### Summary

It's been 4 years since the mountain fell. Skaikru are now part of the coalition and everyone seems to be at peace. Clarke disappeared after the mountain, both Skaikru and grounders assume that she is dead, but the legend of Wanheda lives on. Lexa has sent scouts to each clan to find new nightbloods. The first to arrive is a young boy called Jake. A week later he is taken from Polis.

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Warning: This is EXTREMELY slow burn. If you're looking for something where they kiss, make-up and live happily ever after then this isn't the fic for you.

ON HIATUS

### Notes

This is my first time writing so please be kind! Constructive criticism welcome!
Speech in Trigedasleng is in italics.
I will add tags as I add chapters.

Enjoy :)
Almost 4 years after the Mountain

Polis

Lexa

Lexa has been waiting for the first to arrive. It’s been three weeks since she sent the scouts out, yet so far only one has returned. But not from her own clan. This worried her a little at first, however she knows how large Trikru territory is, and how hard it is to travel just after the snow has melted. They should be back in the next few weeks, with the scouts sent to the other clans not far behind them.

For now, she sits patiently on her throne, twirling a dagger in the twisted wooden arm, waiting. Lexa has had a lot of practice with patience, however over the last four years it has been more difficult, giving her too much time to think about past mistakes, about a particular pair of desperate blue eyes that she walked away from.

The sound of boots in the hallway outside the throne room draws her out of her memory, quickly forgotten as she sits up straighter and replaces the dagger in its sheath. The doors open and four figures enter. Titus, the fleimkepa, her teacher and primary advisor, walks in first, his eyes looking straight at Heda as if knowing what was going through her mind moments ago. Behind him, two scouts follow with a small body between them, scrambling to keep up. Titus steps aside to reveal a boy with scruffy brown hair. He can’t be more than 4 years old, terrified blue eyes peering up at Lexa.

“Natblida kom Trishanakru, Heda,” (A nightblood from the Trishanakru) Titus announces.

“Gon we,” (Leave) Lexa commands the scouts, who abruptly turn and exit the room, leaving the tiny boy alone in the middle of the room, looking even paler than before.

“What is your name, child?” Lexa asks softly. She knows her first impression on the new nightbloods is important, needing to scare them enough for them to behave and focus on their training, but also showing that she actually cares about them. They are still children after all.

“Ai laik Jake kom Trishanakru, Heda,” (I am Jake from Trishanakru) the boy says with a small quiver in his voice, bowing his head towards the floor.

Jake. The name sounds familiar to Lexa, but after all her years as Heda she cannot place where she might have heard it before. It seems an odd name, but he isn’t from her clan after all.

“Welcome Jake. You are a nightblood, and as is your birthright you have been brought here to train with the other nightbloods to potentially become Heda one day. Titus and I will be your teachers while you are here, as well as some of the older nightbloods. Your training starts tomorrow.”

At that, Titus leaves the room with Jake following obediently. After the doors have closed behind them, Lexa can’t help but think about the terrified eyes of the boy, and how eerily similar yet different they are to the blue eyes that still haunt her. The blue eyes that begged her to stay. The eyes that she will never see again.
Jake

During the meeting with Heda, Jake was so scared he wanted to sink into the floor and disappear, yet he could not tear his eyes away from her powerful frame. She was frightening to say the least, but her eyes were kind, dispelling some of the fear, yet enough remained for him to barely say his own name without a quiver to his voice.

The bald man, Titus he thinks his name is, leads him down a few floors of the tower to a corridor with three doors. It takes almost all of Jake’s concentration to put one foot in front of the other as he walks, barely understanding what is being said to him. When Titus stops at the second door, Jake almost stumbles into his legs, staring at the concrete floor in apprehension.

“This is your room. More nightbloods will arrive soon, but you are the only one for now. Dinner is in two candlemarks, a guard will take you to the dining hall when it is time.”

Jake enters the room timidly, still staring at the floor, and the door is shut behind him. Gradually he lifts his head, scanning the room. It is larger than he has ever seen, other than the throne room, with twelve beds arranged around the outside of the room. Next to each bed is a small chest, Jake assumes for clothes and whatever other belongings they are allowed to have. He wasn’t allowed to bring anything from home, only what he was wearing when the scouts came. There is a large window at the far end of the room looking over Polis, thin curtains drawn to the side to let in what’s left of daylight. There is no other decoration in the room other than a few candles scattered about, it doesn’t look like anyone has lived in it for years.

Jake quickly jumps onto the bed furthest from the door and curls up in it. He barely slept on the journey here, longing to see his mothers and afraid of what is to come. He cries himself into a fitful sleep, dreaming of home and the friends he was forced to leave behind.

Aden

All of the nightbloods are in the dining hall, a reasonably sized room behind the first door on the corridor that they live on. One long table runs along the middle of the room, where they are all eating and talking about what they learnt that day. This room has little decoration, like the other rooms on the floor, although here there are ornate tables dotted around the edge and covered in candles to light the room. One window looks out, but the darkness beyond only highlights the fires burning in the city below and the stars in the sky above.

Aden is the oldest of all the nightbloods in Polis, other than Heda of course. He trains hard and listens carefully to his teachers, but after training he tries to be kind and look after the younger nightbloods. He’s known them all so long that at this point he considers them to be his brothers and sisters, even more so now that the rules of the conclave have been changed and he won’t be made to kill them.

The new kid looks petrified. He’s really small compared to the others, barely touching his food and staring at his feet as if there’s a really interesting ant colony living there. Having watched the new kid for about ten minutes, Aden gets up and goes to sit next to him. Aden can sense the nerves coming off the kid in waves. He hasn’t spent time with anyone this young since he was first brought to Polis.

“Hei, ai laik Aden, what’s your name?”
The kid looks up a bit, eyes at his knees now.

“Ai laik Jake.”

Well that’s something at least, Aden thinks. He remembers what it was like first coming here, not knowing what was going to happen next or who the people around him were. Most of all, he remembers the fear and missing the family he had to leave behind. Aden was honoured to be a nightblood, but it doesn’t take away the pain of never seeing those you love ever again.

“Hi Jake. Have you been to Polis before? The food here is really great, you should try some.”

At that the boy looks up at Aden, a small face full of both worry and hope. He smiles gently and takes a small bite from his plate.

“I’ve never been, but nomon has, she said it’s the busiest place she’s ever seen. She wishes mom would go - come - with her some time.”

Aden hears the small break in Jake’s voice at the mention of his mother and ‘mom’, which he can only assume is another family member, although he’s never heard the word before. The boy clearly misses them.

“What does your nomon do?” Aden knows Jake won’t be allowed to talk about them again after tonight, hopefully talking about them now will cheer him up for the evening.

“She is a healer in my village, I miss her a lot.”

“It gets easier kid. Want to hear about Polis?”

At that Jake sits up straighter and takes another piece of food from his plate, looking up at Aden and nodding eagerly.

“Ohkay, we are currently in the tower where we sleep and eat, the rest of us have a room along the hall. Heda also lives here, but we’re not allowed on her floor unless we are invited. There are lots of other floors for guests and for various function rooms. I’m sure Heda greeted you in the throne room earlier? I know she’s scary but it’s her way of looking out for us.”

Aden goes on to explain the layout of the city, or at least what he’s seen of it, & what Jake should expect from the next week of training.

“This week will be hard, you’ll be training with us to start with so it will be a steep learning curve. If you ever need anything, come ask me after classes, okay?”

Jake looks thoroughly confused, and Aden thinks maybe he gave him too much information in one go. At least the kid appears to be less frightened than before.

“Mochof, Aden.” (Thank you, Aden.)

One week later

Lexa

It’s been a week since Jake arrived, and so far he is still the only one in his room. Normally this wouldn’t worry Lexa, except for the fact that the Trikru scouts still haven’t returned. Nevertheless,
Jake seems to be adapting well and has already learnt a lot from the other nightbloods. She has managed to find time to train them more than usual this week, teaching them English every other day and how to defend themselves using a staff for the rest. She is surprised to find that Jake already knows a lot of English, more than she would have expected from a three-year-old.

After dismissing the nightbloods to their quarters following a particularly hard gonasleng (English) lesson, Titus comes towards her with a stern look on his face.

“What do you want, Titus?”

“I am concerned about the fact that only one nightblood has arrived, Heda. Please allow me to send messengers to find out what is going on in the other clans?”

“You know why we cannot do that Titus, and I find your lack of faith in our scouts unreasonable. It takes as long as it takes, you taught me that.”

“Of course Heda, but please consider it. If they have taken nightblood children, they may try to take your command from you -”

“Titus we have been over this many times! I know the dangers, that’s why we kept the scouts secret this time around. Do not make me tell you again!”

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander) Titus bows and withdraws from the room without another word, leaving Lexa fuming alone. She grabs her coat, throwing it on as she storms towards the exit, everyone in her path quickly moving out of the way feeling the rage in the air around her. Once outside, Lexa storms towards the nearest training area, planning on taking out her anger and frustration on a training dummy before returning for dinner.

Hours later, Lexa is covered head to toe in sweat and breathing hard. Four practice dummies lay in pieces on the ground, torn up by her sword. She was so focused on training and releasing the tension she’d been holding in her body that she hadn’t noticed the sun setting until she could barely see the dummies in front of her. She heads back to the tower, in a much better mood than when she left it.

As she walks, Lexa watches the city around her, seeing her people thrive in the peace she brought about. Here and there patrons of the local taverns stumble around in their drunken stupor, singing old songs and grinning ear to ear. She enjoys watching her people like this, uninhibited and relishing in all that Polis has to offer. Still, she feels a small lump of jealousy in her heart. Lexa will never be as free as her people, they will always be her priority and responsibility, and she will always be alone.

Caught up in watching the happiness of the people around her, Lexa doesn’t see the woman dashing out of the tower as she strides in. The woman catches her shoulder, pausing briefly to regain her grasp on the bundle in her arms. Lexa recognises the familiar scruffy brown hair of her most recent nightblood as the woman adjusts the bundle. She almost calls for the guards, but is frozen when the woman looks up. Lexa stares at her eyes, betrayed blue eyes that she could never forget.

“Clarke..?”
One week ago

Haro - Trishana (Glowing Forest)

Clarke

Clarke can’t believe what Ryka is telling her. She’d been out on a two day hunt, coming back hefting a deer proudly on her shoulders. When she’d entered their hut she knew something was wrong. Their son was gone.

“Kal, please! You can’t go after him!” Ryka yells at her.

Clarke gathers up supplies for the trip to Polis, furiously striding across the room from corner to corner making sure she has everything she needs. She doesn’t have a plan, she just needs to go. They’re already a day ahead of her.

“I can’t just let our son go! To hell with traditions, I’m getting him back.”

At that she storms out of the hut, darkness only a few candlemarks away. The village is preparing for dinner, small fires starting to grow around the village to stave off what’s left of the cold from winter. If anyone heard their argument, they aren’t showing it. Clarke loads her bags onto her horse, before turning to see Ryka next to her.

“Please be careful. I can’t lose you too.” Ryka grabs hold of Clarke’s arms and pulls their foreheads together, not wanting Kal to go, but knowing that there’s nothing she can do to stop her.

“Tell Chief I’m away trading with Floukru. Ai hod yu in, Ryka.”(I love you, Ryka) Clarke leans in to kiss her, savoring the feeling of contentment rushing through her at that simple touch. Too soon she pulls away, her life yet again twisting her away from the person she desires. Clarke truly loves Ryka, but Jake is her world.

“Ai hod yu in, Kal.” (I love you, Kal.)

Clarke mounts the horse in one swift motion, briefly looks around at the village and the woman that have become her home, then speeds off in the direction of Polis.

Two days later

Clarke arrives in Polis early in the morning. She is disappointed with herself that she couldn’t catch up with the scouts that took Jake, but she still has hope of at least seeing him again. The gates in the
tall wooden walls are open for traders to pass through and guards are posted every so often along the wall watching the perimeter. Inside the walls, there are small buildings, tents, any kind of structure people had managed to construct in both the near and distant past. There is colour everywhere, paint covering the concrete buildings and all sorts of dyed fabrics adorning the multitudes of people going about their business. The only other time Clarke had seen this many people was at the mountain, warriors preparing to get their blood revenge. The people here are very different, children running about getting underfoot, traders selling their wares along the streets, people from all the clans mingling peacefully. Ryka was right, she should have come and shared the experience with her.

Clarke has to be wary, this is Lexa’s domain and she daren’t be recognised here. Even with her black-stained hair, toned muscles and Trishanakru clothing, some may still recognise her from four years ago.

She stays near the wall for now, finding a stable to leave her horse for a few days. Clearly getting Jake back is going to require more than just brute force. She finds a cheap inn to stay at, leaving her belongings behind while she explores the city. The only thing she takes with her is a scrap of parchment and a pencil to map out Polis as she goes, mostly for planning purposes, but just in case she gets lost along the way. Even now she doesn’t have the best sense of direction.

Clarke spends the afternoon exploring and talking to traders about Polis, barely covering a quarter of the city when she ends up in front of the tower. She’d seen it from afar, but up close it appears to be even taller than she imagined. How it survived the bombs she has no idea, but here it is. From her gentle questioning of various traders, she can assume that this is where Lexa lives. She ducks into a nearby alleyway, not wanting to get caught so early on in her mission. She decides to come back tomorrow, the nightbloods won’t be kept too far away from Lexa.

For the next few days Clarke watches the tower, figuring out guard rotations, possible exits and the most populated streets surrounding the tower at night. She figures she can get lost in a crowd pretty easily without anyone noticing her. Once while watching the tower, she sees Lexa. Clarke pulls her hood up and follows the crowd, trying to ignore the fluttering feeling in her stomach that arose at the sight of Lexa, and is accidentally carried all the way to the training grounds. By now she’s realised that a small crowd often gathers to watch various warriors train, the crowd even larger now since their Heda is there. The onlookers respectfully disperse when a small group of children of varying ages are led to the area by a stern-looking bald man. Clarke stays a tad longer, lingering at the back of the crowd and scanning the line. Among the children is Jake. He’s safe. Dare she think it, he even looks happy. She turns quickly, not wanting Jake to see and expose her, returning to the centre to continue working out their escape route.

Within the week Clarke has a plan. She can’t risk waiting any longer.

