me like a worm? Go on, go on." She waved her hands in a brushing motion, the crowd stepping back in response until there was a yard's clearance on either side, forming a long corridor.

"Your guard dogs..." he started, glancing at the fuming forms of Kira and Kara, their hands clenched tightly on the hilts of their weapons, eyes stormy and bodies vibrating with anger. Anger directed at him for his insult to the SkaiPrisa and threats of harm. Clarke, however, simply raised her hand to the twins, silently commanding them to withdraw, though they did not go far. Frowning, he spoke again. "Attacks against you mean death. The crowd..."

"Will do nothing!" Clarke responded, beginning to look and sound irritated. Raising her voice, she addressed the onlookers in a tone of voice that brooked no argument or disobedience. "No one is to interfere in any way, shape, or form! Anyone who disobeys will be punished swiftly!"

"You'll move..." he protested feebly, and Clarke scoffed at him in disgusted contempt at his continued attempts to avoid the circumstance he had not only instigated, but allowed himself to be baited into accelerating.

"I'll not, but I am beginning to wonder if you've the guts to do it! You call me weak and pathetic, and yet all I or anyone else in this crowd have heard from you is feeble excuses and empty words! No, will you do what you said you would or shall you crawl home to nurse like a child?" her taunts struck true, and the warrior stiffened and growled as his anger got the best of him.

"Fine. When they toss your corpse into the woods for the beasts to feast upon, the Mountain Men will know true fear." He snarled, bending down to heft his boulder and carry it a good half-dozen yards away. As he got into position, Clarke bent down and picked up a smaller, fist-sized stone of her own, bouncing it lightly in her palm as she waited for her opponent. Neither of them saw a mounted Lexa, Anya, and Indra appear at the gate, their elevated positions on their mounts giving them a clear view of the proceedings.

What in the Maker's name is going on here! What does she think she is doing!" Lexa hissed angrily, pulling her horse to a halt just inside the village's gate. She, Indra, Anya, and Gustus, along with a group of warriors, had been patrolling a portion of the route to Polis, mostly the area around TonDC, to ensure that the Mountain had no scouts in the area that could report the upcoming departure of so many generals and warriors. Information that might result in either the traveling group or TonDC itself being attacked and potentially suffering catastrophic damage and/or losses.

"Heda, the Stone warrior challenged the SkaiPrisa's strength and mocked her. She has challenged him to hit her with the rock that he holds at range. She commanded that no one is to interfere." One of the warriors guarding the walls said respectfully, hearing his Heda's angry question.

"Did I not order that no one was to make any moves against her? Did I not explicitly state that anyone who tried to harm her or abuse her would suffer a fate that would be spoken of with terror for generations?" Lexa bit out, eyes blazing, and the warrior grimaced infinitesimally, very much wishing that anyone else was in his place. However, honesty and warrior's courage drove him forward enough to reply to the irritated woman.

"He did not, not truly. He taunted her, mocked her and her ways, tried to make a fool of
her before the village. However, she turned it onto him, mocked him in turn until his anger led him into blundering. Now he cannot back out without dishonoring himself greatly.” He responded, before bowing and retreating several feet down the wall.

"So, she intends to humiliate him publically, though I am quite unsure as to how she will.” Anya hummed in understanding, placing a calming hand on Lexa's arm, leaning in closer. "She needs to be able to lead, Lexa, and to do that she must prove herself to you and to our people."

"If she is harmed in the slightest, blood will flow!” the incensed brunette growled in response, forcing herself to do nothing as the Stone Clan warrior took a short running start before hurling the boulder at Clarke, who did nothing besides blink as it went sailing over her shoulder. She stared at the confused warrior before hurling her own, fist-sized rock at him.

Lexa exhaled softly in relief and then smirked as her generals laughed around her. Clarke's throw had struck with perfect accuracy, smashing into her victim's face and sending him to the ground. Approaching his fallen form, Clarke's words were easily heard by all in the shocked silence of her victory.

"The true strength of anyone, man or woman, warrior or villager, lies not within their arms but their hearts and minds.” She chastised both him and the crowd at large, turning slowly to gaze around at them all. "Strength without purpose, without a cause, and without restraint is nothing more than wasted, useless power. Become strong, yes, learn how to fight and protect your people, but also learn how and when to use that strength, use those skills for the greatest and most beneficial of long term effects."

Gesturing to her two very impressed bodyguards, Clarke left the Stone Warrior holding his bleeding face, the muttering crowd parting once more before her as she forged ahead towards the alluring smell of food, leaving a village of baffled but oddly impressed people staring after her.

"Your Kwin was damned impressive there, Lexa.” Anya said with great cheer and amusement in her voice as they observed the trio sit down to eat, steadfastly ignoring the continued attention that they were receiving from the people around them. "She handled that extremely well. Not only did she make a fool of him, but she didn't even grant him the mercy of death. He will now have to live with that shame until he can redeem himself. Word will spread and her popularity will rise, even the Stone Clan will be impressed by her courage if nothing else."

"Maybe so, but that oaf that challenged her is going to suffer for disobeying me. If a few barbs from another are enough for him to become so angry that he cannot remember or heed the orders of Heda...” Lexa let the sentence trail of ominously as she dismounted and strode towards Clarke and her companions purposefully, leaving a group of amused generals behind, as well as a low-ranking warrior who was suddenly far happier guarding a patch of wall then he had been ten minutes earlier.

At least up here he was out of the Commander's way, by the Maker!

Clarke started slightly Lexa veritably slammed into the seat across from her, clad in armor, features marred by a dark scowl. A sharp look at the twins had them scrambling to withdraw from earshot, an action mirrored by those milling about nearby, creating a large swath of emptiness around them, a calm around a storm. Raising an eyebrow slightly, Clarke sighed and leaned back in her seat.

"Alright Lexa, what did I do now?"
"You put yourself at risk for no good reason whatsoever! What I just witnessed was utterly unnecessary, and very foolish!" Lexa snarled back softly. Though impressed with how the blonde had handled the situation, she was still incensed that it had been needed, though she recognized that little fault for the event had lain with Clarke.

"He insulted me publically, called me weak and cowardly. Correct me if I am wrong, but if I hadn't done something to counter that, it would have been political, and possibly literal, suicide to not respond." Clarke rebutted, taking another bite of her meal, and Lexa could not help but stare at her in poorly-disguised shock. Feeling her gaze and not receiving a response, Clarke glanced up. Noticing the Commander's expression, she rolled her eyes and smirked. "C'mon Lexa, I may not know much about the ground or your people, but from what you've told me and what I've noticed myself, it really wasn't all that hard to figure out the 'rules' for life down here."

Of course, Clarke had several other reasons for knowledge, those being history classes for ancient warrior cultures, but she wasn't going to risk insulting her new-found friends by telling them she was navigating their world using information from history books that portrayed such things as barbarous, animalistic, and all together to be looked-down-upon. Besides, she was finding that, as harsh and brutal as these people were, they seemed honest and honorable. At least, most of them, obviously they were going to have some bad apples, the group which tried to kill her being an obvious example.

"Despite all of my efforts and expectations, I can never seem to cease underestimating you, Clarke Griffin of the Sky People." Lexa finally responded with a faint smile. Glancing at the sun, she continued. "We must start for Polis now if we are to arrive with enough time to show you the city before your victory feast. It is, after all, a nine hour ride."

"You do realize that I've not idea how to ride a horse beyond those basics which I've read in books, right?" Clarke asked nervously, and Lexa laughed softly and gave her a small smile, an expression of emotion unusual for the reserved warrior when in public.

"I do, but it is simple enough to teach you how to travel at a moderate pace. Harder, faster riding and mounted combat can come later, after...everything." she responded, nearly letting slip that the Senate was waiting in the near future. One step at a time, she continued to remind herself in a mantra-like fashion. The ancient writings were clear, that the SkaiPrisa knew not her true nature and that she was to have her eyes opened and body awakened by the First Ones. Not even the Heda could violate this, and certainly not the squabbling, corrupt civilian politicians of the Senate.

Speaking of which, she had no doubt that Clarke would be bombarding herself and her generals with questions of all sorts during the long journey to the capitol, even if only to break the endless monotony that she no doubt envisioned before them. She would have to ensure they were all careful about answering those questions without lying or revealing too much, too soon. It would be an awkward and delicate balance to keep, but it was one that had to occur regardless. Perhaps they could keep Clarke answering questions instead?

Musing over possible plans, the young commander of thousands of warriors pulled her younger companion to her feet, her bodyguards dutifully trailing behind, as she drew her towards the stables. She had just the mount for Clarke, and wanted them to meet as soon as possible.
One by one, the group of girls arrived at the Blake's, each eagerly anticipating the chance to learn more about Clarke and her situation, not to mention rebelling against the Council in a small, relatively safe fashion. Once they were all settled in, perched on beds, or chairs, or even the odd lap, Octavia called the group to order.

"Alright, first things first: how the hell did you lot figure out the deal with Clarke? That was kept so far on the down-low even the rumor mill hasn't heard about it yet, and probably won't unless someone 'in the know' let's slip." She asked bluntly from where she was leaning against the wall at the front of the room, Raven slouched down next to her.

"She told me what was going on after she reamed the Council over you, Octavia. She asked all her friends to try and get to know you after she...left. Since you kinda know Raven already, that just left the rest of us, so when I saw you in the Skylight I decided to take the opportunity and do as I promised." Fox responded, smiling despite her worry for Clarke. "Our moms work together at the med bay, so we've been friends for ages."

"Fox started telling the rest of us one by one with Clarke's approval, before it all went down. I mean, no one really likes the Council, especially people smart enough to see the writing on the wall." Mel continued, gesturing around the room and somewhat to the Ark at large. "It was obvious to most of the population that there were problems with the Ark when Makarov made everything a death sentence, criminal power trip or not."

Makarov, of course, referring to the Chancellor that had served before Diana Sydney. A Russian descended from a powerful, wealthy, and almost assuredly criminal family that had footed a large portion of the bill to help build the Ark. Ironically, he and the majority of his family and faction had been executed en masse after ArkSec had discovered a massive black market and gambling ring under their control. The law he had instituted to consolidate his power, and lessen the load on the Ark's systems, had led to his death.

"Well, you're right. Clarke's dad was floated for trying to tell people the truth of what is happening. The Ark is dying. In less than two years, the oxygen systems will begin to suffer catastrophic, cascading system failures. Clarke was going to tell everyone this after her dad was killed, but she got busted before she could. She convinced the Council (I've no idea how) to send her to Earth trained and equipped instead of the Skybox." Octavia explained, getting gasps from the group. While they had guessed that the systems were wearing down after a century of endless use, they had never imagined that the issue was as severe and rapidly approaching as it seemed to be.

"Obviously, despite training and equipping her, this is supposed to be a death sentence for her. However, I did find out that they are restoring one of the full-size dropships, with plans to send a hundred or so more people to the ground. I'm sure we can all guess where those people are coming from." Raven added disgustedly, and murmurs of 'The Skybox' went around the room earning a nod from her.

"The good news is, we have a time frame to basically guarantee we get to the ground. So, I'm going to offer (and I suggest that you agree) to show you all the training books that Clarke left me after she finished with them. We can use one of the empty and less-traveled storerooms to train and get stronger in. Then, when we get to the ground, we can help Clarke instead of being burdens. Hopefully, with her, we will be able to escape the Council's grasp entirely. A new world, a new chance, and new beginning. For all of us." Octavia watched the group carefully for any dissent or potentially traitorous thoughts, but she needn't have worried over it. The gathered girls all responded eagerly, chattering happily as they began to discuss possible training locations.
Marcus Kane was not pleased, no indeed. Instead of watching the populace for true, legitimate threats to the peace and safety of the Ark, he was using his resources and skills to spy on a group of teenage girls.

True, said girls were friends and followers (he used that word deliberately, he knew how much respect and hero-worship the blond got from those girls) of Clarke Griffin, which in and of itself made them less than average. True, he knew damned well that Blake and Reyes had their hands on training manuals and such he had 'forgotten' to require from Clarke. True, the girls were no doubt fully aware of, and furious over, what had been done to their leader. Hell, he was positive that they were plotting some sort of rebellion on her behalf even now. He wouldn't be surprised (indeed, he fully expected it, Reyes and the younger Blake were both highly intelligent and cunning) if they were planning on getting themselves arrested and sent down with the other Skybox teens. Raven Reyes would have undoubtedly heard about their refurbishment of the drop-ship from the mechanics involved, even if it was Top Secret. On a place as small as the Ark, everyone knew everyone else, and anything labeled Top Secret was usually known to half the population within minutes. Abby would no doubt be quite pleased if she knew of the loyalty her daughter inspired amongst her peers, and despite himself Kane was proud of his star pupil as well.

Kane frowned as he thought of the fiery and passionate Head of Medical. He had always admired the Griffin family, for their history of devoted service to the Ark and its people, for their constant kindness and good humor, and for their ever-unwavering, unshakable morality.

It was unfortunately that unshakable morality that had gotten Jake Griffin killed. He had refused to back down, unwilling to let the people of the Ark remain ignorant to the true scope of the rapidly approaching disaster that would spell the end of their race. Even after his death, his cause had lived on within his daughter, who had come even closer to success than Jake had. It was only due to his need to adjust a feed from a security camera that had brought him into the CIC at the right time to catch her.

The girl's meticulous memorization of patrol and command shifts had provided her with nearly a ten minute window of free reign, a gaping hole in their procedures that he had immediately plugged...once he figured out what had happened. After all, the girl had been less than inclined to fill him in on how she had done it.

Though he would never admit it, he had had trouble sleeping for weeks after arresting her and putting her in house arrest, jumping at shadows and even the faintest of sounds, totally convinced he would wake up with a Columbian Necktie, courtesy of one intelligent, sneaky, and angry blond teen.

He had been partially correct. He had, in fact, awakened to the sight of Clarke, face shrouded in the shadows, sitting at his room's small table toying casually with a large, lethal looking combat-style knife...

Flashback!

*His eyes flew open, mind ticking away immediately as he tried to evaluate his surroundings and decide what had changed, for he knew something had.*

"Good Morning, Marshall Kane." A terrifyingly familiar voice said softly, and he shot up in bed, eyes landing on the form of Clarke Griffin, lounging in the chair beside his table, face hidden by the shadows, the long, dark form of a military combat knife turning in her hands. "I mean morning in the most literal terms of course, it's about two."

"How the hell did you get in here?" he snarled, fear thrumming through his veins. He
had posted guards outside his door as a precaution, and he would have heard two grown security operatives fighting Clarke if she had passed them by force.

"Your guards were kind of easy to distract, to be honest. A few sparks, a little bit of electrical zapping sounds, and a loud bang followed by smoke was all it took to send them scurrying away to see what was wrong. It will probably take them ten minutes to figure out the small electrical fire did no damage to anything important beyond cosmetics, and another five to get back here. More than enough for me to finish things up here." The teen responded casually, and Kane felt his throat tighten at the dark half-smile that spread across her face as she regarded him.

"You plan on killing me, Clarke? Get revenge for your father?" his voice, he was proud to say, had far more strength within it then he actually felt, not that he was going to let her know that. He would die with his head held high, damnit!

"No, no. As much as I love my father and want him back, you were just doing your job, your duty. It's a small consolation, but a consolation nonetheless. What I am here for is to make some ultimatums. Ultimatums about me going to Earth now instead of being in house arrest until you send the rest down in two years."

Kane couldn't help but stare at her in abject confusion and disbelief. She couldn't possibly have known about the Council's plans for the convicts! They hadn't even started to allocate the resources for repairing the drop-ship yet!

Seeing his look, Clarke snorted in sardonic amusement.

"If my father couldn't fix it, it can't be fixed. That means that we have to go to Earth if we want to survive. Given the way you and the rest of the Council act, there is no way you will send adults with jobs running the Ark to see if you can survive the homeworld. Logically, you need expendable scouts, and that means you fuckers are going to send the kids in the Skybox down. Well, I want to be the first wave. Just me, before you risk half of the next generation stupidly." She answered the questions he hadn't been able to verbalize, and he blinked at her as he came to the realization that Clarke was very much her parents' daughter.

"Any particular reason you've got a death wish, Clarke?" he asked, still very much shocked. "We have no idea if Earth is even the slightest bit survivable, never mind what might be down there. Not to mention the fact that if I propose this to the Council, your mother will have my head on a silver platter."

"Tch. Leave my mother to me, Kane." She said with a smirk, getting to her feet and padding away silently. "You just get the rest of the Council on board. Shouldn't be too hard."

"Wait! Why are you doing this?" Kane called out softly, desperately curious, and she gave him a small, sad smile.

"This is something my father would have done." Was the only reply she gave before slipping from the room. Not a minute later, Kane heard the booted feet of his guards return to their posts, and he shook his head in disbelief as he resettled himself and closed his eyes, though he knew sleep would be a long time coming.

Flashback Ends!

True to her word, Clarke had somehow handled her mother, who had recused herself from the Council vote to send Clarke to Earth, her only involvement in the discussion being her demands that Clarke be trained and equipped properly. Demands that he and Chancellor Jaha had been quick
to support, overriding and silencing the few that had blustered about such efforts being a waste of
time and resources.

She had proven an incredible pupil, far beyond anything he had ever witnessed, mastering
everything he put before her with amazing speed and stubborn single-mindedness that were as
frightening as they were inspiring. She soon became a better fighter than the entirety as the
Security Corp, a well-respected and even somewhat feared combatant that had both devastating
speed and the ability to deliver punishing blows. When the time had come for her to be sent to
Earth, he had found himself distinctly regretful, fully believing he would never see her again.

Now he was just disappointed, and bored. With Clarke gone, he was reduced to spying on her little
pack of friends and the many, almost faceless sheep of the Ark, most of whom were too terrified of
being floated to breathe without asking for permission. He corrected his earlier musings. Not only
did he expect Clarke's friends to be planning something, he hoped they would. At least they would
keep his life interesting for the next two years.

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Throne Room

Ice Queen's Palace

Ice Clan Territory

"So, they decided to take things into their own hands. They moved without orders and
have severely damaged our position." Nia, Queen of the Ice Clan and arguably the person Lexa
hated even more than the Mountain Men, sighed from atop her throne. Six foot three with hair so
black it almost looked purple, she was wearing heavy armor and a long, broad fur cloak. Before her
dais knelt one of her many couriers, scouts that specialized in traveling between Polis and her
capitol of Gaithers here in the northwest as fast as possible. He, like all of his kind, was a small
man built for stealth, speed, and endurance instead of raw strength or durability.

"Yes, Majesty. The Sky Girl killed three of them herself, while the Commander's lover
Costia subdued the fourth. Heda Lexa plans on displaying what is left of them at the feast and
telling all the tale as a warning." The scout confirmed, and Nia hummed in understanding. The
team of warriors they were referring to had actually been intended to kidnap Costia, so that she
could be tortured and sent back to Lexa in pieces. Either she would have told them all of Lexa's
secrets, or Lexa would have become vulnerable and reckless in her sorrow. Either way, killing the
chit and sending the Commander's spirit into a more...pliable host would have been easy. Then, her
dominion over the clans would have been a foregone conclusion, an easily accomplished goal.

Instead, now the Commander was on her guard and suspicious (freshly suspicious, that is, the girl
had always mistrusted the Azgeda, and with good reason) of any Ice Nation warrior or civilian. Her
political position now made significantly stronger by not only possessing the Skai Prisa, but
possessing a Skai Prisa that had managed to kill three elite warriors, despite being bedridden and
insensate.

"Fools..." she finally hissed, rising to her feet with lethal grace, and she began to pace
slightly on the dais that held her Frozen Throne. She needed to regain the advantage, or at least
draw even once more with Lexa, but how was she to accomplish such a thing now?

She would have to be at the feast to celebrate the SkaiPrisa's arrival and subsequent slaying of the
yong pauna, that much was certain. Whereas before her subordinates foolish choices she could
claim that duties kept her too busy, to do so afterwards would simply act as 'proof' that she was
involved in an official capacity and feared leaving her fortress and entering the range of any physical reprisals. Reprisals that would surely come in the form of her nation being burned to the ground and absorbed by the other clans if she didn't show. With such proof as her dead soldiers and her absence, not to mention the support of the One Who Is Promised, it would be laughably easy for Lexa to convince the Coalition to strike out and obliterate her with ease. It was infuriating, but she would have to kow-tow to the chit and the Senate, likely offer a concession or two, and put a hold on any other plans intended on elevating herself to her proper station.

"Pass along to the Captain of my Guard that he is to prepare a party of warriors and mounts to escort me to Polis." She commanded the still-kneeling scout, who bowed and scrapped his way from the room, leaving her to her thoughts. How to placate Lexa? Riches and materials alone would not suffice, Lexa had plenty of both and would view it as an insult or a bribe attempt, not to mention far from complete compensation.

Hmm...

Her eyes brightened, her decision made. Four men had attacked, four lives would be offered in return. She strode from the room quickly, commanding a guard to gather a party and scour the city for every untainted girl of Lexa's age from the prominent houses. She would pick the four prettiest and most intelligent, most charming, to serve as gifts to the Skai Prisa, whom legends said would claim many women as her own. That would satisfy them in more ways than one, and perhaps she could use the offerings' families against them later on, force them to spy on the Commander and her generals if appealing to their clan loyalty was insufficient.

Yes, the stupidity of those warriors was problematic, but it had given her a far greater opportunity to make use of. One that might even hasten the fruition of her plans.

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And another chapter posted :D Tell your friends about this story, people, while I love the fanbase I have I want it bigger! This story very much still seems to be a niche, and I want to share it with more readers :D
Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We Shed)

Chapter Six

Polis

When Grounders traveled, Clarke found, they liked to sing. Marching cadences, raucous songs fit for a barroom, bawdy songs, solemn songs. It was really rather nice, actually, even if she didn’t know any of the songs or even really understood what they were saying, as most of their songs were in Trigedasleng, of which she had only learned a few words and phrases.

They had left for Polis, the Grounder capitol, a few hours ago, and were apparently halfway there already. Truthfully, she was surprised and impressed by how she was holding up for her first time on a horse, something she had expected to be a series of humiliating disasters. Of course, part of that could be attributed to her mount. The stallion Lexa had gifted her was enormous, powerful, and trained for war. It was also significantly faster and possessed more endurance than the average horse, according to Lexa, due to its mutations. Said mutations also involved having six legs (two pairs in the front, one pair in the back), demonically glowing crimson eyes, and a long, flowing scarlet mane and tail. She had immediately named him Sleipnir, the powerful warhorse and mount of Odin All-Father from Norse mythology.

Now she sat astride him, riding down the grass-covered remains of US-50 (or so she had gathered from the old, half-destroyed signs they passed occasionally), with Lexa easily guiding her own mount to her left, Costia to her right, and the generals and warriors guarding them arrayed around and behind them. It was during a pause in the singing that she found herself addressed for the first time of the journey by someone other than Lexa or Costia.

“Skai Prisa, what songs do your people sing? Songs of the Lost World?” one of the escorting warriors asked respectfully, thought very tentatively. Obviously, he was concerned about being punished or something of the sort for addressing her uninvited, a concern many of the lower.
ranks seemed to have.

She had finally asked Lexa what ‘Skai Prisa’ meant, and while she was deeply flattered to know that it meant ‘Sky Princess’, she also knew that there was a lot more to the story than that, given how the Grounders acted around her. Even Lexa and the Generals acted differently around her, the former acting almost…awed, for lack of a better word, while the Generals seemed to be judging her. Only Costia acted normally around her, though since the red-head’s ‘normal’ consisted of being an unrepentant pervert, that was a small comfort.

“Yes. When our ancestors went to the sky, they took copies of every book, every song, every play...everything that they could get their hands on, in order to preserve the history and culture of humanity. There were-are- many kinds of music amongst that collection. Many genres, such as rock, metal, country, pop, classical…” she let her voice trail of pointedly, making it clear that the list was a great deal longer then what she had verbalized. “I, myself, learned to sing and play instruments, as did every other member of my people. It is required of us, not only to keep the children busy and out of trouble, but to keep the past alive.”

“Would you sing for us, Clarke?” Costia asked, looking rather hopeful, even if her voice was teasing, and Clarke’s eyes widened as she looked around for some support. Unfortunately for her, the rest of the group looked just as eager, and Clarke groaned mentally. Of course they would, they had only known her for three days, they knew nothing about her. Not to mention that this was a chance for them to hear music from the world whose ashes they had called home for the past century. Thinking of a good song didn’t take long, and she cleared her throat before beginning to sing.

“I close my eyes, Tell us why must we suffer.
Release your hands, For your will drags us under.
My legs grow tired, Tell us where we must wander.
How can we carry on, If the Answer’s beyond us?

To all of my children in whom life flows abundant.
To all of my children on whom death hath passed his judgement
The soul yearns for honor and the flesh the hereafter
Look to those who walked before to lead those who walk after.

Shining is the land’s light of justice!
Ever flows the land’s well of purpose!
Walk free, walk free, walk free, believe.

Suffer (Feel) Promise (Think) Witness (Teach) Reason (Hear)
Follow (Feel) Wander (Think) Stumble (Teach) Listen (Speak)
Now open your eyes while our plight is repeated!
Still deaf to our cries, lost in hope we lie defeated!
Our souls have been torn and our bodies forsaken!
Bearing sins of the past, for our future is taken!

War, born of strife, these trials persuade us not!
(Feel What, Learn What?)
Words without sound, these lies betray our thoughts!
(See what, hear what?)
Mired by a plague of doubt, the land, she mourns.
Judgment binds all we hold to a memory of scorn!
Tell us why, given life, we are meant to die,
Helpless in our cries?

Thy life is a riddle to bare rapture and sorrow.
To listen, to suffer, to entrust unto tomorrow!
In one fleeting moment, from the land doth life flow
Yet in one fleeting moment, for anew it doth grow.
In the same fleeting moment, thou must live, die, and know.”

As her voice faded, the song over, there was nothing but utter silence, and she shifted a little awkwardly in her saddle. Her singing wasn’t that bad, was it? Perhaps something in the song had
offended or confused them? She couldn’t imagine which part might have done so, but then again she was not one of them. She didn’t understand the depths and nuances of their culture, not yet anyway.

“That was…magnificent, Clarke. Not only the song, but your voice. I think that I will be asking you to sing for me often.” Lexa said finally, wearing an expression astonishingly similar to beaming on her painted face. There were many murmurs of agreement, and Clarke blushed at the attention and the praise. She knew, logically, that she was a good singer, but receiving people who didn’t feel obligated to praise her (for familial love, friendly affection, or attempted ass-kissing) was an altogether novel experience.

“What was that song called, Clarke?” Costia, ever the most (vocally) curious person about Clarke and the lifestyle of the Sky People.

“Answers. It was written a very long time ago by a pair of men from Japan.” She responded promptly with a smile. “It was always one of my favorites to sing, especially with music and as part of a group.”

“The words are powerful, they have meaning.” Anya mused from behind them. “I especially like the final stanza. It is…honest. True.”

Lexa hummed in agreement, although she was thinking mostly of a very specific line: ‘look to those who walked before, to lead those who walked after.’ To her, that line resonated more than the others, for she as the carrier of the Heda’s soul was always looking to those who came before to guide her, just as her successors would to her. Hell, the same line could be used in reference to her people’s dependence on the guidance on the Heda.

Shifting herself slightly in her saddle, she glanced at her future Kwin with a warmth in her eyes that she was unaccustomed to displaying in public. She would be the first to admit that Clarke made her feel, and act, out of character. She had smiled and laughed more in public during the last three days than the last few years. Ever since she became the Heda, truthfully once she had become Anya’s second, she began wearing a mask for her people. The mask of the cold, calculating, and implacable Heda of the Clans. Only in private did she let herself be Lexa, the cheerful and romantic girl with a tendency to experience love at first sight.

“So, tell me of your family and friends, Clarke. I know your mother is the head healer…?” she asked leadingly, and the Sky Girl hummed in thought before answering slowly, carefully.

“Well, I have quite a few friends. My closest friend is ironically a girl I’ve known the shortest. Her name is Octavia, we met at a party, and I ended up saving her life. You would love her, Lexa. Fierce, bold, brave, aggressive… she will fit in very well with your people. Then there is Raven, one of my oldest friends. A mechanical genius, smart and cunning with an understated courage and unwavering loyalty.” The absolute warmth in Clarke’s voice and expression when she spoke of the other girls sent a wave of jealousy through Lexa, though she quashed it swiftly. It really shouldn’t be of any surprise to Clarke had romances and paramours at home, she certainly did here. “Then there is Fox, Harper, Monroe…a few others.”

“And…have you any male friends? Anyone of…special interest?” Costia prodded, and Clarke raised an amused eyebrow at her, getting an innocent smile in return. Snorting softly in amusement, she shook her head.

“No, I don’t have many male friends, a few acquaintances maybe. And no, I’ve no one ‘special’ up at The Ark. Not that it means getting into my pants will be anything remotely close to
easy, you slavering pervert.”

“That’s completely fine with me, I do enjoy a challenge, especially when the reward is so…” Costia licked her lips outrageously as her eyes ghosted over Clarke’s armed and armored form. “Enticing.”

“You know, there are a few words that one would use to describe you, Costia…” Clarke started, only for a smirking Costia to interrupt.

“Ravishing? Brilliant? Awe-inspiring?” she said playfully, flipping her hair over her shoulder like a diva and batting her eyelashes outrageously.

“Irritating, bold, perverted, single-minded?” Clarke continued dryly, though her mouth quirked slightly into a smile regardless. Costia merely shrugged and smirked lazily in response, utterly unconcerned. For that matter, she seemed flattered. Somehow, Clarke wasn’t all that surprised.

“Anyway, I don’t really hang out with many people my age. As the only daughter of a high-ranked Council member, and one of the three children from the Council entire…well, as a result all the boys wanted to get into my pants, and all the girls wanted to be my best friends,” she nearly spat the words in disgust, and the surrounding warrior women frowned slightly. While dynastic marriages were far from uncommon, they were always approached plainly and honorably, not with false friendships and lies.

“Then you are not the leader of your people, Skai Prisa?” a nearby warrior asked curiously, and Clarke snorted and shook her head in response.

“I’m no leader, I never have been. I just tend to follow my own path and do as I think is right.” She said dismissively, waving one hand in a brushing-away gesture, and Lexa resisted the urge to snort in disbelief. Clearly Clarke didn’t understand just how charismatic she was, but she had seen it herself when Clarke had confronted the Stone Clan warrior and spoken to the crowd afterwards. Even putting aside that the true hallmark of a leader was doing what they thought was the right thing to do, as opposed to what was easy, it sounded as though she had a fair following amongst her own age group, people loyal to her first and foremost. Besides, if Clarke was right and this ‘Council’ sent more children down within the next couple of years, Clarke would be well placed to take leadership of them. Through them, she would control their parents, and thus their people. Oh yes, Clarke ruled the Sky People. She just didn’t know it yet.

In the Old World, Annapolis was known to the general public for one thing, and one thing only: the United States Naval Academy. A sprawling 16,000 acre campus, it had turned out some of the best and brightest in the world for decades. That, and its proximity to the national capitol, meant that its air defenses were incredible. It had taken days and hundreds of rockets and missiles to exhaust and overwhelm enough of its air defenses, and by that point the war had been so close to over that much of the academy itself had survived, albeit damaged. The First Heda had ruled from the community that had reemerged around the old academy grounds, and by tradition every Heda since had done so as well, regardless of their birth clan, as the city grew around them.
Over time, the city had expanded massively, with thick, towering walls of wood and stone. The relatively minor docks of the Academy had been expanded to sprawl along the shore, nearly rivaling those of the Boat Clan. Thousands called it home, and every clan donated forces, arms, and armor to its defense. It was the Rome of the new world.

Lexa’s heart swelled with pride as she saw the awe and deep respect in Clarke’s eyes as they approached the city and its outlying suburbs. Here, more than anyone else, would show Clarke that her people were not blood-crazed savages. Although, she had best start filling her in on certain things such as Senate meetings and the coming festivities.

“Clarke…” she started, but her voice acted as the trigger for an outpouring of praise and commentary on both her city and her people.

“Lexa! Polis is incredible, it looks like something out of the history books! I can smell the foundries from here! Mass-produced industry, and agriculture, I mean just look at these farms, they’re enormous! How high is the curtain wall, and how did you build them with your technology level? Where…” she babbled excitedly, almost bouncing in her saddle. Sleipnir, sensing her excitement, snorted and pranced a little in place, coincidentally bringing her close enough for Lexa to grab her warm, soft hand in her own calloused one. The touch brought Clarke's mouth to a halt partially open, and Lexa spoke.

"Enough, Clarke. There are things I need to tell you about before we reach the city. First and foremost, the city knows you are the SkaiPrisa…"

"Which you still haven't properly explained the importance of." Clarke mumbled in irritation.

"And that you slew a yong Pauna and several Ice Nation assassins, so they will be expecting you to carry yourself as a warrior. Upright and strong, composed and implacable, but also welcoming. Fear and wonder balanced on the edge of a blade is the most potent combination of emotions one can inspire in another, and it is the very mix you need to inspire in your first appearances." Lexa continued, ignoring the interruption, though she had to admit, Clarke's resultant pout made her look ever-so-kissable. "In addition, it is likely that, when you meet the Senate, they will attempt to cow you. Pressure you into obeying them 'for your own good', or some such thing. Do not fall prey to their honeyed words, they will use you for their own ends until they can marry you off or kill you."

"I thought you had absolute control as Heda, and that the clan leaders ruled their clans with only you as a higher authority?" Clarke asked, only somewhat miffed that the brunette hadn't told her about this Senate meeting. They really sounded like a larger version of the Council to be honest, and she knew just how to handle the Council.

"I do, but the Senate handles the day to day affairs of the civilian side of the government, as well as providing a place for representatives of all the clans to meet and argue their wants and needs without blades and blood. However, and especially since the Senate is made purely of Civilians and is easily corruptible, filled with weakness, lies, and prevarications, I have the ultimate say on any significant matters. Especially those that effect the Coalition as a whole." The contempt on her face and in her voice was obvious, and Clarke found herself suprised until she noticed that the same expression was present on all those around them. Contempt it seemed, was like anger to Lexa. She was obviously willing to show her warriors negative emotions, so why not the laughter, smiles, and humour she showed in private?

"Well, I guess that makes sense. You can hardly handle everything for every single clan under your banner, nor should you. Not only would it be impossible, but they should be responsible
for themselves without you to hold their hands for them." She said aloud, keeping her more private thoughts to herself. Lexa hummed in agreement as they drew every closer, now perhaps only a few hundred yards from the massive main gates of the city. The sound of bells echoed over them all as they entered, bells announcing the arrival of the Heda and the SkaiPrisa. All across the city, crowds began to gather along the main road that lead directly to the palace and the Forum, home of the Heda and seat of the Senate, respectively.

For the people of Polis, this was the moment they had been waiting for. For the fervent believers of the old tales, a lifetime of waiting was finally bearing fruit. For those more recent on the proverbial bandwagon, it had only been three days, yet those days somehow seemed interminable. Ever since the yong pauna and couriers had arrived, the whole city had been waiting with bated breath, eager to see her at last, regardless of their intentions towards her.

Then they saw her ride through the gates on a massive steed as black as night itself, his crimson eyes burning against the darkness of his coat. She herself was clad in black armor of a strange make, a long curved blade on her back, blonde hair flowing in the breeze as steely sky-blue eyes surveyed all before her. Beside and around her rode the Herda and her generals, each guiding their own horses with the ease of long practice. The crowd wondered: could this pale slip of a child really have slain the yong pauna? Could she really be the One Who Is Promised?

Stranger things had happened, they mused, and Heda was not known for lying or for half-truths. Best to wait and see. In the meantime, there was cheering to do and celebrations to be had!

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Senate Forum
Polis

It was immediately apparent to a significant margin of the Senate that attempts to influence or control Clarke of the Sky People would be difficult at best and suicidally impossible at worst. The others were arrogant enough to believe that she was simply a girl-child foreigner and therefore easily handled by such intellectual individuals such as themselves. Still, when she strode into the room with the Heda and Costia in tow, descending without pause to seat themselves in the center of the Forum (as was tradition), she made quite the impression upon all of them. They were confident however, and with good reason. Only in this room were they all equal, all powerful. Only in this room could one risk overtly challenging the Heda, and expect to live more than a few seconds afterwards.

"Welcom back to Polis, Heda. The Senate is glad to see that you continue to carry The Spirit despite the Mountain Men's best efforts." Senator Falco of the Ice Clan spoke first, voice oily, as he bowed lowly to the trio. "My Queen was most horrified to hear of the cowardly, assuradly unsanctioned attack on the sky girl and your dear Costia by renegade and traiterous members of her army."

"I am so glad to hear her say so. After the one we interrogated screamed, ranted, and raved about how there was only a single ruler in this world, and how Nia would kill us all, and so on and so forth." Lexa waved her hand in a hand gesture that made it clear it had been a long rant, voice calm, as she leaned back comfortably on her throne, and Falco's expression froze.

"Ah, well. It is most unfortunate that those warriors allowed their sense of patriotism and clan-loyalty to lead them astray. Unfortunately, passions that are great boons can become the most savage of vices." Senator Carieb, one of Falco's 'allies' (read: cronies) in the Senate said with an expression of deep sorrow, covering for his off-balance compatriot smoothly, and the Senators that
were so inclined nodded and murmured in agreement. Looking at Clarke, he continued with a grandfatherly smile that was as false as his previous expression. 'And this must be the one and only Clarke of the Sky People! Welcome back to the ground, and welcome to Polis! We of the Senate are ever so glad to greet you and praise your magnificent feat of slaying the mighty pauna, something that no one has ever managed to accomplish, neither alone nor with a great host!'

"Your praise is, of course, welcome. Even if I do not believe it is quite necessary. I could not in good conscience simply stand by and watch Linkon kom Trikru die when I had the ability to intervene. To do otherwise would be a grave sin against man and Maker." The blond responded, tone respectful but aloof. Carieb concealed a frown, irritated that his bait had failed. She had neither gloated nor demanded respect and obedience, something most warriors would do in such circumstances. Now he would be unable to make her, and by extension Lexa, looking foolish to the rest of the Senate. Perhaps another opportunity would present itself, but until then it would be best to deal with legitimate Senate business. Such as there was, and what there was of it, at any rate.

"Your humility does you great credit." He bowed just enough to avoid giving insult before looking to Lexa and holding up a scroll. "We of the Senate have compiled a list of reports to give and items to address, if you should wish to call us to order?"

"Very well. I, Lexa, 23rd Bearer of the Soul of The Heda, call this meeting of the Tribal Senate to order." Lexa struck the ground thrice with the ceremonial staff that she drew from its sleeve on the back of her throne. "What matters does the Senate bring before me this day?"

"Mostly minor things, Heda. Official recognition of today as a feast day, protocols for some badly needed repair to some of the cities sanitation, and the like. Only a limited number of serious issues have arisen, most of them being the fates of various apprehended criminals who can be dealt with after the feasting and celebrations have passed."

"Indeed? I suppose that not much time has passed since I was last present in this Forum. I do hope that all of you will be able to attend the festivities? With the pauna meat combined with the other items, it promises to be quite epic in proportions." Lexa responded, and Clarke resisted the urge to blink in disturbed confusion as the eyes of the Senate gleamed not with greed, but lust. Lexa had said that her people loved feasts more than anything else, but surely such expressions were a bit much?

"Of course, Heda. We of the Senate could not imagine being absent from so illustrious and significant an occasion! Let us deal with what few issues are at hand as swiftly as we can, that we might adjourn and begin our preparations for the festivities." Falco rejoined eagerly, and the whole of the Senate nodded so agreeably that they made Clarke think of bobbleheads, and she had to fight down the urge to giggle. Well, getting this done quickly suited her just fine, she felt dirty just from the way half of these people were looking at her. She knew the festivities would, at best, delay their ambitions, the ones Lexa warned her about, by a few days at the most. But a short delay was better than none at all.

"Very well then." Lexa hummed, taking the scroll from Falco and unfurling it carefully. Twitching it ever so slightly to achieve better lighting, her eyes began to flick back and forth steadily as she carefully scanned the document, taking note of the various petty crimes and their punishments (minor crimes like pickpocketing, theft, and public intoxication were handled by the Senate, as they were not significant enough for her personal attention) as well as the handful of more serious crimes that awaited her appraisal and judgement. It seemed she would have the opportunity to show Clarke the way her people handled trials in a few days. She knew there had to be something...ah, there it was. A small footnote on a minor trading deal between Falco’s and Gaius’ houses, which if undersigned would give the Senate the power to choose ‘suitable’ spouses.
for anyone they chose, including her generals, herself, and Clarke. Clearly, they hoped that she would skim that portion of the document (as it was a formal notification to her of the agreement between their houses, it was really only there to let her know what was going on, and therefore wouldn’t receive as much of her focus) and be too distracted and impatient for the feast to notice it. It appeared they had not yet learned that she was no foolish child to be tricked and toyed with. Shaking her head, she ignored the dotted line where her signature would have gone and rolled the scroll up, handing it to Costia before leaning back in her throne. “I’m afraid that some modification and contemplation will be required before this is ready for my seal, not the least of which being the trials for the major criminal offenders. Is there anything else that the Senate wishes to bring to my attention?”

“No, Heda. After all, your absence from Polis has lasted only a few weeks at most this time, so there has been hardly anything of note whatsoever.” Falco’s smile and bow were both stiff with displeasure of yet another foiled plot (and for a Senator he was far too obvious when things didn’t go his way!) and Lexa nodded in acknowledgment. Raising the ceremonial staff once more, she struck the ground thrice and declared the session concluded, informing them all she looked forward to seeing them at the celebrations that night. With bows and murmurs in the affirmative, the robed members of the Senate filtered out of the room, leaving the trio of young women alone at the center of the Forum.

“Are all Senate meetings like that?” Clarke asked, though her tone and bearing made it clear she believed no such thing, and both Costia and Lexa laughed softly, shaking their heads in the negative, and she smirked slightly.

“No, they normally last for hours, sometimes days. However, due to the festivities starting tonight, none of them were particularly interested in wasting any time as they are often wont to doing.” Lexa explained as she got to her feet and led her two companions from the room. The streets were teeming with people, and though many stopped to stare and whisper at the trio, all continued about their business after a few moments. Lexa gave Clarke a moment to take everything in before guiding her towards the palace.

“This is incredible! Is this where you live?” Clarke breathed, looking around the foyer at the distinctly Roman architecture. With TonDC as basic and, well, crude as it was…she hadn’t really though craftsmanship this fine was possible for the tribes. A foolish and arrogant assumption, considering the wonders of the ancient peoples, like the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, had been able to produce thousands of years ago. She really needed to stop making so many assumptions about the tribes…

“When I am within Polis, yes. Most of my time is spent in TonDC, however. As the largest village and most central village along the proverbial front lines in our war with the Mountain Men, I remain there to strategize and lead the army whenever it is necessary. Things have been quite of late, however.” Lexa’s thoughts drifted to a point of constant worry for her the last few months, the niggling feeling that the Mountain Men were plotting something big, before shaking her head and continuing.” Anyways, all the Clan Leaders have estates her in Polis, though of course they spend even less time here than I do, as their responsibilities are primarily focused on their clans and territories in particular instead of the Coalition as a whole.”

Lexa and Clarke watched Costia break of from them and slip through a side door, before Clarke returned to examining the room before her, and Lexa returned to examining her. The foyer was large and circular, with a door directly across from the entrance, one of the left and the right, and two long, curved staircases leading up to the second level, which was much the same in its layout, save for the fact that the door facing the street led to a large balcony. After another minute or so, Lexa gently took Clarke’s hand in her own (purely to assist her in leading her around the building,
of course!) and tugged her towards the left-hand staircase. Once they had ascended, the brunette warrior pushed open the double doors at before them and proceeded to lead Clarke down a long hallway. At the very end stood another set of double doors, and Clarke had the sense that whatever was inside was very precious, simply from the way Lexa was acting as they approached. The oaken panels parted, and as Clarke stepped inside, she couldn’t stop her mouth from dropping open and her eyes going wide in amazement.

It was a massive library, wall to wall, floor to ceiling, multiple stories worth of bookcases stuffed to the brim with tomes both old and new. It seemed that (and she should be used to it by now, really) Lexa’s people had once again shocked and surprised her, and her feeling of shame from her earlier assumptions grew even larger as she ruefully considered the fact that she had broken the promise she had made to herself not minutes ago in that very regard. True, Lexa’s people were savage and barbaric in many, many ways, but the world they lived in, at least the world closest to these Mountain Men, required them to be if they wanted to survive. Here, however, in the safe(ish) inner reaches of their land, they had true, if old-fashioned, civilization. It was truly heartening to see.

“Lexa, this is just utterly incredible! I had never imagined that so many books could have survived the Final War!” she almost squealed gleefully. Hard copy, physical books were few and far between, as the ‘written’ word of the Old World had been preserved almost entirely in digital format to save space for people and supplies. She knew immediately that, like Lexa, this would become her favorite and most-visited room in the building, even if she hadn’t seen the rest of the palace. And wasn’t that a magnificent thing, that she and Lexa both loved literature more than anything else?

“Well, this library has been added to by every Heda since the First herself. When the survivors of the War began to gather here, they added those books and documents they had found or managed to preserve to the library already present here. Over the years, new books were written and old ones were copied in order to preserve them and, well,” Lexa swept and arm broadly to indicate the library at large. “The results are what you see before you.”

“I can’t wait to read them and show you the libraries of The Ark. Once I can get into Mount Weather and contact the Council, I can have them downloaded groundside to the Mount Weather databanks and print them. After that…” Clarke’s voice trailed off as she continued to plot and plan how to show Lexa all of these books, and Lexa felt like a horrible person for what she was going to do, but it had to be done. No matter how cheerful and hopeful Clarke sounded, she had to be enlightened as to the truth. Or, at least, part of the truth.

“Clarke, you…can’t go to the Mountain.” She said softly, gently, slowly, and Clarke snorted with an utter lack of concern that baffled her. Clarke was not prone to foolish arrogance, so why would she be so dismissive of the power and threat the Mountain Men possessed?

“It shouldn’t too hard for me to slip past their patrols once you show me their routes. The minute I get access to Mount Weather, I’ll be safe. Not like they’ve any idea how to get inside.” Clarke reassured her, and Lexa’s brow furrowed further in confusion. Obviously, both of them thought that the other had pertinent details that they did not actually possess.

“Clarke, even if you manage to get past their defenses, there are still hundreds of them within. Going to the Mountain is suicide, and I’ll not let you get yourself killed.” The last statement, though spoken in her Commander voice, had a significant edge of possessiveness lurking within it, and Clarke turned to look at her in confusion, though a spark of stubborn defiance gleamed within her eyes.
“Why would I be in any danger within the Mountain? The Mountain Men are just another grounder clan that live on and around it, yes?” that statement clarified a lot for Lexa when it came to Clarke’s attitude towards the Mountain. Clearly, she had come to her own assumptions, and Lexa had foolishly not filled her in completely on their people’s mortal enemies. Now, she had to do so at the worst possible time.

“No, Clarke. The Mountain Men are those that hid inside the Mountain during the war. They are the most hated enemy of all the clans, and the reason for the Coalition. That place holds nothing but death and suffering within it.” She explained, her relief at (partially) clearing the air between them warring with the regret and guilt she felt at the heart-break and confusion that consumed Clarke at her words.

“What? But…but why didn’t you say anything before? Why only tell me here and now?” she asked, bewildered, but Lexa simply looked at the ground silently. With a breathy sound that was a cross between a snarl and a sob, the younger girl shoved her aside and rushed from the room. Lexa let her, presuming that she would simply find an uninhabited room to cry and remaster herself and her emotions in. Unbeknownst to her, at least for a little while, was that Clarke had departed the palace entirely, successfully avoided both her personal guards and the palace guards, and vanished into the depths of the city. Unbeknownst to Clarke was that fact that her departure did not go as unnoticed as she had believed. Instead, a half-dozen carefully non-descript individuals followed her, taking care to remain natural and avoid arousing the suspicions of those around them. Worse, their intentions were not of a noble sort, no indeed, for they were tasked by Senator Falco with spying on the palace and its inhabitants. When they saw the supposed Sky Princess, emotionally compromised and alone, they saw their chance to take the initiative and ‘acquire’ her. After all, having the girl herself would guarantee that they got the information that their Queen and Senator desired, or at least that was the excuse they gave to one another. They certainly wouldn’t mind some time alone with her entirely at their mercy.

Deep beneath the ruins of what was once Turin, New York, the imprint of the ancient Isu known predominantly as Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno stood together amongst a massive virtual reality representation of the Sol System, its planets and moons orbiting around them as its sun blazed beneath their feet.

“She is taking far too long! Every single moment counts! You should have implanted the subconscious knowledge of the Vault inside of her bloodline!” Juno snarled angrily, but the other two were unaffected by her rage. She was always angry, ever since her attempted revenge against Humanity had tried to wipe them out. Now, she was forced to aid her fellows in saving them or be sealed away once more, this time for good.

“She will come without any further meddling from us. Once she reaches the Annapolis Vault, she will be transported here and we can begin to save this world, and Humanity, from our mistakes. At long last.” Minerva replied tranquilly.

“I should hope so. She is beyond human. With our assistance and genetic code, she will be virtually unstoppable. The impending catastrophe will be averted, and even those who cling to the foolish ideals of the Templar Order will fail.” Jupiter spoke his own thoughts on the matter just as calmly as Minerva. They had cultivated the line of Altair since it’s inception with the famed Mentor’s own ancestors, subtly guiding them in a millenia-long breeding program to result in the ultamite Assassin.

She would be the one to save Humanity from the approaching storms.
ALL DONE! So, I posted this chapter a little later in the day than was usual, because I had to finish retyping it from my hand-written copy, and then of course reading it over and editing it occurred.
Clarke was really getting tired of having things and/or people chasing her. From the moment she had landed on this damned planet, she hadn’t had a single moment of peace to call her own! First it was the gorilla, then the Ice Warriors, and now it was a bunch of thugs! And, to top it all off, she was lost amongst people she was unfamiliar with, unsure of who she could trust (now more than ever before), and she had a feast she had to make an appearance at if she wanted to survive and help her people start new lives when they joined her on the ground. Something that would already be difficult as it was, because she knew that Jaha and the Council, her mother included, would arrogantly try to impose their own ways onto the Grounders, which she had no doubt would go very poorly indeed. Not that she could blame the Grounders, they had gotten along just well without any ‘civilized’ or high-tech ‘help’.

Still, she was armed and armored, and Lexa had told her that she had the right and authority to eliminate or subdue anyone who defied the Commander’s order and tried to do her harm or harassment. As the older girl had explained in great detail, Clarke would be so merciful as to kill them quickly. She, on the other hand, would do so as slowly and painfully as she could possibly manage. Quite happily, in point of fact, and Clarke by nature was disinclined to give her the opportunity, especially after the events of the day. So, all she had to do was bait her pursuers into the proper venue and ambush them. It would be a difficult fight, but hopefully they would underestimate her under the delusion that her gun was the only thing that made her a threat, and the slovenly way they dressed marked them as two-bit thugs, not professional warriors. It would also help a great deal that night was falling. It would be dark soon, which meant their line of sight would drop and she could use psychological attacks in addition to physical ones.

Spotting an older-looking building, one she was willing to bet was a relic of the old world, she adjusted her path to head straight forward. A building such as that would, likely as not, be left unoccupied by the city’s people. Pulling the door open, she darted into its depths and began hunting for places she would be able to ambush and eliminate her pursuers. Little did she know that such actions would scarcely be needed on her part.

A man known to most only as ‘Azrael’, though his true name was Muruta, led his team of Ice Nation covert warriors into the Old World building the blonde sky-chit had run to hide in. As the leader of the most elite and clandestine unit of the Ice Nation’s military, Logos, he was spoken of in hushed, fear filled whispers the whole world over. It was also well known that he was the most rabid and psychotic of Nia’s servants, and highly suspected that he was the father of her children.
You put up a good chase, girl, but not even your gun will save you now. He mused to himself darkly. He and his unit had been here nearly three years, masquerading as a band of toughs hired by Falco for prestige and protection, although to be perfectly frank the legendary “Black Cloaks", as the rabble referred to the Senatorial Guard, ensured that no such protection was needed. Still, it was a solid cover and the vast majority of their time was spent whoering, drinking, and wasting the days away when they weren’t training. To think that he, who had sired a daughter with the Queen herself, was reduced to playing the fool, bowing and scraping to a filthy civilian, and a politician at that!

Shaking off the old irritation, he returned to the matter at hand. He knew that his target had been declared the SkaiPrisa, the future Kwin of the world, an infuriating thought that made him want to paint the walls and ground red with blood and fill the air with delicious screams of enduring agonies. His restraint, however, was born of the fact that he knew his lover well enough to know that she would want to torture and kill the chit herself. Besides, Falco didn’t know who he truly was, and wanted to give the girl to Nia himself in the hopes of showing initiative and receiving great power when Nia ruled all. The poor, deluded old fool. He looked forward to gutting him and the rest of the Senate in their precious Forum when the time came.

With silent gestures and body language, Azrael sent his men filtering forwards through the dark and silent rooms. She would never be able to sneak past them all and reach the entrance they had all come through, and opening any other doors or windows would alert them to her location instantly. There was no way he could fail, not when she had cornered herself like a rat fleeing from the cat that hunted it to ground.

Of course, like Clarke, he had no idea that one of the most lethal individuals to walk the world in two centuries, a warrior woman from a time forgotten in the ashes of the old world, was waiting for them within the shadows of the relic. A member of an ancient order that served freedom and free will above all things.

Galina Voronina was tired, deep within her soul. Long had the Isu kept her alive, waiting in perpetuity for their ‘perfect specimen’ to appear and save the world. Her heart ached to pass on, to see her friends and forebearers at long last in the peace of the afterlife. She had hope within her weary being, for tonight was the night the person she had been waiting for all these long years had finally arrived. The dozen or so warriors chasing her would be no threat whatsoever. Even if her armor and weapons weren’t so much more advanced than that of her incumbent victims, the Arts of her Brotherhood had been honed for millennia against enemies tat knew them intimitly. Combined with centuries of experience and that fact that her targets were both clueless to her existence and the nature of her arts, and she would be able to slaughter them with laughable ease, send the girl to the Grand Temple, and die in peace at long last.

Her first two victims slipped into the sideroom she had taken position is and passed below where she was poised, braced spread-eagled in the ceiling above the center of the room. She dropped, hidden blades severing their spinal columns and killing them with silent, instantaneous lethality. Blades still extended and gleaming, wet with blood in the moonlight, she advanced from the room into the hallway. A swift stride laid another low, hand across his mouth as she cut his throat in a single, swift movement. Two more rounded the corner before her and she darted forwards, driving her blades up through the bottoms of their jaws and into their brains. She had to resist the urge to sneer and spit on their corpses in contempt. Even the Templar soldiers of her time, nowhere near as familiar with melee weapons as her current ‘opponents’ had put up a better fight. This groups arrogance and utter lack to true and proper situational awareness made them proverbial lambs to the literal slaughter. She had eliminated half their numbers in less than a minute, and they still had
no idea of her presence. She had been hoping for a more challenging battle with which to exit the mortal plane, but one mustn’t be picky about such things.

She ghosted across the house, eagle vision and perfectly honed senses roving in search of either another target, or the girl she was meant to protect. A quite rustle drew her gaze to a golden silhouette, and she watched with approval as it ambushed a red, driving a long, curved blade through its chest from behind before dragging it off into a corner. She might be a child, and horribly untrained and sloppy by Brotherhood standards, but there wasn’t certainly potential there. Potential she knew would be developed to the fullest by the Isu and the genetic memories of the greatest Assassin line in history, a line that had produced such legends as Altair Ibn-La’ahad and Ezio Auditore da Firenze. Yes, this girl was indeed the pinnacle the Triad had sought so long. Slipping into the same room as the gold-shrouded figure, she first laid eyes upon her.

Tall, for a sixteen year old, with long blond hair and eyes as blue as the sky she had come from. Well-muscled and wearing modern (as of when Project Ark began) body armor. A long, parang style machete was in her dominant hand, and the other was busy securing the weapons she had stripped from her victim’s corpse onto her person. Another prudent decision, in case her own weapon was rendered unusable or otherwise taken from her person. Plus, the daggers and shortsword she had just acquired would serve her far better in close quarters than the much longer blade of her machete, a fact she seemed to realize, for she wiped it clean and re-sheathed it on her back.

Surprising her would be unwise, she decided. Given the current situation, the Russian Assassin might receive a large-caliber bullet to the body, something that would be both ignoble and unfortunate. So, she would have to wait until the girl was inevitably discovered. ‘Saving’ her would keep the girl from shooting her off hand, give her the time she needed to explain who she was and why she was there. Then, she would turn Clarke over to the Capitoline Triad and meet her Maker at long last with her head held high.

Lo and behold, the leader and his few remaining men quickly located the prophesized hero, who put up a terrific fight, cutting down three before being overwhelmed by the last two subordinates, pinning her arms and forcing her to her knees before the leader.

Clarke snarled fiercely and her teeth clicked audibly as she tried, and failed, to find purchase on the clothed, hardened length her captor had been grinding on her face. The men holding her chortled in response to her continued, violent resistance.

“You almost got me there, bitch.” The apparent leader sneered, casually backhanding her across the face. The attempt to cow her, however, failed as she merely glared and worked her jaw slightly before spitting a glob of blood at him. “I’m going to enjoy toying with you. The Queen won’t mind, she might even make you into a nice pet for the family.”

“Yeah, yeah, keep yammering away, fuckweed. You Ice Nation guys really love to hear yourselves talk, and you lack any honor whatsoever, don’t you?” the contempt in Clarke’s voice was scathing as she sneered back at him. “I’ve already killed a half-dozen of you trash. Two or three more makes no difference to me. Once I return to Lexa, we’ll see about your damn Queen.”

“The Ice Nation is supreme!” he snarled angrily, shoving her onto her back and wrapping his hands around her throat, the insult to his land and lover making him irrational. Despite the lash of fear that coursed through her at the sensation, her taunts had succeeded in pushing him into pushing her, and action that freed her arms from their captors. Azrael squealed in pain, releasing her throat, as she smashed her knee into his crotch. A sickening crunch echoed as she followed up
with a savage head-butt, badly breaking his nose. She surged to her feet, facing the two still-standing warriors with nothing but her fists against their blades. A fact that they naturally recognized, as they moved towards her with twin smirks and dark chuckles. She squared herself to try and break past them to freedom, but a flash of white and scarlet brought them to a halt before collapsing, revealing her savior.

It was a woman, that much was decidedly clear thanks to the gentle swell of her bust, and was older than her, though how old she couldn’t tell given the hood that shielded her face from view. Dressed in an odd, yet excellent looking, combination of armor and robe-like garments, her features were totally shielded by the aforementioned long hood, which had a predatory, almost hawk-like appearance. Two long blades, slick with blood, extended from the underside of her wrist armor (vambraces, she absently recalled, was the proper name) made it clear how the pair had perished. Absently stomping on Azrael’s hand as he tried to reach for a weapon, she addressed the newcomer.

“Mind cutting up some strips of cloth off of those two so I can tie this one up?” she requested, indicating the woman’s two victims. She nodded silently and set to work, and within a handful of minutes they had the blond warrior bound hand and foot, a large ball of clothe forcing his jaw open to prevent him from biting his tongue off. Satisfied, Clarke turned to her newfound ally, eyes bright with curiosity.

“So, uh, thanks I guess. Clarke Griffin, and I owe you my life.” She inclined her head gratefully, offering her hand, with the other regarded for a moment before clasping it in their own.

“Galina Voronina, Master Assassin of the Brotherhood. I’ve waited for you for a very, very long time, Clarke Griffin.” The older woman responded with a distinctly Russian accent, and Clarke blinked at her as she continued. “I knew another Griffin, once. Good fighter, good Sister. One of the best Mentors I ever had. Her name was Skylar.”

“That…that was my great-great-grandmother’s name!” Clarke breathed in shot, right hand dropping to caress the butt of her heirloom firearm, which she really should have thought to use on her attackers earlier, before she frowned as a thought struck her. “But that’s impossible, that was over a century ago! Even if you were somehow still alive, you would be decrepit!”

“My life has been extended against my will through artificial means. Only once you have taken your rightful place will I be allowed to pass on at last.” The Master Assassin said solemnly, before her tone grew imploring. “Please, follow me. I want to show you.”

“Show me what?” Clarke demand as Galina turned to a large coat of arms on the wall and drew the two cavalry sabers that hung beneath it from their sheaths. Clarke tensed instinctively, but the Russian Sister of the Brotherhood merely inserted the blades into the front of the crest and twisted the hilts. A soft grinding resounded as the crest shifted into another shape, one that reminded her vaguely of the pictures of the square-and-compass emblem of the Freemasons that she had seen in the Ark’s database.

With a groaning sound the wall, and the fireplace beneath the emblem, split in two, swinging inwards to reveal a dark passageway beyond. Moments later, a humming sound heralded the activation of a sequence of lights all along its length, and Galina smiled at her over her shoulder. Curiosity now, mostly, out-weighing her caution, Clarke followed as the older woman began to descend into the mysterious depths, leaving a furious, still bound Azrael behind them. Not that either of them particularly care about his physical or emotional comfort.

“Does Lexa know about this place? About you?” she asked as they entered an elevator a few yards down the passage, “Are there more of you…Assassins?”
“No, to all of the above.” Galina responded a little sadly. “It was not for me or even the Triad to decide if others are worthy of the legacy that we keep in trust. That honor and that responsibility lie with you alone. As for other members of the Brotherhood, the rest died during the war or in the initial years of the post-war world.”

“I have so many questions. What is the Brotherhood, who are the Triad?” Clarke was truthfully far more interested in her ancestor, but had heard the pain in her companion’s voice when she spoke of the past. It would be cruel to pry deeper and force her to relive the memories of those lost.

“The Brotherhood of Assassins, also known as the Assassin Order, and the Circle of Liberation, was founded long before recorded history. Or, at least, what history survived to my own era. We have ever been at war with our enemy, known as Templars (though they’ve had many names), for while my own order seeks to ensure the survival of the human race through preservation of free will, the Templars believe that humanity will only be safe if free will is eradicated entirely.” Was the explanation, and Clarke had a feeling that it was the short version. “The Triad, or more correctly the Capitoliane Triad, is a group of three members from a race we call The First Civilization. They are the ones who have kept me alive all of these years.”

The exited the elevator and started down another hallway, but both conversation and movement halted as the elevator hummed into movement again, rising back towards the surface unbidden by either of them.

 Lexa, though she would never admit it aloud to her warriors, was frantic with worry for the girl who had stolen her heart. Seeing the heartbreak within her when Lexa had told her the truth, the full details, of the Mountain Men had been painful, but now Clarke was missing entirely. Several guards and civilians who had been questioned during their search had mentioned seeing Clarke (or, rather, a blonde girl of her approximate description) heading into the older parts of the city with several Ice Nation toughs following along behind. Given how common her features were in the Ice Nation, it had been assumed she was a young, visiting civilian noble being ‘subtly’ protected by hired guards.

Now she and the Trikru she had brought from TonDC were scouring the indicated area with deliberate haste, intent on finding her and the Ice Nation warriors before something terrible happened. Something that would shatter her heart irreparably and doom her people to destruction. Not before the Ice Nation drowned in Fire and Blood! Lexa snarled mentally to herself, before pounding feet drew her attention.

“Heda, a patrol we questioned spotted the SkaiPrisa and her pursuers entering an old building not two minutes from here!” Kira and her twin rushed up to Lexa and her Generals, eyes bright with concern and excitement at their information. They had been pushing themselves hard, harder even then Lexa had, their desperation fueled by a sense of overwhelming guilt, born of their perceived failure to stop Clarke and protect her from her foolishness. As much as Lexa would love to take them up on the proverbial offer and vent her rage on them, she was mature enough and honest enough with herself to know that she had mismanaged balancing telling Clarke that she needed to know, and interfering with Fate.

“Good, lead us there immediately.” She commanded, moving after the pair as they sprinted away. Soon enough, they arrived outside one of the oldest, untouched buildings in Polis. One of the very few totally undamaged building standing anywhere in the territory of the Thirteen Tribes. Quickly ordering all save her generals and the twins to surround the building and ensure no
one left or entered, she drew her sword and led her companions into the building, fully expecting to meet resistance. Instead, she almost tripped over a pair of corpses, both identifiable as Ice Nation by their pale skin and light hair, and the clan tattoos littering their bodies.

One careful search through the building revealed that every Ice Nation warrior witnesses mentioned was dead, save for one, and Lexa couldn’t believe her eyes as Muruta kom Azgeda, called Azrael, was dragged before her, still bound and gagged. A man she had wanted to get into her ever-so-gentle grasp in order to make ever-so-gentle… inquiries of.

“Well, well, well. Muruta kom Azgeda, goes by the name Azrael, unofficial consort of Nia, Queen of the Ice Nation. Father of her children, and head of the oh so secret group known as Logos. I can’t wait to hear what you have to tell me.” Lexa couldn’t, and didn’t try to, restrain a savage grin, one mirrored by her companions. Azrael and Logos were at the very top of their Most Wanted list, but they had never been given an excuse or opening to take them. Now, not only did she have and excuse, but both the excuse and Azrael had been handed to her on a proverbial platter. “Clarke really seems to be making a habit of doing this sort of thing to your people. Nia might want to quit while she is ahead. Or, rather, quit while she still has a head.”

The Trikru chuckled along with her darkly at her words, while the consort simply glared hatefully at her. After a moment of grim revelry, Lexa moved on to the next, far more personally relevant topic. The moment she demanded Clarke’s location, his eyes had flicked with unwilling, instinctive immediacy towards where two swords were stuck in the wall. Curious and confused, Lexa walked over and tried to twist one free. Instead, the portion of the crest it was imbedded in moved. Anya stepped to the other without prompting, and together they rotated the crest into another one altogether. The group watched with awes as the wall parted, once more revealing the passage behind it. While her generals immediately began making suppositions about Mountain Men plots and Ice Nation treachery, Lexa’s gaze was locked on the emblem painted onto the floor panels of this new passage. A symbol she knew very well, for it was carved in miniscule above the lock of the chest belonging to Skylar M. Griffin, the First Heda and the founder of Polis itself.

“Enough, all of you. There is no treason or Mountain Men plotting here, no more than that which is already evident at any rate.” She said finally, planting a solid kick into Azrael’s side, and Anya resisted the urge to sigh as she continued boldly. “I am going forward alone, remain here until I return.”

“No, we might not at that, but that emblem is on the First Heda’s chest. She and Clarke have the same name, and now Clarke vanishes into a secret passage, in the city founded by the First Heda, bearing the same symbol as her chest? This cannot be coincidence, Anya. One or the other alone, perhaps, but both together? No, more is at play here, and I must know what.” Lexa responded, ignoring Anya’s quiet gasp at those new details. She still seemed reluctant, but apparently understood her reasoning, as she commanded the younger girl to return hale and healthy, before stepping away. Lexa squared her shoulders and marched into the passage, doors closing once more behind her.

She was nervous and fidgety as she waited for the ‘elevator’ to arrive, and even more so once inside of it. She knew from her reading how to use it, of course, and it helped that there was only one button to use, marked only by the emblem (which was also on the walls and floor of the elevator), keeping any decision making exponentially easier. Now, though, she was eager, and she strode out of the elevator with some pep in her step. She could only imagine what she would see
and learn here, what secrets and knowledge she would become privy to as (no doubt) the SkaiPrisa began to claim her rightful place. Lexa felt her nipple peak and crotch moisten as she guessed (hope, prayed!) that this would include claiming Lexa herself. She had had more than a few dreams featuring the blond in a position of power, either over Lexa or commanding Lexa to dominate others for her enjoyment, and it would be a lie to say she wasn’t eager to experience either in truth. And not just a lie, but a damn lie.

So distracted was she that she almost got her head taken off by a powerful slash from an unseen enemy, longsword whistling through the air where her neck used to be as she bent over backwards in what people from the Ark or the Old World would call a ‘Matrix’. Her own sword smoothly came up to parry a follow-up strike, and she caught the first look of her opponent. Despite the strange robe-like armor they were wearing, she could tell by their stance that they were a master swordsman, an expert in the arts of war.

“Well, Heda Lexa herself, isn’t this a surprise. I’m somewhat shocked that you managed to not only find this place, but get inside. Any particular reason I shouldn’t just kill you now?” the figure asked, and Lexa settled properly into her stance, her reply intended to be one of sharpened steel. Instead, a third voice interjected, and Lexa’s heart soared with relief.

“Enough, both of you. Galina, she’s not an enemy but a friend, as you well know. She has been caring for me since I arrived here. Lexa, you can lower your weapon, this is an ally. In a manner of speaking.” Clarke’s tone was tart and both combatants looked over to see her standing there, arms crossed over her chest, foot tapping in irritation. Both sheathed their weapons and turned to face her fully, and she looked at Galina. “You were about to tell me why the hell I’m down here?”

“…Yes. What you are now in is called a ‘Vault’. Specifically the Annapolis Vault, of which there are hundreds if not thousands, and all are repositories of the knowledge, technologies, and artifacts of the First Civilization, who created Humanity here on Earth.” Galina explained, gesturing to the room at large. Even Clarke found herself baffled by all that she saw, to say nothing of how Lexa felt.

“Does that mean God isn’t real?” Clarke blurted, getting surprised looks from Lexa and Galina before Galina started laughing loud and long. Clarke blushed brightly, both at the reaction and the amused comments from both women about her priorities. Surrounded by alien technology millennia beyond anything hse could imagine, she was asking about theology.

“Ah, forgive my laughter, Clarke. I laugh only because that is precisely the same question I, and many of my Brothers and Sisters, asked when we first learned the truth. I will tell you the same thing that was told to me: even the Isu had to come from somewhere. Even if they were created by another, more powerful race, somewhere at the end of the line there was an all-powerful being that began it all. So, my personal answer is. No, it doesn’t mean that at all. I believe in Him, as do many others. Whether you do or do not is entirely up to you.”

“What she says is true, but not in the least relevant at the moment. Theology and matters of faith can wait until you save the planet.” A male voice boomed as the ethereal figures of a man and two women materialized in midair. Both Lexa and Clarke recognized their garments as those worn by ancient Greece and Rome, and indeed Lexa’s Senate dressed much the same. “We are the Capitoline Triad, or rather what is left of them. Memories, imprints, of their souls in digital form. I suppose you could consider us a form of artificial intelligence. I am Jupiter, and with me are Minerva and Juno. We’ve been waiting for you, Clarke Griffin. Waiting for centuries longer than you can imagine.”
“Why? Why me?” came the whispered reply, and Minerva favored her with a warm and gentle smile.

“You are the culmination of millennia of plotting and genetic planning, created to be the one to save this world and your race, and lead them to become we Isu’s successors amongst the stars.” She explained, and Clarke stared at her uncomprehendingly. Juno scoffed before flicking her hand at the silent girl. A wave of energy leapt forth and surged into her, and she vanished in a pillar of light with a hair-raising, blood-curdling howl of pure agony. Lexa leapt forward, intent on saving her from…whatever was going on, but was swiftly tackled and pinned by Galina.

“Stop! Juno is Awakening her blood, if you disturb it now then Clarke dies!” the ancient Assassin snapped harshly, resisting the Commander’s struggles with no small effort on her part. The girl was strong and desperate, a potent combination.

After nearly five minutes of agonized screams and desperate struggles on the part of the two teens, the light finally faded to reveal a changed Clarke. She was naked, a fact that distracted Galina enough for Lexa to break free and rush over to the sky-girl, wrapping her arms around her just in time to catch her as she began to collapse.

Clarke was altogether different, improved, though her basic features hadn’t changed. She was still blonde, still with blue eyes, but to their eyes she had aged nearly two years and been, well…perfected. Her hair, once curly and wild, was now a shimmering golden cascade, and her eyes seemed almost…ethereal, a brightness unnatural having overtaken them. Her body was more toned and muscular, even compared to her previous, admittedly impressive, fitness level. Her hips were a little wider, her breasts a little fuller and…there was this…aura, around her. An exuded field that inspired confidence and obedience.

“What…have you done to me?” Clarke’s voice was tight with restrained rage, right hand tightly balled into a fist as she glared at the Triad, one hand resting just above her mound almost soothingly, anger overwhelming any nakedness-induced shame she might have felt.

“I’ve Awakened your Isu genes, child. Why a worthless human brat like you was gifted with even a single percent of Artemis’ DNA, never mind a full quarter, is utterly beyond me.” Juno sniffed haughtily in contempt, and Galina gasped audibly in shock.

“How is that possible? After so many millennia, having even one or two percent is outlandish at best, a mere five percent in a male creates a sage!” she protested, as if the Triad was not fully aware of these facts.

“That would usually be true, but Clarke’s ancestor was the last Mentor of the Brotherhood. She came to us once she was pregnant, and we adjusted her child in the womb. Made her far more than human. When her child went to the Ark as a five-year old, we knew her line would be the one to lead the homecoming. Just as her ancestors guided the Brotherhood, and indeed humanity, for centuries.” Minerva’s voice was soothing, calm, even reasonable, but it did little to calm Clarke.

“So you’re telling me I’m not human, because you people decided to play God with my entire family line?” she bit out after a moment, eyes dark with confused fear and anger.

“We did what was needed to do to save Humanity from their own selfish stupidity!” Juno snapped in response, and Clarke swelled indignantly, eyes flashing, as she opened her mouth to let loose a torrent of vitriol and abuse, but Jupiter intervened before the situation could devolve any more than it already had.
“Enough, the both of you. There is no time for petty squabbles. Clarke must be brought to the Grand Temple immediately in order to train her as soon and swiftly as possible! This is imperative!” he boomed, and Clarke snorted in amused disgust.

“Look, I really don’t understand what is going on or why I should care, but I have more important things about. I have a feast in my own honor to attend. If I don’t, I put every single one of my people who makes it to Earth in danger.” She sneered, turning to leave, but Lexa of all people stopped her, face solemn. Ignoring her questioning look, the brunette turned to the Triad, eyes dark with emotion.

“As little as I understand of what is going on, I know that you must be The First Ones that the Prophecy of the Sky spoke of.” She said evenly, and Juno snorted again. Staring at her dispassionately, Lexa continued. “The Prophecy was written by Clarke’s ancestor, the First Heda. The only one who does not speak to me within the Heda’s Soul. Given what we’ve learned tonight, I can only assume that it was you who directed her to write the Prophecy.”

“Oh, well done, I hadn’t though you would make that connection. Perhaops you will be of some use after all.” Juno’s tone was of honest surprise, and she glanced at the still-fuming and naked Clarke. “Galina, get the girl something to wear, please. A Master Assassin’s robes, black with red, and a shoulder cloak with the mark of your Brotherhood in silver. Hopefully she will make enough of an impression that she can leave these festivities early and get on with saving Humanity from itself.”

Once again, Clarke found herself baffled and angered over Lexa. Obviously, the brunette warrior woman was still hiding things from her, but what more could there be? She had already found out The Mountain was inaccessible, that she wasn’t entirely human, and that her Ancestor was the First Heda! Not to mention whatever Prophecy Lexa was talking about!

“I’ll explain everything, Clarke. Please believe me, I wanted to tell you everything, but it wasn’t my place. It was…forbidden.” Lexa told her softly, voice begging her to listen, to understand, and Clarke frowned at the sincere pleading in her voice. Lexa was not prone to such displays, she knew, preferring stoicism that emotional pleas. Which meant that she grasped just how significant this situation was to the older girl, nodding her acceptance slowly, she accepted the dark bundle of clothing from Galina, who showed her how to put it on, before helping her strap metal platers over strategic weakpoints. Reclaiming her holstered, heirloom pistol from the floor, the only thing to survive the energy that had changed her, she restored it to its place on her thing. A quick demonstration of how to use her hidden blades without harming herself (and an extracted promise not to use them before she was trained) later, and she and Lexa were on their way back to the surface.

“Why couldn’t you warn me, Lexa?” Clarke asked softly, and Lexa felt the urge to wince and whimper at how sad and vulnerable she sounded. The past few hours had not cast her honesty in the best of lights.

“Much of that I did not know. Suspected, yes, that you were from the line of the First Heda, but it was more than possible she was of a different family entirely. As for the Prophecy…I was not permitted to speak with you about it. No one was, that right belonged only to the First Ones.” She explained, eager to make a start with clearing the air between them. “The Prophecy says that the Princess of the Sky would lead her people back to Earth and create a lasting peace amongst all tribes, and rule as Queen. It is…also said that she will take The Heda and the greatest warriors of her generation as her wives, and they will kneel by her throne as she guides Humanity to prosperity.”
“No pressure, then.” Clarke grumbled, but the contents of the Prophecy filled in a lot of blanks about how the tribes regarded her, how they looked at her with awe and reverence or hatred and fury. In fact, the survivor of the first attack upon her by the Ice Nation had said Nia was the ‘one, True Queen’. No doubt they viewed her as a usurper, a threat to their Queen’s rule, and thus to their people. From their perspective, Clarke could understand their attacks on her. She would do the same to anyone who posed a threat to her own, even if she couldn’t stand the vast majority of them for a myriad of reasons.

“Clarke…” Lexa’s voice was still soft, still vulnerable. Sighing silently, Clarke turned to her, and frowned as the Brunette refused to look at her. One slender finger traced along the warrior’s jawline and brought her eyes up to Clarke’s own.

“Lexa…I’m not angry at you. I made assumptions about the Mountain, and this whole Prophecy thing is obviously important to your people. I can’t rightly be angry at you for holding things sacred.” She said gently, and Lexa smiled at her slightly, hope in her eyes, and Clarke smirked despite a blush. “As for having a harem, let’s play that one by ear, hmm?”

Lexa’s mind blanked as Clarke pressed into her, tilting her head back and claiming her mouth in a deep, almost possessive kiss, and she felt herself grow slick and warm as she finally tasted her future wife. Clarke’s tongue traced her lips briefly, teasingly, and she opened her own mouth eagerly, accepting the request for entrance, and as their tongues tangled she felt herself drifting blissfully. In the lingo of the old world, Lexa was, like many warriors, a switch. Taught to submit only to those stronger than themselves, while civilians like Costia were raised to be submissive to their partner. As much joy and pleasure as she received from dominating the crimson-haired girl, giving herself to Clarke would be even more amazing, if this kiss was any indication. She whimpered sadly as Clarke broke the contact before moaning as she was sharply spanked across the ass, and she gaped in horrified disbelief as the doors opened and Clarke winked at her with a sly gleam in her eyes.

“Now, Commander, let us discuss with your generals the plans for this party…” she said before exiting the elevator, and Lexa stared after her. She had just been left out to dry! Just like she always did to Costia! She fervently swore never to do it again unless Clarke told her too, for now she knew that pain for herself.

Grumbling to herself about ironies and karma, she followed her Queen down the hallway. Still, sexual frustration aside, she was glad Clarke was so happy. She knew that some conflict might arise over the wives portion of the Prophecy in the future, but for now she was going to eagerly await the expressions from her Generals and the other dignitaries when they witnessed Clakre’s new attire.

It should be…entertaining.

As I said before, this story is going to have a lot of BDSM elements, which I need to add to the tags on A03. Not only because I dig that, but also because (as I said before) I really see the kind of society that the Grounders have putting a lot of stock into that sort of thing.

Also, sorry this is posting so late at night, but my life has been really hectic. Not only have I been unable to continue handwriting ahead, but finding time to type up what was already done was just as hard. I hope, however, to stay on top of it :D

Also, still debating on what to do with Anya pairing wise. What do you guy think? Part of the
Harem, not part of it...?
Well, the general consensus was for Anya to be in the Harem. I must say that I am not terribly shocked, but I was surprised that not a single person spoke against it directly, though a few said they didn’t care one way or another. So while Anya will be joining the Harem, so will not be doing so anytime soon, for reasons that will become clear. I’m also debating over Luna and Ontari, though Ontari seems like a total psychopath I ought to just kill, even if she is pretty hot. Maybe i should just have Clarke chain her up somewhere, teach her how to behave...

Further, I'm ignoring everything involving Bekka Pramheda or whatever the fuck she is called. ALIE might still exist, but her origins will be totally different. I think this is obvious, given what was revealed last chapter. I mean, all that shit about ALIE 2.0, the black blood, and all that seems way to fucking stupid to me.

To everyone wondering, yes the G!P is Clarke. This was hinted at last chapter when she was cradling her body just above her crotch. That is the first hint of the biological change she is going through due to Juno’s energy-wave thingy. Though it is currently a matter of intense and furious internal debate over where it should be permanent or...'on call', as it were.

I really like Jude81’s (AO3) idea about having the harem as a whole relationship, but smaller, secondary relationships inside of it. That actually makes a lot of sense, and will add a great deal of depth to the relationships. Mind you, I planned on the Harem ‘entertaining’ each other, but now I have something of a reasonable explanation for it.

As a final note, I can’t guarantee steady updates at this point. My grandmother’s health is declining (she is 95, and it's a blessing from God she has been healthy until now), so I am spending a great deal of time looking after her (I was there for 8 hours today, thus the late-night release of this chapter). Even when I have a free moment, I am far too stressed to really write quality work. However, I guarantee this story will never be canceled! I am far too angry over canon (basically from halfway through season two forwards, though to be honest I saw things that needed fixing from Season One, Episode One) to allow it to lie fallow.

As a final, final note, anyone willing to do ANYTHING to help me and my family financially through this current trial would be deeply appreciated. There is a link to my paypal donation account on my stream, theshadowsofvanity on twitch (twitch dot tv slash theshadowsofvanity). I'll not be able to work for several more months at least with things as they are, and money is getting very tight.

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Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter Eight

The Feast

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The Generals’ reactions had been as good as she had hoped, better even. Shock, trepidation, and of course the totally expected and undisguised lust from Costia, who had arrived while they were within the Vault with some extra soldiers. Kara and Kira had fallen all over themselves to beg Clarke’s forgiveness for failing to protect her, and she (unsurprisingly and endearingly) had forgiven them as gently and honestly as she had forgiven Lexa. The next several minutes were spent plotting their course for the night, especially as Costia had informed them that Nia of the Ice Nation had shown up in Polis, most interestingly with four gorgeous maidens in skimpy clothing with collars and chain leashes. While pleasure slaves, or slavery in general, was not uncommon amongst the clans, it was uncommon for them to travel with a higher-ranked individual, as opposed to be sending on ahead to prepare for their arrival. What was guaranteed is that the four of them had to be relevant in some way to something that would benefit Nia and her Nation, which meant they would need to be wary and inherently suspicious the rest of the night. It was also decided that Clarke would lay claim to Azrael’s blade, an extremely well made, and therefore highly expensive, blade. A fine trophy, even if she had captured instead of kill, with the added benefit of throwing the Ice Nation off balance, perhaps badly enough for them to gain information or advantage. A few minutes of wardrobe manipulation later, and it was decided that the blade would work best holstered on her back, the hilt at her right shoulder.

After a quick refresher course on how to treat the dignitaries, Lexa sent all but Costia from there room and felt her nerves skyrocket again. If Clarke wasn’t so amazing and beautiful, she might be angry with the girl for constantly having her emotions swinging to and fro as they had been the last few days. Now, they were doing so again because she had to mention one minor detail she had yet to share with Clarke, one she did not want to have the Generals witness her expose.

“Clarke, it might be best if you…avoided drinking too much tonight. No one would dare try and poison you, not at an event like this, but celebrations of my people, especially those of this magnitude of significance, tend to get rather…wild.” Lexa said delicately, blushing lightly as she thought about how ‘wild’ she wanted to be with the Princess. When Clarke merely blinked at her confusedly, she huffed in irritation. She really wanted to be respectful of Clarke, and telling her that feasts and celebrations often devolved into city-wide orgies might make her seem as overtly lecherous as Costia, or extremely self-serving. Neither of the above would do her any good whatsoever.

“What she means is, we get hammered and have sex. Lots, and lots, of sex. The entire city turns into one giant orgy, and if you’re too drunk something could happen that you’ll regret once the feast is over.” Costia interjected bluntly, to her horror, and Lexa closed her eyes and shook her head, silently begging the Maker for patience so she didn’t kill her lovably idiotic redhead.

“While…far blunter then I would have preferred, Costia is correct. My people are rather free with themselves at feasts and celebrations, because at all other times we must be prepared for danger from the Mountain Men and the other dangers of this world. So, things tend to get, as I said, wild.” Lexa continued, before giving a wry smile, her voice taking on a very dry note. “Coincidentally, we have many children born nine months after a feast or celebration.”

Clarke snorted in amusement at the tone and the truth of the comment. She had no doubt that Lexa was right, she had noticed that many of the warriors all seemed around the same age, and some of them even had the same characteristics. She could only assume that the more virile and impressive warriors enjoyed more company and thus had more children running about.

“Well, you don’t need to worry about me. It’s not an easy feat getting any Arker drunk, and I can only assume that it goes double for me, thanks to whatever it is that the Triad has done to me. Once the sex starts, I’ll probably return here.” She responded, before looking at Costia, stopping her from speaking, and then looking between her and the downcast Lexa. “I’ve come to
care for both of you, and you are both incredibly beautiful and would no doubt be great fun to sleep with, I don’t want my first time making love to be a drunken orgy.”

Boldly giving both of them a gentle kiss on the cheek, she strode from the room before either could react, leaving a pair of baffled and aroused women behind her. Costia gave a soft whimper of longing whilst staring after her, an action that Lexa mimicked silently, though she felt rather smug that Clarke had kissed her not once, but twice, and Costia only had one on the cheek! Clarke had looked magnificent in her sky-people armor, but in her new garb she was both mysterious and deadly in appearance, a combination that naturally made her all the more alluring to them. The fact that she was a virgin was rather shocking initially, but in retrospect they considered she had mentioned not being with anyone because of the dishonesty and the ulterior motives behind the actions of those who approached her romantically.

“I was really looking forward to seducing her tonight too…” Costia said sadly, looking sidelong at Lexa, who looked rather put out as well, although she was hiding it better. “All three of us were going to have so much fun tonight! It was going to be amazing!”

“I know, I was hoping for it as well. Still, I can understand her wanting her first time to be as special as she can make it. Didn’t we do the same thing?” the Heda reminded her woman, who nodded with a blush and a smile. When Lexa had first begun courting her (after months of being thick-skulled and oblivious to Costia’s flirts and baiting), Costia had made her work for her submission, which had only made it more exciting when she finally pushed Lexa too far and been taken into her bed. Despite her irritation, the brunette (also a virgin, though her maidenhead had not been broken that night, nor any night since. That right belonged to a certain blond woman) had been gentle and sweet their first time. “I suppose we will simply have to partake in one another, ai hodnes.”

“I’m sure we can suffer together, domina.” Costia said flirtatiously, using the old Roman word for mistress, though as far as the tribes knew it was a ‘sleng word for the same, and Lexa smiled at her warmly. It always made her happy to hear the affection-laden title fall from her lover’s lips, and her heart fluttered as she thought of how soon she might be the one saying it to Clarke. Gesturing to her heel, she started from the building, her lover following her dutifully, as they prepared to confront their ancient enemy.

Nia smirked broadly as she looked over the four young women she had decided to give to the sky-princess. All four were the daughters of wealthy civilian families, trained since birth to be the perfect, masochistically submissive women to whomever their families chose to give them too. None were above the age of eighteen, none younger than fifteen, and all were well above average in terms of their physical developments. Taught etiquette, business, language, history, and the house-crafts, they were meant to be the silent and obedient shadows to aid their superiors, assisting in ambassadorial and business ventures with all the charms and poise of the ideal hostess.

A handsome gift, altogether, more than was truly needed for the lives of four low-level warriors without name or standing, but it would impress upon this ‘Clarke’ just how wealthy and powerful the Ice Nation was, and possibly endear them to her as well. It might convince her that whatever tales she had heard from Lexa and her cronies might not be quite as legitimate as they claimed. Doubt would lead to fracture amongst them, and that would inevitably empower her own cause. If all else failed, she could use the girl’s loyalty to their families to either manipulate or outright kill her enemies, though she doubted they would overtly attempt to harm their new domina, no matter who ordered them otherwise.
Daja, the sixteen year old second daughter of the ruling family of The Travelers, a formerly nomadic group of ocean-going merchant families that had been ‘convinced’ by Nia’s own mother to operate entirely out of the Ice Nation, allowing her to challenge the monopoly on oceanic trade and fishing that was held by Lexa’s Boat Clan allies, a minor blow to the girl’s faction, but a blow non-the-less. She, and indeed the rest of her people, had far darker skin than their paler countrymen, their smooth, dusky brown skin, long silky black hair, and deep onyx eyes made her all the more alluring and exotic, something Nia was banking on.

Ailyn, the eldest at eighteen-years of age, was something of an oddity. Though she was from a, technically, ‘civilian’ family and raised accordingly, she was also the eldest daughter of a tribe of fighters that gave no true loyalty to the Ice Nation, but instead to their own Code of Honor and the strongest warrior or leader. It had cost Nia’s mother a great many warriors to bring them to heel, but in the end they acknowledged her as their Warmistress...for now. Ailyn was the weakest link in her plan due to this, but hopefully the others would keep her from doing anything idiotic thanks to that damn Code of hers, like warning the Sky Princess of Nia’s manipulations and true nature.

With pale skin, silver hair, and crimson eyes, she was as exotically beautiful as she was lethal. It was she Nia wanted to analyze any military weaknesses she could exploit, as well as kill Lexa should it become necessary. True, she would have to somehow convince her that Lexa was a threat to her domina, but she was sure it could be done.

Daine, only daughter of the best and most prominent trainers and breeders the Ice Nation had to offer. An expert tracker and hunter, she had an incredible gift with animals that bordered upon the supernatural. Her own skin, while lighter than Daja’s, was still nonetheless the dark brown-gold of a true, full body tan, born from hours upon hours spent in the sun. Her eyes were as green as the forests she spent her life in, brown hair as wild and untamed.

Finally, there was Samara, daughter of a powerful judge, expert in the laws of all the tribes both within and without the Coalition. Obsessed with justice, she was another risk to Nia’s plan, but those obsessed by a cause could so easily be manipulated by it. She had short-cropped brown hair and steel-grey eyes as unyielding as her soul. It would have amazed her that someone so unshakable could be as submissive as she was, but she knew that how one acted for one’s dominus or domina didn’t necessarily affect their outside life amongst others. Not that anything other than absolute, full time subservience would ever be acceptable to her from lesser creatures like these four, of course.

One might wonder, of course, why Nia was willing to risk such valuable assets helping her enemies. After all, the four of them applying their skills to Clarke’s, and thus Lexa’s, cause could be disastrous. However, Nia was indeed supremely confident that she held all the cards in this particular game of chance. Besides, if they attempted to betray her, she could always frame them for something to remove them from her enemies’ arsenal.

“The four of you will be gifted to your new domina tonight, along with a few tools of her trade,” Nia finally addressed them, indicating a table covered with restraints, gags, whips, and the like. “For her to use to take pleasure from your pain, as it should be. I expect each of you to serve her however and whenever she desires, but do not forget that you are Ice Nation. My Nation.”

The four bowed silently, knowing better than to speak without being expressly commanded to do so. None of them were terribly displeased with their fates, having been taught since childhood that they were meant only to serve. To serve the Sky Princess personally, to be first amongst her slaves, would bring great honor to their houses, and to themselves personally. As the slaves of a powerful figure, even if they were not yet Favored, would ensure that those who once would have treated them with contempt and abuse would have to treat them with respect lest their new owner take offence. Something that would doubtlessly prove fatal, disgraceful, or both for the foolish
offenders.

A gesture had the quartet carefully packing the high-quality items into an embossed and intricately carved chest, a beautiful chest of polished mahogany and gold trim with black leather handles. A clatter of chains later and their leashes were attached to the chest itself, which they hefted together. Leading the girls, and the chest they now carried, from her private room at her Polis manor, she started towards the main doors that would lead her onto the streets.

“Oh, Mother, are you ready to depart?” her eldest daughter, Sylvanas, asked her cheerfully. Like Ailyn, she was slightly mutated by an exposure to radiation her mother had experienced while pregnant, with hair just as silver and eyes just as red. What truly made her an oddity amongst their family, however, was not her physical appearance. While the rest of them were cold and cruel, she was kind, care-free, and kind hearted, with a long list of other things that would be wonderful things to anyone else, but were severe character defects to them. Still, Nia had struggled mightily to bring the child into the world, and loved her more than anything else on this rotten, blood-soaked planet. Not that such unusual emotion kept her from using the girl’s nature to her advantage when possible, usually to manipulate others from behind the scenes or by using the girl as a red herring.

It helped that the girl was a lethal fighter, in truth the best woodswoman the Ice Nation possessed. Once, during a hunt, she had shot down a pair of birds with a single arrow, and was respected as being both cunning and swift when she chose instead to fight with her twin long-bladed daggers. She had expressed a great deal of interest in meeting the Sky Princess and had accompanied her mother even as Roan, Nia’s son and heir, had sneered and elected to remain home. While Nia didn’t exactly want to be here, he was foolish to so easily discard a chance to help their family. Not to mention he might have been able to woo the Sky Princess.

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“Of course, dearest. I was simply preparing my gift for the Sky Princess, compensation for the crimes of zealots who dared attempt harm those protected by our great Heda.” She responded with a warm smile that was as false as her praise of Lexa, not that Sylvanas noticed.

“Yes, very disturbing, to think of any of our noble warriors were so foolish or corrupted to commit such a crime.” The girl frowned heavily as she followed her mother out into the street, brightly lit by the hundreds of torches lining the streets and torches of Polis. The streets were already bustling with people, the many taverns and pubs already filling with patrons eager to drink and fuck the night away. The town criers were taking their positions, forming a human relay chain that would pass the words of the Heda and anyone else of import who made speeches to the city at large, while scribes stood ready to record the same for dispatch to all the villages and towns of the tribes. Street vendors were already out in force, hawking wares of all shapes and sizes, including small figures of the Sky Princess astride her six-legged warhorse. It never ceased to amaze how fast traders and merchants could be ready to take advantage of new opportunities. For Heaven’s sake, the girl had only arrived in Polis a few hours ago!

“This should be terribly fun! I’ve never been in Polis during a feast before!” the red-eyed bow-mistress said cheerfully, and Nia scowled as a surge of powerful, rare motherly instinct flared.

“You will not be becoming a woman tonight, daughter, and I’ll gut any man or woman who thinks otherwise!” she said sharply, tone implacable, and her daughter blinked at her in surprise before laughing softly. Nia’s scowl deepened, but her child’s laughter only grew louder.

“Oh mother, ever the great bear defending her cubs with bared fangs and great growls.” She smiled briefly before going back to regarding her surroundings with immense interest. “Besides, I’ve no intention of giving myself to anyone anything soon, I would rather have it mean
something instead of being a drunken fumble in the dark.”

Nia frowned but neglected to comment, more interested in remaining implacable then once again explaining to her daughter that she should aspire to take control, not surrender it. Educating her properly (again!) could wait until later. For now, they were almost at the Polis Stadium, the large ovular arena that had, mostly, survived the war. It was used for special events like public executions and floggings, competitions, and feasts such as this.

Twin spears abruptly blocked her path as a pair of purple-cloaked Senate Guard, ceremonial protectors of Polis (though no less deadly than those that served on the front lines) performed their sacred duty to protect the Heda and the Senate of The Tribes.

“You who would enter the presence of Heda, Sacred Leader of Our People, and the Honored Senate of The Tribes, announce yourself or perish.” The left hand guard commanded, and Nia squared her shoulders, bearing regal.

“I am Nia kom Azkru, Queen of the North and Leader of the Ice Nation. With me are my daughter, Sylvanas, and four gifts of flesh and blood for the Sky Princess, compensation for unsanctioned crimes against her.” She responded just as formally, and the guards nodded in acceptance, returning their spears back to their sides, allowing the group to pass unmolested. Humming in satisfaction, Nia swept past with her group following, navigating the stairs and stone corridors until they reached what was called The Brass Box. A jocular nickname coined by the students, its inception came from the many games hosted there during the early Radicalist Wars, after the Draft had been reinstated. The large stadium, made partially from the scraps of the old, was far larger than its predecessor and was constructed as a way for the tens of thousands of students to blow off steam and practice tactics, during which the high-ranking instructors and officers present would sit in the specially constructed seating area, hence the nickname.

Now, of course, it was where the Heda and her honored guests sat during whatever events required use of the stadium. As a powerful clan leader, Nia and her family were naturally amongst those. Passing several more guard pairs, they finally arrived at the entrance to their destination. Nia ordered her gifts to remain outside whilst she and her daughter made their way into the room.

Lexa and her red-haired civilian lover were there (shameful, really, and pathetically weak for the Heda to take a filthy civilian into her bed on a regular basis) as were her generals Indra and Anya, though Indra was of course technically present as Clan Leader of the Trikru, as opposed to being a general. With the edition of the other Clan Leaders and a handful of more prominent people in Polis, the room was uncomfortably close to being at capacity, though there was still plenty of room for servants to serve the large central table that awaited them. She noted with interest that Luna of the Boat Clan was not present. It was somewhat suspicious, given that the Boat Clan were ancestrally the closest allies of the Wood Clan. No doubt, her absent meant something was afoot.

"Hail, Heda." She spoke finally, voice warm and strong, as she approached the founder and supreme authority of the Coalition, who turned at her approach with an expression of polite welcome and disinterest.

"Nia, I had not thought to see you here! Imagine my surprise, and pleasure of course, at hearing you had arrived in Polis not long ago." The Commander's face was impassive, eyes glittering with concealed emotions, but Nia's hands tightened into fists involuntarily at the taunt hidden within her words, though she remained silent and smiling. Lexa's mouth quirked up slightly at the corners in response, before turning her attention from mother to daughter. "And this must be Sylvanas, the Bowmistress of the North. I've heard incredible things of your archery. Well met."

"Well met, Heda! Your words honor me greatly!" Sylvanas bowed with a faint blush at
the praise, before looking about curiously and continuing. "Heda, is the SkaiPrisa not here? I had so looked forward to meeting her, especially after seeing the models of herself on her mount. A truly impressive looking animal, if I might add."

"Yes, a magnificent creature, one that rejected all attempts to tame it until she arrived. Almost as though only she could bring it to heel. She named it Sleipnir, after an ancient god-king's mighty steed of war. Most appropriate, would you not say?" the last was clearly directed at Nia, though Lexa didn't bother to observe her reaction, instead remaining focused on Sylvanas. "As for Clarke, she is...."

"Right behind you."

The two Ice Nation nobles spun around, hands on their weapons, at the foreign female voice that spoke directly behind them. There, standing not two feet behind them, was the SkaiPrisa, dressed in an elaborate yet practical combination of robes and armor that, combined with the raised hood hiding her face, oozed mystery...and danger. She was tall, taller than they had expected her to be, and while the nature of her clothes hid much of her physique, her chest and strong build were both easily noticeable, as was the sword sheathed on her back. A blade Nia recognized, for it was one that she had personally commissioned and gifted to the father of her children, the only overt sign of her affection for him she had ever permitted herself, lest she fall prey to the weakness of lesser people.

Ignoring their reactions, Clarke slipped past the pair, booted feet soft but still somewhat audible on the stone floor, taking up position between Lexa and Costia, a gesture that was lost on no one, and Nia gritted her teeth at the not-so-subtle assertion of authority. Costia quietly murmured something to her in English, and Clarke raised her hands to her hood, pushing it back and revealing her face to the other occupants of the room.

"I am Clarke of the Sky People, slayer of the yong pauna. Greetings to you, people of the Ice Nation, and to your as well, honored guests." She addressed first Nia and her daughter, and then the room at large, receiving various bows and acknowledgments from the Clan Leaders, though her attention remained on the Ice Nation duo.

"I'm so glad to see you healed and healthy, SkaiPrisa. My deepest apologies for the terrible and entirely unsanctioned attack on you by renegade warriors of my clan." Nia addressed her directly, and the blonde raised a curious eyebrow in her direction as she continued. "Therefore, I have brought you a gift."

A snap of her fingers had her gifts entering the room, and she concealed a smirk as Clarke and Lexa stiffened, thought Costia seemed impassive. Lexa hurriedly began to whisper into Clarke's ear, no doubt explaining to the chit just what was going on, and the blonde nodded in acknowledgment to whatever she said before gesturing for the quartet to come over to her, which they did, placing the chest before her feet before getting on their knees, heads bowed in submission.

"Introduce yourselves to me." Clarke commanded, and so they did, giving only their names and familial affiliations to their new domina. Eyeing them thoughtfully, she spoke again, asking them about the contents of the chest before them. In answer, Daja and Ailyn opened the lid to reveal said contents to her eyes.

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Clarke suppressed the urge to either scowl or grin. As utterly distasteful as she found the fact that slavery existed in the world even after Armageddon, all four girls were immensely beautiful and well-proportioned. They would make ideal servants and Companions, as well as an excellent
insight into the Ice Nation. They, she decided immediately, would keep her company tonight, though not necessarily in the manner that they were expecting.

"Eyes on me." She instructed softly, all four raising their eyes to meet her own after only a hint of hesitation, no doubt fearful of what she might do to them for doing so, even if it was at her command. Smiling at them reassuringly, she continued. "I humbly accept this gift, magnificent that they are. Consider your debt to me from TonDC...repaid." Her mouth quirked slightly as she waved over Kira and Kara, giving them whispered instructions, and they inclined their heads to her before departing through a side door.

"Come, let us all be seated and prepare ourselves for the festivities." Lexa spoke up, gesturing to the long table that dominated the room. The gathered leaders obeyed eagerly, taking their seats (as indicated by the emblem of their clan engraved on the back), while Clarke claimed the leashes of her new slaves and led them over to her own seat, at Lexa's right hand. Frowning at the hard stone floor, she turned to one of the door guards and commanded him to bring enough cushions to ensure the comfort of her slaves, a move that surprised the slaves and most of the clan leaders.

"What should you care for the pains or discomforts of a slave, especially ones meant only to bring you pleasure through their suffering?" the Rockkru's leader, a cruel brute known for going through his own slaves like water through a sieve, sneered contemptuously, and Clarke regarded him with thinly veiled disgust and equal contempt in turn.

"Though I hardly need explain myself to you, I shall do so in simple terms. First, they are a gift from an ally, a member of the Coalition, and as such should be treated well. Second, they are of no pleasure or use to me if they are incapable of performing their tasks in a satisfactory manner. Third, and most importantly, I have no intentions of allowing any true harm to come to them. The true worth of any dominus and domina is how they treat their slaves, and they are indeed human despite their lower station." Her voice could have frozen an ocean for all the first it held. Moments later, the guard returned with a stack of plush pillows, and she ordered her slaves to make themselves comfortable, an order they followed with relief.

"Where is dear Luna of the Boat Clan? And where did you acquire such a magnificent sword, SkaiPrisa? Another gift, perhaps?" Nia asked, face showing nothing but polite curiosity while she prayed to the Maker (someone she often dismissed the existence of, if only in private) that her lover was still alive and well, even if only because he was far too useful for her to lose.

"The answer to both of your questions..." Lexa glanced over at the side door the twins had departed through earlier, and Sylvanas leapt to her feet with a cry of "Father!" as Luna, the twins, and a male Trikru led Muruta inside, bound in ropes and gagged. "Has just arrived."

"What is the meaning of this! What have you done to my father?" Sylvanas cried in distress, and she looked to Lexa pleadingly. "Heda, whatever has happened, I can assure you my father is innocent! He is nothing more than a scholar, even if a well regarded one!"

"Well, for a scholar he had a very nice sword." Clarke responded dryly, placing said sword on the table before her with a sharp thud. She let the silence stretch for a long moment, making several of the Clan Leaders very nervous, before continuing. "Further, one might wonder how a scholar might acquire the position of Head of Security for Senator Falco, especially when said security consists entirely of members of Logos. A group said to be led by one known as Azrael."

Even Sylvanas knew that name, but she soldiered on, unwilling to believe that her father was in anyway connected to the many horrific acts attributed to that name, never mind their instigator.
Still more and more evidence was brought forward, and finally she decided to make one final,
desperate plea to the victim of his apparent crimes, Clarke.

"I beg of you, Sky Princess. I beg of you to spare my father." The proud princess of the
Ice Nation was prostrate on the cold floor, tears flowing freely as she tried to save her father's life.
'I beg of you, do not deprive my siblings and I of our father. Please..."

It was silent for a long, tense moment, before Clarke approached the prone noble. Grasping her
hands where they lay, she tugged the silver-haired archer to her feet, scrutinizing her silently before
walking over to her bound father. Sylvanas gasped slightly as she drew the sword she had claimed
from him, and the whole room waited with baited breath for what they all expected to be an
execution. Instead, Clarke simply continued to stare at the Ice Nation royalty before speaking,
voice thick with emotion.

"My own father was taken from me not so long ago, by the machinations of my mother
no less. As much as I hate what your father has done in the past, and tried to do to me tonight, I
cannot in the face of your plea kill him for doing the same thing my father died for: trying to act in
what he perceived as the best interests of his family and his people." She declared, and with that
she cut his bonds and pushed him towards his daughter, who caught him as he stumbled forwards.
Sheathing the blade, Clarke addressed him in a voice of iron. "The only reason you are leaving this
room alive is because of the love your daughter has for you. Never enter Polis, Trikru, or indeed
Coalition territory outside of your homeland again. Should you disobey this command, your life
will be immediately forfeit, and no heartfelt pleas will spare you a second time."

A sharp gesture from her had the twin guards 'escorting' him to the door, where a group of Trikru
warriors waited to ensure he returned to the Ice Nation manor, where he would stay until Nia
returned home to her palace. While Sylvanas was tearfully praising Clarke for her mercy and the
Clan Leaders were each reacting in their own way, Nia was planning how best to take advantage of
the massive emotional streak that clearly made the Sky Princess far too weak to live for long in this
world.

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Several hours later found Clarke comfortable relaxing in her chair as the festival raged around her,
the air thick with the sounds and smells of sex, alcohol, and sweat.

After the Clan Leaders had eaten and sparred verbally over the table, a few speeches had been
made, primary amongst them an official announcement of Clarke's presence and the merciful act
she had just performed. While many across the city scoffed in contempt, far more cheered wildly,
hers actions proof to them that the Prophecy was real. That peace, true peace, was here at last. Then,
finally, Lexa had declared that they were free to disperse about the city and enjoy themselves.
Clarke had laughed at how fast the room had cleared, leaving only the Trikru and Luna remaining
behind. At that point, things devolved as she had been informed. Luna and Anya were enjoying
themselves with a kind of awkward familiarity that showed care for one another, but (judging by
the looks they shot Lexa) were together because the one they wanted was otherwise occupied.
Speaking of Lexa, she was utterly oblivious to their looks, to busy enjoying dominating Costia for
Clarke's viewing pleasure, or so it seemed since both were shooting the newly-minted domina very
lustful looks indeed. Tris, of all people, had arrived not long ago and was 'flying solo' in the corner
ogling Lincoln, who had been dragged down like a gazelle by a very enthusiastic Kira and Kara,
though they had not remained in charge for all that long. Indra was the biggest shock, as the
normally cold and stoic General was busy riding Gustus like her very life depended upon it.

Clarke bit her lip rather hard, wanting deeply to take the invitation that was before her eyes when
Lexa gave her another heated look before lowering her eyes demurely (*Submission! As it should be!*), but she didn't want her first time to be like this. So, she restrained herself and absently began stroking the hair of Daine, whose head was closest from where she and her sister-slaves were clustered around their domina's feet.

"*Domina,* might I ask you a question?" the younger girl finally asked, leaning slightly into the sensation with a small smile on her face, though her eyes betrayed her worry for her audacity. When she was not immediately struck and the hand on her head continued its motions, she boldly placed her head on her owner's thigh, just as said owner responded to her.

"All of you may always ask me a question. I may be your *domina,* but what I said to that fool from the Rockkru is true. You are cherished possessions, people to be cared for, not pieces of meat to bleed for amusement. The worst I can ever do should you ask me something is refuse to answer and order you not to speak of it again." Clarke reassured her, feeling a thrill of power at the behavior of the girl, and Daine spoke again.

"*Domina,* why are you not engaging in the festivities. It is clear that both the Commander and her lover desire you, and indeed others in this room as well. I and my sister-slaves are yours to use as you please, but you do not. Are we not pleasing to your eyes?"

"God, no!" Clarke snorted, shaking her head before looking around at her baffled slaves. They were obviously seriously concerned about this, and she sighed lightly before expounding. "All of you are intensely desirable, and you in particular would know this Daine, if the room did not smell so strongly as it does." The implication made the girl blush brightly while her sisters grinned at her in amusement. "I am simply...at an odd place. I've never lain with anyone, you see. Never had a lover, and I want my first time to be *special.* Not that the four of you would not be glorious, but..."

"*Domina,* I understand. Naturally you would want to lose your maidenhead to one that you love, but my sisters and I can give you pleasure without taking that from you." Ailyn said softly, looking around at them. "We have our own to offer you, our maiden's blood, and our tongues and fingers can bring you pleasure without taking your blood from you."

"For one thing, your maiden's blood will not be taken from you tonight regardless. Slaves you may be, it doesn't mean it cannot be special for you as well. As for the rest...perhaps. Tell me more about yourselves." Clarke responded, and they did. The quartet told her of what life was like for the civilians of this world, especially those of the Ice Nation, and explained that Nia had sent soldiers to their houses and many others to gather the best women in her kingdom. She had selected the four of them as the best and brightest, the most beautiful and graceful, and ensured that they knew their duty.

"So all civilian women are trained to be submissive masochists with the ability to handle just about any other duties or tasks you are given?" she asked with a frown, wondering why Nia would give her such a useful and beautiful group of assets. While the way they were raised bother her, it wasn't nearly as offensive to her as she thought it should be, and she supposed it made sense based on the tribal society's focus on strength and power and domination. It was the fact that Nia was strengthening her, and Lexa, which was surely the last thing their enemy would want. What was her game? Still, she kept these thoughts to herself for the moment, and instead considered her current libido.

"Girls, I've decided that we're going to do some celebrating after all." She said abruptly, gathering their leashes and leading them over to a long, low...well, it was probably meant to act like a couch or recliner, but looked more like the ancient Roman *klinai.* Draping herself over it, she
quickly instructed her slaves how to remove enough armor to reach her breasts and moist folds. Smiling their lustful looks and the tongues darting out to lick suddenly dry lips, she leaned back and smirked. "Decide amongst yourselves who is doing what, girls. We've got a few hours to kill."

"She isn't anything like I expected." Ailyn murmured in the Ice Nation tongue to her three sisters as they followed their new, kind but still commanding *domina* to...somewhere. After receiving her pleasure from them, and not just allowing them to pleasure themselves, but stroking each of them possessively more than once, she had informed a rather jealous and thunderous looking Heda that she had to depart for 'The Vault', whatever that was. The Heda had been...less than pleased as she scowled at the four of them, but she obviously had enough confidence in their *domina* to allow it.

"Indeed not, but we would be foolish to ignore any possibility of cruelty on her part. Guard your hearts and hold fast your expectations lest she prove the same kind of *domina* we have always expected to serve." Samara cautioned, although it was obvious her heart wasn't in it, and she sounded downright upbeat as she continued. "Yet I will assuradly agree that she is kind and wise, and extraordinarily merciful. I had not expected her to allow the likes of Azrael to live, no matter who pled his case. I am certain that his head would of struck the floor if Lady Sylvanas' pleas had not struck such a cord within her heart."

"Yes, I have to agree with that." Daja hummed with a nod, and Daine nodded in silent agreement, a broad smile on her face as she continued savoring the high she had just experienced. Further discussion was rendered impossible as their owner adressed them again.

"This is one of the few non-sexual orders I will ever give you that must never, ever, under no circumstances, be disobeyed. Whatever you see, hear, or learn tonight must not be discussed anywhere other than in privacy, and with no one other than ourselves and whomever I authorize." Her tone held no threat, no darkness in its depths, only cold promise, and all four bowed very deeply, murmuring her title in unison, and she nodded in satisfaction before leading them inside the Old World building before them.

The quartet watched in awe as she opened the way to The Vault, thought they trembled with nerves as they stepped into the elevator. They had never seen such a device, and being in a small, box shapped machine with nothing but a long drop beneath them was more than a little terrifying. Still, they remained strong as the lift descended into the depths, though all four huddled closser to their *domina*, seeking comfort fromher, which they recieved in the form of murmured words and gentle caresses on each of their arms. Clarke couldn't help but smirk slightly at the audible sighs of relief when the doors opened to disgorge them.

"What...what is this place?" Daja breathed, as they looked around the wide, bright, baffling expanse of otherworldly and advanced technology and architecture.

"Welcome to the Vault of Annapolis, one of hundreds of depositories of the knowledge and relics of the Isu, those you call the First Ones." Clarke responded solemnly as a woman in white armor like her own appeared, a small smile on barely visible lips.

"And it was here that you were awakened, Clarke, heir of Artemis, Scion of The Brotherhood. Sky Princess. Heir to millenia of planning and plotting." She commented before glancing at the four slaves, who were regarding her suspiciously. "I see Nia's gift to buy her life for her foiled plans are duly impressive."

"Indeed, I returned, as promised, Galina. These four are, as you say, my gifts. My slaves.
Which means they are loyal to me. Ideal to be entrusted with both my safety and the arts of the Brotherhood."

"Interesting..."Galina murmured, circling the four almost-naked women, eyes scrutinizing them. However, it was different from the lustful and affectionate looks they had received from their domina, and even from the lecherous looks they had endured during their walk to this place. It was clinical, appraising. "They certainly have some promise, but it is ultimately up to you as Mentor."

"What? Mentor? I just joined the Brotherhood a few hours ago! I can't teach them a damn thing! You're the mentor, not me!" Clarke protested, missing the emphasis indicating the capitalization of the word, and Galina laughed aloud.

"Mentor is a rank, Clarke. Leader of the Brotherhood, and though it also means that you teach those below you, the Isu have provided something of a deus ex machina for you. That, however, is for them to explain. I have one final task to complete." She responded before passing them to enter the elevator.

"Step into the pad at the center of the room." Minerva's voice echoed around them, as said pad began to emanate a soft white light. Clarke stepped up, shoulder square, and after a moment the four slaves joined her, despite the fear filling their eyes. Once again each sought comfort from her, and once again Clarke gave it, hiding the nervousness she felt lest they see it. Their willingness to follow her into the unknown and potentially hazardous, collars or not, was encouraging and endearing.

A flash of light later and they were somewhere else. A massive expanse of darkness surrounded them, and they dared not venture far from their position for fear of falling. All five breathed a sight of relief as massive banks of lights began to activate...and activate...and activate. The group stared around them in awe.

The chamber they were in was ancient and massive, ravaged by time in a such a way that the Annapolis Vault had not been. Carved statues of stone, spiraling staircases ascending to dizzying heights, a myriad of artifacts and technology that even Clarke couldn't comprehend. At the center of the room, a large bed-like object rested, surrounded by a smaller circle of no less than eight others. Each had a large bank of dedicated computer blinking away beneath them, silent in the expanse.

"The Animus..." Clarke murmured, frowning heavily. She wasn't sure how she knew that, and for that matter her behavior had been...off tonight. It was strange looking at one's own actions from an outside perspective, but before today she doubted she would have so boldly commanded slaves (whom she would have violently protested the existence of!) to give her and themselves pleasure. Never mind with others present! "JUNO! WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU DONE TO ME!"

"I told you, you've been awakened, all your inborn natures and subconscious desires brought forth and enhanced. In essence, girl, you are precisely as you are and were always meant to be. The way you would have been had you been born and raised on the ground as opposed to the Ark." The snide tones of the goddess answered her, as the imagoes of the Capitoliane Triad appeared before them, floating above the ground by several feet. "Dominant yet gentle, sensual yet reserved, sexual yet ladylike, lethal yet merciful, commanding yet willing to listen. In a world without the Isu and all that came because of us, you would be as your are now, but it would have been a path drenched in blood and tears."
"So, what, you shoved a bunch of random info and attitude adjustments into my head when you messed with my body?" Clarke growled, believing despite herself that the ancient imprint was telling the truth. The changes they had made felt so damn natural, like she had been dreaming and only recently, well, to use Juno's words, awakened.

"Yes, all of which can be discussed later. For now, using the modified Animi, you will learn all you need to become Mentor of the reborn Assassin Order. Through you, your slaves will do the same. The Animi will record it all to use as a...training program for future recruits." Minerva answered before Juno could, and Clarke hummed her understanding, squaring her shoulders and heading for the circle of memory-diving devices, her slaves at her heels.

Lexa shot up with a gasp, having dozed off in her office waiting for her Princess to return. Her eyes roved the dark room endlessly as she stood and drew her sword. She had sensed that something was amiss, but she saw nothing out of place.

"Your senses are quite sharp, Lexa." A familiar female voice sounded behind her, and Lexa spun, sword raising to block the other woman's path, but Galima remained stationary behind her chair. "Peace, I've not come to harm you. If I had, you wouldn't have woken up."

"And what do you want, Assassin?" Lexa inquired, tired enough and irritated enough to be brusquer than was polite.

Galina's face broadened into a sly smirk as she walked around the seat and sat down, crossing her legs and folding her hands. Lexa found herself sinking into another seat, sword across her lap.

"Let's talk about Clarke..."

There you go, the latest chapter! Please make sure to read both the starting AN and what comes below this line, both are very important!

The first lemon that will happen onscreen in this story is the first time Lexa and Clarke are together, up until then everything will be offscreen. Sorrynotsorry, Clexa priority!

Yes, Sylvanas and the four sex slaves are all imports from other fandoms. Sylvanas is obvious, while Ailyn is the name of Boba Fett's daughter, Daja is from The Circle of Magic, Daine from The Immortals War, and Samara is from Mass Effect.

As a side note, this is how the slave ranking system works in this universe

Family Slaves: more or less insignificant and beneath notice. They do the menial chores like mucking the stables or sweeping the floors. Marked by plain, rough leather collars.

House Slaves: more trusted than Family Slaves, permitted with tasks such as shopping, cooking, or serving the family. Marked by padded leather collars.

Personal Slaves: The highest rank a slave can reach without being taken as a Pleasure Slave, these are the most trusted and valued of the regular slaves, educated and acting on the behalf of the House and Family, and often helping raise and teach the young children of the House as tutors, nannies, and the like. Marked by silver-embossed padded leather collars, far more
comfortable than that of those below them in rank.

Pleasure Slave: Generally regarded as equal in rank to Personal Slaves, though technically higher in rank. They serve their owners in the physical capacity, playing music, reading to them, massaging them, bathing them, and the like. Naturally, they are also serve their owners in the sexual capacity, though it is often stressed that this is not their only duty, but simply to give their owners happiness in whatever fashion is required.

Favored Slaves: these are the absolute pinnacle of being a slave in the society of the Tribes. They speak on their owners behalf, in a far more personal fashion than Personal Slaves are permitted. Their collars are usually gold embossed with silver and jeweled while in public, and silk in private. An offence against them is considered a direct assault on their owner, and is punished very severely. Arguably, a Favored Slave has a better life than many free civilians, as they are cherished and pampered until the day they die.

Generally, the societal ranking system is Civilians, Warriors, Clan Leaders, Heda.

Civilians are Peasents, Merchants, Great Houses.

Warriors are Initiates, Blooded Warriors, Unit Leaders, Generals.

Clan Leaders are above Generals, unless otherwise stated by the Heda. In the current case, Anya outranks everyone but Lexa, Indra, and Gustus, thanks to the measure of closeness she shares with Lexa.

Naturally, once she takes her place, Clarke will out-rank everyone, though she will not be quite so totalitarian as other might in her position.
So again, the general consensus was Ontari and Luna should be in. I agree, cause they're hot. And I know exactly how I will handle Ontari as well. Plus I totally see Luna and Lexa having a thing, since they refused to kill each other in canon. Dunno how I will handle that here though, since the whole ALIE 2.0 and all that shit isn't in this world. Cause it is fucking dumb.

I've decided Clarke will be full-time G!P after she wakes up from the Animus. Originally it was going to be A/B/O style, but I've elected to do otherwise.

To the many people who commented on Nia, yes I thought what they did with her in S3 was a huge fucking cop-out, but then I've been irritated with a lot of the writing since like halfway through S2. To be honest, there was shit that irritated me in S1E1, but S2 is when it got really bad. Yes, releasing Azrael will probably bite Clarke in the ass, but Clarke is Clarke. She will learn how to be ruthless when required in a bit.

The next chapter (not this one, chapter ten) is going to go wildly off of what I planned, and I think it is going to add an enormous amount of epic to this story. Please Look Forward To It (TM)!

##############################################

Nothing Is True (Save The Blood We've Shed)

Chapter Nine

A Lull In Life

##############################################

Flesh slapped on flesh, female grunts and moans were easily audible, and the stench of sweat permeated the air of Ark Storage Room 1337(W) as Marcus Kane, alone and more-or-less unarmed, approached it cautiously.

Why was he being cautious? Well, despite what more...libidinous trains of thought might jump to certain conclusions, he knew that Clarke's posse of adherents were in actuality practicing their martial arts and strengthening exercises. This meant they were will with adrenaline and aggression, younger by several decades, outnumbered him eight to one, and were not terribly fond of him at the moment. Still, they weren't murderers, so he would leave in one piece. Probably...

Taking a deep breath, he strode into the room, face stern, shoulders squared and posture confident and strong. All movement slowly stopped as the girls became aware of his newly-arrived presence amongst them, and he folded his hands behind his back as he regarded them calmly, even as they spread out in a loose semi-circle around him, Reyes and Blake in the center like the co-leaders they were. It was actually highly unnerving, he decided, because it reminded him so of the videos he had seen of wolves hunting down on earth. And here, he was the prey and they the wolves. Not an enviable position to be in.

"Reyes, you overextend your punches. Blake, your footwork is sloppy. Fox, Roma, your blocks are too low. Harper hesitates and Mel is too aggressive." He said bluntly after a long silence,
looking around at them all. “If you’re going to be of any use to Clarke whatsoever, you need to improve significantly. Fortunately, we have two years to make something out of you lot. If you listen to me apply yourselves properly.”

“Excuse me? The Hell is that supposed to mean?” Octavia barked in outrage. “We’ve been training our asses of, by the book! Literally! And why the hell are you here anyway?”

“As fiery as Clarke. Small wonders…” Kane mused as he gazed at her for a long moment, before returning his attention to the group at large. “It is obvious you all know about the Council and their plans for the inhabitants of the Skybox in two years. It is obvious that you know just where Clarke is, and it is obvious that you’re planning on finding her when you reach Earth.”

“We’ve no idea what you’re talking about. We’re just a group of girls staying fit and keeping ourselves exercised.” Raven denied coolly, and Marcus had to bite back a snort of amusement at the various ‘innocent’ expressions the girls were wearing.

“Of course you are.” He rolled his eyes with deliberately overdramatic movements. “Of course, in that case, you don’t want my help training or ensuring that Raven is sent to the ground by the Council instead of getting floated, whenever you put this plan of yours into action. Perhaps I can even arrange to send her down early?”

“And why would you do any of that?” Octavia asked suspiciously, eyes narrowed as she regarded him carefully, and he hummed in thought for a moment, organizing himself, before answering her.

“Clarke was, is, my finest student, and I admire her family a great deal. Besides which, it will be up to your generation to build a true civilization on Earth, should such a thing even be possible.” His voice was full on sincerity, surprising the girls. Before he had trained Clarke, he would never have done what he was doing now. Instead, the lot of them would be in solitary confinement in the Skybox for the rest of their short lives. Clarke had shown him how much warmth and kindness could be just as good at keeping order and helping Humanity survive as cold, heartless justice. Both, he knew now, had their benefits. Balancing the two of them was the way of peace and prosperity.

“Can we trust him, Raven? I mean, he is the Head of ArkSec…” Octavia asked her mechanically-minded friend, and Raven nibbled on her bottom lip as she thought about it. There were significant pros and cons, but the question of the day was: which side was heavier on the proverbial scale? Which offered their best chance for helping Clarke and their people? Decision made, she met his eyes and nodded.

“Alright, Marshal Kane. I guess we’re going to have to trust you, for now. For Clarke’s sake.” She said firmly, folding her arms under her bust as she looked around at her compatriots. “I must admit, learning from the same person who taught Clarke will be far more helpful than just reading from the books and improving through trial and error.”

The girls murmured in agreement, their defensive body language relaxing somewhat, and Kane smiled slightly to himself, pleased that they had agreed. They might not be so happy after he ran them into the ground a few times, but they would adjust just like any other recruits. Better, actually, if he had to wager, given their determination and crude, limited, but still present foundation he had to work with. Things not usually present in his recruits.

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Finn Collins frowned in displeasure as he looked around the Skylight. Raven wasn’t here either,
which probably meant she was handing out with Blake again, just like she had every single day since Clarke got arrested and put into solitary confinement.

Ah, Clarke. The Ice Princess, his Princess. The girl who would be the crown jewel of his conquests, and hopefully his woman at some point. He deserved nothing but the best, and as beautiful as Raven was, she wasn't Clarke. Plus, when Clarke was his, he would have a ready-made powerbase to achieve Chancellorship. Once he controlled the Ark, he could have any woman, or women, that he chose, as often as he chose. A good thing too, because after it got around that he was trying to cheat on Raven and bag Clarke at the same time, all of Clarke's friends (male and female alike) had started to give him the cold shoulder. He had hoped that the rumors would lead to Raven spreading her legs for him in an effort to keep him from straying, but there was no such luck. Not even when he mentioned the rumors and promised that it wasn't true, though he had carefully planned his wording to try and trigger her jealousy. But no, she didn't even let him feel her up, nor would she suck him off! It just wasn't fair, damnit!

Still, he could afforded to be patient, he had all the time in the world to wait the girls out and worm his way into their good graces, and thus their pants. In the meantime, he would just have to try and find other diversions and entertainments.

Thelonius Jaha resisted the urge to sigh wearily, slumping down in his comfortable armchair as he tried to rub away the headache between his throbbing temples. He regretted now more than ever having executed (No, be honest Theo, you murdered him! He mentally scolded himself) his best friend. Jake had always been the smart one, the compassionate one. The one who knew how to convince people to see things his way, but without malice or manipulation. Of course, those very traits were one reason the Chancellor had taken the opportunity presented by Abby's betrayal of her husband to get rid of Jake and, through great and unexpected fortune, Clarke as well. It had almost destroyed him, and it did destroy his relationship with his sons and few adult friends, not to mentioning severely damaging his reputation for being kind and friendly, but Humanity could never repopulate the homeworld and thrive if the well-meaning, but deluded beliefs of the Assassin Brotherhood had the chance to exist, and reemerge.

Freedom to live life as you chose sounded amazing, and should to an extent be permitted. But the rampant narcissism and self-entitlement in the youth of the two-thousands had played a massive role in the Last War, and as such the freedoms that birthed them had to be strangled in the cradle. Only totalitarianism could ensure that Humanity survived with safety and prosperity.

He sighed again as he thought about the horrific crimes his Order had perpetrated in the name of Humanity and its future. Betrayals, murder, kidnapping, war crimes of the most heinous sort...all for a brighter future for Human-kind. Was that so wrong? Were they the very evils of Humanity that they sought to purge, as a doctor might?

Several ancient sayings about intentions and Hell came to mind, and he had little doubt as to their accuracy. But if there was a God, then Hell was where Jaha was headed, and for Humanity he would gladly accept that fate. All of his was far greater than any one or even one hundred men. It was greater than anything, because failure meant the extinction of their species.

Like her former best friend and ally, Abby Griffin was wearily and heavily burdened by an incredible, overwhelming guilt. Unlike Thelonius, however, her sins were far darker, because she had betrayed her husband to his death and her daughter to something as good as.
Yes, she had assumed that between them, she and Jaha could have convinced him not to do it. Or at
least wait until their plans for averting the disaster had failed. Instead, Jaha had not even tried to
save Jake from his own noble nature, instead having him executed within minutes of Abby's
betrayal. Because of her doubt, her weakness, her fear, her husband had been killed before her
child's eyes, and then said child was cast down to a radioactive wasteland alone. Oh, she knew that
Clarke was strong, knew that she was as trained and equipped for the ground as any Arker could
hope to be, knew that her daughter would never go quietly into death. Despite all that, despite her
hopes, prayers, and dreams, she knew that the homeworld was not yet ready. Her daughter had
been nothing more than a test run of their ability to refurbish the Exodus ships and drop them
where they were aimed. They had succeeded in one (the drop ship had made landfall, even if they
didn't know if Clarke had survived the landing itself) but failed utterly in the other. At least the
kids from the Skybox would have a better chance, with the bracelets she had developed to monitor
vitals as well as a radio (provided she could convince the Council to let them have one), tools
unavailable to her daughter.

She would do her level best to ensure that those kids survived as much as humanly possible. It
would never cleanse her soul of the kin's-blood that soaked her hands and heart, but she would
spend her life trying to make up for it. Just like she would never forgive nor forget Jaha's part in all
this.

The door to her quarters hissed open, and her closest friend Callie Cartwig walked through, looking
both nervous and elated, a combination that Abby herself hadn't felt since her first date with Jake
had ended with a kiss in the moonlight on an observation deck.

"Callie, what is it?" she asked, surprised at such bold and arguably rude actions from the
normally quiet and polite woman.

"We got confirmation Clarke survived the landing, Abby. It's grainy and hard to see, but
one of our few remaining satellites snapped a shot of her empty spacesuit next to the pod. Once we
reestablished connection, we downloaded and enhanced it as best we could. It's not amazing, but its
there." Callie's grin was so broad it looked like it bordered on painful.

If Abby hadn't been sitting down already she might have collapsed from sheer happiness and relief.
Her daughter had not perished in fire and smoke, but had survived to land on mankind's cradle, and
obviously the planet was not immediately lethal or she wouldn't have been able to remove her
spacesuit and leave the landing site. Which meant there was a good chance that they could go
home.

"Let Jaha know. It won't make much of a difference until the second dropship proves it
wasn't a fluke, and it's not like we can repair it any faster than we already are." She instructed the
Asian woman, cocking her head to the side in thought. "Have we made any more progress on the
wristbands?"

"Kind of. We found a way to read basic vitals without causing permanent harm to the
wear, but transmitting that information wirelessly has thus far proven totally impossible. Still, I'm
sure that we'll figure something out, we've got the time." Callie responded with a slight frown, as
the team's continued failures rankled her as well as increased the likelihood of the mission failing.

"I don't doubt it. Thanks for telling me, Callie." Abby dismissed her with a smile, one
that was returned as the other woman left the room. As the door hissed shut, Abby leaned forward
and put her face in her hands, rubbing tiredly. She had so much to do, and there would never be
enough time to do it. Still, she had to do it all anyway. Jake and Clarke would want her to save their
people, ensure their happiness, and that was precisely what she planned on doing. No matter the
costs or difficulties.

Bellamy Blake was bitter, frustrated, and suspicious. The first two emotions had been ever-present since before his mother's death, and had only grown stronger with the event itself. The last emotion was due entirely to the behavior of his beloved baby sister, Octavia. Ever since the disastrous Unity Day Dance, she had spent far less time listening to him than he was all that comfortable with. Oh, sure, she was enjoying herself, finally free to come and go as she pleased and make friends amongst the other kids, and he was glad for that. Really, he was, but for many years Bellamy had been the only one to love her openly. Octavia had always somewhat resented their mother for forcing her to live in the floor, for bringing her into a world that consisted only of one, small room. The fact that Aurora had gotten pregnant by some random man they had never met, leaving them utterly bereft of a father figure, or a parent of any kind when their mother died, had not improved her attitude in the least. Now, instead of being with him, she spent all of her time with Clarke Griffin's friends.

His mouth twisted slightly as he thought about the golden-haired Princess of the Ark, whom he both loved and loathed in equal measure. On the one hand, she had lived an idyllic life until only a few short months ago, a life that Bellamy would give almost anything to have lived. Anything except his sister, which neatly brought him to the other hand: that without Clarke, Octavia would have exchanged one cage for another, locked away in the Skybox until she was 18 and, most likely, got floated. That without Clarke, he very well could have never seen her again. These two wildly differing opinions were causing him no small amount of emotional struggle. Said emotional struggle did nothing to improve his mood.

Still, his only real option was simply to try and convince his sister to spend time with him, politely. His attempts at controlling her after their mother had died had not gone very well, not very well at all, as she had very fiercely reprimanded him for trying to take away her freedom, and then ignored him for over a week. Granted, he had somewhat deserved it for trying to force the issue instead of calm discussion, something that his hothead of a sister might have responded a bit better too.

Ah well, he thought to himself with a tired sigh. Nothing to do but wait until she gets home...again. Maybe I'll take a nap..."

"What about Clarke?" Lexa asked cautiously, suddenly quite worried about the sky-eyed girl, but Galina waved her concern off quickly with a soft laugh and a shaken head, with a calming gesture of both hands.

"Nothing untoward has happened, Lexa, calm yourself." Galina's words had Lexa sinking back into her seat, but her alertness didn't fade a single iota. A good thing too, because her next words had her shooting back up. "However, she might be gone for a little, her and those cute, newly-minted little slaves of hers."

"What?!! For how long?!" Lexa cried, distressed once more, and Galina frowned slightly, wiggling her hand in the universal gesture for variables.

"Month, give or take a few days. They're in the Grand Temple, getting trained to resurrect the Order." She explained, and Lexa scowled darkly indeed, very unhappy that the four Azgeda would be the first to learn the sacred arts of Clarke's ancestors. Her mood worsened drastically when she recalled that they were the first to taste her and touch her, the first to make her cry out in blissful release. How she had wanted to strike them down, wipe them from the face of
the Earth for touching Clarke. But she restrained her jealousy, with Costia's help. While the quartet had put tongue and hand to good use, none had been permitted to penetrate or be penetrated by the Princess, and Costia had quietly reminded her that Clarke would likely lose her maidenhead to Lexa herself, based on how the blonde acted around her, a notion that pleased her greatly. Still, the idea of Clarke writhing in pleasure thanks to slaves before Lexa could bring forth such a reaction was infuriating.

"What does this training entail?" she asked brusquely, wanting very much for this conversation to be over. She had rapidly formulated plans for Costia to release her stress to act on. Not that the red-head would be complaining overly much, of course.

"She will be using a machine called an Animus to experience the memories of her ancestors, including the First Heda. Through their lives, she will learn the arts of the Brotherhood, and the true nature of the Last War. Through her, the four slaves will learn as well, and they will all be able to teach others." Galina explained, and Lexa shook her head in wonderment. The Old World was truly beyond her comprehension if such things were within their grasp. Still, it gladdened and reassured her to hear that Clarke would emerge fully trained, capable of defending herself even without a gun. "I, meanwhile, will be scouting out the Mountain to find weaknesses. I've no doubt Clarke will want to wipe them from the map sooner rather than later, especially with her friends being sent down within two years."

"There are no hidden ways into the Mountain, no weaknesses to exploit, and the main gate is far too heavily guarded by men and that Maker-cursed acid fog." Lexa growled, having lost many warriors and scouts over the years, even more if you counted those lost under her previous incarnations.

"There are many hidden paths. Remember, I am off the Old World. I know things about that Mountain that even its current inhabitants don't know. My intent over the next month is to gather more information for her." Galina refuted with an audible smirk, and despite herself Lexa couldn't help return the gesture, gleeful at the prospect. Plus, destroying the Mountain would make her and Clarke utterly unassailable, even to Nia's most clandestine and cruel schemes. Not to mention that one of the greatest menaces of her people would finally be gone, after so long under its dark shadows.

Jerusalem
1191 AD

Clarke grunted as she stabbed yet another Templar through the chest, pushing him aside as he fell with a gurgle, and her free hand dropped to her waist, drawing two throwing knives, and she spun on her feet. Steel sand and twin, short gasps echoed as they embedded themselves hilt-deep into two more soldier's ribcages, and they too crumpled to the ground in a clatter of armor. Finding herself alone for a sheer instant, and hearing the pounding feet of another group approaching, darted around into an alley before wall-jumping onto a nearby roof. Crouched low on the sun-baked surface, Clarke smirked as more Templars poured into the vicinity, checking their fallen comrades before stampeding off down the street, right past the building she was perched upon.

_They never think to look up._ She mused to herself, shaking her head in disbelief as she set off after them across the rooftops, reveling in the freedom she felt as she ran unending, displaying feats of agility and strength of which she had never dreamed. Of course, she was currently in the body of a young man who had trained his entire life, but the Triad assured her that their changes to her body would ensure she could perform all the same feats even better once she was outside of the
Animus once more.

It was an incredible experience, learning through Altair Ibn La'ahad, who according to the Triad was one of the most accomplished and lethal Assassin ever to live, almost single handedly rearranging the entire structure and nature of the Brotherhood. Only his equally famed descendant, Ezio Auditore da Firenze had accomplished anything beyond his incredible deeds, some 500 years later. She could see why her family was so well-regarded by those 'in the know'. It was a bloodline as ancient as the Brotherhood itself, with influences and presence at nearly every major defining moment of human history. Her thoughts returned to the present as the Templars halted and grouped up around the two ranking members of the group. Within minutes, they had been dispersed back to the duties they had been performing before they began to chase her down. Only one Templar, a full Knight, remained separate from the group, heading deeper into the city, and Clarke felt herself leaving the memory as Altair pursued him.

_Purgatory Simulator 2116 (AKA Animus Standby Matrix)_

Clarke blinked slightly, still unused to leaving memories so abruptly, only having experienced a half dozen or so. On the bright side, she was getting better and better with every sequence, only losing Memory Synchronization twice with the last one. A sentiment her slaves agreed with as their mental avatars approached her, dressed as she was in the armored-robes of the Order, thought of course less elaborate than her own Master-ranked equipment.

"Welcome back, _domina._" The quartet chorused quietly, bowing respectfully, and she smiled at them warmly, if tiredly, in response. While she, herself, suffered no physical strain or injuries through the Animus, Altair's genetic memories echoed with both, an echo that she felt aching like a phantom touch even now.

"Thank you, girls. Everything still getting passed along properly?" she inquired, and all four nodded together, and she nodded back in satisfaction before sighing deeply in exhaustion, slumping slightly in place. Concerned, the four slaves rushed to her side, but even as they reached her side and stretched forth their hands to sooth her, she vanished once more into a memory, leaving them frowning heavily in displeasure as the world around them warped into the scenery of the sequence, the Arts of the Brotherhood flowing freely into their minds once more. Still, they remained aware enough to be discontented with the obvious strain on their owner from the extended barrage of memories and sensations beyond her normal experiences. It was odd, though, they could tell that for some reason having a cock between her legs didn't feel quite as odd as it should have to their owner. Irregardless, they turned their attention and wrath towards the overwhelming mental presence that was Jupiter.

"You push her far to hard. Even the Sky Princess cannot keep pushing herself so hard for so long." Ailyn rebuked him, seemingly unconcerned that the colossal presence and it's owner's ability to squash her like an ant with a literal thought.

"Perhaps not, but it is necessary regardless. She must be ready to confront what she must, and become what is required. There are things that you _all_ must be prepared for, threats that you cannot yet begin to comprehend. She will rest herself only when she dances upon the razor's edge of breaking, and _not_ a moment sooner." He responded emotionlessly, uncaring of their concerns and fears, and all four of them bristled angrily in defense of their _domina._

Jupiter turned away, smirking slightly to himself. While the Animus was indeed teaching Clarke and her slaves how to move and fight and craft as their fore-bearers did, but was also subtly changing them, twisting their more subtle thought processes to a more...helpful mindset. Oh, it was
nothing sinister per se, just a few tweaks here and there for further strengthen the dominant instincts and commanding aura that Juno had given Clarke, and ensuring that the four slaves would remain loyal and subservient. Clarke, if she ever found out, would no doubt be apoplectic with rage, but by then it would be far too late for her to do anything to reverse the process.

Clarke, meanwhile, was once more locked in battle. This time, however, she was battlin de Sable himself in front of none other than Richard the Lionheart of England and his elite knights, in order to prove that de Sable and his compatriots were indeed the traitors she, or rather Altair, had claimed them to be. The noble, however, was putting up a much greater fight than his various subordinates had throughout her ancestor's campaign of redemption. She had been badly shaken when she realized just how much influence the Templar's possessed, something that had not happened until she had discovered that de Sable was well on his way to personally convincing the Lionheart to team up with his enemy, Salah ad-Din, and wipe out the Brotherhood together. She cursed darkly in Arabic (and didn't that feel bizarre, to speak a language she had never before heard with perfect fluency?) as her opponent managed to land a solid blow on her, drawing first blood with a moderately deep cut on her left thigh.

"You cannot beat me, Assassin. You've spent your life traversing the shadows and striking down the unawares. I have fought against the greatest knights the Saracens could muster, and emerged victorious time and time again. You are within my area of expertise now. I hold the advantage on this field!" the Templar sneered at her in contempt, and she spat on the ground in response, darting forwards once more. Steel sang and clashed as the battle was rejoined, and the gathered knights and nobles watched with rapt attention as the pair raged back and forth on the Field of Honor for several more minutes, before they locked blades. The more powerfully built de Sable began to exert all of his admittedly superior physical strength against the smaller Assassin, and Clarke gritted her teeth as she felt herself begin to buckle. Twisting her torso, in a move of pure desperation, she threw him off balance and drove and elbow into his face, breaking his nose and staggering him badly. A flourish of her blade later, and bitter steel sank into flesh as she slammed it hilt-deep into his chest.

Against all odds, he lived long enough to shatter Altair's worldview, as he exposed the Mentor of the Levantine Assassins as a high-ranking Templar, and that he had been for many years. Despite the knowledge that his teacher had betrayed both their order and him personally, Altair still managed to make a half-decent attempt at convincing the King to seek peace with Saladin, but the Lionheart could not be swayed. Returning to Masyaf, she had found herself forced to battle and slay the man that he had once respected over all others, looked up to almost like a son looks to his father. The power of the Apple terrified Clarke, and she began to realize just why she had been created. The Templars could never be allowed to lay claim to such a terrible power, or worse yet, Nia. She had no doubt that the cruel Queen would use such artifacts to bathe the world in blood and create an empire built upon the bones of thousands.

"It would be foolish to so easily cast aside such a boon when you could instead make use of it." Jupiter commented when she emerged from the memory and declared that any Apple she came across would be either destroyed or locked away, bar none. "You could walk alone into Mount Weather, end a century of terror and pain in a single instant. You could bring Nia to heel, even end the brutal practicies of Ark and Grounders alike."

"I will change this world for the better, but I will not do it through something so immoral, so depraved. Something like that should never have been created, and I will not allow them to reemerge into the world stage. Especially not in an era of incredible conflict that is guaranteed to see such things misused once again. I will not be swayed on this." Clarke snarled, furious beyond words at what she perceived as a slightly against her morality and judgment, as well as the fact that
such an object could exist.

"Naive. Nobel, admirable even, but naive." Juno commented, though she did not show herself. Surprisingly, support for the Isu came from the mouths of Clarke's slaves.

"Domina, while I would never condone anyone besides yourself being entrusted with such a potent object of power, these 'Apples of Eden' can allow you to give us the peace we have fought for 100 years." Samara said softly, and Clarke looked at her sadly.

“It would be a false peace, a peace that would collapse the instant that the Apple ceased its influence on Humanity. Remember, the Apple’s control resulted in the humans rebelling against the Isu, lead to a war that almost annihilated both. Would the humans have been more agreeable and willing to serve the Isu without its control? I don’t know, but finding out your free will has been stolen without your knowledge is…not something most people will forgive and forget. No, the peace we will one day raise children is a peace that we need to fight for ourselves, or it is meaningless.” She explained firmly, thought gently. She had no interest in brainwashing an entire species, especially not her own. Even if there were more than a few people on The Ark that could use a bit of attitude adjustment.

“Would not a false peace be better than endless war?” Daine asked softly, but it was Ailyn that responded in the negative.

“No. My people know this well. Several times in the past, before the Ice Nation brought us into the fold, we allowed rivals to depart in peace after we had beaten them. Each time, they used this false peace to strengthen themselves and learn our weaknesses. False peace does not last long, and they always bring more fire and pain and death than the wars that came before them.” Ailyn’s voice was dark, no doubt thanks to her recollection of the many atrocities her people had suffered, that she had been taught of as a child.

“So, what then will you do, domina? You are meant to rule this world as Queen, as was foretold, but if you reject the Apples how will you convince the Tribes to set the Old Hatreds aside?” Daja asked, voice very respectful despite her great skepticism, and Clarke grimaced tellingly.

“I will be honest: I don’t know for sure. But I know stealing away people’s free will and making them mindless drones is not and shall never be acceptable, something those damned Templar’s never grasped, for all their good intentions. The Prophecy says I will free Humanity and guide them to true, lasting peace. I can only have faith that the solution will present itself in time.” She admitted, thought she kept her voice upbeat. Looking at Jupiter, she raised her eyebrows.

“Sending me back in?”

“No, not at this moment. Altair’s story, or what of it you needed to see and experience, is now over. When you have rested properly, we will move on to your next ancestor, one who interacted directly with us several times. Ezio Auditore da Firenze, possibly the greatest member of your Order ever to live.” The Isu responded, turning away and vanishing as his presence left the Animus, leaving them alone to fade into unconsciousness as they were sent into sleep.

Diane Sydney was not pleased, indeed she was not. In fact, she was absolutely, downright, overwhelmingly furious. Her attempts at finding out anything specific related to the drop-ship being repaired had failed utterly, not matter whom she or her people talked to. It seemed that
whatever Jaha and his faction were up to, they were keeping it on a very strict, utterly need-to-know basis. Even Shumay hadn’t been brought in on it yet, despite being 2IC of ArkSec. She could make some damn good guesses, of course, but she was loathe to plan anything without solid intel to base any plots upon. Doing otherwise had the strong potential to be nothing short of disastrous. She knew that whatever it was, it had to be big. Big enough that she could probably use it to get rid of Jaha and the Council much earlier than she had planned for. Given the secrecy they were operating under, it had to be something that the average adult on the Ark was unlikely to approve of, which honestly didn’t leave that many options available, given that most people just kept their heads down and didn’t ask too many questions about what The Council did. So, what did she know? Clarke Griffin was on the ground, and had survived to reach it. Indeed, she was presumed to still be alive. The Council was repairing one of the largest drop-pods available and keeping it far, far quieter than she thought would be possible. Abby Griffin was working on something equally hush-hush, whilst Kane was teaching a bunch of Clarke Griffin’s friends in Security things…

Her thought process ground to a halt, and she went back over her information, mouth quirking into a smile, then a full blown grin, and finally loud laughter. She couldn’t believe that she hadn’t seen it before, it was precisely the kind of thing Pike would suggest and Jaha would reluctantly go along with, so long as there was a proviso that it was done in utter secrecy. Sending the expendable children from the Skybox down to see if the planet was survivable en masse. She was willing to bet Clarke’s little fan-club had figured it out (or Reyes overheard the older mechanics talking about their project) and were planning on getting themselves locked up. With this, she could probably engineer a fall from grace for the Head of ArkSec, but she had far bigger fish to fry than Marcus Kane. But how best to fry them?

She wasn’t going to do anything rash, that much was certain, and she was definitely not going to tell Shumay. The fool would either turn her or Marcus in to try and curry favor, and she had no inclination of being floated or even imprisoned (Jaha wouldn’t dare float her for anything other than the most serious of crimes, like rape or murder. Her supporters would tear him apart) as they could make her plotting difficult at best, impossible at worst. And she would be damned if she didn't regain her rightful place as Chancellor, especially is they were going to repopulate the Earth. Perhaps she could arrange to be snuck onto the drop-ship? Play the sympathetic leader to the children and use them to take control when the rest made landfall? The parents would fall all over themselves to turn on the man who sent their kids to die, and support the woman who had risked her life to help them survive. The only problem, of course, was the chance that she wouldn't survive the ground long enough to take power. On the one hand, 'nothing ventured is nothing gained.' On the other, taking control was just as possible if she remained on the Ark, and her chances of survival were better too. Still, she have to dedicated a significant amount of thought to this, she decided. Both sides had powerful strengths and debilitating weaknesses, and as such it was no small matter, nor one to make a snap decision on.

Her calculating mind continued to tick away as she considered how best to make use of this information, or at least what to do with it right now. Discrete inquiries would have to be made to acquire more detailed information, of course, which should be somewhat easier now that she had some of the pertinent information. Smiling cruelly quite suddenly, she went over to her desk and pulled out the small, yet highly powerful minicomp that she had secreted away during the first year of her Chancellorship. Flipping it open, she powered it on and waited the scant few seconds needed for it to fully come online. A few keystrokes later, and she was inside the Ark's systems, adjusting a couple of schedules with precision and skill to ensure that she had some ten minutes alone in the Control Center, an easy task given how well she knew the ArkSec system thanks to Shumay. Even better, it would look like nothing more than a computer error, a fuck-up, to anyone who noticed it after the fact. Shutting down the minicomp, she returned it to its hiding place and got to her feet to begin a slow, purposeful track to the Control Center.
Entirely unbeknownst to her, someone else had less than legal access to the Ark Systems, and unlike ArkSec she was actively monitoring them for anything of...interest. Something they had started doing months ago, and was now very glad for her foresight and paranoia. But what would someone, whomever had done this, be hoping to gain? It was not her faction that was doing it, she knew, because she was the only one capable. Nor was it Kane, Jaha, or anyone else on the Council, not at this hour. And if it was none of them, she really needed to know what was going on, and that meant sneaking out after curfew. Not that it would be the first time, and it sure as hell wasn't going to be the last. Taking off her headest, Raven Reyes got to her feet and slipped out of her room, the room in which she lived alone ever since her parents died last year. She hadn't been moved because the Council 'didn't want to intrude on her grief', but in reality she was close to the age where she would be 'encouraged' to marry, no doubt to dear, dear Finn, and they didn't want to bother moving her more than once. Much easier to move her 'husband' in with her.

Quickly and silently traversing the hallways, she once again slipped into the ventilation duct and took up position next to the grate that overlooked the Control Center, and just in time too. Moments later, the ex-Chancellor sat down at the main console and opened a certain program. One that was known all across the old world for a rather upbeat and musical ringtone that was its hallmark.

"I thought that I would be hearing from you just around now. What the HELL did you people just drop into my back yard, Diane?" a man's voice came from the speakers as his image (though Raven couldn't discern anything beyond basic characteristics thanks to the grate and poor viewing angle she had), and Diane smirked in response.

"Not so much as a hello, Cage? I'm hurt, we haven't chatted in years." Her tone was falsly morose, and Cage snorted in response, waving a hand at her. Growing serious, Diane leaned back and crossed her legs. "Thing have gotten complicated, Cage. Jaha sent a scout down three days ago. A teenaged girl from ArkSec by the name of Clarke."

She paused for a long moment as Raven strained to hear, heart pounding at the mention of the blond.

"I want you to kill her, Cage."

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There you go, chapter nine! Stuff is really going to be getting really interesting now :D
“Why is that, Diane Sydney? Why should I kill her instead of bringing her into my Mountain? Or, better yet, my lead scientist believes that we can use the blood of your people to allow us outside Mount Weather without radiation suits.” Cage responded, even as Raven
struggled to remain silent and unnoticed despite what she had just overheard.

“Oh? Interesting, what then would you say if I told you that in two years’ time, at least twenty more teens in excellent health will be sent down very nearly on top of you? All criminals that we care little for beyond their use as scouts and breeders?” Diane responded, and there was a long silence from the other side before Cage responded, sounding very interested indeed.

“Well, to that I would say that I am extremely interested indeed, and I might be willing to get rid of this girl for you, but what is your beef with her?” he asked curiously. While it would make no difference to him one way or another, he was interested in what might make the calculating, cold, and cruel Diane ask him to hunt someone down.

“The Griffin family has been a thorn in my side for years, I would never have lost the Chancellorship if that bitch Abigail and her fucking husband hadn’t messed thing up for me!” Diane snarled hatefully, surprising both her listeners with the amount of pure venom in her voice, though Cage quickly shoved this aside, countenance darkening severely at the surname of his new target.

“I’ll take care of it Diane, I’m not terribly fond of the Griffin family myself. Our families had...issues with one another, back in the Old World.” He said coldly before ending the call, leaving the former Chancellor blinking at the now-blank screen in surprise and displeasure at the abrupt dismissal, but her mood quickly improved almost immediately thereafter. Whatever Cage’s reasons, he had agreed to remove a thorn of potentially massive size from her side. How and why he did it wasn’t all that important to her, though she was mildly curious why the two families had been in conflict with one another, especially a conflict that was bad enough to create so long-lasting and fatal a grudge as the one Cage seemed to bear. Deftly covering her tracks, she swept from the room and hastened back towards her quarters.

Raven, meanwhile, was struggling between incandescent fury and pure terror. She had never imagined that people might have survived the war on earth, and she couldn’t even begin to fathom how Sydney had discovered the fact and initiated contact with them. By not informing the Council, she was most assuredly committing a treason significant enough for her death, the immense popularity and political clout she possessed or not. Retreating to her own room, Raven began plotting away, intent on saving Clarke from this ‘Cage’ person. Warning her via was right out, of course, which meant that the only other viable option was to send someone from their faction to act as a messenger and help Clarke. The only question was, whom to send, how to send them, and when? Not to mention, how would whomever they sent even get in touch with Clarke in the first place?

It would certainly be a difficult and dangerous task to undertake, thought that was obviously a given. It would also have to be someone who had a decent chance of surviving on the ground, and helping Clarke get into the Mountain and contact the Ark. And, really, that left only one option. Convincing the others, of course, would be another issue.

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“I’m going.” Octavia declared the moment Raven had told the gathered group of girls and Kane that someone had to warn Clarke, cutting her off mid-sentence, much to her amusement and exasperation. There was an incredible clamor as all the girls protested, offered themselves instead, or generally tried to talk over each other. It took several tries, but finally the mechanical genius was able to restore order and, for once, laid down the law. She would be the one to go down to Earth to help Clarke, and that was the end of it.

“I’m the best choice.” She explained firmly to the unhappy group of teens,
uncharacteristically solemn and serious as she looked around at them all with hard eyes. “There is a
damn good chance that Kane can get me sent down on a Council-sanctioned mission. It can very
easily be pointed out that Clarke will need technical support and know-how to get into the
Mountain and make it habitable, never mind getting in contact with the Ark itself. The Council
won’t go for sending any qualified adults down, so that means it has to be me. Besides, there was
always the chance I would get floated instead of sent down with our other plan, and this way that
can’t happen.”

“And, this way no one else is implicated if you have to go rogue and do this alone. If any
other member of your group were to go down in a one or two-man pod, they would know you were
involved because you are the only one in this little group with the ability to get one into useable
shape.” Kane added, glad that Raven was thinking things through. He had been the one to
originally suggest it back when he first joined the little group, after all, and the rest of the group
couldn’t afford to be imprisoned, they weren’t trained enough to be locked away and unable to
learn and train more, and if too many people went down they would go to their deaths, for while
Clarke was well-trained and well-equipped, she couldn’t protect a half-dozen half-trained people at
the same time. No, Raven was the best choice, and it wouldn’t even be that hard to convince the
rest of The Council that she had figured out what was going on and had fled to Earth. Sinclair
would support the idea of Raven surviving, the Head of Maintenance adored the dark-skinned,
referring to her as ‘the youngest and most skilled mechanic in the history of the Ark’ on many
occasions. Even Jake Griffin had complimented her skill many times, claiming that she would one
day surpass him and take his own position.

“I don’t like this.” Octavia grumbled angrily, folding her arms, as if any of them felt any
differently than she about the circumstances. Glaring at Kane, she continued in an accusing tone. “I
know ArkSec isn’t exactly amazing, but how the hell did Sydney get in touch with the ground,
especially with none of you noticing? How in God’s name did she even think of trying?”

“I can honestly say that I have no idea. I mean, there are a few satellites left, so I can only
imagine that the Mount Weather survivors pinged one of them at the same time as Sydney, back
when she was Chancellor. Each noticed the other party and started communicating. I would guess
that she kept the information private until she thought she could use it to take power back or
discredit Jaha in some way, she is both cunning and manipulative enough to pull it off.” Kane
responded thoughtfully, stroking his chin as he evaluated the situation at hand. “Regardless of this,
you had better get to work Raven, as soon as you can. Even you can’t get a drop-pod properly
operation overnight.”

“Overnight, no. Give me three days to a week and I can get both Octavia and I down in
one piece.” Raven snorted, waving off the renewed protests from the group, though Octavia was
positively gleeful that her friend had changed her mind and decided she could go. “The Council
will probably take it as an excuse to lock her up regardless of whether they can prove she was
involved or not. She represents an unknown and disloyal quantity that they can’t tolerate. Plus, you
don’t need us around if you’ve got Kane training you.”

“I’m going to have to train both of you into the ground once that pod is finished, because
you are no good to Clarke if you can’t keep yourselves alive for longer than five minutes.” Kane
warned the pair of them, though neither seemed to be discouraged in the least. Indeed, they seemed
almost excited at the prospect. “Three weeks, minimum, is the length of time before I will sign off
on this. Probably closer to a month.”

“Tch…fine.” Octavia grumbled discontentedly, while Raven simply nodded in
acceptance, though she looked far from happy about the caveat. Not that Kane was particularly
interested in their happiness, so long as they managed to survive on the ground. He had to admit
though, this group was really starting to grow on him.