**Just after Jake is taken**

**Lexa**

Lexa is stunned into inaction. *She’s alive.* The thought gallops around her mind, her body frozen to the spot, while the woman she could barely recognise disappears into the streets of Polis. *Shit.*

Cringing at her own reaction, Lexa chases after her, trying not to cause alarm while at the same time moving as quickly as possible. Lexa knows she should be better than that, she should not be so influenced by the appearance of one woman that it leaves her incapable of thought. She loses Clarke in the busy streets, no doubt part of her plan, but Lexa acts on instinct and heads towards the stables.
Clarke wouldn’t risk staying in Polis overnight, she’d be getting out of the city right now. Lexa yells at an orderly for a horse, startling the man something dreadful before striding up to the nearest guard.

“Wake Titus and Gram kom Trishanakru, tell them to meet me in the throne room in two candlemarks!”

The guard nods and runs off in the direction of the ambassador’s’ quarters. The startled orderly nervously approaches her with a hastily prepared horse. Lexa swings up gracefully and races towards the nearest gate, shouting at the guards there to open it for her. She storms through, leaving confused guards behind her but not caring in the slightest. Heda doesn’t need to explain herself. Lexa makes a guess at where Clarke would go, not towards the heart of Trikru territory, but into the nearest tree-line nonetheless. Her instinct pays off, shortly seeing fresh horse tracks in the mud, the bright moonlight helping her for now. She won’t able to follow the tracks for long, especially once they are in the trees, but she hopes that she can catch Clarke before it’s too late.

Clarke

*Shit.*

Getting caught by anyone wasn’t part of the plan. Getting caught by Lexa is even worse than that. Lexa is one of only a few people who could possibly be able to recognise Clarke right now.

But Lexa sees her, green eyes widening with shock as they bore into her own blue.

Clarke runs, using the route she’d planned out over the last few days, although now moving faster than she’d anticipated having too. With Lexa on her trail, Clarke is sure the odds of getting herself and Jake away from Polis are even smaller than before.

She meets no resistance on her way to the wall, passing through a small gate to the outside thanks to a now unconscious guard. Her horse waits on the other side, prepared and ready to go where she left it hidden hours earlier. Clarke carefully lifts Jake onto the saddle, her son barely awake but aware enough to hold on while she climbs on behind him. As soon as she has the reins in her hands they head off at a gallop, quickly leaving Polis behind them. She hasn’t got time to cover her tracks, she might have made it this far but Lexa and her guards won’t be far away.

Before long, Clarke can hear the pounding of horse hooves in the distance behind her. She can’t tell how many there are over the sound of her own blood throbbing in her ears. Fear and determination drives her forward, holding onto Jake with one arm as she spurs her horse to go even faster. What she does once they reach the trees will seal their fate. It’s too dangerous to push the horse hard in the woods, especially in the dark. If there are more than a few guards, she will easily be overwhelmed.

At this point, she’s desperate enough to take a risk.

Lexa

Lexa slows down as she enters the woods, not wanting to injure her horse. She just manages to follow the tracks left behind but it’s slow work, using only slivers of moonlight that make their way through the tree-tops. The trail carries on for about a mile, Lexa becoming frustrated and starting to feel the cold creeping through the gaps in her coat.
Lexa stops. A horse is tied to a tree ahead of her, saddle and bridle still on but no humans or saddlebags in sight. It has to be Clarke’s horse. No-one would leave a such fine mare tied up in the middle of the woods to freeze to death. Lexa scans the surrounding area slowly. She can’t see any signs of where the pair could have gone or any movement, the lack of light disguising anything that could help her.

She sighs softly. The woman she had tried to forget, had assumed was dead, is now a huge problem. More than a problem, an unfortunate thorn that could cripple Lexa’s reputation if not dealt with swiftly. She unites the abandoned horse and heads back towards Polis, disappointment clear in her demeanor and potential courses of action running through her mind.

**Clarke**

Lexa came alone.

**Why would Lexa come alone?**

Clarke can just see her approach the horse from their hiding spot. She’d had just enough time to grab everything and cover their tracks adequately enough before Lexa had caught up to them.

Clarke is still as a statue, keeping her eyes fixed on Lexa’s next movements. She hopes her trail is as well disguised as she thinks it is. Lexa scans the area and Clarke almost flinches when those green eyes pass over their current location, but the slightest movement could give them away, even in the darkness. Clarke had almost managed to forget the green eyes that had haunted her for years, but here they are now, searching for her in the darkness, perhaps even more sadness hidden in their depths than there was four years ago.

To Clarke’s relief, Lexa only moves to untie the horse and return the way she came, her shoulders perhaps slumping slightly, although it could be a trick of the moonlight. Clarke relaxes when she can no longer hear the gentle plod of the two horses walking away. Jake grumbles slightly, drowsy blue eyes squinting up at Clarke from inside a log.

“**Sshh Jake.**”

“**Sha, mom.**” *(Yes, mom.)*

He’s the reason she did this, why she would ever risk going to Polis. Jake is everything to her. If she can’t protect her own son, everything she has done will come crashing down again, leaving her a blubbing mess of self-hatred and devastation.

When she’s completely sure Lexa is out of earshot, Clarke climbs out of the log, removing their few belongings and tying them around her back, sword still at her hip. She then picks up a half-asleep Jake, who curls himself into his mother’s body instinctively like he has done since he was a baby. Clarke makes her way through the woods, treading carefully so as to leave no evidence that they were ever there. She has an idea of where to go, but for now, anywhere away from Polis is enough for her.
Thanks again for all the comments and kudos guys! I get super excited whenever I get anything :)

Managed to get this edited quicker than I anticipated, hope you enjoy!

Later that night

Polis

Lexa

As soon as Lexa is within the walls of Polis, she orders a guard to fetch Indra and strides in the direction of the tower. Soon Indra is by her side, keeping pace and not saying a word.

“Indra, I need you to form a tracking party to leave as soon as possible. You are to seek a dark-haired woman with a small boy, they left here by horse about two candlemarks past, I lost them in the trees heading towards Trishanakru territory. If you find them, send a messenger directly to Titus and bring them both back here alive. No-one else is to know about this, understood?”

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

At that Indra is gone, leaving Lexa alone. She hopes that Indra isn’t the one to find Clarke, they never got on that well. She soon arrives at the tower, quickly entering and ordering for ambassador Kane to be brought to the throne room. Lexa gets in the elevator, thinking through precisely what to say to each person she’s about to meet. Tiredness is starting to creep in, but she still has a long night ahead of her. She doubts she will be getting much sleep tonight.

As Lexa approaches the throne room, she can see both Titus and Gram, the ambassador from the Trishanakru, waiting patiently in the corridor, weariness clear in both of their expressions. She enters the room first, climbing the dais and sitting on her throne stiffly while the two men stand awkwardly in front of her.

“Our newest nightblood, Jake kom Trishanakru, has been taken. What have you to say about this Gram?”

Lexa glares at Gram, her piercing green eyes looking for all of his reactions to the news. She has known Gram for a number of years, the Trishanakru were one of the first clans to join the coalition having been good allies with Trikru in the past. At this point, she can almost read him like a book.

Gram looks shocked to the core, he will have known that it had to be something serious to be woken in the middle of the night, but he probably didn’t expect this. He bows his head low in respect, before speaking clearly.

“I know nothing about this, Heda, and I am deeply troubled by this news. I will send riders to
*Trishana immediately to find the perpetrators.*

Lexa knows he is telling the truth, he tends to rub the back of his forefinger with his thumb when attempting to lie. She briefly looks to Titus, who is clearly fuming but keeping silent while the ambassador is present.

“There is no need to send riders, I will be going myself. This is a serious matter and I will not take such threats lightly. If it were any other clan, I would have to treat it as an act of war.”

She lets the almost-threat sink in before carrying on. Gram starts to visibly grow pale, no doubt hoping that the actions of a few individuals don’t ruin everything for his clan.

“What do you know about the boy?”

“I don’t know much, Heda, only what I managed to get out of the scouts. He came from a village called Haro, roughly two days ride from here. The scouts said that his mother is a healer, but I don’t know her name. I have heard good things about the healers in that village, many Trishanakru go to Haro if they are severely injured.”

Lexa takes a moment to commit the information to memory, making a mental note to include at least one Trishanakru warrior in the group that she takes with her.

“That will be all, Gram.”

Gram takes that as his order to leave, retreating to the corridor as quickly as possible, only breathing calmly again once out of the tower.

**Titus**

When Titus had been woken up, he assumed that another nightblood had arrived, although it is unusual that anyone other than Heda herself is allowed through the gates at night. As soon as Gram arrived outside the throne room, he knew something had to be wrong. It was unlikely that more than one nightblood would come from any particular clan, and the scouts sent to Trishana had already returned. They were waiting a long time until Heda returned. Gram attempted to make small talk, but in his sluggish state this just irritated Titus more. He was about to go find Heda himself when she appeared, a stormy expression on her face as she whisked past them.

When he heard that Jake had been taken, he was full of anger and worry. He had warned Heda that something like this might happen, but she had dismissed his concerns time and time again. Even as a child she had often ignored his advice and done her own thing. His anger grew into a burning rage, keeping his thoughts to himself until Gram left the room.

“How could you let this happen Heda? This is an act of war, we should treat it as such!”

He sees Lexa’s shoulders slump slightly with exhaustion, she has clearly not slept yet if the bags under her eyes are anything to go by. He may be harsh sometimes, but he is one of only a few who can get away with challenging her.

“For starters, you are in charge of the guards on the nightblood floor, if they are so incompetent as to let this happen, you should replace them immediately! I do not believe this was an act of war, Titus. The Trishanakru are among our closest allies, they wouldn’t do this knowingly. I presume that the woman who took Jake is his own mother, which is why I am going to sort this out myself.”
Titus’ brows knit together in worry and frustration. How does she know that a woman took Jake? Arguing the point would be futile, she wouldn’t tell him anyway. Her calm expression just infuriates him even more.

“What if it is the resistance trying to make a point, Heda? We cannot look weak in the face of such defiance!”

“Calm yourself, Titus. We don’t know whether or not it was the resistance and we haven’t heard about any developments in regards to them. If it were, they would make some sort of statement to the general public, which they haven’t. I am going to deal with this personally, no-one needs to know what happened yet.”

“But Heda -”

“But Heda nothing! I have decided! Now go check on the other nightbloods, make sure they are all still in their beds.”

Lexa’s glare is a mix of fury and determination, one that everyone attempts to not be on the other end of. Titus bows his head a little, his heart beating rapidly in his chest despite the fact that they have had many arguments like this over the years. His faith in Heda is intact, but he is sure that if she fails to bring the culprit to justice, she will be dead within the month.

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

Titus leaves the room and heads towards the nightblood floor, hoping that Lexa truly understands the risk she is taking.

Lexa

As soon as Titus has left, Lexa almost collapses against the back of the throne, her body complaining at the lack of sleep and the tension returned to her shoulders. She has stayed awake longer than this in the past. She sleepily considers that maybe peace has made her soft. Lexa drifts in and out of an uncomfortable nap, head resting between two branches on the back of the throne, until she hears footsteps in the corridor outside. She takes a moment to awaken fully, sitting up straighter and quickly rubbing at her eyes, glad that she doesn’t have to worry about smudging her war paint for once.

The doors open and ambassador Kane walks in, looking bemused as to why he is there at such an unusual hour. Lexa has come to respect Kane in the time she has spent with him, despite their obvious differences early on. He has always tried his best to accommodate the wishes of both their peoples and became the ambassador for Skaikru almost two and a half years ago now, not long after they joined the coalition. They had tried using another sky person as ambassador for a short while, but in the end it was decided that Kane was a much better fit for the job. Lexa had wholeheartedly agreed.

Kane is now standing in front of her and she feels a little bad for having to wake him in the middle of the night. Lexa knows that she is about to broach a very sensitive issue so attempts to soften her features a tad, speaking in English since Kane seems to still be half-asleep.

“You are aware that in the agreement for the Skaikru to join the coalition, any confirmed sightings of Clarke or knowledge of her whereabouts are to be shared between us, correct?”
“Yes, Heda.” He looks confused, they haven’t talked about Clarke since the coalition agreement three years ago, and the clause only allowed information to be sent both ways by relentless insistence from Abby.

“Then I have some news for you Kane, although unfortunately it isn’t all good.”

Kane’s face drops, obviously expecting the worst. All of Skaikru had assumed Clarke was dead, they hadn’t heard anything about her since they left the mountain all that time ago. There were some that still had hope, Kane included, but most had moved on by now. Her name is only ever spoken in passing at the annual celebration for the fall of the mountain.

“I have seen her, Kane. She is alive.”

Saying the words is like trying to push a small boulder out of her throat. Lexa never thought she would say that sentence aloud, but a small bubble of hope that she would has always been nestled in the depths of her heart. Kane looks overjoyed at the news, his feet shifting slightly as if itching to run to tell his people immediately.

“Where is she? Abby will be delighted.” The joy in his voice is even more obvious than in his erratic movements.

“I do not know where she is, however I have trackers out looking for her now. She has committed a very serious crime, Kane, and must be punished according to Trikru law. You may tell some Skaikru that she is alive if you wish, however I would appreciate your discretion. I do not believe you want the entire coalition to know that she is alive and to start hunting for Wanheda.”

By the time she finishes, Kane’s brow is furrowed in thought and concern. She can tell he wants to ask what Clarke did, but even if he did she wouldn’t be forced to tell him by the agreement. Lexa herself hopes that he doesn’t tell all of Skaikru, perhaps even only Abby. If other clans were to discover that she is alive, Clarke would be in even more trouble than she already is. It may have been four years since they last spoke, but Lexa doesn’t want any harm to come to her. Clarke is apparently still her weakness, even now.

“Thank you for sharing the information, Heda. I will go to Arkadia at dawn to tell Abby the news.”