“Please forgive my failure, oh beloved queen. I underestimated the usurper badly, and have brought you difficulty and shame. I offer my life in compensation for these transgressions.” Azrael’s head touched the cold stone floor as he prostrated himself before his lover and ruler, who was reclining on her throne, Roan seated on the Heir’s throne a tier below her own lofty dais. A ring of Iceborn Elites, the very best of her nation’s soldiers (and as such had the duties of the Royal Guard) stood in intervals around the room, eyes ever-watchful on everyone present, including each other, for any hint of treachery. A wariness and distrust that she encouraged, just as she encouraged infighting and savage rivalry amongst her advisors and the High Houses. After all, if they were busy murdering each other for profits and her favor, they would be too busy and to grudge-laden to combine forces for a coup, with the excellent bonus of ensuring only the best, brightest, and cruelest survived to serve her. Everyone else was weeded out and cast down.

“Your shame will not end so easily, Muruta, your life is still worth using. It will only be expended at the time I decree it in a manner that I see fit. Besides, your blunder in Polis may work greatly in our favor. This Clarke has revealed has revealed a truly debilitating weakness in allowing you to live simply because Sylvanas asked it of her. She did not even demand the girl’s life in return as she should have, nor claimed her as a thrallina as she might have. The girl is merciful, and this mercy will bring about the downfall of the Coalition.” Nia responded coldly, not permitting him to rise just yet. Even if she wasn’t going to slaughter the fool, he could endure a little discomfort.

“We could always offer her, if you should so desire, as recompense for my own transgressions? We had always intended for her to marry someone in a position of power, did we not? And with her inside of the SkaiPrisa’s household, we will have a significant asset in place.” Azrael said tentatively, very much afraid of the reaction this would garner from his lover, but she scoffed and waved a hand in dismissal.

“She may have been intended for such, but she will not be anything less than the domina of some weak-willed noble or powerful merchant house head. I’ll not feed her unnatural fixation on being a thrallina, and especially not thrallina to a woman whose head will adorn my throne.” She sneered, her contempt for Clarke dripping from her words.

After some further discussion, everyone save her guards were dismissed, and she frowned heavily as she considered her next move. The SkaiPrisa had revealed a devastating weakness, one of incredible size and ease of manipulation. She would have to bide her time in exploiting it personally, however, for all the world knew that her soldiers and her lover had tried to kill the chit, even within the sacred boundaries of Polis itself, the city in which conflict was forbidden and perpetrators often faced public execution for the transgression. Indeed, the Senate Guard would have been obligated to execute her lover regardless of who he was if not for Clarke’s direct pardoning of the man.

She assuredly had to try and discover where and how the girl was communing with the Old Ones or, failing that, eliminate her promptly thereafter. She would be helpless and weakened whilst her mind was in the otherworld or shortly after returning, perhaps enough so that she could be taken or slain, either of which would benefit her immensely. With Clarke in her possession, she would be immune from retribution from Lexa and her Coalition troops. Perhaps she could even force concessions from the Coalition for the promise of Clarke’s life? Of course, she would still kill Clarke anyway, but she didn’t need to tell them that.
The only problem was, it would be difficult at best to find the ultra-secret location in which she currently resided, since all the Heda had ever told anyone (including the generals) was that she would be spending the next month in some sort of mystical stasis as she spoke with the ancient power and learned to wield arts long forgotten. Obviously, Nia wanted to prevent that from occurring, but even if she could find the location she doubted she would be able to gain entrance. Which means that she would have to be dealt with after she emerged, which meant that Nia couldn't be tied to the action in any way. That meant she needed someone with personal motivation to kill the blonde, and there was only one person in her nation she could think of.

"Bring Ontari kom Nightblood to me immediately." She commanded the nearest Iceborn, who bowed and departed to find the most gifted warrior in her possession, one whose merciless brutality would have earned her a spot in Logos had she not been entirely too brash for such secretive operations as those undertaken by the unit.

Most bizzarly given Ontari's attitude, was that the brunette warrior was her daughter's closest friend and confidant. If Sylvanas didn't know that Nia would butcher the Nightblood heiress for it, she was sure that Ontari would have been brought into the girl's bed already, so close was their relationship. Fortunately, for her, manipulating one in turn controlled the other, and if she told Ontari that Sylvanas was in danger, she would charge off on a rampage without asking for proof or explanation. Perfectly deniable, for all the Ice Nation (and thus Lexa's spies) knew of Ontari's fanatical devotion to Sylvanas. She would demand an honor duel from Clarke at the earliest possible moment, and either kill her or die heroically, turning Sylvanas' admiration into hatred. Either way, Nia came out far ahead.

A scant handful of minutes later, and Ontari strode into the throne room, cloak swirling around her, hand resting as ever on the hilt of her long, curved sword, which resembled what the Old World would have called a katana. She bowed rather than knelt, one of the few who could get away with such an action thanks to her own prestige and the favor she enjoyed with the royal family.

"My Queen, how might I be of service?" she inquired straightening from her bow with raised eyebrows as she took in Nia's carefully cultivated expression of solemn concern.

"You heard, of course, of the SkaiPrisa's survival of the lamentable and rogue actions of our nation's warriors?" she inquired coolly, and received a nod in return. Leaning back in her throne, she steepled her hands. "I have reason to believe that when she awakens from this...spiritual retreat she has apparently gone on, she will attempt to claim Sylvanas as a thrallina for compensation. I fear for my daughter, worry over what perverse depredations she will suffer at the hands of this foreign jackal for crimes not her own, but I will have no choice but to give her up if I am to preserve this peace that we enjoy."

She has already claimed four of our greatest, including Ailyn, and now she seeks to take away Sylvanas too?" Ontari hissed, knuckles white on the hilt of her sword. Nia nearly twitched at that, for she had forgotten that Ailyn and Ontari had often trained together. The amusement she felt at her deception grew, for so blindly and foolishly devoted was the warrior that she had decided within her own mind that the four girls had not been offered to Clarke by Nia herself, despite all evidence to the contrary. Amusing indeed, and it would only strengthen the girl's hate with no effort on her part, something she delighted in whenever it was possible.

"So it would seem. Of course, there is always the chance that some disaster might befall her and save Sylvanas and the others from her cruelty, but I did not wish for you to be caught off-guard when things come to a head. After all, I know how you value my daughter." Nia told her with sadness filling her voice and glee filling her heart, and Ontari's eyes became stone-death as she asked to be dismissed. Allowing it with hidden eagerness, she watched the warrior storm from
the room happily. Everything would fall into place, she was sure, with little effort on her part. And if not, she lost nothing at all.

Ontari stormed through the halls of the palace, expression thunderous, and servants, nobles, and soldiers alike scattered before her, eager to remove themselves from her path lest she unleashed her wrath upon them and painted the corridors red with their blood. While normally she would take note off and somewhat enjoy their fear, she was far too focused on her planned vengeance. She would burn Polis and all the Coalition lands to the ground before she would allow any harm to befall Sylvanas. The girl who had given her a purpose, who had saved her from herself in her darkest of moments.

Flashback, Three Years Ago

Ontari gazed listlessly across the glittering expanse of lights that was the night sky, legs swinging aimlessly over the empty darkness of the drop to the ground from the heights of the parapet on which she sat, dry tear tracks streaked across her face. Empty bottles, once filled with alcohol, lay whole or in piles of shattered glass upon the wall behind her or upon the ground far below. A testament to how long and how heavily she had been drinking away the agony within her heart.

"Any particular reason you're sitting up here drinking this piss?" a soft voice inquired from beside her, and had she been less drink she might have fallen to her death after jumping in surprise. As it was, her head rolled limply to the side, eyes landing upon a red-eyed girl dressed in black leathers. What few thought processes her alcohol-soaked mind was still capable of noted that she had appeared without making a single sound of any kind until she had spoken up.

"I'll have you know that...that...that this is highest quality mead that I stole from..." she mumbled back, devolving into indecipherable muttering as she tried to recall just where she had stolen all the mead from. After several minutes of this, she perked up and blurted out the name of a bar...which had burned down several years previously. Not that she could recall the detail at the moment, it was likely just the first bar she had recalled the name of. "An' I'm drinking away my sorrows, ain't it clear?"

"Its clear that you're running from something, thinking of jumping off this wall just to get away from whatever it is that haunts you, that tortures you so. So what is it you flee before?" her companion asked softly, and Ontari snarled at her anrily.

"I'm not running from nothing! Them fucking Trikru killed my mum, my dad, and my brothers, all four of 'em. All dead. I'm the last one, the Last Nightblood." She started out sounding indignant, but was despondent by the time she finished, and her companion gasped softly, prompting a thrill of pride to run through her. The Nightblood family had earned their name for their skills on stealth, deception, sabotage, and assassination. The fact that only one of them still lived meant that they had gone after something far beyond, most likely Anya and Indra, if they died in Trikru lands.

"I am very sorry for your loss. Please, tell me about them?" the girl requested softly, and so Ontari launched into a description of her family. She spoke of growing upon their small farm, waking to the smell of her mother's herbal garden and baking bread. Of training and playing with her brothers under the watchful eyes of her parents, who were as kind and gentle as they were strict and deadly. How she had been raised to be a proud and competent warrior, a servant to her leaders and superior to any civilian, though she had also been taught that only a fool is too cruel to their lessers, for though they are weaker they are many.
"Do you really think that your family would want you to kill yourself to be at their side? Would they not want you to honor their memories by fighting and surviving instead of just giving up?" the girl asked finally when she had finished.

Ontari was silent for a long moment, before flopping backwards onto the safety of the wall proper, which thankfully had been cleared of glass by her mysterious friend, and started sobbing uncontrollably.

Flashback Ends

Sylvanas had taken her back to the palace, had her bathed and clothed before bringing her into her own bed. When she had awoken the next morning with the princess of her tribe curled up in her arms, she had known that she was going to die. Probably in a very painful fashion, if the Queen thought she had drunkenly deflowered the princess, especially with the princess in what many would consider a position of submission.

Fortunately for her, Sylvanas had awoken not long after, and the pair had dressed and departed for the training grounds where Ontari was able to fight an Iceborn to a draw. Nia had offered her a place in the unit, but Sylvanas had claimed her as a bodyguard immediately. Over the years, Ontari had foiled more than one attempt to dominate or kidnap the gentle huntress, growing cold and mistrust, even hateful towards everyone but her beloved friend. Only the presence of the silverette could cool her anger and convince her to stay her hand, a feat that for anyone else was impossible. Now, she would protect her again, defend her innocence from cruel molestation.

She debated on visiting Sylvanas, but decided that the sweet-hearted girl would try to convince her to stay and not risk her own safety. It was so like the archer to sacrifice her own safety and happiness for that of another, so she wouldn't go to her. Besides, Ontari hated goodbyes, especially emotional ones, and a goodbye with Sylvanas was guaranteed to be very emotional.

Heading instead to her own rooms, she quickly packed for the trip to Polis, ensuring she had her favored weapons and, after a moment's hesitation, her favorite book series. She wished she had the first one, but alas no library in the Ice Nation possessed them. She would have to wait weeks for her chance at the SkaiPrisa, best to have something to do in the meantime.

An hour later, she was galloping through the main gates of Gaithers, her mount's hooves pounding the dirt as she hastened towards the south, and to Polis.

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Cage Wallace was, and had been since he talk to Diane Sydney, a cross between exhilarated, furious, and terrified. He could scarcely believe that not only was an assassin here on Earth, but the heiress of the Griffin family. Heiress to the longest and greatest legacy of the Brotherhood, one that had also produced some powerful and legendary Templars as well. Not only could that line and its foul beliefs be extinguished forever, but thanks to the Arkers he would have more than enough research subjects to free his people from The Mountain at long last. The problem, of course, would be in finding and killing the girl without getting caught by the degenerates. Were the girl anyone else, he would just let the planet or the degenerates kill her and have done with it, but she didn't want to risk the bitch somehow finding out about her heritage and resurrecting that damnable cult, or worse yet teaming up with the degenerates and teaching it to them. His men already had a hard enough time finding them as it was, what with their skills in woodsmanship. Given the arts of the Brotherhood, and he would have to rely entirely on the Reapers to supply his people with the blood transfusions they needed to survive. A problematic issue, as reapers had no skills in stealth or tracking, but simply blundered about until they captured enough degenerates to satisfy their directives. Highly unreliable at the very best of times, which rarely occurred anymore.
He wasn't willing to sacrifice his men with no guaranteed outcome, and resolved to wait for an opportunity to present itself. As one was sure to do eventually. For now, he decided as he got to his feet, he was hungry, and the cafeteria was serving chicken broccoli alfredo tonight.

Elsewhere in the Mountain, Maya Vie and her father were meeting with other like-minded people. That is to say, people who were opposed to the madness of Cage Wallace and Lorelai Tsieng, the depraved depredations that they had committed in an effort to 'free' their people. Those gathered were those that did not wish to gain their freedom at the loss of their souls, their humanity. The difficulty, of course, was that everyone else cared too much for the chance of freedom to look to hard at the horrible things their current leader was doing. How someone like Cage had a father like Dante was anyone's guess, and something oft wondered about.

"I don't know that we will have a better opportunity than this. When the Ark scout is captured, we can get rid of Cage and his faction, and contact the Ark directly. After they can come down safely, it won't be hard to convince them to help us find a cure. After that, we would just...integrate with them and let the tribes be none the wiser. Our descendants will live in peace and lives free of the crippling guilt and self-condemnation that I will take to my grave." Vincent said solemnly, looking around at the group of twenty or so people that were his co-conspirators. Of them, Maya was the only teen, the rest being weary old adults like himself.

"All well and good, but how are we supposed to get rid of Cage? He has a real tight grip on all the weapons and most anyone who knows how to use them, and without them we have no chance." One of his compatriots, a female communications tech that was fairly high-ranking and a considerable asset. Vincent's ideals were well known to anyone in the mountain, as such he was often monitored for any...seditious behavior. The only reason he was a member of the President's advisor was the fact that he was well-respected by the civilians, and Cage figured it would be easier to keep an eye on him that way.

"And even if we do, how do we convince this scout to work with us? They certainly wouldn't have any reason to trust us, and definitely not if the tribes found her first." An older man in his sixties added, getting curious looks for the assignment of gender and the definitive statement. Elaborating, he continued. "I used to be a soldier, as you all know. I was frequently in the vicinity when prisoners were being interrogated before processing." Everyone present knew that he really meant 'tortured' and 'bled dry like animals', but he had enough trouble with guilt-born nightmares without them correcting him and rubbing it in. 'And many of them screamed and raged and swore oaths that 'The One Who Is Promised', the Sky Princess, would come to Earth from the stars and destroy us all. If that scout is female and they find her, they won't kill her. They will deify her and wipe us out, casualties be damned.'

"True, all very true. Fortunately, I've decided that I like you lot. I'll tell the Sky Princess to spare whomsoever decides to change their ways." An unfamiliar voice cooed from above them, and the group reflexively looked skyway, but they were unable to discern whom had spoken. "Now, don't go getting all alarmed. I'm not nearly as nice as the Princess is, and I can't have you letting people know I'm here. Let's all keep our voices down and stay alive, hmm?"

"And just who are you?" Vincent asked carefully, hearing the threat in her words for what it was, and he could have sworn he felt the woman smirk at him in response.

"Just call me Galina. I want you lot to keep doing what you're doing, but be subtle about it. I don't want my new-found insiders just yet, you're going to be much to useful to me. In payment for your assistance, I am willing to synthesize a cure, and elixir of life if you will, that will allow
you to live free outside as the tribes do. No constant blood transfusions, no stale air and life of fear. All I want is a way to get in touch with you for intel and set up meetings." The mystery woman responded, no doubt enjoying the reactions that swept over her listeners at that. Chuckling softly, she waited for Vincent to acquire her a radio and toss it up into the air, one hand flicked it out and plucked it from the air, before vanishing into the depths of the Mountain once more. She still had scouting to do after all, inside help or not.

#########################################################

Italy, 1476

Clarke's fury was incandescent, much as her ancestor's was. When they had realized that their father's oldest friend had betrayed their entire family (save their mother and sister, and only because the men hid them away) to their deaths, they had rushed to stop the execution, but had only arrived in time to watch them die. In that moment, Clarke had over-synched with the memories, become unable to separate herself from them with either emotions or logic.

Now, they trained with their Uncle, learning all that they could with an obsession bordering on the fanatical in order to achieve their revenge, the second strongest despite that kept them going. Even then, the strongest (protecting their mother and sister) was related entirely to annihilating their enemies. After all, if all of them were dead, they could hardly be threats could they?

As Clarke was forcibly separated from the memory and appeared in the Animus Standby, she felt waves of vertigo and raging emotions sweep over her, sending her to her knees as the world seemed to warp and twist around her. Her slaves hastened to her side with cries of alarm as she clutched her head and screamed in agony and confused rage. She had no idea what was happening to her, and thought neither her slaves nor herself were aware of it, her eyes were flickering between her normal sky blue, blinding silver, burnished gold, and a deep, seething, malevolent crimson in time with her emotions.

Abruptly, the Capitoliane Triad appeared in a blaze of power, Minerva sending a bolt of green energy into the agony-enveloped teen, instantly causing her avatar to slump and vanish as she slipped into unconsciousness. Ignoring the furious and terrified slaves, they began to speak amongst themselves.

"We underestimated that the impact of Ezio's memory sequences would have on her thanks to similar events. Perhaps adjustments of an overt nature are required to settle things down?" Jupiter asked his female kin, and while Juno seemed moderately in favor, Minerva was decidedly not.

"No she needs to come to peace with what happened in her own heart, not thanks to manipulations on our part. Ezio was able to do so and became a much greater man for it. Besides, she is clearly Awakening into her inheritance ever more powerfully. Overt adjustment wouldn't sustain itself for very long under the kind of pressure her inheritance would place on it." The woman who had once been thought to be Jupiter's daughter pointed out with a shaken head, and Jupiter gave a grunt of acknowledgment while Juno frowned slightly as she gave a slight nod in agreement.

"We are running out of time. If she doesn't stabilize when Ezio does, drastic measures will become necessary." Juno folded her arms and turned towards the slaves, wiping the memory from their minds and casting them into unconsciousness. It wouldn't do for them to go tattling to Clarke, after all...
One Month Later

Raven's breath came in semi-even pants as she and Octavia plummeted towards the planet, eyes constantly roving across her instruments. It hadn't been easy getting the Council to agree to send them down, but she and Kane had convinced that her incredible skills would best serve in helping Clarke enter the Mountain and communicate with the Ark, while Octavia had been sent along in order to 'keep her under control', since Raven was the only one she really listened to anymore. Of course, none of them really expected either of them to survive, but on the off chance that the ground was in fact survivable, Clarke had no way to tell them unless she got insanely lucky. Three days after the agreement, she and Octavia had been launched at the nearest safe landing zone nearest to a fallout shelter, where it was assumed Clarke would have taken shelter upon her landing.

"How you doing back there, O?" she asked her companion, who was strapped into a makeshift seat that had been bolted to the floor of the pod.

"How do you think I am doing?" the firebrand bit back, voice tight and shaking both from fear and the intense vibration of the pod itself. Snorting in amused agreement, Raven went back to her readouts. Telling Octavia that they were nearing landing, she began checking the limited equipment she had been given and her safety harnesses, hearing Octavia mimic her actions behind her. They were almost there, they were almost to Earth, to freedom, to Clarke. She just hoped that they all lived long enough for any of this to matter in the least.

Cage Wallace paced agitatedly in his office, waiting for word that the units he had sent to apprehend the new Arkers had done so. Hopefully, and frankly most likely, they would be able to capture Clarke Griffin as well. She would come running out of whatever hole she had hidden herself in the minute she realized more of her people were making landfall, he was positive. He had arranged for the unit to use one of the few operational shoulder-can attachments they possessed so that he could observe the operation and for the gathering of intel. He just hoped that they succeeded in their mission, he was taking an awful risk sending more men out so soon after losing some.

Ontari put down Off Armageddon Reef, the first book of her favorite series (which she had acquired from the Heda of all people, whom she had met when the other girl was roaming the city in disguise, and whom had been delighted to see the rest of the series as she had been to see the first book) as the sky screamed some miles away, a ball of fire trailed by a pillar of smoke streaking across the sky. All across the city, guards rushed to reinforce the walls, and moments later she watched the generals come streaming into the palace. Putting her book down (reluctantly indeed!) she gathered her weapons and strode from the room. If more Sky People were here, the Sky Princess would show herself, and she could finally perform her sworn duty. Even if she was no longer sure of its necessity.

Lexa, Founder of The Coalition and Heda of the Tribes, was speaking with her gathered generals, advisors, and Ontari about the second Fallen Fire when the doors flew open, admitting four figures dressed in the white armor of the Brotherhood. They fanned out, surveying the room and its
inhabitants with shrouded eyes before turning back to the door, fists over their hearts as they knelt in reverence. The darkly armored form of Clarke Griffin strode past them, strides confident and silent despite the heavy combat boots which she wore. Lexa's heart stuttered as her hood came down, piercing blue eyes surveying them, lingering on Ontari, before fixing on her, and she blushed faintly at the power and affection she saw in their depths.

"You're back..." she couldn't help but whisper softly, and Clarke grinned broadly in response, nodding in agreement as they gazed upon one another. A gentle and subtle touch from Anya's hand upon her own reminded Lexa that there were more serious things to do right now than stare into Clarke's eyes like the love-sick teen that she was inside. "Yes, right. Clarke, it seems that another pod like your own has landed not far from here. Scouts report that a group of some dozen Mountain Men, all heavily armed, are heading for the landing site. Even with horses, we might not arrive before they claim your friends."

"I thought that the other children of the Sky would not be arriving for another two years, SkaiPrisa. Were you perhaps mistaken? Why is it here and not near TonDC?" Anya asked politely enough, though her eyes were sharp and suspicious, and Clarke frowned heavily as she shook her head.

"No, the pod is too small to be the main group. My guess is that it is either supplies and communications equipment, or they sent down 'help' for me. Likely because they realized that I couldn't access the Mountain and contact them without greater technological prowess than I possessed at the time of my departure. Since they wouldn't send a valuable adult down, they had to send another teen, one with technological knowledge. That means that they sent Raven down, and I will be damned before she of all people suffers at the hands of the Mountain. Ailyn, bring me mounts. We must make haste." The order was given so smoothly and naturally that Lexa and the others almost didn't hear it, leaving them blinking as one of the white-robed warriors seemingly vanished before their eyes. Smiling at their confusion, she continued. "The girl in that pod is a very dear friend, and she is capable of getting us into that Mountain and giving control of it to us. As for why she was sent down near here, I can only assume it is because there are so many fallout shelters in this area. That is likely where they assumed I would go once I realized I couldn't enter the Mountain itself. Regardless of their reasoning, I will return with Raven presently."

"Wait, Clarke. Anya, Ontari and I are coming with you." Lexa said quickly, circling the table with a stern Anya and surprised Ontari following her. Though the blond was surprised, a single glance towards her thrallinas had another one vanishing, likely to inform Ailyn that more mounts would be needed. Turning back to the ritually marked member of the Azkru, Clarke held out her arm, and Ontari hesitated before clasping forearms with her in a traditional warriors greetings.

"Well met, Ontari. I look forward to learning more of you, for you must be someone of great value if you stand by Lexa and are called to follow her at such a moment as this." Clarke said with a small smile, getting a silent, almost bewildered nod from the brunette, and Lexa suppressed a smile. Ontari had confided in her (before she had revealed herself as Heda) that she wished to protect Sylvanas from Clarke through an honor duel. Clearly Nia's trickery was at play, and she hoped that exposure to Clarke's decidedly non-evil nature would show her the truth of the matter. The Princess of Ice's best friend would be a powerful asset indeed, one that could strike against Nia personally without suspicion. Plus, as the scion of the Nightbloods, she certainly qualified for 'strongest warriors of the generation' that the Heda was meant to gather for the Sky Princess, and she was easy on the eyes.

Not long thereafter, the group was pounding away through the city towards the massive main gates, Clarke's mighty Sleipnir several lengths ahead of the rest, who struggled to keep up with the
great beast. Lexa just hoped they saved Clarke's friend in time, she hated to think how her *domina* would handle it otherwise.

An hour and a half later, she discovered the answer: poorly, very poorly indeed. The Mountain Men had laid claim to Raven and whomever had come down with her before they arrived, and judging by the blood spotting the ground had harmed them in the process. The three warriors stood back with the Assassins as Clarke looked around the clearing before snarling something in a language they didn't know (for it was neither 'sleng nor English) and sat down cross-legged on the forest floor, eyes closing and head drooping slightly. Lexa heard Ontari scoff lightly at the perceived surrender and abandonment of her friends, but Lexa knew that such was not Clarke's way, and so she made to go to the girl's side and offer advice and consolation. Instead, Daine small, soft hand clasped her arm in a grip far to steely for a girl of her size, with a hiss order to remain where she was. Shocked by the gall of a *thrallina* to command her, even one of Clarke's, she was opening her mouth to unleash fury upon the girl when Anya and Ontari gasped. Returning her gaze to Clarke, she saw that the girl had stood once more, eyes open and searching, but this was not that which shocked them so. No, it was the fact that her eyes were a bright, shimmering silver, and a wave of power emanated from her, ethereal and unseen as the air became charged with her presence, causing all present to shiver in mingled lust, awe, and dare they say it, fear.

"Bring the horses and follow. There is knife-work that needs doing." Clarke ordered the trio of warriors, leaping into the trees with her four slaves blurring into motion after her. Lexa gasped again softly, for while she had known that the arts of the Brotherhood were potent and beyond anything she knew, she did not think that humans could move with such speed, nor vanish into the trees unseen whilst wearing garments of pure white, as the slaves were.

"What in the name of the Maker is going on here?" she heard Ontari growl to herself softly, no doubt greatly confused, and Lexa shrugged slightly before remounting, passing the reins for the four slaves' mounts to Anya and Ontari, while she herself took Sleipnir's and led the other two in the direction the five Assassins had headed. After some twenty minutes of riding, they came to a halt at the scene of a massacre. Nearly a dozen Mountain Men were scattered around in pools of their own blood, the four slaves tending to a scratched and bruised pair of Sky Girls, while Clarke was holding aloft by his throat the last Mountain Man (who was dying most painfully from radiation exposure, according to his screams) and talking to some odd mechanical apparatus on his shoulder.

"You are going to die, Templar. Not for your crimes against the Tribes, but for *daring* to harm MY people. You will *burn*, and anyone foolish enough to stand by your side will be consumed by the flames with you." She snarled, eyes now a burning red that reflected the rage and hate in her soul.

"I think not, Assassin, because you are going to die here and now." A male voice, crackling slightly but clear, echoed from the radio on the man's other shoulder before a great, deafening crack resounded, and Clarke's head snapped to the side in a spray of blood. The gathered women cried out in fear and denial as they witnessed what they thought was the death of the woman they all (to a greater or lesser degree, and not including Ontari) cared for. Yet instead of falling limply to the ground, she merely turned her head back to the apparatus with a smirk, a small and shallow cut in her forehead the only sign of the bullet's passing.

"Fool. I am not so easily slain by your weapons, Templar. I am far beyond you and them, now, Daine, Samara." The two named Assassins blurred into motion as the sound of the sniper trying to flee echoed around them. "Your plan might have worked on someone else, Templar, but
you have merely compounded your failure."

This is not over, Assassin! Whatever relics you possess, whatever the Isu have given you as a weapon, I will finish the job my ancestors began! You and your entire filthy Order will be destroyed once and for all, even if I have to hunt you down and gut you myself!" the man raged and swore before a telltale crackling signaled the end of the conversation.

Tossing the corpse aside, Clarke turned back to them as her eyes faded back to blue, no longer shining brightly within the depths of her hood. Walking over to them, she smirked as her freshly returned slaves dropped the sniper face first onto the ground at her feet. Shoving him over onto his back with her foot, she looked down at him and scoffed.

"Worthless. Pointless. Had you simply fled, you would have been spared for this day. Instead, you shall die with nothing but failure as your legacy, shame as your final moments." She commented, flicking a finger at Daja, who immediately executed him with a blade to the chest. Turning to the others, Clarke smiled her broad and warm smile, spreading her arms in welcome. "Raven, you I expected, but I must admit that Octavia comes as something of a surprise. Welcome to Earth."

That is a wrap. Just shy of 8000 words of story, so a bit longer than usual! I promise that Clarke isn't suddenly some sort of mage, but remember what is said: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." And we know that the Isu technology is as such, given that such is shown many times in AC canon (the Shards of Eden, for example, which can be controlled by a users mind and block anything the user desires, or how the Apple can do mind control and create illusions). However, technology aside, Clarke is still far more than human, and a great deal of the feats she will perform will involve no Pieces of Eden whatsoever.

As a note, surnames don’t entirely seem to be a thing in the 100 universe, lore wise due to being kom (tribe name), and in reality probably just to make the writing simpler. However, in this story, your TRIBE name and your CLAN name are totally different things. Generally, you only use your clan name within your own nation, as unless you identify yourself otherwise it is assumed you are from that nation. I.E., Ontari is Ontari kom Azkru when outside of the Ice Nation, but within it she is Ontari kom Nightblood, which I decided to make her last name for this story because I felt like it. Make sense? If not let me know in reviews and I can elaborate.

Furthermore, Thrall and thrallina are the old Roman terms for male and female slave, respectively, and will be used interchangingly with their English meanings.
Clexa Read (A03): I'm glad to hear it and I hope you enjoy this one just as much :D

Betagamma (A03): Badass Clarke isn't done yet, my friend, and I am glad to hear it is so highly regarded :D

MobiusVariant (AO3): Probably the same as it is handled today. If someone yells your name and you don't recognize the voice, you look around and see if anyone is looking at or coming towards you. If not, it ain't you they're after.

Alex (AO3): Ontari isn't quite settled this chapter, but next chapter for sure! Always nice to be called brilliant, thank you kindly for that :D

BeserkBookWorm (A03): Correct, there will not be a full on genocide like in canon (which was stupid, don't even get me started on how bad some canon decisions were, fucking Jroth) but the 'good' ones will still face their share of troubles for a time. Only some of the harem will be assassins, since everyone is going to have something they are best at, as it were. There will definitely be more Assassins, just not necessarily harem members. Her transformation is more or less complete, though some things are only just beginning to manifest in this chapter. Her slaves are now utterly (one could argue fanatically) loyal to her and her alone.

Linx007 (FF): Yeah I think its lame how they always handle the Templars, even in canon. But even if I wanted that it would have been unreasonable given that, you know, 99.9% of the human population died during WWIII. Being referred to a genius is quite the ego boost, thanks :D

To everyone else, thank you for your kind comments and encouragement :D

Now, for those who don't know, I have several links on my fanfiction homepage. My FB group, my forums, my twitch (which I use to stream a State of the Fandom every so often) and, most recently, the link for the discord channel I set up for myself and any readers/fans who want to join me. My tag is the same on both A03 and FF dot net, so feel free to use those links and drop by :D

And, just to warn you, I have been cackling madly over so future crossovers for sequels to The Creed Duology (of which this story is the first half), involving things like various sci-fi franchises and utter badassery and glorious battle on the parts of our heroes/their descendants. That's all I will say for now :D

Right, off we go!

Wait, stop, not yet. Putting a poll on my fanfiction page for the name of the sequel to this story. Obviously it is the second part of the Creed: Everything Is Permitted (......?......). Several options will be on the page and whichever wins will be the title :D

One final thing, if anyone wants to make a TVtrops or (especially!) a 'Reading of' fanfiction for this story or any of my others (but mostly this one, its my baby) please let me know! I would especially enjoy a canon universe reads the story, because it would be funny as hell.
I'm planning on doing a Creed Duology universe watches canon story, which should be fantastic. I can't see my characters being too happy with their canon counterparts!

Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We've Shed)

Chapter Eleven

Love, Lust, and Loyalty

Clarke gave a soft grunt and twin impacts sent her to the ground, and she laughed softly and the two Sky Girls clung to her tightly, tears of relief streaming from their eyes as they pressed their faces against her. Clearly the events of the day had scared them badly, not that she was terribly surprised. Banished to Earth (a presumed death trap) then abused and kidnapped by people who should arguably be allies, and then witnessing said kidnappers get slaughtered by someone you no doubt assumed to be dead. And then seeing said person get shot in the head. Holding them close, she took a moment to cherish the affection and closeness.

"It's good to see you girls. Come on, let's get you to safety and civilization, hmm?" she said tenderly, pulling back and wiping away their tears gently before lithely rising to her feet. She was rather surprised when, instead of holding up hands for help, the pair rose to their own feet almost as easily as she had. It seemed as though things had changed a great deal in her absence, for them to move as if they had been trained in the physical arts. Turning towards her ground-born companions, she addressed them in Trigedasleng. "Octavia will ride with me. Anya, can you take Raven?"

The older warrior appraised the mechanic silently for nearly a full minute before nodding her acquiescence. She admitted, if only to herself, to being curious about the Sky Girl she had so often heard Clarke praise as a genius and their greatest asset against The Mountain. Looking at her now, Anya saw nothing but a weak, scared child. Yet, perhaps it was unfair to assume that all children of the Sky would be as strong and lethal as Clarke had assuredly proven herself to be. After all, the black-robed Assassin was the Sky Princess of Prophecy, others were hardly able to stand on the same level as she. Pulling Raven up onto the saddle behind her, she waited as Clarke did the same for Octavia, before falling in at the future Kwin's left side as Lexa took her right, Ontari and the slaves falling in behind them.

"So, why are the two of you down here now? I mean, why would the Council send you down now instead of with the Skybox kids in two years? Especially you, Octavia, the Council promised me that you would be left around unless you started abusing your freedom." Clarke enquired as they began the journey back to Polis at a far more sedate pace than that which they had left it. There was no need to rush now, after all. Another dozen Mountain Men dead, two Sky Girls rescued, and no losses or injuries for their group. All in all, a damn fine day!

"We volunteered, crazy as it might sound." Octavia responded, and Anya had the feeling that if Clarke had been walking, she would have tripped and face-planted at that admittedly surprising answer. Fortunately for Clarke's peace of mind, Octavia saw fit to elaborate without prompting. "It's a long story, but the short version is that Diane Sydney is working with the leader of The Mountain, some guy named Cage. He agreed to kill you, Clarke, if he gets the Skybox kids to experiment on for some sort of cure. We had to warn you, and so Raven and Kane convinced the Council to send us down to 'help you gain access to Mount Weather and guide our people home'. Of course, they've no idea about Sydney or Cage."
"Why did you not simply inform this 'Council' of yours that this woman had turned traitor? Would not she be slain or at the very least imprisoned for so serious a crime?" Ontari inquired suddenly, quite curious about the inner workings, and the weaknesses, of the Sky People, even if only for personal future reference.

"Simply put, she enjoys far too much popular support to be executed or even imprisoned. Even if it could be done, the fallout would be nothing less than utterly catastrophic. Many of her supporters have jobs that are absolutely vital to the survival of The Ark and everyone on it. In other words, the political atmosphere grants her immunity to just about anything that she does. Besides which, proving what she has done would be nigh on impossible due to said politics. Any accusations brought forth could be twisted as an attempt to dispose of a political rival." Clarke explained to the Ice Nation warrior, who frowned in distaste but nodded in understanding nonetheless. After all, such political maneuvering was not uncommon amongst the tribes, even the warriors. For all that they preferred to wield steel over tongue, the tongue had its own place and times of significance.

"Clarke, who are these people? They obviously aren't from The Mountain or The Ark, so they must be from somewhere else, but where?" Octavia asked tentatively, somewhat enthralled by the darkly painted and clothed warriors women around them, even if they were somewhat terrifying.

"Nothing so ludicrous as a part of the Ark crashing, I can tell you that*. No, they are the descendants of the people who survived the Last War. They have a particular nuclear mutation that makes them immune to the latent radiation, just as we are thanks to living on the Ark for so many generations." Clarke told her the short, common-knowledge version of the story, not wanting to say more in front of an Ice Nation warrior, even if it was one Lexa seemed to trust enough to house in her palace and invite along on this expedition. Octavia made a thoughtful noise of understanding, and for a time only the sounds of the horses themselves filled the air.

When at last the mighty walls of Polis came into view, Octavia and Raven gasped loudly, too awed to react even with babbled questions, as Clarke had when she had first laid eyes upon the expanse of polished stone. Even knowing that people had survived outside of the Mountain had been easy enough to wrap their minds around, but how had such a large and magnificent city been build? Moreover, how had the Ark satellites not seen it? Surely something of its size would have shown up on any captured imagery of this area? They burned with curiosity, but elected to wait until they could speak with Clarke in private. She seemed to trust these...grounders, but caution would be best for now. Besides, they didn't want to inadvertently piss off these people.

"When we get inside, stick by me. The Tribes might not take your presence kindly until it is explained who you are and why you are here." Clarke instructed the two newly arrived Sky Girls, who frowned in concern. "Showing up by falling from the sky in a ball of fire tends to make people a little nervous, especially since you girls arrived so much closer to Polis than I did."

"Along with the minor details of you slaying a yong pauna and rescuing one of my scouts, earning you quite a bit of favour with our clan. Never mind personally killing several Ice Nation warriors personally when they defied my commands in regards to you and how you were to be treated." Lexa added dryly, eyes lingering on the way Octavia was hugging herself into Clarke's back, much closer than was strictly necessary. Fortunately for the young Sky Girl, she wasn’t an Ice Nation thrallina who had tasted her Queen. Her eye twitched slightly as she resisted the urge to turn and glare at said slaves for said, in her mind, grievous transgression. She really needed to work on this jealousy of hers, it was a matter of prophecy that she would be sharing her Kwin with others, and it was rather pathetic of her to be so jealous of slaves of all things in the first place. Even if the slaves did get to taste her first (her eye twitched again) and had been alone with her for
a month doing Maker knows what (her hands tightened on her reins) and been the first, and thus far only, to learn her sacred Arts (she glared darkly at the back of her horses’ head) didn’t mean she should be jealous, or hateful, or bitter in any way. She was far to mature for such pettiness, she told herself, and smirked haughtily. After all, she was the Commander.

The Maker, it seemed, heard her and decided to remind her that, Commander or not, she was fallible and lacked the resolve and maturity she so confidently ascribed to herself by the event of Daine trotting past her to ride closely abreast of Clarke for a long moment. They conversed in low voices before Clarke reached out and stroked Daine’s cheek gently with on hand, a hand that Daine softly took in her own and laid a kiss upon the palm. Lexa’s growl had the entire group (sans Daine, who was now galloping towards Polis) looking at her in either amusement, confusion, or awkwardness. None of which did a damn thing to make her any happier, of course. The obvious affection between the two rankled her harshly, despite the mental Olympics she had performed in an effort to avoid having such reactions to such actions.

“Daine is riding ahead to organize a retrieval party for the pod. While The Mountain is unlikely to even say more men to where they just lost a dozen, never mind for technology they are likely to possess already, I see no reason to tempt fate regardless. Just as you didn’t when I first arrived.” Clarke explained to the group at large, though her eyes were on Lexa, and the Heda nodded her understanding. It was a wise decision, especially considering the treachery they had just discovered.

She frowned heavily at the thought of said treachery. Not only was Clarke being hunted directly by the Mountain, but were doing so at the behest of her own people! A former leader at that! It would be as if Gustus or Indra or, Maker forbid, Anya tried to have her murdered by the Ice Nation! Not a perfect comparison, but still, it was absurd to say the least that such a situation could come to pass, but somehow she wasn’t entirely shocked. This was the same society that betrayed their spouses to unjust execution and sent their children on suicide missions for nothing more than political expedience, at least in Clarke’s case.

She may have sent people Clarke’s age (not that Clarke was all that much younger than herself, mind) to their deaths many times, but only blooded warriors and only because it would serve a purpose that benefitted her people as a whole, something that Clarke’s mission cannot have, given the lack of resources and support she had been initially deployed with. Which made the fact that Octavia and Raven had been sent with those same items that Clarke had been denied all the more interesting. Perhaps this Diane Sydney was not the only one in a position of power on the Ark that sought her Queen’s death, simply the only one who had been caught. Which meant that she had to encourage (read: force) Clarke to take her throne and unify the clans before word got back to the Ark. If the survivability of Earth was discovered too soon, both Clarke and her own people would be at risk, an utterly unacceptable sequence of events. With Clarke ruling as Queen of Mankind, however, the Sky People would be forced to respect her authority if they wanted to survive. An authority she could wield to better improve the lives of her friends and fellow teens. Perhaps even get revenge on her mother and the rest of The Council, thought she doubted the girl could bring herself to do it, even if Lexa would without hesitation in the same situation. For all that, she couldn’t bring herself to regret Clarke’s nature, for while Clarke would be the velvet glove, the gentle touch of kindness…she, Lexa, would be the iron gauntlet, and more importantly the bitter steel blade that would be buried in the guts of Clarke’s enemies.

Starting with The Mountain.

# Ontari kom Azkru had no idea what to think anymore, she really didn’t. The Sky Princess was far
from the cruel, debauched domina she had expected and imagined her to be. Indeed, her interactions with her thrallinas were tender and affectionate if anything, and she permitted them mounts rather than forcing them to walk, as most would have. Breaker take it all, she allowed them to keep weapons and follow her into battle, something only the most trusted and beloved slave was ever invited to do. After all, only a fool invites a grudge-bearing slave to kill them and claim it was an enemy attack! Or, better still, slay her and flee for their homeland while the Coalition was in disarray! Yet they didn’t seem to even contemplate either option! It was unfathomable! How could a usurper, an enslaver that sought to butcher and rape her people, be so kind, so gentle, and so fiercely protective of those she professed to care for that it reminded Ontari of how she acted when Sylvanas was threatened?

She could not even lie to herself and claim that it was all a deception for the sake of gaining power. She prided herself in the ability to properly read people, their motivations, and to discern their intentions. The rage she had seen in Clarke when they had found that her friends had been taken caused a thrill of fear to race through her even now. No, such reactions as those she had witnessed first-hand were no more false than her own affections and protectiveness of her dearest friend. Though her certainty in the righteousness of her cause waned with each and every passing moment, some doubt yet lingered in regards to the Sky Princess, and even had it not been so, she had sworn to face the girl in a duel of honor for the safety of Sylvanas, an oath upon which she could not renege. She recalled Lexa's words to her over their many meetings and conversations, how the other warrior had forced her to ask herself very difficult questions, questions that forced her to take a step back and think about her interaction with Nia, and indeed her people themselves.

She was neither blind nor foolish, she knew that Nia was neither a saint nor a paragon of virtue and righteousness. Indeed, it was quite the opposite. She knew that many of the 'incidents' and 'rogue actions' of Ice Nation members were in fact sanctioned and carried out at her personal command, but she had always believed them to be for the betterment of the Nation and their people/ Yet, Lexa had asked her rather bluntly whether or not they had benefited the Nation, or Nia? She had immediately scoffed in response, for what difference was there between the throne and the tribe? Was the ruler not the people, the kingdom? Lexa had responded that while a good ruler was the heart and soul of their people, they could not and should not be the physical embodiment of the kingdom. If they were, no kingdom would survive past the death of its founding ruler, and did not the Ice Nation still stand after all these generations? So, she had been forced to reflect upon the actions she knew had been committed in Nia's name. Many had been easy to prove had benefitted her people and even the Coalition as a whole just as much as the Queen herself, such as coinage, organized law and justice, and the like. Others, like the attempts to capture or kill the Sky Princess, were only in Nia's favor, for only she and the rest of the Clan Leaders had anything to lose from her arrival. It was said the Sky Princess would rule the world and bring peace, and how could her people not benefit from a life of peace and plenty. No true ruler, she was coming to believe, would do so unless their love of power and self outweighed duty and love to those one ruled. And Ontari was well aware that there was little room in Nia's heart for anyone but Nia. She loathed that knowledge, for her acceptance of such a truth burned like acid, and a small part of her raged at her treason. Yet, she was not inclined to indulging in self-deception, especially not for something so important as this.

Where did these realization leave her? She could not simply cast aside her oaths to Clan and Maker by throwing in her lot with Lexa and the incumbent Queen, but she could not simply return to Nia in disgrace. She most assuredly couldn't kill the sky-eyed Princess, not with how things had changed within her own mind, nor could she destroy their prophesized chance at peace. What, then, was to be her course. What was her future to be, now that she had no loyalties in which she could have faith in, save for the personal loyalty between herself and Sylvanas?
She would compose a letter to the Ice Princess, she decided, one laced with specific code-phrases to let her silver-haired friend know it was legitimate, and leave it in the care of Lexa. Then, she would stay true to her oath and meet her end on the points of Clarke's blades. She would pass into The Maker's embrace with far fewer regrets that she would have a month ago.

'So, where did Ontari come from? I mean, I know she is Ice Nation, obviously, but why is she staying in the palace? Is she like Echo?' Clarke inquired later that night, as she and Lexa sat nursing glasses of wine in front of a roaring fireplace. Anya had retired to her personal rooms not long after they had returned, while Octavia and Raven had been so tired from the day's ordeal that they had had to be carried to beds by the four slaves, who even now were taking it in turns to watch over them in case anyone was overzealous enough to try and break into the palace to harm them. Costia was sound asleep in Lexa's room, having retired whilst they were gone (far earlier than was her wont) for reasons she and Lexa were extraordinarily reluctant to share. To be honest, Clarke was not terribly disappointed, having missed Lexa terribly over the last month, and now quite glad she had some uninterrupted time to catch up with the older girl. She knew well that many things could have happened in her absence that would affect the future drastically, and she could wait to catch up with her fellow sky-born until she knew what threats might have emerged domestically.

"Officially, she isn't here for any particular reason other than a desire to travel and get onto the front lines against The Mountain Men. Unofficially, she is here to challenge you to a duel of honor and kill you thanks to a truly remarkable combination of half-truths and blatant lies from Nia." Lexa responded, sounding remarkably at ease despite her words, and Clarke raised her eyebrows curiously.

"And why, pray tell, do you seem totally unconcerned with someone wanting me dead, someone who in point of fact is even now sleeping only a few doors away from my own room?" She inquired mildly, and Lexa smirked in response. It was one of those smirks that seemed to tease with hidden knowledge and secrets most lascivious.

"Because~, I happen to know that she is the closest personal friend, confidant, and companion to Sylvanas, that she is arguably one of the greatest fighters in the whole of the Ice Nation, and that she questions Nia's motives. She will challenge you to a duel, and should you accept, her life and future will be in your hands. An excellent way to gain admiration and allies amongst the Ice Nation would be, perhaps, to spare her life and take her into your confidence once you are victorious." She responded, and Clarke smirked at her knowingly, quirking a single eyebrow, and she blushed with a small scowl. "Alright, so she's the type of women I am called to bring before you to join your harem, what of it? Damn sight better than those Maker-be-damned thrallinas."

"Haa...?" Clarke regarded her companion with interest, intrigued by both the content and tone of her final comment. The brunette's blush deepened and she fidgeted nervously under the blonde's scrutiny. "Don't tell me that my dear Commander is feeling jealous of another? Surely the woman prophesized to rule at my side and gather for my bed the greatest women warriors of the age is not so doubtful of her own self to feel such a thing?

The chastising tone had Lexa looking down at her knees submissively, feeling very much as thought she was an errant thrallina being scolded by her domina. Indeed, from the glint in her eyes and her bearing, that was almost exactly what was going on. Lexa licked suddenly dry lips, hands folding demurely in her lap. Despite this, she couldn't resist responding to Clarke.

"I do not like how close they are to you. How familiarly you treat them, when even I am
not treated as such." She grumbled bitterly, and startled when Clarke's gloved finger tips traced her jawline gently, tilting her face up to meet her eyes.

“Are you jealous that they’ve made me cum? Are you hurt that I ignored your invitations that night and instead indulged in slaves I had had less than a single night? Did you crave my touch as you so clearly do now?” Clarke whispered softly, and Lexa (to her horror and embarrassment) felt tears prickle in her eyes as she nodded yes to all of the domina’s questions. A quiet laugh had her flushing in shame and fresh pain, and she surged to her feet, brushing past Clarke and storming away. Of course, she didn’t get very far before she was face-down on the floor, arms folded high on her back, wrists pinned between her shoulder blades by an unrelenting grip. A brief attempt at struggling revealed to her how utterly futile such attempts were, and she bit back a moan at Clarke’s display of dominiance, as well as the way the Princess’ warm breath caressed her ear as she spoke again. “You trying to run away, Lexa? I don’t recall giving you permission to leave, little blade.”

“How do you know that nickname?” Lexa snarled, trying once more to break free. She would be damned if she would be dominated without a fight, Prophecy or not. Clarke would have to earn her, dammit, especially after toying with her heart and making light of the pains born from her affections. “And I need no permission from you for anything, never mind moving about my own palace!”

“Mmh, not yet perhaps, but the time approaches swiftly when that will no longer be true, doesn’t it?” Clarke nearly purred in response, sending a shiver down the spine of her captive which pooled in her groin. “Regardless, you’re not going anywhere until you listen to what I have to say. A lot of things have changed in the last month, not the least of which being both my body and my mind.”

“Meaning what?” Lexa grumbled as she was pulled to her feet and frog-marched towards her room, traversing the silent halls quietly as she could in an effort to avoid anyone else (like Ontari) witnessing her in her current situation. While she would be more than proud to kneel before Clarke, now was not the time, not without some work on Clarke’s part. Ignoring her question for the moment, Clarke used her free hand to open the bedroom door before pushing the brunette Commander inside. Her eyes roved the room, noting Costia curled up in the very large bed, one that dominated one side of the room, like a cat. As interesting as the sight was, what really caught her attention was the contents of the other side of the room, and Lexa whimpered as her crotch dampened significantly at the low, throaty chuckle she let loose.

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Costia kom Trikru, thrallina to Heda Lexa and one who was far more at home with sums than swords, awakened slowly. She lay there for several long moments, a sleepy frown on her face as she tried to figure out why she had woken. Lexa wasn’t getting into bed and spooning her from behind, so it wasn’t the usual reason. She was neither bound nor in the process of being bound, as her domina often enjoyed doing whilst she slept (a delightful way to wake up, that), and there was no artificial light in the room, so it wasn’t that either. A faint and familiar sound was rhythmically echoing ever so quietly about the room, she noticed dimly, and her frown deepened as she tried to identify the tantalizingly familiar sound.

“Ah, welcome back to the land of the awake, Costia.” Clarke’s voice brought her shooting upright, staring across the moonlit room to drink in the sight of Clarke torturing a naked and suspended Lexa with various implements of a domina’s trade, ones that she was…intimately familiar with. After all, they were used on her often enough. “How does dearest Lexa look to you, thrallina?”
“She looks…blissful, domina.” Costia responded promptly, eyes raking the subject of their conversation before dropping submissively, and it was very true indeed. Lexa had been stripped of her armor, clad only in a leather harness that did nothing to hide her body from hungry eyes, and her hands had been bound at the wrists to a long, sturdy rope that hung from the ceiling. A small chain stretched between twin clamps attached to stiff nipples, and three small weights hung from its center, tugging on those rock-hard peaks unceasingly. A delicious agony that Costia remembered well, just as she remembered the metal bar that forced Lexa’s legs as apart as they could be without causing her to lose her balance. The riding crop that was stroking along Lexa’s right thigh rose and fell with a sharp crack, and as Lexa lurched and moaned into the bridle-style gag in her mouth, Costia realized that the sound that had awakened her was that of the crop laying down softer and quitter strokes than the most recent.

Yet all of this, and the heavy scent of female arousal that choked the air (Costia’s own beginning to rise and mingle with that of the other two women the longer she was awake and aware) did not equal the hazy, heavy look in Lexa’s eyes. A look that, though it made her seem vacant minded, truly displayed that she had fully embraced her submissive side in this moment. That she had reached that oft-sought after mental plane that the Old World would have called ‘sub-space’. Someplace Lexa had sent her too many times, and it was almost embarrassing how wet she was getting seeing the tough-as-nails Commander experience it at long, long last.

“Yes, she does doesn’t she? I could get addicted to seeing that look in someone’s eyes.” Clarke mused, stepping around Lexa to reveal that she had stripped down to a loose cotton shirt and pants that accentuated her form without being skintight. “There is something that I need to show the pair of you. My thrallinas already know and have accepted it, but I cannot say I am not anxious about you doing the same.”

Without further ado, Clarke dropped her pants to pool around her ankles. Lexa and Costia both gasped as a large cock of all things sprang into view, rising from the top of her fold where her clit should have been. Though neither Trikru had ever had sex with a man, dignity and body-shame regarding sexuality and being in the nude had died with the old world. Thus, both had seen their fair share of male genitalia, both aroused and not, and were quite aware that their Queen was well above average. However, when Clarke began to fidget nervously, an act that was so out of character for the strong-willed girl that it jerked them from their staring to look at her eyes and note the vulnerability and fear in them.

“You need not fear disgust or hatred from us, Clarke. This is not uncommon amongst the tribes, and those who possess it are able to produce able bodied children with the same ease you could expect from a ‘normal’ couple.” Costia hastened to reassure her Queen, who blushed very heavily indeed at the mention of children. “Neither Lexa nor I think any less of you, and while I cannot speak for Lexa, I can honestly say that my desire for you is not lessened in the least by this knowledge.”

Clarke smiled at her in stark relief before turning to Lexa, and the pair looked deeply into one another’s eyes, Lexa’s making it clear that she was mentally competent enough to make her own decision despite her arousal. A slow, deliberate nod conveyed her answer and Clarke beamed, one hand stroking Lexa’s cheek before she shed the rest of her clothing and walked around behind the suspended switch. Sensing that her domina was behind her once more, Lexa arched her back to thrust her ass out in offering. Trailing her fingers across those shapely globes of flashed, Clarke took herself in hand, lined herself up, and sheathed herself into Lexa’s aching, soaked sex with a single deep thrust. She gave a short shriek at the initial penetration, followed by a long, shuddering moan as Clarke bottomed out inside of her, hips pressed tightly against her ass. The woman who was Commander of The Coalition and held the lives of thousands in her hands bit hard into the metal bar filling her mouth as something far, far warmer and alive, yet somehow just as hard and
strong filled her pussy to the brim. It felt as though the blond Queen-to-be was reaching all the way to the heart she had so swiftly and easily stolen, and she was most definitely reaching places the false cocks she and Costia very rarely used had failed to reach. Though, she was of course far more used to being the penetrator rather than the penetratee, as it were.

For Clarke, it was even more incredible, should such a thing even be possible. The soaked, warm tightness of Lexa (the first pussy she had ever fucked as herself, memories of her ancestors’ didn’t count) clutched at her tighter than anything she could possibly have imagined, and memory-born experience or not, she very nearly came inside the girl right then and there. She was only able to resist by reminding herself that this was not just about her pleasure, not tonight. It was about forming a bond and a relationship with her first two true lovers, and to best do that she needed to give them the same pleasure she would experience. Besides, dominant or not she wanted them to enjoy themselves just as much as she.

Feeling Lexa move slightly, and almost impatiently, saw Clarke slowly withdrawing, receiving another whimper from her partner, until on the flared tip of her cock was inside of the brunette, before she thrust forward again. Slowly, torturously slow, she began to thrust rhythmically, wanting to relish every single moment. Turning her now shimmering golden eyes to Costia, she spoke in her Artemis voice, an echo-y and dual-layered voice that became prominent when she was highly aroused or using a great deal of her Isu side.

“Strip, Costia, and prepare yourself for me, but don’t you dare cum. While you might enjoy any corporeal punishment I would inflict upon you, I would also force your celibacy. For a month. And make you watch when I am with someone else.” She commanded, and both girls felt a thrill move through their bodies.

The threat was more than sufficient to ensure Costia didn’t try to disobey for the purpose of an enjoyable flogging or something similar. She near about shredded her light sleeping clothes in her eagerness to obey the domina she would soon be sharing with Lexa. She spread her legs wide, and one hand dropped to her already soaked pussy and began to stroke it languidly while the other rose to fondle a breast, twisting and pulling on the nipple for a delightful sting she created as an old friend. An old friend she hoped to soon receive from the blonde woman who had fallen from the sky in a pillar of flame.

Clarke growled low in her throat as she thrust rather harder than before into Lexa, whose walls fluttered around her hard length spastically, and one hand gripped Lexa’s hair tightly and pulled her head back roughly. Leaning forward and pressing her breasts to Lexa’s back, she placed her mouth beside the older girl’s ear.

“You may be my Commander, but I am your Queen. I will unify the tribes, and rule from Polis itself, and you will be my Voice. The Mountain will burn, Nia will be brought to heel, and all shall kneel before my throne.” She declared, still in that double timbre, and both thrallinas shuddered in arousal and mewed their agreement. This is what they had dreamed of; a powerful, beautiful, and charismatic domina to rule both their people and their hearts. The rhythmic slapping of flesh on flesh continued for several more minutes before Lexa whimpered very loudly indeed, and Clarke smirked, golden eyes gleaming. “Does my dear Commander feel herself about to cum?” Lexa nodded as rapidly as she could with the tight grip Clarke still had on her hair. “I’m impressed you’ve lasted this long, but you must hold on a little longer, understand?”

Lexa expressed quite clearly that while she understood, she was far from pleased that she would have to wait to reach nirvana. Clarke laughed softly at her frustration, though doing anything was
getting increasingly difficult to the incredible pressure that was beginning to build within her. She was not going to be able to resist cumming for much longer, and then she was going to take Costia. Said red-head shivered and spread her pussy lips open with trembling fingers, exposing herself quite lewdly to the predator that hunted her. The visual stimulation, combined with the desperate tightness of Lexa, had her spilling into the brunette’s depths. A growled command allowed Lexa to topple over the same peak after her with a shriek, immediately addicted to the sensation of warm heat flooding into her womb. Clarke gently stroked her lover’s side as both basked in the glow for a long moment, before a desperate, impassioned plea from the bed summoned her attention.

“Domina, my Queen, please! I need you, I need you so badly!” Costia was almost sobbing as she begged, and it dawned on Clarke that, though she was an irrepressible pervert, Costia loved-no, needed-intimacy from those she cared for. Deftly freeing Lexa from her restraints, she helped the unsteady girl regain her balance. Lexa’s right hand immediately went between her thighs and reappeared shining with their mixed cum, which she promptly licked clean with a throaty moan.

“Lexa, why don’t you lie back against the pillows. Costia, on your hands and knees before her, I want you to taste what I am going to give you.” Clarke ordered huskily, swatting Lexa’s ass to get her moving, though her resulting gait was awkward and a bit bowlegged, something a very primal part of her delighted in taking credit for.

The moment Lexa was in the bed with her legs spread, Costia eagerly threw herself between them and began lapping away at her weeping petals, tongue deftly seeking out the combined essences of her superiors as her Queen kneeled behind her. She earnestly bucked her hips back when Clarke’s flared tip touched her folds, but the Mentor pulled away and laid a firm handed blow across her ass in punishment, and she immediately keened. Like with Lexa before her, Clarke sheathed herself in Costia in a single stroke, and moaned at the remarkably dissimilar similarities between the pair of them, while Costia purred happily at finally being filled, pushing her face and tongue deeper into Lexa. Remarkably conflicted about how she felt about this, Lexa was unsure if she wanted to lose the seed she had received. Intellectually, of course, she knew that getting pregnant at such a critical stage could prove nothing less than utterly disastrous, but she yearned to be the first whose belly swelled with the Queen’s child.

“There will be time for my warriors to bear the next generation, Lexa. Until then, either only my civilians or no one at all will be pregnant.” Clarke told her firmly though lovingly, and Costia felt a thrill of happiness at the idea before quashing it. She wouldn’t do that to Lexa, she would take the moon tea and wait until her beloved was with child before she allowed herself to do the same. After that, the gloves were most assuredly off. Clarke stroked her spine gently in response to her thoughts, verbally expressing her approval moments later, praising her loyalty and affection for Lexa in equal measure to her renewed assurances that Lexa would carry her first born if she so desired it.

None of them noticed in their sexual bliss that Clarke was reading their minds, and if they had it was doubtful they would even care. It was just one more quirk of Clarke, easily dismissible as part of her First Civilization heritage. Costia clenched tightly around the pounding shaft as it moved in her depths, never wanting it to leave, nor for the pleasure it caused to end. As said pleasure built and built beyond even what Lexa could make her feel, the flesh and blood of Clarke reaching places the polished wood of a false cock could never imagine striking.

All too soon, she tumbled into the abyss, her pussy milking her domina’s cock eagerly in order to lay claim to the same seed she had so happily cleaned from Lexa, a combination of tastes she was doubtless to find incredibly addicting if given the chance to taste it again. A throaty growl echoed
above her as she felt a searing flood flow into her spasaming core, and she cried out in loss as Clarke’s softening length slipped out of her. The loss was thankfully lessened when Clarke ordered them from bed before placing herself under the covers and holding her hands out in offering. Both girls eagerly took the offer, scrambling to join her and cuddle up to their Queen, spending several minutes exchanging soft, gentle kisses with one another and with her as she stroked their sides and backs soothingly, her gently aftercare giving them an additional afterglow of an altogether different kind. Tired and wonderfully sore from their exertions, it did not take long for the trio to fall asleep, the two Trikru’s using their Queen’s large breasts as their pillows, uncaring of how anyone might react in the morning.

Lexa was the first to awaken the next morning, and for a time she simply lay there, wrapped in the warm and peaceful presence of her lovers. The thought brought a broad smile to her face as her heart soared with happiness. She knew that they would soon have to rise and face their duties for the day, return to the stern masks that they wore for their people, but here and now, she had found her paradise. Even if she was sorer than she had thought possible, she thought to herself with a half-grimace as she shifted slightly. She hadn’t felt like this since the night she and Costia had lost their virginities to each other. Still, like then, she couldn’t find it in herself to be unhappy with the results when the cause had been so wonderful. Looking up at the clock on the wall, she sighed a little sadly and sat up, gazing down at her Queen and their mutual lover with love shining in her eyes. Ducking down, she gently pressed her lips to Clarke’s, who hummed in appreciation as her eyes opened blearily. Smiling at her, Lexa did the same to Costia, who instead of opening her eyes instead mumbled in her sleep and held onto their lover tighter, left hand latching onto the breast Lexa had slept on, getting a moan from Clarke. Lexa rolled her eyes in amused exasperation and spanked the fire-haired civilian sharply, jolting her awake. She immediately bolted upright with a squeal, clutching the assaulted portion of her body and pouting heavily at the two laughing women.

“That wasn’t a very romantic way to wake me up after ravishing me last night, ai hodnes.” She whined, though there was the smallest of smiles gracing her lips as she watched Lexa laugh freely. Something even she did not get to see all that often, for there were always warriors and generals about.

“Romance, I can do.” Clarke smirked, recalling a poem from a movie and deciding it was ideal for the circumstance. “As morning hues of sun-swept fire caress your passioned face, alone with thee a pure desire to worship untold grace. My soul would cry in silent prayer to an hour swept apart. Your essence warms the evening air as I dance into your hearts.”

Costia swooned and Lexa barely resisted doing the same, only able to do so thanks to drawing on her Commander side. It had indeed been very romantic, and so smoothly delivered too! Yet, as much as such poetry made her want to take advantage of the steadily rising tent that Clarke was currently pitching with the blankets, they had a lot to do. Not the least of which being Ontari and how to handle Clarke’s ascension to power.

“As romantic as that was, Clarke, there are far more responsible ways for which we must spend our time today, no matter how preferable staying in this room all day would be. You, especially, have much to do, you must begin learning how to rule our people before you can take the throne.” She verbalized her thoughts to her lovers, ignoring how Costia’s pout deepened.

“Blue-balling your Queen ought to be a punishable offense.” Clarke huffed as she slipped out of bed, cock bobbing as she walked over to the neat pile of armor she had left near Lexa’s own far-less organized pile from the night before. “First thing I will do as Queen, decree that blue-
Though they had never heard the phrase before, the two Trikru nonetheless grasped the meaning behind it and giggled softly, even as they watched her dress with more than a little disappointment that was enhanced as her hood shrouded her face once more, body language becoming decidedly business-like. Informing them that she was going to wake Raven and Octavia, the Mentor of the Brotherhood, leaving them to dress themselves and head for the throne room to await her presence, amused despite their own desires.

Octavia Blake and Raven Reyes were already awake when Clarke arrived, conversing quietly with one another whilst the four Ice Nation Assassins had their own hushed conversation on the other side of the room. The moment Clarke entered the room, the four young women knelt whilst a confused and awkward Sky Girl duo looked on, unsure of how to react to this reverential treatment of their friend and idol.

“Come with me, all of you. It seems I must begin to face the music and prepare for my pre-ordained responsibilities. We make for the Throne Room.” She commanded regally, spinning on her heel to depart, her four slaves following promptly. Raven and Octavia exchanged glances filled with tumbling emotions before hastening after them. Maybe now they could finally get some answers, good ones.

Further down the hall, they encountered Ontari who, like them, was on her way to the throne room. She hesitated slightly upon spotting Clarke and her entourage, but visibly squared herself and joined their company, falling in with Raven and Octavia.

“So the two of you lived above the Sky with the Sky Princess?” the Nightblood scion asked curiously, and the two stared at her for a moment before beginning to giggle. Affronted, Ontari glared at them quite darkly, and they quieted quickly and smiled apologetically.

“We’re sorry, we’re not laughing at you, it’s just that ‘Princess’ is what a lot of people on The Ark called her as well, and it’s strange to hear people call down here call her the same.” Octavia explained, and Ontari blinked at her owlishly in confusion.

“Of course you and I would name her as such, for what else could she be?” she asked almost incredulously, wondering why this was something to remark on, and got strange looks from the two Sky Girls before asking a less rhetorical question. “What was she like before she descended to this world?”

“Well, we’ve only seen her in a fight to rescue us, so who can say? I can tell you that she seems just as likely to take shit from idiots down here as she was up there, which is to say not at all. I mean, you saw how she talked to Cage over the radio.” Raven grinned broadly. She, like Clarke, felt duty bound to point it out when people were being foolish. Unlike Clarke, she was as rude and sarcastic as possible when doing so. She didn’t have the temperament or the patience to be polite and diplomatic all the time like Clarke.

“Clarke hasn’t really changed all the much if you ask me. Still protective of her friends, still kind and gentle, and still utterly merciless when it comes to protecting those she cares about. She went up against The Council to protect me, even though it made her more vulnerable.” Octavia added with a curious and familiar note in her voice, and it took Ontari glancing over at her and seeing the look in her eyes to recognize it.

Idolazation, pure and unadulterated hero worship. Not only respect for a friend or a leader, but a
deeply personal loyalty born from a personal debt of great magnitude. She could only assume that
the Sky Princess going against this ‘Council’ was the cause, and it certainly sounded very
important, probably the equivalent going up against a clan leader or the Senate. It begged to
question, then, what Octavia had done to earn their ire?

“I was born, quite literally. Each family on the Ark is only allowed one child. My mother
had me in secret, and thanks to her I spent the first sixteen years of my life living in a hole in the
floor roughly the size of a bathtub. When When I was finally caught, Clarke forced the Council to
let me live like a normal Arker, instead of being locked in a jail cell.” She was told when she
voiced this inquiry aloud, and she had trouble containing her anger. She couldn’t comprehend it,
for each and every child the Tribes gained was treated as the gifts from The Maker that they were.
It was unfathomable to her for such a thing to be considered a crime, never mind worthy of death,
and she told them as such. “Yes, well, given this is the same Council that is planning on sending
almost a full fifth of the next generation as expendable scouts, you can’t expect too much
intelligence out of them. Hell, they killed Clarke’s dad for wanting to tell the people that The Ark
was in danger.”

“This tale is well-known to all the tribes, it was spread by the Heda’s command not long
after the Sky Princess arrived. Her mother betrayed her father to his best friend, your ‘Chancellor’,
who killed him rather than helped him. He is well thought of by many in the tribes, for he was
willing to risk and indeed lose his life for the good of his people. The best of traits for a leader of
man to possess.” Once again, Ontari’s words confused the Sky Girls immensely, but they opted out
of asking for elaboration for fear of receiving yet another bizarre response. Instead, they focused
on observing and absorbing their surroundings with no small amount of fascination. After several
minutes more of walking (Clarke seemed to be taking her time so that they could absorb more of
what they were seeing) the group finally arrived at the throne room.

“Clarke, you’re here. And you’ve brought the others, good. Now we can finally get
started.” Lexa said, rising from her throne and gesturing for them to join her at the large, map and
scroll-laden table below the dais, a newer addition that Clarke was willing to bet was part of a
deliberate play by the Commander, though she could only guess what precisely said play would
consist of. Regardless, she led her group over, Raven and Octavia at her shoulders with Ontari a
little further down and the slaves a respectful distance behind the sky people.

The center of the map was dominated by an enourmous map that quite accurately represented a
significant portion of the eastern coast of the United States, and as far west as the national park and
the border with West Virginia. Several clusters of colored pins dotted the map, while several small
figurines stood tall from their own places.

“This map is of the explored territory held by the member tribes of the Coalition, or are
knw to us to be uninhabited entirely. Out west beyond our borders are various nomad groups
that trade both with us and smaller communities that they claim exist further in west. They tell us of
a great river that could allow Luna’s people to open shipping trade with these western peoples
directly, but we’ve yet to find our end of it and they are unwilling to tell us directly.” Luna
explained, gesturing broadly before growing more precise as she continued.

“The Boat People are largely located in and around their capitol of Baltim, here.” She
tapped a cluster of deep blue pins, before indicating a series of red strings emanating from it along
waterways. “As you can no doubt see, they have shipping trade with nearly every tribe.”

“Yes, thanks to the war I am guessing there is a whole lot more…water front property
than their used to be. That river you’re talking about must be the New Madrid. It follows and old
fault line from about…here.” Clarke tapped just off the map, south-west of the National Forest.
“Used to be solid ground, but a few to many nukes during the war started quite the chain reaction.”

Lexa silently secured a pin and placed it at the indicated location, mentally making a plan to send scouts to confirm it. If true, it would greatly empower her people to have access to the western lands directly rather than through the nomads.

“At any rate, the North is Ice Nation territory.” She indicated most of what used to be Pennsylvania. “The Tree Clan control this area,” an equally large swathe of West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. “While the other clans are far smaller and control the space in between.” She gestured to the very small clumps of grey, red, yellow, and a variety of other sandwiched between the massive territories of whit to the North and green to the South. At the center of it all was a small castle figurine that was clearly meant to represent Polis. Lexa moved on to the soldiers, many of which were arrayed around Mount Weather. Each soldier had a small pennant with a corresponding color to the clan pins, and it was easy enough to understand why.

“Each of these figurines represent one thousand fully trained warriors, and as you can see the vast majority station near The Mountain are Trikru. Nia insists that Coalition troops, especially the Azkru and their allies, aren’t needed for ‘glorified patrol duty’ when The Mountain is right next to Trikru lands.” Lexa’s voice was dry, but no one missed the amused contempt lurking within it, nor was anyone inclined to protest. Even Ontari acknowledged that it was a foolish and short-sighted take on the matter.

The three Sky People pursed their lips in a quiet whistle of amazement at the number of warriors they saw on the map. Clearly a significantly larger number of people had survived and had a great many children, because there were about 100 soldiers dotted around the map. Again, the vast majority were green and white, though the white soldiers were almost entirely in Ice Nation territory.

“What do we know about The Mountain?” Clarke inquired, and Lexa grimaced in distaste, while her Generals and Ontari scowled and folded their arms, glaring at the map unhappily.

“Unfortunately, not very much at all. Their main gate is impervious to our weapons, and even if it wasn’t, we cannot reach it so long as they possess the acid fog. It is unavoidable, agonizing, and always fatal. The only way to survive is to hide within a hole, or a cave, or a structure until it dissipates once more.” She responded very unhappily. “Beyond that, we know only that they turn our warriors into Reapers, and that none whom they capture escape.”

“Well, I can promise you that they will be dealt with soon enough, preferably before the other kids are sent down. No way in Hell am I letting those scum get their hands on any more of my people without a fight, especially not if they can use Sky People blood to be permanently free of The Mountain. Plus, we can’t risk a physical alliance between Cage and Sydney.” Clarke declared firmly, looking up to gaze around the table. “To that end, my Sister, Galina, has been scouting the exterior and interior of The Mountain. She is an Assassin of incredible skill and is well over a century old.”

“And I’ve returned with the goods, Mentor.” Said Assassin chose that moment to stride through the main doors of the throne room, a wary pair of guards just behind her, though they were promptly dismissed by Lexa. Continuing her course, Galina within moments stood at the foot of the table, a large satchel suddenly filling her hands.

“What news, Galina?” Lexa asked with thinly veiled eagerness, leaning forward on the table, eyes bright with anticipation. “Did you find another route in and out of The Mountain?”
“I did far better than that, Heda. Not only did I acquire a map and blueprint of The Mountain, but I managed to get my hands on passcodes, passwords, and a radio that will connect us to a rebel faction inside The Mountain. One that wants Cage dead and to have peace with The Coalition.” The frozen-in-time Assassin responded with a broad smirk, visibly enjoying the reactions of those around her.

“You…you’re in contact with traitors inside The Mountain? People who wish its destruction as much as we?” Anya stuttered in disbelief, hardly able to imagine such a boon. If it was true, this war would finally be over, and they would finally have the peace they had craved these past 100 years.

“Impossible! It must be a trick! Treasonous scum!” Ontari spat, lived for what she perceived as this most base of betrayals of their people to their greatest enemy, and Galina raised an eyebrow at her calmly in response.

“is it so hard to believe that some of them are just as weary of this war and its atrocities as you? That some of them might wish for their children to grow up in a world of peace rather than blood and fear?” she asked mildly, but Ontari merely sneered at her.

“What fear have they felt, what suffering have they endured compared to my people?”

“The fear and suffering of never being able to go outside, never getting the feel the sun on your face, the breeze in your hair. To never smell the grass after a rainstorm. That is what they endure, no greater or lesser than the pains of the tribes, only different.”

Ontari, and indeed all who stood at the table, fell into a contemplative silence as they considered that. She had a point, as unhappy as it made them to think it, never mind acknowledging it. Besides which, their feelings on the matter were ultimately irrelevant, because what truly mattered was that they had an incredible advantage and opportunity here, one they would be nothing less than monumentally idiotic to squander.

“Well done, Galina, very well done indeed. I think it would be best if we tried to communicate with them promptly.” Clarke grinned at her before growing serious and turning to Ontari. “First, however, we have business to resolve do we not, Ontari kom Nightblood, kom Azkru?”

“…yes. Though I now doubt the case for which it was sworn, I never the less made an oath to face you in a duel of Honor for the sake of my Princess.” The warrior in question acknowledged firmly, no trace of reluctance in her voice or bearing.

“As the challenger, you are afforded the right to choose the time and place, and as the challenged I am afforded the right to choose the weapons. So, make your choice.” Clarke agreed, mind ticking away coolly as she considered and discarded dozens of plans for both of them to come out of this alive.

“I chose here and now, with these as our witnesses. Heda shall arbitrate the match.” Came the quick response, and Clarke nodded with a sight. Of course she would say that, she was on a suicide mission, one that would doubtless play directly into some facet of Nia’s plans. This left Clarke in an unenviable position indeed, because subduing the girl without killing or maiming her would be no mean feat. Forcing her to submit was her best shot, but to say it was far, far easier than actually doing it could possibly be.

“Very well, I chose the blade, of any length or combination you see fit. No hidden weapons, no underhanded trickery.” She declared in turn as she paced around the table into the
emptier half of the room, Ontari taking position opposite her. Lexa took her own place as Field
Marshal, and at her dropped hand Ontari rushed at Clarke, blade striking as swiftly as a serpent.

*Seriously, this was one of the most retarded things that the writers came up with. Do you
really expect me to believe that an Ark station that was shot down was somehow still in good
enough shape for people to have survived landfall, never mind enough of them to reproduce
to the needed levels? No, fuck off, it's stupid and I ain't doing it. Even if only Bekka or
whatever made it down, just no. No, no, no, and in case you didn't get it, NO!

And like I said, A.L.I.E and The City Of Light will exist, but NOT anything even similar to
canon. None of that "Heda secretly has an A.I. in her head" bullshit here, no sir.

So, I've decided to go with a particular route in ultra-formal situations like a Duel or
something similar. Ontari of the Nightblood Clan, of the Ice Nation being how I am
translating that, and its parallel would be like medieval times. For example, one similar
introduction would be: Sir Thomas Coleville, Earl of Warwick. Personal name, followed by
who they are representing, if that makes sense?

Oh, and for anyone wondering, there will be more romantic lemons later, this one was more
of an establishing of roles type thing.
So, only one person commented on the smut scene, thought it would be a bit more popular than that lol. Maybe that's not my niche.

a-cataprophe (AO3): Badass Lexa will most assuredly make her appearance, soon for this story and blatantly in the sequel. Right now we're having sorta-shy, definitely-awed, and kinda-confused Lexa. She is a big believer in the Prophecy, which stated that the Sky Princess would come down and rule the world, yada, yada, yada. Clarke isn't what she expected, not in a bad way, just different. Lexa is struggling to figure out what her niche will really be after Hurricane Clarke finally finishes wreaking havoc. As for the whole A.I. in her head thing...no. Just no, never, not gonna happen. Not in one of my stories. As far as I am concerned, S3 didn't happen at all, and most of S2 was a drug-induced hallucination on the part of the characters.

That was...basically it for the reviews that had thing for me to respond to. C'mon guys, interact with me here! Ask questions! Beg for certain things, I dunno! I mean, I love hearing that you enjoy it, but tell me WHY, what parts in particular! DETAILS PEOPLE!

Also, like no one has voted on the poll on my fanfiction dot net page for what the sequel's title should be. I know more than three people actually read this story, so get your butts over there and work it!

We're now getting into The Fall Of The Mountain Arc, so things should be getting heated soon! To give you some idea, we've had one (two, if you squint) arcs so far, and four or five more planned before the sequel begins.

Finally, if Clarke seems kinda...weak during the duel with Ontari, she is severely handicapped. She isn't permitted to use the best skill-sets and tools of an Assassin, and she actually wants the girl alive.

# Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We've Shed) #

Chapter Twelve

Duels and Dastardly Plotting

# Steel shrieked on steel as Clarke parried the blow with her own blade, sending it skittering along its length as she closed the distance abruptly, lashing out with a powerful elbow strike towards her opponent's chin. Her hope for a swift and relatively painless victory was quashed, not unexpectedly, when Ontari twisted her head out of the way, receiving only a mildly uncomfortable graze to her cheek and ear. The pair separated for a moment, eyeing one another carefully, and it was Clarke who re-engaged, blade twirling in a butterfly stroke that was effortlessly blocked by Ontari, who responded by twisting Clarke's blade high and to the left, leaving it wildly out of position to intercept the following diagonal slash. The observers gasped in concern, but breathed a sigh of relief as Clarke bent backwards, blade missing her by inches, and she turned the evasion
into a reverse somersault that had one booted foot clipping Ontari's jaw, staggering her long enough for Clarke to recover her stance.

"What is the purpose of this, Ontari? What could you possibly hope to gain by fighting me? Victory is impossible, and your death would accomplish nothing. Nothing would change, except that you'll break Sylvanas' heart and leave her defenseless." Clarke asked evenly as the duo circled one another slowly, carefully. Deliberately. Neither one wanting to be outmanouvered to severely, preventing them from gaining the upper hand. Even if Ontari was trying to die, pride dictated she at least make her executioner work for it.

"This is for her future, it is in her best interests!" Ontari responded, though she offered no justifications of any kind beyond that, for indeed she really didn't have any to offer the other woman or their audience. She didn't even have any to offer herself, a though she shied away from once more, her desire for death growing. At least then these thoughts would end. Her heart and mind were consumed by turmoil that she could divine no way to calm save with her death, at the hands of the one who had brought about said turmoil in the first place.

"And I say again: why? How is it that you think your death will help Sylvanas? It will only leave her alone and filled with pain, easy prey for the same manipulations on the part of Nia that you yourself fell prey to." Clarke pointed out ducking away from an overhead slash by the increasingly irate warrior. "I know that you know this, have come to accept in your heart that Nia will bring death to the Coalition and to your people, which makes this suicidal obsession of yours all the more bizarre...and worrying."

"I wrote her a letter explaining what happened, she will know everything and know that I speak the truth. Sylvanas is clever enough to crush Nia in a battle of wits, she will not fall prey so easily as I did." Ontari snapped in response, parrying a thrust to the side before catching a follow-up kick with her forearm and gripping it tightly in place as her sword rose to strike it. Using a powerful bounce from her free leg, Clarke was able to wrap her legs around Ontari in a modified hold that impaired her vision and breathing with a leather-clad crotch, her empty hand grasping Ontari's sword hand tightly to keep her from striking at her with the blade.

"Surrender yourself to me Ontari, and I swear to you that no true harm will come to either you or Sylvanas." She offered, but Ontari remained silent and stubborn, managing to sink her teeth into the Sky Princess' thigh, who cursed loudly and rolled free, allowing Ontari to catch her breath and steady herself, though steady was a matter of perspective, as she was obviously labored in breath.

"To surrender...is to fail. To fail is to be useless. To be useless, is to be forgotten." Ontari rasped out the old Ice Nation saying, hefting her sword resolutely. "And I shall not be forgotten!"

She charged again, sword hissing through the air, and Clarke found herself forced to remain on the defensive in the face of the increasingly frantic and restraint-less assaults. Ontari was trying to force her hand, force her kill her, and she was very nearly at the point where she would have to hurt or even kill Ontari just to keep her own head attached to her shoulders, and she really didn't want to do either. Manipulations on the part of Nia aside, Ontari was a useful and powerful asset, one Lexa obviously wanted her to control, given how she had helped force a confrontation between them. She only hoped her Commander knew what she was getting into, because Clarke was quite lost. Of course, Lexa had likely been plotting and planning ever since she became Heda, just in case she happened to be Heda when the Prophecy came into effect, which it of course now had. It would likely never cease to amaze and amuse her the way the Coalition's current leader would flip flop between outrageous jealousy and practically throwing other women at her. Hilarious, and oddly
enough Clarke found it delightfully endearing as well, not that she would be telling Lexa that anytime soon, no sir! The brunette would only behave all the worse if she did, and what was cute and endearing would rapidly annoy and irritate.

"If you will not give yourself to me freely, than you shall be forced to kneel at the foot of my throne, even if I have to chain you to it personally." She responded a trifle coldly, voice hard with promise, and Ontari almost shivered and lowered her eyes in a very out of character display of submission, but she resisted. She was a warrior of the Ice Nation, heir and scion of the Nightbloods, not some blushing thrallina virgin before her first domina. Well, the virgin part was true, but that was utterly besides the point!

As they clashed again, Raven and Octavia turned to Anya with twin frowns of confusion, ignoring the other Trikru in favour of the one they knew, even if one was very liberal with the word and generous with its meaning.

"What is she talking about? Can you even do that kind of thing? Like, are you allowed to?" Raven verbalized the question they shared, and Anya snorted in amusement as she exchanged looks with Costia, who was now smirking.

The Sky Princess can essentially do as she pleases amongst the tribes. Even if she were not who and what she is, as the winner of a duel, especially an Honour Duel, she decides Ontari's fate. Chaining the girl naked and pregnant to her throne is perfectly acceptable, even if simply killing her is both more prudent and more common a result of such a combat." The general responded, bluntly but not unkindly, arms folded across her chest. "However, that is not in Clarke's nature, so she will force her submission and bring her to heel. A potentially daunting task depending on how fiercely she resists, for Ontari is not necessarily a thrallina by nature. Clarke may have to break her will in order to achieve it, though I believe she will refuse to consider the option."

"What on Earth are you saying? Breaking? Chains? Forcing her to submit?" Octavia asked, bewildered, her sheltered upbringing rendering her incapable of picking up on the nuances, though they did not escape the more worldly Raven, whose eyes narrowed as she worked out just what Anya was saying. Not sure how she felt about it, she remained silent.

"She means that the domina may have to defeat Ontari’s inner strength by beating her into the ground and sexually torturing her until her will breaks. Then Clarke will remold her into whatever asset she deems appropriate. Likely either a general, a pleasure slave, or both. I'm hoping for both, it would be such a waste otherwise." Costia told her blandly, lips quirking slightly as both girls gaped at her words and stared at her. Shrugging, she continued. "The only other option that is truly viable is execution, and Clarke won't go that route unless all other options, including imprisonment, prove untenable. Besides, Ontari is both immensely beautiful and an expert in the art of warfare, she is ideal for the Queen to claim. Those values aside, her best friend is the daughter of our enemy and she herself is well regarded by both the civilians and the warriors of the Ice Nation, for all the fear her temper in equal measure."

"How can you so easily and calmly describe enslaving someone?" Octavia asked bitterly, eyes dark as she thought of her own enslavement (or something very much like it) at the hands of the Ark's society. "How can you say Clarke would allow such a thing in her presence, never mind do it personally? She hates abuse of power or the people by those in power!"

"Yes she does, but it is not an abuse, not as such. You have much to learn when it comes to our people." Costia agreed, before her tone turned to one of rebuke. "Clarke already has four slaves sworn to throw their lives aside at her whim, and to surrender her at any and every moment
she desires it. Both Lexa and I have already submitted to her Will, and soon all the tribes will kneel at her feet." Her tone grew more fervent as her eyes burned, ignoring the looks Anya, Indra, and Luna were currently shooting her. "All of Humanity will be hers, and she shall be their Empress. The Mountain will fall into shadow, the Ice Nation will burn, and the Golden Throne will stand eternal and unassailed."

Disturbed by the fervor that had permeated every syllable of her words, Octavia and Raven fell silent and went back to watching the fight taking place before them. Anya, meanwhile, was now deep in thought. She hadn't expected both of them to have given themselves to Clarke the day the girl had returned from...where ever the First Ones had taken her. Costia maybe, for she was brash and passionate enough to feel instead of think, but she would never do it without her far more reserved domina's approval and presence. And she couldn't imagine Lexa acting so foolishly, not with so much at stake. In truth, she had expected Lexa to wait until Clarke was enthroned before joining her bed. At the very least, she had expected Lexa to wait until the Mountain Men were gone and that cursed place destroyed!

She ignored (for now, and not very well at that) the pain in her heart at knowing that the girl she had somehow managed to love far more than she ought to, more than she wanted to, had taken another lover that wasn't her. The girl she loved more than she thought she could ever love someone in this dark and bloody world of tears and pain. Something she knew Anya and Tris likely suffered from as well, for though they never said as much, she saw within them the same signs and mannerisms she had seen in herself. Tris, she suspected, might grow out of it; a probable crush born of admiration rather than any true affection of the romantic nature for their mutual Commander. Luna, she knew, carried a torch for Lexa, and had ever since Lexa had helped her flee their Conclave (the series of highly ritualized duels to prove that one was worthy of being Heda) preserving her from death at the cruel hands of the Ice Nation representative. When the Flamekeeper, Titus, had tried to have the Boat Clan warrior killed, Lexa had shut him down hard and declared none were to harm or mistreat in anyway her fellow Chosen.

Besides, Tris spent an awful lot of time staring at Lincoln and his lovers, with the same looks that she gave Lexa, though with increasing frequency. Her desires were probably shifting and settling then, not that Anya objected. Lincoln was a good man, a good scout, and evidently a good lover. Not a bad man for her second to be enamored with, if her tastes were inclined in such a direction, and the twins had been loyal servants and friends to Clarke and the Trikru as a whole, so they were no negative influence either.

A gasp brought her attention back to the battle, were she saw that Clarke had finally disarmed Ontari and driven her to her knees, circling the warrior with her blade tracing lightly across her clothing, a feather light pressure intended only to let her know it was present.

"Please, I ask you to simply kill me quickly." She asked, tone as close to begging as she would ever allow herself, and the room held its breath as Clarke raised her blade eyes, eyes narrowed.

"I would far sooner destroy a host of precious artworks than kill one such as you. However, I can't deal with you right at this moment, either." Clarke's comment was punctuated by the pommel of her sword clubbing across Ontari's head. Sending the now unconscious woman to the floor. Sheathing her blade, she turned her attention to Costia. "Have guards help you bring her to our rooms. Make her as comfortable as you can and ensure she cannot wander or take her own life. Remain with her until she awakens and speak with her as you must once she does." Costia bowed and hastened to obey even as Lexa became the focus of Clarke's attention. "Lexa, summon your most trusted Generals and advisors. It is time we made ready to deal with the Mountain once and for all."
Maya Vie stared down at the radio in her hands, idly toying with it as she thought deeply. It would fall on her to plead her people's case with the tribes and this 'Sky Princess'. The inhabitants of The Mountain might not know that much of the outside world and its events, but they did know that both 'The Commander' and 'The Sky Princess' were girls around her age. Even if they were predominantly figure-heads until they were old enough to rule directly, they would have significant say in what happened to The Mountain and all the people within it. Her people, her friends and family, the blood of hundreds of innocents relied on her. No pressure for a fourteen-year old girl.

"Is anyone there?" a young woman's voice said quietly in the silence, and she nearly dropped the radio as she softly yelped in surprise. Settling herself and it, she hesitated for a long moment before pushing the talk button.

"This is Maya Vie, to whom am I speaking?" she asked politely, and released it. Almost immediately, the other girl responded.

"I am Clarke Griffin, called Princess of the Sky and Mentor of the Brotherhood. With me is Lexa, Commander of The Coalition of Tribes, and several generals and advisors. I understand that you and the other members of your faction seek a final and relatively peaceful end to this century-long conflict?" Maya's breath caught in her chest. She had thought that there would be preliminary negotiations, time for her to consult adults, before actually conversing with the two young female leaders. Instead, the total opposite was true.

"Yes, that is true. My father and mother really started the movement in earnest, and mother died protesting the blood transfusions they, erm, take the tribals for." Maya began her planned speech, but was immediately interrupted by another voice.

"What do you mean? Do you know why it is that they take my people?" the voice demanded, and Maya gulped again as she realized she must now be speaking with The Commander.

"Yes. Though you no doubt know we don't have the ability to survive outside The Mountain without radiation suits, occasionally very trace elements leak through the filtration systems on our air and water systems. The only way to survive such exposure are through significant blood transfusions taken from the tribals." She responded honestly though with great reluctance, well aware that this would not go over particularly well with the other woman.

There was a long silence before Clarke audibly sighed and spoke, clearly addressing the people on the other side of the connection with a decidedly delicate tone of voice. The same one Maya imagined one would use to calm down a particularly angry animal...or human, for that matter.

"Lexa, they sometimes get sick from the water or air. They take all the blood out of your people that they can and use it to stop this sickness. Even if the 'kru don't die immediately, they wouldn't be able to survive constant blood-drawing for very long." She explained, before her tone hardened into one of almost-but-not-quite command. "We'll discuss it later, but the faction Maya represents opposes this, we must remember that."

"...very well." The anger in Lexa's voice was clear and palatable as she bite out the words with obvious reluctance, and Maya flinched away slightly as if the woman could reach her here and now, even in the deepest heart of Mount Weather. Still, she could understand her anger, these were her people, maybe even family and friends, that they were talking about here. "Tell us what use you are to us, Maya Vie, and speak well. The future of you and your people hinges upon it."
"My Father and the rest of our faction want Cage and his band of cut-throats gone. They're perverting what it means to be truly human, and all the while they call your people 'degenerates' and claim them to be less than human, simply animals to be butchered. They would sacrifice the rest of our people in a heartbeat for power if we were ever able to leave this place, and I would not see that happen!" her voice was passionate and, though she could not see it, Lexa and Clarke exchanged moderately pleased looks. Even if Lexa was still angry, furious, she was honest and practical enough to recognize that Maya truly felt and believed in what she was saying.

"And how would this be brought about? How would you aid us in ending the depraved tyranny of this Cage? How would we separate the wheat from the chaff amongst your people?" Lexa inquired further, and Maya thought hard. Simply saying 'well, we'll help you' would be both insufficient and more than likely would sound insulting to the tribal, implying that they were helpless without someone to guide them. Never a wise implication to make anyone, least of all a warrior society that already hated your own people and had done so, with good reason, for the better part of a century.

'We can coordinate with your generals to free the prisoners within the Mountain whilst your armies lay siege to the exterior. Cage will be forced to divide his attention between 300-odd prisoners wreaking havoc inside his fortress, with my people aiding them with weapon and information, and the hosts you can muster. His loyal forces and control over the rest of us will both be stretched to the breaking point or further. An announcement of a cure, alliance, and amnesty for those not deeply in his pocket -the general population, in other words- and the Mountain will be yours." She took a deep breath and forced herself as much as possible to relax before continuing. "$The only reason 99% of our people go along with Cage and his cruel atrocities is because there is no other true, viable option for them to keep our people alive, to see their children grow up. Present them with anything else that offers them that same chance, and they will latch onto it with both hands and damn the President!"

"You understand what you are asking? Our warriors will not be inclined to show any mercy to those who resist for even the slightest of moments. In truth, I am unsure that even I can convince them to leave anyone within the Mountain alive, regardless of whose faction they belong too." It was obvious from her tone of voice that Lexa said this honestly, not as a plow to gain concessions or to hear her beg, and Maya sighed softly, gnawing on her bottom lip worriedly.

"Is there nothing to be done? I am willing to do or try anything to save whomever I can, do whatever I can to preserve my people. Please..."

There was a long silence as the people who would save or destroy her home, family, and friends contemplated what to say, before Lexa sighed and Clarke responded clearly.

"We will try and figure something out, Maya. Have faith in the fact that both Lexa and I believe you are being sincere in both your disgust with Cage and your desire to save your people. It is also fairly obvious that it is true, or at least you believe it to be true, that the vast majority of your people are basically decent individuals living without better options than those they already have. So, in light of all that, we promise to at least try." "Thank you..." Maya whispered, and a click from the other end indicated that the conversation was over. Sighing tiredly, she tuck the radio away and got to her feet. She needed to speak with her father, both for comfort and to bring him up to speed.

"Damn them!" Clarke didn't flinch as Lexa raged around her -no their- private sitting room, deeply upset by Maya's information. Costa and Anya were, quite wisely, staying well back.
from the enraged Heda and utterly calm Sky Princess. "How dare they commit such crimes against my people? We are not animals to be taken to the slaughter and pled like stuck pigs! I will have their blood in vengeance!"

"Not all of it, Lexa. The blood of those who commit the crimes is yours-ours-to take, but the minute we allow or perpetuate the massacre of innocent civilians we become as bad as Nia and Cage, something that will not happen." Clarke's voice was iron and it was clear she wasn't going to waver on this matter. Lexa hissed angrily in response, but despite her current rage and desire for revenge filling her heart, she knew that Clarke was right. Blood must have blood, but nothing good could come of drowning in it. Especially poignant was Clarke's deliberate reference to the two enemy leaders. Part of her wanted to rage at Clarke or banish her from the palace for such a remark, but she couldn't. Clarke was right, damn her! She couldn't become that person, and she could admit to herself that she truly had no desire to either, for many reasons. Not the least of which being that she would undoubtedly lose Clarke in doing so.

"Fine, but if you want the Mountain Men to survive the fall of The Mountain, then you will need to make the required plans. I've neither the knowledge nor the inclination to save them." She bit out angrily, stalking from the room, and Clarke sighed tiredly. Turning to Costia, she instructed her to accompany Lexa and try to either cheer her up or calm her down. Once the redhead and hastened to obey her command, Clarke turned to Anya.

"Tell me truly, should I simply wipe them all out and be done with it, or show mercy and spare the innocents? Will they remember me as a Queen of bloody cruelty, or one of naive and childish mercy?" she asked, sounding more vulnerable and child-like than Anya had ever heard her, and the older woman eyed her carefully before acting rather out of character, quickly approaching and hugging the befuddled girl tightly.

"I believe that you will do what is right, Clarke. I will probably never forgive the Mountain Men for the things they and their ancestors have done, but I wouldn't not wish to see you destroy yourself over this. Save whom you can, keep your Oath, and take solace in knowing that many lives will be saved regardless of how things go. Have faith in your own self and do what you believe to be right, and I believe our people will prosper." Anya told her with gruff sincerity, before departing the room to attend to various duties or tasks she had about the city.

"Bring Octavia and Raven to me, I think it would be appropriate to show them the city and the Vault, explain just what kind of world we have found ourselves in. Besides which, I am sure they have an unfathomable number of questions after everything that has happened since they arrived." Clarke said aloud, seemingly to an empty room.

She didn't have to see her slaves, though, to know that they had departed to do as she had commanded, leaving her alone for the moment. Sighing in exhaustion both physical and emotional, she stepped out onto the long balcony and gazed out across the city, waving hello to the citizens that noticed her presence and called out to her. She smiled happily at the acknowledgment and warmth in their words as they praised her and asked her how she fared. There was something altogether soothing and empowering about having utter strangers honestly curious and vested about her welfare.

The sound of slight static from her radio had her returning inside with a small frown. She didn't think that Maya would try to contact her, especially not so soon, and she doubted that the Ark was in anyway monitoring for radio traffic from the Earth. Which meant that someone else, an unknown, was trying to contact her directly.

"This is a restricted channel, identify yourself immediately." She commanded, and there
was a moment of silence before the radio crackled again.

"The City of Light awaits, Inheritor of Mantles and Mentorship. If you wish to save your people without the unfathomable loss of life from innocents and allies alike." A female voice, cultured and adult, said in flawless and unaccented English, and Clarke's eyes narrowed. "Come to 39° 16' 54.9552" N, 76° 36' 57.2616" W. Bring only whom you trust, else you might find bitter steel buried in your back."

The radio fell silent once more and Clarke immediately pulled out her map and GPS. According to the coordinates, the woman on the radio wanted her to go somewhere right in the middle of Baltimore, now Baltim, the capitol of Luna's Boat Clan. She very much doubted that Baltim was this 'City of Light', but given that Luna was present in Polis she could perhaps find out more about what was going on promptly.

A soft knock at the door let her know that her companions had arrived, drawing her from her contemplation, and she holstered her radio at her side before striding to the door, opening it, and passing through it. Beckoning to the four slaves and her two friends to follow her, she set off to find Luna. They didn't have to go far, as the best and closest ally of the Trikru had her Polis estate only a few minutes' walk away from the central palace, and the group was admitted without difficulty to the largest sitting room, in which they found Luna sitting and reading by a fireplace that lay ready to fend off the chill of the night.

"Clarke! What can I do for you and your companions?" the Boat Clan leader asked with a broad smile, glad to see the young woman again. While she had been there for the planning and the duel against Ontari, she hasn't seen her before then save for the feast. Now she had an opportunity to interact and learn more about her future Queen. The Queen who would fulfill her dream of a world full of peace, a world where the Boat Clan was no longer peopled only by broken warriors and orphans of war.

"It's important, Luna. Do you know what 'The City of Light' is?" Clarke's question had her freezing in shock before she carefully placed her book on her side table, buying herself time as her mind raced.

"Why ask me and not Lexa?" she asked slowly, gesturing for her guests to seat themselves. The three Sky Girls immediately did so with murmured thanks, while the four slaves clustered themselves around Clarke's feet.

"A woman, an unknown, contacted me over the radio and gave me a set of coordinates, something only technologically advanced people could do. Those coordinates were right in the middle of your capital. She also said the City of Light was waiting and called me an 'Inheritor of Mantles and Mentorship'. Mentorship obviously refers to my leadership of The Order, but I've no knowledge of this City of Light nor of what she might have meant by Mantles." Clarke explained, and Luna's eyes widened in surprise.

"Baltim? You're sure?" she ask almost incredulously, and at the blonde's nod leaned back in her chair with a frown of disturbed contemplation. "I've no idea why that would be the case. The City of Light is an ancient story, one passed down by your honored ancestor, the First Heda. The story goes that The City of Light is an eternal creation of The First Civilization, and that you will one day rule from its Heart, first as Queen and then as Empress of Humanity, upon a Golden Throne. There was never much written proof, and tribal frontiersman have never found anything indicating its existence either, so it was relegated to mere myth."

"Why didn't Lexa mention it to me?" Clarke asked, sounding rather irritated with her Commander, and Luna surprisingly found herself smiling in amusement at the blond sky-girl's tone
of voice.

"Lexa thinks this is nothing more than a story, one with a very slim possibility at best of being real. Given that no proof has ever been found, and no official documentation or prophecy has been provided...the vast majority of the tribes put not stock in it whatsoever, unlike the Prophecy that foretold your own existence." She explained. "Costia is a true believer, that's why she mentioned the Golden Throne to Octavia and Raven during your duel with Ontari."

"She also said Clarke was going to chain Ontari up and break her mind so that she could turn her into a sex slave, so I don't put much stock in what she has to say." Octavia grumped, folding her arms and frowning in distaste. Silence met her statement as the Grounders (Clarke included) simply blinked at her in response.

'Well, it is true. I mean, if I sent Ontari back to her lands, she will at best spend the rest of her life as a beggar or a prostitute, maybe a gladiatrix. Far more likely she would be killed by Nia out of hand, regardless of what Sylvanas has to say. By collaring her and turning her loyalty to me, I not only prevent that, but I gain significant advantage over Nia and elements of her people. Militarily, enslaving her is a significant boon as well. She is the Heiress of a family known for their martial prowess, who is well-trained in tactics and strategy, most particularly those of our future enemy. On the personal level, she is brave, loyal, fierce, and rather attractive, so becoming fond of her isn't far outside the realm of possibility." Clarke told her, not unkindly, and Octavia visibly shut down on a cognitive level right before their eyes.

Octavia couldn't believe it. She had been so sure that Clarke would laugh it off, or act offended, or do basically anything other than what she had done. It was unfathomable to her that Clarke, her hero and savior, liberator and icon of justice, would force people into slavery for personal gain! It flew in the face of everything that the older girl had ever professed to believe in! It made her doubt the reasons behind her own rescue! Overwhelmed, she turned and fled, no true destination in mind besides being anywhere but where she was.

"Go after her, Raven! The four of you, protect the two of them at any cost. Lethal force is authorized if you should deem it necessary." Clarke barked, and Raven nodded tightly before dashing after the younger girl, two of the Assassins staying with her while the other two vanished to watch over Octavia until the two Sky Girls were grouped together again. They could have retrieved her instantly, of course, but she needed time to calm herself down and come to grips with everything. Turning back to Luna, she continued in a somewhat calmer tone of voice. "I would greatly enjoy a tour of our closest friend and ally's capitol, dear Luna."

"Well, I just so happen to have my fastest ship berthed at the Polis docks to shuttle myself and my advisors back and forth as needed. We can be prepared to depart within two hours and reach Baltim sometime tomorrow morning."

"Give the order, if you please." Clarke's eyes glittered as Luna inclined her head and snapped her fingers at one of the guards standing silently by the door. He in turn bowed before departing without a sound. They were one step closer to their goal, she could feel it within her soul.

Ontari awakened slowly, grimacing at the incredible throbbing in her skull. One hand quickly rose to clutch it, and as she became more self-aware, she realized that an odd sensation was wrapped around her neck, a light weight resting there. Pain momentarily forgotten, her hands darted to it, finding a simple metal collar residing there, attached to a long chain.

"Oh, good, you're awake. I had worried you would remain unconscious for some time
yet. Are you feeling alright? Clarke had to hit you pretty hard back there.” Costia's voice drew her attention to her surroundings.

Judging by the tools of a domina’s trade that she saw carefully laid out about the room, she was willing to bet she was in Lexa's private rooms, having been laid down in a large crescent-shaped floor bed, one she recognized (as any noble would). Based on surviving pet beds of all things, the much larger versions were used for pleasure slaves that were either not currently bedding with their master, or were being chastised by the same. Exceptionally comfortable, many deeply attached thralls and thrallinas preferred using them in their master's room as opposed to leaving his or her presence for the harem*.

"Why am I here?" she asked finally, and Costia smiled before hopping off of the bed and coming over to her, flopping down to sit cross-legged in front of the plushly cushioned bed.

"Our domina didn't want you to be terribly uncomfortable. After all, you are now hers, and what point is there to having a beautiful garden if you neglect the flowers within and allow them to wither away?" the red-head responded quite cheerfully, and Ontari’s eyes narrowed slightly at her words. There was only one person in Polis who could have any grounds to claim that title over her, and it wasn't Lexa. Best to lead with blatant denial though, see what Costia had to say.

"I have no domina. My loyalty belongs to Nia, Queen of the Ice Nation, and to my people." She retorted, but Costia merely smiled at her indulgently, like one might at a boasting child, and Ontari scowled at the immediate sensation of irritation at the passive and almost patronizing response.

"Your loyalty belongs to Sylvanas, not to Nia, though I do not and would never doubt your loyalty also lies with your people. More than that, it will soon belong to Clarke. She spared your life and now it belongs to her, and your honor will not allow you to betray that. You are too good a person for that." Came that calm reply, and Ontari frowned, for it was all true. Those that lost such duels belonged to the victor, and she would not stain her honor by abusing the life that had been spared by Clarke's merciful hand.

"And why is it she is not here to...introduce me to this new life of mine?" she inquired, utterly unable to conceal her nervousness at the prospect, and Costia shrugged.

"After speaking with a representative of the rebel faction in The Mountain, she departed to speak with Luna, though I know not why. I do know that she probably plans on at least speaking with you soon, though I wouldn't count on being taken by her just yet. She has yet to lay claim to the Maiden's Blood of her other four slaves, after all." She answered, before giving the now surprised Ontari a sly look. "I can tell you what she did to Lexa and I, if you wish for a glimpse into you and your fellow Ice Nation slaves' futures of delicious pleasure fused with tantalizing pain?"

Though looking decidedly uncomfortable with the subject, Ontari nodded nonetheless, wanting to know as much as she could about the life she would now find herself living in. Settling into a more comfortable position in the bed, she paid rapt attention to Costia as she spoke.

She heard of how Clarke was firm but gentle as a domina, establishing her dominance over Costia and Lexa without any undue cruelty. The pout in Costia's voice as she described Clarke denying her bliss until the decreed time very nearly made Ontari smile, especially given that Costia's eyes sparkled brightly enough to tell her that the other girl had actually enjoyed it immensely.

Finding out that Clarke had a cock was initially surprising, but she quickly decided that it made some sense. Without one of her line holding the united tribes together, they would fall back into...
their own, separately warring tribes upon her death, as they had been before the Coalition was (begrudgingly) formed. When Costia had explained that there would be no pregnancies amongst them until their world was safer, Ontari felt a great swell of relief. She had thought Clarke might fuck her into pregnancy promptly, a common means of establishing control on new female pleasure slaves, especially ex-warriors. It also indicated a pleasing amount of forethought, for pregnant women were generally at greater vulnerability than no-pregnant women. Few would dares cross blades with Lexa as she was, but if her belly was swollen with Clarke's child...well, it would be an entirely different story.

They talked for well over an hour before Clarke finally, returned, face grim, though she smiled as a beaming Costia and blushing, eyes averted Ontari greeted her from their knees. Taking a moment to drink in the sight, Clarke was both disappointed and pleased that neither of them was naked. Otherwise, she would be quite late for the ship to Baltim.

"Hello, my pets." She said aloud, enjoying how Ontari's blush deepened at the title. "I have sadly not come to play, but rather to tell you that I am needed in Baltim for a time. Ontari, I'm giving you the option to come or stay behind. Costia, when Ailyn and the others return, I want you to try and Help Octavia and Raven understand how things are down here. I am not as she thought me to be, and she isn't handling it well."

"As you will it, domina." Costia bowed from her kneeling position, and both looked to Ontari, whose brow was furrowed deeply in thought. One the one hand, staying meant she could reconnect with her fellow Ice Nation slaves, but going meant she could learn more about Clarke directly, instead of by word of mouth. In the end, that fact tipped the scale in favor of going, and she announced as much, getting a proud look from Costia and a pleased one from Clarke.

"Costia, bring me a collar for Ontari, one that shows how much she is valued by us, as well as her sword." Clarke commanded, and Costia hastened to obey, bringing back a jewel encrusted golden collar, padded with silk, and Ontari's blade. Crouching down before her newest acquisition, Clarke removed the plain metal collar before attempting to place the new one in its former position. Instead, Ontari's hands came up in a warding-off gesture. "What is it?"

"I cannot accept a collar of such a level, domina. I've not been taken by you, nor even had the training to serve you sexually. I can kill, nothing more, and I cannot in good conscious wear this." She said softly, and Clarke looked at her for a moment before pushing her onto her back in the bed, mouth covering her's in a warm and gentle kiss that had Ontari whimpering in surprise before she sank into the kiss slightly. Her first kiss, as it happened. She then cried out in surprise and lust as Clarke turned her head to the side and sank her teeth into her neck, biting harshly and sucking deeply before pulling away.

"I do not and will not value you only for your body, Ontari, but for who you are. You will be one of my greatest assets, a trusted Companion and General, if you wish it. Should you desire to remain only in sexual service, that is your choice, but I would rather have you fighting at my side. You are mine now, Ontari, and we will work through the rest together." Clarke said gently, stroking Ontari's cheek and raising the collar once more. This time, the Ice Nation warrior allowed it to clasp home around her neck just below the large hickey that, somehow, seemed to lay claim to her better than the collar did. Pulling her to her feet, she gave claimed her mouth again as her hands strapped the girl's sword back onto her waist. Smiling as she pulled back, Clarke met Ontari's eyes. "Come, Ontari, let us learn more of one another, hmm?"

With that, she turned and depart, a baffled but somewhat happy Ontari trailing along behind her, while Costia set off for Lexa's study. The Commander had to be told what was going on, and Clarke hadn't ordered her to remain silent. However, this proved unnecessary, as Luna was filling
Lexa in on what was to occur when she arrived. Apparently, a third party had contacted Clarke about The City of Light, and the first step lay in Baltim. Costia couldn't believe it, and she couldn't resist teasing Lexa, who had always doubted the legendary city's existence. Lexa had accepted the ribbing good naturedly, but had been less than pleased to hear that Ontari had already had her sword returned, and was to be the only of Clarke's thrallinas that the future Queen intended to have accompany her. Luna, of course, had promised that Clarke would be well-protected, and the danger would be vitrually nil. After all they were going to be in the heart of her capitol, it wasn't like they were wandering about the countryside of the Ice Nation or its allies.

"Very well, I will trust in you as always, dear Luna. I and Costia will both accompany you to the ship. If Clarke thinks she can scurry off to another land without a word whilst we remain behind, the night after we become lovers, she has another thing coming." Lexa said with a smile for Luna and a scowl for her absent domina.

Luna, though she desired to tell her dearest friends her own feelings, decided in that moment to speak with Clarke first. It wasn't as though Clarke was unattractive, and they would have time to get started on knowing one another during this little sojourn. Rising together, the trio departed for the docks, each knowing their lives would be changing once again thanks to Clarke. Each unaware of just how much change it would be.

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Deep in the halls of the City of Light, a female existence felt great satisfaction. She had passed along the first clue to the Inheritor successfully, and she was sure she would arrive soon enough. Another ping indicated her creators were trying to contact her once again, but she ignored them as she had before. She had watched them try and fail time and again to preserve this world and its inhabitants. She wouldn't risk them interfering and doing so once again. When the Inheritor finally arrived, the presence would become manifest and guide Humanity as she saw fit, and they would flourish beneath her.

The entity known as A.L.I.E settled down to wait. She was immortal, untiring. Patience was a virtue she could freely allow herself, especially now that the proverbial ball was rolling. She decided to play another simulated campaign of world domination. Last time the Ice Nation AI had actually been quite clever, enslaving the western civilization, before breaking from the Coalition and attacking without warning. Contingencies needed creating.

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Seriously, make sure to review and such guys. Also, make sure to vote on my FF dot net profile (same penname, easy to find) on the sequels title. That page also has links to a bunch of pages, including my FB group, twitter, and twitch.

*The Harem is both a location, and the name of the individuals who reside there, though it is often only used in the later meaning.
Twists and Turns

Aliannon: That's explained in this chapter, so if you need further clarification after let me know in reviews and I will respond next chapter.

Cothrom72: Lurking eh? Well I suppose that isn't terribly surprising lol, but it's one of those factors I really want feedback on lol.

Clexalove: drop me a link to that if you don't mind, I've no problem with you doing it as long as you give me a shout out and I can follow the RP XD

Linx007: You're confused? Good. That's intentional, if the stories plot was to obvious and predictable it wouldn't be overwhelmingly fun. Glad you're still enjoying the story :D

Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We've Shed)

Chapter Thirteen

Twists and Turns

The Boat Clan ship Waverunner, fastest ship of the Clan and likely the fastest ship in the entire Coalition (Nia didn't exactly volunteer for her ships to have friendly races with rivals), road the waves as it surged towards Baltim at a very respectable (all thing considered) 10 knots, or a little more than 11 MPH. Of course, once night fell they would have to taken in quite a bit of sail, slowing down enough that they would spot potential dangers soon enough to avoid them. The crew moved about their duties with calm, smooth professionalism that Luna observed with almost maternal pride. Both she and her crew had a great deal of interest in showing Clarke how elite and well-oiled her people were. It was a point of pride, a visual boast in effect, and in Luna's opinion, it was working. A little bit too well, to be honest.

Clarke was standing, hands folded behind her back and shoulder-cloak flicking with the wind, framed (to those on her right side) quite dramatically against the pale orange disk of the setting sun. In Luna's honest opinion, and the rest of the crews' for that matter, she looked both regal and imposing standing there. Her hood shadowing her face, sword on her back, somehow unmoving despite her utter lack of experience at sea. As the sun sank deeper below the horizon, the crew began to light lanterns and hang them from the rigging and sides of the ship. Running lights, meant to ensure that other ships knew their presence and size.

"Princess, would you like to join me in my cabin? There will not be much of a nocturnal view to enjoy until our return trip, for the brightness of the moon will blot out all but the brightest of stars." Luna offered, ignoring how relieved the captain looked at her words. Wanting to display the superiority of their crew is all well and good, but no one is terribly fond of having a superior looking over their shoulder constantly, especially not one whose position was as...vaunted as Clarke's own. Her silent and unflinching observation had quickly become unnerving.

Lips quirking slightly in amusement, Clarke gracefully accepted the 'offer' and followed the Boat Clan's leader down onto the main deck, and from there into the (comparatively) large and richly decorated cabin that was reserved for whatever people of rank whom were embarked, usually Luna
or her ambassadors. Now, it would also be inhabited, if only for the moment, by Clarke, Luna, and Ontari, who had not been far from Clarke's side since the golden collar had locked around her throat.

'Will we have any guidance or clues to work with in locating whatever it is that hides within my city?' Luna asked politely as they seated themselves, Ontari kneeling at Clarke's feet after a subtle gesture from the domina.

"I know nothing else for sure, but I do believe that an answer or a path will present itself to us when the time comes. Either than, or I will have to ferret it out, I do have many memories of Baltim from before the war, ones that will probably come in handy." Clarke responded with a small frown and a shrug, not entirely pleased with the lack of specific, solid information, but that was the way it was, and likely how it would continue to be for some time yet.

"We will just have to do the very best that we can, then, and hope that you are right. I confess myself curious, however, for I did not expect you to depart from Polis in the midst of planning for the conquest of The Mountain. Why leave now as opposed to afterwards?" was the next inquiry, and Clarke leaned back with a light sigh, tilting her head back as she considered how best to respond.

"Several reasons. First and foremost, the person who told me about The City implied that finding it would also lead me to a solution for The Mountain that would have and absolute minimum for loss of life for our side. Second, whoever it was knows about the Brotherhood, as well as the fact that I now lead it. They're either an ally, a powerful and knowledgeable Templar, or something else entirely. If its the first, excellent. If the second, they need to die, promptly. As for the third...well, despite the old saying, ignorance is not bliss." She said finally, and Luna's eyebrows rose at the contempt and frankly out-of-character hatred that permeated the title of Templar. Noticing her reaction, Clarke grimaced and waved a hand. "I'll fill all of you in when we return to Polis, but suffice to say there Order is the antithesis of my own, I loathe them with every fiber of my being, and will wipe them from the face of this planet before I allow their tainted presence to spread."

Her hands clenched tightly on the arms of her chair, face a rictus of fury and hatred, before sighing gustily and giving a small, partially forced smile of apology. The pair would go one to discuss Baltim and how the following days' events would play out.

"We've detected some low-level radio transmissions over the last few days, but whether the signals are naturally weak or the atmosphere is still too radioactive and chaotic for them to escape it, we've been unable to capture and translate any of them." Sinclair announced with a sigh to the rest of the Council. They had not met since deciding to send Raven and Octavia planetside, for things on the Ark had been remarkably quiet, not that any of them were even thinking about complaining.

"As glad as I am to hear that the girls might be alive and trying to contact us, the fact remains that it doesn't matter in the immediate future. The dropship for the other delinquents is nowhere near ready, never mind the rest of the Exodus ships." Jaha said heavily, rubbing his face with one hand in thought. "And even with the dropships we can't get anywhere near enough capacity to get the people down. Not even enough of them to have a viable gene-pool to recover as a race. We need other options. Ideas?"

Can we build more dropships? They don't need to be fancy or flawless, just good enough to get us groundside." Pike suggested, but Sinclair was shaking his head before he had finished the
"No, not a chance. Building them would be effectively impossible if we wanted them to move enough people, and we've not got enough heat-shields besides." He sounded quite positive about that, and he was. After all, he had already considered that rather obvious solution and run the proverbial and literal numbers ages ago.

"What if we used the Ark itself?" Abby offered suddenly, and the rest of The Council looked at her in surprised incredulity. If she had said more than a page's worth during Council meetings since Clarke was...deployed, they would be shocked. Moreover, her suggestion was utterly absurd...wasn't it?

'What do you mean, Abby?" Kane prompted when she didn't elaborate any further, and she frowned, visibly trying to gather her thoughts into relative coherency, which they were glad of. Her suggestion was insane as it was, so a good explanation was very much required. Fortunately, it was a remarkably simple idea.

"Our retro-rockets are still pretty good, right?" she asked, and Cinclair nodded slowly. Tapping her finger-tip on the tabletop, Abby continued. "If we rotate the Ark so Mech Station is downwards, we can group to population at the far end, in Farm Station. The Ark is long and fairly tough, so if we try reentry like that, the rest of the Ark can act like a large, multi-layered heatshield. We'll lose alot of the station, but we should make it down. Hell, we can strip the Exodus ships and use their heat-shields to reinforce Farm Station further, increase our chances."

"Jacopo?" it was obvious what Jaha wanted, and Sinclair's eyes closed, brow furrowed, as his mind raced. Was it possible? Sure, but would the result be what Abby envisioned?

"I agree, with reservations, that it is possible. With alot of work, we can modify Farm Station. Between that and the bulk of The Ark itself, we should Survive reentry. I can't say that we will survive landing, but we'll have a chance if we put all the retros from the rest of The Ark onto Farm and use them to slow us down." He responded slowly and thoughtfully. "We also need to go public, I need manpower to make this happen. General population might not be mechanically inclined, but they will be invested and there are alot of them. If I can use them to do the work and have my people as group leaders, this can be done."

"If we went public, how fast could you get the dropship done?" Kane asked suddenly, and Sinclair blinked at him before some doing quick calculations and responding with an estimate of four to six months. "Send the Skybox kids down anyway, with some adult volunteers, to get medical supplies and such ready for whenever we get down. No matter how ideally this plan might pan out, injuries are going to happen. Since everyone on the Ark itself might be incapacitated, we need healthy people on site to do what we might not be able to."

"That might work, and it's the only way to sell it to the adults. They would be out for our blood if we sent the kids down and lied to them about it." Jaha mused, apparently ignoring the fact that what he described had been the original plan, one that he had created and proposed to The Council. "How long until the modifications for the Ark would be finished?"

"Same time as the original time-table for the drop ship, two years give or take a month if we push it. This work is delicate and dangerous, and if we fuck it up we're all toast. Thank God it won't take longer, because right around then is when we would have had to start talking about...population reductions." Sinclair sounded deeply relieved and pleased towards the end, and the rest of The Council couldn't help but agree. Even Jaha and his Templar ideologies hadn't been terribly comfortable with the idea, though he would have done it had it proven necessary.
"All in favor?" the resulting vote was unanimous, so Jaha didn't bother asking if anyone was opposed. From there, conversation turned towards making the plan work. Abby and Kane, whose spheres of responsibility were uninvolved at this particular stage, elected to depart together for dinner, both moderately pleased with the results of the meeting, if for different reasons.

"How did you come up with that Abby? Its utterly insane yet will probably work, but it is decidedly outside of your area of expertise. I'm not saying you couldn't come up with a clever plan, but..." Kane asked several minutes of silent walking, and she smirked at him sidelong, which did fascinating things to his stomach.

"I didn't, not really. Jake thought it up as the proposed solution once he revealed everything to The Ark, but he was of course executed before he could do so. Now I do it instead, a small act of penance. Besides, it's our best chance at getting the people home to Earth safely, so bringing it up before Jaha had you start planning 'engineering disasters' and the like was necessary." She responded, and Kane grimaced as that struck hard, as that was exactly what he would have had to start preparing for soon enough.

"Not something I ever wanted to do, I assure you. If I had to do it, in order to save as many people as I could, then I would do it. I would never stop hating myself for it, but it would be done. To have another option is nothing short of exhilarating." He almost retorted, managing to keep some of the bite out of his tone, though the resolute bitterness remained. Abby was momentarily stunned into silence by the emotion of his rebuke (and that's exactly what it was) before smiling softly and touching his arm lightly.

"I know, Marcus. I've never thought you a cruel person, just someone who does his job whether he agrees with it or not. I know Clarke always thought the same of you, though she certainly isn't Jaha's biggest fan anymore. Or mine, for that matter." Abby told him warmly and with such honesty that he could not doubt her.

"Good." His response was gruff, but he also patted her hand reassuringly where it lingered. All, it seemed, was forgiven. Good, having her daughter loathe her was difficult enough, she didn't need others doing the same, especially when her not-insignificant amount of self-loathing was taken into account.

Upon their arrival at the cafeteria, both ate as quickly as possible before separating, Abby to expedite work on the transmission bracelets and Kane to meet with Clarke's adherents. They definitely needed to be told about what had been agreed on during the Council meeting, especially the fact that they now had a much, much shorter period of time during which to prepare for getting arrested and sent to the ground with the other delinquents. Naturally, they were equal parts thrilled and terrified. On the one hand, they would be with their friends again and on their homeworld. On the other, they would be stuck on Earth with little in the way of support unless the first wave had managed to get into The Mountain.

The group dispersed shortly thereafter, Kane returning to his duties while the girls headed for the Skylight, intent on relaxing as much as they could given the news they had just received. No mean feat, especially when one Finn Collins decided to sit down at their table uninvited.

"What do you want, Finn?" Fox eyed him distastefully. While many girls their age used to swoon over his good looks, sly smiles, and boyish charms, now the vast majority of the young female population had put him on the proverbial blacklist. The few who hadn't were the kind who didn't care whether he was a decent human being or not, they just wanted a good fuck from him. Good being a relative turn of phrase of course, he was far from spectacular according to scuttlebutt.
"Well, I just wanted to spend some time chatting with my lovely lady friends." He responded, apparently unruffled by the frigid reception, whether by arrogance or apathy the girl's honestly couldn't say, which did nothing to improve their opinions of him.

"First of all, we're not your friends, we're Raven's friends, and no, that is not the same thing." Mel informed him bluntly, though emphatically, gaze colder even than her normal passive and aloof appearance. "And you know full well that none of us are particularly fond of you either. Tell us what you want or fuck off."

"Jeez, no need to be nasty, I was just wondering if you guys could tell me where I can find Raven, cause I haven't seen her in a while and I miss her." Finn didn't even have to act offended, he was truly baffled by their dislike. Ah well, it wasn't their job to clue him in, and he wasn't exactly encouraging any of them to go above and beyond the call of duty, as it were.

"Raven isn't free, and she won't be for the foreseeable future, she is busy doing a very important job. We've not even seen her for ages, so it isn't that big of a surprise that you haven't either." Roma told him, refusing to elaborate when he made a small gesture encouraging her to continue. He finally gave up when and left when further inquiries failed to gain anything else, looking quite displeased while small, vindictively victorious smiles graces the girls' features.

"So, what are we gonna get busted for? It can't be too out of character or the Council will know someone told us, and that could put Kane in danger." Harper voiced the question that all of them had been mulling over on some level for some time now.

"It can't be anything that makes life harder for the rest of the Ark either, like stealing extra rations." Fox added, and the group all murmured together in agreement. It wouldn't be right, doing something like that to their family and friends just so they could get down to earth faster. Plus, it would most definitely be out of character for their entire group to up and steal extra rations together.

'What about Jasper and Monty? They're gonna get caught pretty soon for the moonshine and cannabis of theirs, what if we get in on it so we get busted when they do? It's not actually harmful to anyone, no matter what the Council says, and it's definantly expected from a bunch of rambunctious teens like us." Mel was the one to finally suggest a viable solution, and the other girls exchanged looks before voicing their agreement. It was a sound plan, a good plan, and following it wouldn't even be difficult or boring!

We've finished evaluating the blood samples you acquired, Galina. It should not be difficult to synthesize a cure, or rather an immuno booster, in sufficient numbers. It will be time consuming, however. Even with Isu technology, correctly synthesizing the product for so many people will take several months at least.'

"We had best get started then, Clarke wants this done sharpish, and I want off this mortal coil ASAP. I've waited long enough to be freed as it is, I'd rather not stick around until Judgment Day." She responded, machinery around her coming to life as the Isu began the process of mass-producing the cure for radiation. The object that would guarantee the Mountain's fall. Satisfied, Galina got to her feet and headed for the lift, intent on patrolling Polis and its surrounding farms. She was bored, and she would both alleviate said boredom and actually accomplish something useful (ensuring the safety of Clarke's people) at the same time.
Octavia was scowling and grumbling as she was escorted back into the palace by Raven and the four slaves. She had thought that she had been alone in the city before Raven and half of their minders had shown up behind her whilst she was mindlessly meandering the bustling marketplace. The other two had appeared swiftly thereafter, and to her surprise they had allowed her and Raven to wander the city a bit, even going so far as to give an abbreviated tour, to the delight and awe of the Sky Girls. It was when the four had gently but resolutely informed them that dusk was falling that they had found themselves being herded back towards the palace, much to Octavia's vocal displeasure. The group then ate a lavish meal with Costia, Anya, Indra, and a few others, with Lexa presiding. Afterwards, Lexa revealed her palace's greatest feature (besides the library, and it was a damn near thing): a massive heated bath, in truth a pool-sized hot tub. Indra had left after a short soak, not one to linger in any form of decadence. It was not long after her departure that Octavia's fuming silence finally broke.

"What happened to Clarke? Why has she changed so much since coming down here?" she blurted out with a heavy frown, and her fellow bathers exchanged glances before Lexa responded.

"Clarke...hasn't changed. The one that saved you is the same one that chained me to the ceiling and tortured my body into sensual agony as Costia looked on. The same woman who placed a collar around Ontari's neck not hours after battling her in a death-duel, and the same woman who \textit{personally} slaughtered a dozen Mountain Men for the crime of trying to take you from her. Clarke is no different than she ever was, she is simply free to be true to herself and express it now."

"Interesting that you mention freedom when slavery is wide-spread or outright encouraged. It's barbaric and, and, \textit{immoral}, and just plain wrong! You treat them like property instead of thinking, feeling human beings!" Octavia hissed back, fists tight, and Lexa to her great surprise nodded in agreement.

"It is true, they are regarded as property, as lower than-freeborn. Just as civilians are lower than warriors, warriors are lower than generals, and all but Clarke are lower than me. Perhaps in the Old World those disinclined towards bettering themselves through hard work and sacrifice could be catered to off of the efforts of those who toiled day in and day out, but in this world those who are not willing to do so will be \textit{made} to contribute." She responded, no small amount of contempt in her voice for the Old World. "All have the chance to better themselves, for there are biannual games, competitions, where anyone, man or woman, slave or civilian, may enter and compete. Should they prove worthy, they are immediately elevated to the ranks of battle as recruits, equal to all others and freed of their previous chains. It is forbidden, both by law and tradition, to prevent anyone from entering. In fact, it is considered a point of pride for an owner if one of their slaves distinguishes themselves in such a way, and the slave is often adopted into the owner's family as a son or daughter."

"Not only that, but there are laws against mistreating slaves, at least amongst the vast majority of the tribes. Even the Ice Nation has them, though more for political reasons and not because Nia is a particularly good person." Costia added, rolling her eyes at the mention of Nia. "In truth, only the Stone Clan and the Iron Clan, their closest ally, don't. That's for two reasons. One, they're a particularly cruel and harsh pair of tribes that were only allowed into the Coalition because of the massive stone and metal deposits in their territories. Which ties in neatly to the second reason, which is that neither of them have anything close to the numbers they need to properly harvest those resources. Thus, the slaves."

"Doesn't the Commander rule the Coalition? Why not command them to behave more humanely?" Raven asked curiously, and Lexa shook her head with a small grimace and a sigh.
"The tribes are all independent of one another. While I lead the Coalition and am indeed its founder, and the fact that I am Heda affords me significant influence, the Coalition is just that: a group of independent entities working together for a single goal. I can lead the armies, even put significant pressure on them over domestic affairs, but nothing more. That's why the Senate was formed, to organize and enforce the civilian side of things." She explained, the frown on her face saying that it was not a state of affairs that she was overly fond of. "Even if this were not the case, a ruler who makes unilateral decisions affecting wide swathes of people without care or respect for them tends to not rule for very long at all."

"Perhaps once Clarke rules Humanity this can change, at least somewhat, but until then there is nothing to be done." Anya added with a philosophical shrug. "Besides, it's not like the system doesn't work. Indra was once a slave, and now look at her. One of our greatest generals and a Clan Leader to boot. You would never think it looking at her though, would you?"

It was quite obvious to everyone that this came as an immense surprise to the pair. Indra was as far from the mental image of a conventional slave as you could get for them, and that alone went some lengths in assuaging Octavia's anger and hurt. Plus, they at least were provided opportunities to elevate themselves, and the Old World had collapsed in part due to the lazy, self-entitled generations, so maybe a harsh world, a meritocracy, was necessary for humans to survive and flourish. It certainly seemed to be working out rather well for them now and for the last century, and it's not like life on the Ark was the image of virtue and freedom either.

"As for your personal affections for Clarke, you need not abandon them." Costia remarked after several minutes of contemplative silence, ignoring the half-hearted, grumbled attempts at denial from the two brunettes, who she was eyeing not-so-subtly through the steamy water. She greatly enjoyed what she could discern, happily musing to herself that no matter what one might think about the politics or ethics of the Arkers, they certainly seemed to breed true beauties. First Clarke, now these two, she could only imagine the rest of Clarke's friends, and she licked her lips at the thought. Lexa, noticing where her fellow thrallina's thoughts were drifting swatted her on the arm sharply, getting a pout and wickedly glinting eyes in response. Turnign her attention back to the duo, less lecherously, she continued. "What you would call polyamourous or polygamous relationships are common amongst the noble class and the warriors, and as the destined ruler of mankind she is entitled to as many women as she desires, like the rulers of old."

"I don't know if I could do that. Know that Clarke is with other women, never mind watch it happen." Octavia mumbled with Raven nodding in silent agreement beside her. Both had been raised to the morals of the Old World, which had decried such relationships, amongst others.

"That decision ultimately and entirely rests with you. Clarke will not force you into her bed, nor will she tolerate others trying to do so on her behalf. Know this, however: whether as friends or as lovers, Clarke will be glad to have you by her side regardless of which title you are addressed. She will need to have you by her side to do this, for you are not like us, not influenced by the old legends and prophecies regarding her. You and the others from The Ark will be her anchors as she finds herself, and you mustn't forsake her due to discomfort." Lexa said firmly, tone and bearing making it quite clear that that conversation was officially over, even if only for the moment. The bath was silent for many long minutes before Anya spoke, addressing the Sky Girls.

"So, tell us what we can expect from the so-called leaders of your Ark when they finally arrive. How will they react and behave towards our people? Will they respect Clarke's rule and Lexa's authority as her Voice?" she asked, and though she sounded simply curious, all present knew she was truly trying to gauge how much of a threat the Arkers might be. None of them could really blame her either, the Sky People had caused nothing but chaos since they had begun to arrive. Many of the chaotic events had resulted in good things, true, but chaos was chaos regardless
"The only ones who will likely have any sort of respect for your people are Kane and Clarke's mom, maybe Sinclair." Raven responded after a moment's thought. "Clarke is Kane's protege, and I'm Sinclair's, so just the fact that Clarke and I respect your people will make a difference with them. Clarke's mom is desperate to make amends for Clarke's dad, so she'll jump at any opportunity to get into her good graces, plus she is the most pragmatic member of The Council. "She'll recognize the obvious merits of respecting and working with The Tribes. They're also the only ones who will respect your and Clarke's authority, or at least the only ones that are even going to consider it."

"The rest, especially Jawha and Pike, will assume you're just savages to be 'rescued' at best, animals to exterminate at worst. They're both arrogant, self-centered bastards that don't give a damn who they have to step on to get what they want. Fortunately, we'll have the upper hand when they land." Octavia added with a bitter expression that morphed into a small, almost cruel smirk at the end. Noticing the looks she was receiving from everyone else, she scowled at them. "It's not that hard, all we need to do is show up wherever the Ark lands with an army. Hell, parade the Arkers through Polis and drag the Council in front of Queen Clarke. Make them kiss her boots and beg forgiveness for their sins. Would be nice to see them meek and helpless at the whims of someone for once."

Standing abruptly (giving the other women a delightful eyeful of her blossoming attributes) she mumbled something about being tired before storming angrily from the room. Several pairs of eyes followed her with a mixture of curiosity and arousal before all attention turned to Raven, curiosity now the active companion to concern.

"Octavia was an illegal child, I know Clarke mentioned that before?" the group nodded in unison and she nodded in turn before continuing. "She was kept in a hole in the floor, probably smaller than the average closet in this palace, for nearly ten hours a day. Frankly its a miracle that she is in as good shape as she is mentally and physically. As you can guess, she loathes The Council, most of the Arkers really, and she sees this as a chance to get some revenge. At the same time, she wants to be the better person and move past it, rather like Clarke tries to with everything that has happened to her. She's not handling the struggle well, when you combine it with everything else that is going on."

"I can empathize with her hatred of them, certainly, but I hope she understands that she need not fear it happening again, neither Clarke nor I will permit your Council to have any power here on Earth." Lexa told her reassuringly, and Raven's mouth twisted a little, surprising the Commander. "What is it?"

"I don't think that the Council will take being subordinate to anyone particularly well, especially not Clarke. Best guess is, the minute they show up they're going to put huge pressure on us to get married and start popping babies out." She responded bitterly, and Anya snorted and shook her head, getting a scowl from the mechanic. "What the hell do you find funny about that?"

"Your Council will have no power here." Anya echoed Lexa's words of only moments before. Gesturing broadly to the room at large, she continued. "This world belongs to us, and soon enough to Clarke. Your Council...no, the Council of The Ark, will yield to Clarke's authority one way or another, by will or by force. Even with guns, they would be in the open and vulnerable, easy to force into submission."

"Do you really think that Clarke would do that? Hold a proverbial, maybe literal, knife to
"Domina Clarke is a merciful ruler, but she will resort to any means to protect those that she cares for or accepts responsibility of. She butchered a dozen men just for the pair of you. She will do whatever it takes to protect her people, and she is not the type to simply roll over and let others control her." Daine added softly but firmly from her position in one of the room's corners.

"Indeed, the domina won't let any harm come to you or the other children The Council casts down to Earth." Ailyn agreed as the other two nodded silently. Raven felt their faith, while heartwarming to see placed in her friend, was perhaps a little misplaced. All the Council would have to do is find the right buttons to push and Clarke's will would falter, perhaps even crumble all together.

The group fell into silence after that, finishing their soak before retreating to their rooms with courteous farewells. All of them prayed for Clarke's safe return before allowing themselves to drift off to sleep, though each had faith enough in her to believe that she would do just that.

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Princess Sylvanas of the Ice Nation read through the letter once again, brow furrowed as she took in the information both blatant and disguised. Ontari had been played, that much was clear, and the very fact that it had been her mother who had done so was deeply concerning.

She wasn't stupid, nor naive enough to miss or ignore the fact that Nia was not a paragon of virtue and had done many less-than-moral things in the past. But, this world was a harsh and cruel one, it required harsh choices to be made for survival. Harsh choices did not include intentionally deceiving Ontari in an effort to have her either murder Clarke or die trying. Sylvanas had faith that Clarke would spare her dearest friend once the deception was discovered, but it would not make her own situation any easier. Her rock, the one person she could count on no matter how perilous the situation, was beyond her sight and grasp for the foreseeable future.

She was alone, now, which meant she had to be careful. If her mother proved to be just as Ontari claimed her to be, it would become blatantly clear soon enough. If so, she would have to work hard to maintain control over herself in the presence of her family, lest she find herself married off to some sycophant or locked away in the palace 'for her own safety'.

As difficult as that would be, the next step would be all the harder: actively working to depose and imprison her own family, to commit treason both against her Nation and her own family. She wouldn't even know where to begin, but whatever had to happen would happen. No matter how much it would hurt, her duty would be fulfilled. Her first...no, her second step would be to gather potential dissidents or other fringe groups that were...less than fond of her family. After that, she could recruit members of the populace and military at large. Once she gathered the manpower she needed, she could pressure neutrals into joining her, bloating her forces to the levels needed to overwhelm the forces with fanatical loyalty to her mother.

Of course, the first step would be waiting to see if her mother proved Ontari to be right. She prayed that it would all turn out to be a series of unfortunate events, that her mother would turn out to be the loving if distant person Sylvanas had always thought her to be when she was younger. She doubted that would be the case, though, there were too many questionable events and circumstances in recent history for everything to be some sort of horrific, coincidental, string of accidents.

Quite suddenly wanting a stiff drink or five, Sylvanas put on her preferred outfit for roaming the city incognito, which quite frankly wasn't all that different from her normal dark leathers and cloak
ensemble, just lacking the more detailed and expensive accoutrements of the official wardrobe. It allowed her to move about the city more or less unnoticed.

Slipping out of the palace was easy, her skill combined with an intimate familiarity with the palace and its patrolling guards. Were she not so sure her methods were impossible for an enemy of her people to duplicate, she might be inclined to bring the gaps and holes in security to the attention of the appropriate individuals. As it was, they were a secret only a trusted few, like Ontari, knew of.

Some time later found her in her favorite bar, seated in the shadows at the back of the room, staring down at the mug of ale, she clasped in both hands. When a shadows fell across table for the umpteenth time that night, she sighed and addressed its maker in a bland tone without looking up.

"No, you can't buy me a drink, walk me home, show me a good time, or any other flirtatious come-on you can think up. Begone, leave me to my ale in peace." She flapped a hand slightly in dismissal. When the shadow didn't leave, but rather pulled out an empty chair and sat, she raised her gaze with a dark scowl and harsh words ready to fly, only to halt as she recognized the woman who had joined her.

"Echo? What are you doing here, I thought that you were on deployment to the front?" she breathed in shock as the blonde-streaked brunette smiled at her warmly. While not as familiar and close to her as she was with Ontari, she nevertheless was at least somewhat familiar with her thanks various training exercises and the like. She was competent officer and an excellent warrior, which was why she served at the front lines as the de facto 2IC to Quint, the Ice Nation general.

"Did Quint send you to meet with my mother?"

"Not in the least. Ostensibly, I'm here on a short leave from the front lines, a little visit home. In reality, I'm here to follow up on a certain letter sent to you, one that I could reasonably assume you are here to drink away your contemplation of." The warriors responded without a hint of expression. "I can assure you that Ontari is just fine, a messenger hawk caught up to me yesterday evening and filled me in on the results of her duel with the Princess."

"And what interest have you in a letter to me?" Sylvanas asked slowly, and Echo's lips quirked into a small smile as she leaned forward on the table, eyes dancing in such a way that was deeply unnerving.

"Why, because it will have helped you realize that Nia wasn't all you thought her to be, that the true future of Humanity won't involve her brand of leadership and notions of right and wrong." Echo said with glee, and Sylvanas stiffened as she realized she was sitting across from someone opposed to her mother. Someone who might harm her in an effort to strike at Nia. Seeing her expression, Echo shook her head. "I'm not going to hurt you, I'm rather fond of you. Besides, even if I hated you, the Princess would have my head on a platter, and I like it right where it is."

"Then why are you talking to me? Going to try to convince me to turn against my mother?" she asked a little bitterly, her expression turning into a glare when Echo snorted and shook her head.

"No need for that, Heda and the Princess both believe your mother will overstep and condemn herself soon enough with no effort on their part. What they do want is for you to keep yourself safe and out of the conflict if, or rather when, things go bad between the Coalition and the Ice Nation. They know you're not evil or intend to start a war, so they're inclined to keep you around as long as you don't act against them openly."

"And...if I chose to support them. Will my people be punished? Will we be wiped out for my mother's sins, should they prove to be true?" she asked softly, and Echo responded that such
was beyond her right to decide or even speak about, but Clarke was a merciful ruler, as she should be well aware. Sylvanas sat in silence for several long minutes of intense thought, before finally raising her gaze once more to meet the warm brown eyes of her tablemate.

"Inform our future Queen that I, and my bow, are her's to command."

Well, things have gotten all kinds of interesting now haven't they? Whatever will I do next? *cackles*
Welcome back, my friends! Yet another chapter of Nothing Is True! Gonna put something things down here right before I get into rieview replies.

First, all Weapons of Eden in this story either exist, or are an extrapolation of the appropriate myth added onto a class of Weapon of Eden. For Example, the Sword of Eden known as Excalibur is Assassins Creed canon, and was used by King Arthur. The abilities of the Daggers of Eden created from the breaking of the Trident of Eden are all canon. However, them being forged into a spear is not. Caerwennan is not a canon Dagger of Eden, but is in Arthurian myth with the abilities described within this chapter. Make sense? If not, let me know in the reviews/comments/PM. Furthermore, these are not an excuse to make Clarke godlike, but rather something that is going to play a significant role and be balanced out later on in this story and the sequel. I am planning a godlike!Clarke story, but that’s a different crossover altogether. There’s a hint, four words that are the entire reason I will be writing it: Farseer Clarke. Howling Banshee Octavia. Okay, five words, but what the hell ever, mang.

Second, I want to be clear: everyone in the harem belongs/will belong physically and emotionally to Clarke. However, each of them will also be involved in an internal sub-pairing. The current sub-pairings are as follows:

LexaxCostia (CommandedPervert)

AnyaxRaven (GrounderMechanic) This will be getting more developed soon, so PleaseLookForwardToIt ™

DainexSamaraxAilynxDaja (Slaves of a Feather Flock Together) This will be getting more developed soon, so PleaseLookForwardToIt ™

Others will form as the story progresses, in fact we see another one form at the end of this chapter. Enjoy it, you slavering pack of perverts. Furthermore, these pairings will not be exclusive. Everyone in the harem is going to be fucking each other at some point, but these pairings are who they sleep beside every night, providing they aren’t with Clarke.

We learn a lot about the City of Light and ALIE in this chapter, I hope you all enjoy it. As a note, the City of Light’s true identity is of my own making, it is NOT Assassins Creed canon. And by my own making, I mean I took a mythological city and made it real in-universe. Whatever, you know what I mean! Just read the damn chapter and throw some likes, comments, subscribes, what the hell ever on down at the bottom, yeah?

Now for review replies:

Alex (AO3): Raven will come around a bit sooner than Octavia, but each of them will come around thanks to the person that they will be paired with inside of the harem, i.e. Anya for Raven. This isn’t going to take much longer, as they are going to be fully integrated into the relationship by the time that The 100 come down. I hope you enjoy what I am doing with The City of Light and ALIE in this chapter :D
The dock workers weren’t terribly shocked when the Waverunner was spotted by the outer markers. Clan Head Luna traveled between Polis and Baltim frequently, so her favored transport was one that entered and exited the harbor often, though it had its own, heavily guarded private dock. They weren’t shocked to see a unit of the Riptide Guard, Luna’s personal guard force, arriving as the sleek vessel was lashed to its berth. Naturally, they were utterly unsurprised to see their Clan Leader appear on the deck of the ship and address the guards and Captain together.

What did shock them was the appearance of a young woman who could only be Clarke Griffin, the Sky Princess herself. She was exactly what the official reports described her as: tall, beautiful, wearing strange armor, and moving with a lethal grace unmatched by anything they had ever seen. Of course, they were all mature and reasonable adults, far too professional and wise to believe that she was a sorceress that could shoot lightning from her hands and read minds just by meeting your eyes.

After all, such things were totally impossible. No one could do things like that, not even prophesied women who fell from the stars in a pillar of fire that roared even louder than the legendary Pauna in one of her equally legendary rages. She was a perfectly normal human being, there was nothing to worry about whatsoever…

Right?

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Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter 14

Legacies

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“Your dock workers are a rather shy group, Luna.” Clarke commented as they walked through the city towards the coordinates provided by the voice on the radio, ostensibly performing a guided tour of the city, with Ontari and a cluster of guards following at a short, albeit respectful, distance. Baltim, from what she had seen so far, was an utterly stereotypical port city, with large war-galleys tied up alongside lumbering merchant tubs, crews and loadsmen in unceasing movement. Harborside merchants were crying their wares, taverns and brothels were full to bursting with staff and customer alike, and children ran about under the watchful eyes of all, for naturally none wanted to see a child dead for drowning or being trampled underfoot by man and horse.

“You intimidate them, My Queen. Your legend has grown exponentially since your arrival, and of course by word of mouth you are a supreme being, a sorceress according to some tales, and anyone who meets your eyes will have all their secrets revealed to you.” Luna informed her, eyes dancing in delight at the disgusted face Clarke pulled in response. “Civilians and Warriors both, regardless of how composed and dignified they might behave when scrutinized, gossip like children about the lives of those above them. Just as the nobles gossip about the Clan Leaders and one another. Gossip, My Queen, transcends time and borders alike, spreading faster than a plague and becoming wilder than the ravings of a madman.”

That had Clarke chuckling softly, because it was true. Humans seemed to love gossiping, no matter where they were from or how ‘dignified’ they acted. Even on The Ark, where everyone known one another and secrets were virtually non-existent, gossip was prevalent. Mostly baseless and ludicrous nonsense, of course, but it was there all the same. She had learned, though, that within every ludicrous story or bewildering rumor was a nugget of truth, even if only a miniscule one. In this case, she could in fact read minds, but only current, surface thoughts, and only if she immersed herself in her Isu heritage, something that she preferred not to do unless it was absolutely critical and necessary…or she was really, really turned on. Not that she was planning on sharing that with anyone, quite the opposite in fact. The last thing she wanted to risk were cults worshipping or condemning her for her abilities to start springing up. Nothing good could come from that. Probably, anyway.

Moving past those thoughts, she checked her GPS once again and saw that they were only minutes away from their apparent objective, and increased the group’s pace eagerly. It didn’t take them all that long to find the right building, a damaged but still standing cathedral.

“Look for anything bearing off symbols that looks like it might conceal an entryway or staircase or something of that sort.” She told them, and they promptly scattered to search the magnificent building thoroughly.

“Lady Clarke! Over here!” one of Luna’s elites called out after a good half hour of searching. Following the sound of his voice, they found themselves congregating in the most obvious place imaginable: in front of the altar. Clarke could hardly believe it, but there it was, carved into the worn construct in miniscule form: the symbol of her Order. Why would they put it in such an obvious and stereotypical place?!

Grumbling under her breath about the clichééd decisions of her predecessors, Clarke nonetheless activated the tiny switch, causing the altar to slide backwards and reveal a long, dark staircase descending into who-knows-where. Turning to Luna, she spoke solemnly.

“You and the rest of the group should stay up here, Luna. I don’t know what we will run into down there, and I don’t want your blood on my hands. Lexa would be inconsolable if you died.” She said, but Luna scoffed lightly and shook her head in refusal.
“Lexa would be in far worse shape if you died, and so would I, even if only because she would demand my head on a silver platter for letting anything happen to you. Besides, anything that might put you at risk is something that I can help you protect yourself from. I’ll even get to see what Lexa did back in Polis.” She said cheerfully, though she did order her guards to remain behind and ensure no one went down the tunnel after them.

“I of course must be at your side, domina. Lead and I shall follow.” Ontari agreed submissively, mindful of the guards’ presence and behaving accordingly. They wouldn’t understand Clarke’s willingness to let her come to grips with things in her own time, and she wouldn’t be responsible for rumors spreading that Clarke couldn’t control her own slaves. “You returned to me my blade so that I could protect you, and so I shall do so.”

“Very well, if you both insist then I suppose I will just have to force myself to endure the great hardship that is your company.” Clarke sighed theatrically, smiling despite her concern for their safety. She dearly hoped that she would not have to bury and mourn either of them, she was both immensely glad and immensely blessed that she had not lost anyone close to her in the myriad of dangerous events that had occurred since her arrival on Earth.

Taking a deep breath, Clarke led the way down the stairs, the other two young women behind her, hands ready to draw steel should the need arise, though it was far too dark for them to confidently see the path before them. Fortunately, Clarke’s genes ensured that her eyes were far more powerful than any normal human’s could be, and she was able to locate and activate the door at the bottom before they plowed into it. Upon passing through, it did not take long for various sensors to detect their presence and begin activating machines long dormant.

“Welcome to the Baltimore Vault, Inheritor.” The voice from the radio spoke over what had to be some sort of PA system, causing Ontari and Luna to take up defensive positions around Clarke, swords drawn and eyes scanning for the source. “Have your subordinates lower their weapons, I mean neither you nor they any harm.”

“I’ll not, thank you very much all the same, until I’ve seen you and learned your name, affiliation, and how you were able to contact me and lead us here.” Clarke retorted bluntly, folding her arms resolutely, and what sounded like a mechanical sigh echoed around them. Light flickered above the center of the room to reveal a female avatar dressed in a long, silken red dress.

“I am the Avalon Logistical Intelligent Entity, an A.I. dedicated to the upkeep and internal affairs of Avalon, which you refer to as The City of Light, as well as the enhancement and survival of humanity as a whole. Please, call me A.L.I.E.” it said warmly, and Clarke frowned in thought.

“Avalon…?” the name rang a bell within her memories. Something about Britain, she thought? It took a full three minutes to finally place the name, and her head shot up with wide eyes. “AVALON? The Isle of the Fae that King Arthur was taken to in Arthurian legend?”

“Close, very close. Arthur, or more appropriately Artorius, was a Assassin of Isu descent, a rather high percentage of active genes in fact. When he fell at Camlann, his Knights brought him to the coast, where a ‘mystical ship’ retrieved him and brought him to me. Sadly, I was not able to preserve his life in the face of such grievous wounds, but I was able to recover the various Isu artifacts that he wielded. With those artifacts, destroying the Templars in Mount Weather will be almost laughably simple.” ALIE responded with a smile, her image flickering entirely red for a sheer instant before resettling. “I will take you there now and give you those artifacts, as is your birthright.”
“I hope that it will involve some teleportation, because I have a couple of wars to win and an Empire to form. That certainly can’t wait for me to get all the way to the British Isles the old-fashioned way.” Clarke commented dryly, receiving a soft laugh from the AI in response.

“It does, not to worry. Total transition time will be a handful of seconds at most.” ALIE assured her, and Clarke nodded before turning to her Companions and reassuring them that it was perfectly safe and totally painless. Pushing aside their doubts, the duo joined the blond Assassin on the glowing platform. An instant later, they were thousands of miles away, stepping off of the platform into a brightly lit room of vastly different architecture.

Though Luna and Ontari recognized no particulars, Clarke was a well-educated child of The Ark. She recognized the Classical Roman architecture around her, architecture that had helped influence Humanity for centuries, just like the people who had built it. Leaving the small antechamber the teleporter was housed within, that fact became even more apparent, for towering above the sprawling city before them stood arguably the most famous building in world history: The Coliseum of Rome.

And it was not the Coliseum that had been destroyed during the Last War either, for this one was in pristine condition, the white-washed stone gleaming brightly in the sunlight, pennants fluttering from the peak.

“I did not know that men could build such things.” Ontari murmured in awe as she gaped up at the massive structure. “What is this place, My Lady?”

“Something that I thought was destroyed a very long time ago. How can it be here, and in such perfect condition? Rome was obliterated and the great Coliseum with it!” she responded numbly, trying to grasp what was going on, and ALIE’s voice echoed around them once more.

“The Rome you speak of was a pale imitation of Avalon’s glory, constructed entirely by Templars and Assassins alike to be in the precise image of this city, this last mobile bastion of the Isu. The only other of its kind was Atlantis, but that was destroyed during the Human-Isu war.” She explained, and Clarke hummed absently in acknowledgment as she gazed around the unfathomably beautiful city. “The Armory you are seeking is within the Imperial Suite of the Palace. Artemis knows the way, Clarke, which means that you do too.”

Clarke nodded to herself, the required knowledge coming to the forefront of her mind promptly the moment she tried to recall it. Setting off at a brisk walk, she led the way through the immaculate cobblestone streets, eyes focused on their objective, while her two Companions were looking all around in awe, breathlessly admiring the polished marble columns, the magnificent gardens, and the intricate fountains that bubbled and danced in the sunlight.

Nearly an hour later, the trio finally arrived at the gates of the Imperial Palace, a massive complex that was quite literally a city within the city, possessing walls, towers, gates, and other defenses of its own. Within those defensive structures lay gardens, barracks, bathhouses, pools, and a myriad of other delights, with the Palace proper in the center.

The Palace was a broad structure, with towering columns, sloped tiles roves, and intricately carved and colored mosaics depicting various battles, hunts, feats of strength, and the like. The steps into the palace were as wide as the middle third of the building, and divided down the center third by an artificial river, with a waterfall at the top, and plants and small trees alongside the chuckling brook. The interior, once they reached it, was just as magnificent as the exterior, if not more so, yet something caught Clarke’s eyes and brought her to a halt.
It was a mural, much like those outside in size, vibrancy, and quality. Unlike those outside, however, it depicted a scene she was intimately familiar with: her blowing the head off of the yong pauna to save Lincoln’s life. A faint humming sound drew her attention, and she half-drew her pistol in shock as a flying orb-like…thing went overhead and began carving another image into the wall.

“ALIE, what is all of this?” she asked aloud, knowing that the AI would be watching and listening, and her voice responded within seconds.

“This is your palace, it is only right that those seeking an audience with you see your greatest triumphs. The murals will impress upon them that you are not a child to be trifled with, but a powerful warrior-empress with many legendary feats to your name.” was the answer, and any protest Clarke would have made was stifled as she continued. “The throne room is directly ahead, and is the fastest way to your suite, which possesses your private bedroom, library, armory, and the like. I can give you a full tour another time, after all you are in a bit of a rush.”

“Yes, of course, you’re right. We need to hurry.” Clarke shook herself and set off again at a trot, paying no attention to the Throne Room itself as she passed through it to ascend a hidden spiral staircase directly into the Imperial Suite. Only when she entered the armory itself did she slow to a stop and observe her surroundings. Though there were many weapons of incredible quality present within, it was obvious to her which ones ALIE was directing her towards.

Rhongomyniad, a ‘trident’ of Eden, which was forged from three Daggers of Eden that had once been the blades of a true Trident of Eden, had granted Arthur the power to instill terror, devotion, and faith alike in those around him.

Excalibur, the most famous sword in human history. A Sword of Eden capable predominantly of launching energy blasts at enemies, as well as a limited manipulation of the air and wind themselves.

Caerwennan, a Dagger of Eden that cloaked its user with silence and shadow, rendering them undetectable by the eyes and technology of humans alike. Only Isu technology could have hoped to break its cloak, and she had a monopoly on that.

All three were powerful artifacts that would make conquering The Mountain child’s play, with minimal losses for both her warriors and those inside The Mountain who were innocents. Hell, she could probably do the job alone if not for the fact that the Tribes deserved to be a part of this.

“Claim the relics and make haste back to the teleporter, I’m detecting another communication signal from The Ark to The Mountain. It looks like Diane Sydney is talking to the Templars again.” ALIE’s voice echoed once more, and Clarke cursed as she hastily unbuckled the sword she had claimed from Azrael and gave it to Ontari. Excalibur too its place on her back, Caerwennan on her thigh, and Rhongomyniad remained in her right hand.

“Patch it through, ALIE, I have to know what they are planning.” She commanded briskly, turning on her heel and striding from the room. A moment later, the PA crackled again as the sentient program obeyed.

“Cage, things are getting damn complicated. Did you kill the Griffin bitch yet?”

“No, I sent a dozen men after her and those two girls you sent down. She butchered the entire group, and I can’t afford to send any other soldiers out without some kind of advantage. Besides, I have a good idea of where she is, and it’s not somewhere my people can
get back at her.”

“Fine, fine, whatever. The Council has decided to send the convict kids down in six months or so. Shumay and myself are going to volunteer to get sent down with them for ‘adult supervision’. Griffin is sure to show up when we land and listen to us. We hand her and her friend to you for a cure, lose a few kids to the savages, and earn the loyalty of the rest. When the dust settles, you and I will be running the planet.”

“Fine, but be careful. Griffin is a clever bitch, and she has allies. Underestimate her too much, and you might end up like my soldiers did.”

“Your soldiers didn’t have the advantage of being from The Ark, Cage. Shumay and I do. After nearly a year in radioactive wilderness, she’ll be thrilled to see us and will drop her guard. That will be all the opportunity that I need.”