Kane leaves the room, once again leaving Lexa alone. This seems to be a common theme in Lexa’s life, but then again it has been like this ever since she became Heda. She quietly stands and heads towards her own bedroom, delivering orders on the way to prepare for her departure at dawn. When she finally removes the clothing she has been wearing for almost an entire day, Lexa collapses on her bed, curling up in the furs for what she knows will be a short and broken sleep.
Next Morning

Trishanakru Territory

Clarke

Clarke and Jake are walking through the forest at a steady pace, fast enough for Clarke’s fears of getting caught to be sated, but not too fast so that Jake can walk by himself. Clarke hasn’t slept yet, getting as far away from Polis as possible is the priority right now. She had a small rest at dawn when they’d just entered Trishanakru territory, but they have to keep going.

They have a direction now and a short-term plan at least. Jake had asked about Ryka when he woke up, and Clarke realised in that moment that she needed to somehow offer his other mother the chance to disappear with them. Clarke knows that she can’t go back to the village. If she turns up with Jake, they’ll know what she did.

For now they carry on, Jake enjoying the adventure and not quite realising the seriousness of the situation they are in. The beauty of the glowing forest keeps him occupied and the awe on his face allows Clarke to be distracted from their predicament temporarily. She vaguely remembers the first time she laid eyes on the forest, radiant blue flowers had caught her eye that reminded her of her dad. He would have liked it down here, she thinks. The pain that comes with thoughts of her father is duller than it used to be, but has never disappeared. She lets the grief drive her now, vowing silently to protect this Jake to the best of her ability.

About two candlemarks after dawn, Jake starts to complain about his feet hurting, so they have a short rest in a small nearby cave, eating a few of the provisions Clarke had packed the day before. While Jake munches on his meager breakfast, Clarke pulls out a pocket-sized radio she almost always carries with her now. She can only hope that Raven is awake.

“Raven, come in, Raven. This is Kal, over.”

Nothing but static noise comes from the device. She waits barely a minute before trying again.

“Raven, you better be awake you goddamn piece of -”
“Woah woah hold on there princess, no need to be calling anyone names here,” a half-asleep sounding voice comes through the speaker.

“Raven this is urgent, is Octavia in Arkadia?” Clarke is counting on Raven being awake enough to understand her words, but the mechanic has been known to forget entire early-morning conversations sometimes. Raven better not to forget this one.

“What, no ‘Hi Raven, how’re you? What’s going on in your life?’” Clarke has missed her sarcastic friend dearly, but now really isn’t the time for pleasantries or sass.

“Raven this is serious, get your ass out of bed and fetch Octavia, radio me when you’re ready. Out.”

At that Clarke stuffs the radio in a pocket and starts to gather up their minimal possessions. She feels bad for not seeing Raven, rarely even talking to her unless there’s something she needs. Clarke makes a mental note to make it up to her someday, Raven’s name filling a whole section on the list of all the people she owes favours to whether they know it or not. Maybe someday she will have the chance to help those who have helped her. But Clarke can’t think about that right now.

“Who was that?” Jake asks. He’d seen the strange device before, but Clarke had told him not to touch it or to talk about it to anyone, including Ryka. It had taken bribery in the form of a new toy to get him to cooperate, Jake tends to tell Ryka everything when you least expect it, much her partner’s enjoyment.

“That was an old friend of mine, hopefully she can help me with something.”

He accepts her words for what the are, a quiet look of contemplation on his face. They set off again, Clarke covering their trail as they go and surveying their surroundings. Just as they reach the bottom of a shallow valley, the radio makes a muffled sound in her pocket.

Arkadia

Raven

Raven swings both legs out of bed, the cold nipping at her toes as she tries to dress quickly. She had been asleep when Clarke radioed, but the desperation in her old friend’s voice had woken her up quicker than she thought possible. Clarke hadn’t sounded like that in a long time, something bad must be going down.

Raven puts on her leg brace, a new and improved version of the first one she’d made, then stands slowly, holding onto a table as her head gets accustomed to the new height. As she leaves her hut Raven peers around, eyes adjusting to the sunlight, then heads off in the direction of the training area. Her leg feels stiff from sleep and cold, causing her to limp a little more than usual. Octavia and Lincoln are usually training in the mornings, teaching more and more Skaikru how to fight using all sorts of weapons they aren’t accustomed to yet.

Arkadia has expanded a lot over the last few years, agreements with Trikru allowing them more land in exchange for a percentage of their produce and other services. By now the whole coalition knows that some of the best medical care can be found here, thanks to Abby and her equipment. Raven had been sceptical of the treaty with the grounders at first, but now she can see the amazing benefits it has reaped on her people. Even if it is an absurd time of day to be awake.

When Raven reaches the training grounds, Octavia is mid-spar with Harper, one of the original 100.
Lincoln is advising from the sidelines, pointing out assets and faults in both warriors to those observing. Raven watches for a while, intrigued by the odd dance they perform that she herself will never be able to join in with. O had taught her how to throw knives and shoot an arrow to reasonable accuracy, but her leg prevented Raven from doing much else physically.

Soon she sidles up to Lincoln, poking him in the side. “I need to talk to your wife.” Lincoln peers down at her, the gentle giant probably wondering what she’s up to now. Raven’s grown to like him, he’s stern but knows how to take a joke. He doesn’t even react when she pokes him anymore, the muscles beneath firm and unyielding. If she’s honest with herself, she only pokes him to feel the muscles. Lincoln calls an end to the fight, nodding slightly towards Raven before moving over to talk the trainees through the next exercise.

“Hey Raven, what’s up?” Octavia is dripping in sweat, small bruises starting to appear on her bare forearms from training all morning.

“You wet enough there Blake? I can help you out,” Raven replies, playfully winking and nudging Octavia with her shoulder. “Seriously though, our friend needs to chat.” Raven wiggles her eyebrows at Octavia comically, pulling a short laugh from the girl before they head off towards Raven’s hut near the crashed Ark station.

“What does she want? It’s meant to be another month before we talk to her.” Octavia’s brow furrows in concern as she speaks, it had taken a long argument to persuade Clarke to talk to them at all.

“I’ve no idea, it sounded like there’s trouble, O. She hasn’t sounded that desperate since before the mountain.”

“Ah.” They carry on in silence, hoping that their worlds weren’t about to come crashing down around their ears yet again. They’d spoken to Clarke on the radio before, but mostly at agreed upon times to update her on how Arkadia was managing in her absence. They knew nothing about what she was doing or where she lived these days. Raven hadn’t even seen her.

They enter Raven’s hut, locking the door behind them so that no-one can enter unexpectedly. It’s a small hut really, Raven is the only one that lives there after all. The only furniture is the bed, a small chest and a large table that is permanently covered in tools and bits of wire. The two of them sit on the bed, Octavia fiddling with the edge of one of the furs. Raven pulls out the small radio she’d made to keep in touch with Clarke and hits the transmit button.

“Clarke, come in, over.”

They both wait nervously side-by-side with the radio held between them, still wondering what the hell is going on.

“Kal here, is O there?” Clarke’s voice crackles in the small speaker. They’d figured out that Clarke pretty much only uses her alias ‘Kal’ now, but they still slip up from time to time. They can’t blame her for not wanting people to know exactly who she is.

“I’m here, what the hell is going on?”

“I need a favour. I’m really sorry I have to ask but there’s no-one else.”

They pause a moment, considering what Clarke might ask Octavia to do. She’s never done this before.

“What is it Kal? You know we’ve got your back.”
There’s a pause on the other end, tense silence falling around the pair. They’d grown much closer since the mountain, even though Octavia spends only half the year in Arkadia. Whenever she’s around they hang out as much as possible, Lincoln even joins in some of their peculiar drinking games on occasion. It’s a curious friendship, one that each of them never knew they needed until they had it. They’ve told no-one about seeing Clarke, keeping her existence between the two of them. The silence is broken by the radio finally crackling again.

“I need you to deliver a message to someone in Trishanakru territory ASAP, can you do that?”

Octavia barely takes a second before responding eagerly. “Who, where and what’s the message?” The warrior often becomes frustrated when she has to spend a long time in Arkadia, a trip out is just what she needs.

“You need to see a woman called Ryka, she’s a healer in a village called Haro, grab something to write on so I can give you directions.”

Raven passes Octavia a spare piece of paper and a pencil, intrigued herself as to where this village is. This is the most they’ve heard about anything in Clarke’s life for a long time, since before the mountain even. After Clarke has finished giving Octavia the directions, she relays a short message in Trigedasleng to give to Ryka. Raven still isn’t great at the language, but presumably it means something more to this healer woman than it does to her.

“Kal, what the hell is going on?” Raven blurts out. She hates that Clarke is so secretive, it hurts that she won’t tell them what’s going on in her life or listen to what’s going on in theirs. Raven often wonders if Clarke is just using them to keep an eye on Arkadia, it’s not like she ever comes to visit or anything.

“I - I can’t tell you Raven, I’m sorry. I need to get moving. Thank you O.”

The line cuts out and she knows they won’t hear from her again today.

Trishanakru Territory

Clarke

Clarke turns the radio off and stuffs it into one of their bags. She feels guilty for not telling her old friends more, but she daren’t, not right now. Clarke thinks she can trust them, she wouldn’t have asked them for the favour if she didn’t, but after so long apart she doesn’t know for sure what they would do with any information she may give them. They might tell her mother, although she highly doubts that, neither are exactly big fans of the Chancellor.

Picking up Jake, Clarke hurries off again. She wants to get to one of her old hiding spots before dark so that she can actually rest tonight. The next few days are going to be hard.
After Jake was taken, Polis

Lexa

The moment she wakes up, Lexa knows it’s going to be a long day. She barely slept, and what sleep she did get was haunted by those stormy blue eyes as if she’d left them at the mountain only yesterday. She dresses quickly, applying her warpaint with practiced ease and attaching the red cape that marks her position.

As ordered, a small group of her most trusted warriors are gathered by the stables, horses loaded with all the supplies they need for a week or so of travelling. The sun is barely above the horizon as she approaches the stables, the clouds tinted pink in the crisp spring air. They head out as soon as they’re ready, it’s at least a two day ride to Haro.

The Trishanakru’s territory is some of Lexa’s favourite land in the coalition, second only to her beloved Trikru woods. She has visited many times before, yet every trip she sees a new plant or insect in some glorious hue that she’s never seen before. It never ceases to impress her. At night the glowing makes sleep difficult, yet it’s beauty is even more breathtaking; Lexa’s eyes roaming over every inch of her surroundings until sleep forces her to stop.

By the end of the second day of hard riding, they reach what appears to be the edge of a large village. They stop just outside the perimeter, setting up a small camp back in the trees where they won’t draw too much attention to themselves. Lexa sends one of the Trishanakru warriors into the village to see the chief and warn them of their presence. She doesn’t want any trouble, but at the same time needs to keep her whereabouts under wraps for now.

After camp is set up, two of the group are sent to keep an eye on the village while the others rest. Watching Haro from a distance, it’s clear to Lexa why Clarke settled here. It’s far enough away from the mountain and the memories that come with it, but close enough to Arkadia to keep an eye on her people. Even in her self-inflicted exile, Clarke still cares about the Skaikru.

Lexa is the first awake the next morning, fully dressed and war paint neatened by the time any of the others stir. She relieves one of the warriors watching the village, taking up a high lookout position in a tree on the west side, sunlight just starting to peek through the glowing tree tops and blinding her slightly.

She’s sat there for about two candlemarks, aimlessly toying with a dagger when movement catches her eye. A horse and single rider are slowly making their way towards the village. Lexa can’t tell who it is from this distance, although she doubts Clarke would come back herself. She wouldn’t do something so obvious.

Lexa drops from the tree silently, gradually moving closer to the slow moving horse in an attempt to identify its rider. Ducking behind a fallen tree log, Lexa peers round cautiously. It’s been a while since she’s seen her but she knows who the rider is, Indra has spoken of her improvement on many occasions.

Octavia.
Lexa creeps quickly but invisibly back towards their small camp. Perhaps she will be lucky today. She roughly knows of the agreement between Indra and Octavia so that the latter could spend half the year teaching Skaikru, the rest training with Indra in Trikru territory. There’s only one reason why she would be in Trishana alone. Clarke must have sent her.

**Haro**

**Octavia**

It took Octavia slightly longer than she expected to get to Clarke’s village. The directions weren’t exactly drawn on a map and she’d managed to get lost in the forest more than once. It was just too distractingly beautiful, that's what she told herself anyway, that and the directions were obviously terrible. At least Indra hadn’t seen her mess up.

When Octavia spots the village not long after dawn, she slows her horse down in case of a hostile welcome. Everyone is allowed to move freely within the coalition now, but that doesn’t mean people are exactly friendly with each other yet. She can’t shake the feeling that she’s being watched, but that's to be expected near a village this size, they will have a constant eye on the perimeter, even during peacetime.

“Stop. What is your business here?” A tall muscular man steps out a little way in front of her, hand on the hilt of his sword in preparation, the other on a knife at his back.

“I have a message for Ryka, your healer.”

Octavia hopes this is enough to get through, Clarke didn't exactly give her any instructions for this.

“What would the Trikru want from our healer, you have your own!”

The man doesn’t move, eyes fixed on Octavia. Clearly this dude is a bit grumpy in the morning.

“I come from Arkadia, home of the Skaikru. Our healer sent me. She wishes to learn more from your people.”

It's only a small lie really, if Abby knew about this place she would have sent O to get information anyway. She hopes it’s convincing enough for the warrior to let her enter the village.

“You may pass stranger. Do not stay long.” His curious eyes linger a moment more before he disappears into the forest, no doubt returning to his position on look-out.

Octavia nods to the air where the man had last stood, then pushes her horse into a slow walk towards the village. Well at least that's one obstacle dealt with, she thinks.

The village itself is almost as large as Arkadia, although it blends much better into the surrounding nature. If it weren't for a few clearings here and there and the sheer number of people going about their daily business, the untrained eye might not even notice how extensive the village really is. Only the larger central buildings give away that it is even there at all.

Octavia ties up her horse at the edge of the village then cautiously walks towards the center. On her way she approaches a slightly older woman to ask where she can find Ryka. She points towards one of the wider huts with broad doors at the front and a large red cross decorating the wall. It must be the healing hut.
Octavia strolls over casually, trying not to appear as much out of place as she feels she is. She enters the building, immediately looking around in the dim light. Her eyes adjust quickly and she sees a dark-haired woman coming towards her.

“Can I help you? You don't appear to be injured..”