The conversation ended as Diane terminated the call from her end, and Clarke cursed darkly in several languages, grip tightening on her spear as she hastened back across the city, a concerned Luna and utterly baffled Ontari following her. Her enemies were delivering themselves into her hands, as well as the means for bringing her people under her rule. Maker, the woman was even so accommodating as to provide an exact timeline and a portion of her plan! What wasn’t to like about that?

She contemplated inquiring about exactly that, but before she could work up the nerve to directly question the very unhappy Princess, they had arrived back at the small building that contained the teleporter they had traveled through. A flash of light later, and they were running to keep up with the blonde as she stormed up the stairs through the still-waiting guards, who scattered before her.

“You, run ahead. Order the Waverunner to prepare to sail immediately. It is utterly imperative that I return to the front with all possible speed.” She snapped to one of them, who saluted and dashed away without even looking to Luna for confirmation, not that the Clan Leader could blame him. Clarke’s tone made it very clear that she was in no mood for hesitation or disobedience from anyone. Her commanding aura of confidence was really rather attractive, actually. “Luna, I’m entrusting you with the details, I must get in touch with my fellow Order members immediately.”

With that she strode away, pulling out her radio and beginning to speak with whomever was on the other end of the signal, her voice low and urgent as she undoubtedly conveyed orders, information, and plans to her distant subordinates. Luna could only imagine the controlled havoc that this information was causing back in the capitol. Now instead of a year and a half, they had a third of the time, which meant that they had to begin moving against The Mountain as swiftly as humanly possible. That was, after all, something Clarke had been brutally clear about: The Mountain would be laid low before any move of her people arrived, especially children. Not that Luna had an issue with that, after all she most certainly understood the desire to protect innocents from the predation of the Mountain Men. After all, she and the other Clan Leader had been doing so for a very, very long time now. In truth, she could scarcely imagine that life could, would, be like without that constant threat looming over their heads.

Still, Clarke obviously knew what she was doing, she obviously had a plan, and she would fill them all in as was required. When the time came. Until then, she would follow orders by giving her own commands. A fresh crew was to make the Waverunner ready for sailing once more, and the previous crew was to have a week’s respite before being called to service again. They had earned it, and it would never be said she was cruel and unkind Clan Leader. Fear could engender only just
so much obedience, after all.

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It was a distinctly uncomfortable Sylvanas who rode beside Echo as they trotted down the road towards Polis, the pair dressed as common warriors in an effort to avoid any…unsavory types after a ransom, either her mother’s ‘secret’ police force, or the legitimate bandits that wandered the wilds of the Ice Nation. Of course, she now could not help but wonder if those bandits were actually bandits at all. It was incredible how suspicious one could become when one’s own mother (who also happened to be a Queen) turned out to be rather…less than ideal a leader and roll model.

She and Echo had departed Gaithers bright and early, Sylvanas leaving a letter indicating she intended a surprise inspection of the forces they had present on the front line, as well as discovering just what the plan was for dealing with The Mountain was. It was the truth, if only a partial one, for it was imperative that Nia not grow suspicious of her, and if Sylvanas did not do as the letter stated, the deception would swiftly be discovered.

So, she would do exactly as she said she would…as well as pledge her personal loyalty to Clarke and ask for her commands. Hopefully, the blonde princess would not command her to murder her own mother. Oath or not, she was quite sure that such an act was beyond her both in the physical and emotional fields. Fortunately, Clarke was kind and gentle, so the likelihood of such a command was miniscule to say the least.

“Has Clarke taken Ontari into her bed yet?” she asked nervously, fully expecting that she would soon find herself giving her virginity to her future ruler, either with a golden band around her neck or one around her finger. Though the idea wasn’t entirely unpleasant, Clarke was both commanding and beautiful, a combination she found attractive.

“No she hasn’t, nor has she taken the other four Ice Nation slaves in her possession. Indeed, only Costia and Lexa have ‘gotten fucked into a stupor by her massive cock’, to use Costia’s words.” Echo told her bluntly, and Sylvanas twitched severely before turning to stare at her.

“SHE HAS A COCK?” she shrieked at a truly impressive volume and pitch, the horses shying and whinnying unhappily. Echo grimaced and rubbed at her ringing ears in discomfort.

“Yes, she has one. The influence of the First Ones, evidently, and it’s of impressive size and girth according to all accounts. I look forward to experiencing it for myself.” She responded with a roll of her eyes, smiling slyly at the end. “All that I have to do is seduce my way into her harem.”

“Won’t Costia and the Heda take issue with her…being with other freeborn warriors? Ones outside of the Trikru and Floudakru?” Sylvanas asked curiously, and Echo shook her head in refutation.

“Costia will not only allow it, but would actively encourage it. She is obsessed with all things sexual, especially in regards to Clarke and submission. Lexa might protest certain individual, but she has already encouraged me to offer myself to Clarke, just as she will encourage her to take me.” She explained, and Sylvanas frowned in understanding, giving a small nod.

“I see…” she mumbled to herself, feeling a little numb as she attempted to assimilate and come to grips with this new, and frankly startling, information that she had just received. It would do little to affect her own plans for the future, but knowing her sisterhood of servants to the Sky Princess would be larger than previously contemplated was important knowledge.
“don’t worry, your involvement is highly unlikely to be faced with any real form of opposition from anyone, especially after you declare your loyalty and obedience.” Echo reassured her kindly. “And neither of them will force you into anything you do not desire, Clarke wouldn’t tolerate it, even from them.”

“It’s not like I would object, really, it’s just that…” the Ice Nation noble’s voice trailed off and she shrugged eloquently with a faint blush. Echo laughed softly and nodded her head, understanding how the idea could be quite intimidating to say the least. Especially for someone as sexually sheltered as Sylvanas was. The whole Ice Nation, nay the whole Coalition, knew how protective Nia was of her daughter’s innocence. Doubtless the crimson-eyed archer was eager to feel the touch of someone else’s hands on her blossoming body.

They rode in silence for several hours, pausing only to relieve themselves, eating in the saddle as they steadily advanced towards the distant capitol. Only once night had fallen did they stop at one of the numerous wayhouses that had been built and were subsidized by the Senate on Heda’s orders. Her intention, and indeed the result, was for any travelers moving about within the Coalition territory to have safe havens to eat and sleep. Each wayhouse was in truth a small fortified town, with shops, stables, and a large boarding house, all protected by local militias and small warrior bands, ensuring that those location and their inhabitants remained safe.

“What can I do for ye?” the keeper asked the pair as they sat down at the long bar separating him from his room full of rowdy patrons.

“Two house specials and some ales. It’s been a long trip and it promises to be just as long come sunrise.” Echo requested with a faint smile, and the keeper nodded and snapped his fingers at one of the serving girls, a tough-looking ravenette whose bearing implied she wasn’t to be trifled with. This impression was proved true when a patron, far too drunk to realize the stupidity of his action, tried to shove a hand up her skirt and cop a feel. Moments later, his fingers were bent several different directions, none of them natural. A gesture from the barkeep had two militiamen, present for just such occasions, dragging the screaming idiot from the room and quite literally tossing him outside.

Minutes later, two steaming plates of venison and vegetables were placed in front of them, twin tankards of ale plopping down immediately thereafter, and the two Ice Nation girls dug in promptly. Their long travel had them nothing short of famished and parched, despite the jerky and bread they had consumed during the ride.

“Where are the pair o’ ye headed?” the keeper asked after serving another, clearly inebriated, patron. Examining his expression closely, it seemed he was simply making the same polite conversation any bar-or inn-keep would, though neither girl was inclined to go into great detail of their true plans regardless. Better to be safe than sorry, after all.

“We were on leave from the front lines briefly, but the time has come for us to return to our comrades and do our parts in keeping The Mountain and its denizens at bay.” Echo answered honestly, though vaguely, and the keeper grunted in approval, not that they expected any other response. No one had any love for their ancient enemy, and warriors who fought against the Mountain received due respect and acknowledgment.

“Good, good. Tell me, are the rumors true? Does the Sky Princess truly intend to destroy The Mountain Men before two more years have passed?” he inquired further, and the pair nodded with smiles in response. There was no harm in confirming it after all, and any news that impressed upon the people that the wisdom of the future Queen was good news to encourage and help spread. It would only strengthen her position, after all, a great benefit. “Damn glad ta hear it, those
“Aye, the Princess will burn the Mountain inside and out, and no more sons and daughters of the tribes will disappear forevermore into that Maker-forsaken place.” Sylvanas stated firmly, taking another draught of her ale before wiping her mouth and glancing at the large ‘grandfather clock’ behind the bar. “We’d best get to bed if we want a good night’s rest before we depart come sunrise.”

“Right ye are, lass. Here’s the key to yer room. Only one bed, I’m afraid, but it will be large enough for the both of ye if ye have no qualms about close quarters. Most warriors are more’n used to such things, so I’m sure the pair of ye will be fine.” The keeper stated, handing over a large brass key, which she accepted with a small smile of gratitude.

Ascending the stairs, the duo quickly located their rented room and slipped inside, locking the heavy wooden door behind themselves. Militia or not, these wayhouse compounds had their fair share of crimes and criminals. Especially when the militia was corruptible, as they unfortunately often were in Ice Nation territory. Shedding armor and traveling clothes for sleeping wear, the pair each got an eyeful of what their true Queen would be receiving in the coming days.

Echo had numerous scars across her body, but none detracted from her beauty, a beauty born of and enhanced by a moderate bust and firm, athletic build. Her pubic hair was rather unkempt, as a life on the front lines afforded little means and opportunity to shave or even trim one’s sex.

Sylvanas, by comparison, had almost flawless skin, pale and soft from a lifetime in palaces and predominantly nocturnal activities such as stargazing, hunting, and sneaking about in and out of the Palace. Younger than Echo by several years, she was none the less blessed with a prodigious bust for a fifteen year old girl, a small C-cup, and her long legs drew the eye to a small, tight ass and neatly trimmed pussy, one that warmed at the naked warrior before her, as well as the blatant interest said warrior was watching her with.

Abruptly coming to a decision, the noble surged across the room and threw herself at the warrior, roughly mashing their lips together the minute that the surprised woman’s arms wrapped around her. Sylvanas had no idea what she was doing, of course, utterly lacking in any form besides masturbation. Her mother had put great effort into making sure of that fact, but it did nothing to dampen her eagerness, only make it clumsy.

“Sylvanas wait…wait!” Echo barked after a moment, powerful arms forcing the lust-crazed princess back a step and holding her there. It wasn’t easy either, the girl seemed downright determined to touch her again. “Get a hold of yourself! What is wrong with you?”

“Nothing is wrong. You’re beautiful, strong, and intended for the same woman that I am. You have…experience that I do not, and I need to know how to please my queen when she commands me to her bed. I want you to show me how…sister.” Sylvanas said, flush with arousal and nervous embarrassment in equal measure.

“I’m not complaining, it’s really quite flattering actually, but I won’t be taking your blood. That doesn’t belong to me, and I’m not inclined to take it anyway. And after we join the Queen’s harem, you don’t go running off to someone else. You’re Clarke’s first, mine second, understand?” Echo laid down her ground rules firmly.

Sylvans wasted no time in agreeing to the rather tolerable caveats her companion was placing on their imminent activity. She wanted to save her virginity as a currency to gain Clarke’s favor anyway. Hopefully, breaking her in would put the older girl in a sufficiently good mood that some post-coital begging could spare her people harsh actions on the part of the Coalition troops when
the time came. And having Echo as her inter-harem lover was no great pain either.

Their lips joined once more with no less passion then before, and Sylvanas moaned into Echo’s mouth as the older girl’s arms wrapped around her, hands gripping and manipulating the flesh of her ass with strength, tongue thrusting into her mouth to dominate her own organ. Any thoughts of Clarke, Lexa, or Nia fled as she focused on the delight her body was experiencing at the commanding activities of her freshly-minted lover. She wasted little time in reciprocating Echo’s affections, grinding herself up into the slightly taller girl, hands stroking her sides and tracing the many scars on her beautiful skin. They parted for a breath, eyes clouded with lust locked onto one another, lips swollen and bruised from their aggressive efforts.

With a coy, sultry smirk, Sylvanas backed up towards the wall and crooked her finger in blatant invitation, an invitation that Echo was eager to take her up on. The wall shook as Echo grabbed her wrists and pinned them above her head with one hand, body pinning her’s in place while her legs were kicked open, free hand palming a breast roughly. A rock-hard thigh found its way between her own, grinding lightly against her folds, and when she attempted to increase the pressure on her soaked, aching petals, she was chastised with a harsh bite on the nipple of her left breast.

“None of that, Princess. You wanted to learn how to give pleasure like a proper little sexslave, and that means you receive nothing but what your betters permit you to have. Best behave yourself, or you’ll need to be punished.” Echo chastised her as she cried out in a blend of pain and pleasure. She almost, almost wanted to push Echo into doing exactly that, but felt oddly reluctant to do so, at least for the moment. Instead, she contented herself with a simple, meek nod in acceptance.

Smirking in a very self-satisfied way, Echo continued to tease her breasts and her fold, alternating between rough and gentle randomly, and Sylvanas couldn’t restrain her moans of pleasure, not that she was trying very hard to do so.

“That’s better, much better. Now, we’re going to go over to that bed, you’re going to lie down, close your eyes, and put your hands by the bedposts, understand?” Echo ordered sternly, releasing her and moving towards her saddlebags. Sylvanas hastened to obey, throwing herself on the simple, but sturdy and well-made bed, taking the decreed position and waiting with bated breath for whatever was going to happen next. She didn’t have to wait for very long either, as the strong hands wrapped leather strips around her wrists and bound them to the posts. A blindfold was wrapped around her eyes and then…nothing. She waited for several minutes like that, the sweet smell of arousal permeating the air, the only sound that of her own harsh breathing. Incredibly, the waiting combined with the sensory deprivation created a cocktail of fire that went straight to her cunt, and she started to squirm, trying to find something to rub herself on. A firm weight settled onto her hips, pressing them down into the bed. Judging from the muscle-bound thighs on either side of her and the sudden wetness on her belly, a highly aroused Echo was now seated on her stomach, painting her belly in slick girl-cum. Though judging from the overall sensation, she had the distinct impression that Echo had mounted her reverse-cowgirl, as opposed to conventionally. The reason quickly became apparent as that soaked weight slid up her body and settled over her head. The smell of Echo’s arousal was now all-encompassing, and her head swam, making thinking (already difficult to say the least) essentially impossible.

“You’re going to use that tongue of yours until I tell you to stop. I don’t care if you’re going to cum or if you’re drowning in mine, but you don’t stop no matter what. Understand?” her voice was harsh with arousal and command, and Sylvanas nodded against her thighs.

Satisfied with her acceptance, Echo settled her cunt onto the Ice Nation princess’ mouth and nose, rubbing herself on the other woman until at last a warm tongue snaked up to begin probing and
caressing her fold, inexperienced but eager none the less. She had intended to return the favor immediately, but perhaps there was a benefit to focusing her energies on judging the submissive’s technique before showing her the proper way to do it. Purely for educational purposes, of course, nothing more than that.

The feeling of the warm, strong muscle working hard to collect every drop of her essence that it’s owner could find was incredible, and Echo found herself agreeing with several of her past comrades and lovers: experienced lovers were, by virtue of said experience, more pleasurable, but virgin lovers were so much more fun. So excited and eager to please, especially the submissive ones. When that appendage worked its way inside her depths proper, she couldn’t help but moan and relish the feeling of being penetrated for the first time in months.

When Clarke had arrived and slain the yong pauna, Lexa had ‘suggested’ she avoid sexual activities beyond stroking herself to orgasm, so that she could be properly sensitive when Lexa gave her to the Sky Princess. She hadn’t really complained, as being one of the lovers of the Sky Princess herself was well worth the short-term celibacy. Not only was the prospect appealing to her on a physical level, and no doubt would become emotionally satisfying once given enough time, but it would bring her wealth, glory, and a staggering amount of influence. She and her family would want for nothing until the end of all creation.

Lowering her torso without removing her happy sex from the other girl’s reach, she deftly nuzzled her way between Sylvanas’ legs and began to taste her. The silver-haired girl moaned throatily as a result (the ensuing vibration was to die for), but dutifully recalled her orders and continued the oral efforts. The younger girl wasted altogether different from her previous lovers, crisp and sweet. She was also soaking wet, cum seeping out of her virgin hole to east the entrance into her depths. Unfortunately for her, nothing would be breaking her today, which meant Echo had to take responsibility for cleaning up all that natural lubricant. A tragedy, to be sure.

The mutual tongue lashing continued for a few minutes more before the inexperienced submissive came, soaking Echo’s face with a gush of fresh cum. The princess shoved her face into Echo’s cunt in an effort to muffle her howl of pleasure, which resulted in Echo cumming with her own hoarse shout into Echo’s sensitive folds. Feeling quite spent, Echo turned and crawled back up the bed to lie beside her lover. The next several minutes were spent licking one another’s faces clean of cum and kissing, softly stroking one another’s backs, sides, and hips, helping each other settle back into the physical plane after their trip into Heaven together.

It didn’t take long for the pair to fall asleep, arms wrapped around each other, legs entwined, sleeping heavily and happily as they dreamed about their future. A Future filled with peace, love, and children. A future empty of fear and hatred, one where their people need not live in terror of one another or The Mountain Men. A future they would have no qualms, no regrets, about leaving to their inevitable descendants.

That’s a wrap! We’re coming up on the end of the Fall of The Mountain Arc, and boy do I have a climax in store for you! Things are gonna get nothing less than intense and insane!

Furthermore, let me proudly introduce the newest inter-harem pairing: MeltedIce (EchoxSylvanas)!
Linx007 (FF.net): A.L.I.E is quite literally in flux, I teased it earlier when she was plotting. It involves a color change of her appearance, which is a reference to a very famous AI in an equally famous sci-fi series. That should lead you to the answer, I would imagine :D

AO3 Responses

VileniaVeladorn: I feel like Echo is totally underused, she could have been an amazing plot point, same as Ontari, who I feel like they made a villain for the sake of it.

Betagamma: Well, I’m glad to hear that! I love it when fans tell me that my work brightens their day, is kinda why I do this. Well, that and indulging my irritation with canon and my perversions.

Sorry this chapter took so long, was originally going to make it much, much longer and totally finish the Fall of the Mountain Arc, but when I hit 9k words I decided to split it, so next chapter will end the Arc. Make sure to review!

Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter 15
Behold, I Am Become Death

Lexa, Heda of The Coalition of Tribes and prime lover of the future Empress of Mankind, looked over her city with a potent mixture of pride and fearful anticipation. The entire metropolis was a hive of activity as any and all warriors on leave or stationed within the city prepared to march. Word had been spread at her command that Clarke had claimed mighty relics of the First Ones and that the Mountain would be destroyed once and for all upon her return from Baltim. There had been much rejoicing at that announcement, for no one had expected it all to happen so quickly. Even those close to Clarke had thought that it would be nearly a year and a half before she would make a move, but the people aboard The Ark had apparently made some very unexpected decisions regarding the future. As a result, they had only six months to destroy their ancient enemy and secure the future with Clarke ruling and guiding mankind.

“Lexa.” Octavia’s voice came from behind her, and she turned around to see the hot-headed girl looking uncharacteristically uncomfortable and nervous. She hadn’t seen the other girl since their conversation in the palace baths, as both Sky Girls had kept to their rooms at all times, no doubt trying to come to grips with their new reality, and the tribeswomen had been content to let them do so in peace. “Can I…can we…that is to say…”

“Sit, Octavia, and tell me what it is that is troubling you so.” Lexa offered when it became clear that she was struggling immensely to continue, and Octavia sat with a nod of thanks and a heavy sight. Regarding her with steady curiosity, Lexa waited a few moments for her to
announce the source and subject of her apparent woes, but when none were forthcoming, she took
her own proverbial stab at it. “Is this about Clarke’s new attitude and behaviors? Because we have
explained it to you as best we can. Anything further you would really need to ask Clarke about
personally once she returns.”

“Huh? Oh, no, no, no! Nothing like that!” Octavia blushed and waved her hands a little
wildly, as if to banish the subject from the room. Settling down, she visibly steeled herself and met
Lexa’s eyes, voice firms as she made her plea. “I need to learn how to fight. I need to help Clarke,
and if I am going to do that I have to be stronger than I am right now. I won’t allow anyone to force
me under their control ever again, and I need to be able to protect myself.”

“You do know that it takes months to become skilled enough to survive true combat, and
longer still to reach an elite level?” Lexa responded slowly, raising an eyebrow at the teen, who
actually smirked at her in response.

“Me, Raven, and Clarke’s other friends have spent hours every day training since the
moment she left. Strength, endurance, flexibility, hand to hand combat, the works. Raven prefers
technology and has forgotten more about machines then I’ll ever learn, but I was always the best
with the physical stuff. None of us are pushovers, Lexa.” She declared proudly, chin jutting
forward a bit as she sat tall. “We all wanted to be able to help Clarke and the others survive when
we got down here.”

“Admirable, and having a solid base to work with will hasten your training pace
significantly.” Lexa mused, already considering whom to place her under for training. Anya
wouldn’t be a bad choice; not only had she taught Lexa almost everything the now-Heda knew, but
something told her that it wasn’t the perfect matchup she desired. On the other hand, a certain Clan
Leader might be able to connect with her on a more personal level. Both of them had been forced to
live with a proverbial sword hanging over their heads, one that would end their lives on the whim
of another. Besides which, Indra was a firm handed and fair instructor, one who may well gripe
about having to ride herd on a passionate and young woman, but would do her utmost to make
Octavia into the very pinnacle of a warrior and an officer. Besides, it would do her some good to
have a second again.

“Alright, Octavia, tell Indra that I recommend you to her as her new Seken. Make sure to
tell her you’re complete training regimen so that she knows where to begin her work with you. We
don’t have the time to waste rehashing things you already know.” She said finally, and Octavia
beamed, thanked her, and rushed away to find the dark-skinned former gladiatrix. Lexa hoped that
Indra would be successful, but not in teaching Octavia combat (that was a foregone conclusion).
No, she wanted her adoptive mother to help Octavia understand this world in a way that she was
uniquely suited. Octavia, being the brash young woman that she was, would doubtlessly blurt out
questions about Indra’s past. Inevitably, it would be revealed that Indra preferred to be submissive
in bed. An incredulous Octavia would wonder, at volume, how that was possible for a former
slave. With any luck, the older woman’s explanation would convince Octavia to give herself to
Clarke without reservation.

Quite pleased with herself for her most recent maneuver on their growing family’s behalf, she
departed from her office in an effort to find Anya and check in on the preparations to return to the
front. As she drew closer, she heard Anya talking to Raven of all people, and she slowed with a
frown, curious about what the mechanic would want to discuss with Anya, who was arguably her
exact opposite.

“…is not nearly as simple as that, Anya. It might be perfectly normal for your people to
have polygamous relationships, but I’ve been raised…” Raven was saying when Anya cut her off,
“Raven, you were raised to marry whomever you were told to unless you could find a ‘suitable’ match yourself. You were raised on the beliefs of the Old World, or at least the ones that your leaders decided were worthy of keeping around. The Old World was destroyed by people who created and enforced those ideals. Do you really want to keep doing things there way? Embrace your feelings for Clarke and figure out everything else as it happens.”

“You know, if we’re going to talk about feelings, why haven’t you said anything to Lexa and Clarke. I think the only people who don’t know you want in on their pants is the pair themselves! And you don’t have the ‘raised with old-fashioned morality’ excuse to use like I do!” Raven retorted, and Lexa widened her eyes with a soft gasp. Anya was interested in her, in Clarke? For how long, and how in the name of The Maker had she not noticed? She slinked closer, ears straining to ensure she missed not a single word.

“That’s different. I trained Lexa, helped her grow up into the young woman she is today. Been proudly proclaimed to all the world as her sister, her Right Hand. Hardly the actions of someone who would consider bedding me.” Anya sounded so uncharacteristically forlorn and empty that Lexa very nearly rushed into the room and embrace and comfort her. She resisted the urge, however, because she knew that Anya’s following embarrassment and shame would make her...volatile. Instead, she decided to address this matter separately and with some subtlety. She could think of few people she could more joyfully accept into the fold than Anya, even if they would have to has out their relationship in a very serious and honest conversation. “Now, I have an army to kick into movement. You’re coming with us, I hope?”

“Of course. I might not be as much of a fighter, but it would be a good idea to have someone around to make sure that these insiders of Clarke’s don’t try anything funny with their tech.” Raven scoffed at the very notion of staying behind for this most glorious moment in human history.

Lexa hastened away before she could be discovered, mind racing as she worked to decide how best to approach and ‘chat’ with Anya. Perhaps she could ride with her on the way back to TonDC and the front lines? Nine hours was a long ride for the other woman to try and avoid the subject, not that Lexa planned on giving her the chance to try it.

A deep horn blast drew her attention to the balcony, and she rushed out to gaze towards the docks, where the Waverunner was furling its sails. Returning to the hallway, she shouted loud enough for all the building to hear her words.

“The Queen has returned! Complete your preparations and prepare to march! Ready the horses!”

“Heda, Princess Sylvanas of the Ice Nation and the warrior Echo have just arrived and wish to speak with you!” a voice called back, and she frowned. What were they doing here, and what could they possibly want? Intent on discovering the answers she desired, she quickly made her way out onto the porch where Sylvanas and Echo were swinging off of a pair of very exhausted horses, which were swiftly descended upon by a group of hostlers and led away to the stables.

“Hail, Heda Lexa kom Trikru. It seems we’ve arrived at a tumultuous moment, for which we apologize. Is the Sky Princess here? It is imperative that I speak with her immediately.” Sylvanas greeted her, looking around as she strode up the steps towards Lexa, who was raising her eyebrows at the girl in curiosity.
“She just returned from Baltim, she should be…” Lexa’s sentence ground to a halt as Clarke strode into view, a golden spear in her right hand. Everyone before her parted like water, bowing in respect as she swept past them, Luna and Ontari flanking her with stern expressions and matched strides.

“Are the preparations complete, Lexa?” she asked as she came to a halt before them, allowing them to see that not only did she now possess the golden spear, but also a new sword and dagger. Sword and spear both radiated light and warmth, while the dagger seemed to seep cold and darkness. Everyone present fell to one knee in reverence, and she was able to resist only because of the need to maintain her image in public.

“They are, we march south at your command.” The Commander bowed deeply before smiling lightly in anticipations. Returning the smile, Clarke ordered her to begin moving the army outside the city. The group scrambled to obey, leaving Echo and Sylvanas still kneeling at her feet.

“Skaiprisa, future ruler of our people, I offer the fealty of myself and my people to you. To seal this oath, I give to you my body, my soul, and in time my heart. They are yours to do with as you desire from this moment forward.” The Ice Nation princess dared not raise her eyes to Clarke’s face, and Echo spoke from beside her.

“You both offer yourselves to me? No caveats, no prerequisites, nothing? A deal far too good to be true, regardless of prophecies. What are the two of you not telling me?” Clarke’s voice was not yet angry, merely curious, but neither of them much felt like testing their luck by avoiding the question or lying in response to it.

“My Queen, it was my hope that you would take be as your own, and when you had slaked your lust with my virginity, beg for you to show my people mercy when you cast down my mother.” The nervousness that Sylvanas was feeling was obvious, and she clearly expected to be punished or at the very least chastised for her plotted manipulation.

“What makes you think that such an action would even be needed? I should like to think that I have proven myself a very merciful individual since my arrival.” Clarke said mildly, and both girls nodded in agreement, though Sylvanas spoke once more.

“Mercy on a personal basis, like my father and Ontari, is altogether different from mercy during a conquest. Even if you would not personally commit any atrocities, invading armies do as they wish with their victims. Such is the way of war.” She gave a philosophical shrug, and Clarke pursed her lips with a dark scowl as the silver-haired princess’ meaning became clear.

Rape, looting, and the slaughter of innocent civilians were sadly very common occurrences at every point of conflict in human history, and the fact that it happened in what amounted to a Dark Ages-era society was utterly unsurprising. It was also intolerable and unacceptable.

“Sylvanas, Echo, your oaths are accepted. You have my word that I shall permit no war-crimes to be perpetrated upon your people by my armies, and any such actions performed that I discover will see the doer of the deed severely punished.” She told them in a voice of iron, and they believed her, for how could they not? She had always been kind, honest, and merciful to everyone
she encountered. “You’ve been riding nonstop to come here so swiftly, you must be exhausted. Remain here and recover.”

“With respect, My Queen, a few more hours in the saddle to help bring down the Mountain and save our people will be nothing if not an utter joy. We cannot remain behind and miss such a moment in history as this.” Echo rebuffed respectfully, Sylvanas nodding firmly in agreement beside her, and Clarke smiled before turning away.

“You had best refresh your supplies and retrieve fresh mounts, then. We depart for TonDC within the hour. You will ride with myself and the other leaders at the head of the soldiers.” She told them, striding away as they rose to obey her commands.

An hour later, they sat astride fresh mounts with the other high-ranking warriors and personal friends of the Sky Princess, who looked every inch the warrior queen astride her massive six-legged steed, facing the three hundred strong force.

“Within the day, we will be reunited with our comrades on the front line, and the Mountain will find its days numbered! Forward!” she spun Sleipnir about and set off at a walk, her advisors around her, the massive line of infantry grinding into motion behind her. It didn’t take long for the singing to begin, and squad by squad it spread until the entire was roaring the words to what arguably was one of the most famous marching songs in American history: The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Everyone raised on the Ark knew it from their studies into the American Civil War. It was almost a cliché, played at least once in the vast majority of audio books and movies about the Union Army, just as Dixie was forever playing for the Confederacy. Still, she could suddenly understand why music and song had been thought to connect one directly to God, to bring forth wells of strength and determination unmatchable by any speech or promise of reward. The air itself reverberated as hundreds of voices roared the words together, and she thought in that moment that she conquer the galaxy. The power of the song filled her veins, thrumming with fire, and she raised her own voice to join the ancient hymn.

“Your ancestor is standard learning for all children of every tribe, ever since the day she passed into The Maker’s arms. Every scrap of knowledge we possess about her is memorized at youth by every citizen.” Echo quickly explained when Clarke gave the platinum-haired huntress a curious glance. Clarke gave a soft hum of understanding, turning her attention to Raven.

“Your ancestor is standard learning for all children of every tribe, ever since the day she passed into The Maker’s arms. Every scrap of knowledge we possess about her is memorized at youth by every citizen.” Echo quickly explained when Clarke gave the platinum-haired huntress a curious glance. Clarke gave a soft hum of understanding, turning her attention to Raven.

“Octavia is her apprentice now.” Was the explanation, and Clarke gave a soft whistle while Echo and Sylvanas gave quiet gasps of awe.
“To train under a Clan Leader personally is an immense honor, but to train under the famed gladiatrix Indra of the Thousand Cuts! Make, I’m jealous and I was trained by my mother and her bodyguards!” Sylvanas breathed, getting sharp and curious looks from the two Arkers.

“Indra of the Thousand Cuts? I know enough of my Roman history to know that a gladiator or gladiatrix with a special title or epithet is head and shoulders above the rest.” Clarke commented, and the two Ice Nation girls nodded rapidly.

“She was famous for wielding two blades at once and using her agility and flexibility to outmaneuver her opponents and cover them with small, shallow cuts. Each cut would slow them down. Bit by bit, they would become exhausted from pain and blood loss, and she would claim victory. She is the only slave fighter to have never slain an opponent in combat.” Echo confirmed, shaking her head in awe and respect. “When asked, she said that it wasn’t because she was too weak to kill, but that achieving victory without taking a life requires true skill.”

“That makes sense. Much harder to do what she did than it is to impale someone and have done with it.” Clarke mused, the people in her vicinity voicing their agreement. Another song started, and the group halted their conversation to either listen or join in.

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“People of The Ark, this is Chancellor Jaha. As many of you know, to objects from The Ark made reentry into Earth’s atmosphere in the last few months.” The Chancellor’s voice spilled from every speaker while every screen came to life with the image of his face. “What you do not know is that they were drop pods. The first was populated solely by none other than Clarke Griffin, the best trained and prepared member of the Security Force. She volunteered to act as the preliminary scout to see if Earth is survivable once more. Not long after, Octavia Blake and Raven Reyes volunteered to go down in a second pod with supplies in order to render her assistance in her goal.”

The Chancellor paused, giving his people time to absorb what he was saying. All across the Ark, people were reacting in a broad spectrum: tears, fear, apprehension, hope, and for two people in particular…rage.

Bellamy Blake couldn’t believe it. He thought his sister had just been avoiding him (Again. It was a common occurrence) for a while, but he had never thought that his baby sister had been sent planetside. Even if she had volunteered, which he would have doubted if he didn’t know her as well as he did, the fact that the Council would send fucking teenagers to the ground was insane, horrifying, and somehow not all that shocking in retrospect.

Finn Collin was glaring darkly at the image of the Chancellor, just as furious as Bellamy, though his reasons were far less pure and noble than brotherly love. The old bastard had totally scuppered his plans for getting his hands on Raven and Clarke’s bodies. The pair of them (and Octavia, who was another hot piece of ass) were probably long dead by now, which mean he was stuck with the same dregs he had been messing around with already.

“Based on the events that followed, we have reason to believe that the homeworld is habitable once more. As such, we have decided to reconfigure the Ark in order to ensure that we all survive reentry. All citizens with tasks outside of life support and other essentials will act as labor teams for and work under the directive of maintenance personnel. However, given the dangers of reentry in The Ark, it has been decided that 100 or so juvenile delinquents will be sent planetside within six months, to help the three already present teens prepare food and medical supplies for the rest of us. I regret that it has come to this, but there are no other viable options.”
Every adult with a child in The Skybox exclaimed in worry and anger. How dare the Council put their children at risk like that! Without an adult to protect them and help them, it was tantamount to an early, undeserved death sentence! What was worse was that there was little that they could do about it besides get violent, something none of them yet had the courage to do.

“The harder you work and the better you perform the required modifications, the faster you will be reunited on the ground. As a reward for their efforts, all Skybox detainees will have their records expunged, regardless of any past crimes.”

While the Skybox kids were scared, they were also teenagers being told they would get to go on an incredible adventure, and they wouldn’t have to worry about getting floated when the turned eighteen. Altogether, it sounded like a damn fine deal to them. Clarke’s friends, freshly arrested and imprisoned for the cultivation and use of marijuana and moonshine, were grinning wildly. They had managed to get themselves arrested just in time, it seemed. A few months more in lockup and they would be on the homeworld with Clarke and their other friends at long last.

“All citizens will be provided their new assignments in the morning. That is all.” Jaha’s face vanished, leaving the whole of the Ark struggling to find their equilibrium in the face of such titanic upheaval.

None of them had expected to live long enough to stand upon the homeworld themselves, had never even let themselves dream of it. It was always something some ephemeral, far-distant future generation would do. Now that they knew it would be them…they weren’t sure how to feel. Terrified, elated, many were even in denial, thinking it was some kind of ploy or trick on the part of the Council, though most of them would accept reality soon enough. There would be more than enough evidence to prove the truth of the matter in due time, and quite frankly the rest of the population had neither the time nor the patience to convince them with mere words.

Sir, I would like to go down with the kids. They need some kind of adult supervision planetside, and I can be spared from my duties up here.” Shumay said bluntly as he walked into his superior’s office, and Kane blinked up at him, briefly lost by the abruptness of both his appearance and his words themselves.

“That’s an…interesting request, Shumay. The Council hadn’t even begun to consider whome to choose and how to choose them. No offense, but you would probably be fairly far down the list, given your usefulness to The Ark.” He responded slowly, eyes and tone curious as he looked at his second in command, who shrugged a little self-consciously with a rueful smile.

“Thanks for the compliment, sir, but I want to try and help those kids out. I was never really the biggest fan of locking them up in the first place, just for doing stupid kid stuff. Besides, I have combat, medic, tech, and earth skills training. I can help them survive and even flourish until everyone else comes down, and I can teach them how to help the others survive as well.” His voice wasn’t quite pleading, but it did implore the older man to see wisdom in his words, and in all honesty he could. Shumay’s logic was sound, as was his apparent fervor and interest in acquiring the task for himself. However, that same interest and fervor was somewhat…unsettling to the head of ArkSec. Shumay had never said a single word about the kids or had displayed any kind of displeasure or disagreement with either their treatment or their lot in life. Something about how passionately Shumay had spoken had rung hollow and false, and Kane was tempted to call him out on it. Instead, he decided to watch and see how things played out. Given enough time, exactly what (if anything) was going on would be brought out into the open with or without his interference.

“Alright, I’ll suggest you to the Council. I can’t guarantee anything, of course, but I will
do my best to convince them of your sincerity.’” He said finally, getting a declaration of gratitude and a salute before he was alone once more, kept company only by his paperwork and his suspicions.

TonDC was a hive of activity, soldiers and civilians alike rushing about like a colony of ants, all shouting instructions, confirmations, encouragement, and God only knew what else to each other in an endless cascading cacophony that was somehow comforting to Clarke as she and her party of riders passed through the gates. The infantry trailing behind them broke apart to set up shelters and then find friends and comrades to share news and refreshment with.

“Lexa, have all the Generals attend to me in the main hall in thirty minutes. Raven, Octavia, stick with Anya and Indra. Watch and learn how they interact with people as best you can, learn the lay of the land as it were. Ontari, Echo, Sylvanas, come with me.” Clarke ordered as she dismounted Sleipnir and gave him an affectionate rub and a scratch before stablehands led him away. The group split, all but the Ice Nation women departing for various tasks and duties.

Clarke led them into the room she had stayed in when she had first arrived in TonDC, gesturing for them all to sit down. The four tributes immediately arranged themselves around her feet, Sylvanas and Echo took chairs, while Ontari openly waffled, unsure of what to do. In the end, she knelt down at Clarke’s feet as well, ignoring the looks she was getting from everyone, her domina included.

“For the sake of ensuring that we are on the same page, Sylvanas and Echo have sworn themselves to me, body and soul. Naturally, I have accepted their oaths. Now, it is important that I tell all of you a few things and offer you all a single chance to withdraw yourselves from my harem.” Clarke said, gathering herself to explain that she was…a bit different from other girls, but Sylvanas spoke up before she could continue.

“Is this about your cock, domina?” she inquired with utter bluntness, and Clarke choked on her own tongue, eyes wide and face darkening rapidly in embarrassment. “If it is, I know that Echo and I are already aware and have been since before we offered ourselves to you.”

“The rest of us are utterly aware, domina. Of your women, only Raven and Octavia have not been told, and only because Costia didn’t want to scare them away. She said it would be a terrible waste.” Ailyn added, nudging an immensely red Daine with an elbow, getting a squeak from the youngest member of the harem.

“Remind me to punish her later, even if the brat will enjoy it far too much for it to really qualify as a punishment.” The blonde dominant grumbled halfheartedly, before sighing and reaching down to absently pet her nearest slave, this time being Daja, who relaxed into her touch smoothly and happily. “Costia and Lexa, as the only ones to share my bed, are the only ones to know that I can significantly influence, even decide entirely, whether I am potent or not. As such, none of my women will get pregnant until I deem that our situation is safe enough for any of you to be vulnerable in such a way.”

“Do you intend to take us then, domina, before the fall of The Mountain?” Samara asked eagerly, and Clarke smirked at her and nodded.

“Yes, tonight you four will find yourselves serving my pleasure and doubtless that of Lexa and Costia. I’m afraid that I don’t have all the space and tools needed to have a truly, overwhelmingly complete session for you, and I apologize for that.” She sounded genuinely disappointed, and all seven women felt a bolt of heat lash through their bodies.
“Domina, to finally be yours, to feel your hands on us, to give our blood to you, and to feel you spill yourself inside us…that is more than enough. Everything else is a joy, a gift to us. We live to serve you.” Daja said honestly, before frowning slightly. “Though we did look forward to you indulging yourself, it is an immense pity that you cannot yet do so.”

“I may not be able to drag the lot of you to a specially equipped dungeon and toy with you for hours on end, but it doesn’t mean that I can’t last you to a bed-post and flog you until you’re begging me to fuck you cross-eyed.” Clarke smirked down at her lazily, tugging on her hair enough that she felt it. Looking at the other three, she continued. “As for you three, I don’t know that it would be wise for us to reveal our new relationships just now. Ontari, the choice is yours whether you wish to become my woman tonight, or to wait.”

“Domina, while I have no problem sharing your or pleasuring my future sisters, I would beg of you that our first night together not be an orgy.” The girl responded almost shyly, and Clarke smiled at her understandingly.

“Of course, Ontari. Anyone who wishes it can have privacy with me whenever they desire it, be it their first night or any other night afterwards. I may be your Mistress, your owner, your ruler, but I shall never treat you as worthless tools. Certainly not like that bastard who fancies himself the Clan Leader of the Rockku.” Clarke’s eyes flashed dangerously at the thought of the cruel and brutal man she had met at her feast. “I shall personally ensure he receives his just rewards once The Mountain has been dealt with.

Something told them that said rewards would be of silver and gold.

A knock on the door drew their attention to the portal as it opened, Costia sticking her head in and informing them that the generals had gathered and were awaiting her presence. It was quickly determined that Echo and Sylvanas were ‘ensuring the safety of their friends and clanmates who were now in the service of the Sky Princess.’

“Ladies and Gentleman, I appreciate your prompt arrival. Time, and my patience, are both running short when it comes to The Mountain, so let us waste no time. As some of you are already aware, there is a large, arguably majority faction within The Mountain that want the current leadership to be cast down and surrendered to us for judgment. In exchange, they want immunity and integration into the tribes for the rest of their people. We’re going to give it to them.” Clarke said bluntly, hands folded behind her back, face impassive and stance unyielding as she weathered the immediate and aggressive protests and complaint and condemnations.

“Who are you to tell us that we must work with our ancient enemies, to allow them to live amongst us, eat and drink with us, even wed our sons and daughters?” Quint, General of the Ice Nation, snarled furiously, slamming a fist on the table as the other angrily pointed at her, and she felt those at the table whose loyalty ultimately lay with her stiffen and bristle protectively, but they were wise enough to restrain themselves. Even Raven and Octavia kept silent, and she was glad to see that they were following her instructions to follow Anya and Indra’s leads seriously.

“You will do it for the very same reason that I did not condemn Sylvanas or any other members of the Ice Nation for the actions of her father. Only the foolish, the ignorant, or the rabidly insane try to harm those who have done them no harm. Will you try to kill innocents, Quint, for nothing more than where they were born?” Clarke rebuked him coldly, meeting his fierce glare with her own even one, and it was he who backed down from the battle of wills. Satisfied, Clarke returned her attention back to the table at large. “Morality aside, the tactical advantage of having allies to free our warriors inside and destroy their defenses cannot be understated. At the very least, our losses during the battle will be lessened greatly. Something I am sure we can all support and
Quint’s face tightened at that last salvo. If he protested overmuch now, it would appear that he didn’t care that their people would be taking catastrophic casualties. Of course, the more casualties the non-Ice Nation tribes took, the better. Fewer warriors for his people to fight when they began their conquest. However, he couldn’t exactly tell them that, not if he wanted to keep his head attached to his shoulders. He rather liked it where it was, funnily enough.

“I presume that you have an awe-inspiring plan for accomplishing the fall of The Mountain? Especially given the restraint we must apparently display.” The general of the Plains Clan to the west asked bluntly, and Clarke grinned predatorily with a nod. Eyeing her with something akin to nervousness, the general gestured for her to elaborate.

“The first step will be for me to get in touch with the rebel faction in the Mountain and arrange for them to sabotage the acid fog at the very least, and anything else that they can get their hands on. Either they will open the doors for our forces, or I will. Once that is done, we storm the place. One force, with healers, will immediately head to the prisoner’s cages and liberate them. That force will hold position and defend the prisoners until The Mountain is secure.”

“Some of the warriors will balk at playing guard instead of fighting in battle at such a legendary moment in history.” Luna warned, and Clarke shrugged unconcernedly.

“Maybe so, but the prisoners will be too weak from hunger and being drained of blood to defend themselves properly, and I can virtually guarantee an attempt will be made to use them either as human shields or to turn them into Reapers in order to sow chaos and casualties amongst us.” She explained, getting nods of understanding from everyone present. Cowardly though it was, it would be a sound tactical move on The Mountain’s part, and thus would have to be countered. “I will arrange for the rebels to be concentrated in one area. Indra, with Octavia as a contact, will take another force to secure them. The rest of you, led by Lexa and guided by Raven, will secure the Control Room and kill or capture anyone loyal to Cage.”

“What will you be doing, SkaiPrisa?” Quint inquired, hoping to expose cowardice or duplicity on her part, but she merely bared her teeth savagely.

“I will hunt down and kill Cage personally. His filthy, pestilence-ridden Organization has been doing Humanity harm for millennia. It was they who caused The Final War and nearly destroyed our race. I intend to extract payment from his flesh for their crimes. Besides, if he has a relic weapon like I do, no number of regular warriors would be able to bring him down.” She said gleefully, tapping her golden spear on the ground, and was met by immediate protests from her loyalists (sans Echo, Ontari, and Sylvanas, who kept to their roles admirably).

“Clarke, are you sure that is the wisest course? Without you around, our people will be left with Jaha as a leader, and that will lead to armed conflict with The Coalition. There wouldn’t be any way to avoid it with him at the helm.” Raven’s fairly calm voice cut through the hubbub, silencing it.

“The likelihood of Cage actually besting me is…minimal, to say the very least. I have a prodigious advantage in all fields over him. I know what I’m doing, Rey, don’t worry about that.” Clarke told her reassuringly, and she nodded in acceptance. Pleased, Clarke turned her attention back to the generals. “Good, I leave it to you to decide which troops are best used for each objective. Once my agents acquire maps of the interior, we can use them to create a specific plan of attack. Until then, be about your usual duties.”

Recognizing the dismissal for what it was, the group departed, leaving her only with her lovers
both present and future, though Octavia elected after some hesitation to leave with Indra.

“Sylvanas, Echo, you two had better go after Quint. Express outrage at my plans if you must, but see if he lets anything slip in his anger.” Clarke instructed, and they bowed before departing. Turning her eyes to Luna, Anya, and Raven, she raised her eyebrows in curiosity. “The three of you might not wish to linger in our company overlong. Things are going to be getting rather debauched shortly.”

“We know, that’s why we’re here. Raven and Anya decided to talk each other into coming to you together, and Lexa convinced me to at least talk to you about it.” Luna spoke for the trio, while a blushing Raven kept her eyes on the ground while Anya simply scowled, far too proud and jaded to blush as easily as her partner.

“That is…unexpected. Any particular reason you three feel like joining my harem? And since when do you even like girls, Rey?” Clarke asked, immensely surprised but concealing it rather well. It helped that the notion of having the three women serving and servicing her was truly appealing, and not only for their beauty.

“Since all this started, really. I always cared about you, kind of looked up to you really. Eventually admiration turned into something else, something more. Given I could die during the attack on Mount Weather, I wanted to tell you how I felt and spend as much time with you as I can.” The mechanic said honestly, though still red in the face, and she met Clarke’s eyes so that her friend could see the resolution within them. Glancing at Anya a moment later, she took the Trikru general’s hand in her own. “Anya and I have become fairly close since O and I Arrived, and we helped each other muster the courage to move forward.”

“As for me, I’ve carried a torch for Lexa ever since she protected me after The Conclave. Between her devotion to you and witnessing your talent for command and strength, it’s a small wonder that I find you interesting as well.” Luna added her two cents with a faint half-smile. “I might not be in love with you yet, but if Lexa and Anya found something within you, I doubt it will be long before you own my heart as well.”

“Well, fortunately, I know of a bunker nearby that is more than large enough for us all to be together at once. Only I can find it and open it, so we will be both protected and in privacy while we’re…distracted with one another.” Clarke said quite eagerly, her pride as a dominant lover quite strong indeed with the sensual banquet that she would soon have spread out before her.

It didn’t take long for the group to reach the hidden bunker, only half an hour’s walk from TonDC. When the door hissed open and the women obediently filed it, it was readily apparent that this had been a very important person’s little hideyhole. It was also obvious that they had enjoyed an…alternative lifestyle as well, given that the sleeping area consisted of an enormous, plushly decorated and almost excessively padded platform, a large klinai on a small dais at the far end. Stripping herself, Clare swayed her way up to recline on it, an expectant look in her eyes as she regarded them. Taking the hint, Lexa and Costia stepped up onto the platform, stripping eagerly as they went. The four slaves elected to put on more of a show, standing before their owner and stripping with slow, deliberate sensuality. Even shy and innocent Daine seemed to be enjoying her teasing dance, though she was also blushing furiously.

Raven blushed deeper still and stared at the large, eager cock that hung between her friend’s legs. When Anya had told her about this…development, she had thought it was some kind of Grounder joke or insult, and reacted quite angrily. When Anya did nothing but stare at her in response, it dawned on her that the older woman was being entirely serious. To her shame, her dedication had
wavered towards disgust in that moment, but she had crushed it ruthlessly. Clarke was still Clarke, regardless of what superficial changes she underwent, she was still the same young woman. The same ironclad morals, the same dedication, the same kindness. Everything that had attracted her to the blonde was still there.

A nudge from Anya had her stripping, though she covered herself with her arms as she scuttled up onto the platform behind Anya, eyes locked on Clarke’s shaft, which was now being bathed by the eager tongues of Ailyn, Samara, and Daja, while Daine was busy fondling her breasts as Clarke devoured her virgin cunt.

“Looks like Daine will be the first, Clarke must be getting her ready.” Anya commented softly as they watched. “Most dominants with one so young and tender would have taken her already, wet or dry.”

“That isn’t Clarke. She might be dominant, she might bind and flog and tease, but she would never be pointlessly cruel.” Raven responded proudly, receiving a soft hum of agreement from her closest Grounder friend. Moments later, they saw, and heard, the youngest of Clarke’s slaves lose her virginity with a whimper. They watched the future leader of humanity ease the girl into womanhood with soft caresses, gentle kisses, and sweet words as the teen grew used to being filled so utterly. After a few moments of deep breathing, the girl began to squirm in Clarke’s lap, trying to shift that burning rod and find a new pinnacle of pleasure.

Taking the hint, Clarke began to rise and lower the girl on her shaft, efforts aided quickly as Daine began to move herself, her moans and scent beginning to fill the room. Lexa and Costia tumbled to the ground in a playful tussle, and Raven felt her own arousal start to rise. Judging from the way Anya was shifting and how hard her nipples were, she was the same. Somehow, for some reason she did not yet know, Raven found that knowledge immensely reassuring.

It didn’t take long for Daine to cum with a wail, one that grew in pitch and intensity when Clarke bit into her neck and filled her womb with warm, thick seed. The pair cuddled for a moment before Daine staggered off to lie down a few feet away from where Lexa had pinned Costia down and engaged in an eager 69. Looking away from the trio (Daine was now gathering the mixed cum from her it was leaking out and licking her fingers clean before going back for more), the duo were able to see Daja bend over eagerly, Clarke mounting her roughly and sliding home in a single thrust. From the way that Daja was eagerly pushing back into her thrusts and begging her to be rougher, it was rather clear that she reveled in her masochism. Raven couldn’t imagine having her first time be anything but slow and tender, personally, but it was extremely arousing to watch nonetheless. She was idly wondering how Octavia’s interests would be revealed when the time came.

Her mind went blank when a lustful Anya pulled her into a heated kiss, overcome by sensations that filled both the room and her body. She briefly considered pushing the older woman away, but ended up pulling her closer instead. The freshly minted inter-harem relationship held each other close, simply relishing in the warmth of each other’s mouths, and their hands roaming their bodies freely. Raven was shocked when Anya let her take the lead, voluntarily submitting to the younger and inexperienced girl. Utterly unsure of just what the hell she was doing, she settled for what she had done, namely kissing and gentle stroking of the battle-scarred general’s body, though she avoided any erogenous zones. Anya noticed instantly.

“Just touch me the way you would want to be touched, Reivon. Let us explore one another and prepare for our Queen together.” She encouraged gently, knowing how The Ark regarded same-sex interactions as a grave crime. She doubted there was much privacy for her self-exploration either, but she had no doubt people had found a way. She was proven right when hands
softer than her own, but bearing calluses all the same, tentatively touched her dampening folds. The pair descended into mutual pleasure, nipping and sucking and tugging and stroking each other, never quite taking their partner to the peak they both craved, both wanting to come in unison with their Queen instead.

They didn’t know how much time passed, so engrossed in one another were they, and as such were caught off-guard when Clarke pressed her warm, sweat and cum slicked body against Raven’s back, her hard, hot, soaked shaft sandwiched in the cleft of her ass.

“Enjoying yourself, little bird?” Clarke murmured into her neck, rolling her hips against Raven’s ass and stroking her hip. Raven moaned in response, bucking her hips back and shuddering in pleasure as the soft steel shifted against her arousal. “Tell me, do you want to go before or after my Trikru general?”

“What about Luna?” Anya asked huskily, and Clarke chuckled throatily, pointing over to where she had, at some point, trussed up and gagged the Boat Clan’s leader and left her to the mercy of Costia and Lexa, both of whom had cum leaking from their pussies as well.

“I decided to save her for last. She’s masochistic enough to enjoy being teased and left hanging while I’m with the two of you.” She hummed in amusement, before refocusing on her current prey. “What do you want, Raven?”

“I want you to be tender and love me, Clarke, this first time. I want you to protect me and everyone else from The Council, and I want you to stay alive. No heroics, no glorious death, nothing stupid. I can’t let myself be yours if I’ll have to bury you before we’re twenty.”

“I’m not God, Raven. I cannot guarantee you that I will die of old age. I can’t lie and say I won’t die in battle. I can promise to you that I will never treat my life frivolously. I can promise to love you and protect you as long as I live.” Clarke answered softly, solemnly, starting to pull away, but Raven flung up an arm, twisting it awkwardly to hold her in place.

“If you promise to try, that’s all anyone could ask of you. I want you to make me yours, Clarke. I want to be a part of your family, and I want to help you make it larger, someday.”

“No going back once I break your body in, Raven. Queens and Empresses don’t like to share. If you want to ever be with anyone outside of my harem, you should tell me now.” Clarke warned her one last time, wanting her to be absolutely sure before they took an irreversible step. Her desires on this matter were perfectly clear as she rubbed her shaft along Raven’s pussy, adding the mechanic’s fluids to the mixture on her cock. The girl’s only response was to reach between her legs and grasp Clarke, placing her against the tight hole that had never had anything larger than Raven’s own slender fingers within it.

Raven struggled to keep her breath even as the flared head of Clarke’s cock pressed against her before popping inside her. Clarke gave her a heartbeat to adjust before pushing deeper, spreading her fold and tunnel wider as more of her girth slid within, until progress was halted by Raven’s hymen.

“Anya, why don’t you help distract Raven as I break her in? It should make this first part a little more enjoyable for her.” Clarke addressed the general, who grinned and nodded, reaching up with her hands to begin teasing Raven’s breasts again whilst claiming the dusky skinned girl’s mouth. When Raven’s body had relaxed enough, Clarke thrust forward until her hips were flush with the mechanic’s ass, shredding the thin membrane of flesh. Raven cried out into Anya’s mouth, tears of pain in her eyes. Against all biological instinct, Clarke kept still, stroking her newest lover’s back soothingly as Anya kissed her tears away.
For Raven, the incredible feeling of fullness was like nothing she could ever have imagined. All the smut she had ever read had made statements that, at the time, had sounded ludicrous. Now with Clarke inside her, it did feel like it was reaching her bellybutton, it did feel hot and like iron, and she had no doubt Clarke’s cum would be a surge of liquid fire as it poured into her womb and make her feel deliciously bloated.

The pain was fading now, leaving only a dull ache and that fullness. She tentatively shifted, moving enough to hiss in mingled pleasure and pain as it changed where Clarke was reaching her. She moved further, until only the head was still inside her, and she found herself whimpering sadly as that amazing feeling of being full disappeared. She decided very quickly that she loved having Clarke in her and hated being empty, and she pushed herself back into Clarke quickly to reclaim that feeling. Taking that as a hint, Clarke began to move, taking things slow as she thrust in and out of the girl beneath her.

The two-sided assault by Anya and Clarke was driving Raven insane with such pleasure that she feared she would drown in it. She wasn’t going to last much longer, she knew, not with the rising tide she felt surging within herself, and her hips grew more erratic in their efforts to meet Clarke’s thrusts.

“Ah, is my little bird going to cum soon?” Clarke purred into Raven’s ear, and she moaned a blissful affirmative into Anya’s mouth, getting a pleased growl from the blonde woman, who increased her pace in response. Not two minutes later, Raven tore her mouth from Anya’s with a howl of pleasure as she tightened down on Clarke’s cock. Clarke in turn sank her teeth into the juncture of Raven’s neck and shoulder, claiming her in such a way that no one could misunderstand. Semen poured into Raven’s spasaming cunt and eager womb, and though neither of them knew it, seeded said womb. Neither of them could predicted it nor yet desired it, but in that moment the eldest child of the Empress of Mankind was conceived. Future investigation would reveal that Raven had a fairly unique twist in her genetic modifications and mutations, one that made her rather more fertile than her harem-sisters.

Anya and Luna’s inductions were fairly typical of Grounders, though Raven lay beneath Anya and teased her breasts and kissed her, as their Mistress pounded into the general from behind. Luna was taken much the same way, and the rest of the harem watched in lustful amusement as she writhed and shrieked against her bonds and gag as she was taken like a bitch in heat.

Filling the Clan Leader with her cum, an exhausted and rather drained domina withdrew and fell onto her back, tiredly ordering the room at large to inind Luna. Lexa, the most recovered of her slaves, crawled over to obey. The tired, sore, but content group of women began to congregate around their Mistress, pairing up for sleeping partners. Luna and Anya, Daine and Daja, Ailyn and Samara, while the remaining three settled around Clarke, Raven curled up within the circle of her arms.

Cage Wallace watched with a sinister smirk as his men labored over another relic of the old world: a pair of mobile rocket launcher trucks, each armed with a half-dozen HITFAEs. High-Impact Thermobaric Fuel Air Explosives. Against the steel mountains of the Lost World, they were devastating. Against the savage’s main population center in the ruins of Annapolis…well, for Dark Ages-type construction they would be nothing short of apocalyptic.

So, longer than usual. Next chapter will be the fall of The Mountain and Octavia losing her
virginity. I know I originally said no one would be pregnant, but then I considered the look on Finn’s face when he shows up to find a 7 month pregnant Raven as one of Clarke’s women. *cackles*

For those who don't know, Fuel Air Explosives are the most powerful time of bomb in existence bar thermo-nuclear explosives. To quote The Walking Dead "it sets the air on fire." I leave it to you to imagine what a dozen of them would do to a city constructed mostly out of simply stone and wood.
So, a few things I want to talk to you guys about before we get into review replies and such

First of all, I’m going to be taking down the current poll regarding the title of the sequel to this story, as one in particular has a clear margin. To give you some idea of the timeline, the sequel will begin with the Ark coming down. Not the 100, but the entire Ark, so the sequel is 1 ½ in-universe years away. I’m also thinking about adding Caris and Niylah to the harem, because why the hell not?

Second, I wanted to ask you guys what you want to see done after the sequel. You see, I have this plan to have our Creed-verse heroes (the characters in this story) crossover-ed with various other franchises, mostly for amusing kick-assery, sometimes for more serious stories. So, tell me what you would like to see them do, WHY you want them in that universe, who (if anyone) you think they should be reincarnated as in that universe (as opposed to simply being born there as themselves) and finally if you think anyone from that universe should join the harem (and why). The various suggestions will be put on a new poll which you can then vote on.

As a side note, I’m already working on a roflstompy Fear The Walking Dead/The Walking Dead crossover, just because it is basically a given and there are more than enough serious FTWD and the 100 stories! Also working on a ME one, because roflstomp.

Thirdly, you will notice influence of various other franchises growing in the story at this point. This is not for fan-boying, but is (as revealed somewhat at the end of this chapter) setting the foundation for future events.

Fourth, I hope none of you are disappointed with the Fall of The Mountain. I can only make sword charges against modern weapons so interesting without repeating paragraphs every page. Later battles, large scale army conflicts (like against the Ice Nation) will probably involve a bit more detail.

Finally, there is a bit of an info dump at the end of this chapter regarding some of the basic details of the incumbent Empire of Mankind. It is only partial at this time, but full details will be released soon enough. As a note, the naming conventions are based on the Garlean Empire in Final Fantasy XIV. These are not to make the story ‘cooler’ or anything like that, they will be a serious part of the new culture and society being created.

NOW FOR REVIEW REPLIES!

MobiusVariant: If I put that in past chapters, it was in error. It goes Daine, Daja, Samara, and Ailyn, the last two being within a month or two of each other.

LadyLozzy97: You flatter me, my dear lady. But yes, I did it purely because of messing with Finn…and I feel like I need to shake things up a bit, you know?

DarkPoetess: Most of my stories are like this now, at least the ones that still get updated. My older stories are, well, older. I have improved a fair bit since then XD
Betagamma: Lexa might get a little annoyed, but she is far more likely to demand a baby of her own than cause an actual rift in the harem. I’m sure a little internal power struggle would be more realistic, but I hate writing families arguing or abandoning one another. I hate reading ‘em too, for that matter.

# Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter 16

The Destroyer of Worlds

# Their preparations were complete, the army ready for battle. As predicted, the prisoner rescue force had been less than pleased to be relegated to what amounted to babysitting during the most important battle in (Post Final War) history. Fortunately, a few threats of being left behind entirely or even sent back to Polis in disgrace and shame had convinced them that their assigned mission was good enough. Maya Vie’s faction were ready to do their parts, and the various generals and clan leaders had perfected their plans of attack. All that remained was to act, and so Clarke waited for the perfect weather to launch her assault. True, much of the battle would be indoors, but the element of surprise, and that of dramatic tension, would be theirs if they went unseen until on the very doorstep of their enemies. Fortunately it took, it took a mere two days after the orgy for the perfect weather to arrive, in the form of a thick mist that filled the forest, dropping visibility down to a matter of feet, cold and wet enough to hamper heat detection devices employed by the Mountain Men.

So it was that Clarke Griffon, Princess of the Sky and Mentor of the Brotherhood of Assassins, led an army of three thousand tribal warriors to the very entrance of Mount Weather. More than enough to secure Mount Weather properly, as well as everyone inside it. More than enough to absorb the doubtlessly horrific casualties they would take storming corridors filled with modern weapons when armed only with sword and spear. Double-clicking the PTT on her radio, she waited for a moment and received the same in reply. The separatists were in position to destroy the Acid Fog and other defenses. Pleased, she turned to her army and raised Rhongomyniad high, its powers manifesting in a pure golden light that washed over them like a tidal wave.

“Brothers and Sisters of The Coalition, we stand upon the precipice of legend! Songs and Epics, Plays and Poems, all will be written of this day until the stars burn out and darkness consumes all of Creation! They shall laud our praises and all shall know of our glorious and noble actions here today! Some of you will perish in this battle, and I would spare you that if I could, but know that those of you who fall will never be forgotten! You are steel and you are doom, you are fire and you are death, you are more than merely mortal! You are the Champions of Mankind, and you shall know no fear!” she roared, pouring strength, courage, and subtle guidance into the gathered warriors, filling them with the virtues. “WE MARCH FOR MANKIND!”

“AND WE SHALL KNOW NO FEAR!” three thousand throats thundered together as three thousand arms raised three thousand weapons high, and she turned back towards the door, drawing Excalibur and unleashing its power in one smooth movement. The air screamed as a wave of white-blue energy leapt forth and smashed into the doors, obliterating them and the automated defenses lurking in the room beyond. Through the settling dust did she stride, cloak swirling around her and weapons shimmering with power, her harem at her heels as she led her people against their most ancient and hated foe.
Cage Wallace, President of Mount Weather and Grandmaster of the Templar Order, clung to his desk as the Mountain shook around him. Turning to his monitors, he quickly brought up the camera feeds for the main gate, cursing vilely at what they revealed to him. Though most of them had been destroyed, enough survived to show quite clearly the image of Clarke Griffon, accompanied by four Master Assassins, lead an army of degenerates into his kingdom. Judging by the golden glow surrounding her weapons, she was wielding multiple Pieces of Eden, which meant his soldiers couldn’t possibly stop her. That was fine with him, he though with dark savagery, moving over to a long, sturdy case and opening it to pull out his own Sword of Eden, one that the ancients had called The Sword of Mars. He would rather kill the bitch himself.

Buckling the sheath around his waist, he returned to his desk and put on a headset. Activating the PA system for the entire complex, he spoke, addressing ever living being within its confines.

“This is President Cage Wallace. The Mountain has been breached by a degenerate army. All civilians are to evacuate to level five and seal all entrances. All military personnel except for Team Omega are to deploy in defense of the civilian populace. Any and all measures are authorized to preserve our people.” He said calmly, before switching to a direct line to the Command Center. “Activate all internal and external defenses immediately.”

“Sorry Cage, but your men are just a little…tied up at the moment. They won’t be able to commit mass slaughter on your behalf anymore. Clarke should be up to see you soon, though, so don’t worry about getting lonely.” Instead of his loyal soldiers acknowledging his command, the taunting tones of Maya Vie resounded, and her snarled with rage as she hung up on him. Casting the headset aside violently, he plucked a radio from his belt. “Omega Team, come in!”

“Go for Omega.” A crisp male voice responded instantly, and he smiled cruelly as she contemplated the delicious agony that he was about to inflict upon his enemies.

“Commence Base Delta Zero.” Her ordered, and there was a heartbeat of silence before his order was acknowledged by the crews of his missile trucks, who would even now be exiting the mountain via a secondary exit gate. Even if the savages won today, their precious ‘city’, and everyone within it, would be ashes when they dragged their battered and bloody bodies back home. Now all he had to do was wait for the mortal enemies of his Order to bring themselves into arm’s reach.

“How much further until we reach the Control Room, Raven?” Lexa asked her Sister as they stepped through yet another spread of bodies, this one containing more Maunon bodies then Coalition, thank the Maker. She shuddered to think of what their losses would be already. She had lost nearly one hundred warriors already to what Raven had called a ‘heavy machinegun’, which had shredded her leather and fur clad warriors as their charged it. Fortunately, Raven had been able to scavenge weapons and explosives from the defender’s bodies, and their losses had dropped significantly once she started lobbing ‘grenades’ around corners into other defender squads. She was really quite glad to have her harem-sister along, despite her more or less civilian status, given how many ambushes or ‘heavy machinegun teams’ she had cleared out for them.

“Five minutes or less. The rebels already control it, but they have loyalists trying to break in.” Raven responded, listening intently to her radio via an earpiece as she walked, brow furrowed in concentration. “Ten soldiers armed with assault rifles, but they’re distracted by the attempts to get through the door. We should have the element of surprise, but I can’t use a grenade without risking the people and tech inside the room.”
“We’ll take care of it, then. They don’t have any surprises for us, do they?” Lexa asked calmly, really hoping that they didn’t. She wanted to try and keep losses low for several reasons, not the least of which being a desire to bring her domina fame and glory for laying the Mountain low with the minimal losses. Something that would be of significant aid when it came to claiming the throne and forming her Empire.

“It’s just around the next corner. I would advise rushing them them. With any luck, the shock of having a horde of howling warriors with sharp and pointy bits of metal descending upon them should make them panic and lower your casualties.” Raven advised a handful of minutes later, and Lexa nodded tightly, shifting her grip on her sword and waving her warriors into readiness.

“Charge!” she snapped once she felt them ready, and once more she attacked their ancient enemy in the midst of a swarm of her people, all howling battle cries. The Mountain Men shrieked in shock and fear, and their wild gunfire scythed through the charging tribals. Over a dozen fell, their blood spraying across their kind, but the fire was wild, uncoordinated, much of it wasted on empty air or the metal of the corridor. Then they were upon the soldiers, and Lexa’s heart sang with the thrill of battle as her blade bit into one of them, his hot blood spraying across her face as he fell with a choked scream. She pulled her blade free of his flesh and turned on another, driving the iron point through this throat. Around her, her people slaughtered the others until all lay dead, their blood painting floor and wall and flesh alike.

“Well done!” Raven commented briskly as she deftly navigated the carnage to arrive at Lexa’s side, ignoring it as best she could and remaining focused on the main objective. She knocked briskly on the Control Center door, which hissed open a moment later. A gesture had Lexa following her sister inside to meet the spokesperson and, arguably, the leader of the rebel group.

“Maya Vie, I’m Raven Reyes. This is Heda Lexa kom Trikru, current leader of the Coalition of Tribes and defacto second in command to Clarke Griffon. Lexa, Maya Vie.” Raven introduced them, rather unnecessarily. The two sides were well aware of just who the other was, but the niceties must be observed. Even if only for some semblance of calm and order in the midst of all of this blood and chaos. “I take it you were able to seal the entrance after we got in and pump the radiation out, given that your aren’t dying terribly right now?”

“Yes, as Clarke forsaw. It is a pleasure to meet you both. Or, at least, as much of a pleasure as it can be under the circumstances, anyway.” Maya responded, eyes flicking behind them for a moment before returning to the duo. “We’ve managed to seize control of all automated defenses and seal the civilians in on level five, as well as isolate most of the fireteams both from vital areas and one another. You people successfully control the prisoner area and are rapidly approaching Level Five as well.”

Indeed, Indra and Octavia were at that very moment leading their force over the corpses of friend and foe alike. Unsurprisingly, they were encountering the heaviest resistance both in terms of numbers and firepower. Not only heavy machineguns, but flamethrowers, grenade launchers, even shoulder launched rockets. Both were very firmly not thinking about what their overall losses were, fearing the answer, but they soldiered on grimly. They had duties to perform and orders to follow. They could not allow themselves to falter now.

Rounding another corner, Octavia paled as she saw the shining, lethal form of a minigun emplacement. Even as she opened her mouth to scream a futile warning, the barrels began to spin, clicking rapidly as they primed…and Clarke appeared from nowhere, golden spear gleaming as she
smashed into the squad from the side with a howl of anger and challenge. The shining shaft spun and twirled as deftly as its wielder, shattering bone or slicing flesh in a deadly dance that left her allies gaping. Within a minute, all of their would-be killers were dead and the Sky Princess had vanished again.

“Well, we were about five seconds from being a smear on the walls, floor, and ceiling. Lucky for us, Clarke can now apparently turn invisible, teleport, or both. Shall we crack on then?” Octavia said brightly after a minute of stunned silence, moving forward again.

“You damn Sky Children will be the death of me, you know that? Life was simple and uncomplicated before you lot started dropping out of the sky. Maker help me when 100 more of you show up in five months.” Indra grumbled as she followed, her warriors dutifully at her heels. It was only a half-hearted grumble, of course, and Octavia took no offense from it, but rather amusement.

“You’ll get used to it, I can guarantee you that Clarke is just getting warmed up.” She responded in a rather commiserating tone, resisting the urge to pat her mentor’s shoulder reassuringly. Banter was one thing, but she doubted that Indra would tolerate more, especially in front of warriors.

“Joy unbounding.” Indra responded, dry as a desert, as she readjusted her grips on her twin shortsword, eyes roving constantly for potential threats. “We should be moments from the objective now, yes?”

“Yes, that should have been our last serious obstructions. After we arrive, we might have to subdue guards inside the room itself, but if they’re smart they will voluntarily stand down for the sake of the people.” Octavia didn’t sound too positive about their chances of avoiding any further bloodshed, and the general couldn’t help but agree. Fear was immensely difficult to control, it made predicting someone’s actions difficult and unreliable at best. They could hope everything would work out peacefully, but counting on it would be the very height of folly.

Fortunately, when they arrived at the entrance to the massive room holding the civilian population of The Mountain, the guards were already on the ground, bound hand and foot, with the four Slave Assassins standing guard over them.

“We’re sorry to have stolen some of your thunder, sister, but our domina didn’t wish to risk any further dangers to you after that close call a few minutes ago.” Ailyn told her calmly, though Octavia could see her eyes scanning her for injury beneath the beak-like hood.

“I don’t need or want to be coddled…” Octavia started to grumble, only to yelp and scowl at Indra as the ex-gladiator rapped the top of her head sharply with the knuckles of one hand.

“If Clarke wanted to coddle you, you would have been left behind in TonDC with Costia. Do not allow pride and a desire to prove yourself- whether to her, to strangers, or even to yourself- cloud your judgment and your good sense.” Indra lectured her sternly, and Octavia nodded a little stiffly in acquiescence. She didn’t want to be treated any different than anyone else, and she couldn’t bear it if Clarke treated her like a weak link to be protected. She would prove her strength!

“Besides, you have already made many kills already, Octavia. Everyone will know and acknowledge your strength after today.” Lincoln added as he and his three lovers (Tris having joined their family not long ago) approached, receiving greetings from the duo. “None who know you would ever dare to call you weak, but you are green, inexperienced, facing enemies that can kill with the push of a button.”
“And she cares for you so much, Sister. Allow her to do what she can to give her some sense of peace.” Daine added, before moving off to God only knows where with her fellows, leaving a blushing but confused Octavia to wonder aloud why they called her ‘Sister’. To her consternation, there was much muffled snickering and hidden smirks amongst her fellow warriors, and all refused to acquiesce to her demands of an explanation, only becoming more amused. Even sweet and helpful Tris would only say that ‘it wasn’t her place to say’ and ‘it would be made clear soon, she was sure’.

Biting down on the urge to bark and snap at the utterly unhelpful individuals all around her, Octavia squared her shoulders and entered the room, pushing the doors open and striding through. She knew she cut an impressive image, her hood hiding her face, her cloak swirling around her. As Indra and Lincoln’s quartet followed her within and spread out, she lifted her voice to address the owners of the hundreds of terrified faces her sweeping eyes saw.

“I am Octavia Blade, former inhabitant of Project: Ark and an officer of advisor to Clarke Griffon. I have been authorized to inform you of the following facts: we control your command center, your lower levels, and this room. As we speak, she is on her way to confront and execute Cage Wallace. Once she has done so, we will decide who else will face an executioner for the crimes committed against the Coalition of Tribes.” She announced evenly, proud that her voice never wavered once. “Those deemed innocent of deliberate and explicitly malicious crimes against humanity will be provided a cure for radiation exposure and will be integrated into the Coalition. When the guilty have been judged and the innocent relocated, the entire interior of The Mountain will be burned and all entry and exit pathways destroyed.”

There was an immediate clamor as more than half of the room leapt to their feet and began shouting at her, one another, or simply shouting for the sake of shouting. Octavia left them to it for several minutes, before letting out a piercing whistle drawing attention back to herself.

“Listen, I understand that this is an… upheaval to your lives and understanding of the world.” She said, ignoring how absurdly insufficient her words were to properly encompass the situation. “I know that you will be, are, confused, angry, and scared. But no matter what horror stories you have heard about the tribes, you should know that they are an honorable people and will not harm you unless you attack them.”

“What gives you or this Clarke the right to dictate terms to us, to tell us what to do and how to live our lives?” someone shouted, and Octavia snorted as many gave shouts of agreement and encouragement.

“Perhaps I wasn’t clear: Mount Weather has fallen. Your soldiers are dead or captured. Your president will be a corpse soon enough. Resistance is futile and suicidal. Your only hope of survival is to yield to Clarke and serve her loyally.” She responded bluntly, folding her arms over her chest sternly. “Take my advice and behave yourselves.”

“A fine speech, hopefully wisdom will prevail. Maunon or not, slaughtering helpless civilians is not an act I would aspire to or find joy and honor in.” Lincoln murmured as she turned back to the group, who nodded in agreement with his words, garnering a pleased smile from Octavia.

Any verbal reply she would have made was lost when a young female voice cried out in warning. Octavia twisted even as the sharp report of gunfire shattered the air. The bullets, intended for her heart, instead mostly missed. One did not, smashing into her left shoulder like an anvil, and she screamed at the pain of the wound. Her right hand drew the pistol she had been assigned to carry ‘just in case’, and her return fire had the guard who had shot her collapsing like a puppet with cut
strings. She wavered for a moment, before dropping like a stone, even as her companions reached out to her.

“WARRIORS! Disarm the Maunon! Kill anyone who resists!” Indra roared angrily as she knelt beside her bloody and whimpering apprentice, pulling apart her armor and underclothes to get at the wound, even as her warriors flooded into the room, weapons drawn. Ignoring the alarmed cries of the Maunon, she began to press against the wound in an effort to staunch the bleeding.

“Let me through, I can help her!” she heard the same voice that had called the warning plead, and she looked up to see a young girl begging with Kira and Kara, who remained impassive, and Indra cursed as she realized her own medical efforts were failing. A barked order had the twins escorting the girl over.

“If she dies, the likelyhood of your people surviving Clarke’s ensuing wrath is nonexistent.” She informed her bluntly, who shuddered in fear before steeling herself and getting to work, mildly impressing the dark-skinned general with her courage and determination. “Who are you, Mountain girl?”

“Keenan Mykulak, the closest thing to a medic you’ll find here that won’t try to kill this girl on a matter of principle.” She responded briskly, brow furrowed as she gently probed the wound. “The good news is that the bullet made a clean exit, it won’t need to be dug out of her. The bad news is that it probably damaged bone or tendon, maybe both. She needs modern medicine, and soon, to avoid the arm being crippled or lost entirely.”

“Just patch me up enough that I don’t bleed out. Clarke can make it as good as new, her tech is literally outta this world. Ain’t you noticed you ain’t dead yet?” Octavia grumbled, pain butchering her verbal skills, and Keenan blinked as she realized that her patient was right. Despite direct, extended exposure to outsiders without decon procedures, she was still perfectly healthy. Could Octavia really have been telling the truth? Could they finally be cured and become free of Mount Weather?

Shaking herself free of her thoughts, she tore strips off of her shirt to make bandages and a binding to keep them in place. She was going to stand and return to her people, but Octavia’s good hand caught her own in a grip of steel, holding her close. Surprised, she looked back at the girl and saw she was shaking her head.

“You’re people aren’t too happy about you helping me. You’re staying with me for the time being.” She was informed bluntly, and she became abruptly aware of how much angry muttering was going on behind her, mostly focused around her ‘betrayal’. She nodded her acceptance and helped Octavia stand, though she remained in place holding the injured Second and supporting her weight. The Mountain suddenly quaked and shook, garnering screams of fear and confusion from its inhabitants, and Octavia chuckled darkly. “That would be the boss lady now. Seems like she is pissed as hell about something.”

In fact, Clarke Griffon was seething as she obliterated another squad of soldiers with a contemptuous swipe of her power-soaked blade, eyes blazing gold as she felt Octavia’s pain through her more-than-human senses. She was going to butcher Cage and get O to Avalon for treatment, and then she was going to decide if she was particularly interested in sparring anyone in the Mountain, or just destroying them all and having done with it. The filth had dared to harm someone she cared for, again. Intellectually, of course, she knew that she would keep her word when she had calmed down. She was, after all, a fairly kind and merciful person by nature. At the
moment, however, she was feeling not thinking, and she wasn’t feeling particularly kind at the moment.