Her sentence trails off, perhaps distrusting the stranger in front of her. Octavia runs her eyes over the woman, noting her slight build and lack of calluses on her hands that would come from wielding a weapon regularly. Her dark brown eyes peer back at Octavia, curiosity apparently overcoming her initial animosity.

“I’m looking for Ryka, could you tell me where she is?” Octavia keeps her voice low, not wanting too many people to know her exact reasons for coming all this way.

“I am Ryka,” the woman responds, now eyeing Octavia as if assessing the potential threat she may cause. It’s not like warriors go searching for a healer when they don’t need to, especially in a completely different clan.

“Is there somewhere we can speak in private? I have a message from Kal.”

The woman’s eyes suddenly widen, a hint of wetness forming in the corners either from fear or relief. Her posture immediately opens up in a more trustful way, a small smile forming at one side of her lips. What the hell is Clarke’s relationship with this woman to incite that reaction?

“Follow me.”

They leave the healing building, swiftly covering the distance between it and their destination, a much smaller hut but large enough for a small family to live comfortably. Hopefully I’ll eventually live somewhere like this, Octavia thinks wistfully.

Once inside she looks around, seeing evidence of a small child living there, if the toys are anything to go by, and unmistakable drawings of everything from plants to views of the village pinned up around the walls. Octavia had visited Abby’s quarters often enough to recognise Clarke’s work. She clearly lives here, apparently with this healer woman and a child no less! No wonder she never came back to Arkadia.

Ryka shuts and locks the door behind her, turning to Octavia expectantly but not saying a word. Her entire posture betrays how she’s really feeling, chest rising and falling faster than necessary for standing still, hands held together so tightly in front of her that Octavia can see her knuckles growing white.

“Kal’s message is: ‘If you wish to come with us, meet me where we first met in three days.’ Although that’s now tomorrow because her directions are useless. I hope you understand the rest, she wouldn't tell me anymore.”

Octavia studies the woman’s reaction, expecting understanding, maybe even excitement. What she sees instead is something Octavia is very familiar with: confliction. Her silence is uncanny, as if a thousand thoughts are all battling inside her mind trying to claim dominance over the rest. Ryka’s eyes are unfocused, drifting over the objects in the room perhaps trying to find something to ground herself. Octavia takes it as a sign to leave.

“I need to head back. It was nice to meet you, Ryka.”

Octavia leaves and heads back towards her horse, it was a long journey here and she can't be gone too long without people getting suspicious. She already had to lie to Lincoln, he doesn’t know that
her and Raven have a way to contact Clarke.

Octavia hears hurried feet behind her, then a gentle hand touches her shoulder. She turns slowly to see Ryka, a small smile filled with undying gratitude brightening her face.

“Mochof, stranger.”

The meaning behind the small gesture is not lost on Octavia. Ryka clearly loves Clarke a great deal. The lump of jealousy at seeing Clarke’s new domestic life shrinks a little, she even feels a little sorry for this woman. She has no idea who Clarke really is, she knows nothing of the drama that tends to follow the blonde around like a shadow.

“Pro, Ryka.” (You’re welcome, Ryka.)

Lexa

Lexa had gathered her warriors when she returned to their camp, knowing that they may have to move out soon. They had packed up with practiced speed, and now they wait hidden at the edge of the village, their horses back in the forest out of sight.

Lexa sees Octavia leave the village, a woman briefly stopping her on the way. That must be who she came to see.

As Octavia mounts her horse and disappears into the trees once more, Lexa orders a warrior to follow her discreetly. If Octavia has been in contact with Clarke, she wants to know how. The young warrior should know the punishment for keeping information about Clarke secret from Heda. Lexa only hopes that it isn’t all of Skaikru that are lying to her.

She orders her other warriors to spread out around the village - if the woman who stopped Octavia leaves the village, they are to inform her at once.

They obey her without question, Lexa herself counting her blessings that they had arrived in time to see the exchange between Octavia and the mystery woman. She will have to talk to Kane on her return to Polis about both Clarke and Octavia’s punishments. For now she waits patiently to see what the healer woman does next, mildly surprised that she can still predict what Clarke will do. Take care of her people.
Hodnes Laik Uf (Love is Strength)

Chapter Notes

I will warn you that there’s a sort of almost-rape & a fight, nothing bad happens and Clarke is a badass, but wanted to warn you. The specific section is separated by %% so you can skip if it could be triggering.

Also, super bummed about the Brexit vote today, it really sucks to put it mildly.

Anyway, hope the new chapter can bring you some joy!

Just after Octavia left

Haro

Ryka

Ryka returns to the healing building after the conversation with the stranger. There’s no-one needing help at the minute, but she usually spends her time there in case she’s needed for anything. These days most of what she does is bandage up cuts from training or hunting. Her life is much easier now that there isn’t war.

She enters the building, sitting in her usual chair in the far corner and washing bandages as she considers the message from Kal. The repetitive motions calm her while she thinks about the woman in question.

Ryka knew from the moment they met that Kal could be impulsive and reckless, but she usually had a good reason for doing so. It causes mixed emotions in Ryka, since she was a child she was taught that *hodnes laik kwelnes* (*love is weakness*).

But Kal had tried to teach her otherwise, that in fact *hodnes laik uf* (*love is strength*), that love for those close to you can drive you forward and keep you going when circumstances get damn near impossible.

Ryka fondly remembers the exact time when she first started to believe that this might be true.

%%

Ryka knew many of the villagers since childhood, but she had grown up with one man called Leon who had taken a liking to her even though they were never that close. Kal had only been in the village for a week or so, having finally been persuaded by Ryka to stay there for the winter. In her home no less. One night Leon got very drunk, and the drink combined with the fact that a complete stranger had just moved into Ryka’s hut fuelled his jealousy.

Leon came looking for Ryka in the middle of night, claiming that he wanted to make her his. Before he could move more than a few steps inside their hut, Kal had leapt up wearing nothing but a thin
nightgown, holding a sharp knife against his throat. Leon was easily a head taller and much stronger than Kal, but she held her ground against him, forcing him out of the hut.

But he didn’t give up. As soon as they were outside he attempted to overpower her, pinning her knife-wielding arm against the wall of the hut with one hand and sloppily punching her in the gut with the other. Somehow Kal stayed alert and conscious throughout, managing to get her own strikes in. She stomped on his toes, kicked him in the groin and bloodied his face with a swift palm strike to the nose with her free hand.

Ryka could hear a bone crack from inside her hut. Up to that point she had sat motionless in bed, frozen as the scene unfolded in front of her. But at the cracking sound and the following grunt she ran to door to check who had the broken bone. To her surprise it was Leon who knelt on the floor, hands grasping his groin and face as blood streamed from his nose. Kal stood between him and Ryka, fists clenched ready to go again if need be.

Ryka pulls herself out of her memory. Kal hasn’t changed much since then, protecting her and Jake in any way she could. But now she’d done something that Ryka couldn’t fathom. She’d managed to get Jake back and escaped from Polis. Ryka had worried about Kal the entire week she’d been gone, not even knowing if she was still alive. Kal really was special, but she knew that already. Ryka doesn’t know what to do, and she only has the rest of the day to make her decision, to meet Kal she would need to leave at dawn.

Her whole life Ryka was taught to obey her chief and her Heda, to uphold the traditions she was brought up with. If she were to make this decision four years ago, it would have been easy. But now?

Ryka’s thoughts are confused, a rioting combination of the culture she grew up in versus her devotion to both Kal and Jake. Those two people changed her life, they are her family, her people. Could she stay in Haro and be happy without them? But would she be happy being on the run from her own community, even if she were with the two people she loves the most in this world?

_Hodnes laik kwelnes o uf? (Is love weakness or strength?)_

By the time she decides what to do, darkness is beginning to fall on the village, fires starting to burn in the usual places. Ryka walks slowly to her hut, taking in everything and everyone around her. She hopes that she’s made the right decision.

**Next Morning**

**Outside Haro**
Lexa

At dawn one of Lexa’s warriors alerts her to the fact that the healer woman is leaving the village on foot. She orders him to gather the others, then they follow the woman from a distance, Lexa leading the group. Lexa is mildly surprised that this plan seems to be working, although she isn’t entirely certain that it will lead her directly to Clarke.

“Melon op, blinka au.” (Heads up, eyes open.) The order is almost silent, not wanting to bring any attention to their location. She doubts Clarke will have anyone with her, she wouldn’t risk someone else getting hurt. But given that this is where she has probably lived for the last few years, it wouldn’t surprise Lexa if Clarke had set traps around wherever it is she is now hiding.

They’ve been walking for a few candlemarks when the woman stops for a rest. Lexa knows her body is going to ache from following this woman at a crouch for so long. They also seem to be doubling back on themselves from time to time, as if the woman is trying to confuse anyone who might try to follow her trail.

During their rest, Lexa studies the healer carefully from a distance. She is undoubtedly beautiful, her long dark hair pulled away from her face in a simple tie at the back. There’s innocence yet turmoil in her eyes that Lexa can’t quite place. She is easy to read, but difficult to understand. Before Lexa can fully decipher what’s going on behind those brown eyes, the woman hurriedly packs up and sets off again, Lexa following not far behind.

Before long they come to a small waterfall overflowing with melting snow, sunlight passing through the mist forming a dazzling rainbow above the water. Up to now Lexa had managed to ignore the beauty around her and concentrate on the task at hand, anticipation of finally seeing Clarke making her giddy and nervous, keeping her focused.

Lexa stops to admire the sight in front of her longingly, a gorgeous mix of colours that she somehow feels an overwhelming connection to. The overall view is stunning, the glowing trees and fauna forming a perfect background for the mesmerising movement of fresh water as it makes it way over the ground. Lexa takes a moment to store this place in her memory, to remind herself in times of strife that this peaceful spot exists in her world.

The woman only pauses briefly then follows the river below the waterfall, not travelling far before coming to a large cluster of rocks. Behind the rocks the river flows quickly, swollen from the snow and rain of spring. It would be possible to cross safely in the summer, but now even a strong swimmer could easily be swept downstream. The tree line is a little way back from the river, leaving a small clearing of sorts between the rocks and forest.

The healer stops, turning in circles on the spot and frowning as if looking for someone. This must be the place. Lexa silently orders her warriors to spread out to form a wide semicircle in the trees around the woman’s current position. She doubts anyone would attempt to cross the river in its current state.

Lexa crouches behind a bush nearby and waits. The healer is wringing her hands and nervously tugging at the straps on her bag, still looking around the area for some sort of sign. She suddenly freezes, looking towards the trees to Lexa’s right. Lexa daren’t glance over in case the movement is seen, but she hears a small pair of feet walking steadily towards the tree line. In the clearing between the rocks and trees, Jake runs out towards the woman as she dashes towards him, Clarke just behind the boy.

“Nomon!” (Mother!) Jake cries loudly as the family embraces, kisses and smiles exchanged between all three. In the past, Lexa has felt envious of the freedom that her people enjoy, but it doesn’t compare to her emotions right now. Her stomach feels like it’s turning inside out, her throat suddenly
dry and aching, her heart thudding so loudly that she swears anyone nearby could hear it.

*We were supposed to be the same, but Clarke had the life I could never have.*

So many uncontrolled thoughts are reeling inside of her, bitterness and anger wanting to explode from every pore. It’s difficult to calm herself down as she tries to keep any hint of what’s going on inside her head from breaching the surface of her stoic exterior. Clarke could always read her, but Lexa can’t let the blonde see her true emotions in what is to come next.

**Near the waterfall, Trishanakru territory**

**Clarke**

Clarke arrives at the rendezvous point a little after dawn, carrying Jake to make sure that they leave no tracks. Their water skins are starting to run low, so she quickly fills them in the river before retreating to a good hiding spot she found a few years ago. From there she can see the river and the exact spot she hopes Ryka will remember.

Clarke’s not sure if Ryka will show up, and that's assuming Octavia managed to get the message to her in time. But Clarke daren’t stay here for more than a day. She's sure Lexa is on her tail, the commander probably already ordered the entire coalition to arrest or kill her.

Clarke can't stop, she needs to protect Jake and keep him safe, no matter the cost to herself. Sure he seemed happy when she caught sight of him in Polis, but she never wanted that life for him, a lonely and dangerous existence she knows all too well. Clarke can't let him go and never see him again, she’s already lost too many people in her lifetime.

Jake is starting to get restless, shifting and mumbling quietly while drawing in the dirt with a small stick. Clarke lets him entertain himself as long as he stays silent.

By mid afternoon, Clarke starts to lose confidence that Ryka will come. She didn't expect Ryka to renounce all her traditions and run-away with them, but she believed that there was a chance she might. Clarke hoped that she had taught at least one person that *hodnes laik uf (love is strength).*

When Ryka finally appears, Clarke's heart soars. The kind woman she'd spent the last three years with, the woman she is raising Jake with, dropped all of her ingrained beliefs to come here to disappear with them. Clarke really just can't believe it.

It takes a few minutes for Clarke to come to her senses again, shock having taken over her system. She quickly scans the area for movement before pulling Jake out of their hiding spot and leading him to his *nonom (mother)*, Clarke’s should-be-*houmon (wife)*, if only she had had the courage before.

As soon as Ryka sees them, her face shifts from worry to absolute joy and she starts running towards them, and they towards her, ending in a huge bundle of limbs and kisses, their little family reunited.

Clarke can't enjoy the moment for too long, pulling away slightly to look Ryka seriously in the eye.

“We need to get going. Lexa will be right on our tail.”

Ryka has gotten used to Clarke calling Lexa by her name rather than her title, but Clarke still sees a small crinkle of intrigue at the edge of her deep brown eyes.
“Kal, we can have a moment, surely? And what's the plan? I know of nowhere beyond Heda’s reach.”

Fear rapidly returns to Ryka’s expression and she holds Jake’s hand tighter than Clarke has ever seen her hold him before, obviously not wanting to let him go ever again. Clarke can relate, Jake’s small innocent face smiling up at them is the most adorable thing she’s ever seen. Clarke has the exact same worries, but she knows in her gut that together they can do this. They have to.

“There will be somewhere, I promise. But we need to go, we can plan on the way.”

Clarke takes a second more to lock eyes with Ryka, trying to convey all her emotions in that one look.

As she turns towards the trees, dread fills Clarke as she sees a familiar figure striding slowly towards them, hand on sword, fearsome war paint adorning her face and green eyes glaring with betrayal.

“Hello Clarke.”
Reunion

Chapter Notes

Enjoy ;)

By the river

Lexa

“Hello Clarke.”

The words burn her throat on the way out, but she hides all of the torment bubbling underneath the surface behind her typical Heda mask. The woman and Jake turn to see her, eyes going wide in shock and terror. The woman quickly drops to her knees, looking down towards the soggy ground in front of her. Jake smiles a little at Lexa, he knows more of her soft side, but his mother quickly pulls him down so that he is also kneeling in the mud.

The only one that doesn't bow is Clarke. Her hand goes towards her sword, threatening to draw it, her furious blue eyes attempting to bore holes into Lexa’s head.

“You know why I’m here. This doesn't have to be any messier than it you make it. I have warriors in the trees surrounding us, you can't escape.”

Clarke doesn't move, standing between her family and Lexa. Angry eyes quickly scan the trees looking for said warriors, although Lexa can't tell if the anger is directed at her or at Clarke herself for getting caught. Blue eyes move back to Lexa, clearly thinking through her options but not giving her intentions away.

Clarke looks almost unrecognisable now, her face changed from four years on the ground and well-defined muscles straining beneath her Trishanakru clothing. The dark hair helps with the deception, but the blue of her eyes hasn’t changed. The way she holds herself exudes power now where four years ago it may have seemed to be arrogance or self-righteousness.

The knuckles of Clarke’s left hand are white from clenching her sword hilt, but the determination that was always there is still present in the set of her shoulders. Clarke looks like a fully-formed warrior now, and could be an even better leader than she was before.

“Clarke, you cannot kill me and my warriors while still keeping the boy safe. You cannot cross the river safely. There is no option but to do as I say.”

Lexa keeps her voice even, her eyes never leaving Clarke’s tense form. Clearly Clarke doesn't want to believe her, her eyes locking with Lexa’s in an act of defiance, but Lexa had evaluated the options well before Clarke did.

“What do you want, Leksa?” Clarke growls, obviously not wanting to accept defeat just yet but knowing that it is inevitable.

The switch to Trigedaslang mildly surprises Lexa, having spoken in Gonaslang (English) up to this
point to make sure Clarke understood. Apparently she didn't have to.

“I would think that was obvious, Klark.”

Clarke

Lexa’s words infuriate Clarke. She is so angry and and betrayed, her thoughts barely coherent as she stands motionless. The irritating woman is right, Clarke has run out of options.

Clarke takes a slow step towards Lexa, gauging the distance between them. She knows she’s talented in combat now, having trained with the chief for almost four years, but she’s never see Lexa fight.

Quickly Clarke draws her sword and runs at Lexa, anger and exhaustion clouding her judgement, but she doesn’t care right now. All she can see are those green eyes turning away and abandoning her when she needed Lexa the most.

A guttural cry leaves her mouth as she charges, swiftly covering the distance despite the slippery ground. Clarke brings the sword around from her left side, clenching the hilt with both hands to force all of her anger into the strike.

Pain sprouts in her shoulders when Lexa’s sword blocks her strike with incredible strength, the muscles in her arms jarred from the impact. The second it takes for Clarke to adjust is all it takes for Lexa to break her grip on the sword and send it flying to one side.

Another second and there’s suddenly more pain in Clarke’s chest as a boot pushes her away from Lexa, almost sending her rolling in the mud. Clarke’s strong legs keep her standing, but she’s at an even worse disadvantage now.

“I don’t want to hurt you, Klark.”

Lexa has barely moved from her position, sword drawn and concern filling her eyes. Clarke pretends it isn’t there, it can’t be. Not now. The dread that filled her when she first saw Lexa resurfaces, threatening to consume her entirely. Her breathing is heavy, her shoulders ache and her eyes are trying to form tears that she can’t allow.

“It’s a bit too late for that, don’t you think?”

Ryka

When Ryka first spotted the commander, terror had taken over her mind and body, kneeling in the mud before she even realised what she was doing. Ryka just about follows what the legendary woman says in Gonasleng, but she doesn’t understand all of it.

What really confuses her is why the commander keeps calling Kal ‘Clarke’. Ryka has only ever heard of one person called Clarke. She led the Skaikru against the mountain all those years ago but disappeared after it fell. The stories said that Clarke had killed all the mountain men single handed, sacrificing herself for her people in the process. From then on, the clans had called her Wanheda, the commander of death.
Kal speaking brings her out of her reverie, still kneeling on the ground, thoughts running around her head. Could Kal really be Wanheda? The myths elaborated on Wanheda’s golden hair and eyes the colour of the sky. It’s true that Ryka had compared Kal’s eyes to a summer storm on more than one occasion, but the hair?

When Kal attacks Heda, Ryka knows that her should-be-wife won’t want to give up, even with the dire odds presented to her. She never did.

She lets go of Jake, trusting that he will behave himself, stands and goes over to Kal. She touches her arm, gently turning Kal so that she looks into her eyes and away from Heda.

“Kal, we have to do what the commander says. There’s no other way out of this without one or both of us getting killed. I don’t want Jake to have to go through that, and neither do you.”

She pauses to let her words settle in before asking the question that’s bugged her since the commander showed up. She’s pretty sure she knows the answer, but she needs to hear it from Kal.

“Why does she keep calling you Klark? How does she know you?”

Kal’s eyes start to glaze over, the smallest indication of tears beginning to form before she lowers her chin to her chest, staring at her feet and taking in a deep breath. That’s all Ryka needs to confirm what she already suspected.

“Before I came to Haro, I was known as Clarke… Kom Skaikru…”

The words are almost a whisper, a long buried memory that never wanted to be brought out into the light. Ryka’s own eyes begin to water, but she needs to stay strong for Kal and Jake. At least this time they get a proper goodbye, as a family.

She brings her arms around Kal fully and holds her tightly, the enormity of the situation and the revelation getting the better of the pair of them for now.

“It’s okay Kal. You are who you are because of your past, and I love who you are right now. You are the bravest person I have ever met, and I can’t imagine the last few years without you.”

Clarke

Lexa has been silent throughout the couple’s exchange, watching on in tense silence with sword still drawn. Clarke can’t even look at her without fury clouding her mind again.

Instead, Clarke beholds her little family, Jake standing to one side bewildered by what’s going on. She’d hoped for a more peaceful life for him, but then again she is his mother. Clarke then looks to her should-be-wife, seeing the pain and betrayal in her eyes, but also undeniable love and affection.

A thought comes into Clarke’s head. It’s probably not the smartest idea, but you never know.

She pulls Ryka flush against her and kisses her passionately for what could be the last time. She doesn’t care how Lexa reacts, Clarke needs to show Ryka how much she truly means to her, even after all of this. Clarke pulls out of the kiss, hugging Ryka close and beckoning Jake to join in their last family cuddle.

Ryka shifts back a little, looking her in the eye as fear rolls over her face. Clarke holds the eye contact until Ryka glances away to her right where Lexa stands patiently. The commander has
allowed them these moments, but Clarke doubts that they have any more.

Clarke turns away from Ryka and Jake, facing Lexa with the most expressionless face she can manage at that moment.

“Jake and I will come with you to Polis on one condition: Ryka goes back to Haro unharmed. She had nothing to do with this.”

Clarke detests the words coming out of her mouth, but both women were right, this is the only option. For now.

Lexa nods slightly and sheathes her sword. She makes a sign with her hand and four warriors appear in the tree line, all armed and fierce looking.

“Throw your weapons three feet behind you.”

Clarke obeys, slowly removing a dagger from her thigh and a small throwing knife from her left boot.

“All of your weapons, Klark.”

Lexa tilts her head to one side slightly, eyeing up potential areas where more weapons could be hidden.

Clarke sighs heavily. She thought she might get away with the weapons she’d already removed, but apparently nothing gets past Lexa.

She pulls a blade out of its sheath hidden at her back and throws it behind her with the others. Then she puts her hand down the front of her top into her breast binding, drawing out another small dagger from between her boobs. Clarke likes that hiding place, the surprise in people’s faces when she pulls it out are often priceless. Curiously Lexa doesn’t react other than a slight quirk in her eyebrow, perhaps questioning Clarke’s motives for such a location for a weapon.

Once all her weapons are thrown sufficiently far away, a warrior walks up and gathers them in a leather bag along with her other belongings. Back in the trees, a fifth warrior comes forward with six horses, one for each of them that apparently travelled with Heda.

“Baro, take Ryka back to her village then return to Polis. Mara, tie up Klark and guard her. Jake will ride with me.”

Two warriors walk towards the small family. Before they reach them, Clarke whispers in Ryka’s ear.

“Come to Polis, we can live there and keep an eye on Jake from a distance.”

Ryka doesn’t have a chance to reply to the words before one of the warriors carefully holds one of her arms and guides her to his horse. Clarke’s hands are tied by the second warrior, but she doesn’t pay attention as she watches Ryka being taken away, hoping for some sort of reaction to her proposition. Ryka’s horse leaves first and quickly disappears into the trees, leaving Clarke without an answer.

Lexa approaches to collect Jake, delicately placing the small boy on her tall horse before elegantly mounting behind him. At least he will be safe there, Clarke thinks to herself. Their predicament isn’t ideal, but for now at least she can still see her son, if not talk to him.
Day after Clarke is captured

Edge of Trishanakru territory

Jake

The second day of their journey back to Polis is as silent as the one before. Heda’s horse leads the group, Jake sat in front of her in the saddle. The other warriors follow, the horse that Kal is riding walking between two of the others. They are going slower than usual due to being a horse short, but they are making good time and should be in Polis by morning.

Jake is enjoying riding with Heda. She lets him doze off to the swaying rhythm of the horse’s steps, but a gentle arm keeps him secure in the saddle. He wishes he could ride with his mom, but he gathers by now that that isn’t going to happen. Kal isn't tied up currently, but she is being treated like a prisoner all the same. At least one warrior is always keeping her company, and Jake isn’t allowed to talk to her.

Jake wants to ask questions, but he doesn't want to seem rude, and not many people ever ask Heda things without getting their tongues cut out, he’s heard anyway. But he can't ask anyone else in their current positions.

Jake squirms in the saddle a little, questions on the end of his tongue burning to come out. Lexa notices the movement and the slight clench of the boy’s jaw.

“*What is wrong, Jake?*”

He immediately stops moving, sitting rigidly and staring straight ahead.

“*Nothing, Heda,*” he lies, but she sees right through it.

“*If you have a question, you may ask.*”

He considers her statement for a second, then decides which one of his many questions to ask her.

“*Why do you call mom Klark?*”

This may not have been the question Heda was expecting, but it is the one that intrigues him the most. Everyone in the village had called her Kal, except him of course. This new name had confused Jake ever since Heda turned up at the river.

Heda pauses for a long time, so long that Jake thinks that she silently refused to answer.
“I knew her many years ago. Back then she was going by the name Klark. I will call her Kal from now on if will make you more comfortable?”

Jake nods in reply, not trusting his mouth not to go straight into another question. Jake expected Klark to be some insult he hadn't learnt yet. He didn't expect his mom to have known the commander, or that Heda would do something just to be nice to him.

All the stories paint her as a ruthless warrior who cares for no one. But it’s becoming clear to him in the short time he's known her that the opposite is true - she loves all her people, the nightbloods in particular. He’s feeling more confident from the short interaction, daring to ask another question.

“How did you know her?”

The pause this time is even longer than before. Jake starts to look at their surroundings, in the treetops in particular for birds he recognises. He’s startled when she talks quietly in his ear.

“We were allies against the mountain. She helped to bring it down.”

Jake had heard stories about the mountain, but it happened well before he was born. All he remembers is the vague summary his nomon told him, that Heda and the Skaikru brought it down together.

Jake knows Heda isn’t telling him everything, but another question would be downright dangerous, especially with Kal riding only a short distance behind them. He lets the topic lie for now, reminding himself to ask Aden some of his other questions when they get back to Polis.

Haro

Ryka

Ryka is going about her day as usual, as if she hadn't almost runaway from it all the day before. A furrow is permanently buried in her brow, thoughts and decisions running round and round.

Kal’s proposition rattled her. Ryka decided to go with the woman she loves two days ago, but things are different now. Kal had always been cagey about her past, now she knows why.

Ryka is caught up in her thoughts, her body going through her routine without thinking about it. How could the woman she spent the last three years with be the legendary Skai Prisa. Wanheda. Klark...

The chief walks up to her silently, studying Ryka’s face carefully.

“You didn't perform your duties yesterday.”

It isn't a question, but it didn't need to be. Ryka understands the meaning.

“I miss Jake, and Kal’s trip is taking longer than expected. I needed some time alone in the woods.”

She prays that the lie is convincing, although it isn't a strength of hers.

“If that is true, how do you explain why you were brought back here by a warrior last night? A warrior who notified me of Heda’s presence nearby three days ago. What did you do, Ryka?”
There is concern in the question, but a gently simmering anger drives it. Ryka had hoped that no-one saw her return yesterday, but it was always going to be in vain. She has to tell the truth, another lie won't go down well at all. But how much of the truth can she tell her chief?

“I went to meet Kal. And Jake.”

Ryka waits for the realisation to hit the chief of what Kal had done, the woman’s face suddenly going pale in shock and fury. Steam almost seems to be billowing from her ears as she paces the room, glaring at Ryka as if unbelieving but knowing it is true. Ryka sits staring at the floor, waiting for the rant she knows is coming.

“How could you go to her? She breaks one of our most sacred laws yet you go to her? What were you thinking, that you could run off together?! I thought you had more sense Ryka! Hodnes laik kwelnes (love is weakness)! I can’t believe I let that woman twist your morals so greatly. I knew she was trouble! She will die for this, Heda will make her pay, and you are never to leave this village unless I allow it, understood?”

Ryka quietly sobs into her hands, the tirade attacking her where she’s most vulnerable - Kal. The chief stands in front of her, waiting on an answer that Ryka doesn't want to give.

But she’s right, Kal will most likely die for her crimes. There's no point Ryka travelling all the way to Polis to see it happen in front of her and have her heart ripped to shreds. She would be banished from her village, unable to return to the place she grew up.

“Sha, nomon.” (Yes, mother.)