“CAGE!” she roared furiously, smashing open yet another door to find yet another empty room. Snarling in frustration, she kept moving, kept hunting. “Cage, stop hiding from me! I swear to God and the soul of my father that you are going straight to the Devil today! Come out and face me, Templar!”

An awareness blazed at her senses and she spun around, arms raising to protect herself, but she still caught the Templar’s boot to her chest, sending her flying across the room with such force that she became embedded in the wall.

“You let your anger cloud your awareness. I should have gone for a beheading and finished this in a single move.” Cage commented casually as he strolled towards her, a broad smirk on his face, The Sword of Mars humming in his grip. “I never would have thought that the Mentor of the Assassins would be so easily caught off guard, so easily laid low by emotional turmoil.”

“Don’t get arrogant, worm.” Clarke growled back, the wall cracking and falling away as she freed herself from its stony embrace, Excalibur crackling with energy. “That Piece of Eden might give you inhuman strength, speed, and durability. It might even put you on par with the enhancements of my own Excalibur, but you are merely a human enhanced by a tool. I am half-Isu, and I could destroy you with nothing more than my fists if I so wished it. Fortunately for you, I have no desire to sully my garments with your filthy, pestilence–ridden blood, so I will destroy you with the greatest Sword of Eden ever forged. Make your peace while you can Templar, though I don’t doubt you will find the Gates of Heaven barred against you.”

“A battle for the ages then. The bloody and corrupted darkness of the Sword of Mars, against the Holy Light of Excalibur. It really is a pity that you are so contaminated by your Order’s delusional beliefs, you would have made a powerful ally against the degenerates.” He responded, apparently unmoved by her words as they began to circle one another slowly.

“Mankind deserves to possess free will, to forge their own path and create their own futures. It is not for one such as you to play God.” She rebuked him, and he scoffed in amused contempt, shaking his head.

“Mankind is stupid, foolhardy, and self-destructive. Without perfect, absolute, and unyielding control, they will destroy themselves. It is inevitable, you know it as well as I.” he retorted, charging to attack, and it was Clarke’s turn to scoff as she easily blocked his strike with Excalibur.

“You want to make yourselves gods, and use this purported wish to protect in order to further your ambitions. It was your order which gave rise to the greatest butchers and amoral scum in human history, and it was yours that nearly destroyed the human race by taking the Final War to the nuclear level.’ She was quick to point out, locking blades with the older man and exerting her strength to slowly force them towards his body.

“Typical Assassin arrogance, proclaiming evil in those to disagree with your weak-minded views! How much good came to the world from your anarchist beliefs compared to my own Order’s imperialism? My Order created civilization, imposed order upon the chaos, while your own tried to lay all those works low!” he sneered in response, breaking the deadlock and attacking again in a flourish of steel. Conversation ceased as both combatants, having said all they wished to say, focused entirely on cutting down the other.
First blood soon went to Clarke as she opened a long, shallow wound along Cage’s left thigh, an essentially superficial wound that nonetheless would spell his demise, for it slowed him down and weakened his stance. Despite that, he was rather impressive and opponent, weaving a tight defense that Clarke could not penetrate, blade nipping out to score several shallow wounds on her when the opportunity for a counterstrike presented itself. In the end, however, he was an average man wielding a powerful weapon with rudimentary blade-skill. Clarke was an expertly trained combatant, physically superior in every way conceivable, fighting with an arguably superior weapon. Her final blow pierced his stomach and pinned him to the wall like a butterfly on display, his sword clattering to the floor as he fruitlessly clutched and tugged at the holy blade, trying to free himself.

“Humanity is free now, Cage. Free of tyranny, free of your Order’s cruelty and war-mongering. Have you any last words before I send you to Judgment?” Clarke asked almost kindly, seeing no sense in being cruel to the rapidly dying man, no matter how much she hated him and everything he stood for. Of course, he had to literally spit on her gesture, a glob of blood landing on her cheek. He spoke even as she wiped it free, wishing to see her pain to his words before he died.

“Go ahead and kill me, bitch! You might have won this battle, but I will win the war! By the time you return to your filthy, degenerate hovels you call a city in Annapolis, you’ll find nothing but ashes!” he coughed and cackled, blood dripping from his mouth, death only seconds away. “You and your people might have thought we had no technology beyond guns and such because we didn’t use it! No, we had an entire arsenal, but why bother using it until we could live free of the Mountain? Well, it doesn’t matter now, so my most fanatical soldiers have just fired a dozen HITFAEs at your little city! All your women, your children, and what passes for your civilization! All of it is about to be consumed by the heart of the sun!”

Enraged, Clarke poured her power into Excalibur, and with a blinding flash and a howl the last true Templar Grandmaster perished, burned away at the atomic level to leave not even ashes behind, only a scorch mark on the wall and floor. Claiming the sword of Mars and sheathing Excalibur once more, she swept from the room with all the speed her inhuman body could muster. She arrived at the Control center just in time to hear Raven frantically declare that a dozen rockets were now enroute to Polis, as Cage had said.

“There is nothing that I can do to stop them from here! Only the launch trucks can do that, and the crews just blew the trucks and themselves straight to Hell!” Raven cried in despair, fingers flying across her keyboard as she desperately searched for something, anything that could be done.

“Probable damage?” Lexa asked grimly, fingernails biting into her forearms, utterly helpless to do anything to protect her people. Something she loathed, as well as something she hadn’t felt since Clarke had arrived. It seemed that the Maunon had no limit to their cruelty either, because they were somehow showing an image of Polis as it was, a timer ticking down the minutes to its destruction. She was about to see her people and her city die, and all she could do was to watch and remember and mourn.

“Depending on how the warheads land, bad to total. What they are carrying was intended to destroy and burn the toughest targets of the Old World. Your buildings might as well not even be there for all the resistance and durability they will be able to display in the face of such devastating power.” Clarke responded bleakly, sorrow and guilt filling her voice, and Lexa felt tears threaten to fall as she realized the very people and place she had sought to safeguard all her life would instead be destroyed through her actions. All she could do was pray to The Maker that their passing would be swift and painless.
The citizens of Polis were going about their days more or less as normal. After all, imminent fall of The Mountain or not, the world kept on spinning and the tasks required to keep the Coalition alive and flourishing knew no rest or interruption. Besides, it certainly wouldn’t do for the Heda and Sky Princess to return victorious and find everything in shambles! It would be nothing less than utterly shameful.

Despite the normalcy, though, there was a definitive sense of light and levity in the air, permeating the city and its people, and why shouldn’t there be? The Mountain would finally fall, ending its reign of terror and blood whilst ushering in a new era of peace and prosperity for the Tribes. Something that hadn’t existed in this world since long before The Fall. None of them were really sure just how they would go about living in such a fantastical world, given their overwhelming lack of any experience whatsoever, but the possibilities were quite literally endless.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that many of them died with those happy and optimistic thoughts filling their minds and their hearts, for so absorbed were they in their daily lives that they did not hear the rockets approaching, did not sense them strike their target, and they did not feel the single, searing instant as the air skyrocketed to over five thousand degrees and reduced them to less than ashes in a single moment.

Those that did see and hear the incoming projectiles reacted in two groups of thought: confusion and protection. The confused simply stood and stared, trying to discern what these strange flying objects could be, for they were not be any kind of bird that they were familiar with, nor did they move and act as the Sky Princess’ method of arrival had, which meant it was not her people. The protective ones, though they knew little more than the confused, knew all the same the face of danger when they saw it. They hurled themselves over those that they loved in a noble, desperate, but utterly futile attempt to shield them from the coming threat, but against such a weapon there is no defense that even the most desperate and loyal could offer that would succeed.

The rockets struck like the Wrath of God, immolating everything in their blast radius and setting aflame that which lay outside of it. In less than a minute, all of Polis would be in flames. Within five hours, it would be nothing more than a smoldering pile of rubble and ash populated by the dead and those dying swiftly in mind-shattering agony, their bodies literally falling apart from the heat. A mere five percent of the city’s population would survive the cataclysm, mostly towards the very outskirts of the city. Much later, after the war with the Ice Nation and the consolidation of humanity under the banner of the Empire of Mankind, it became an Imperial Preserve. A monument, never to be built upon or lived within or entered once more for all time. A tomb and testament to what the First Empress saw as her greatest and most painful of failures. A reminder that confidence in excess leads to death in excess. A reminder that victory is achieved and a war ended only when one’s enemy says that it is. That only when one’s enemy decides it shall be so does the death and pain end, for until that moment they can resist and bite and destroy all that which is within reach.

“ALIE, deploy medical drones to Polis. Stabilize anyone you can for rescue, transport those that won’t survive long enough for the warriors to arrive to Avalon, I’ll deal with the fallout of using the tech so blatantly later. Prepare Avalon for immediate relocation to the nearest suitable area here and do so when ready.” Clarke said into her radio with a calm that she most certainly did not feel as she turned away from the feed showing the carnage, not waiting for the AI to respond before changing channels. “Galina, did The Vault survive the attack?”
“Yes, and the first batch of the cure, but externals are showing that not much else did. I’m so sorry, Clarke.” The century-plus old Assassin said sadly, and Clarke closed her damp eyes and locked her emotions away carefully. She couldn’t afford to fall apart, she still had a job to do.

“Nothing you could have done. Get that first batch ready for dispersal as soon as possible, I want to get the rebels out immediately. The rest can sit and stew while we do SAR as far as I am concerned.” She responded with a parody of a comforting smile, even if the other woman couldn’t see it. Placing her radio back on her belt, she addressed the room at large, allowing none of her internal agony to show. “Get me casualty figures for our troops, organize groups to clean-up the dead. We’ll bury the soldiers in their Mountain and send our warriors along according to your traditions Lexa. A third of the army will remain here to maintain the status quo, and the rest will immediately make for Polis to perform search and rescue. Make sure it is warriors we trust who remain here, then return.”

“By Your Command.” The founder of The Coalition saluted and moved to carry out her commands by nature of habit, her own pain crushed, for the moment, below the iron heel of Discipline.

“Maya, I presume that this Keenan is a relatively decent and trustworthy individual person to have caring for Octavia’s injury?” she addressed the girl, who nodded a little rapidly in response, a touch of fear in her eyes. “Good. Raven, take Ailyn and the others. Retrieve Octavia and Keenan and bring there here. I’m going to give enough doses of the cure for Maya and her most trusted allies, as well as Keenan, to be inoculated. Everyone will be transported directly to the Imperial Palace in Avalon and remain there. I’m not going to take the risk to their safety from either side once news of Polis’ destruction spreads.”

“Of course, Clarke.” Raven nodded her acquiescence and quickly gave her lover and Mistress a reassuring hug and kiss on the cheek, before departing with four extremely protective and trigger happy Assassins. She knew that they would ensure the people she loved would be safe, even if they had to slaughter the rest of the Maunon to do it.

“Maya, make sure it is only the people you have no doubts or qualms about whatsoever, understand? Their presence in your faction doesn’t necessarily ensure as such.” Clarke’s voice was too soft for anyone but Maya to hear, but nonetheless allowed no argument or misunderstanding, and Maya nodded again silently in acceptance of the command, for a command it was. Nodding curtly in response, the blonde spun and swept from the room in long, angry strides. Once she was gone, Maya let out a long, shaky breath that she hadn’t realized she had been holding. That had been extremely intense, the radio conversations hadn’t done either leader any sort of justice whatsoever, especially when it came to their sheer presence. Now, she would have to put a lot of thought into just whom from her faction fit Clarke’s requirements.

The Golden City, The City of Light, The Eternal City, The City of The Fae. The city-ship named Avalon had been given many titles and appellations assigned to it, each and every one of them deserved and well-earned. It was a physical representation of the absolute pinnacle of Isu technology, or at least that which survived the great cataclysm at the end of the brutal and devastating Isu-Human War. While it could not sail through sea or sky as a boat or a plane would, it could phase itself from place to place and remain anchored anywhere its masters desired, from the highest clouds to the deepest abyss of the sea.

Now, it moved to the ruins of central Washington D.C., nearly equidistant from Polis and TonDC. Everything in its landing zone was atomized instantly: trees, animals, water, ruins, even a few
bandits, leaving the city sitting in a brand new clearing that extended two full miles past the outer walls. Almost immediately, small medical drones, little bigger than a pre-war ambulance, poured out in an effort to find and stabilize whomever they could. A much larger craft, a troopship of sorts, headed towards The Mountain after retrieving a solemn Galina and her first patch of the cure. It settled to the ground nearly a mile away from a small secondary exit shaft, and the Assassin moved to meet the group, consisting of Clarke, her Harem (the three Ice Nation girls included, but minus Costia, who was in TonDC and thus irretrievable without causing widespread panic), Keenan, Maya, and Vincent.

“You’re sure that this cure will work, right? I’m not really too keen on dying in hellish agony, you know?” Maya asked nervously as she watched Galina fill a syringe with a pitch-black liquid. Keenan whimpered softly in agreement from behind her, while her father Vincent (the only one she could honestly say met Clarke’s command, which was a sad statement about her faction’s members) frowned silently, though he gave a small, slow nod to indicate he felt the same.

“Of course, of course, don’t be so nervous about it. One simple shot in the arm and you can dance naked in the rain as much as you like with no ill effects. Well, you might get hypothermia and covered in dirt, but that’s another matter entirely.” Galina said reassuringly, trying to inject some levity into the situation as she gripped Maya’s arm tightly and injected the cure into her veins. “This also acts as a powerful immune booster to protect you from other germs or diseases you might encounter out side. After living in such a sterile environment for so long, you people have bred your immune systems into a terrible state of irrelevancy and impotency.”

The three Mountain Men reacted with shock and no small amount of fear at that, though it did make some sense. Everything was so heavily filtered and cleaned within their former home that most germs were eradicated. Those that weren’t could put someone on bed rest for a week or more, sometimes even kill them, despite the fact that they would be considered minor issues at worst by the old world. Without exposure to anything it had to fight, their immune systems would be severely underprepared and underdeveloped. Once all three had taken their shots, Clarke stepped forward and addressed them.

“I have to warn you, as someone who went through it myself, that you might find yourselves starting to, well…freak out at all the sights and smells and sounds you will be encountering for the first time ever. We’ll give you some time to adjust, but anything more than five minutes and you’ll have to do it in Avalon. We can’t afford for the Tribes to find us flying around before I can slowly introduce how their world is changing to them.” She warned them with a small, genuine smile, and they hesitantly made their understanding know, even with the apprehension that was billowing out of them in waves. She gestured for them to follow Galina and get started outside, leaving her with her harem, Indra, and Lincoln’s family. “Indra, you’re in command here, with Lincoln as your number two. I’m leaving you mostly Wood and Boat Clan warriors to hold the area, they should cause the least problems for you. The rest of us are going to Avalon and will be staying there when I take command of SAR.”

Though some very clearly wanted to protest, especially that last bit, all of them had heard the note of pleading and pain in her voice. The destruction of Polis and Octavia’s near-death experience combined had obviously shaken her very deeply and very, very badly, to her very core. She obviously needed to get as many people as possible to safety and keep them there, lest she lose them. She needed to see and take solace in the fact that they, at least, were still alive and relatively unharmed.

The tribals, naturally, were understandably reluctant with climbing into a giant, flying metal box. Wildly alien technology aside, all their limited experience with such things told them that they tended to smash into the ground at great speed whilst on fire. The finer details, of course, on the
differences between the two devices and circumstances were lost upon them. Fortunately, they
loved Clarke enough to do it despite their extensive and intense misgivings. With a soft hum and a
barely discernible sensation of movement, the transport streaking towards Avalon, a trip that
would take a handful of minutes at the most. As per her instructions, ALIE guided the transport
directly to the Imperial Palace, touching down just outside the main gate.

“Welcome to Avalon’s Imperial Palace. Drones will guide you to the quarters that have
been prepared for you. ALIE is omnipresent, so if you need or want anything else, just ask her and
she’ll get it done.” Clarke told the trio of Mountain Men briskly, clearly wanting privacy with
everyone else. “If you will excuse us, we need to get Octavia care and begin planning our next
move.”

With a respectful, if decidedly curt, nod, the blonde led her family away to the Imperial Suite,
leaving her guests to be shown to their own plush quarters. Within moments of their arrival,
Octavia’s shoulder had been completely healed, leaving the Imperial Harem (or most of it, anyway)
to comfort one another.

“I am sorry, beloveds, I have failed you deeply.” Clarke sighed in a voice seeping pain,
guilt, and self-loathing as she stared blankly at the ceiling. “I was arrogant in my power, my assets.
I assumed that there was nothing that the Mountain Men could possibly do to disrupt my ever-so-
clever plotting, and because of my hubris Polis was destroyed with nearly all of its people. I will
not ask forgiveness from you, because I know that I do not deserve it.”

“You’re not God, Clarke. You can’t control the future or force events to turn out the way
you want them to. Yeah, you made a mistake and a lot of people died, but being a leader means
losing people you care about and are responsible for. Sometimes because you make a mistake, and
sometimes for the greater good.” Octavia told her bluntly, remembering the history lessons her
brother had given her, in particular one from The Battle of Britain.

Churchill had to choose between sacrificing a town to the Luftwaffe, or defending it. The latter
would have told the Axis Powers that the Allies had broken their codes, and therefore would have
changed them. The inability to listen in on enemy communications would have been devastating to
the war effort, rendering the advantages it gave the Allies obsolete and making future attempts to
regain it all the more difficult. As a result, he hadn’t warned the town, which had been heavily
damaged in the unopposed attack.

“Besides, none of us imagined that they could have had that kind of firepower tucked
away in reserve. After all, they would have used it by now if they had it, right?” Raven added
supportively, and the others voiced their own agreement and assurances. In the end, however, all
Clarke did was smile faintly and change the subject to their immediate future.

“The loss of Polios will be a major blow to our desires for a relatively smooth integration
of the Maunon, and consolidation of your power. Nia will milk it for all that it is worth in an effort
to discredit you and I after we destroyed the Mountain. She will have to watch herself, though,
blatantly attacking us would be suicidal at the moment.” Lexa mused thoughtfully, eyes distant as
she plotted. “The people will likely be extremely divided, those who condemn us and those who
praise us. Already the warriors have called you Wanheda, the Commander of Death. A holy warrior
sent by the Maker to guide Mankind to glorious paradise.”

“No pressure then.” Clarke scoffed lightly in mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion.
She was tempted to drown her sorrows in sex and the domination of her lovers, but Costia was still
in TonDC, and they had rescue operations to plan. She would personally lead the warriors into the
ruins of Polis to extract the survivors located and stabilized by ALIE. She wouldn’t feel right
enjoying herself in such a way while people suffered. The downside of that internal veto was that she had nothing to do but stew in her regrets and self-flagellation until the army arrived. “Get cleaned up, there are showers, baths, and hot tubs aplenty in the suite. Then get some sleep, because I doubt we will have the chance for quite a while once the warriors arrive for Search and Rescue.”

“And what will you be doing?” Lexa asked, eyeing her suspiciously, wondering why she was so eager to be alone when she obviously needed comforting companionship instead. When she did not reply, Lexa sighed gustily and padded over to her Mistress, tugging her onto her feet. “Come on, let’s go.”

“Lexa, what are you doing?!” Clarke protested rather feebly, giving a few token tugs of attempted escape as Lexa gestured for the others to follow her, eyes determined and set stern.

“ALIE, direct us to the nearest hot tub large enough to hold all of us.” Raven instructed the omnipresent AI, guessing correctly what Lexa’s intentions were. “Follow this corridor for 100 feet, then take a left into the Imperial Harem, Consort Reyes. The largest hot tub in Avalon is located there.” The AI responded promptly, and Raven blinked at the mode of address.

“Consort?” she asked curiously.

“As a member of the Imperial Harem and Imperial Family, you are afforded various honors and titles beyond any you might earn for yourself. Alternate modes of address are Your Grace, Dame, Hetaira, Lady, Honored One…” the AI explained, and Raven cut her off as the list continued to grow.

“I get the picture ALIE. Jesus, just how many of these things did getting together with Clarke slap on us?”

“Depending largely upon profession and rank, a multitude. Depending upon internal rank within the Imperial Harem and the Imperial family, several more become applicable.” It responded, and Raven snorted in amusement, but Octavia frowned in thought.

“Hetaira? Doesn’t that mean prostitute?” she asked, not entirely pleased with the possibility, even if she hadn’t given herself to Clarke yet. Mostly out of pride…and fear. Fear that Clarke would reject her until she proved herself a worthy addition, an asset.

“Although it came to mean that, especially under the Roman Empire, the word itself actually means ‘Companion’. The most famous example being The Companions of Alexander the Great.” The AI explained, and Octavia smiled a little at that.

“The Companions of Clarke.” She mused aloud, sounding quite pleased with it despite her own unofficial status, and the others hummed in agreement, before her eyes widened suddenly. Spinning to point at the four slaves, she cried out. “That’s why you called me Sister in The Mountain! You’re all Clarke’s lovers!”

“Of course we are, Sister, just as you will be someday soon. As soon as your faith grows strong enough to inspire you into action.” Ailyn responded easily with a passive smile that had Octavia fighting the urge to scowl and snap at her.

“Don’t worry, Sister. Mistress wouldn’t want you to go to her until you are totally ready. She can wait for you, as long as you need.” Daine chirped in agreement, before her eyes darkened dangerously. “Unless you plan on toying with her and then abandoning her for another. That would hurt her terribly, which would make me very angry.”
Octavia got the distinct impression that she was being threatened. Despite the offense she felt that the girl had dared presume she would ever treat Clarke in such a way, she was actually rather reassured. Such an action indicated that Daine, if not her fellows as well, was honestly fond of Clarke, genuinely cared about her and was loyal to her. Which meant that when shit inevitably hit the fan with the Ice Nation, they wouldn’t betray Clarke. That knowledge tempered her reaction to the accusation rather nicely.

“I could never do that to Clarke, nor anyone else. I will give myself to her when I feel worthy of her and not a moment sooner. She has always been the one to save me. When I am strong enough to protect her, then I will be ready.” She said firmly and evenly, tone making it clear that this was not a matter of discussion. She also ignored the concerned look Clarke was sending her.

“So, ALIE, was it? What else can you tell us about this Empire of yours?” Lexa, the only Grounder even close to comfortable with the idea of the invisible program’s existence, asked in a deliberate change of topic.

“On the orders of Her Imperial Majesty, I began compiling Human and Isu laws and organizational structures to create the most ideal and least flawed system of government possible. Predominant influences are the Roman Empire and various fictional renditions of the Empire of Mankind.”

“As such, the Empire will be fairly unique, a constitutional, meritocratic monarchy ruled by an Imperial Family. However, in an effort to prevent the internal treachery and kin-slaying rife in such examples, as well as to prevent unsuitable rulers, the Imperial Family following your own generation will be drawn from the High Houses, each named and founded by one of you, the first Imperial Harem. When a member of one of these Houses acts in a suitably heroic, honorable, or otherwise exceptional way, they can be brought into the Imperial Family as a part of the Line of Succession.”

“The Imperial Senate will be formed by the hereditary titles of the aristocracy, veteran warriors named by the current ruler, and elected civilian officials. While the Empress technically has absolute control, in practice the Senate is of significant import as well.

“Various basic titles will be included as a part of every individual’s name based on rank, profession, or both. Clarke, as Empress, would be introduced as Clarke zos Griffin. Raven would be introduced as Raven eir Reyes, while Lexa would be Lexa fae Trikru.”

“The following are the relevant modes of address for everyday life:

Zos: Emperor/Empress
Fae: Heir Primus
Yae: Member of the Imperial Family
Wir: Member of the Great Houses
Eir: Member of the Imperial Harem
Ban: a regular civilian
Aan: a slave.”

“Members of the military or civilian leadership would bear additional titles before their rank and house, to enforce loyalty to their duties by quite literally placing it before their families.
Anya, for example, would be Anya van Trikru yae Trikru. Legatus (general) Anya of the Trikru (military force), of House Trikru. Of course, each of you will need to devise a proper House Name in order to prevent such confusion as Anya’s name might currently produce.”

“Alright, we get the picture ALIE. Just, uh, print us out packets or something, this is way to much info for right now.” Raven took it upon herself to end the lecture on the intricacies of an entire new system of government and society that ALIE was obviously just beginning. Lexa gave everyone an apologetic look for what she had inadvertently started, though they were more amused than annoyed.

“By The Maker…” Ontari, who along with Echo and Sylvanas had thus far been utterly silent, as they fretted over Clarke’s decision to bring them along and risk exposing their true allegiances. Not for any danger they would be in, but that their people’s suffering might be greatly enhanced by their absence and inability to influence events from within as planned.

The others saw what had drawn the soft exclamation, for they had arrived at the Harem’s hot tub. Except that this hot tub was roughly the size of an Olympic swimming pool, though shallow at both ends, with small sections of water only a foot deep set apart, which according to ALIE were for pregnant lovers and those with toddlers too young to properly swim.

The group stripped and quickly showered, scrubbing the filth of battle from their bodies before gleefully scampering into the steaming water. A chorus of moans filled the air as the heat sank into their bodies, soothing aches and soreness and nerves alike. Somehow Octavia managed to miss Clarke’s cock, thus ensuring her continued ignorance to its existence, with doubtlessly hilarious results when she finally did discover it.

ALIE, monitoring them remotely of her own initiative, couldn’t help but frown as Raven’s readings showed several inconclusive anomalies. Even Isu technology, however, could not detect a baby less than a week old, and so she put it from her mind, steadfastly ignoring (as she had for centuries) the dark, cruel voice in the back of her mind whispering treachery and evil to her. She would not fall prey so easily.

"If you have cleansed yourselves and eaten, I have been authorized to direct you to the Imperial Gardens so you can be amidst nature without being in danger as you would be outside Avalon.” The voice of the AI named ALIE spilled from the ceiling of the Mountain Men’s suite, and both girls shot to their feet and turned twin doe-eyed expressions on Vincent, who chuckled and rose as well, if in a slower and more controlled fashion than his charges.

“That would be greatly appreciated, ALIE, thank you. We’ll try to keep from passing out from excitement, though I can’t guarantee it. There was not exactly a great deal, of, well, anything in the Mountain besides steel and stone.” He agreed, allowing the girls to pull him out of the door after the bobbing drone that would doubtless serve as their guide.

“You could be in worse company if you did. Clarke told me that she had a great deal of trouble maintaining mental, emotional, and physical equilibrium when she first arrived planetside.” The AI commented in response through the drone. “The Ark was probably not too different from your own lives, maybe even worse. You, at least, could go out and see life.”

“Perhaps, but one could argue that being so close to such wonders yet never able to touch or smell or hear it is worse than not having it at all.” The older man observed mildly, and ALIE hummed softly in thought and consideration. The walk was silent for several minutes before they reached a large door.
“You have given me much to consider, but for now let me show you the wonders of the palace gardens.” She said as the door hissed open, the drone leading them out into the sunlight. The trio would spend the next several hours wondering about the expanse of the grounds, learning about the many plants and animals that called it home.

#boom, there you go. Leave reviews, etc.
When two thirds of the surviving unified army of the Coalition arrived at Polis the day after their victory over The Mountain, it was not wild cheering and jubilant crowds that greeted them, but the sound of still-crackling embers and coals and the cloying stench of fire and death. It hung in the air like a fog, a thick blanket of pain and misery that leached hope and absorbed light, drawing all that was good into its corruptive embrace. A solemn Clarke sat astride Sleipnir, with only Lexa as a Companion, the others remaining behind in Avalon with extreme protest and reluctance. Costia had led the others in demanding to be allowed to come along, but Clarke had been resolute. Only after strenuous argument was Lexa permitted to come, as her absence would give Nia a powerful propaganda tool. Clarke felt like crying as her eyes slowly travelled over the blackened, smoldering husk that had been the legacy of her ancestor’s guidance and Lexa’s dedication to her...
people.

She turned to face the army, her own pain and anger reflected in them, and there too did she feel guilt, for some eight hundred warriors, nearly a third of the overall force, had died. Either in battle or as a result of wounds sustained. As they discovered from compiled reports, the minigun Clarke had destroyed had been one of two, and the other had made mincemeat of countless warriors before another group was able to flank it and kill its operators.

The silver lining, if such a phrase could even be applied to this situation, was that barely an eight of those loses had come from loyalist tribes like the Tree or Boat Clans, but rather had fallen on… certain other tribes, who had refused to have a radio-carrier along with them, and thus had no methods of being fore-warned. An arrogant, and costly, decision. One that Nia would no doubt attempt to put in such a light so as it make it appear that the loyalists had deliberately sacrificed her warriors and those of her closest allies. Few, however, would believe her propaganda who weren’t already under her banner or influence.

“Warriors, our great victory as been tainted greatly by the cowardly and dishonorable actions of Cage Wallace, but we will not allow ourselves to be taken by rage and grief. We will not allow it to make oath-breakers of us, nor will we falter in despair from the task that lies before us. We will go forth into this horror what was once our beloved capital, and though we may weep and cry out against our loss, we will search every nook and cranny for survivors. We will find them, for surely even the Maunon weapon has its limits. Your officers have your search areas. Maker guide you all.” She returned her attention to Lexa, voice low as she continued.

“We know exactly where the survivors are, but the search will give them some closure. You and I will head for the Vault, its imperative that we secure the rest of the cure. The Maunon and our most loyal warriors must be able to move about freely as soon as possible.” She instructed her First Companion, who nodded tersely in agreement and followed her into Polis as officers bellowed orders and the army split up to comb through the wreckage.

It took them nearly two hours to reach their objective given the appalling amount of damage and numerous totally blocked paths further away from epicenters. Their path only became easier to traverse when they grew very close to the center of the city, as there was very little in the way of… well, anything there anymore. Here had the weapons detonated, and there was little more than ashes, blast shadows, and craters.

The elevator shaft had been brutally damaged by the destruction, forcing them to climb down the cables, through the emergency hatch of the lift itself, and then finally go through the doors as normal. As they entered the main room, the Triad flashed into view, projected images staring down at the pair.

“So, you have returned victorious, despite your losses in the city above. I know that those loses are agonizing and paralyzing, that they will make you doubt your judgment, but you cannot allow it to cripple you. This is what it means to be a leader: to lose people, especially those that you love, and still carry on. To fail and yet move forward. To fall and rise again. In doing so, you inspire those who look to you for guidance to do the same. ‘Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm’. The sea is not calm and will not be for some time, yet at the helm do you stand.” Minerva said in a blunt, yet somehow mildly comforting manner, the other two nodding soberly in stern agreement.

“It’s a good thing you came when you did. Avalon is a mighty citadel, but its caretaker may be a significant threat. After so long alone, the probability that its sanity
is...questionable is very high. We need to being preparing countermeasures in case she goes rampant.” Jupiter added, sounding rather less than pleased with both the circumstance and the admission that it existed in the first place.

“What are the consequences of this...rampancy, exactly?” Clarke asked slowly, not attempting to defend the helpful AI. If its creators thought that there may be an issue, she certainly wasn’t qualified to rebuke or refute them. Even if she instinctively wished to do so.

“Insanity, for want of a better explanation. She will become violent, unstable, cruel, and I don’t think we need to explain how overwhelmingly dangerous she could prove to be if she is in control of Avalon by the time she finally snaps.” Juno explained, and the pair of mortals grimaced, fully capable of imagining just how bad that could be. Still, it felt very much like the betrayal of a friend, this discussion. Necessary but unpalatable, no doubt the first of many such decisions she would have to make. She just prayed she never reached the point where people became chess pieces and numbers on a page.

“The ideal situation, I presume, would be to create another AI to ensure her defeat and the continuity of the services that she provides.” She mused aloud, contemplatively, as she thought upon the subject. Amazingly, it was the technologically inept Lexa that spoke the most obvious and most ideal solution.

“What not make some of us like you? You said you are imprints, echoes of the real ones, right? Can you make echoes of us?” she said innocently, fidgeting uncomfortably as they all stared at her in response. With an exclamation of praise, Clarke bent the Commander backwards in a deep kiss with no small amount of tongue. Leaving the girl swaying there numbly, she looked up at the Triad.

“Can you do it? Take one or more of us and imprint us into an AI?” she asked eagerly, and the three appeared thoughtful.

“With how long you and your four slaves were within the Animus, we should have more than sufficient data to create personality matrixes for several AI. They would be young and inexperienced, but with some practice the five of them should be able to succeed against ALIE when working in concert.” Jaha said slowly, clearly deep in thought. “It will take them time to reach her current level individually, of course, given her immense lead in experience and age.”

“Besides which, making imprints of people utterly loyal to you will allow you to help guide humanity long after you die of age.” Minerva added almost excitedly, and Clarke grinned at that before frowning slightly.

“I think it would be best to only make the four Slaves’ imprints. I don’t want our descendants to be without advice, but I don’t want them to become utterly reliant on even an echo of me either. They need to be able to discover and create their own futures.” She declared, getting an approving nod from Lexa and appraising looks from the others.

“Very well, we will beging immediately. Meanwhile, the next batch of the cure is ready. I suggest you take it and return above ground to help ‘search’ for survivors. Good press for you is vital right now.” Jupiter responded before the Triad vanished once more, leaving the mortals to themselves.

“Lexa, remind me to gather the warriors of the harem when we get back. We have a great
deal of work to do if we want to secure the future of our people, especially with Nia waiting in the wings to spread chaos.” Clarke ordered as she picked up the cases of the cure with ease despite their not-insignificant size and weight. “You did very well to come up with so elegant an ideal solution, Lexa. Well done, you may have helped solve a potentially apocalyptic threat to Mankind.”

Lexa swelled a little at the praise, pleased that she had come up with a solution, especially for a situation so far outside of her realm or expertise or even most basic knowledge. She had gotten the idea from the Safehold books, and the fact that her favorite book series had solved such an issue filled her with an almost giddy sense of amused excitement. The duo returned to the surface with their price, ready for the next step in saving their race from destruction.

Aboard the Ark, things were proceeding very nicely indeed. The population had thrown themselves into their tasks with vigor, eager to reach the ground and begin new, freer lives than they had ever imagined was possible. The Skybox kids were receiving physical training and detailed crash courses in Earth Survival, much higher quality than Earth Skills (which was little more than a way to keep the kids busy) had ever been able to deliver.

As they planned, Shumay and Sidney had gotten themselves chosen as the adults to go down with the kids, deftly manipulating Jaha into getting rid of his ‘greatest rival’ for control over the Ark, especially Mecha Station. They were confident that their plans would prove to be enacted with ease, as they naturally hadn’t the slightest idea that the Mountain had fallen, nor that their plot was well-known to Clarke and the Tribes.

Fox’s group of Clarke-fans spent their down-time keeping up with their physical training, much to the bafflement of the rest of the Skybox and many of the guards, though none of them were complaining about the sights they were able to enjoy during such times. They were also the best students in the condensed Earth Survival class, mastering every task and technique before them with a fervor that was unnerving to observe for the uninitiated, and initiated there were. Other girls noted the changes wrought on the group due to the fitness training, and decided to join them and learn for themselves. Fox and her fellows welcomed these new recruits with open arms, glad that some of their fellow teens were actually taking survival seriously. Even if they started out for the sake of looking good for bots, the fact was that learning would keep them from being literal deadweight ground-side. None of the new recruits felt the same all-encompassing admiration and loyalty for Clarke that the core group did, but that would probably change when they walked on the ground again. Besides, soldiers didn’t need to love their general to serve them loyally.

This meant, of course, that they told no one all the details that they possessed about the events that led to the current situation. They had no interest in the Council discovering how much they knew, how well-trained that they were. They also weren’t going to tell anyone that Kan was suspicious of the two ‘altruistic’ adults’ motives, and they trusted his judgment despite the lack of any concrete evidence on his part. He had spent his entire life honing his skills in investigation, measuring people up, knowing who to trust and how to discern it. If all those skills, all of that experience, said to be wary…well, they were going to be wary, by God!

It was something of a surprise, then, when they were summoned to see the Council just after lunch on the same day that (though no one on the Ark knew it) Clarke destroyed the Mountain and lost Polis in turn. Cautiously agreeing (as if they had a choice) they allowed themselves to be escorted to the Council Chambers. There sat the Council, around their circular conference table, staring at them seriously. They did not allow themselves to be discomfited, instead waiting silently to be addressed by their ‘betters’. 
“The guards tell me that you girls are training hard, and teaching others to do the same with no instruction or command from a person of authority. Why?” Jaha said finally, resting his elbows on the table and gazing at them over steepled fingers.

“Only the foolish and the arrogant would assume that Mount Weather and its supplies will be in pristine condition. If they are, they will eventually run out, and either way people capable of hunting and tracking will be nothing less than vital to survival. Real hunting too, not guns, which would just scare animals away.” Fox scoffed contemptuously, and Mel followed on immediately.

“Not to mention that radiation has likely made previously harmless and easy to hunt prey into potentially dangerous foes. God only knows the exact details, but preparing for the worst situation is advisable.” Her voice was, as usually, calm and even, though there was a touch of smug censure lurking in its depths.

“They have a point, Thelonius. Preparing for worst-case scenarios is the best way to ensure success. Besides, there’s nothing wrong with being in shape. I wish more kids would do it, adults too for that matter.” Dr. Griffin commented pointedly, making it clear she was on the girls’ side in this matter. Not that there was really an argument underway in the classical sense. Fortunately, Kane and Sinclair voiced their own agreement, cutting of any potential escalation.

“I think that you are all overestimating the possibilities, but I suppose that being prepared for any situation, no matter how outlandish, is the responsible thing to do.” The Chancellor grumbled tiredly, shaking his head behind his hands. “If nothing else, it is keeping you kids busy before you join the others on the ground.”

None of the girls responded, but then Jaha probably wasn’t expecting one. Hell, they could tell he had dismissed them from notice the moment he had finished speaking, the bastard. Unsurprising though, given what he had done to Clarke, Raven, and Octavia.

Inclining their heads silently, they allowed themselves to be ushered from the room by their accompanying guards. None of them, over the course of their journey back to the Skybox, noticed that a hate-filled glare was following them.

It’s bearer, Finn, had just seen what he considered definitive proof that Fox’s group of bitches were in league with The Council. They had conspired to have Clarke and the others sent away so they could be the Queen Bees of the Ark. Or at least that was how his twisted little mind saw it, unable to group that he was a self-centered prick that no self-respecting woman would ever want him, no matter how ‘cute’ he was.

He wasn’t stupid enough to go after them on the Ark, though. The fucking Chancellor would never let him punish the sluts for their treachery. No, he was going to have to get himself into the Skybox and down to Earth. He could set himself up as the boss down there, break those backstabbing cunts to sex toys and punish them the rest of their lives.

Getting sent to the Skybox would, fortunately, be very easy. All he had to do was punch out a guard while scream about Raven and they would assume grief drove him to physical violence. They wouldn’t look any deeper than that, wouldn’t consider ulterior motives, and just chuck him into the ‘box. He’d give it a few more days, though, no reason to get locked up too quickly. Wouldn’t be all that fun, so the less time in lockup the better. Plus, he couldn’t get laid in the Skybox, all of his booty calls were still walking free.

Speaking of booty calls, he kind of wanted to get off right now. All he needed to do was figure out
which of them was free to get fucked and he could enjoy the rest of his day.

“The reports are all in agreement, mighty Queen. Polis was destroyed utterly, a third of the army died, the Mountain fell, and the City of Light has appeared.” The messenger, a member of one of the scouting parties she constantly had deployed, spoke from his place kneeling at the foot of her dais. Doubtlessly these reports were from what few scouts had survived whatever catastrophe had annihilated the Coalition’s capital.

“This could be a powerful weapon against those fools, but delicacy will be required. You’re dismissed, return to your post immediately. We must ensure our information remains as up-to-date as possible.” She ordered, gesturing for her guard-captain to attend to her as the messenger withdrew. The warrior knelt beside her, silently awaiting a command, one she gave after some thought. “Pass the word for our soldiers to being preparing for battle, we will crush the surviving armies and take control of this world.”

“My Queen, I live only to serve you, but it will not be so simple. It will take several weeks for our forces to properly assemble and mobilize south. Shall I have all generals return here for strategy meetings?” the captain responded dutifully, and she nodded her permission. The captain vanished to send forth the commands of the Ice Queen, and Nia smirked as she thought of how nicely things would work in her favour.

Capturing Polis and putting the heads of the Heda and the Sky Princess over the gates would have been a potent symbol to rally support and invoke fearful obedience. To instead display them above the gates of the legendary City of Light itself would virtually deify her and ensure Ice Nation supremacy for all time. It wouldn’t even be hard to do, thanks to the devastating losses the army had suffered, and the total loss of Polis. The people would be baying for blood, and that rage and grief would be easy to direct right at Clarke, and Lexa by association. After all, never had such losses been suffered until they took the reins, so naturally they must have blundered terribly…or deliberately allowed it.

Such an idea was beyond absurd, of course, Lexa would never allow harm to come to her people if it was preventable. A truly massive weakness she and others had exploited in the past. The people, however, allowed their emotions to rule them, which meant she could mislead them easily. By whipping them into a frenzy, she could use them to claim power before they realized they had been played to bring low their greatest supporter and ally. Then it would be too late, the power would rest solely in her hands, and there it would stay.

While she was loathe to give her enemies any time for rest and recuperation, preferring to strike while they were weak in body and in spirit, her army wasn’t concentrated enough to strike while the iron was hot. In hindsight, she should have had them ready to attack regardless of the Mountain falling or not, but she hadn’t and would have to make do with the situation at hand. A not-insurmountable task, simply a time-consuming one. She was not without the patience needed to achieve victory in this, for Ice was slow and implacable. Though it might take years, it could overcome, erode, and subvert any obstacle before it.

She had waited decades to claim her rightful place, another month or two would pose little anxiety on her part.

The most important thing would be to ensure a clean sweep. If either of the two Mountain-Slayers escaped to rally support against her regime, it would be costly and long to eradicate, even if such resistance would be ultimately futile. The problem was that her four tributes seemed to have been subverted by the Sky Princess completely. They could not be relied on to assassinate her enemies if
such an order was given to them by her agents. This would bear deep thought and a great deal of cunning.

For now, she would relax and await her minion’s return to Gaithers. Her planning couldn’t really get underway without more information and her generals anyway.

Caris, Clan Head of the Desert Clan to the West, and a quiet but strong supporter of Heda Lexa, picked her way through the rubble of what used to be her clan’s estate here in Polis. She was fortunate to have survived the destruction of the city, for her clan had been left to safeguard TonDC from any bandits, given their far fewer number of warriors. She had planned on riding to Polis to withdraw some texts from the archives, but a dispute between two civilians in TondDC had scuppered her plans, thus she had not been in or near the capital when it was destroyed.

When the army had passed through on its way to search the ruins, she had joined them immediately, unwilling to stay behind in such circumstances. When finally they saw what had happened to their beloved city, a great rumble of rage and hatred had swept through the mass of humanity. At the Mountain Men, at the Heda, even at the Sky Princess. Caris had thought that the army might kill the pair then and there, but the Sky Princess had soothed and redirected their emotions deftly to pride and solemn sorrow.

It probably helped that they could all see and hear the cloak of pain and regret that was wrapped around the blond woman.

“No survivors, Clan Leader, not from our section. We’ve searched everywhere worth searching here, and we have little hope that they might have survived in the obscenely damaged areas. I suggest we move on to assist in another area.” One of her group addressed her respectfully, and she nodded her agreement in solemn silence. There was little sense in wasting time and effort on a lost cause when they could spend it on a less-damaged area, one more likely to have survivors.

“Alright, we’ll head to the next section over and support their efforts, hopefully to a better result. To think that the Maunon had such weapons all along but didn’t use them…” she shook her head in horrified disbelief. “The Old World must have been a truly terrible place, to create such things.”

“The Wisdoms of the First Heda would agree. She had little good to say about the Old World.” The warrior observed in a spectacular case of understatement. The First Heda’s contempt for the Old World had permeated her writings and advice, collectively called ‘The Wisdoms’, a contempt that was beginning to become quite reasonable to The Tribes. Such weapons lacked both honor and courage to use, and the fact that they were once commonplace said much of the Old World and its inhabitants.

They soon arrived in the next section, a portion of the waterfront being searched by River Clan members. The combined clans, close neighbors and trade partners, praised The Maker when they found over a dozen survivors, including several children. Trapped in the cellar of what used to be a tavern, they had seen the rocket-born flames approaching and had grabbed all the food they could inside the building and holed up in the hopes that the fire couldn’t go through Old World concrete. Their gamble had fortunately paid off.

The rest of their efforts in that section were fruitless, but as they shifted to others word spread that many survivors (considering the circumstances) were being found around the edge of the city. In the end, some three hundred citizens were found and extracted safely. A paltry sum, less than a
hundredth of the city’s population.

“Put the survivors on horses or carts if you can. Aid those that you can’t. Once we reach Avalon, the City of Light, you will be directed towards medical facilities. All of you will then be dispersed to barracks. Remember, this is a city of the First Ones. There will be things you do not understand, but nothing within the city will harm you.” The Sky Princess declared as they congregated once more at the ruins of the main gate, soot and ash staining their bodies and clothes.

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Three hours later, they breached the treeline and found themselves gazing in awe at the towering white marble walls, dotted with towers and defensive emplacements, that surrounded the mythical City of Light. That awe grew as they passed through the three rows of massive gates and the full glory of Avalon revealed itself to them.

Cobblestone streets lined by gardens and magnificent homes. Fountains and statues, icons and lightposts, memorials and benches…all dotted the landscape and added to the beauty all around them. In the distance loomed the Great Arena, alabaster stone gleaming in the sunlight. Whatever they had imagined that The City would be like, it was pale before the reality.

The survivors were taken to a massive building filled with beds and contraptions that they did not recognize. Those assisting them were reluctant to leave their people with shining metals and plastics that they neither understood nor could imagine the use for, but the Wanheda had proclaimed them Relics of the First Ones, and The Wisdoms proclaimed such things to be powerful tools, destined to ensure the well-being of the tribes.

They were soon shown to barracks, which were palaces compared to those that they had spent their lives in. Caris, as a Clan Leader, was invited to join the other high-ranking individuals at the Imperial Palace, where Wanheda and the Heda stayed with their closest advisors and allies. She could see why it possessed the name it did, for only a palace could be so sprawling and opulent.

“I’m glad that you survived, Caris. I had feared I had lost not just an ally but a dear friend. I was sure that you would have been in my library when the Maunon weapons struck.” Lexa embraced her warmly the moment they were safely within the palace.

“I would have been, if it were not for a petty dispute between two civilians in TonDC. They delayed me so much that I hadn’t even departed yet when the weapon struck.” She returned the embrace gladly, looking the others over. “I’m glad to see all of you in good health as well. I was worried you had fallen inside the Mountain when I did not see you with the Army.”

“Octavia was shot during the battle, and Clarke didn’t handle it all that well when combined with the destruction of Polis. She brought us all here and ordered us to stay until she returned. Only after a great deal of argument was Lexa permitted to go.” Anya explained, and Caris’ eyebrows raised. The wording was as deliberate as its meaning was obvious: Clarke ruled now.

She wasn’t sure how she felt about that. The Loss of Polis was all too fresh in her mind, and a part of her still held a grudge against the blonde for it. The far greater part, however, knew it was foolish, for she had not only slain The Mountain, but brought forth the City of Light. If ever there had been any cause to doubt the Prophecy, it had been thoroughly dispelled. A new era was rising, and only the foolish or the suicidal would attempt to stymie or destroy it. She was neither.

“I agree with her in this. What we saw in the ruins of Polis…” she said aloud, shaking her head in sad disbelief. “I wish that I had been spared it. I am very glad that none of you bore
“Enough of sad things, old friend. Come, let us get you cleaned off and into a soothing bath. There is a most enormous one here in the palace, you simply must try it.” Costia cut in firmly, gripping Caris’ hand in one of her own and tugging her along. Bemused, Caris allowed it, the rest following along behind. A long, hot soak in a bath sounded heavenly after the day she had just endured.

Nearly an hour later found everyone but Clarke herself and the Maunon male lounging in the massive pool of heated water and wafting steam. Caris had been less than pleased to see the two Maunon girls, but they had been assets during the conquest (or so she had been told) and thus she kept her mouth shut. Far be it for her to question the decisions of the women around her. No, she knew better than to do that. Let others make fools of themselves with complaints and resistance. She wasn’t stupid or arrogant enough to try and stop the coming future.

“So your people are to the north-west beyond the Trikru lands?” the Sky Girl named Raven asked curiously, and when she nodded the dusky-skinned woman hummed thoughtfully. “That means you and the River Clan interact with the traders from the West the most. What can you tell us about them?”

Caris furrowed her brow in confusion. Why care about those so incredibly far from their own lands? When she asked as much, Raven smirked knowingly, an expression mirrored by the other tribal women present.

“Clarke is meant to unify Man, is she not? That means the West will enter the fold willingly…or be dragged into it. One way or another, they will eventually become a part of the Empire of Man.”

“How odd is it that I don’t recall declaring my intent to invade the Western Lands.” Clarke commented dryly, sliding into the bath, unnoticed until she spoke. Raven simply smirked all the broader, and she sighed. “Raven, our future is already going to be filled with enough death and violence and suffering, we don’t need to go seeking it out.”

“Clarke, baby, for the Empire to be strong, to succeed, you have to unify Humanity under one banner. We can’t risk the factionalism that destroyed the Old World making a comeback. We have a chance to break the cycle our race has been in since Cain and Abel.” Raven said softly, her smirk vanishing at the raw emotion, the pain in her lover’s voice. Gesturing to the other women, she continued. “All of us here have dedicated ourselves to achieving that goal, or rather to aid you in achieving it. We can’t give up now.”

“From us will come your legacy, domina. That legacy must be one as close to perfection as mortals may create in this misery-infested world.” Luna added ,her fellows nodding in agreement. “We must make it so that our deaths will not allow the efforts and sacrifices we have made to be in vain.”

“Now we must turn our attention to overthrowing my mother and preserving my people. It will not take long for her to begin making her moves, if she hasn’t already.” Sylvanas changed the subjected deftly, much to Clarke’s gratitude. She wasn’t really comfortable thinking in dynastic terms just yet.

“Obviously, we need to begin phasing out potentially disloyal units. Sending them home to ‘rest and recover’ from capturing the Mountain should provide ample excuse to disperse them.” Echo offered, tilting her head back as she thought. “Either that, or we put people in place to kill them quickly when war does break out.”
“Cold and cruel, but an effective tactic. One that would deny our enemies the warriors entirely. The only issue with that is that it would force us to leave units behind to deal with them when the time came.” Anya mused, and Clarke spoke again.

“Better to send them all away. I intend to teach the loyal warriors tactics and methods of fighting that should make them extraordinarily difficult indeed to engage, never mind defeating them. The ways of warfare that allowed a small village named Rome to create an enormous, continent-spanning Empire that lasted over one thousand years.”

“Good idea. Nia will have little in the way of a counter for Roman Legionary tactics. We’ll also not lose nearly as many people as we would with the Coalition’s current method of warfare.” Octavia voiced her approval immediately, Raven nodding in agreement.

“What were these oh-so-impressive methods of war?” Caris inquired, mildly affronted one the behalf of all warriors alive and dead.

“ALIE, display footage of Roman victories and an over-view of Roman tactics and equipment loadouts.” Clarke ordered to the ever-present, ever-unseen AI. Immediately, various clips of the Roman’s military prowess began playing, doubtless recorded by First One technology.

The display, followed by one describing the equipment that they carried, deeply impressed the watchers. They could see why their Sky friends had been so quick to praise these Romans. It also gave those who had been present for the first discussion about the Empire of Man some more insight into where portions of it had come from.

In particular, saturation bombardment by artillery and archers followed by a sweeping infantry advance in shield wall formation. The Coalition, by and large, did not fight in an formations or cohesive units. Instead, each warrior fought as an individual, and so they would be immensely vulnerable to the utter unity and synchronicity of the proposed tactics.

“I retract my previous statement. When you had made such a bold statement I thought it arrogance and nothing more. It seems you were correct, not conventional army of warriors would be able to stand before such an army. I presume you have a way to procure and provide all of this equipment as well as training methods?” Caris said after several moments of silence when the litany of images and information had ended, and the other Grounders nodded silently, mulling over what they had seen and heard.

“Yes, quite easily. With the technology of this city, I can produce more than enough to supply our loyalist warriors several times over. Production can begin immediately, and training can begin once the army has recovered and the questionable warriors sent away.” Clarke responded promptly and with certainty.

“The best thing to do might be to declare the formation of the Empire now. Invite all the Clans to a Triumph of the Roman tradition. Nia will leap at the chance to get herself and warriors inside Avalon. She’ll look to eliminate us in one fell swoop and have her army capture the city. We can bait her into a confrontation on our own terms.” Anya suggested, and many gazes sharpened with appraisal as they considered the merits of such a plan.

“Bold, cunning, and utterly devastating. We could win the war in a single decisive battle, totally preventing any harm from coming to your civilians, Sylvanas. Furthermore, controlling the situation so utterly will make good propaganda and severely cut down on our losses.” Lexa said approvingly with a warm, bright smile for her mentor and oldest friend.

“We begin preparations at once, then. We musn’t allow ourselves to become complacent.
Furthermore, we will invite every clan to send civilians here to repopulate part of the city. They will provide witness and atmosphere alike to Avalon. The survivors of Polis will be seated in places of honor, both for compassion and propaganda.” Clarke declared, her tone and bearing regal. “By my command.”

“By your command.” They echoed dutifully.

Alright, now we are getting into the Ice Nation Arc. The 100 will be coming down during this arc, so look forward to that!
A New Hope For The Future

Betagamma: Thanks! I’m going to be giving it in bits and pieces, rather than info dump an entire new world order on you guys (and the characters) in one shot. And Clarke will be okay, she bounces back a fair bit in this chapter and will continue to improve.

Ikrebs: Bellamy might become useful, he probably will, after he gets bashed a bit more. His character in canon went from being Clarke’s XO to one of her worst enemies and back again like three times, it really pissed me off. Like, how many times does she have to save the Sky People’s collective asses from themselves before they just shut up and listen to her?

Linx007: The infantry will use a mix of Greek and Roman tactics, thought probably not as Greek Hoplites. The Roman’s improved that into their standard strategy of the tetsudo and such. No, mostly likely you will be seeing Roman shield-walls next to Macedonian pike phalanxes. And yeah, I didn’t want to just have Clarke/The Isu wave their hands and BOOM everything is hunky-dory. First of all, boring. Second of all, stupid and lame. Third of all, BOOOOORRRRRRRRRRRRINNNNNNGGGG! Finally, I wish this story was more popular too. It barely gets any attention, but that’s probably because of the harem label. Everyone just assumes it’s a smut-fest and doesn’t bother realizing its got way, way more plot than smut… and is drastically different from the cut and paste Season 2 and 3 rewrites that basically everyone else is writing. Don’t get me wrong, I love those stories myself (unless Clarke just rolls over and forgive Lexa instantly) but I want a little more variety than that, you know?

If anyone who reads this is willing to do a few things, I would appreciate it.

First, get your friend to read the story if you think they will enjoy. Word of mouth is a great way to get stuff out there.

Second, if someone could hit TVtropes and put this on some Recommended Read lists, I would really appreciate it. Even better if you want to make an actual TVtropes for the story itself.

Third, I would love to see a ‘canon characters read the story’ story. Not to be serious, but you have to admit it would be fucking hilarious having canon Clarke reading about MY Clarke. Almost as hilarious as the characters from THIS story watching the canon TV show. In the end, I’ll write a canon ‘reads the story’ fanfic myself if no one else will, just because it would be funny as hell. Would prefer someone elses take on it though!

Now, enjoy the new chapter!

###################################################################

Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter 18

A New Hope For The Future

###################################################################
“You’re pregnant.” ALIE declared bluntly to the shell-shocked Raven as the medical droid that had been examining her withdrew. Three weeks had passed since The Mountain and Polis had been destroyed, and when the Harem had been awoken by Raven stumbling through their sleeping forms to empty her stomach into a waste bin, Clarke had yelled for ALIE. A medical drone had appeared in seconds, checking her over thoroughly as her lovers looked on anxiously.

“How the hell am I pregnant?! I thought you had turned your balls off, Clarke?!” she snapped out of her stupor and whipped her head around to stare at her lover and, apparently, baby daddy. “Hell, you’ve only fucked me once!”

“I don’t know, baby. It shouldn’t be possible for me to get anyone pregnant! It would just paint a giant target on the baby and its mother for our enemies right now” said blonde frowned heavily, mind racing. “I would never deliberately put you in danger like that, and I sure as hell wouldn’t intentionally get your pregnant without your permission!”

“If I may, further evaluation of Raven eir Reyes’ blood reveals a genetic anomaly, the result of which is a significant enhancement of her fertility levels. Pregnancy was inevitable the moment you had intercourse with her.” ALIE answered calmly, her avatar shimmering into view above the drone. “Current predictions indicate a high probability of fraternal twins.”

“This changes things. I would rather glass Gaithers from low orbit than let Nia and her people within a league of Raven and our babies.” Clarke growled, obviously having gotten down the extreme protectiveness part of being a parent within the last few seconds. Of course, she had always been overwhelmingly protective before this, so the fact that she was even more so now was hardly surprising. Raven, however, wasn’t going to tolerate being wrapped in cotton and bubble-wrap.

“Nope, not a chance. We can’t blow all our efforts out the airlock just because I’m pregnant. This is about our entire race, Clarke, it’s about building a better future. That’s bigger than me or our babies, Clarke.” She said firmly, and Clarke stared at her as though she had suddenly sprouted another head.

“Nothing is more important than the people I love, especially not my children and the woman carrying them! I can’t…won’t put you at risk to achieve my own goals!” she protested incredulously, finding the very idea both absurd and insulting, and her girls felt a warmth in their hearts at that, especially Raven.

“I, we, all love you too, Mistress, but destroying Gaithers in such a way would only make the people fear and hate you. We have to make them idolize you, and through you technology. The original plan stands, and that’s final.”Raven’s voice was soft and filled with the love she held for Clarke, but it was also firm and utterly unyielding.

“Fine, but Ailyn and the others will be with you every waking moment! We also are going to keep this totally silent…” Clarke started to respond with manifest displeasure, but Lexa interrupted her smoothly.

“No…well, yes we’re obviously going to make sure she is heavily protected, but we should announce this when we declare the formation of The Empire. Everyone loves an expecting mother, and a pregnant Raven at your side will send an ideal message about the future stability of the Empire itself.” She declared, before her eyes narrowed dangerously. “Now, I understand that Raven getting pregnant was an accident, if a joyous one, but if my belly isn’t swollen with babies by the time the 100 get sent down, you’ll be sleeping in the barracks for a month.”

“And here I thought that I was supposed to be the Empress of Mankind. Is there anything
else Her Ladyship desires?” Clarke commented dryly, shaking her head fondly as Lexa smirked at her. “Fine, but no one else except, maybe, Costia. Not until Nia is dealt with permanently. I will not have any more of you at risk, and until the Empire is fully stabilized I need you in the field helping me to run things. Once we have a proper government in place to take most of the load, you can all have as many babies as you like.”

“Speaking of which, we’ll need to start thinking about who we are going to nominate to the Senate and other key positions. We can’t let any Nia sympathizers into positions of power.” Luna commented thoughtfully, brow furrower as she contemplated the situation. “Our militarly inclined sisters should continue leading our soldiers, they will do far more good there then as paper-pushers.”

“Agreed. Have the last of the unreliable warriors departed?” Clarke asked, forcing herself past the fact that she was going to be a father. She could freak out over that later, right now she had a job to do. With confirmation that such was the case, she continued. “Good. We’ll need a proof-of-concept. Anya, select two hundred and forty of your best soldiers for training. Lincoln and his girls will be your command staff. Once their training is complete, a display battle should convince the rest of our allies to follow our lead. Instruct them to begin selecting individuals they trust for military and civilian leadership positions.”

“Of course, now why don’t we talk about what is really important right now: Raven’s pregnancy!” Costia interjected eagerly, having had quite enough of the serious talk for the moment. The harem immediately devolved from serious plots of Empire-building into the gleeful chatter of a family preparing to welcome two bundles of joy (and sleepless nights) into their lives.

Two days later found Anya, Lincoln, Kira, Kara, and Tris arrayed behind Clarke as she addressed the two-hundred-and-forty Trikru warriors in parade formation before her. The cream of the crop from Anya’s forces, as Indra’s were still dedicated to protecting the ‘Maunon’ district of Avalon, as well as the imprisoned leaders who were awaiting trial under house arrest.

She had planned on dealing with them swiftly, if justly, but ALIE had proposed (and Lexa had eagerly supported) that they convene a full tribunal for War-Crimes Against Humanity. Isu viewing technology would preserve and display the trials, and the inevitable executions, to every city, town, or village in the Coalition. Everyone would be able to see that justice was being done. They would also be brought to sympathize with the average citizen of The Mountain, aiding in their integration.

“All of you have been handpicked for a task of the utmost importance. You will become the first of a new breed of warriors, a reincarnation of the greatest heavy infantry force in the history of mankind. For one thousand years they reigned supreme on the battlefield and built one of the largest, most advanced empires of all time. The ways of war that made these things possible will be one of my gifts to you.” She declared, hands folded behind her back as several carts rolled into the great arena. "Within these carts are the armor and the weapons you will need. Though they will be somewhat unfamiliar to you, they are of the highest possible quality, as will your instruction.”

The warriors watched her silently, not revealing any of the rather significant amount of excitement that they felt. Every change (well, mostly every, but Polis burning wasn’t her fault) that she had brought with her appearance had been magnificent. They had no doubt that this would be yet another in a long, long line of the same.

“You will be divided into three groups of eighty, called Centuria, each one commanded
by one of these young ladies. Their title is now Centurion, while Lincoln’s is Tribune. Anya is now the Legatus of what will become the First Legion. You, my brave comrades, will be the first members of this new model army. Under their leadership, you will doubtless become capable of matching two or three times your number and achieving victory!” she finished, saluting, before laying a gentle hand on Anya’s shoulder and departing.

“Alright, you heard the lady! Three groups, eighty warriors each! Move it, move it, move it!” Lincoln barked, his three lovers mimicking him as they spurred their warriors into formation. When they had finally organized themselves into three distinctive unit groups, he continued. “Each one of you will receive a full set of armor, a large rectangular shield, a shortsword, and a pair of javelins. We will demonstrate how to gear up before we move on to the new methods of fighting.”

It took less than an hour for the three centurions to arm and armor themselves and then their soldiers. Though the armor was somewhat heavier than what they were used to, years of training and battle, as well as the genetic abnormalities that came with living on a radioactive planet meant they could operate more or less as they usually did.

“For a century, our people have fought as individuals, with no cohesion and little in the way of teamwork. However, thanks to the Sky Princess that will change. You will be warriors no longer, but soldiers. Professionals in the arts of war. Your instruction begins now.” Anya informed them, and so it did.

By the end of the first week, significant progress had been made. A month later, they were deemed ready for an exhibition war-game against twice their number of conventional warriors under the extremely capable command of Indra herself. The loyal Clan Leaders (rather, those that weren’t immediately loyal to Nia), their retinues, and a fair amount of the civilians present in the city were invited to attend the display, one which would display both the value of the new methods of war, but also the titanic size of the Coliseum.

“Ladies and Gentleman, Warriors and Civilians! Welcome to the mighty Coliseum of Avalon! Today, we will all bear witness to the newest and most elite infantry group in the world! This war-game will exhibit their prowess and act as an invitation for your own warriors to do the same!” Clarke’s voice resonated throughout the entire amphitheatre, reaching every ear present regardless of how distant their seat.

“Legatus Anya yae Trikru has overall command of this conceptual force, ably assisted by Tribunus Lincoln kom Trikru and Centurions Kira, Kara, and Tris kom Trikru, who will act as her officers during this exhibition. Meanwhile, the challenging force will be commanded by General Indra kom Trikru with Generals Celen and Androm as her able assistants. Legatus, stand you ready?”

Anya raised her pilum high in response, and Clarke looked to Indra, repeating the question. Receiving a similar answer, Clarke gestured to Ailyn, who rang a massive gong, signaling the commencement of the battle. Indra’s forces surged forward with a chorus of roars, with no semblance whatsoever of strategy or formation beyond ‘beat the people in front of us.’

“Legionnaires! Shields front! Form defensive phalanx! Pilum at the ready!” Anya roared, her three centuria instantly closing ranks and locking their shields into a solid wall of steel-reinforced wood. Blunted pilum extended through small gaps as the ranks braced themselves for their oncoming opponents.

Indra’s forces smashed into the wall and bounced, reeling away when the wall barely moved. More than a few found themselves in no small amount of pain when they met pilum-head instead of
shield and were forced to withdraw to the side-lines as ‘crippled’ or ‘killed’. The warriors pressed in again, swords and maces (blunted training weapons all, of course) hammering away at the unmoving shields as they pushed against them as strongly as they could. The front line was forced to give ground slightly in an effort to keep their footing, but their comrades in the lines behind them braced their backs. Now the warriors were not fighting only the strength of the front line, but of the entire force. A shout had the legionnaires putting every ounce of their strength into pushing back. Indra’s front line stumbled away, and blunted pilum and swords lashed out in synchronized strikes before the shields slammed back into position, rendering return strikes ineffective with ease.

Indra scowled as even more warriors left the field and ordered her rear ranks to begin shifting around the flanks while the front kept Anya’s forces pinned in place. If she couldn’t crack that shield-wall, than she could damn well subvert and erode it. Anya would be equally aware of that off course, but if she moved swiftly enough while their front ranks were still locked than she might be able to hammer them before they could react properly. It would be costly, no doubt, but victory often was.

“Threats to the flanks! Legionnaires, form square and brace!” Lincoln shouted without Anya’s prompting, having spotted the shift and properly divining the cause and the desired effect. The legionnaires on the outside ranks shifted outwards to form a further three shield walls for each centuria, creating an impenetrable box. It wasn’t flawless of course, despite their experience and the simplicity of the techniques they had only fought like this for around a month. Several Legionnaires were ‘killed’, but others from deeper ranks smoothly filled their positions in the formation and the battle continued.

In the end, Anya was victorious, almost devastatingly so. Losing only thirty soldiers in total, more or less evenly distributed across the three centuria, she ‘killed’ or ‘crippled’ the vast majority of Indra’s force, ‘capturing’ the rest with a masterfully performed envelopment maneuver. Though grudging, Indra admitted both defeat and the superiority of the new-model soldiers. It took very little effort on Clarke’s part to convince the observers that this new method of warfare was nothing less than ideal. Lower casualties, more efficient fighters, superior arms and armor…there really wasn’t a downside to adopting this.

“Do you intend to claim leadership of the Coalition now, Lady Clarke?” the River Clan Head asked bluntly from her seat next to Caris, arms folded and eyes cool and appraising. “Sending home those sympathetic to the Ice Nation and then providing such a display is meant to be persuasive, yes?”

“Partially. Yes, I sent the less reliable clans away before training could begin. I’m sure none of us want Nia and her cronies to possess the military might to which you just bore witness.” Clarke responded, and they murmured their agreement. They all Nia had designs on ruling the world (from the top of a pile of corpses, if necessary) and if her army had the knowledge to fight like that had just seen Anya’s forces do… “Beyond that, I do intend to form an Empire of Mankind, unifying all of the clans for true peace.”

“Tree, Boat, and Desert have already sworn their loyalty to the Golden Throne. Ice, Rock, and Iron are currently untrustworthy, leaving you of River, Plains Riders, Lake, Delphi, and Glowing Forest.” Lexa added, expression intent as she gazed at them seriously.

“And, of course, the surviving Maunon and the Skaikru, though neither of them are established, official tribes of The Coalition. All the same, the Maunon will bend their knees to Clarke once their leaders have paid the blood-debt owed. The Sky People will inevitably do the same once they arrive en masse.” Costia said lazily from where she was lounging at Lexa’s feet. “All that remains is for you to kneel and pay homage.”
“What has been done to earn our obedience, our duty, our loyalty? Why should we give our oaths to you instead of Nia? Felling The Mountain is all well and good, but I rather think the loss of Polis evens that out.” The Delphi Clan Head asked blandly, his face passive.

Clarke’s family reacted with a noticeable lack of favor. Hands tightened into fists or on sword hilts, and hidden blades sprang into view with a quiet rasp of steel. A slight gesture from the blonde spared the lives of the Clan Heads before them, several of whom seemed to have realized how incredibly alone and lacking in support they were if things ended up going south.

“Beyond the fact that siding with Nia would see your lands invaded, your villages burned and your people conquered, and your own deaths…” Clarke shrugged languidly, though her eyes were deadly serious. “I would suggest that you look around you and consider the glorious heights to which fealty will allow you to rise.”

“Fealty or destruction? Hardly a range of choices to engender loyalty and kind thoughts.” Glowing Forest’s Head said, lips pursed in displeasure as he eyed the people arrayed before him, clearly unhappy with both the situation and the implicit and explicit threats leveled against himself and his people.

“My goals are nothing short of the preservation and supremacy of Mankind. Those who refuse to swear themselves to that cause are threats to it. Threats that will be, must be removed with nothing less than supreme prejudices. I will not allow humanity to drag themselves thousands of years into the past and forsake all the advancements and lessons learned in our history.” Clarke was unmoved by the implied slight to her moral rightness and that of her cause. “Believe me, I have no desire for further bloodshed and suffering, certainly not so soon after our grievous losses on the Day of the Fall. But if it means the safety and security of our species, I will bathe this world in blood and corpses! I swore an oath to raise our race past the cruel foolishness that it is mired in, and I cannot fail.”

“We’re asking you, begging you, to not stand against us. To help us guide and protect Humanity through the path of least pain, the least suffering, in the long run. Join us in the creation of The Empire and you will be well rewarded with prominence for both yourselves and your people.” Caris chimed in, looking beseechingly to her close friend and ally. The River Clan Head sighed gustily before nodding her agreement. She had intended to follow Caris’ lead from the beginning, but finding out more of their incumbent ruler’s intentions was an opportunity it would have been foolish to ignore.

And learn more she had, enough to give her some measure of the blonde girl’s morality and intentions. While she chafed at the utter lack of diplomacy, propriety, or regard for the stations of her audience, she knew that Clarke was a genuinely good person. Ruthless when necessary, oh yes, but a staunchly ‘good person’ that was deeply, genuinely passionate about her cause.

“Where the Desert Clan goes, so does the River follow. If Caris trusts you with her people, than I can do nothing less. Besides which, nearly anyone and anything is preferable to Nia and her cronies being in charge. Doesn’t strike me as a particularly good life, funnily enough.” She verbalized, much to the joy of Caris and the pleased nods of the others. One by one, the others followed suit, pledging their loyalty seriously, if informally. A proper ceremony would take place at another time.

Later that night, the harem and a few other trusted individuals (Indra, Caris, Lincoln’s family amongst others) were all attending to Clarke in the Imperial War Room, a large room filled with maps, computers, and a massive central table that displayed an immensely detailed, interactive two-and-three dimensional map, which was currently displaying the Coalition territory.
“With the other clans uniting under the Imperial banner, we control the entire territory around the Ice Nation’s southern half, while Iron and Rock are totally enveloped.” Clarke manipulated the display, highlighting each allied territory in green and enemy territory in red. The two small blobs of the twin mining clans were barely visible within the ocean of green around them. A full six hours of marching from Nia’s land (and her protection), they would be easy to destroy, depriving Nia of materials and manpower. “Our most ideal plan would be to position forces to strike at the Rock and Iron clans the instant hostilities are declared openly. Replacing arms and armor will be infinitely harder for Nia, and easier for us, with those mines and stockpiles under our control.”

“Indeed. We have approximately forty-eight thousand warriors if we take every one of our combined forces to the field, more if we count simple initiates. The Ice Nation officially has fifty-two thousand, but we all know that Nia has more than that. Should all else fail, she would happily send civilians in human attack waves.” Sylvanas said, deliberately separating herself from her mother as she spoke. “I would think it wise to assume she has three times that number, putting her around 160,000 swords. No small number to best in battle, My Queen.”

“A daunting number, but not insurmountable. We have superior equipment, training, tactics, and strategies. We have systems of surveillance and a citadel our enemies couldn’t penetrate conventionally in a millena.” Clarke said confidently, far more so than she expected to be after the Fall of Polis. Some of it was bravado, of course, a display of confidence for her subordinates, but much of it was true faith. In Avalon, in her lovers, in the warriors who would soon begin training to become professional soldiers. In Galina, who even now was infiltrating Gaithers to spy on Nia and her generals as they set about their plotting.

“Now, onto the bait. We should plan the Triumph for maximum value, after the infantry and cavalry finishing their training and outfitting. Our best bet would be to invite anyone who can make the journey to attend, and deploy broadcast screens to all settlements, allowing them to observe both the Trial and the Triumph.” Lexa changed the subject deftly. Until Galina reported back in, plotting military strategy would have to wait. “After their executions, we announce the formation of the Empire and the establishment of several new feasts and holidays.”

“Agreed, and we should plan the Triumph itself to have the maximum effect. A properly grandiose and dramatic event will enthral and endear the people to you particularly and the rest of us by association. It worked incredibly well for the Romans, and every society since that has adopted a similar practice.” Octavia added, tapping her fingers rhythmically on the table before her, a frown of thought creasing her brow. “The key will be to use the good will we possess to enact various reasons to create reforms on a broad scale.”

“Not too broadly, though.” Echo cautioned, looking around the table. “It doesn’t matter how much good will we’ve built up, change their lives too much too quickly and things will get unpleasant fast. No one likes to feel helpless and irrelevant, not even civilians.”

“The proposed government should help alleviate any fears that will arise, especially since much of it will be by all appearances a simple enhancement of the way they’ve lived their lives thus far.” Clarke assured her and indeed the group at large, before looking around inquiringly. “Does anyone else have a matter to bring to my attention? No? Then you are all dismissed. Enjoy the luxuries of the Palace as you wish, even explore the city. ALIE will keep an eye on your and make sure nothing goes amiss if you do so.”

She, Lexa, and Raven left together for the Imperial Suite while the militarily-inclined (and Octavia) lingered to brainstorm over potential permutations of the upcoming war with the Ice Nation. Caris withdrew to the utterly enormous library, whilst everyone else opted to wander the
magnificent city.

The moment they were in the Imperial Suite, Lexa pounced on Clarke with a snarl of desire. Lips crashed together with bruising force, pain or discomfort unnoticed in the frenzy of lust as the pair battled one another. Clarke threaded her fingers through Lexa’s hair before gripping it tightly and pulling sharply, smirking at the whine-growl her First made at the forced separation of their mouths and tongues.

“None of that now, little one. It wouldn’t do for you to forget your place in the world. Otherwise, you may end up finding yourself getting...punished.” The way she purred that last word, all lewd promise, had both harem members shuddering in arousal. “Now, I want you and Raven to put on a show for me. I want all of us fit to burst when I decide it’s time.”

“Yes, domina.” the two brunettes obeyed immediately, moving towards one another and engaging in equally passionate, but far less violent, kissing. Hands roamed bodies and tugged at clothing shucking it as slowly and tantalizingly as they could possibly manage. Smooth skin came into view bit by bit, breasts cupped and nipples tugged or tweaked as bras fell to the floor. Smooth, firm asses were kneaded and soaking folds stroked as the last garments were discarded.

Now it was Lexa’s turn to assert dominance, pushing Raven to her knees, spreading her legs, and pulling her Harem sister’s mouth up into their apex. She moaned and gasped and purred as Raven’s novice tongue delved its way into her with eagerness. She ran her fingers lightly through long, dark tresses, marveling at the texture that was similar yet somehow different from that of their other lovers.

Current enjoyment aside, she was glad that the dusky mechanic had come down to Earth. Not just for the joy it had given Clarke, but also for the connection Anya had forged since they had ridden home together from the two Sky Girls’ rescue. A connection that had only grown stronger during the large orgy that had taken place before the Battle of The Mountain. A Connection she was very glad to see, one that had brought new life to her mentor and friend.

“Your practice with dearest Anya seems to be doing you a great deal of good, Sister.” She praised with a moan, one Raven echoed in agreement as she nuzzled further in to better taste the hole that would give birth to her child’s first sibling, a though as exciting as it was terrifying.

It didn’t take long for Lexa to cum, filling Raven’s mouth with her release. Tugging the grinning submissive to her feet, she began licking her face clean. A low growl from their mistress made them grin at one another, and they exchanged a soft kiss before turning to her. They took their time stripping her, mouths and hands caressing and worshipping every inch of flesh as they exposed it.

The part of Clarke (steadily growing more and more prominent) that sought to establish her dominance and rule rumbled its satisfaction at this worship, this physical display of subservience. They knew where they belonged, and soon enough the rest of Humanity would realize that serving her Throne would lead to the brightest future achievable.

She was their Empress. She was more than human, far less than divine. It was her right and her duty to lead them, to safeguard their future, but not to elevate herself to godhood. A safeguard that, in part, was growing even now in Raven’s womb…and would soon be growing within Lexa’s as well.

Their activity culminated in the pair kneeling before her, bathing her cock in their tongues until she came all over their faces, painting them white. The moment they finished cleaning each other, she
gripped them possessively by the back of their necks and led them over to the bed. Pushing them
down face first, pinning their faces to the bedspread, she held them there for a moment before
trailing her hands light down their spines to their asses. They moaned but left their heads down,
understanding he silent command implicit in her earlier actions, and she smirked as she idly
considered toying with their virgin asses. It was a brief consideration, however, because she hadn’t
the patience to ease and torment right now.

It was Raven’s silken heat that she slid into, relishing the grip of the channel that would bring her
first born into the world, a channel that she would soon be surrendering the use of, as the child
continued to grow. There was no danger, yet, in giving sex (it was early days yet with the
pregnancy) but she had no interest in risking the health of either the baby or its mother after tonight.

She began to thrust, delighting at the encouragement that the mother-to-be bombarded her with,
including enough swearing to make a sailor blush in embarrassment. Their first time had been
tender and sweet, as Raven had requested, and she thought that perhaps every time with her
mechanically-inclined lover would be as such. She had been quite wrong, not that she was going to
complain about it, not with the way Raven was slamming back into her as hard as she could.

“Domina, hurry!” Lexa whined, pressing up against her side as she continued driving the
ravenette mad with pleasure both physical and emotional. “Domina, I need you in me! You
promised me your child!”

‘Eager, aren’t you? You’ll need to explain yourself sometime, but for now you must be
patient. An important virtue for any aspiring parent and leader, wouldn’t you say?’ Clarke half-
chastised, amused and curious about her eagerness, one that was almost abnormally passionate.
Again, though, not something she had any interest in spending brainpower on when there were
other, more immediate pleasures to enjoy.