Arkadia

Kane

Kane is in yet another meeting with Abby when they are interrupted by a knock on the door. He’s grateful for the distraction, Abby has had him locked in conversation for almost all of the three days he’s spent in Arkadia.

When he had first told her of the news about Clarke, she had hugged him tightly, joyful tears soaking into his shoulder. But she wanted more, wanted a plan to find her themselves now that they know she is alive. It had taken a very long argument for Kane to persuade her to not tell anyone else. Clarke's safety was the only reason that stopped her from ordering a full on search party.

Currently she is wrangling him for more information than he has to give, both becoming frustrated with the circling discussion.

“Come in.”

Kane doesn’t need to look at Abby to know that she is fuming at him for allowing the intrusion. He avoids her gaze by turning his attention towards the guard at the door.

“A messenger from the commander has arrived to see you, Kane.”

“Send them in.”

He looks to Abby whose face has transformed within seconds to one full of hope. He is hopeful
himself, but doubts Heda would send a messenger with such sensitive information.

Within minutes the messenger enters the room, appearing obviously uncomfortable in the old space station. They rarely use it now, keeping only the hospital and the council room open. Their living quarters are predominantly built outside the Ark now, expanded greatly from when they first landed.

“Ambassador Kane, Heda would like you to return to Polis tomorrow with the one called Octavia. I will also accompany you.”

The order is strange, putting Kane off guard for a moment before regaining his wits.

“Thank you, we will leave at dawn. A guard will show you to some quarters for the night.”

At that the messenger leaves the room, evidently not quick enough for their liking. As soon as they’re gone, Abby barrages him with yet more questions.

“Why does Lexa want Octavia to join you? Do you think it has something to do with Clarke? I swear if Octavia has known where she’s been all this time I’m going to -”

“Abby, I doubt this has anything to do with Clarke. Indra is in Polis at the minute, she probably needs Octavia for something. I will tell you if there’s anything more about Clarke, I promise.”

He doesn’t know whether or not he will actually keep that promise, but it’s what Abby needs to hear right now.

Kane says his goodbyes and goes to find Octavia. The girl will no doubt want to argue with him about it, despite the order coming from Heda herself.

As he strolls through the camp, he still can't believe that they are here, on the ground, not just surviving but even enjoying life. Kane never thought it would happen in his lifetime, and it cheers him up every time he really stops to think about it.

Eventually Kane meanders towards the training area, a small group split into pairs practicing hand-to-hand combat. He's moderately pleased that he didn't have to do too much training to be the ambassador, he was never a very active person. He approaches Octavia, calling her away from observing the pairs with a tilt of his head.

“The commander wants you to accompany me to Polis. We’re heading out at dawn.”

Kane can only hope that the conversation will end there, but he doubts it will.

What does surprise him is the slight widening of Octavia’s eyes at the order, as if she'd been caught doing something she shouldn't. Kane assumes she hasn't, although you never know with her. She is strong willed enough to do something she thinks is right, even if it means disobeying a direct command.

“Lincoln comes too.”

She says it almost like a demand rather than a request. Octavia has definitely learnt more than just how to fight while here on the ground.

“We need him here to train the others, and the orders only specified you.”

Kane knows the couple rarely go anywhere without the other. His reasoning to keep Lincoln in Arkadia is weak and he knows it. Worse, Octavia knows it too.
“Get Raven to radio her gal pal Ash, she can train these guys while we're away. You know she'll do almost anything Raven asks. Plus my Trig pronunciation still sucks.”

The Skaikru had learnt Trigedasleng to make communication with non-warrior grounders easier, but the majority were by no means fluent even now. The task had predominantly fallen to Octavia and Lincoln to teach them, but during the half year they are away, many become rusty from lack of actual contact with people from other clans. Kane keeps trying to get them to mingle and visit other places, but some of the older Arkers are stuck in their old ways and don’t trust the grounders, even after years of peace.

Octavia has a point, Ash is a valid replacement for her and Lincoln, and Raven will be extremely pleased to see her as well.

“Okay, be ready at dawn.”

Next Morning

Near Polis

Clarke

As soon as their small camp is packed up and the horses loaded, Clarke's companion for the day leaves temporarily and is replaced by Lexa. Great, just what she needs, alone time with her. Clarke shuffles her feet, uncomfortable in the awkward silence that quickly engulfs the pair.

“For your own safety, you can keep the dye in your hair and be known as Kal while you are in Polis. I am sure you have heard the rumours about you, some have even named you Wanheda. A few may try to kill you if they find out you are alive.”

Lexa doesn’t look at her, staring off towards the other members of their small party. Her tone is serious, as if she actually cares about her or something. Clarke can't deal with this right now, she just needs Jake and Ryka to be safe, she doesn’t need or want Lexa’s pity.

“Mochof.” (Thank you)

Clarke doesn’t try to hide the sarcasm in her voice, but Lexa barely reacts to her reply.

“We’re near Polis and should arrive in a few candlemarks. You will be tied up for the remainder of the journey. I will try not to let Jake see but I cannot guarantee that he won’t.”

Clarke is actually grateful for that consideration, only nodding to confirm she heard what Lexa said. She had expected to be bound, in fact she was surprised she hasn't been tied up for the entire journey, only at the beginning when she was first captured. Clearly the heartless commander still trusts her to some degree, or at least knows that she wouldn't abandon Jake.

Lexa walks away towards her own horse, lifting Jake onto it first as she has done for the last two days. Jealousy stabs at Clarke’s heart. How dare Lexa treat her own son in such a way, it’s her job to take care of him.

But it isn't anymore.

The thought freezes her insides, her stomach feeling like a large ball of lead has dropped into it and
wants to drag her to the centre of the Earth. Clarke isn't responsible for his safety anymore. It’s heart wrenching and awful, but oddly freeing in a terribly selfish way. Without him to protect and care for, what is she meant to do?

During her personal dilemma, today’s guard has come over and shackled her hands in front of her. She helps her mount their horse, clambering on behind in a much less dignified way than Lexa.

_No, that thought didn’t happen. It can’t._

The group sets off at a steady pace, small drops of rain starting to fall from the sky.

By mid morning they finally reach Polis. The small shower had turned much heavier, drenching them all completely by the time they reach the walls. Cries of _Heda_ start to echo around the wall as they enter, Lexa sitting tall and proud even though she must be as cold and wet as the rest of them who look absolutely miserable. Clarke knows the dye in her hair lasts a while in the rain, but much longer and it will be obvious who she really is.

Once dismounted, Clarke is grabbed on both sides by guards and dragged in a direction she doesn't recognise. Shouts go out around her as she searches for Jake, finally seeing him walking hand-in-hand with Lexa towards the tower. He looks back at her once, water streaming down his face from the rain, hiding his tiny tears. Clarke’s head droops. She can't do anything now. All she can do is wait.
Chapter Notes

This chapter is a bit longer again. The last section has the actual physical punishment bit in case you want to skip it.

There are more clexa scenes coming up, but be warned that I have a plan & it won’t be easy for our favourite couple ;)

Enjoy!

Later that day

Polis

Lexa

Once Lexa arrives in the tower she immediately orders for a hot bath to be drawn for her. The last thing she needs is to get sick from spending too long in the rain. Her clothes are soaked through to the skin and she can feel the cold already seeping into her bones. Titus can wait a little longer.

The hot water is relaxing, relieving some of the tension in her muscles, the woody scent in the steam comforting her senses. Lexa takes a few moments to unwind and lets her legs soak after days of hard riding. Her thoughts are as calm as her body, forgetting the events of the last week and focusing on the feeling of the water caressing her limbs.

Eventually she starts to undo her tight braids, her long brown locks dropping over the edge of the bath until she is finished untying all of the interwoven strands. Lexa dips her head under the water, gently scrubbing at her scalp and hair to loosen any dirt and grime. Her whole body is covered in a thin layer of sweat and mud, but she’s used to that.

After scrubbing her body from head to toe, Lexa dresses and slowly starts to re braid her hair, savoring the feel of the strands running between her fingers. She has always enjoyed doing this. Ever since she was little, Lexa has attempted to make her hair impressively intricate, almost like a delicate piece of artwork. It’s her only creative outlet, unless you count war strategies.

Lexa sighs knowing that she has drawn this out long enough. Titus will be waiting impatiently somewhere for her. She’s not wrong.

As soon as Lexa arrives on one of the lower floors that has some smaller meeting rooms, she finds Titus pacing up and down the corridor, glaring at the floor as if trying to set it on fire. She calmly enters one of the rooms, trying to ignore the restlessness emanating from Titus.

“I found the culprit, Titus, there is no need to be so agitated. How have things been here while I was away?”

He looks up at her, his anger dissipating a little but she can tell that it’s still bubbling under the
“How did you find her, Heda? Indra came back empty handed.”

“It doesn’t matter, Titus. What matters is that Jake is back with us and the perpetrator will be punished for her crimes, which we will discuss after you have given me updates.”

She tilts her head expectantly towards him, eyebrows raised and giving no indication that she will divulge the answer to his question.

“Two nightbloods have arrived, Heda, one from Trikru and the other from Azgeda. They have been training with the other nightbloods, I will arrange for you to meet them this afternoon.”

Finally some good news. And a Trikru nightblood, even better.

“How have the pair been getting along? I assume the rivalry between Trikru and Azgeda has caused some friction.”

Sure the coalition had been mostly peaceful for the last few years, but there has been bad blood between Trikru and Azgeda for longer than Lexa has been alive. Some of it will have rubbed off on the children.

“There was a minor incident when the Azgeda child arrived, Aden stepped in before it got too serious.”

Lexa swells with pride, Aden is definitely a favourite of hers. The fact that he is already learning to make peace between others is a very good indication of his potential.

“Good, Aden is coming along nicely I see.”

Lexa pauses a moment before making her next inquiry.

“Any word from the resistance?”

Her question is lined with heaviness, her throat tight in worry. She knows that if they caught wind of Clarke’s actions, then they would use it against her. An invisible weight is lifted off Lexa’s shoulders when Titus confirms that they have heard nothing from them.

Titus is clearly eager to get to their next topic of conversation, setting Lexa’s teeth on edge.

“What do you believe the woman’s punishment should be?”

Titus doesn’t waste a second before replying enthusiastically.

“Death by a thousand cuts, Heda. This is a very serious crime, we should use her to send a message to the resistance.”

His words are harsh, and although Lexa knew this is what he would say, they still hit her hard. She can tell that this could be another bad argument between the two in recent weeks.

“Before the conclave rules changed, the punishment for such a crime was not death. I do not believe it should be now. The woman acted as she did out of love for her son, I cannot condemn her to death for that. She did not kill anyone, there is no blood to be repaid.”

Lexa knows her argument is solid, but doubts that Titus will let it go at that. His silence speaks volumes, clearly acknowledging her points but not wanting to let his opinion be brushed under a
metaphorical rug yet again. Impressively he keeps his voice calm when he finally speaks.

“We need so set an example, Heda. You have been too lenient with these people, you need to
demonstrate your strength to the clans, show them that enough is enough.”

Unfortunately for Lexa, he is right. If it were anyone other than Clarke, the choice would be much
easier.

The problem with the resistance is that she sympathises with them and understands why they want
what they do. But Lexa can't do much about it, she has already changed many of their laws despite
almost immovable defiance from Titus and the ambassadors. Anything more might push them over
the edge.

“We shall bring her in front of the ambassadors tomorrow, stating her crime and giving them the
two options we have here. If the majority vote for her death, you shall have your way Titus.”

It’s a compromise she believes he will accept, and one that she hopes she doesn't regret tomorrow.
Her head had to make a choice, but either way her heart will be disappointed. At least Titus looks a
little happier. Well, not that she’s ever seen him happy, just less grumpy.

“This is acceptable to me, Heda. I will inform the ambassadors of the meeting tomorrow at noon.”

Next morning

Kane

At dawn, a messenger informs Kane that Heda would like to see him and Octavia immediately. They
arrived in Polis the night before but had gone straight to bed after the tiring journey. He is tempted to
ask Octavia what the hell Heda wants with her, but the look on her face tells him that she has no idea
either.

They enter the throne room, Lexa sitting imperially on her throne ahead of them, her face as stoic as
ever. Indra stands to her left, looking more irritated than Kane has ever seen her. Perhaps Lexa found
Clarke, but Kane knows it isn't his place to ask.

“Clarke has been apprehended, however we have a meeting shortly to determine her punishment.
She kidnapped a nightblood, Kane, her son I believe.”

Lexa pauses, no doubt giving them a moment to take in what she just said. Clarke has a son? It takes
him a few seconds to register the first thing that she said. Punishment.

“Will the penalty be death, Heda?”

Kane asks uncertainly, hoping that the answer to his question won't mean that he has to tell Abby
that her only daughter is dead and that she is not allowed to see her grandson.

“She may live, the ambassadors will decide on that. There will be a vote, death by a thousand cuts or
ten lashes in the square, as was the punishment before the resistance arose.”

Guilty feelings rise within Kane, his head dropping in shame. He had been involved with the
resistance to start with, a voice for them in Heda’s presence. He eventually had to stop or give up his
position as ambassador. If Clarke is sentenced to die, Kane knows that he is partly to blame.
“Thank you for warning me, Heda.”

Throughout the conversation, Kane hasn’t looked over at Octavia. He does now, wondering why Heda wanted her here. She can’t have known that Clarke was even alive.

However, the badly disguised look of dread on Octavia face tells him that she knew more than she’d let on before. Her stance is stiff, as if waiting for a verbal berating from Heda. Her eyes are averted from the women in front of her, including her own mentor.

“Octavia, I saw you in Haro four days ago talking to Jake’s other mother. We found a radio amongst Clarke’s things, I assume to keep in touch with you. What do you have to say for yourself?”

Octavia shuffles her feet nervously, her eyes finally meeting Lexa’s.

“I’m sorry, Heda. Clarke asked me to give a message to Ryka, I had no idea what she’d done.”

Her voice is low and subdued. Kane is furious that one of his own people would defy the terms of the agreement with the other clans, especially Octavia. She has the most to lose.

“How long have you been in contact with her?”

Kane can only hope that Heda believes that he had no idea it was going on.

“About two and a half years. We talk every three months or so, I give her updates on how Arkadia and the coalition are doing.”