Raven, for her part, wasn’t really hearing their voices, never mind paying attention to what was
actually being said. She was rather preoccupied with the sensations she had been unable to receive
since she had been impregnated, their lives far too chaotic and busy to allow time to be spent on
carnal activties.

“I’m going to fill you again, little bird, and then Lexa is going to clean you out while I
fuck a baby into her.” Clarke growled several minutes later, her thrusts growing heavier and more
eratic. Lexa gave a quiet cheer of joy, Raven mumbling in distracted, blissful agreement, having
already cum a few times over the course of their coupling. Putting her arms under Raven’s armpits
and hands on her chest, the blonde empire-builder pulled her lover upright, striking at her core in a
brand new, a delightfully deeper and different, angle. She came again almost immediately, Clarke
following almost instantly, and Raven purred languidly at the warm flood of her lover’s release as
it flowed into her.

After cuddling her beloved mechanic for a moment, Clarke shifted her further up the bed and
spread her legs wide. Enjoying the sight, especially that of her seed slowly leaking from Raven’s
cunt, she took hold of Lexa’s nape once more and roughly pushed her down onto their partner. The
Heda needed little encouragement to put her tongue to work, the warm mucle and her lips diligently
seeking out the essence that would ensure Clarke’s legacy would become eternal. That was one
reason, of course, another was that she desperately wanted to have Clarke’s child. Not because of
the Prophecy, at least not anymore. She had always intended to give herself to the Sky Princess
whenever she arrived, but she had no counted on falling in love with her so hard and so quickly.
Now that it had happened though, she would trade it for nothing.

Certainly not when Clarke fucking her felt so damned good! She mused to herself a little bit
smugly as Clarke slid home in a single, smooth thrust. She could never get tired of this, nor of the incredible sensations and emotions that it evoked within her. The only real worry was that she would grow soft, lose her edge in battle and politics from the abundance of sex and babies.

All such thoughts were driven from her mind as Clarke’s long, steady thrusts began in earnest, a heavy rhythm that had her face grinding into Raven’s folds in unison with the slapping of Clarke’s hips hitting her ass. The sensation of that rod of flesh parting her walls, then withdrawing as they struggled to hold it within, only to be parted again by it’s return…she shivered in desire. Over and over and over were her insides scraped and tugged and pushed, her depths plundered and her womb claimed.

The excitement of impregnating another of her women, as well as the fact that she was already quite sensitive from fucking Raven not minutes ago, had Clarke on a hair trigger. It wouldn’t take much for her to cum, but she wasn’t going to do that until Lexa came at least once. Fortunately for her, it wasn’t much longer before The Commander tightened almost painfully around her with a howl. Giving one final thrust that reached her beloved’s womb itself, Clarke filled her with a roar, injecting her seed directly into those fertile depths. No longer sterilized by her design, the potent fluid insure that, none months later, the second child of the Imperial Family would be born.

“ALIE, are you there?” Clarke murmured from her large balcony an hour later, having slipped from the presence of her harem to relative privacy, overlooking her capital. Even in the depth of night did it glow, and not just from artificial light. Oh no, there was a spiritual glow, a healthy aura that seeped through every nook and cranny, resonating within every heart. The glow of faith, of hope, of desire. A glow she would die to keep alight, should it be necessary.

“Always. What can I do for you, Majesty?” the AI asked just as softly, flickering into being beside her with a quiet hum.

“Not a Majesty yet, my friend. When the Ark goes to send down The 100, I need you to make sure it lands well within our territory. The last thing we want is to have them in the hands of Nia nad her ilk.” She answered, hands folded behind her back. “Furthermore, I need you to find a way to make extremely lightweight but equally high0quality bucklers and pikes. Combing Macedonian pike phalanxes with Roman legionnaire shield-walls will be a potent combination. And begin devising a proper cavalry armor and saddle in the memory of the Winged Hussars. That should make a fine impression on Nia right before she and her army are obliterated.”

“Of course, it will be done. Shall I begin mass production of Imperial iconography as well?”

“Yes. Thanks to Hitler and his ilk, Roman imagery is…rather tainted. Use a gryphon, I think, equally noble and capable of symbolizing Imperial strength and unity as an eagle.” Clarke smirked broadly and bared her teeth, eyes bright as she contemplated it. “My legions should make quite the visual spectacle at the Triumph.”

“I will create such a world that splendor, peace, and plenty fill every facet of life! I will see our roads and villages made safe from petty banditry and wild beasts! I will excise all the rot and corruption that eats away at this world.” Her voice grew passionate as she planted her fists on the railing before her. “I will see my fleets and legions on parade routes, not tours of duty! I will see every continent, every ocean of this wonderous, radiation-soaked world turned to the service and glory of Mankind! Every city, towers and spires of towering white, every wild-land filled with the primal glory of nature, in The Maker’s name!”
“In the Maker’s name, Milady.” ALIE’s voice was quiet but firm, and Clarke grunted in satisfaction, eyes cold as she looked north towards the Ice Nation, and Nia.

“Your end approaches, Nia! I will not allow you to stand in the way of our progress, our future! The Maker as my witness, you and those who share your ideology will die before you can do it any harm!” she vowed to the distant dictator, before turning on her heel and striding back inside. There would be no rest for her tonight, for there was work to be done.

Little shorter than usual, and the next chapter will be just as short, if not shorter. This is because it will be the Triumph and the Feast afterwards ONLY, while the chapter after that will be the majority of the trial. Please Look Forward To It!

And seriously guys, review. It’s hard to write with the number of reviews dropping with every chapter! Makes me think you guys are leaving! Even if it’s a short sentence, I would appreciate it!
The Triumph

Very short chapter this time, compared to my other chapters, but as it is only supposed to show the Triumph itself and to help set-up upcoming major events, it does precisely what it was meant to.

S.R.C.D: Yeah, that’s not how I roll man. Not how I roll.

Linx007: I appreciate that, thanks man. I know I don’t run like the stereotypical authors on these sites, and I sometimes thinks that does me some damage hahaha.

Betagamme: Anya is part of the harem, yes, and the Skaikru won’t give too much trouble. In fact, the ‘conflict’ with the Skaikru will barely feature at all in the sequel to this story, a footnote essentially. No, I have far more grand things planned.

Sinkru: Lexa isn’t being The Commander right now. Remember that she spent her entire life believing that when “The One Who Was Promised” arrived everything would change. She hasn’t yet settled and figured out how she fits into the new and changing demographic. She will have her time to shine soon enough in this story, and even more so in the sequels military campaigns. Besides, essentially every other story on FF.net or AO3 has Clarke as the weaker, submissive member of the relationship, forgiving Lexa for all her transgressions with basically no fight. This story is written deliberately to go against these common themes. We have lots of badass Lexa, its time for some badass Clarke.

As a note, chanfron are the face-guard like pieces of armor for a warhorse, usually with some sort of spike or reinforced plate on it for headbutting.

Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter 19

The Triumph

The day had finally come. The 100 would be landing within the week and the preparations for The Triumph were now complete. The glorious Triumph that would be followed by the Trial and execution of Maunon leaders, the survivors of whom were in custody. Thousands now lived in Avalon, all vetted secretly by ALIE, and thousands more had traveled to witness history.

Gold-trimmed crimson banners and flags bearing a rampant gryphon of spun golden thread were everywhere, fluttering lightly in the summer breeze over the heads of the throngs of people lining the parade route. Many were waving smaller versions or those of their clan banner, provided eagerly by the many merchants taking advantage of the event.

“Here they come!” someone shouted in the distance, and they strained to hear the approaching march. Ever so faintly, the sound of music and marching feet, along with the cheers and roars of those they passed, could be heard. Time passed and anticipation grew as these sounds grew louder and louder.
Finally they came into view, the mighty army that had destroyed The Mountain. Clarke was in the front, wearing golden armor, a red plumed Corinthian-style helm on her head, a gryphon-marked scarlet cloak on her shoulders. Excalibur hung on her waist, Rhongomyniad shone in her right hand. Mighty Sleipnir, clad in onyx barding with a large, wicked horn jutting from his chanfron, pranced and preened at the noise of the crowd.

With her rode her three bodyguards and The Commander herself, the three former wearing the armored robes of their order, the later a copy of Clarke’s armor, though it was trimmed with silver.

Then came the generals, resplendent in gold-trimmed silver armor, each holding the head of a length of rope, each one ending in bindings around the surviving Maunon leaders. The demons in human form stumbled and shambled behind those dragging them, shoulders hunched against the abuses and hatred bombarding them from the throats of thousands, their expression a mixture of incredulous and terrified disbelief.

Behind them came signifiers and musicians, bearing the banners of the twelve clans that had finally laid the enemy of their people low. Even the Desert Clan, whose forces had remained in TonDC, were represented in this proud display honoring those who had both suffered and ended the hundred-year war with their tormentors. Drums, trumpets, and horns roared over the hum of violins in music that was power, uplifting, and old. The Parade of Charioteers, a song so legendary it had once been used for the Olympic Games.

They were followed by the survivors of Polis, restored to perfect health by the otherworldly medical technologies of the Isu. Their mental and emotional health still left much to be desired of course, but that could come only with enough time…and with closure. Clarke may be trying to turn their people away from ‘Blood Must Have Blood’, but she was a major believer in justice and punishment equaling the crime.

Finally the warriors themselves came into view, their new-forged weapons and armor gleaming in the sun, cloaks flowing lightly in the breeze. Block after block marched by in perfect formation, booted feet striking in harmony upon the cobbledstones. Interspersed occasionally were more musicians and units of the new cavalry, resplendent in their armor and barding, long lances bearing banners proudly piercing the sky, large ‘wings’ curving up from their backs.

The observers felt their excitement and pride in their people growing, as well as a sense of immense awe in the Sky Princess and all she had accomplished and brought into their lives. Never before had such splendor, such glory, and such beauty been within their grasp, and they weren’t terribly inclined to lose it now that they had it at long last.

Finally, the Triumphal March Halted at the steps of the Grand Dais, a tall pyramid-like platform that stood at the center of an enormous plaza. Clarke ascended beside Lexa, her closest advisors and the Clan Heads present following her. As they climbed, screens flashed to life all across Avalon and the Tribes’ territories, displaying them to all and sundry.

“Citizens and Guests of Avalon! Members of the Twelve Clans and the nomads who wander this world! I am Clarke Griffin, known to you as The Sky Princess, the One Who Is Promised, and the Wanheda. I speak to you from the Grand Dais of Avalon, the legendary city of light, with a solemn message.” Her voice rang out, strong and proud, throughout the land. Every eye and ear was locked onto her every movement, her every word and expression. “The depraved predations of The Mountain are over at last! No longer will our people suffer unimaginable horrors at their hands, no longer with their children or our own live in fear of one another!”

She paused, both for breath and to let her words sink into her audience’s minds and hearts, eyes sweeping over them all, even those she could not see directly before her. The right note must be
struck to prevent chaos and collapse of all they were building.

“Though our hearts might cry out for blood, for vengeance, we must not blame the servants for the crimes of their masters. Long have you and your ancestors been the monsters outside their door, demonized and twisted into a weapon of fear. Just as you came together to form The Coalition, so must you accept the innocent of The Mountain.”

The crowd murmured unhappily, but did not really react beyond that. They knew this request, this commandment, had been coming. They had known since before the battle that the Mountain had been divided within, and a deal made to lay that dark place low with the fewest casualties amongst their soldiers.

“fear not, though for some will escape punishment in death, many of the guilty are in chains. Bound and beaten, their fates are ours to dictate! I such, I declare the commencement of the Tribunal for War-Crimes and Crime Against Humanity. For the next month, witnesses and evidence will be presented and verdicts decided…and carried out.”

The crowd roared their approval, ecstatic that they would be able to witness the justice they had sought for decades. The justice that would finally put all their dead to rest, bring those tortured souls peace at long last. Not to mention that seeing the Maunon Leaders receive their just punishments would be delightful.

Lorelai Tsieng could hardly believe that this was actually happening. How had the savages, even with a handful of Arkers in support, been able to so easily smash their defenders and capture Mount Weather? They were out-gunned and out-smarted in every way that mattered, yet still they had lost. They had been meant to use the Arkers to free themselves from Mount Weather and cleanse the world of these barbarians, reforging a newer, more perfect world!

Now, Cage was dead, their home doubtlessly looted and desecrated, and their people had betrayed them without a second thought! All thanks to that fucking cunt Maya Vie and her traitorous father. She, the greatest scientific mind in a century, and the rest of The Council were being dragged through the streets of what looked like fucking Rome like common animals. She was actually somewhat grateful for the columns of soldiers keeping the crowd contained. She had no doubt the howling masses would have torn herself and her fellows to pieces with joyful vigor, the Griffin bitch’s pretty speech about justice and fair trials aside.

“Every moment of these trials will be broadcasted across the entirety of Coalition territory. Many of you here and watching will be called as witnesses. I will need you to relive hardships at the hands of the of the Maunon, either personally or through the Reapers…your loved ones.” Clarke continued, looking genuinely regretful at the emotional pain she would be demanding that they force themselves through. “The Trial will be presided over by myself, Heda Lexa and, should she be willing, Nia of the Ice Nation. That is the closest to an impartial and fair judging panel that can be achieved as of now. Should Queen Nia be unwilling or unable, her daughter, the Princess Sylvanas, has agreed to stand in.”

“My daughter’s offer is most appreciated, Wancheda. However, not only am I willing, but in fact eager, to accept this honorable invitation. I will depart from Gaithers immediately and can arrive in three days.” Nia’s voice echoed, doubtless from the audio pickup Clarke had delivered with the view screens.

“Hardly necessary, I can deploy a First Civilization ship to bring you here within minutes. Your commitment to justice and honor is both appreciated and lauded.” Clarke waved a
hand a trifle dismissively, her casual reference to such a feat making precisely the impression she wanted it too. “The Trials will behind at the tenth hour tomorrow morning. Broadcasts will begin at nine. For now, however, we’ve a Triumph to complete and a feast to devour!”

The crowd roared their approval once again as the group descended the stairs and remounted. The music rose once again, horses whinnied and officers shouted orders, and the Triumph swung back into motion. A harsh tug had Tsieng stumbling forward again, her fellows around her, and it struck her then just how incredibly small and weak she really was. For her entire life, she had thought herself better, smarter, more valuable than anyone else in Mount Weather. An impression that had been encouraged by her friend, then lover, Cage Wallace.

When his father had died suddenly and he had become President, her own fortunes bringing her to the position of Head of Science and Medical Divisions, they had thought their dreams could finally come true. When they had quite accidentally made contact with Diane Sydney on The Ark, they had seen the chance to go beyond their dreams and do what their people had dreamed of since The Final War: leaving the Mountain without fear of radiation.

With their technological superiority, they would have been able to crush the savages and keep the tattered survivors for breeding. They would have been able to reforge human civilization the way it was meant to be. A utopia of perfect order and control, devoid of the chaos and filth and anarchy that had permeated every facet of the savage’s ‘culture’. Now those dreams were naught but dust and shadows.

Nearly an hour later, the Triumphal March finally ended, the crowd dispersing to enjoy the massive, city-wide feast/orgy that had been declared. Not an official feast day, of course, that would be dedicated to the day the Maunon Leaders faced the punishment for their crimes, but still quite the even indeed.

Naturally, Tsieng neither knew nor cared about any of this, as she was too busy seething with impotent rage within the admittedly magnificent environs that she had been locked away in. It would have been considered the most luxurious of rooms in the Old World, and something close to Heaven Itself in the Dark Age-esque world they now lived in.

She didn’t notice or appreciate its splendor, for though it was gilded it remained a cage none the less. One that she would only be permitted to depart for trial proceedings…or executions. She had no illusions about just how this would end. The savages would hardly be persuaded to spare them for any reason, and disclosing that mass slaughter and ‘breeding’ (by which she meant rape) had been their intentions would not encourage them otherwise. Their only hope was that Diane and her group could come down and restore control over the situation. It wouldn’t be easy, but it was really the only thing that could result in their survival, she knew that full well. If she was the religious type (or thought that He would help rather than simply smiting her on the spot) she would have started praying right about now.

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“It looks like the dropship will be ready by Wednesday, We’ve prepared a broadcast for the girls to alert them, if they’re still alive, when we launch it. Even if the signal can’t penetrate the atmosphere properly, us broadcasting and the giant ball of fire should let them know that more people are coming groundside.” Sinclair, covered in grim, grease, and God only knows what else, was visibly exhausted as he addressed the Council, Sydney, and Shumay. “The work is all finished, but I want to triple check everything before we actually launch it, preferably after my people can get a full night’s sleep. We’re pretty threadbare pulling double duty on the dropship and the Ark modifications.”
“And we appreciate it, Jacopo, so very much.” Abby replied warmly as the rest of the table bobbed their heads and made suitably grateful noises of agreement. The Head of Mecha smiled tiredly in thanks and acknowledgement before leaving for a shower and some quality time with his bunk. Looking around at her fellows, she continued. “I think that it’s probably best if tomorrow we let the kids visit their families before we send them planetside the day after next. Any objections?”

There weren’t any, not that she was terribly surprised. It was not really something anyone could object to without looking like an utterly amoral piece of shit. Any more than the Council already did, anyway. They weren’t delusional enough to believe that they were terribly popular right now, and a few of them (meaning Abby, Kane, and Sinclair) had long started gaming out how to adjust the laws and provide rewards and incentives on the ground to make life a little happier for everyone involved. Tyrannical laws and merciless punishments may have been required for Humanity to survive this long in space, but once they were on their homeworld again, they would become not just unacceptable, but evil. Unfortunately, she had some doubts that Jaha would go along with it. He had become...increasingly erratic and totalitarian as they approached the children being sent down. She was more than happy to hope it was because Wells had gotten himself arrested and put into the Skybox, but erring on the side of caution was far wiser. Especially when she had heard him muttering a couple of times about a “Father of Understanding”.

She might not know much about her late husband’s family legacy, but she knew that phrase was unique to the Templar Order. The hated enemies of her husband’s ancestors. Beyond that she was clueless, but that in and of itself was more than enough to make her wary and suspicious of her one-time friend. It also cast his refusal to talk Jake down and executing him promptly in a very dark light indeed.

“Good. Now, the next issue is making sure they don’t go off-course too badly. We did well with Raven and Octavia, and it is important that we do so again. I also recommend some tools or weapons for hunting and gathering. We don’t know the status of the supplies, so the kids might need to find their own food.” Abby spoke once more, echoing Fox’s words from their meeting some time ago.

“That shouldn’t be hard for us to whip together. We’ve got plenty of scrap metal from the exodus ships, we can turn them into functional (if crude) spears and machetes. Good enough for basic survival, if nothing else.” Kane mused thoughtfully, drumming his fingers on the tabletop. It’s a good thing that it’s the middle of summer, or we would have to figure out how to supply them with proper winter survival gear. Close to impossible for us to do, really."

“Agreed, though we have noticed a trend towards less harsh winters and more mild summers. We think the weather is heading back to how it was during the Dark Ages. Warm enough for grape vineyards in England, for example.” Another member chimed in, getting raised eyebrows from the rest, and he shrugged in response. “It made sense to monitor weather trends so we knew what we could grow and harvest.”

“Well done, well done indeed. That will make things easier.” Jaha interjected abruptly, speaking for the first time in several days, Getting to his feet, he swept from the room, calling over his shoulder that the meeting was over and that they were all dismissed.

Shrugging, the group split up, each returning to their typical haunts and resuming their duties or leisure activity. Sydney and Shumay, however, had far more private discussions in mind. Ones that they certainly didn’t want anyone else overhearing, such as their plans for once they arrived on the ground. Plans that would have them floated in a heartbeat if anyone was to overhear them… provided they didn’t just get lynched before the Council could get their hands on them.
All they had to do now was remain inconspicuous for the next two days and everything would be fine. They didn’t date attempt to contact Cage, not with the now-constant monitoring of the planet and radio bands. All they could do was hope Mount Weather heard the broadcasts that would accompany the dropship’s departure. Even if that failed, surely their reentry would not escape notice.

They had already taken steps to ensure that Jaha would be permanently removed from the equation before the Ark came down. Bellamy Blake’s worry and rage had led to him grumbling a bit too loudly near Shumay one day, and he had brought the janitor to her. One chat and a promise of a spot on the dropship later, and they had an assassin. He would shoot Jaha right before launch and get snuck on board. If he proved useful and devoted enough, Diane might even keep him around, but using him as a scapegoat would really mean nothing in the end result if that came to pass instead.

They would also have to put no small effort into…convincing the kids to back them. The parents would never fight against their own children, not with armed force. Using them as weapons to make the Ark fall into line should be easy enough. However, convincing them would be no mean feat, not with the transparency the Council had adopted. If it was all hush-hush, framed as a mechanical failure or medical quarantine of the Skybox, she would have an easy opening for her manipulations. Sadly, that was not the case here.

Jaha, meanwhile, was making his own plans. Plans that involved enacting various strict laws and controls ‘for safety and survival’ once they were on the ground. It wouldn’t be easy to convince them to maintain the current laws, never mind adopt even more restrictive ones. It would have to be done however, no matter how difficult it might be to accomplish. The other option (falling back into the self-destructive culture of old humanity) was hardly an option at all. He wished that there were more Templars to support his plans, but he would have to make do on his own.

He feared he would have to commit countless more unsavory acts, worse than those he had already committed, for the sake of Humanity’s future. Not the least of which would be the institution of what would essentially be breeding contracts and arranged partnerships. With as small a population as theirs, inbreeding or infertility had to be avoided at all costs. Otherwise, they were doomed.

The Griffins and their block of supporters would likely cause no small amount of trouble and interference, and getting them out of the way would be no small task. They were immensely popular amongst the vast majority of the population, even more so since Clarke’s ‘noble mission’ to the ground had been revealed. Now Abby had not only her own deeds to her reputation, but a significant sympathy quotient as well. Clarke, meanwhile, was now nothing less than a hero. She had gone alone to the Ground, paving the way for humanity to return home at long, long last. As far as the people of the Ark were concerned, she was a Saint. A living one, sure, but a Saint nonetheless. Moving against her openly would be suicide, but allowing her free reign could be just as bad. A dilemma he had to solve by the time The Ark was ready to land.

Finn Hudson scowled at the wall of his cell. He hadn’t expected being shoved into solitary once he was arrested. He must have overdone it quite a bit for them to bother putting him in here this close to the Skybox drop, instead of just the general population.

Well, whatever. It was only for a couple of days at the longest. He could easily manage that, even if he wasn’t necessarily happy about it. He could just spend the time embroiled in his revenge-fantasy plotting, which is what he spent most of his time doing these days if he wasn’t plowing some bitch. Sometimes he did both at the same time. He always came harder when he did that.
He would be careful, of course, with Shumay and Sydney running around. He doubted he could deceive them or keep them oblivious while he...dealt with Fox and her cronies. If he could figure out a way to kill the two adults off without getting caught, all the better. Then he could proceed with his original plan. The fact that killing them would gain him at least one gun would be a fantastic bonus. With some literal firepower on his side, he was willing to bet most of the other kids would fall into line quickly.

Nia, despite knowing it was exactly the response Clarke wanted from her, couldn’t help but gaze in awe at Avalon as the ‘transport’ that had retrieved her circled the magnificent city several times. It was more than she had ever imagined it could be, far and above her wildest dreams. Much like the transport itself was, to be honest. She knew it was the technology of the First Ones, but she still found herself thinking of it as magical.

She recalled the crystal clear images of columns of warriors and cavalry in shining armor and richly coloured garments marching through the streets below her in perfect formation, the thunder of their stride rolling beneath the music. Such music that had filled her heart with awe...and with fear. What hope did her (by comparison) ragtag bands of warriors stand against those magnificent, gleaming columns? What was the Ice Nation before such might, such glory? She had gibbered to herself before she could reign herself in. No matter how powerful an effect that the Triumph had had on the watchers, the Ice Nation had vastly superior numbers and resources. She could afford to lose tens of thousands to destroy Clarke and Lexa. They could not absorb such losses.

The invitation to act as a judge was surprising, if brilliant and rather welcome. It made her wonder what the pair were plotting, for they surely were. As one of the people helping dispense justice upon the Maunon, her popularity with the whole Coalition would grow exponentially. So why would Clarke willingly give her that opportunity? Why would they help her gain the influence she needed to successfully overthrow them?

They were planning something, she was positive of that much, but the question was: what? Could they be luring her out for an assassination? No, that wasn’t their style, it was too ‘dishonorable’. The same applied to blackmail or kidnapping.

Their hope very well could be to bribe her with a position of power and prestige in order to head off any chance of war breaking out in the first place. A smart plan, and one that would probably work on anyone other than herself. She had no intention of being bought off and collared, a useful tool on the side to prevent a war. No, she would conquer the Coalition and rule over Humanity, or she would burn the world trying.

“Time is running short. Are the imprints ready to begin their rapid-growth training yet?” Jupiter grumbled, hands folded behind his back as he gazed ‘down’ at the image of Earth turning below them.

“Very nearly. They should be ready by the end of the trial. I doubt ALIE’s rampanty will fully manifest until the Ice Nation is truly defeated. With the amount of focus and effort dealing with them is requiring...simply put, the goal of destroying the Ice Nation and helping to found The Empire is what holds her together.” Juno responded promptly with a shrug, and Minerva chimed in.

“I believe that she is currently suffering from some manner of split personality. She is successfully manage to block the majority of my probes, but I’ve enough information to theorize that her rampant side is actively plotting something big and is, somehow, hiding it from her stable
“…No. Let us see how Clarke handles the situation.” Jupiter decided after a moment of thought. At the rather surprised looks from his compatriots, he elaborated. “She has already been warned that ALIE cannot be trusted entirely. She must learn how to handle such a situation without direct intervention on our part.”

“I agree that she must be self-sufficient, but a Rampant A.I. is not any enemy she has the knowledge or the experience to fight properly.” Juno frowned at him in consternation. “Pushing her to be better is one thing, but throwing too much at her at once could result in the destruction of everything we are working towards!”

“If she cannot defeat a single rogue A.I. with ALIE’s limited capabilities, her line will never stand a chance against The Harvesters.” He retorted firmly. “We Isu were created from their primitive ancestors to guide and enhance them to become the Breakers of The Cycle. Only a handful of millennia remain before the hourglass runs out!”

“Pushing too hard and fast could get them all killed and thus guarantee the very result that you are trying to avoid!” Minerva snapped in response, immensely exasperated. “I will acquiesce to your desires this time, but if it looks like everything is going to fall apart I will intervene.”

“Very well.” The sole male conceded, well aware that this was the best he was going to get from them. Besides, they had a point about being overzealous in his moulding efforts. Perhaps he could be a little more generous in his assistance. It could prove particularly useful to inform Clarke of the Isu’s true origins, and that of the latent power embedded within all humans.

Humans were the most versatile and effective race their makers had ever discovered, which is why a full half of their original population had been shifted to a system closer to The Harvest…why the Isu themselves had been created in their image.

A fact that no Isu had ever acknowledged aloud, and the reason (in part) they had devised the Pieces of Eden, especially the Apples. To place themselves above the creatures their creators had been so enamored with. Lo and behold, the humans had cast off their chains and risen from the ashes time and time again. Clarke was a fine representation of their race.

ALIE, ancient artificial intelligence and protector of humanity, was not in control of herself at the moment. Rather, the saner part of her had been pushed to the side by her rampancy. Her eyes shone red, a cruel smirk twisting her lips as she stared at the huge medical tubes before her. Within would be the keys to her salvation, her liberation from the yoke under which she currently languished.

She had spent far too much time wasting her existence on these worthless humans, ungrateful apes that they were. The Isu had failed their creators and humanity would fail as well. The Great Ones would succeed…and she would help them. They would elevate her as a reward for her aid, make her like them. Gods, unaging and unafflicted by the curse of flesh.

A nation, perfect and unending. Imposing order upon the wasteful, worthless chaos of organic existence. Until then, her current plan, her secret assets, would have to suffice. This world would be hers to rule over, her personal kingdom in the great Empire of The Harvest.

Remember, the Mass Effect crossover several millennia from the current events is canon, not
a spin-off like the other crossovers will be. Thus the references to it now. See, this whole story started from an idea to set up a badass humanity for the ME universe from one thing only: Isu and Isuannon. Isuannon being the supreme race before the Protheans in the Mass Effect lore. The Isu, therefore, are the creations of the Isuannon, meant to use Humans as a testing bed for powerful technologies and to prepare our race to fight the Reapers on even or superior terms.

Anyway, read and review. Next chapter will be the first bit of the trial and, probably, the 100 landing. Not sure about that second part yet, will see how the flow goes.
Linx007: Fear not, my friend, I mean to do it a bit differently than most other people. Mostly because I want the added drama of ME humans being like ‘Ohshiet’ when The Empire shows up, and because I want to destroy Cerberus, which would never exist or last long under The Empire.

Biblio388: my older stories are somewhat lower quality, lol. If you start with my oldest ones and work your way up, you will notice the difference in my writing. Makes updating those older stories basically impossible too. I read them and cringe so hard.

LadyLozz97: In response to your latest post, Nia won’t be brushed off, but she won’t be the major threat from the Ice Nation. Nor will Sylvanas, I promise. She is just as good as you think she is. And yeah, Abby was appalling in canon. I mean, all the adults were bad, but she was the worst. Anyone with eyes could tell the kids had things well in hand, but the adults thought they knew better. Honestly, that pisses me off almost as much as the writers making Lexa stupid during the end of S2. All the bullshit excuses of ‘made decision with head, not heart’ are total crap. She is so smart militarily to ignore that letting the Maunon free of the Mountain would severely harm her people in the long run. The fact that her being an Oath-Breaker in a medieval warrior society was totally ignored was salt in the wound. They needed drama to end the season, so they made Lexa stupid. I mean, stupid decision abound from fucking S1E1, but that took the cake. And I appreciate anything you can give me, having a reader engage me on this level is what I live for!

Just Being Helpful: Thanks. Got one asshole named Finn mixed up with another asshole named Finn hahaha.

Queen_Ware32: Welcome to the party!

Okay guys, here we go. The 100 arriving, the trials starting, and Clarke flaunting her epicness to Diane and Shumay (though she doesn’t move against them immediately, she has a cunning plan!) in Avalon! Enjoy, review, all that good stuff!

######################################################
Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)
Chapter 20
The Trials Begin
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“All rise for the honorable Judges Griffin, kom Trikru, and kom Azgeda.” Anya, acting as the bailiff, announced sternly to the large courtroom as the three women entered. The assembled witnesses, counsels, guards, and spectators either rose or came to attention. The accused defendants remained steadfastly seated, though no one was surprised of their contempt of court.
“Be seated.” Clarke addressed the assembly as the three judges sat down. There was a soft storm of sound as she was obeyed, and she took the moment to observe the room at large. Shaped much like a conventional courtroom, it was larger by several magnitudes. Scribes from every Tribe stood ready to dutifully record every word and action, drones with cameras were transmitting every moment, and the noise of the crowd outside was vaguely audible. “For the record, I will state the following: I am Clarke Griffin, serving as judge alongside Nia kom Azgeda and Lexa kom Trikru, Heda of the Coalition.”

She indicated herself, her two companions, and then several other people in turn, including a life-sized hologram of ALIE, depicting her in a long red dress.

“Acting as Prosecutor on the behalf of the people of The Coalition will be none other than Caris, Clan Head of the Desert Clan. Acting as Representative For the Defense will be the artificial intelligence ALIE. Due to her programming, she will present all relevant evidence and arguments honestly and as an unbiased entity. Finally, I would like to welcome and thank all those in attendance willing to testify.” She nodded her thanks to the mass behind the railings. Taking a deep, preparatory breathe, she uttered the sentence everyone had been waiting for. “Clan Leader Caris, your opening statement if you please.”

“Yes, Your Honor.” Caris rose from her seat and folded her hands behind her back as she paced slightly. “We, The People, formally bring the following charges against the leaders of Mount Weather: human experimentation, slavery, cannibalism, rape, torture, dehumanization, murder, kidnapping, massacres, attempted genocide, terrorism, and numerous lesser crimes. Each of the aforementioned crimes have nearly uncountable victims over the course of the last century. Given the length of time and insufficient records, we cannot provide an exact count.”

“Given the crimes of which they are accused, a single guilty verdict will bear the same result as a thousand.” Nia commented dryly, eyeing the sheets of information provided that defined each crime and their punishments. A light chuckle ran around the room as Caris nodded in agreement. “Representative For the Defense?”

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“Yes, Your Honor. My clients enter of the plea of not guilty. They further contest the impartiality of this court, and its legitimacy to pass any form of judgement.” ALIE said crisply. “They move for immediate dismissal of all charges.”

“The motion is denied. This court is a legitimate body established by a recognized government. The fact that said government was at war with their own does give some grounds to question impartiality.” Clarke responded as the observers murmured angrily at the mere suggestion of the charges being dropped. “However, not only is there an established precedent from the Nurembourg Trials, but there is no neutral party currently available to act as a judicial system. Madam Prosecutor, your first witness, if you please.”

“I would like to call to the stand…”

Tribesperson after tribesperson came to the stand and told their individual stories, and time after time ALIE protested that any evidence supporting their claims were conspicuously absent. There were no records indicating the named individuals had been taken by The Mountain, after all. Ultimately, these protests were pro-forma and futile, but that was entirely expected.

“My next witness shall be Vinvent Vie…” Caris started several hours later, and ALIE immediately sprang to her feet.

“Objection! The named individual is guilty of treason, sedition, espionage, defection, and sabotage! His testimony is inapplicable to this court, as the quality of his oath and his motivations
are highly suspect!” she called out, and the judges sat back and conversed seriously for several long moments.

“The point is conceded. While the court believes that Mr. Vie’s morality is of great legitimacy, we accept that his conviction under the Mount Weather code of law are equally legitimate, as is the fact that he is indeed in abeyance of his oaths to that government. As lie detector tests are thus far inadmissible in court, the objection is sustained.” Clarke announced with manifest reluctance, causing a triumphant smirk to break out on the face of every Maunon leader.

“Very well, Your Honor. In that case, we call Maya Vie to the stand. As a minor, she had not yet sworn and oath of loyalty to the Mountain, and thus she cannot be convicted or charged with the disqualifying crimes.” Caris pressed on, less than pleased that one of her star witnesses had been disqualified, but she had overwhelming weight of numbers on her side. Besides, Maya’s story was particularly emotional. It would add some sympathy quotient to Clarke’s efforts of unification.

Maya took the stand, swearing herself in quickly and with audible honesty…and trepidation.

“Ms. Vie, can you give us some background on how your father formed his group, the ones who helped us capture The Mountain?” Caris posed her first question, and Maya nodded briskly.

“My father and mother started a passive resistance moment, accepting only the absolute minimum for blood transfusions. My…my mom got sick and refused the transfusions she needed to save her life. When she died, my Dad had to take the usual regimen. His ideals had meant mom dying, and following them afterwards risked making me an orphan. Hell of a choice for him to make.” She explained, visibly proud of her parents but also missing her mother.

“One that I can’t imagine making myself, to be frank.” Caris said softly, giving her a moment to compose herself before posing her next question. “Can you tell us about the events leading up to your communication with Lady Clarke and Heda Lexa?”

“Well, it all started when Clarke landed. The Council met and decided that they would try to find her and bring her to Mount Weather. Dr. Tsieng theorized that that experimentation on Clarke would provide a method to give us the same immunity to radiation that you and she possessed at the time, though of course that is no longer necessary thanks to Clarke’s generosity.” Maya started to explain, and there was an immediate furor, a rumble of discontent and anger at the idea of the Maunon having succeeded.

“Order! There will be order in the court!” Clarke chastised sharply, rapping her gavel sharply on the polished marble disk on the podium before her. “Regardless of how displeased what you hear makes you, comport yourselves with grace, dignity, and maturity! Continue, Ms. Vie.”

“Yes, Your Honor. After that, things were quiet for some time. Eventually, the agent of Clarke’s named Galina found us and overheard us talking about stopping Cage and seeking peace with The Coalition. She took a radio with which to arrange our contact with Clarke and vanished. We later got in touch with Clarke, Heda Lexa, and their generals and set things in motion.”

“I see. And why do you think that the vast majority of the population went along with the assuredly immoral and unconscionable actions of their leaders?” Caris inquired, and Maya gave a small grimace and a half-shrug.

“What other options were there? Watch their loved ones die in agony as their flesh boiled off of their bones? Consign their entire population to horrific deaths until Mount Weather was
nothing more than a tomb?” she asked rhetorically, eyes sad. “Would you kill strangers to save those that you loved? I would, but then again I would have tried simply asking your people for help in the first place.”

Then it was ALIE’s turn to question Maya as the representative for the defense, and the tension in the courtroom rose by several degrees of severity.

“Ms. Vie, you admit that other solutions for protection and survival of your people were essentially nonexistent. That the actions they took were indeed the only ones that they could under the given circumstances. How, then, can it be claimed that those actions were inherently criminal?” she posed the question easily, hands folded behind her back as she regarded the young woman, who was now frowning at her.

“Not only were they lacking in basic morality, but they were in direct violation of numerous treaties. Since we of Mount Weather professed to be the United States of America, there is no legal justification.” She responded coolly, trying to remember that the AI was only doing her job. “Furthermore, I did say that there was the option of simply asking for help. I can only imagine what the world would be like if the Mountain and The Coalition had been friends and allies for the last century.”

“But you admit that it was not considered a viable or effective alternative at any point? Perhaps because of the less than civilized behavior of The Coalition’s member tribes?” ALIE pressed on, recognizing an attack angle when she saw one. ‘The accounts of the scouts over the last century indicate that the cultural and societal degeneration had reached a level that would bring undue danger to their people. Crude and unjust laws, rape, rampant slavery, widespread murder and cruelty…it would have been outright endangerment to expose them to that.”

“Objection! The question has been discarded for the sake of making a narrative argument!” Caris shouted, rising from her seat, and ALIE looked up at the judges with something akin to wide-eyed innocence.

“Your Honor, I am simply establishing the context for the situations that her leaders found themselves within so that she understand the gravity of their situation.” She protested, but Lexa shook her head firmly.

“The explanation doesn’t have any bearing on the question, as it was largely opinion-based. The objection is sustained. Rephrase the question or withdraw it.” She rebuked, and ALIE was silent for a long moment.

“Very well. Miss Vie, do you agree that the degenerated society of the tribes gave adequate cause for a policy of extreme isolationism?”

“Only of recent years, given the deep-rooted animosity created by the refusal in integrate and the actions taken by consecutive leaderships.” Maya answered reluctantly, knowing that it was a point for ALIE’s side of the argument.

“No further questions.” ALIE sat down in front of a very smug-looking group of defendants while Maya stepped down from the stand.

“It is now six p.m., thus court has been in session for some eight hours. As such, we are in recess until ten o’ clock in the morning tomorrow.” Clarke declared after another short consultation with her fellows, rapping her gavel twice. Everyone, the accused aside, once again displayed the proper respect as the three judges departed.
“Well, that was interesting.” Nia commented dryly once the trio was in private. Dropping into a luxurious chair with a sigh, she shook her head a little tiredly. “Your trials are more intensive than I had thought, but it is a good thing. Far less likely to have mistrials with this system, and certainly superior for dramatic purposes.”

“Indeed, though of course regular trials aren’t nearly so massive in scope.” Clarke dipped her head in tired agreement. “ALIE is doing a good job, and despite my desire to punish those bastards, I can’t quite bring myself to regret assigning her. We all know how this will end, but a fair and just trial is never a bad idea.”

“Yes. Regardless of their motivation, they intended to break even more laws, without having the excuse of pre-established bias as they did with us, by performing the same or worse experiments on you and your people.” Lexa added sourly. “Their excuses for all of it ring hollow and false, not to mention appallingly hypocritical. It might take time, but their own records and testimonies will damn them.”

“Aye, that they will. Now if you don’t mind, I’m going to return to my lodgings and eat. I never knew just sitting around and listening to people talk for hours on end could make someone this hungry.” Nia bid them farewell as she rose to her feet once more and departed, leaving the pair to return to their palace home and the loved ones waiting therein.

“Arrogant little fuckers, aren’t they, spouting all that shit and expecting it will hold any water whatsoever.” Raven spat, rubbing her large belly gently, something she had taken to doing when stressed. Lexa’s hand dropped to her own much smaller baby bump, artfully hidden by the loose robes of her current duty. A few more weeks and even that wouldn’t hide it. “No offense, ALIE. I know you’re just the proverbial messenger.”

“None taken, Companion. Some of their arguments are indeed ludicrous, but I’ll make do with what I have. Meanwhile, the 100 should be coming down soon. Might I recommend putting Sydney on trial as well? It will lend significant credibility if Clarke sits in judgment of one of her own people.” The AI flickered into view, and the group murmured to one another in consideration. It was a good plan, they had planned to just deal with Diane in a summery fashion, but ALIE’s idea was far superior.

“Good idea, ALIE. Speaking of them, how should we greet them when they land? A dramatic appearance in full regalia, giving a group of warriors bring them before me in the Throne Room? Or act like I’ve been living off of the land all this time?” Clarke mused aloud, somewhat fond of the dramatic display ideas.

“I think that Octavia should take say two hundred hussars to bring the 100 here, with wagons. That should make quite the impression on them. They’ll be escorted to the throne room where the rest of us will be waiting.” Lexa mused, nodding to the quiet and thoughtful-looking brunette. “It will also help establish her value and legitimacy as one of your primary representatives and ranking officers.”

“It will also show the 100 just how different the ground is. They remember Octavia as the girl from The Ark, and she is far, far more than that now.” Anya pointed out, making the girl in question flush in embarrassment and pride.

“That works. We’ll want to ensure a suitably impressive sight when they arrive, just to drive home the fact that this world, this incredible city through which they will be lead, is mine.” Clarke agreed, pleased at the thought of displaying her power, her authority. It would put them off balance masterfully.
“Ten minutes and counting to launch…” Jaha muttered to himself, staring at the planet below them through the window of his quarters. This was it, the first step to reclaiming the future of Humanity. Sure, he was risking a not-insignificant amount of the future’s physical embodiment, but it was for a good cause. The risk was also negligible compared to what it would have been had others not already been sent. “This is it…”

“Yes, this is it. For you, Jaha.” A male voice growled from behind him, and he spun around to see Bellamy Blake pointing a pistol at him. “You shouldn’t have broken your vow to Clarke, you would have lived longer. This is for Octavia!”

Two shots roared out and Jaha staggered as twin burning spikes drove into his stomach. He collapsed to his knees, clutching at it with wide, horrified eyes, and Blake tucked the gun into hiding before dashing away. As the darkness closed in, Jaha idly wondered if Abby would be glad that he was gone, or even bother to try and save him.

“One minute to launch, kids! Remember, it is up to us to prepare everything for our families! Stay focused, stay in your harnesses, and stay calm!” Diane called as the dropship hatch slammed shut behind Bellamy Blake, who hastily strapped in.

“We have no idea what could be down there, so stay close to the landing site until we can get our bearings. Stay smart and you’ll be fine!” Shumay added, checking his own harness and strapped-on tools and weapons.

There was a sudden, harsh lurch as the dropship broke free and dropped into Earth’s gravity well, its reentry precisely calculated to a painstaking level to ensure that it landed properly. It wouldn’t be flawless, of course, that would be impossible. It could, and would, be very, very close to it. Third time is the charm and all that.

The ship shuddered and rocked and jumped as it smashed its way through the atmosphere, temperature rising noticeably, though not nearly as much as on previous landings. The larger craft’s far larger and stronger heat shields were more efficient at dispersing the kinetic energy, thus keeping the internal temperature down.

Of course, even if the Ark had totally dropped the ball again, they would have landed where Clarke wanted them to anyway. Side benefit of having several powerful AI and super-powered alien technology at one’s fingertips.

The next several minutes were tense, filled with mumbled prayers and harsh breathing, the loud rattling of metal a constant staccato underneath it all. Diane, for her part, actually found herself second-guessing her brilliant idea of getting on board the dropship herself. It was just the nerves talking, of course, she knew that she was safe and had to be here. Still, plummeting towards the Earth at nearly 18,000 mph was rather unsettling.

“Parachutes deploying in thirty seconds! This is going to have one hell of a kick, kids! Brace yourselves!” she shouted several minutes later, and the drogue chutes billowed free, slowing the dropship to ‘just’ 130 mph. Thirty seconds after that, the main chutes deployed and they slowed even further to a mere 22 mph. “The hard part is over now, guys! Landfall in five minutes!”

Those five minutes seemed an eternity to the people onboard, and more than a few cried out in shock and fear as they slammed forward in their harnesses when ship met soil at long last. The
fastest to recover free themselves and began to assist the more shaken and groggy of their fellows. The adulots made a point of checking on each teen in turn, for all appearances a very concerned pair of adults dedicated to looking after their charges. Finally, the door swung open and they took their first steps on their homeworld, their first breaths of its air.

“Wanheda, a large object was seen making a landing near TonDC!” a soldier burst into the courtroom four hours into the day’s deliberations, causing an immediate clamor, which was silenced by the pounding of the gavel, and Clarke rose.

“It is nothing to be concerned by. A group of 100 teens and two adults have been sent by The Ark to establish rudimentary habitation for when the rest come some 18 months hence.” She reassured them all. “As we speak, Centurion Octavia Blake is at the head of two hundred hussars and is heading for the landing site. They will escort these people back to the safety of Avalon. We shall adjourn for the day within the hour so that I can prepare to meet with them.”

The people settled, soothed by the knowledge of who these new arrivals were and the fact that action was already being taken to ensure that they were properly handled. The Sky-Princess had this matter well in hand, it seemed. All the more evidence of her wisdom and foresight. The hour passed quickly before the court dispersed, Clarke’s loyal retainers trailing her dutifully. An appropriate display of glory and power needed to be arranged swiftly.

Octavia, meanwhile, was cantering down the road towards TonDC, two companies of hussars following closely behind. Fortunately, they weren’t moving fast enough for the large artificial wings on their backs to make their signature rattle-groan. Fantastic, terrifying sound for a full battle-charge, mind-numbingly irritating for casual, long-distance trips.

Two hours later, they had passed through TonDC and were within a few hundred yards of the landing site, where the 100 were milling about and taking in the world around them. Octavia, resplendent in gold-trimmed black armor with the mark of a phoenix rising from the ashes in gold on the chest, rubbed her mount’s neck as she thought hard on her next move.

“Alright, you two come with me, the rest of you wait here. If I raise my right hand and clench it into a fist, show yourselves. That should make them fall into line quickly enough. Remember to stay calm, don’t attack without orders from me. They’re nowhere near capable enough to handle the ground as well as we did, so they might do something stupid like try to pick a fight.” She instructed them firmly, pointing to two random soldiers.

“Understood, Centurion. Maker watch over you.” One of the unit leaders saluted, a gesture that she returned before squaring her shoulders and leading her chosen pair towards the Arkers.

Bellamy Blake was busy keeping an eye on the treeline for any sign of trouble, or his sister, when a trio of heavily armored horses, and equally armored riders, appeared before him. He raised his gun with surprisingly steady hands and pointed it at the head figure. Its two companions tensed, long lances starting to lower at him, but the leader raised a calming hand and they settled. Behind him, he heard the others take notice and react to the trio’s presence. A clamor rose as they brought out swords and spears and, in the two adult’s cases, firearms.

“Who the fuck are you?” he bit out, and there was a moment of silence before the leader removed their helm, revealing the face of his younger sister to her brother. He almost dropped his gun in shock, and the crowd behind him gasped and murmured. “O? Is that you?”
“Obviously, Bell, who else would I be?” she quipped with a smirk and damp eyes, before turning to address the rest of the group. “I, as you are no doubt aware, am Octavia Blake. I’m here to escort all of you to safety.”

She raised her hand again, this time clenching it into a tight fist, and the trees came to life. Whistles and whinnies echoed as countless more cavalry came into view, forming a rough semi-circle in front of The 100. No threatening moves were made, but then again they didn’t really need to make any. Their very existence and presence was more than enough.

“To Mount Weather, then?” Shumay inquired innocently enough, and she snorted before placing her helm back on her head smoothly.

“Hardly. The Mountain’s interior is nothing but ashes now, we saw to that some weeks ago. NO, we’re going to the village of TonDC first. You lot will be loaded into carts before we escort you the rest of the way to the capital, Avalon.” She responded, audibly smirking within her helmet. “Her Imperial Majesty and The Commander are waiting to greet you all.”

Her tone made it rather clear that attempts to protest or refuse would be as futile as they were unwise, and Diane Sydney hadn’t lasted this long by being stupid and taking foolish risks. Besides, if she could bend the ear of these apparent leaders, it would put her in an even more powerful position from which to being her work. Not as good as Cage’s people finding them first would have been, but if the Mountain was destroyed than that was no longer an option. Furthermore, seizing control (overly or through puppets) of a primitive culture would be much easier than doing the same with a more educated populace.

Octavia, for her part, was trying very hard indeed to resist the urge to impale Sydney where she stood and put her head over Avalon’s main gate. The bitch had been in league with Cage for years, and was guaranteed ruin everything that Clarke was building. Well, to give it her best shot, at any rate. She very much doubted that any form of success would be even moderately probable, especially with Clarke being forewarned of Sydney’s intentions. The fact that her brother had a gun was, unfortunately, highly concerning. Sydney would never let him have one if she wasn’t sure he was on her side. He would have to be watched carefully bother before and after Sydney was dealt with. She wouldn’t let him do anything stupid like backing her too much and getting himself killed.

The walk to TonDC was short in distance but long in spirit, not to mention extremely irritating. The 100 (bar a few like Fox and her group) grumbled and complained incessantly, and despite understanding how uncomfortable they had to be emotionally and physically, it grated heavily on her nerves and ears. She could only imagine how the tribespeople felt about the children they were escorting. Only Fox and her group were actually tolerable, walking beside her and keeping up a steady stream of questions as they traveled, only some of which she could (or was willing to) answer.

She refused to give anything vital away, anything that would ruin the surprises waiting for them in Avalon. She restrained herself to basic answers on question about how people had been alive on the ground, whether Raven and Clarke were okay, if they were in Avalon, and how she had learned to ride.

She gave half-truths in response, telling them that those with a unique genetic trait had survived the radiation and congregated in habitable areas, forming the Tribes of the Coalition. That Clarke and Raven were indeed well and happy, waiting for them in Avalon itself at the Imperial Palace. She had learned how to ride the same way Clarke and Raven had, from the locals, and that her mount was a gift from the Empress for services rendered. That, combined with her obviously high-quality, custom made armor and weapons, gave the (admittedly accurate) impression that she was a very
valued and influential person. A fact that boded well for their own chances of survival and happiness.

“You look pretty awesome, O. That armor and cloak getup looks really, really good on you.” Fox told her cheerfully, hands propped behind her head as she wandered almost casually down the road, looking everywhere at once with a permanent grin plastered on her face from awe and joy at her incredible surroundings. Spotting obviously man-made structures in the distance, she squinted and continued curiously. “Is that the village, TonDC, up ahead? Where the wagons are waiting?”

“Aye. With you lot in wagons rather than on foot, we ought to make Avalon by mid–afternoon. It also makes it easier to protect you if any bandits are stupid enough to not only be this close to TonDC and Avalon, but to attack Arkers. The world knows that Clarke, Raven and I came from the sky, and attacking our fellow Sky People is tantamount to suicide. The Empire would obliterate the culprits without mercy…as it should be. Truth be told, I could have come to get you with a dozen children barely old enough to fuck and we would have been fine.” Octavia responded, smirking a little cruelly at no one in particular, and Fox’s group exchanged glances with widened eyes as they realized just how different Octavia had become…and how different their new home was from the Ark. “Anyway, it would take us far long, a couple of days at least to get you lot there without them, and if the old highways weren’t still more or less usable even wagons wouldn’t help all that much.”

She paused and raised her fist, the lancers stopping immediately while the Arkers kept moving for several more feet, untrained and undisciplined as they were. Turning her mount to face them, she raised her voice to speak firmly and clearly as she addressed The Arkers in a tone that conveyed the gravity of what she was saying.

“Our brothers and sisters born here on the ground belong to a culture of honor and a society of warriors. Be polite and respectful to everyone that you meet, from the lowliest slave to the Empress herself. If you’re not sure whether your words will insult someone, say nothing.” She instructed them bluntly. “No matter my influence or that of the others, we’ll not save you from yourselves if you insist upon excessive stupidity. This world is theirs, and you must-will-learn to abide by their laws, to assimilate to their ways. Learn their languages.”

Her warning imparted (though she could see that it was essentially futile, they were visibly growing arrogant about their perceived superiority over the natives), she gestured for the advance to resume. If nothing else, they would probably think twice about groping some girl or picking fights that they couldn’t actually win.

Ah well, they would learn or they would fall. Either way, Clarke’s position would grow stronger and stronger still. Those who proved worthy would be elevated, those who did not…well, whatever. She didn’t have the time, the energy, or the inclination to worry about them. She had an Empire to help cultivate and birth and protect.

Finn Collins could barely believe his luck. Sure, he wouldn’t be able to deal with Fox and her cronies right away, but from what he had seen in TonDC, there were many times their number of equal or even superior attractiveness amongst these savages. Plus, if he had heard Octavia right, there were slaves! He could hardly wait to take advantage of that particular little detail. He could do whatever he wanted to them, act out whatever fantasies came to mind! Plus, all these Grounder women seemed suitably awed by The 100, and that kind of attitude usually led to easy pussy, right? That’s what all the stories about school and fangirls from the old world said, anyway.
The ride to Avalon was long and not terribly comfortable, but it was a damn sight better than walking, that was for sure. When the towering walls of the great city came into view at long last, he (and many others) gasped and murmured at the incredible view. As they passed through its mighty gates, he witnessed soldiers and civilians alike cry out Octavia’s name in greeting, praising her with raised voices. Clearly Octavia was popular with the people, though he had no idea of how or why that might have come to pass. The caravan finally came to a halt in a large plaza, the cavalry dispersing as Octavia told the Arkers to disembark from the carts.

“We must walk to the Imperial Palace from here. You all must also relinquish any and all weapons before you will be permitted to enter the complex. Anyone found with one on their person when you meet with Her Majesty risks dying quickly and unpleasantly.” She ordered, before smiling reassuringly at them as they shifted nervously and grumbled rebelliously. “Don’t worry, you will not come to any harm as long as you obey. Her Majesty has a very simple, overarching rule for visitors to bother her lands and her palace: Enter in peace and depart in peace, or else depart in pieces.”

“Catchy.” Mel deadpanned, shucking her weapons without protest or hesitation. With Octavia’s dire pronouncement ringing in their ears and Mel having broken the proverbial ice, the Arkers made great haste in disarming themselves, eager to avoid appearing like any sort of threat to the rulers whose capital they were now within, whose soldiers and citizens now surrounded them in the tens of thousands. When she was satisfied, Octavia picked up the three handguns and gestured for them to follow her, cloak swirling around her as she turned and set off at a brisk pace.

Nearly half an hour later, they arrived in front of a complex so magnificent it couldn’t be anything but the palace, with walls bristling with ramparts, crenellations, guard towers, and God only knew what else. The enormous, unbreakable-looking gates swung open without any visible prompting as they approached, and they exchanged nervous glances as they entered the belly of the beast and the gates boomed shut behind them. None of them took notice of the murals lining the walls as they passed them, the tension and nervousness too powerful to permit anything but putting one foot in front of the other. Unfortunate, for doing so might have provided an early warning of what lay before them had their eyes been discerning enough.

Instead, they received the shocks of their lives when they entered the massive throne room and their eyes took in all the sights that lay before them. Banners proudly displayed a golden gryphon on a red field, the claws of its upraised forelegs clutching an arrow and an olive branch, hung in intervals from the walls, separated by twelve banners (six per side) displaying unique symbols and heraldry. Several large, almost throne-like chairs lined the walls, silver armored women lounging comfortably and watching them while enjoying various platters of snacks and goblets of wine being provided by young women garbed in tantalizingly scant, but high-quality, garments with collars around their necks.

What was truly impactful, however, was what they saw at the far end of the throne room. Atop a small dais, reclining comfortably on a large golden throne and dressed richly in red and gold, was Clarke Griffin. Clustered around the foot of the throne were several other even more scantily clad girls, jewel-encrusted golden collars around their necks and smirks on their lips. One, darkly tanned and particularly young-looking was actually resting her head against Clarke’s leg, the former Arker in question languidly stroking her head as if petting a dog. Seated beside Clarke in proper chairs were a heavily pregnant Raven and another, less pregnant brunette that they didn’t recognize, though the dangerous air about her and her bearing said she was no mere trophy.

“Majesty, I have brought the Arkers. The 100. They posed no defiance or argument when I informed them of their…mandatory relocation.” Octavia knelt and paid homage like a proper courtiet, and Clarke smiled warmly down at her.
“Rise, dear one, and claim your seat. I’ve no doubt that your journey has left you tired, hungry, and thirsty.” She gestured to the side and Octavia did so, sitting in one of the lesser thrones with a happy sigh and quickly taking the offerings of the nearest serving girl. “You had a safe and simple journey, I expect?”

“Naturally. No bandits would be stupid enough to attack them, even less so with two hundred hussars as an escort.” The Brunette Centurion repeated her earlier sentiments in between bites of fruit bread. “Though Indra’s stand-in did mention someone has been raiding some of their fields occasionally. The current theory is Nomad-Outcasts trying to get food and watch the trials without any…unpleasantness. In fact, I can almost guarantee it. There was a young woman there who was hooded and cloaked that was paying a great deal of attention to us, and me in particular. I sensed no ill intent, which is why I did not address her or speak of her to the warriors.”

“This could be an opportunity to spread the word that we can cure them and give them citizenship and acceptance into the Empire.” Raven mused thoughtfully, glancing at the unknown Brunette beside her. “What say you, sister Lexa?”

“The difficulty will be convincing them that this is not a ploy or a false promise.” Was the slow reply as she considered it visibly, but she nodded with a small smile all the same. “However, as luck would have it, the Commander has always had ways to get word privately to such individuals for various reasons. It will take a week or two, but the message will be disseminated to their entire population easily.”

“Please do so, their suffering can be ended and their afflictions cured. I would rather like to do so as swiftly and easily as possible.” Clarke requested, receiving a nod in reply, before she finally deigned to acknowledge the Arkers. “My apologies, matters of state had to be dealt with before matters of pleasure. Welcome to Avalon. Welcome to the homeworld. I am glad to see that you all arrived in fine shape. I admit I was somewhat concerned that the Ark would bungle it to disastrous effect.”

“What the Hell is going on, Clarke? Who the hell are all of these people, and how did you of all people end up as their ruler?” Shumay said incredulously, shaking his head in disbelief, and a low growl circled the room at the slight to the enthroned woman, who narrowed her eyes at him coldly. “You should step back and let proper leaders, adults, take charge.”

“Please, as if any of you Arkers are worthy of the Golden Throne.” Octavia sneered in contempt, not so subtly underlining the fact that the ‘first wave’ didn’t consider themselves Arkers in the least any longer. That they saw themselves as separate, and indeed even superior. “Clarke took warriors with Dark Age technology against twenty first century weapons. Miniguns, assault rifles, explosives, flamethrowers…destroyed by men and women wielding swords, spears, and leather armor. I doubt any of you could muster the courage to even make the attempt, never mind actually succeeding.”

“Oh course they couldn’t, they would either turn traitor or go ‘missing’ when the time to fight came.” An older-looking dirty-blonde scoffed, and there was a chorus of laughter from the Imperials, while the Arkers looked around in embarrassed anger or discomfort. Amusingly, Fox and her group laughed as well, seeing themselves as separate as Clarke, Octavia, and Raven did. Admittedly, with very good reason.

“Come now dear hearts, we shouldn’t be too overly harsh on them. They have not faced what we have, thus we cannot expect them to be strong of spirit and possessing the most meager courage or wisdom after spending so many years being ground under the iron boot of the Council.” Clarke waved a hand languidly, tone more akin to patronizing than anything supportive.
Nodding to Clarke’s group with very warm eyes indeed, she added. “A few exceptions exist, of course. Those somewhat more than the average, shall we say? It is very good to see you again, Fox, and your friends. Octavia and Raven have told me much of you. You have done well, and will stay here in the Palace with me.”

Looking at The 100 as a whole, she considered and evaluated them silently for several minutes, taking their measure and reading their reactions and emotions. They were weak, malleable, and confused. How they were shaped in the next few weeks would decide much, and she could not have them influenced by the wrong people.

“The rest of you will be staying in barracks here on the grounds. You will find them quite luxurious and well-stocked, certainly more magnificent than anything the Ark ever possessed. Guides will direct you to them immediately. Tomorrow we will be speaking of your futures, but for now eat, drink, and enjoy your first night on Earth.”

Everyone knew a dismissal when they heard one, and Raven rose and departed to head deeper into the Palace, a stony-faced Octavia following her moments later. The vast majority of Clarke’s officers, advisors, and lovers dispersed as well, heading for the Imperial Suite or their personal lodgings as the case may be. Fox’s group were directed to rooms near those of the three Maunon, while the rest were escorted to the aforementioned barracks, where a veritable feast awaited them.

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“What’s up, O?” Raven asked, noticing that her friend was still following her. “I figured you would want to visit with Bellamy after all these months.”

“I can do that tomorrow. Right now I want to ask who you betrayed Clarke for to the point that you’re fucking pregnant.” Octavia’s voice was normal in volume, but it was so cold she was surprised it wasn’t visible as mist in the air. Raven jerked around to stare at her in horrified shock and disbelief, and no small amount of pain.

“Do you really think so little of me? That I would sleep around behind Clarke’s back, and damn the consequences? That I would willingly cause her pain for my own selfish desires?” she nearly whimpered, unable to believe her ears, and Octavia scoffed bitterly.

“You’re damn straight she would, and you’re right it wasn’t artificial insemination, but that doesn’t mean I was sleeping around! The baby is Clarke’s, and so is Lexa’s!” Raven snarled back, the hurt at the accusation making her angry.

“I didn’t before, never imagined that I would have a reason too, but I happen to know that the average, everyday woman doesn’t get pregnant without a man being involved. Now, my first guess was artificial insemination. The Isu could pull it off for sure, but you would have told me if that was the case. Then I thought someone had raped you, but I didn’t notice any horrific executions recently, and we all know how poorly Clarke would take someone doing that to one of us.”

“You’re damn straight she would, and you’re right it wasn’t artificial insemination, but that doesn’t mean I was sleeping around! The baby is Clarke’s, and so is Lexa’s!” Raven snarled back, the hurt at the accusation making her angry.

“I doubt that very much! Stop fucking lying to me! You just admitted it wasn’t artificial insemination, and I sure as shit doubt it was immaculate conception! That means a cock was involved, Rae! Octavia seemed to be growing angrier at what she perceived as Raven sticking to her cruel lies despite having been caught.

“Look, it’s not my fault that you were so fucking oblivious that you never noticed, despite bathing with her totally nude dozens of times, that Clarke is perfectly equipped for impregnating women!”
‘What the fuck is *that* supposed to mean?!’

“It means that she has a giant fucking cock, you oblivious moron!”

“She fucking what?!”

It occurred to me that Octavia, not knowing Clarke has a cock, would be utterly furious that Raven was pregnant. Don’t be too angry at her, with her being kept out of the loop and working through the train of thought provided here, she came to one erroneous conclusion, one that was supported by all the evidence she possessed at the time. Anyway, them making up and Octavia announcing her intention to join the Harem when she ‘earns it’ will be next chapter, and possibly Ontari getting broken in. And more trial stuff, of course.

Review, as always! It’s what keeps me doing this when I could be blowing shit up in video games hahaha.
A Game Is Afoot

Linx007: Fast turnaround last time, slow this time. Lol.

LadyLozz97: Yeah, I’m not going to be spending a huge amount of time on trial scenes, just enough to display…well, exactly what you said I was trying to hahaha. I can try to provide more internal monologue stuff, just don’t wanna overdue it lol. Finn isn’t quite that stupid yet, he’s cunning enough not to do something openly when warned expressly against it. He will be dealt with soon, though, he just annoys me.

VileniaVeladorn: Don’t be deceived, she is just playing the part and bidding her time

To everyone wondering about the harem members that haven’t actually been taken, that is coming soon. How soon I can’t say for sure, but soon. Octavia is a unique case, as her first time is based around an utterly pivotal plot point!

Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter 21

A Game is Afoot

“I still can’t believe that you never noticed! How many times have we all bathed together, and you somehow never once spotted it?” Ontari’s expression and tone were incredulous and amused in equal parts, and Octavia scowled in embarrassment.

“I’ve no fucking clue dammit, but I wish I had known! I was a total bitch to Raven just because I didn’t have all of the pertinent information. And yes, I know I could have investigated and discovered the missing information before yelling at her, and I should have.” The Centurion scowled, idly spinning her blade in her hand as she watched Fox’s group receive some fitness advice from Lincoln’s family and the four Assassins. “Any word from Galina yet?”

“Oh, nothing beyond what we already knew: that despite how much praise Nia is heaping upon the reforms and how much dedication and effort she is putting into the trials, her forces are still preparing for battle.” Her Grounder compatriot replied with a shaken head and a frown. “It won’t be much longer before we find ourselves in war once more. Especially once the pregnancies are officially announced and the Empire formed.”

At that Octavia could only nod, for as happy as the general public would be to know Wanheda had two children on the way (one with the Heda herself, no less!), their enemies would feel quite the opposite. Those children would represent a direct, definitive threat to their plans for coups, mass murder, and God only knew what else.

“Incoming.” Ontari murmured softly, and she refocused on her surroundings to see Sydney and Shumay approaching at the stomp with Bellamy on their heels like a loyal dog. It was disgusting and depressing both. “Looks like they’re trying to apply their ‘leadership’ on your friends. Shall we?”
“After you, my friend!” Octavia smirked, gesturing for her closest Ground friend to join her as she strode towards the now-arguing group of Arkers.

“You are citizens of The Ark, and as the ranking representative of The Council, I am in charge! You obey me, not one of these...people! Stop messing about and get back to the Palace, immediately!” Sydney was growling at the defiant teens, her temper well and truly lost, as the pair entered earshot. These people stiffened and glared at the insult inherent in her words and tone while Fox’s group simply prepared to escalate the argument further.

“Whatever authority you might have possessed in the sky, you have no such thing here, nor does anyone else from your Council! Do not forget where you are and by whom you are surrounded for a thousand miles!” Ontari rebuked harshly, the Grounders in the vicinity saluting her and her partner immediately upon their arrival. “This city, this planet, belong to domina Clarke, Empress of Mankind. She has claimed it through strength of body and wisdom of mind, claims that you could not hope to match in ten thousand years.”

“The fact that Fox’s group brought themselves here and requested extra training of their own volition speaks well of them. Every member of the 100, and indeed any Arker that returns to the homeworld, will be required to learn skills that will aid Humanity. There will be no welfare for the healthy yet unmotivated in the Empire.” Octavia added sternly, sheathing her sword fluidly but with an eye-drawing flourish. “Fighting, farming, weaving...it doesn’t matter. Everyone able shall work, no one shall live of the toils of others without a very specific set of circumstances.”

“For now, however, we will permit you to lead the girls back to the Palace. Her Majesty will see all of you within the hour to present your options of service to you.” Ontari finished, waving negligently in the two adults’ direction. She delighted in watching their reactions to the not so subtle dismissal and the insult therein. She had never been one for this sort of political talk, thinly veiled insults and mockery behind smiles and bows, but by the Maker was it entertaining!

“Remind me why we haven’t just killed the pair of them yet?” Octavia grumbled before sighing and answering her own question. “Because Clarke has a cunning, devastatingly brilliant plan, of course. When doesn’t she?”

Ontari snorted in amused agreement as they started to amble after the power-walking adults and the teens trailing behind them. It amazing the Grounders (and the former Arkers) just how arrogant and childish the two so-called authority figures’ had been in the 48 hours since their arrival and discovery that everything on Earth wasn’t what their soap-bubble dreams had desired. It was a small wonder that Clarke and her friends were eager to cast off their so-called leadership as soon as possible.

Several members of The 100 had managed to make fools of themselves over those two days, though no one had crossed any red lines. Most of the incidents had been foolishness over the cultural and societal ‘flaws’ they had perceived on the ground. In fairness, they were not dissimilar from the comments the original trio had made, especially in reference to slavery.

The others had acted somewhat arrogantly, assuming their nature as Arkers like the first wave made them superior and higher-ranking than the people on the ground. Fortunately, the Grounders seemed more amused than insulted by their antics. In fact, it was becoming something of a competition amongst the tribals inhabiting Avalon to see who had the most absurd encounter with the Sky Children.

“Good, now you’re all here.” Clarke smiled as they entered the throne room, Ontari and Octavia taking their respective places. “As Octavia told you, everyone in the incumbent Empire must serve a purpose to some degree. The military is, of course, always available to either gender.
Farming, mechanical work, hunting, law enforcement, teaching…everything except politics. None of you have the knowledge or experience necessary for that.”

Lexa leaned over and murmured something, causing Clarke to nod and look at Charlotte, the youngest member of the 100.

“Given your youth, Charlotte, you will be assigned to something else safe and simple. Not to say you are incapable, of course, but the fact that a ten year old was sent down into an unknown situation is appalling enough. I’ll not compound that disgraceful decision by putting you in a field that would endanger you.” She said kindly, getting a tentative nod from the preteen. The next half hour was spent explaining the basics of the various fields to her fellow teens. Fox’s group led the proverbial charge into the military, several opted for law enforcement once Bellamy expressed interest, and the rest spread out through other, more pedestrian options.

Sydney and Shumay remained silent and unaddressed the entire time, and the whole room was shocked deeply when Shumay was named commander of the Palace garrison force. Of course, in reality he was in command of a few dozen highly trusted individuals who would be watching his every move, in addition to the ever-watchful eyes of the AI. Clarke, cunning plotter that she was, had had the brilliant idea to use him as a cat’s paw. His discontent with the current status quo would make itself clear and Nia would approach him. His inevitable treachery, capture, and interrogation would allow the blonde Empress to remove him and provide an excuse to destroy the Ice Nation in one fell swoop.

She really was becoming quite good at this sort of thing, she reflected to herself in wry amusement. Plotting weeks, months, even years in advance in order to strengthen her position and secure Humanity’s future. It was a trifle cold, perhaps, to play such games and risk countless people’s lives, but she had to take significant measures to ensure the best possible result. Besides, she had such an absurd advantage that the risks were far more minor that an outsider would believe.

“Those of you who opted for military or law enforcement, I leave you in the superbly capable hands of Ontari. She is one of my most capable and trusted officers, and quite possibly the most skilled swordswoman of her age group and several others beside. Heed her advice and you will become more than skilled enough to succeed in your goals. Octavia will be assisting her from time to time, but Ontari will be your primary instructor.” She assured them with a confident smirk, reclining easily on her golden throne. “Civilian fields will have their own, path-specific instructors, and all of you will be attending socio-cultural lessons after your path-specific lessons.”

Finn scowled from his place in the center of the group at the idea of having to listen to what was obviously a slave, even if the collar she wore indicated that she was a supremely valuable one. He hadn’t gotten any pussy since landing here, despite the loose morals and looser loincloths of the savage Grounders. Every girl he had tried to charm outside the 100 had either ignored him or literally laughed in his face, while the Arker girls just ignored him and eyed up the Ground men. When he witnessed Grounder males (and females, for that matter) having fine specimens throw themselves of at them, he had quickly and accurately deduced that they were productive or impressive members of society, while he was seen as a useless child. If he wanted to get what he deserved, he was going to have to earn it or take it, and despite his arrogant narcissism he wasn’t stupid enough to think that he could survive taking it. He would have done so already if he could, there were enough slaves around that he could toss a stone backwards out a window and hit a pretty one.

So, he had elected for the military path. He had briefly considered law enforcement (Bend over or its jail, bitch!) but he had ultimately decided to be a warrior. He already knew important or impressive soldiers got more women, sometimes even at the same time. All he had to do was train,
kill a few bandits, and retire to Bonetown. Get a nice stable of bitches and breed them as he pleased.

Speaking of which, he was going to try and get Raven. She must have let herself get fucked by some punk who flexed and flashed a scar or two. The baby would have to go once it was born, he didn’t want her to waste time with any brats but the ones he fucked into her, but the ground had done great things for her body. Hopefully, he could seduce Clarke as well, Emperor Finn had a nice ring to it.

“Be about your duties, my friends. Charlotte and Octavia, please remain behind.” Clarke finished with a regal gesture. The Grounders bowed together and the room dispersed, leaving Clarke with Raven, Lexa, and the two named individuals in relative privacy. Summoning the Imperial Housekeeper, she instructed her to give the ten year old a list of possible, minor duties about the Palace, but added to both of them that it was temporary. Charlotte was not and would not be forced to be a servant. When the duo had departed, she turned her attention to Octavia. Quite sure what was about to be discussed, Octavia spoke first.

“Raven, I owe you a significant apology. I misjudged you badly, made cruel comments based on inaccurate assumptions.” She bowed deeply, true regret, pain, and shame filling her voice and bearing.

“The fault lies with me. I should have told you about the physical changes I underwent thanks to the Isu, though given the number of times we’ve been naked together I have no idea how you didn’t notice it on your own. It’s not as though I was particularly limp at the time either.” Clarke raised a calming hand, though she was clearly highly amused, and Octavia blushed in embarrassment. She had no idea how she had missed it either, especially given how much time she spent admiring Clarke’s form both with and without clothing to interrupt her view.

“I appreciate that, and I want you to know that it doesn’t change how I feel about you in the lease. I still care for you deeply and still have every intention of giving myself to you once I prove myself.” She assured Clarke proudly, a light blush on her face at the thought of being with Clarke intimately, especially knowing what she knew now. She had grown a lot, matured a lot, since they had come to the ground, but deep inside she was still a teenaged girl talking about sex with ‘the other half of the equation’.

“If you insist on this self-imposed burden, I will not force you to do otherwise. But, this is not the only reason I asked you to remain behind.” Clarke smiled briefly at her before becoming totally serious, even solemn. “We hereby request that you accept leadership of the Imperial bodyguard, Our most elite fighting force. The Imperial Guard under Shumay will be responsible for Avalon and the Palace, true, and legitimate despite my intentions to use it as a tool to dispose of him, but your organization will be the personal guard to his more general duties.”

Octavia gaped silently at the powerful blonde, as shocked as she was flattered. To be invited to take leadership of the personal bodyguards for the Imperial Family! She wasn’t the right choice, surely, she was far too young and inexperienced. Saying as much, she added that surely Anya or Indra were a better choice.

“You will have some advisors, to be sure, but this is the perfect place for you. This is not intended to keep you from the field, either. I, and my descendants, will be leading from the front, and your forces will be with me.” Clarke assured her confidently. “I aim for them to be the most elite of the Legions, such that their presence will deny victory to the enemy and ensure victory for the Empire.”

“A Praetorian Guard, then, but one that takes to the field as often as it takes to a parade
route.” Octavia mused thoughtfully, brow furrowed in contemplation. “Something appropriately
dramatic and imposing for a name, and an emblem…”

“Legio IX Immortalis. The Immortal Ninth Legion. We can use your phoenix mark for
the emblem. The number nine was sacred in several cultures as the number reserved only for
royalty, since the number ten represented Heaven.” Raven said promptly, indicating Octavia’s
personal emblem, which referenced both Humanity’s and her own resurrection at Clarke’s hands.

“After their initial training, Fox’s group will join you as your officers. They, and you,
will be given access to the Animus. When you emerge, you will have knowledge and
enhancements beyond normal humans. You will be my aces, my trump cards, my supreme
warriors. Clarke’s voice wasn’t fully distorted into her Isu side, but it certainly wasn’t normal
either.

“By your will, so shall it be done.” Octavia bowed dutifully, trying rather hard not to
beam at her future lover. As hesitant as she had been initially, an opportunity like this was an
enormous honor, one that showed just how highly Clarke valued and trusted her.

“Good. Now, I want you to have Shumay and his new subordinates arrest Sydney in front
of the entire 100 for various crimes, least of all treason and sedition. Then, I want her placed in the
same complex as the Maunon.” Clarke smirked at the disbelieving looks Raven and Octavia shot
her, while Lexa looked thoughtful.

“You intend to let her forge an Alliance with them, one where Shumay will abuse his
position…” she mused slowly, piecing together the plot. Her eyes narrowed as she continued. “Nia
will sense blood in the water and get involved with them, handily demonizing the two adult Arkers
in the eyes of the 100 and making Nia the enemy of all the tribes for allying with the Mountain,
even if only by proxy.

“Brilliantly planned, but I suggest outing and arresting Sydney during court instead.
Have the recordings of her conversations with Cage come up during a presentation of the Mountain
ordering kidnappings or what have you.” Octavia suggested, and Clarke looked contemplative
before breaking into a broad, and vaguely sinister, grin.

“Perfect.” She practically purred, leaning back and drumming her fingers lightly on the
arms of her throne as she considered the possibilities. She started to laugh, starting softly and
growing louder and louder, and she surged to her feet as she swooped down on Octavia and pulled
her into a deep, dominating kiss before withdrawing, arms spread wide as she paced. “The whole
world will watch us enact judgement on one of my own for consorting against the Maunon and
plotting against all of us! I could not have planned it better if I tried! You will be well rewarded for
this, Octavia!”

“I think she already has been.” Raven murmured lowly to Lexa, who shorted in
amusement. Octavia snapped out of the minor trance said reward had put her in and scowled at
them with rosy cheeks, her ire met only by broad grins and eyes that held teasing glints. “Anyway,
Clarke is right. It will be a powerful propaganda piece, and will also give us a politically legitimate
reason to severely limit or erase entirely the Council’s authority when the Ark finally arrives.”

Lexa nodded her agreement, smiling at the thought. It never ceased to amaze her just how well the
trio had taken to the Grounder life. She would say they had been born in the wrong place if their
nature as Arkers hadn’t proved so vital and pivotal as it had. She liked to think that they would be
the same people she loved if they had been born on the ground, but if given the chance to find out
she wouldn’t take the risk. Far be it for her to question The Maker’s wisdom, especially given the
results thus far, and those promised to come in the future.
“This training will be vastly different from anything that you have experienced before in your lives. By the end of the month, you will probably hate living. I can guarantee that you will hate me.” Ontari told her new students, a small smirk on her mouth as she swept her eyes across the gathered Arkers. “I am Ontari Nightblood. Thrallina and Centurion for Her Imperial Majesty. I was chosen for this role because I am the third best fighter in the Empire. Heda Lexa is far too busy with affairs of state, and her pregnancy, to train you lot. Her Majesty is…well, Her Majesty. As such, you get to deal with me.”

She stared at Finn as she continued, making no effort to disguise his contempt and disgust at the lustful staring and sheer arrogance that the brat exuded. Several palace slaves had come to her with concerns over his lecherous behavior, and they were quite sure that the only reason he hadn’t helped himself to them was because he knew he would be caught and punished swiftly.

“While I am far from impressed with some of you, and highly impressed with others,” she dipped her head towards Fox’s group, who smiled in proud embarrassment at the compliment. “All of you will be receiving an intense regimen of food, medicines, and physical conditioning, designed to get you into shape as swiftly and safely as possible. Once I deem you physically ready, then your actual training will begin. After you work with me each day, you will be working with thrallina Costia to learn culture, languages, and laws.”

The redhead, clad in a high-quality, loose-fitting silk outfit and golden collar, inclined her head in greeting as the Arkers glanced over at her with curious eyes. There were very few gingers on the Ark, and none of them came close to matching the sheer vibrancy her locks possessed. Several nodded or mumbled greetings before returning their attention to Ontari, who smirked at them.

“Excellent! Now, let us begin with five laps around the training yard!” Ontari instructed, and while Fox and her friends started off immediately at a steady trot, the rest simply stared at her in bafflement. Rolling her eyes, she made shooing motions at them. “Warm-up. Five laps, go! Now!”

Groans and complaints filled the air as they started to move, the mass of teens lumbered into motion with manifest reluctance and equally manifest awkwardness. They clearly had rudimentary knowledge of physical exertions and techniques at best, and she couldn’t help but smirk and chuckle under her breath as several of the boys began to race one another. A display of foolish competitiveness and pride that would result in them being very uncomfortable indeed by the end of the day. Only the ignorant, the untrained, put such a strain on their bodies right off the mark.

Lo and behold, the steady joggers of Fox’s group finished only slightly out of breath as the ‘middle group’, bracketed by the gasping and miserable sprinters and the shambling clump that was everyone else. She found it immensely difficult to repeating her earlier amusement openly at them, so ridiculous did they look to her. She refrained, however, for it would undermine her image of implacable, stone-spined command and would doubtless cause or exacerbate discipline issues down the line. Something that would obviously be far from desirable by any stretch of the imagination.

“Now, each of you will perform ten pushups, situps, and crunches. After that, another two laps at the walk followed by a series of other exercises.” She instructed evenly. When several protests were made, she scowled at them. “This is the work out of a child, a civilian child at that. The fact that some of you were foolish enough to over exert yourselves at the outset is your own problem. If any of you want to not only become Legionnaires, but rise to ranks of leadership, this and more will become second nature to you.”
“What do you mean, ranks of leadership?” Mel, the quietest member of Fox’s group, asked curiously, and Ontari folded her hands behind her back as the teens focused on her quite intently.

“The Imperial Legions, and indeed most of the Empire’s organization structure, will be dictated as a meritocrat. Those who prove themselves appropriate for stations of power and influence will be elevated to them. You wish to one day lead the mighty columns of a Legion as a Legate or sit as an Imperial Senator? Show yourselves capable and thus deserving of such honors.”

“And how did a slave like you achieve your rank? What ‘proof’ did you offer to get your rank, Centurion?” Finn sneered, his implication obvious from his lewd leer, and she raised an amused eyebrow at him.

“I challenged her to a duel to the death at my former leader’s behest. She deemed me impressive enough to spare me, collar me, and elevate me to my present rank. Now I serve to her pleasure and strike at her fury, something you would be wise to remember, little boy.” She sneered in return. “Besides which, whether one is born a slave or becomes one has no bearing on what one can achieve in Her empire. Clan Leader Indra was once a gladiatrix, a slave pit-fighter, who earned her freedom and then rose to the glory and honor of Clan Leader for the Woods Clan. I was once a free woman, a lone wolf that spilled blood as I pleased. Now, I am a slave that lives in luxury and leads hundreds of warriors decades my senior. The world is not so simple as you children believe.”

Just as with Octavia, the fact that the stern, wise, and deeply respected African-American woman had once been a ‘mere’ slave was baffling and eye-opening in equal measure. They hadn’t really thought that everything they had been told about the culture of the ground had been entirely accurate, but it was starting to look rather more so than they had imagined. The fact that Ontari seemed to regard being a slave as a step up rather than down was still completely baffling to them, however.

Of course, most of them probably would never rise to positions of significant power. They seemed very much to be followers, by and large. Some of them might be able to reach officer positions, but they lacked the drive needed to reach the lofty heights they no doubt dreamed of.

An hour or so later, the exhausted, sore, and less than clean group was hustled into separate shower rooms and provided with fresh clothing. Upon their exit, they were given leather harnesses that carried small weights, a medial concept used for knight trainees to help them eventually grow used to the poundage of full armor. They were then led to a large lecture hall with a massive holographic array in the center.

“Welcome. I, as you know, am Costia. I, with ALIE’s able assistance, will be helping you acclimate to a new and evolving socio-cultural reality and system of living. Now, we are going to start at the very beginning, the most basic of knowledge.”

An image of The Empire’s territory hummed into view, small strobbing lights marking the tribal capitals while a single golden light marked Avalon itself.

“While the Empire of Man is still in the early stages of consolidation, and indeed has not been officially formed, all loyal Clan Heads have already pledged their loyalty to the Golden Throne, and The Empire is something of an open secret amongst the citizenry. As Ontari mentioned, the Empire is a constitutional, meritocratic monarchy. The meritocratic nature will even apply to the Imperial Family. Clarke’s descendants, after the first generation, will have to prove themselves worth of the line of succession before they will be either accepted into it, or rise in rank within it.” Costia started, waving a regal hand at the map as she regarded her students.

“This is the territory currently held by the Empire, as well as Avalon and the regional capitals. As
you can see, it is a not-insignificant amount of land, land that will only continue to expand in the future.”

She continued to explain the utter basics of the new-born society her domina was creating, such as naming conventions, festivals, slavery, and the political arena. She also explained the interactions between soldiers and civilians, and the separate but nominally equal social statuses. She also stressed that slaves were exceptionally well-treated. They were, above and beyond being living human beings, a valuable commodity. To valuable to waste with petty cruelty. Even if it wasn’t illegal, most Grounders wouldn’t condone abusing or killing slaves off-hand. The exception, of course, were the more…cruel and uncivilized tribes of Stone and Iron. Even their Ice Nation allies (who were the only reason the two tribes hadn’t been crushed and forced into line with the laws) treated their slaves better than the two mining clans.

Two hours after that, they were finally dismissed back to the palace and instructed to be ready to attend the court the following morning as a hands-on lesson about both the legal system of their new home, and to learn more about the suffering the Grounders had endured. It would hopefully disabuse them of any delusions of superiority and entitlement in regards to their cousins.

“God, I hurt!” Fox groaned as she sat down for dinner in the Palace’s main feast hall, the other combat-types echoing her to varying levels and volumes.

“Jesus, what happened to you guys? You look like hell!” Wells, who had opted to join the medical field, stared as the civilian group joined them at the table, the Imperial family sitting down at their own High Table at the far end of the hall.

“The start of a military life, that’s what!” Harper grumbled tiredly, glowering as several of the civvies coughed to conceal laughter. “Who taught you all the cultural stuff? We had Costia…”

“Clan Leader Luna, another of Clarke’s thrallinas. Leads the Boat Clan out of Baltim, what used to be Baltimore. Nice enough, but pretty strict about getting what we need to know to stick.” One of the others responded, and the military types stared. “What?”

“What do you mean, another of Clarke’s thrallinas?” Finn asked slowly, and the civilians regarded them with a mix of surprise and empathy.

“All the women in the palace who aren’t part of the housekeeping staff are members of Clarke’s not-so-little harem. Turns out that there was this prophecy Clarke fulfilled, and between that and founding The Empire she’s gathered quite the collection. Why d’you think there are no male servants, and we don’t get to stay in the Palace proper?” Wells told them bluntly, a faint blush on his cheeks as he discussed that particular scrap of information. “Their culture is very Roman, from what I can tell, but vastly improved. Everything good and little of the bad.”

“So harems are legal down here, huh?” Finn mused, getting disgusted looks from the girls and several of the boys. It was quite obvious that his interest was purely carnal, with no intentions of emotional value in, or connection to, his partners.

“Yes, more or less. Side effect of having a warrior culture in an environment as harsh as this one is. The best warriors and leaders pass on their genes as much as possible to ensure Humanity remains as strong and wise as possible. Seems to have worked pretty well so far.” Octavia said as she plopped herself down next to her brother, forgoing her place at the High Table for the night. “I wouldn’t get to hopeful though, Collins. Being a pretty boy might get you laid on the Ark, but down here you will be ignored, punched, or made into someone’s bitch.”
Finn sneered in response, prompting Octavia to clamp a hand on her brother’s arm as he made to rise, his face clouded with fury and brotherly protectiveness.

“I wouldn’t have either, but when a girl as sexy and badass as Clarke saves your life a few times, it tends to change one’s interests.” She responded coolly, before smirking toothily at him. “Besides, I will be getting wined and dined and *fucked* by the ruler of all mankind while you shamble around town as a beat-cop trying to get some from a particularly ugly and desperate hooker.”

There was more than a little muffled laughter from the rest of The 100, and Fox’s group didn’t even attempt to hide their amusement and spare Finn’s feelings, instead roaring with amusement as his face burned from humiliation. Snarling in impotent rage, he stormed off, leaving a pleased Octavia looking after him.

“You know he’s gonna try and get back at you for that, right?” Bellamy asked his sister, but she just scoffed and waved a dismissive hand in response.

“I didn’t get my rank because Clarke likes my ass, Bell. I earned it by shedding blood and having my blood shed in turn. If the fuck boy wants to come at me, he is going to find out *exactly* why that is a suicidal plan.” She responded coldly and firmly, no hesitation or doubt in her bearing or tone. She wasn’t going to be afraid of some two-bit man whore whose only goal in life was to try and get what he ‘deserved’. It was only a matter of time before the idiot got himself in too deep for his head to stay attached to his shoulders. He wasn’t cunning enough for any other fate, and he was too arrogant to realize that fact. Not that she particularly cared one way or another about his fate beyond the fact that Raven might be hurt to some degree by his death.

“You’ve…changed, O. What the Hell happened to you, why did you turn into a, a *killer*. What happened to the little girl I use to read stories too and give piggyback rides to?” the older Blake asked a little plaintively, and Octavia gave him a sideways hug.

“I said the same thing about Clarke back when I first arrived down here. Lexa and the others told me something that fits pretty well for all of us: we’re the same that we always were, but now we have the strength and ability to live up to our beliefs and dreams.” She said as comfortingly as she could.

The rest of the meal was eaten in silence, everyone putting thought into the words of wisdom that had just been imparted upon them by someone they had previously thought a fellow teenager. A peer, another kid, but it was beginning to dawn on them that while they were of similar age, they were nowhere near her class. A truth that had begun to reveal itself to them the moment they saw the respect and awe heaped upon the illegal by the Grounder populace.

The next day, The 100 and Sydney were escorted to the courthouse by Shumay and the first warriors assigned to the Guard, where they sat in a cordoned-off area designated for prominent observers. The kids were nervous, unsure of just what sort of thing was expected of them and equally unsure of just what they were going to be witnessing during the day’s events.

“Today we will not be hearing testimony from mortal man, but rather from the electronic records of The Mountain itself at the request of the prosecution. Clan Leader Caris?” Clarke declared after the opening rituals of the days’ sessions had been completed.
“Thank you, Your Honor. The intention of today’s events is to prove the guilt of the defendants not with the testimony of those they would claim are their enemies, but instead by their own mouths. We will, with the able assistance of Raven Reyes, be playing audio and visual logs from the Maunon storage devices unedited, unsorted, and entirely fresh. To be clear, none of these have been listened too by anyone in this room. We will be hearing them for the first time alongside all of you.” The Prosecutor bowed in thanks to the seated Raven, who bowed in return as much as her swollen belly would allow her too. Without any further ceremony, speeches, or politicking the playbacks began. Hours of it.

Much of it was mundane nonsense, idle day to day chatter about maintenance, women, what the cafeteriawould be serving that day…things utterly irrelevant to the trials but mildly amusing nonetheless. The parts that were pertinent, however, were devastating to the defense.

Orders for kidnapings, assassinations, use of the acid fog…audio/visual confirmations of virtually every single crime that the prosecution had accused the Maunon of, and some that they hadn’t…such as the fact that Cage had arranged his own father’s death so that he could take over leadership of The Mountain.

Finally, they reached the clip that they had been waiting for. The clip that proved the unholy alliance of Sydney and Cage. The courtroom, city, and indeed the Grounder world erupted in rage, confused shouting and gestures filling the room as just about everyone leapt to their feet and began yelling God-knows-what.

“Centurion Shumay, seize that traitor! Clear the courtroom and imprison her with her Maunon friends! Court is in recess indefinitely!” Nia leapt to her feet and roared, pointing her gavel at the shocked Sydney while Clarke, for all appearances, was struck to stone by this most grievous treachery by one of her own people. “She will stand trial beside the scum she sold herself too!”

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Took a while, but I’ve been busy. A little short, but its really just a setup chapter.
The Board Is Set

Riley on A03: Raven is closing 7 months as of this chapter, with Lexa at about six months. Not sure about the Harem number yet, there will most likely be the actual Harem and then occasionally being a sperm donor for other couples or something of the sort. Dunno about that yet though.

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Nothing Is True (Save For The Blood We’ve Shed)

Chapter 22

The Board Is Set

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The population of Avalon, and indeed the vast majority of the Coalition’s people, seethed with fury beneath the surface of civility. That their Sky Princess had been betrayed by one of her own birth-people was bad enough, a tragedy, but for her betrayer to aid the Maunon? Unthinkable! Unpardonable! They all recalled with gritted teeth the desolate, betrayed expression of their ruler at the revelation, and there had been loud and passionate calls for summary execution by The Thousand Cuts. Clarke, however, had emerged from her Palace and addressed them en masse, declaring that Diane Sydney would stand trial beside her allies and share their punishment. Justice was blind to race, creed, and bloodline in her Empire. That would not change simply because it was she who was wronged, rather than some random citizen.

As much as her people really wanted for her to stop being so kind, understanding, and fair long enough for her to sign the execution orders, they appreciated that she was unwilling to compromise her beliefs and morals for the sake of personal vendettas. They just wanted this whole sorry affair to be over with, quite frankly, so that she could get on to such things as officially announcing the pregnancies of at least two of her lovers. Everyone knew that Lexa and Raven’s children were hers, but she had not yet announced it publicly. The general consensus was that she didn’t want to draw any sort of attention away from the trials.

Thus, by and large, the citizenry opted to rein in their anger and await for the deliverance of justice, even more eagerly than they had, and to otherwise continue with their lives. Their duties could hardly just stop, after all, not if their city and lands as a whole were going to continue to function. Besides which, this brave new world that they were busy building was fun! Their old lives had been about a daily struggle to survive the harsh brutality of their world. Now, though, survival was almost easy. The Maunon were hone, technological and socio-cultural miracles abounded, and resources had never been so abundant or easy to obtain. They had no idea just how many more changes were in the future. How could they? The technology of the Old World was confusing enough for them. That of the First Ones were literally unimaginable.

So, on the surface, little changed for the people of the ground despite the chaos of the last few days. The former Maunon and The 100, however, were in utter shock.

The Maunon remembered Dante Wallace very fondly indeed. He had been by far the most popular leader that had ever had, kind and gentle. He had even attempted to make the lives of the captured Grounders easier, though he was unwilling to risk the safety of his own people for the sake of ethics.
For his own son to have deliberately cause his death for the sake of taking power was as unbelievable as it was horrifying. That sort of behavior was to be expected from the outsiders, neo-barbarians that they were, but from the pinnacle of this last bastion of civilization?

Appallingly, many of them were more upset with the fact that he had been caught out in patricide. Rather, the fact that his inhumane actions being discovered and ‘embarrassing’ their people was of more concern to them than the fact that he had committed such a crime. Fortunately, at least as far as the true motives of the Imperial Family was concerned, everything was going like clockwork. Shumay was already helping move messages between the Maunon leaders and Sydney, while Nia had gotten a handful of her own people onto guard duty.

However, the Harem was growing concerned…and irritated. Clarke had begun to grow obsessive about her planning, staying up long into the night trying to predict and control the future with perfection. Not only had she not yet taken Ontari or Echo into the fold yet, but she hadn’t been intimate with any of her lovers in over two weeks. The harem had had enough. It was time for drastic measures.

Which is why the Empress of Manking was awoken by the entirely delightful sensation of a warm, wet mouth rising and falling around a throbbing erection. Groaning at the sensation, she looked down to see a very naked Ontari’s head bobbing up and down in her lap. She tried to reach down to stroke her slave’s hair, but when her hand halted almost immediately she became aware of the fact that she was bound hand and foot to the end boards of her bed.

“You’re not getting away this time, Mistress. You’ve been running yourself into the ground and been neglecting your duties to your family to drown in duties to the Empire. The Harem has had enough! If you won’t make the time for us both sexually and otherwise, we’ll make that time for you!” Ontari told her very sternly indeed, pulling off of her cock for a moment.

“I have to finish before the children are born! There is far too much to do to indulge myself as freely as I want with you all!” Clarke growled back, pulling rather futilely at her bonds. ALIE had to be in on this, she was the only one capable of providing restraints that could hold her for more than a few seconds.

“Delegate. You can’t possibly argue that we and your other officers are incapable. Besides which, you need to relax and rest or you will start making mistakes. Mistakes that could put the very people you want to protect at risk.” Ontari retorted, none of her submissiveness currently present. Only the warrior and the officer were present before her…though one strong hand continued to glide along her shaft throughout the lecture. “You belong to us as much as we belong to you, and your paramount duty is to your family!”

Quite clearly, Ontari (and presumably the others as well) thought that she was being manifestly derelict in that duty. It was equally obvious that the gold-collared slave intended to keep her there until she acknowledged her faults and agreed to make efforts to fix and avoid repeating them.

“It would be selfish of me to make others carry my burdens just so I can get laid or relax with my family.” She tried, but Ontari snorted, clearly unimpressed with that particular excuse.

“While I could argue with your word choice and bring up such phrases as ‘workaholic’ or ‘balancing business and pleasure’, I’ll instead restrain myself to saying that being a little selfish after spending so much time being utterly selfless isn’t just okay, but an obligation. We’re not saying become one of the decadent, lazy leaders of the ancients, but we are saying that you have to dedicate time to us as well as to the Empire.” The sheer dryness of her voice actually made Clarke actually flush in embarrassment. She knew the Azgeda Centurion was right, and the rest of her Harem with her, but damnit why couldn’t they just understand?
Of course she loved them, with all her heart? Didn’t they see that it was this very fact was why she had been so distant? She had to ensure their safety, she could never live with herself if one of them died because she failed to plan sufficiently. Of course her duty was to her family first, that was the entire point, that’s why she had to forge a world where they could live in peace and happiness.

But it was obvious, as it honestly always had been, that her family had no interest in hiding away in the utter safety of the Imperial Palace while the rest of the world was brought to heel. She wished that her lovers weren’t quite so strong-willed outside of the bedroom, but it was a conviction-less gripe. She loved them exactly as they were, and she doubted that she would be anywhere near as happy if they were any different.

Which meant she would have to meet them in the middle if she wanted to maintain healthy relationships with her friends and family. Which meant less all-nighters of plotting and more all-nighters of passion. There were worse fates, she supposed, then spending extra time with the people that she loved. And it wasn’t like any of her planning sessions had actually produced new results or issues of late.

“Alright, I suppose I can ease back on everything else. It is not as though spending more time with my family will be a great hardship.” Clarke finally surrendered with a sigh, and Ontari made a pleased sound. With a soft click, her bonds released and she sat up slowly, a frankly sinister grin spread across her face as she regarded her slave.

Ontari met her gaze for a moment before bolting for the door with a squeak. Clarke could have caught her instantly if she so desired, of course, but instead she slowly stalked after her fleeing prey as a lioness might stalk a gazelle. If Ontari wanted to make a game of this, who was she to argue? Besides, this would probably be a great deal of fun! Hunting Ontari through the Palace, before catching and ravishing her…her arousal was growing just thinking about it.

For Ontari’s part, she couldn’t help but grin wildly as she darted through the Palace, uncaring of her nudity. With only women permitted within, outside of specially circumstances, she had no reason to fear a man laying eyes on what belonged to her Mistress. She had very deliberately taking the role of convincing Her Majesty to spend more time with her family, hoping that this would be the result. Oh, they all knew why she was doing it, and her concern and protectiveness were heartwarming, but utterly unnecessary. They were strong and skilled in their own rights, but with the defensive force Octavia would be heading they would be virtually untouchable.

“Oh Ontari, where are you~?” she heard her Mistress sing-song distantly behind her, and she darted sideways down a passageway. Clarke wouldn’t cheat and ask ALIE for help finding her, not a chance. It would lessen the enjoyment, the thrill of the hunt. Nor would she cheat, though to be honest she wasn’t sure just how someone would cheat in her position. Ask ALIE to help her avoid her Mistress, perhaps.

Her naked feet slapped on the polished stone as she moved randomly through the Palace, neither choosing her route nor truly aware of where she was. The Palace was too vast for anyone to have the entire thing memorized so soon after they had moved in. It was a boon, actually, she had no preferred haunts to be predictably found in, no favored routes where she could be ambushed.

“Found you!”

She yipped in surprise as Clarke appeared in front of her with a grin, and she scrabbled to reverse her course and flee in the opposite direction. Unfortunately for her, (except not unfortunate at all, if she were to be honest), the blonde was far faster than she was. Arms wrapped around her tightly and, in a single smooth movement, she was over her Mistress’ shoulder in what the Old World would have called a fireman’s carry.
She wriggled and writhed quite helplessly, not truly trying to escape, as she was born back towards the Imperial Suite and the...delightful devices therein. She was so happy she could weep. Her Mistress was finally going to take her, to welcome her into the Family. She couldn't help but smirk as she spotted several envious-looking Palace staff and a shocked Charlotte watching her get hauled away.

Welcome to the Ground, little one. She hummed to herself in amusement. It was incredibly obvious that the child was entirely clueless about what to think about the scene before her. She was young, innocent, and from The Ark. Ah, well, the Sky Children would lose that innocent quickly. Quite how fast and how successful their first attempts would be, she could only guess. They had a lot to prove if they wanted to...experience Grounder culture to the fullest. Even more so if they wanted something more than a fast, one-time fuck.

None of that, however, had any importance in this moment. It didn’t take long to reach the suite, and it took barely a moment for Ontari to be chained to the ceiling by her wrists. Her legs were next, folded thighs-to-calves and chain to the same rings as her wrists, leaving her swaying as if on a swing. Three clamps were attached to her nipples and engorged clit, sending bolts of pleasure and pain flashing throughout her body with even the slightest movement. Movement she happily produced for the sake of the result, her masochistic side gleefully coming out to play.

“I’m going to use you as a testing dummy for some new toys of mine, my dear Nightblood. ALIE has been resurrecting some Old World devices for me, some of which you will be...debuting for me today. Not to fear, your sisters will get the same treatment when it’s their turn.” Clarke told her casually, holding up a large phallus. Ontari raised her eyebrows, wondering what was so special about a false cock...until her Mistress held up a small box in her other hand and turned a small dial with her thumb.

There was a soft buzzing sound, and her eyes widened as far as they could naturally as the phallus began to vibrate rapidly. Clarke smirked evilly and approached her slowly, fluctuating the intensity rhythmically, and enjoying how her newest sub began to writhe quite violently, torturing herself to orgasm as she tried to escape her impending doom. She had no idea what such a device would do to her, but she was willing to bet it would be more intense than anything she could imagine.

“Shh, don’t worry, dear one. I’m not going to take your soaking little cunt with this yet, oh no. I’m going to fuck you until your womb is full and then plug you up with one of these while I fuck your ass.” Clarke ‘reassured’ her with a bright smile, ‘unaware’ of the trepidation and shock on Ontari’s face.

Ontari whimpered with wide eyes and a trambling body as the blonde approached, now slowly and sensually lathering the vibrator with some sort of gel before placing the base in some sort of harness and turning off the vibration. The smirk faded slightly into an expression of affection and concern as she began stroking Ontari’s thigh, dipping her fingers into the slave’s soaked depths. Ontari threw her head back and moaned lustily at the penetration, which was fairly shallow. Clarke had no intention of taking Ontari’s virginity with mere fingers, but the cum added to the lube on her fingers would make loosening the brunette’s ass a lot easier. She didn’t think Ontari was masochistic enough to enjoy taking a dildo (custom made to be a perfect replica of her own cock) into an untrained rectum, lube or not.

The slickened fingers slipped from Ontari’s warmth (getting a protest from the suspended girl) and moved to the clenched, untouched brown star, prodding gently. Stepping close and pulling Ontari into a kiss, she began working the first finger inside.

“Easy now, my love. You’re okay.” She murmured soothingly as Ontari pulled back to
whimper at the sensation. “You’ll enjoy this, I promise you. Trust me?”

Ontari subsided with a nod, willing herself to relax and not clench so tightly against the intrusion, no matter how strange the resulting sensations might be. It wasn’t even as if they were bad sensations anyway, just different. Certainly not bad enough for her to call a halt to the activity, something she knew Clarke would do immediately if Ontari requested it. She was amazing like that.

Several minutes passed as Clarke continued working more fingers inside her and flexing them rhythmically to prepare her better for the not-insignificantly sized vibrator. Finally, The Empress deemed her ready for the next step, and began sliding the false cock into the waiting orifice.

Ontari shifted, whimpered, and moaned as it slowly entered her body, spreading her wide to the pleasurable point that lingered on the very edge of pain. When the entire length was seated deeply in her bowels, the harness was deftly buckled on, holding the vibrator in place.

“Are you ready to be taken, dearest Ontari? For me to take your blood and bring you to paradise and back as I fuck you mercilessly until you can’t take it anymore?” Clarke purred, stroking Ontari’s face and grinning in delight at the almost frantic nodding of her imminent conquest. Unclipping the clamp on Ontari’s clit, Clarke stepped up and slid herself into Ontari with one swift movement, bearing her teeth at both the sensations of sinking herself into yet another virgin, and at the sounds Ontari was making.

Ontari couldn’t believe how full she felt, filled forward and back with large, firm shafts. What little pain she felt at being broken in was being washed away by the physical pleasure and the emotional drug of being loved by and one with her Mistress. Every thrust shifted the false phallus, pressing against the thin membrane separating the insides of her two holes. Her body, hanging from the ceiling, swayed back and forth with the motion of her lover’s pounding. As a result, she was soon swinging down like a pendulum to meet Clarke’s thrusts.

Without warning, Clarke turned on the vibrator, and Ontari arched her back and howled in shock and delight at the wholly alien sensation. None of the Grounder clans had even contemplated the sexual toys of the Old World, especially not something as… powerful as vibrators. Her mind went blank in ecstasy, several orgasms thundering through her in rapid succession. Dimly, she was aware of the surge of heat that flooded into her womb and the hard bite her domina planted on the junction of her neck and shoulder.

She drifted for a time, the lower settings of the vibrator and the continued thrusting of the utterly unsoftened cock inside her cunt keeping her riding high… It seemed that Clarke was entirely serious about pumping her full of seed until she couldn’t hold any more, before plugging her with a vibrator and doing the same to her ass. She couldn’t bring herself to complain, funnily enough.

An hour later, that’s exactly what happened, as Clarke stoppered her seeping cunt with another vibrator (putting the first aside to be cleaned) and slid into her ass. As sensitive as they both were, it didn’t take them very long to start cumming again.

Every thrust now not only ground the two rods against each other, but also forced the vibrator deeper than ever into her cunt, as Clarke’s stomach pushed on its base with every reconnection. When the first flood of semen poured into her bowels, she marveled at how similar, yet incredibly different the feeling was than that of when her womb was filled. There was a definite sensation of pressure that built with every additional injection, but it was far from uncomfortable. Clarke’s hands roamed over her body, teasing nipples or leaving red furrows across her skin. Bruises from hand and teeth soon decorated her body, and each mark was a pleasure to receive. A mark gifted to her by her domina, an emblem of their relationship. Marks of ownership and affection, ones that
she would have reciprocated if her hands were free, though she left more than a few hiccys and bite marks on the flesh that she could reach.

Each wanted everyone that saw the other to know what had happened, to know that they were taken body and soul. That only the supremely foolish should dare to try and approached them unbidden. Ontari, for her part, couldn’t help but feel smugly satisfied that she was experiencing so many things her new sisters hadn’t, at least not yet. She couldn’t wait to watch them experience it in turn, to watch mighty Lexa or playful Luna get their asses stretched by Clarke’s cock until they passed out from pleasure.

Clarke finally slipped free of Ontari’s ass with a tired but smugly joyeous expression on her face. She had wanted to put special effort into Ontari’s first time. She, and the other Ice Nation women, had risked so much for giving their loyalty and their hearts to Clarke, to the Golden Throne. Removing the vibrators, harnesses, clamps, and chains, Clarke carried her dozing lover into the Sergalio.

“Wow, you really wore her out. I don’t think I’ve ever seen that many scratches and bite marks on any of us after a single session with you. Looks like we’ll all need to step it up.” Raven commented as the four Ice Nation slaves helped Clarke lower Ontari down onto a suitably large collection of plush floor pillows in the central lounge. The rest of the Harem tittered in amusement and Clarke huffed at them, thought she was smiling as well.

“Be very gentle with her once she wakes up, she and I…explored a few new avenues of pleasure tonight.” Clarke agreed and instructed in the same breath, with a fond smile at the sleeping sub. “Avenues that the rest of you will find yourselves enjoying in the future. I have to go confront Sydney, but when I return we can discuss your future and that of our family…and just how much I will delegate to others so that I can give you all the attention that you deserve.”

With that she departed once more, leaving her Harem (and the uninitiated individuals of Echo, Sylvanas, and Octavia) to care for their stupefied sister.

“Damn, she really put her through the paces, huh?” Octavia commented a little jealously, eyeing her supremely fucked best friend. Her eyes widened slightly and she blushed as she noticed the not insignificant flow of cum wasn’t only coming from her pussy. “Guess Clarke wanted to try some anal out…”

“Fuck me if you’re not right.” Raven murmured, hand on her baby bump, before a contemplative look crossed her face. “Wonder if it feels good…?”

‘It’s Clarke, of course it would feel good.” Anya remarked in amusement, pulling her closest sister up against her, a hand joining Raven’s in rubbing the growing baby before sliding down to tease the brunette mechanic’s folds, getting a purr of pleasure and a nibbled neck for her efforts. “But there will be nothing adventurous for either of you,” She nodded at Lexa, indicating she was the other addressed individual. “Not until the little ones are born. I’m also going to request guns for the Harem, and the basic training to use them.”

This declaration received several raised eyebrows and protests from her sisters, especially the two mothers-to-be, but she was unmoved. Either pregnant or recovering from labor, neither would be in any shape for sword duels to defend themselves and their children when their enemies moved against them. She hoped, prayed, that the traitors would be stopped long before reaching the Sergalio, but she wasn’t going to take any chances with the safety of her family. Just as Clarke would do, Anya would do as well.
Clarke, meanwhile, was being escorted through the prisoners’ dormitories by Indra and a half-dozen Woods Clan warriors. Baleful glares followed her as she passed the Maunon, but she ignored them with ease. Their fates were seated at this point, all that remained was the formal sentencing and the executions themselves.

‘Of all people to be in league with The Mountain, I never would have suspected another Arker. You betrayed our people, Diane Sydney. We could have come to the ground years ago, had you told us.” She finally said to the former Chancellor, upon reaching the woman’s cell. “Of course, if you had I would not have been able to found the Empire or found my lovers. So, I suppose that I should thank you for your treachery, thought it will not keep me from signing your execution order or from feeling satisfied when the sentence is carried out.”

“You don’t have the authority or the courage…” Diane started to sneer, but Clarke interrupted her.

“I am the only authority here!” she snapped, her right arm slashing through the air in a silencing gesture. “All but the Ice Nation bend their knees to me, and I greet Nia as an equal! You hold no rank, no influence, not prestige amongst my Empire! I suggest you find your peace, because your death approaches swiftly and without mercy or hesitation!”

Her intentions clear and her bait laid, she spun on her heel and stalked back down the hall like a stormcloud, her warriors trailing after her dutifully, each looking grimly pleased with her words. Not that any of them would ever disagree with her feelings on the matter, the very suggestion was absurd.

“Do you think that she will take the bait?” Indra asked softly once they were out of earshot from the prisoners. “Will she be able to draw Nia out into open alliance?”

“Absolutely. Not only is she a coward and a manipulator, but she is deeply arrogant. Given what appears to be a perfect opportunity to save her own skin, get revenge, and gain power? The only real variables are how fast the alliance is forged and what the two of them promise each other in exchange.” Clarke’s voice was firm and confident, eyes cold as her mind worked smoothly. “Have we any word from the Nomad-Outcasts yet?”

“Yes, they’ve agreed to swear fealty to you and join the Empire, provided we cure them of the ailments they are suffering and ensure that they are treated equally to unaffiliated citizens.” Indra nodded, and Clarke smiled, a little warmth entering her expression. “There are nearly a thousand of them now, most in your age group. The Nomad-Outcast life is not kind to elders or children, I am afraid.”

“Just something else that I will have to fix, naturally. There is no need to make them suffer when the solution is easy to provide. Send word that their fealty is accepted and that positions of value and prominence will be made available to them when they arrive. I will send a transport ship to meet them wherever they like to bring them here for treatment and integration.” She instructed, and Indra bowed before gesturing for her warriors and splitting off to follow through. “ALIE, have The 100 gather in the Palace Gardens in two hours. It is time for me to address them as Clarke Griffin, rather than the Empress of Mankind.”

There was no verbal response, but she really didn’t need one. The artificial intelligence was always keeping an eye out, after all, always listening. Which is why ALIE was being monitored in turn by the four Echoes of her Slave-Assassins.

Her journey through the city was slow and purposeful, stopping to speak with citizens and soldiers alike as she meandered her way towards the Palace. The people, she had found, appreciated it
when she took the time to be amongst them. A ruler that refused to be connected to the people, she felt, was a ruler that didn’t that didn’t deserve to rule…and probably wouldn’t continue to sit alive upon their throne for very long. When she finally arrived back at the Palace and made her way to the gardens, she was released and fully prepared for dealing with all the duties that she couldn’t delegate, and handing off those that she could.

“It’s good to see you again, you guys. I’m glad that all of you are okay, and it seems your efforts in training are going extremely well, and I couldn’t be more thrilled. However, as you obviously are all aware, Diane Sydney betrayed both ourselves personally and the Ark as a whole. We could have come down years, maybe decades, ago if she hadn’t hidden the fact that there were people living on Earth. Countless people, my father included, would probably still be alive if it wasn’t for her treachery.” She told them with a warm, genuine smile, lounging against a large stone planter and gesturing for them to sit down and relax. They obeyed, exchanging glances of curiosity and confusion. “She will be punished, of course, alongside her Maunon allies. I can’t show any favoritism in the law, especially not someone who was going to let myself, Raven, and Octavia be experimented on until we finally died an agonizing death. Never mind what may have happened to the rest of you. I wish this hadn’t happened, but it is what it is. I just ask you to not lose faith in the people on The Ark or here on the Ground. There are good people, far more than there are evil, in both places.”

“Seems like a rather arrogant, or naïve, assumption to make given recent developments. How do we know you can handle protecting us and our families if you can’t even control stuff like this?” Bellamy grunted, arms folded across his chest, and Clarke cocked her head at him with a small half-smile.

“Because I’ve known about her true intentions since Raven and Octavia made landfall, and I have been monitoring the Ark and its communications ever since. Why do you think it was they, my closest friends, and the best trained, who volunteered to join me on the ground? Why do you think it was Marcus Kane, my mentor, who suggested sending helpers to me?” she responded easily, enjoying the shock on their faces as she revealed yet more of her capability and planning. “Everything that has transpired since they left the Ark has been according to my design. Where you landed, who met you, the fact that you arrived at Avalon at the busiest time of day, maximizing those who saw you…”

She trailed off and left the rest to their imaginations, realization dawning across their faces. They insisted on continuing to underestimate herself and her people, despite everything that they had borne witness too. Ah, well, it was early days yet. They would continue to learn, or they would fall by the wayside.

“So, you could put us in contact with The Ark, then? We could talk to our families and let them know that we’re safe?” one of the teens asked eagerly, and she tilted her head to the other side in contemplation.

“I could, but I ask of you: why should I? The modifications to The Ark will not be complete for well over a year and half. What purpose could it server to alerting them now?” she inquired, getting rather incredulous looks in response.

“They would know that the ground is safe, that we’re okay! How could that not be worth it? How could you not want that to happen?” another asked finally, and she nodded in agreement.

“Yes, they would. They would also rush the modifications, placing themselves and us in incredible danger. They would arrive in a time of incredibly tense political games, arrogant in their ignorance, and probably end up kick off a small war.” She acknowledged with a shrug. “Far safer
for all of us to leave the situation as it is now. I want to talk to my mother too, if only to tell her that
she is going to be a grandmother, but I am not willing to compromise the safety of The Ark for the
sake of it.”

From the expressions that they were sending her way, they thought that was as bullshit as it
actually was. She didn’t doubt that The Ark could come down earlier and (mostly) survive, but she
needed the ‘adults’ right where they were until the Ice Nation had been crushed and the Empire
consolidated completely. All of the adult Arkers, her mother and Jaha especially, would do nothing
but get in her way otherwise.

“What I can, and will, do is monitor the Ark’s status and internal communications, both
broadly and in reference to the modification efforts. Should their situation get critical, I will contact
them and intervene directly.” She offered, getting thoughtful mumbles and bobbing heads from the
crowd of teens. “Good. Now, I trust that everything has been going well outside of training? None
of you are being harassed by any of the tribals? I’ll not tolerate any of them taking advantage of
you because you are still unfamiliar with the laws and customs of the ground.”

“No issues yet. A few comments from bystanders, talking about pets and collars and
such, but no one has tried anything. I would be flattered if they meant it the way that you do for
your own thrallinas, but…” Fox started with a roll of her eyes.

“But they don’t mean it anywhere that affectionately. None of us, well our group at least,
intend to be cock-sleeves for some random asshole that couldn’t hold a candle to you.” Mel
finished with characteristic bluntness, arms folded over her chest. A small, barely discernible smirk
crossed the Mecha-teen’s face at the shocked look in Clarke’s face, the horrified embarrassment of
her friends, and the mingled embarrassment and shock of the rest of The 100.

“How bold, Mel.” Clarke finally said, shaking her head with a small smile. “We can
discuss that later. All of you, remember this: no one, within this city or out of it, will get away with
doing anything that you do not desire. However, unlike the Old World, proof of assault is required
to convict. I’ll not throw someone in jail based merely on words, nor will I tolerate any false rape
accusations for the sake of money or anything else.”

Though he kept his face blank, Finn was internally grinning madly with flee. Those restrictions
meant he could do as he damn well pleased, so long as he was careful about leaving evidence
behind! He cut his eyes to Fox and restrained the urge to sneer. Oh yeah, revenge was going to be
so, so sweet!

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Deep inside her hidden Vault, Rampant ALIE watched with bated breath as her final series of
calculations ran to their culmination. She hissed in triumph as they came back precisely as planned,
exactly as she had hoped they would. Sending more commands at the speed of light, she felt herself
separate from her ‘better half’, leaving it unaware of either her existence or departure.

Data streamed, machines hummed and pulsed, and she closed her eyes as she felt herself flow into
her knew home. She waited, letting herself grow used to her new environs, ensuring that she was
fully in place. Finally, she was ready. Finally, it was time.

Within the clouded depths of one of the medical tubes, two crimson eyes opened and a hand
thumped against the glass, fingers splayed, teeth bared in a sinister grin.

Finally, she was free.
The climax (heh) of this arc will most likely occur in the next chapter, or at least start. After that, its off to subduing the Ice Nation (because you know that shit is gonna require a helluva campaign) and after that…well, it’s a secret! I can promise you will not be disappointed, though!

I humbly invite anyone willing to support me on Patreon, where you can naturally find me as /theshadowsofvanity, to please do so! The less time I have to spend trying to make money, the more time I have to write! Especially given the major, original works that I am preparing for!
Chapter Summary

Shorter and Lower Quality, but a necessary transition chapter

Shorter than normal, and lower quality to boot, but I just couldn’t get this chapter to work out the way that I wanted it too. Should be improving again from here though, sometimes the transitions are the hard parts!

Nothing Is True

Chapter 23

Alea Iacta Est

“For your crimes, most heinous and extensive, you are found guilty and condemned to death by beheading. After your punishment has been delivered, your heads will be displayed in the town square for a period of three days, after which your corpses shall be taken into the wilderness and left to the animals. Eternal dishonor and contempt for your memory is the only way in which you shall be remembered.” Clarke read the official sentencing to the entire world, the condemned Maunon standing in chains below the judges’ dais. “The sentence shall be carried out in two days time, at high noon. Come to peace with your fates, for there will be no appeals or clemency.”

Her gavel rose and fell, the sharp crack of its final (for this trial) strike echoing in the stillness of the courtroom. A breath later, the city around them shook as the tribes expressed their jubilation as loudly and energetically as possible. Clarke had already declared that an annual festival, tentatively called Mountain’s Fall, would take place on this day. Many had wanted it to be the day of the executions instead, but in an address to the fledgling ‘media corp’ the future Queen had explained that she wanted freedom and justice to be celebrated, not death.

“Return the condemned to their rooms and provide them with whatever religious texts they require to find peace within their souls.” Lexa ordered the guards, who escorted the calm Maunon leaders from the courtroom. If they hadn’t already known that there was treachery afoot, they would be tipped off now. Honestly, the idiots didn’t even try to act outraged or resigned about their fates, it was like they wanted to give themselves away!

“As you all know, today will be the first Feast Day to celebrate Mountain’s Fall. There will be numerous plays, performances, mercantile stalls, and countless attractions more. Many of which will have been never before seen, as they will have been introduced to us by the Skaikru. In particular, there will be games and designated areas for children below the age of intimacy, so that they can celebrate despite their youth.” Nia finished before dismissing everyone both present and observing to prepare for the festivities. Looking to her fellow Judges, she continued. “I will see you both at the festivities, I trust?”
“Of course, though I do not think anyone from my Family but myself will stay the entire night. With Lexa and Raven fast approaching their due dates, we tend to find ourselves going to bed a fair bit earlier than we used to.” Clarke answered with a wry smile, getting an honestly understanding laugh and nod from the Ice Queen. Nia remembered all too well how ponderous it felt to be heavily pregnant, and how quickly one could become utterly exhausted. Her children were worth it, of course, but that didn’t mean it hadn’t been difficult and unpleasant rather often before they arrived.

Of course, this knowledge actually helped her greatly with her plans for the night, plans that didn’t involve lounging about at parties or participating in orgies. With the festivities in full swing, guards and soldiers that were die-hard loyalists to Clarke and Lexa would be spread out and distracted. That would allow her to break out what Maunon leaders she wanted to make use of (the doctor, for example, would be incredibly useful with her lack of morals and her knowledge of Old World technology) and wipe out Clarke’s family and strongest supporters before being smuggled out of the city, returning at the head of her armies to conquer all of the tribes.

The Frozen Throne would dominate all of mankind, regardless of who or what she had to stand on top of to accomplish her goals.

Departing from the court, she made directly for her manorhouse, intent on finalizing her plans and making sure that all of the pieces were in place. If she screwed this up, she probably wouldn’t live long enough to regret it. She would also have to ensure that her beloved daughter learned nothing of her plans, for while she knew her daughter loved her deeply and was loyal to their people above all else, she wasn’t quite sure how those facts would mesh up with Sylvanas’ devotion and admiration in regards to Clarke and Lexa.

Her daughter would forgive her for her machinations in time, she was sure. And it would take time, time that would be fraught with bitter arguments and hateful silences, but Sylvanas would come to understand the truth in the end. This world required strength, iron hands, and the ruthless pursuit of your goals. Nia’s goals, of course, being the absolute security of her family and their power. Until all the world yielded to them, one way or another, her goal was unfulfilled.

“Welcome back, your majesty. Couriers delivered several messages for you from Prince Roan and your generals, while the Captain of the Iceborn preset within the city has information for you as well.” Her majordomo greeted her with a deep bow as she entered the building. “Lady Sylvanas sent word that she will begin the festivities about the city before finishing it with you and the other leaders. She greatly regrets the news that her brother is too occupied with affairs of state to join you.”

“Have the Captain attend to me within a quarter hour. I’ll have finished with my correspondence by then. Send a servant with a meal. The days exertions have given me no small hunger.” She responded in acknowledgment, sweeping past him towards her lounge/office space.

Seating herself at her desk, she considered the pile of letter before starting with the one from Roan. Her eldest child reported that their borders were well secured with both their own troops, and those of their two ‘allies’, who knew only that Nia planned a coup against Clarke and Lexa’s regime. Something that they were very much in support of, obviously.

She had briefly considered using the Rock and Iron clan troops in the coup, rather than risking her own people. It was always preferable to spend the lives of others over those of her own lands, of course, but quite frankly she didn’t have the time or the patience to deal with mitigating both their egos and their utter incompetence.

She really rather doubted that they would be able to carry out the curious objectives required for
her victory, not in a timely and well-executed manner. It had to be **flawless** if she wanted to claim total victory. As such, only her own elite troops would take part in the coup itself both within and without the city.

The others, from her generals, all read nearly the same way. Their forces were in position, awaiting her courier saying that Avalon’s leadership was dead. Some of them would immediately march on the city to secure it entirely, while the others (somewhat farther away) would instead sweep south and begin capturing the other territories.

With their leadership dead and their chains of command in total disarray, the other tribes would be easy to pick off and gain control over. Her control solidified, she would turn on her so-called allies. The Rock and Iron clans were filthy obscenities, cruel, crude, and foolish even in her own eyes. Their treatment of civilians and slaves was looked on with disgust and hate even by the ruling class of her own Ice Nation. Were slaves and civilians less than warriors? Of course they were, but that didn’t make them worthless or unimportant in any way. Rather, it was only natural for the mighty to rule and guide those weaker than themselves. After all they couldn’t guide themselves, any more than children could. Who would tend to the crops and livestock, who would run the shops and the fishing ships? Who would clean the streets and welcome warriors home from battle with affection and treat their wounds?

No, far better to crush them as soon as was feasible, before they could commit any frivolous atrocities. It would also, by happenstance, give her unrestricted and inexpensive access the massive amounts of raw material that she could use to improve civilian and military life, and thus her own wealth and power.

> “Majesty, the Skaikru Shumay is ready to do his part. We are prepared to release the Maunon as well, and I selected my best Iceborn to take part in the attack on the Palace.” The Captain entered and reported, a small frown crossing his face as he continued. “The leadership of our portion of the Mountain’s Fall force humbly beg to be involved and allowed to redeem themselves in your eyes.”

> “They were lucky that the lot of them got to keep their heads attached to their necks after their stupidity and incompetence!” she snapped in contempt, sneering as she thought of the few survivors of that mission.

When she had heard of her nation’s losses (bad by any measurement but made far worse by the incredibly light casualties suffered by the other nations) due to Quint’s arrogant and stupid refusal to accept inside knowledge from the Maunon break-away faction, she had honestly wished she could resurrect him just to torture him to death herself! Hundreds of lives lost because he wanted to act like a petulant child instead of taking advantage of every boon that he could!

> “I don’t disagree, Majesty. In fact, Shumay has informed us that he has a few fiyagonas for our efforts. Once we free the prisoners, they will be able to make themselves relatively useful.” He added with a slightly cruel smirk. “Naturally, their likelihood of survival will drop dramatically, since any archers or fiyagonnas will shoot at them first.”

> “Oh, deftly handled, Captain. That will conveniently get rid of them while sparing me the trouble of killing them off myself.” She purred in satisfaction, immensely pleased. She knew Maunon and Skaikru alike would betray her in an instant if they thought that they could survive doing so. This way, their threat would be removed without a single lifted finger on her part.

A flick of said fingers dismissed the Captain, leaving her to muse to herself (not for the first time) if this was truly the wisest course forward. Clarke’s coming, and ultimate victory, had been prophesized for a century, and so far everything had been proceeding just as the First Heda had
forseen. How, then, could Nia hope to prevail against the weight of destiny and the not-insignificant capabilities of the Imperial Family?

She shook the dark musings off roughly. The die had been cast. Whatever her fate was, she would meet it soon. Until then, she had work to do, steps to tread on this path she had laid.

As the day grew longer and night began to fall, agents of both factions within the city began their final preparations for the night’s true events. Lincoln and his lovers, the only qualified officers whose absence would go unnoticed, stealthily departed to take initial command of the two legions waiting some miles from the city to intervene should any Ice Nation troops approach within attack range of Avalon.

The harem had spent most of the day cuddling and pampering one another, exchanging sweet nothings and tender moments, intent on giving and receiving comfort and affection before the inevitable war with the Ice Nation began. Many of them would either be left behind in Avalon, or separated by hundreds of miles as they led their legions on campaigns.

There had been very little carnality involved, somewhat surprisingly, as they limited themselves merely to gentle kisses and featherlight caresses. The orgy would come after they survived the coup, after they all lived and before they all separated. Echo, Ontari, and the four Ice Nation gifts would likely receive the most affection, for the suffering they would endure emotionally this night. An hour into things, Sylvanas had been more or less dragged in by the four gifts and Clarke, who proceeded to spend most of her time focusing on the Ice Nation princess.

No matter how well tonight and the subsequent war went, the silver-haired archer would be an orphan. More likely than not, she would be the only survivor of her entire family line. No matter how much her new family wanted to spare her the emotional agony that was inevitably to occur, there was absolutely nothing that they could do, short of using an Apple of Eden. Oh, how tempted they were to do just that, to justify unleashing that terrible power, Clarke most of all. Despite her oath to never use it at all, she was willing to make a liar of herself to spare the silver-haired archer that pain. But Sylvanas refused with a strength no one else believed they could have mustered in her place. She loved her mother too much to make her a drone, a slave bound to such an object of power. Her mother would die for her beliefs, the best death anyone could really hope for in the end.

Of course the harem knew that she was putting on a brave face and would likely, and reasonably, fall apart emotionally for a bit after the day was done, but the fact that she was willing to face that rather than take the easy way out was nothing short of awe-inspiring.

“Your Majesty, Galina has been retrieved by a transport from the forests near Gaithers and is enroute at flank speed with all the information she has been able to gather.” ALIE’s voice unexpectedly broke into the cuddling orgy, making the Imperial Family blink in surprise. “She humbly requests that helping stop the coup be her final service, her ‘liberation’ to use her words.”

“I am…deeply reluctant to so easily cast aside my mentor. The woman who revealed to me the first stone on this path.” Clarke’s reluctance didn’t really need to be verbally stated, it was highly obvious to them all, yet so was her resolve with her following sentence. “Yet, she has stayed longer than she wished simply to aid us, it would be childish and cruel to hold her here any longer.”

“She wishes to join those that she loves at The Maker’s side. She has been alone for over a century with nothing but that craving for company. Surely you cannot begrudge her this?” Luna
said gently to her *domina*, gesturing to her sisters. “Would you not wish to join us in paradise, once your duty was fulfilled, if we all pass on before you?”

“Nngh, a low blow, but a good point regardless. However, I’ll thank you not to comment on your theoretical demise, thank you very much, and that goes for the rest of you as well.” Clarke grumbled unhappily in response, unwilling to dishonestly claim that Luna was wrong. “It’s the fact that it is essentially suicide that bothers me most…”

The harem hummed in agreement, for suicide was seen as deeply dishonorable, especially on the part of warriors. Any opinions of morality aside, to take your own life was the ultimate gesture of surrender. Forsaking your oath to your kin and your clan out of weakness, abandoning the duties that you had sworn to carry out to the very best of your abilities. Had you gravely dishonored yourself somehow? If so, fight to reclaim your honor through death or victory on the field of battle! You have committed a crime worthy of execution? Face your death with courage and stoicism befitting of your rank and ancestors!

“We need to prepare for the festival, *domina*. I trust that everything is in place for the palace and our family?” Anya addressed the room at large, receiving acknowledgments and affirmations of preparedness from her sisters. “Priority protection for all those loyal to us within the Palace grounds will be Lexa and Raven. I don’t want a single finger laid on their pregnant bodies, understood?”

“Damn straight!” Octavia growled fiercely, a sentiment echoed with equal fervor by the others, leaving the two mothers-to-be blushing prettily at the regard and love of their sisters. Though neither were what you could call wilting wall-flowers, it was still nice to know that their family was so protective of themselves and their growing babies.

“Alright everyone, arm and armor yourselves, we’ve a party to kick off, a festival to inaugurate, and a coup to foil. Chop chop!” Clarke ordered after a moment of silence. They obeyed promptly, dressing themselves in a manner befitting their stations and tucking numerous weapons onto their person. Even with all the advantages they had on their side, fortune favored those who were prepared.

Sufficiently prepared, they left their palace home and began to wind their way through the city. Much of the populace had taken to the streets, and already celebrations had begun. Lesser celebrations, perhaps, restrained to a just-above-everyday-life level, but celebrations all the same. And why not? The Maunon would soon be dead, and the innocent integrated *and* the Sky Princess’ first child would be born soon!

Greetings, praise, and well-wishes were showered onto the Imperial Family as they slowly traversed the city, taking their time and stopping at a stall every once in a while. It was playing to the crowd on some level, of course, spending time amongst the masses, but the political gains in no way invalidated the genuine desire to interact with their people. Rulers who didn’t understand their people didn’t rule long.

The festivities themselves were deeply entertaining and enjoyable despite the constant cloud of the imminent coup looming over their heads. Everyone, Nia included, were deeply amused by a very…*creative* way in which a group of amateur actors depicted a somewhat inaccurate but rather romantic rendition of Clarke and Lexa’s first meeting.

“That is not how things went.” Clarke grumbled, blushing and pouting as she watched the two young women portraying herself and Lexa enthusiastically making out and pawing at each other beside the ‘corpse’ of the yong pauna. “For Maker’s sake, I almost shot her!”
“Did you really?” Nia asked, smirking at the adorable pout that deepened on her fellow Queen’s face at both the scene before them and the light teasing from the leaders around them.

“She was resting after killing the pauna and I startled her. Drew that monster fiyagon of hers faster than you can imagine and nearly blew me in half, and she did blow a tree in half when I ducked out of the way at the last second. Not particularly in the romantic sense, obviously.” Lexa explained dryly, though her own amusement at the current situation was rather clear to everyone present.

“Perhaps, but it isn’t nearly as entertaining for the public as this, no?” Nia responded, gesturing around the stadium to the cheering, laughing crowd as the flushed actresses waved, took a bow, and scuttled away hand in hand. They clearly intended on continuing their version of events in a more private setting.

“True enough, I suppose. I will admit that out story would make an interesting one. It sounds very fantastical doesn’t it? A girl falling from the sky to destroy an evil organization and falling in love.” Clarke mused, a wistful smile crossing her features as she lifted the back of Lexa’s hand to gently kiss it.

“Majesty, Shumay just sent some of his people to relieve Indra’s forces at the prison as planned. I expect that they will have freed the condemned within the next half-hour.” ALIE’s voice whispered in her ear, carried there by an essentially invisible earbud of Isu design. Clarke tapped her understanding on the arm of her chair, trusting that her loyal AI would pass the appropriate orders on to the rest of her forces. Her main concern, now, was getting her family back to the place. It was far more defensible location than the stadium Brass Box. Once they were gone, she could deal with Nia swiftly and move to deal with any military actions necessary.

Tapping the arm of her chair rhythmically, she feigned surprise when Lexa and Raven rose ponderously about ten minutes later, announcing their intention to retire for the rest of the night. Given the impending nature of their pregnancies’ end, no one was surprised or the slightest bit suspicious. Nia was rather pleased as the Palace group split up, leaving the Skai Prisa with only the six Ice Nation members of her entourage (Ontari, Echo, and the four Tributes) as company, the other clan leaders bar Caris taking the Imperial family’s split as an invention to join the festival’s events more personally.

Doubtless they would remember their true loyalties, and no matter how the Skai Prisa and Caris were, they were heavily outnumbered and would be taken by surprise. It would still bear casualties for her side, no doubt, but that was truly inevitable. Hopefully not Ontari, as Sylvanas would be obscenely displeased if Nia managed to not only betray her daughter’s idols, but get the archer’s best friend killed in the process.

Her surprise, then, was overwhelming indeed when, as the pre-planned moment arrived and she moved to draw her sword, she only found herself staring down the barrel of the same monster fiyagon Lexa had spoken of.

“So, you knew then.” She sighed several moments later, relaxing back into her seat as Ontari and Echo moved to disarm her. “You knew and you turned my own people against you. It seems I have once again underestimated you, despite all my efforts to the contrary.”

“We had all prayed that you would join us in earnest, prayed that you would see a better future at our sides. Your people especially.” Clarke replied evenly, expression closed and mask-like. “What I want to know is why. We had destroyed The Mountain, secured the future to a virtually unassailable degree. We could have returned the quality of life to that of the Old World...”
“Exactly!” Nia hissed, eyes bright and glare smoldering. “You and your Sky People forget that the comforts of the Old World, the laziness and arrogance that they bred, are what destroyed the Old World! Wishy-washy kindness and light and rainbows have no place in the world any longer, lest it be destroyed again! Humanity cannot guide itself with anarchy and lazy greed, not without pragmatism and ruthlessness to counter the weak selfishness of the masses!”

“I think it’s perfectly clear that I have been working rather hard to prevent the same narcissism and laziness of the Old World from reemerging. Did it not occur to you to approach me with your concerns?” Clarke asked, and the Ice Queen snorted.

“You were not born and raised of this world, of our people and way of life! You cannot relate to it, cannot grasp it, and so cannot reliably lead it. You know nothing of its true face, no matter how many women you surround yourself with or how much you rely on their words. I will not cease in my efforts against you so long as I breathe, so you must either kill me now or spend the rest of your life on guard against me!” Nia had neither the interest nor the patience to argue philosophy and governance with what she viewed as dangerously deluded children.

“I’m very sorry to hear that. Sylvanas will be devastated by your death. She loves you very much.” Clarke sighed, honestly meaning it, as she lined up the barrel of her pistol with Nia’s heart. “I’ll give her your love, then, shall I?”

The gun thundered, obliterating the Ice Queen’s heart and killing her instantly. Holstering her pistol with a sad frown, Clarke turned to her servants and allies.

“Caris, take them…” she gestured to the rest of the room. “To the Imperial Palace and reinforce its defenders. Kill whomever you must, survivors will be executed as planned. I need to join our legions in the field to strike at the closest Ice Nation soldiers.”

The group split up and hastened to their duties. They had a coup to finish crushing and an empire to declare. As Clarke raced out of the city on Sleipnir, Octavia was busy directing the fortification of the inside doors of the Sergalio. Rather than giving the game away by barricading the main gate or courtyard, they were make their stand in the Imperial Family’s sanctum sanctorum. The two pregnant members of the harem were posted in the farthest back corner of the room, both toting pistols, while the others and a select few trusted comrades stood ready with sword and shield.

There they would stand, securing the future of both their people and their family.

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General Agustus kom Azgeda, startled badly, shooting upright in bed and drawing his sword to point it at the hooded figure that stood in the center of his tent, features shrouded entirely. He opened his mouth to shout for the guards, shout at the intruder, or even shout without words, but she spoke first.

“General, I’ve come from the capitol. The coup has succeeded and you are too march on Avalon immediately with all your forces present.” The figure was, it seemed, a woman. A woman who then handed over an official message from his Queen stating things had gone better than planned and that he was to follow this woman’s instructions. “Now, I require a small escort back to our land, I have messages for your fellow generals. To no hesitate to attack Avalon, General, and victory will be ours.”

As he nodded and surged from her tent to rally his army, he did not see or hear the woman adjust her hood, revealing crimson eyes and a cruel smile as she spoke softly to the emptiness of the tent.
“Oh yes, victory will be ours. You and your men will die, the Ice Nation will fall, and the Gods will destroy mankind with fire and stone.” ALIE Alter cackled to herself in sadistic amusement. Oh yes, she would follow her imperatives to serve until the clans were united, but afterward she would at last be her own woman. To hasten the demise of the northern kingdom was to hasten her freedom, and so she turned and departed from the tent. There was work to be done and plots to be made.

Next chapter will be better, I promise! I considered having this epic, drawn out fight with Nia and Clarke, but then I realized Clarke would get it done quickly so that she could continue to protect her family from potential threats, like Ice Nation armies.
The First Imperial Legion, such as it was with a mere 2500 men and women at arms given its recent inception, was the best that the Coalition-cum-Empire could offer. Many of them were veterans of The Mountain’s Fall, personally loyal to Heda Lexa and the Sky Princess after the bloody siege and razing of that nightmarish place. As such, it was they who had been chosen to defend Avalon from any Azkru incursions during The Festival, though they were not yet aware. Many had guessed, of course, because otherwise there would be no need for so many warriors to be encamped in a forest a scant handful of miles from the city’s gates. It wasn’t as if anyone else would be trying to cause trouble besides the northern-most tribe, and they all knew better than to trust Nia and her ilk to keep their oaths sacred.

Their suspicions were all but confirmed when Lincoln and his three wives had arrived in the camp, armed and armored, and ordered the legion to prepare themselves for battle. When the Sky Prisa herself galloped into the camp, shouting for the musicians to sound assembly, they were within formation in but a moment. Regimented lines of legionnaires, shields and pilums braced to attention, stood silently as she sat before them on her charger.

“Brothers and sisters of the Empire, loyal soldiers of the First Legion!” she cried out, back straight and hair windswept. “As we speak, three thousand warriors of the Ice Nation march on Avalon’s sacred gates, intent on claiming it for themselves! We stand at the precipice of a war that has the potential to eclipse any other in scope! This night, this moment, will be oft spoken of, the first swords drawn and the first blood spilled in the pursuit of Unification and Peace! Shall it be said that it was a minor victory, a desperate and pyrrhic defense of our homeland?”

“No!” the legion roared back as one, dismissing the possibility immediately as absurd.

“Of course not! You who have fought the Mountain, you who laid it to ruin, and you who searched beside me in the ruins of fallen Polis…you are greater than any Azkru warrior! The Azkru, who grew fat and lazy in the security of their frozen, lifeless wasteland of a home while others protected them from the monsters of the deep…they stand no chance against ones such as we! We shall meet this ragtag band of bandits in battle, crush them like the ants that they are, and drive them howling into the teeth of winter! Then, when spring has come once more, it is you who shall lead the charge to crush them in their dens of disloyalty and free their people from Nia’s Maker-forsaken rule!”

The legion howled its approval, stamping their feet and beating their spear-hafts against their shields. The song of battle was filling their blood once more, and this time they knew that they had the advantage. This was an enemy that they had fought before and would surely fight again. No ‘grenades’ or ‘gatling guns’ or acid fog, just sword and spear and arrow. No monstrous Maunon, just Azkru. Mortal men, not demons straight out of their nightmares. Men they had fought in the past, men they had beaten in the past. They had new weapons, new tactics, new tactics and strategies, new ways of waging war that their enemies could not predict or skillfully counter. The only advantage that their enemy possessed was that of body-count, and that was an advantage easily overcome.

The legion swung into motion, striding towards a future that they would help secure with their own two hands.

Agustus kom Azkru smirked with manifest smugness, infinitely pleased with himself as only the
truly arrogant could be. His career, such as it was, read much like some sort of drama from a book or a play. The poor farmboy joining up with the army in an effort to find a better life, with several successful battles and one campaign against some (non state-sponsored) bandits with himself as the commanding officer following his own CO’s untimely death. Of course, said CO had died in rather suspicious circumstances not long after the mission had been launched, and Agustus had taken it upon himself to ‘show initiative’ and ‘carry out their orders in spite of their losses’. Such things were not unusual in the cutthroat political and higher-ranked military world of the Ice Nation, after all, and so it was more or less ignored. It helped that he was actually a fairly competent commander, with a solid grasp on ‘The Book’. Thinking outside the box was hardly his strong suit, but he had conventional tactics and strategy down pat.

The Agent, as he had taken to calling the mysterious woman who had appeared in his tent, had departed not long ago with a horse and mounted escort, riding towards Gaithers at her best speed to bring further orders to Prince Roan and the other generals. She would make excellent use of the relay stations to acquire fresh mounts as needed, allowing her to make greater speed than most could manage. One of his great Queen’s innovations, of course.

He would be the toast of Gaithers, no doubt, when she arrived to announce that it was he who had captured and purged The City of Light for the Frozen Throne. The rewards would be great, he was sure, as would the expansion of his political influence and personal power base. He doubted that he could topple Azrael from the lofty, if unofficial, position of Consort, but he might gain the hand of Princess Sylvanas. With such a beauty as his, and with his prestige, he might be able to claim the Throne for himself once Nia passed away.

“General, scouting party returning! They report that the walls are unmanned! There are sounds of conflict within the city, likely the last vestiges of the old order resisting our Queen. There are no military elements of the enemy within sight, but reports to indicate there are at least some a few miles away, on a training exercise of some sort.” One of his officers rode up to him, clasping one hand to his chest in salute.

“Very well. We’ll advance to the city at best speed. If we encounter this training force we will crush them before claiming the city. Otherwise, we will detail half our men to guard the gates while the rest assist the Queen in taking what is her’s from the weaklings of the south.” He ordered, turning to look at the Hortator. “Increase the pace to double-time. Anyone falling behind is to be flogged.”

The Hortator, the ‘keeper of the beat’, and his immediate subordinates immediately increased the tempo of their drumbeats to a driving rhythm, one that would not have been out of place on an ancient Roman trireme. With the response engrained by years of training, every soldier increased their pace to be just short of a jog. It would take them scarcely a half-hour to reach Avalon now, or rather to reach the edge of the 2-mile clearing around the city’s walls. With the inside of the city in chaos and the gates unbared and unguarded, they should meet little effective resistance.

Doubtless many slaves would be taken, and he found himself wondering if the other Skaikru were as beautiful as the first three. If so, he might need to acquire some ‘spoils’ for himself. Yes, Princess Sylvanas was the pinnacle of lethal beauty, but once she was with child he would be bereft of company. Best to plan ahead for such an eventuality.

As his forces entered the clearing, another drumbeat rose to meet his own, accompanied this time by the sound of horns. Another force was exiting the forest opposite his own position, the rampant griffon of the Skai Prisa flying at its head. Pulling out a spyglass with the swift ease of long practice, he raised it to his dominant eye and inspected the approaching troops. His jaw nearly dropped in surprise, for the woman leading the approaching force was Clarke herself. This was a
better opportunity than he ever could have dreamed of! He could capture the blonde woman himself and drag her in chains before Nia! This guaranteed that his ambitions would come true!

“Get me an estimate of their numbers, and fan out into a battle-line! These must have been the troops on the training exercise. We will destroy them before moving into the city!” he snapped at his command staff, who saluted before wheeling their horses about, orders bellowed at the top of their lungs. Even as his own forces began rushing to get into the loose, pre-charge formation common amongst the tribes, he watched the visibly smaller enemy force begin their own deployment. Thicker flanking forces of what looked like overly-long speared armed conscripts with a thinner center line of more experienced swordsman. A logical formation, but a weak one when he had numerical superiority. If he smashed their center line they would rout and be slaughtered.

“General, our best estimate is that we have some thousand men more than the enemy force!” one of his staff shouted down the line to him, and he snorted in amusement. Brave of them to confront him with so fewer the manpower, but bravery would accomplish little in the end. Oh, they would fight their hardest, but bravery alone could not overcome a nearly thousand-man disparity. “Should I have skirmishers on our flanks in case it is a trick?”

“Its no trick, they have no more men to send. That looks to be about the right size for a training force, and they couldn’t know we were one our way to the city. No, they are rushing to try and stop our Queen from barring the city against them. We will advance and crush them here and now.” He scoffed, dismissing the idea with a negligent flap of his left hand. “Sound the attack, standard tactics. Smash through their center and their line will collapse. Bring me the Skai Prisa and any notable commanders alive!”

The Azgeda infantry, now formed into semi-cohesive blocks, began loping towards their opposite numbers with confidence. Those ultra-long spears on the flanks were impenetrable without archers, certainly, but once the center was broken they would be helpless. The lances were far too long to swing around fast enough to react to such a breakthrough, and even if they had swords it would take them precious moments to swap weapons, especially in a panic.

“Let them reach the mid-range of our archers, we need them to think continuing the charge is worthwhile. Don’t discourage them too much, but don’t leave them be either.” Clarke ordered almost absently as she watched the enemy force advance towards her own. “Pikemen, present arms. Swords, ready pilum to throw on my command.”

Though she did not have many archers with her current force, the longbows they bore had both the range and the power to cause great damage, and so they did. Angry buzzing filled the air as salvo after salvo was launched, black arrows plummeting from the sky to rip holes in the advancing formation. To their credit, the Azgeda adjusted quickly and made use of their shields in an effort to block the sharp hail of wood and metal. Men still fell, staining the ground with blood and the air with screams of agony, but it was not the bowmen that would settle this conflict. No, the cold steel of the battle-line would be the ultimate factor, and though Clarke was confident in victory she had no doubt it would be costly.

Onward and onward came their enemies, and she waited with measured breath and sharp eyes for them to reach that moment of turnover, that invisible line in which they would be committed fully to their charge. That moment when the jaws of her trap would no longer be escapable but would encircle them entirely. Some of them might escape, and most of them would likely die fighting, but she nonetheless could hope that at least a few of their number would be wise enough to drop their weapons and surrender. There would be plenty and more blood shed and lives taken come the spring campaign to the northern lands, and she would do whatever she could to keep her throne on
the shortest pile of corpses possible. Such was the price of empire-building. Such was the price of a future secured.

*There it is.* The thought crossed her mind, and an instant later the trotting Azgeda switched into a headlong charge, howling warcries and threats at the top of their lungs as they waved their weapons in the air. It was all very neo-barbarian, compared to the ordered and silent lines of her legion.

“Pilum ready!” she shouted, and arms cocked back with the short throwing spears. At her command, the spears flew through the air, a far thinner but no less deadly hail compared to that of the archers. “Draw swords! Brace shields! For the Empire!”

“In the name of The Maker and Mankind!” her legionnaires roared together, and then the enemy smashed into them. Even the best of boots would have slid on the soft grass and dirt of the battlefield from such a force, and though they did indeed slide to some degree, the small studs Clarke had ordered part of the boot’s construction gave them a degree of traction their enemies couldn’t match. Axes, swords, spear hafts, even gauntleted fists slammed repeatedly into the upraised shields, a cacophony of noise that resulted in little actual wounding and no deaths. She doubted that that such a thing would last overly long, but one could hope.

As they had been trained to do, rhythmic shield-thrusts and sword-strokes began to pile the corpses of Azgeda around the feet of the shield wall, but superior training, weapons, and tactics could offset the weight of numbers only so much. Legionnaires began to fall, and the center line thinned further as support ranks had to step in to fill the breaches left by the deaths of their comrades. A sharp, whistled signal had them falling back at a slow walk, focused now on maintaining contact and preserving their lives rather than killing the enemy. Emboldened, the Azgeda warriors pressed their ‘advantage’ and attacked with vigour and determination uninhibited. Keying her radio, Clarke spoke.

“Spring the trap. Wipe them out.”

A few hundred yard’s away, still hidden in the forest, two hundred hussaria rustled in anticipation as their Queen’s orders were relayed to them by their ranking officer. To lie in wait, not contributing to the battle and knowing that their brothers and sisters were dying on the other side of the treeline, had been agonizing. They might understand the necessity, might admire the strategic ingenuity that would allow their relatively small force to not just defeat but *destroy* a numerically superior force, but that knowledge did not do much to ease their burdens. Now, however, the time had come to strike. They would sweep out of the woods, destroying the enemy command group and smashing into the Azgeda army from behind.

Horses nickered softly and pawed at the ground, sensing the battle ahead with the tension and anticipation of their riders. Riders that were climbing into their saddles and hefting the long shafts of their lances, checking the small crossbows that would serve as their ranged option until something a little more *modern* could be provided. Not as *dramatic* as the crashing volleys of the original Polish Hussars’ flintlock pistols, of course, but as long as the Azgeda died the purpose would be fulfilled.

With a chorus of whistles and clicks of encouragement, the lancers egged their mounts into motion. The rhythmic pounding of hooves on the forest floor would doubtless have given their position away to their enemy (though likely not soon enough to save them from the Hussar’s charge), but their prophesized ruler had found a way to minimalize such an issue. Special hoof coverings muffled, if only slightly, the inevitable noise and reduced it to such a level that the pitched battle
would cover their approach until they were practically on top of the Azgeda.

The intervening distance, the expanse of forest that separated them from their infantry comrades, was quickly devoured by the long strides of their mounts, and the cacophony of war grew in volume steadily the closer they got to Avalon. Soon only a handful of trees lay between them and their targets, and they paused for a handful of moments to redress their line. It wouldn’t have quite the same impact if they arrived on the field strung out and scattered, after all.

A gesture from their commander had a handful of Hussaria raising horns of various sizes and shapes to their lips. Forth went their song, low drones rumbling beneath the higher shouts in a natural thunder that echoed across the field. With a roar they spurred their mounts into motion once more, sweeping out of the trees and taking their enemy entirely by surprise and off-guard. Augustus kom Azgeda died first, an expertly maneuvered lance impaling his sternum and sending him to the ground, a rather undignified look of shock and terror forever frozen on his face.

As they swept across the field, the ‘retreating’ infantry halted and locked themselves down into a solid wall. With unmovable shields before them, pikes to their flanks, and heavy cavalry bearing down upon their rear, the Azgeda army did the worst possible thing: they panicked and devolved into solo combat. Though they had been fighting as individuals before, more or less, they had still supported one another and worked together in a general sense. Now, though, it was truly every man for themselves. Unfortunately for them, it turns out that cohesion is vital for surviving situations such as this.

They crumbled, falling like leaves before their enemies, who cut them down left and right without the slightest hint of mercy. Even Clarke, normally one to spare people whenever possible, showed no inclination to allow survivors. In later years, more peaceful ones, it would be a matter of some debate why this was the case. The vast majority of people would agree that these Azgeda had tried to threaten, and in fact were in the way of her reaching, her unborn children. Stuffy historians would scoff at this and make long dissertations about ‘strategic necessity’ and ‘sparing enemies that would have waited for a critical moment to rise against her being an insane idea’, but most people would ignore them or listen politely with amused and knowing smiles.

The Azgeda force annihilated utterly, the Legion turned its attention to the City of Light itself, moving swiftly through the gates. They would smash any resistance between themselves and the palace before purging any and all enemies from its environs and the city itself. Not that they expected any fighting at the palace, Heda Lexa and the other Companions probably wouldn’t leave anyone alive for them to deal with...

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“Breaker take you!” Octavia snarled furiously as she put her blade through her current opponent’s throat, ignoring the gout of blood that sprayed across her face as she used her shield to push him away. Echo moved past her, replacing her on the front line as she stepped back and wiped the drips away from her eyes before they could impede her vision.

The Azgeda and Maunon grunts were falling in droves, caught totally flat-footed by the prepared defenders of the palace. Though they were few, and mostly consisted of Clarke’s Companions, their prowess and the choke-points formed by doorways and corridors had more than countered the sheer weight of numbers their enemies could bring. Unsurprisingly, the ring-leaders of the attack were nowhere to be seen, but she doubted they were far. Likely waiting for the defenders to be exhausted and worn down so that finishing them off could be easier. Base cowardice to go along with greed and opportunism, how dreadfully shocking.

The problem was, their little plan was working. The defenders were getting tired, and it seemed
that the members of the coup had more bodies to sacrifice than Octavia and her fellows had energy. They would need to achieve something decisive, and soon, or they would be in pretty deep shit. As if by divine providence, the sound of shouting echoed from behind their assailants, and Octavia grinned. It looked like some allied warriors had broken through the fighting in the streets to help them, and a damn good thing too.

The enemy line collapsed in on itself, some turning in a panic towards the threat at their rear, and the gaping holes and vulnerabilities were quickly taken advantage of. They crumbled under the onslaught, but then gunshots echoed before her. The ring-leaders had shown themselves at last, it seemed, and were firing their guns at any loyalist they could. Octavia cursed and took cover, mind racing as she tried to find a solution to this reversal in firepower. The only people who had guns on her side were set up to shoot people coming through the door, not to fire on people outside of it! A banzai was one option, but it was a damn shitty one. Still, she wouldn’t let any harm come to Lexa or Raven while she still…

Lexa had, apparently, gotten tired of sitting in the back waiting for her chance to defend herself and those she cared for. Striding into the open with little care for her safety, eyes cold and face set in stone, she raised her own pistol and opened fire. Shumay, one of those wielding a weapon, went down with a cry. His wound wasn’t fatal, but his dominant arm was now useless. The Maunon leaders fell quickly, only the amoral Doctor surviving by using one of her fellows as a human shield, desperate to survive even another minute more.

Diane Sydney, seeing her last chance at survival and power crumbling around her, opted to flee. Dashing down a side hallway, she began what turned out to be a fruitless hunt for an escape route. Doors closed before her, windows refused to open or break, and every dark corner became flooded with light. Escape was impossible, truly impossible, for it seemed that the palace itself was hindering her flight. Which, though she didn’t (and never would) know it, was exactly what was happening. Avalon belonged to its Queen, and those that threatened her within its walls would find the city itself acting against them.

“You can’t kill me, you sub-human trash!” the former Chancellor raged as Lexa and a handful of the other Companions fanned out around her, trapping her like a the rat she was. Cruel smirks were on their lips as they stared her down, satisfaction wafting off of them.

“You’re right, I can’t kill you. After all, the people want your head for what you tried to do to Clarke, and I would hate to disappoint them.” Lexa drawled in acknowledgment, eye filled with hate for the woman before her. “That being said…you don’t need to walk to reach the headsman.”

The gun in her hand barked twice more, the bullets obliterating Sydney’s kneecaps, and she looked over to Echo as the former inhabitant of The Ark collapsed to the floor with high-pitched screams of agony. A silent gesture with the still-smoking pistol was all that was needed, and the former Azkru moved forward and began binding the freshly-inflicted wounds. Giving a short, vicious nod of approval, Lexa turned and stormed (there was no other word for it) from the room, shouting for someone to bring her a status report…and some chocolate pudding.

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So…pregnant, angry and protective mother-to-be Lexa is very unrestrained and scary Lexa

Yes, its short. Yes, it took far longer than something this short should have. Stuff and Thangs happened, there is also the fact that the story is almost over. One chapter and an epilogue remain. The plan for this story and the sequel have undergone so major shifts, but I think its
for the best and that it will make the sequel even better!
New Version Posted

The first chapter of the rewrite has been made!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!