The confession hits Kane as if a horse just ran into him. Octavia has known Clarke was alive for years, yet never bothered to share that information. Kane looks up at Heda, she appears to be as furious as he’s ever seen her. Indra’s eyes glare at Octavia with undeniable rage.

“You know what this means Octavia, there are penalties for breaking the agreement between Skaikru and the coalition.”

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

Kane knows what the standard punishment would be, lashes in the square, but he assumes that Heda doesn’t want Clarke’s existence to become common knowledge. Octavia’s punishment will have to be something much more discreet. He daren’t guess what Lexa will suggest.

“Indra will decide what to do with you.”

“Sha, Heda.”

Indra stands tall and imposing, still scowling at Octavia. Kane has no idea what she’s going to put Octavia through.

“The meeting is at noon, Kane. I expect to see you there. Bants.” (Leave.)

Noon

Clarke

Clarke has spent the time in her cell trying not to think about what could happen when she leaves it.
She has been treated reasonably well, even receiving dry clothes when she arrived, although the thin
fur here is much harder than the soft bed she has back in Haro. Or rather, had. She doubts the chief
will allow her to return to the village if she survives whatever punishment Lexa has in store for her.

Sometime around noon guards come to her cell and tie her wrists behind her back. She’s surprised
that they don’t put a bag over head, allowing her to see everything that’s going on. They drag her out
of the dungeon-style cell block and up onto the streets.

The fresh air is welcome in Clarke’s lungs after a day in the stale and slightly damp cell. She’s
pulled round a corner towards the tower, no doubt for her sentencing. She can only hope that Lexa
still has a soft spot for her. But it’s been four years, Lexa’s feelings for her will have changed in that
time.

Clarke is taken up to the throne room, large and impressive at the top of the tower. Drapes and flags
from each clan are hung along the walls and across the large window behind Lexa’s familiar wooden
throne.

The sight of the elaborate chair brings up an array of memories in Clarke, ones that she had tried to
forget. Begging for mercy for her people, countless hours planning a war. Moments that temporarily
changed her opinion of the fearsome commander.

Clarke is brought into the middle of the room and shoved to her knees in front of Lexa, her dark and
dirty hair covering her face as she stares at the cold concrete beneath her. She is the centre of
attention in that moment, her shoulders stiffening at the thought that someone might recognise her.
Kane should be there, he would remember her.

Clarke dares to look forward, gradually moving her eyes up from Lexa’s boots, over her legs
towards her strong imperious shoulders. Clarke feels a hint of admiration at the sight, but she quashes
it before it can become any more than a fleeting thought. She doesn’t meet the green eyes that Clarke
knows are staring at her, not wanting to give Lexa the satisfaction of meeting her gaze.

“This woman was caught attempting to kidnap a nightblood, her son. You will vote on what her
punishment is to be: death by a thousand cuts or ten lashes in the square.”

The voice commands the room as it always did, bringing all attention to it alone. Clarke contemplates
the options given. If she had killed someone there would be no doubt as to which would be carried
out. She hopes that the ambassadors are in a good mood today.

“All those in favour of death by a thousand cuts?”

Chairs squeak as a number of people stand. Clarke doesn’t see how many, she’ll know her fate soon
enough.

“All those in favour of lashes?”

Again chairs squeak. Clarke’s throat goes dry as her future is chosen for her by these strangers, and
Kane.

“It is decided.”

Sunset
Lexa

Lexa silently watches the crowd gathered around her. She stands on a small podium built in the centre of the main trading square in Polis, fires lit around the edge as the last rays of sunlight shine orange through the rooftops.

She is in her full commander regalia, pauldron on and red sash blowing softly in the wind. Lexa notices Kane, Octavia and Lincoln standing near the front of the crowd, their expressions full of worry.

"People of Polis, we are here today to witness the punishment of Kal kom Trishanakru, for attempting to kidnap a nightblood."

Any murmurs before she started speaking disappear, the square in eerie silence as they look at her expectantly. From one side Clarke is brought to the podium by two guards, then tied with her hands above her head to a large pole in the centre.

"Her punishment will be ten lashes by my own hand."

Lexa takes absolutely no pleasure in this, but it is her responsibility to ensure the safety of the nightbloods. She must be the one to carry out the punishment as a sign to her people, no matter the consequences when it comes to her relationship with Clarke. Not that there’s a relationship to break, she destroyed it a long time ago.

She walks behind Clarke and takes a cat-o-nine-tails from Indra. Her palms feel clammy, her heart beating fast at the thought of physically hurting the blonde. But she is Heda, this is her place in the world.

The clothes on Clarke’s torso are cut off, leaving her wearing only a strap of cloth round her breasts. Powerful muscles contract beneath pale skin as the cold hits her bare torso.

Lexa steps into position behind Clarke, allowing herself a deep breath of bitter air while the whip unfurls at her side. The chill focuses her. One poorly aimed lash could harm Clarke more seriously than intended.

The crowd is silent, but Lexa’s eyes do not stray to them. All she can see is Clarke, all she can hear is blood pumping through her ears.

Lexa’s arm acts out of instinct rather than her brain telling it what to do.

Clarke makes no sound at the first three lashes, pain only showing through the heaving of her chest. On the fourth she lets out a small groan that tears at Lexa’s heart, making her pause briefly before inflicting the next strike.

Lexa tries to get the ordeal over as quickly as possible, Clarke’s cries getting louder with each lash. When all ten are completed, Clarke’s back is dripping with blood, staining the wood below.

Lexa turns away from the sight, her own chest heaving with emotions that can’t spill out. Not here.

She gives the bloody whip to Indra and leaves the podium with supposed impassiveness. Clarke will be well cared for by healers, Lexa just needs to get away. Away from the woman she still cares about. Away from the woman she hurt.
A week later

Polis

Clarke

Clarke is lying face-down on a cot in the healing building of Polis. It’s much larger than the one in Haro. There’s space for at least forty people to be cared for at once, although at the moment there are only three including herself. There are five healers assigned to Polis, but with the shortage of injuries they can take a lot of time off.

Clarke’s back is healing well, but jolts of pain still flow through it if she twists in the wrong way. She knows it’s going to scar, even without being able to see it.

Octavia has been to see her every day, talking to her about anything and everything. Clarke appreciates her friend’s company, but she knows O is using her as an excuse to delay getting back to whatever awful task Indra has her doing that day. Yesterday she had to sharpen and polish all of the swords in the armoury, a gruelling chore Clarke is glad she doesn’t have to do herself.

Clarke is woken from a light sleep by footsteps coming towards her. She cracks her eyes open to see Lincoln approaching. He has changed her bandages every so often during her recovery, usually when Octavia came by to postpone the inevitable. Clarke had been surprised to see him when she was tied to the post a week ago, but if Octavia was around then it’s no surprise that he would have been too.

Clarke hopes that today is the day she can leave this place. Lexa had ordered that she not be allowed to leave until she healed enough to travel.

“*Heda requires your presence, Kal.*”

Lincoln’s voice is gentle, trying not to wake up the other patients.

“*Mochof, Linkon.*” (*Thank you, Lincoln.*)

The commander had visited twice to check on how she was healing, but each time Clarke pretended to be asleep so that she didn’t have to interact with her. That won’t be an option now though.

Clarke slides into a seated position and carefully pulls on a loose top with help from Lincoln, attempting not to jostle her back too much. Once dressed, Lincoln escorts her to the tower a couple of streets away from the healing building. A few people glare at her in passing, but she pays them no mind and carries on, striding purposefully and ignoring the pain that blooms with every step she takes.
Lincoln waits outside the tower while Clarke is escorted inside by a guard. She is taken to a small meeting room on one of the lower floors, apparently they don’t want her getting too close to the nightbloods again. She is left in the room alone, but the guard stands outside the door.

The room is plainly decorated, a small table at one side covered in what looks like ancient books and maps. A window looks out over the rooftops of Polis, letting in fresh spring air. Clarke goes over to it, watching the people move about below while she waits. She lets the breeze and sounds calm her, whatever Lexa wants she can’t act rashly towards her again.

After a short time Lexa walks in, flanked by Indra and the bald man she’d seen that day with the nightblood children. Indra doesn’t even look at her directly, staring somewhere over her head. The general hasn’t changed one bit.

“You wanted to see me, Heda?”

Clarke keeps her face as stoic as possible, but it pales in comparison to the other three people in the room.

“Yes, Kal. You have paid the price for your crime, however there are rules I feel I have to reiterate to you about the nightbloods.”

Clarke doesn’t appreciate the condescension, but she does wonder why Lexa is using her alias Kal when Indra will most definitely know who she is. Perhaps Lexa hasn’t told the bald man yet. Interesting.

“Family and friends are not allowed to see the nightbloods. Most are told to stay away from Polis, but I will not force you to leave if you do not wish to. However, if you see Jake even once, I will have no option but to banish you from the city. Understood?”

Clarke expected to be sent away, this is a useful development.

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

Clarke uses Lexa’s title for the first time in four years only to keep up pretenses around the bald man. She could use her anonymity as an advantage at some point if necessary.

Lexa tilts her head slightly at the use of her title, perhaps wary at such formality from Clarke.

“If you leave Polis, I want to be informed and for a guard to accompany you. This isn’t negotiable. Indra, please escort Kal out of the building and return her things.”

Indra peers down at Clarke in disdain, not dissimilar to when they first met.

“Sha, Heda.”

The reply is a menacing growl, clearly despising the order she was just given.

The pair of them leave the room, Clarke wondering if the imposing warrior is tempted to drag her down a side corridor and kill her herself. She wouldn’t blame her.

Lexa

As soon as Indra and Clarke have left the room, Titus blows up in another one of his temper
tantrums.

“Why are you allowing her to stay? She is a threat! We should banish her from the coalition altogether!”

“Titus, she has received her punishment, there is no need to do anything more to her.”

Lexa is starting to grow weary of his anger about the whole situation, but she has to listen to his opinions, to not would be downright stupid. He’s her most trustworthy advisor after all.

“What if the resistance hear of this? They will use her against us Heda! She is a weakness we cannot tolerate.”

True, it’s something that has crossed her mind, but she knows Clarke. She thinks so anyway.

“I trust her, Titus. She will not do anything that would harm innocent people, especially children.”

He pauses in his rant, confusion washing over his face.

“How could you trust such a woman Heda? She disobeyed one our most sacred laws! She is a disgrace to our people.”

Titus’ face is turning an entertaining shade of red, but Lexa can’t laugh at the old nickname she and the other nightbloods in her conclave came up with. The sweet memory is ruined by what happened to her friends, but she smiles internally all the same.

“I trust her because I know her Titus, we have worked together in the past. Do not worry about Kal, I will keep a close eye on her while she is in Polis.”

Titus looks even more confused. He has met pretty much everyone Lexa has ever worked with, except for one. She knows this, but her growing annoyance at the man caused her to reveal more than she intended to.

“Please don’t tell me she’s who I think she is Heda…”

His voice is low and threatening, eyes locking onto Lexa’s.

Lexa’s lips twitch to one side, contemplating whether or not to tell him the truth. He will just go prying in Clarke’s business if she doesn’t, but she also knows his opinions about the infamous woman.

“She is Klark kom Skaikru, Wanheda I believe people call her.”

Titus is stunned into silence. He often has more words than this, it unsettles her that this information affected him so, she assumed that he would go into yet another fit of rage.

“If the resistance hear that she is alive, and that she is the one who kidnapped a nightblood, they will use her against us Heda. I can’t believe you let her live. This is worse than I feared.”

Lexa has never seen him so worried. Apparently Wanheda has an adverse affect on everyone, not just her. She understands his worries, but he doesn’t know Clarke. She is strong-willed, yes, but a killer for the sake of it, no.

“She won’t start a war, Titus, she never wanted the last one. We could use her to our advantage.”

Titus looks into her green eyes, intrigue crossing his features.
“Once I have regained some of her trust, we can use her to get information from the resistance. She can infiltrate their ranks as Kal, the concerned parent of a nightblood. We could get accurate intel for once, we just need to show her that we want to help her.”

Lexa knows winning back Clarke’s trust will be difficult at best, but it would be worth it in the long run. Titus doesn’t seem convinced.

“She could easily switch sides, Heda. Her loyalties are unclear, your confidence in her is unfounded.”

Lexa’s irritation with the man heightens, he disagrees with all of her actions at the moment and it’s starting to wear thin. And how dare he question her judgement.

“We have her son, her loyalty is to him. She would not risk putting his life in danger.”

Lexa knows it’s an empty threat from her, she could never harm the boy.

“If she can be proven trustworthy, this is a good plan, Heda. However, if she slips up, even in the slightest, I cannot support your belief in this woman.”

Well, that’s a start.

“I understand, Titus. Let’s see how she settles into Polis, then we can think about our next steps.”

Clarke

The walk down the stairs of the tower is eerily silent, Indra driving the pace from behind her. They never got along exactly, but she thought that they’d at least reached a point of mutual respect. Four years apart and a mountain later, apparently things changed.

Once at the bottom, Indra roughly hands Clarke the bags that she’d had on the run with Jake.

“Take your things and go.”

The quiet woman gives her a glare then disappears into the tower, her powerful stride as intimidating as it ever was.

Clarke ruminates through her things, surprisingly all her weapons are there, but the radio is gone. No doubt the commander will try to keep track of her in her own way now.

Clarke replaces her weapons around her body except for the knife at her back, placing that on her other thigh. Her back is still too sore for anything to be rubbing against it.

She steps out of the tower, letting her face bathe in the afternoon sunlight. For the last week she’d been considering her options while confined to a bed. Clarke knows she wants to stay in Polis, and as long as she appears to behave, she can do.

Lincoln walks towards her, accompanied by Octavia. The younger woman’s face is downcast, exhaustion clear in her eyes. It’s Clarke’s fault. She knew she shouldn’t have radioed her, she just ruins the lives of everyone around her.

“Where to next, Kal?”
The question takes her by surprise, as well as Octavia calling her Kal.

“I’m going to stick around for a while. Where are you staying?”

“There’s a place on the south side of town, we know someone who can take you in for the time being if you need it.”

“Thanks O, Linkon. I’ll make it up to you, I promise.”

Clarke really hopes that she will be able to keep her word. Octavia stuck her neck out for Clarke and is clearly paying for it. It’s about time she started making up for all the shit she’s caused.
A Week Later

Polis

Clarke

Clarke has settled into life in Polis for the last week. She loves the life here, the people enjoying freedom and going about their days with hardly any cares in the world. She still gets a few curious eyes staring at her from time to time, but she manages to ignore them for the most part.

She’s spent a lot of time with Octavia and Lincoln, including watching them spar at the training grounds. Her back hasn’t healed enough for her to join in, but give it a few more days and she will be kicking Octavia’s ass.

Occasionally Clarke sees Lexa around, either training herself or watching her warriors. She steals glances at the woman, silently marvelling at her grace while wielding a sword. She’d never seen Lexa fight before the mountain, but now she can truly appreciate her technique. She shouldn’t be looking, Clarke berates herself when she catches herself doing it, but she can’t help it. There’s just something about the commander that demands her attention, even after everything.

By the end of the week, Clarke starts to worry that she hasn't heard anything from Ryka. She’s been in Polis for two weeks altogether now, if the healer were coming she should already be here.

Clarke's heart drops whenever she thinks of Ryka, the fact that she had lied to her for so long weighing heavily on her mind. She meant to tell her at some point, but it got harder to bring up the longer Clarke left it.

She doesn't blame her for not coming, even so Clarke can't give up that easily, not now that she's effectively lost Jake. He’s in the same city as her, but he’s just out of her reach. Whenever the nightbloods come to train, Lexa gives her a pointed look which Clarke takes as an order to leave before the kids get there.

Clarke's managed to catch a glance at Jake a few times, but he has never seen her. There are a few more kids around his age now, they must be from some of the other clans.

After one such occasion, Clarke walks back towards her quarters with Octavia and Lincoln. The
streets are even busier than normal, colourful streamers and decorations filling the air between buildings in preparation for the celebrations coming up.

"You looking forward to the festival, Kal?"

Octavia's question is innocent, but she knows what it means for Clarke. The festival celebrates the fall of the mountain, quickly becoming an annual tradition to remember the victory. People throw feasts all over the coalition, but the festivities in Polis are said to be amazing.

Clarke has managed to avoid any celebrations for the last three years. She remembers the dead in her own way, separate from other people’s jubilation.

"I'm actually thinking of going back to Haro for a few days. Could you tell Indra for me?"

Clarke doesn't voice the real reasons she's leaving Polis, but the couple can guess from the haunted look in her eyes. The mountain changed all of them, but none more than Clarke.

"Sure, that's probably for the best, it's going to be a drunken mess here. Indra's going to have me on cleanup duty, I can see it now."

Octavia grimaces at the idea and Clarke's expression lifts a little at the thought of Octavia scrubbing the streets in the early hours. Indra's tasks are foul and tiresome, Clarke tries to help out where she can but her back still limits her movements. At least she has a friend in Polis for the time being.

They stroll in silence for a while, watching the preparations half-heartedly. Clarke needs to get out of here before people start whispering about Wanheda. She knows it's only a matter of time before it begins.

Clarke loathes the title, but it sticks in her mind like a bad song on repeat. It fits her like a glove, but rubs in all the wrong places. It makes her feel powerful and strong, but at the same time destructive and ashamed.

She knows enough of the stories that have been told, recounted around the villages throughout the coalition. They paint her as a fearsome leader who brought them their revenge, a hero even. Clarke hates it all.

Two Days Later

Haro

Ryka

Ryka has been stuck in Haro for the last two weeks. She's heard nothing from Kal since the river, but if she's honest with herself she never expected anything.

Kal is dead. Ryka's heart is broken and empty.

A few people have noticed Kal's absence by now, but none ask where she's gone. They know what it's like to lose someone they care about, it's a common occurrence, one that everyone has learnt to deal with in their own way.

At night Ryka sits immobile in her hut. It’s cold and drafty with two less people living in it. The pain
is too great for Ryka to do anything other than her daily chores, barely eating or talking to the other villagers.

This particular night is no different. Red rays of light from the setting sun filter through the curtains of Ryka's hut, blinding her as she sits curled up and sobbing on the bed. Outside the village is celebrating the fall of the mountain with a large feast, but she doesn't join them.

The door opens softly, but the light in her eyes means that Ryka can't see who it is. She doesn't shift from her spot until after the door is closed and the person speaks.

"Hei, Ryka."

She knows that voice. Ryka thought she'd never hear it again. The voice of the woman she loves with all of her torn-up heart.

Ryka leaps up faster than she's moved in days and jumps on Kal, covering her face in sloppy kisses and hugging her tightly. Kal winces and groans beneath her, but right that second she doesn't care. Kal is alive.

A few moments later she loosens her grip on Kal, looking at her grimacing but happy face. She's really there. Ryka has never been happier than in this moment, her heart slowly stitching itself back together again. Her joy is only marred by the pain in Kal's face.

"I'm sorry I lied to you Ryka, I. No-one knew who I was and I just wanted a fresh start. I promise I will never lie to you again, you can ask me anything and I will answer as honestly as I can."

Kal's eyes are full of tears and pain and love. How could Ryka blame her, sure she felt betrayed at first, but she's had time to come to terms with it. She always knew Kal wasn't being completely honest with her, she'd come to accept that she wouldn't know about her life before they met.

"En's ogud, Kal - Klark. Ai hod yu in." (It's ok Kal - Clarke. I love you.)

Ryka hugs Kal again, drawing a sharp hiss from the woman's mouth. Ryka pulls back quickly, not wanting to hurt her more.

"Take off your shirt."

Kal crosses her arms over her chest and grabs the hem of her shirt, but lets out a small groan of pain when her hands reach her ribs.

"Let me."

Ryka steps even closer to Kal and gently pulls the fabric from her body. She walks around to her back and observes the scarring tissue. Long scabs run the length of Kal's back, red and angry from being jostled on the journey here. It must be incredibly painful. Ryka's healing instincts take over instantly.

"I'll put some cream on your back, sit on the bed for me?"

Kal complies silently, sitting at an angle so that Ryka can reach her whole back. It's not the first time Ryka has patched her up, but it's the worst injury that she's tended to so far.

Ryka sits behind her and starts to carefully apply the cream. She started to keep a jar in their hut for emergencies not long after Kal moved in, either for themselves or for anyone else coming to them in
the middle of the night needing assistance.

It takes a long time to cover Kal's back, but Ryka enjoys running her hands up and down her muscular form, despite the welts in her skin.

When she's finished, she wraps Kal in a gentle hug from behind, not wanting to let the gorgeous woman go.

"I'm sorry I didn't come to Polis, -"

"We don't have to talk about it. We're together now, that's all that matters."

Kal's voice is soft and tender, caressing Ryka's ears and making her feel safe.

Kal turns in her arms to plant a soft kiss on her lips. A familiar bolt of excitement runs from Ryka’s lips at the touch, suddenly wanting more of those lips. The kiss deepens, Kal grasping at the edge of Ryka’s top, almost ripping it off.

 Barely a moment later Kal pulls off Ryka’s shirt and pushes her onto her back, Ryka’s front exposed and waiting. Kal stands up then, and for a moment Ryka thinks that something’s wrong. Quite the opposite. Kal strips off her remaining clothes, leaving her in nothing but her underwear.

Ryka can't help but stare at the beautiful woman in front of her, taking in every detail. When she finally glances up to her eyes, almost all the blue has disappeared in pools of dark desire.

Next Morning

Clarke

The next morning the couple sleep in, daylight peeking into their hut, but neither wake up as early as they usually do thanks to their lengthy reunion the night before.

Eventually Clarke stirs, however she doesn't move other than to pull a still sleeping Ryka closer to her. She’s warm and happy, the woman she loves in her arms again. Clarke drifts in and out of calm dreams for a while until Ryka starts to wake up, turning so that their bodies face each other.

"Morning."

Clarke’s voice is low and croaky from sleep. Ryka’s eyes start to flutter open at the sound.

"Good morning. How did you sleep?"

Ryka had worried about sharing the small space with her given the state of her back, but Clarke had insisted that it would be fine.

"Well. I missed you.."

The way the words leave Clarke's mouth seem like a confession of sorts. They hadn't spent this long apart since the first time they met, and Clarke missed the comfort of being in her lady’s arms.

"I missed you too. If I'm honest, that's the best I've slept since Jake left."

Clarke's mouth twitches and her brows furrow for a second. She feels guilty for leaving Ryka behind
when she left, but it was the only way to ensure her safety at the time. Clarke didn't know if she'd get caught trying to get Jake back. If Ryka were captured and killed because of her own impulsiveness, Clarke could have never forgiven herself. Assuming she lived long enough that is.

Before she has a chance to say anything else, the door flings open with such a force that Clarke’s hair is blown into her face. She brushes it clumsily out of her eyes as Ryka instinctively pulls the covers more fully over their naked bodies.

"Ryka? You're late for."

Uh oh.

**Ryka**

"*Kal. What the hell are you doing here?*"

The anger in her mother's voice is comparable to being reprimanded by the commander in that moment. Ryka doesn't need to look up to know how red her face is right now.

Kal stands slowly, still naked, and starts to pick up her clothes that were scattered around the room the night before.

"*Let me dress and we can talk like adults, okay?*"

This just fuels her mother's rage even more.

"*How dare you come here, to my daughter's bed no less, and then dare to address me so! Get out! You are banished from Haro!*"

The shouting in the tiny space hurts Ryka's ears, but she can't take her eyes off the two women in front of her, suddenly feeling extremely vulnerable. Kal is standing between her and her mother, still fully naked, but protecting her like she always has. Ryka can't help but oggle Kal's perfect ass, but now really isn't the time.

"*I am allowed to see her, you can't stop me!*"

The statement is powerful, a fire burning in each word that Ryka knows is replicated in her blue eyes. She's seen that fire directed at others before, but never her mother. Brown and blue eyes are locked in a battle of wills. Ryka can only watch from behind Kal, frozen in place under the furs.

The first to move is her mother, a bitter snarl curling her lips.

"*Yes I can.*"

She goes to grab Kal's arm, but Kal blocks it easily and pushes it away despite her injuries.

"*Leave, Liza. You do not want to get on the bad side of Wanheda.*"

The air crackles at Kal's voice, the intensity of the last word radiating from Kal as if she's finally owning the title she'd been given.

Ryka's eyes grow wide in surprise and fear. Sure she'd accepted who Kal really is, but she hadn't witnessed something like this from the woman. A complete ownership of her identity that strikes
Ryka so hard she can barely breathe. Her mother moves back a step, uncertainty clear in her eyes. But she doesn’t back down.

"You are no Wanheda. You are a dumb girl who committed treason! You are no-one!"

The sound of the slap echoes through the room, a red hand-print quickly forming on the chief’s face. If she hadn't heard the sound, Ryka could've sworn Kal hadn't moved at all.

"How dare you-"

"How dare you! You barge into our home, uninvited, with no care in the world for what your own daughter wants. I will leave as you wish, but don't blame me if Ryka comes with me."

The last part kick-starts Ryka's limbs. She stands slowly and positions herself just behind Kal, glaring at her mother. The woman in question is disbelieving at the sight, her own daughter disobeying her.

"Fine. You know the consequences if you go with this traitor, Ryka."

The threat is not lost on Ryka, but she doesn't care. All she cares about is being with Kal. If that can’t be here, then they will go somewhere else.

Her mother retreats from the hut, and the couple simultaneously let out a breath they didn't know they were holding.

"Are you sure you want to do this? Life with me isn't exactly easy, or happy."

Kal's voice is small, a stark contrast against the argument that just occurred.

Ryka turns her around and holds her close, stroking the back of Kal's head gently in a way she knows calms her.

"Of course Kal, I love you."

They enjoy the moment a second longer, finally parting a little and holding their foreheads together.

"Let's do this then."

There's a hint of excitement in Kal's voice, a glint in her eye that Ryka hasn’t seen since before they found out Jake is a nightblood.

They let go of each other to pull on their clothes, but never stray too far apart. Ryka starts to gather items to take with them while Kal replaces her various weapons. They steal glances at each other now and then, smiling the whole time at the prospect of being together again.

The smiles are brought to abrupt end when the door is slammed open once again.

Two warriors rush at Kal before she can react, grabbing her arms and dragging her out of the hut. Ryka dashes after her, shouting her name, but someone else grabs hold of her and stops her from chasing after her.

Ryka looks to her right, seeing her mother overseeing everything. This is her doing.

"Kal, you are hereby banished from Haro. If you ever return, you will be sentenced to death. Take your horse and go."

The chief's voice carries over the whole village, making sure that every single person knows what
just occurred. Ryka glares at her mother a second longer before staring longingly at the woman being literally thrown out of the village.

"Ryka, come to Polis with me!"

"I will, Kal."

"You will do no such thing."

Ryka's mother has closed the distance between them in the last few moments to stand in Ryka's line of sight to Kal.

"You will stay here away from that wicked woman and will be permanently supervised. This is for your own good, Ryka."

The chief's eyes are cold, her words even colder. Ryka can no longer see Kal and she struggles against her captor to no avail.

"You can't stop me mother. I will see her again. Hodnes laik uf. (Love is strength.)"

Ryka's whole being fills her words with conviction. Ryka doesn’t know how, but she will see Kal again.

She’s quickly dragged away towards the healing building, her mother averting her eyes in disgrace at the woman her daughter has become.
Managed to get this done for you guys, keep the comments coming!

Enjoy ;)

Now

Haro

Clarke can’t see Ryka anymore. She didn't hear a reply to her shout to her. All she wants is to beat up the warriors dragging her to the edge of Haro, run back to the woman and carry her out of here.

But she can’t. Every movement of her arms are pulling at the skin on her back. She knows a few of the scabs will have torn open in the struggle. She can't give up, but she can't fight.

Clarke feels helpless as she’s taken to her horse. She hopes that Ryka heard her plea, that she will come to Polis so they can be together.

When the warriors finally shove her off towards her horse, she turns around towards the village hoping to get a glimpse of Ryka. The warriors intentionally block her path back into Haro.

She gingerly mounts her horse, vowing not to abandon her love, but to come back fully healed and better prepared.

Her companion from Polis waits not far away, confusion clear on their face. Apparently they’re the only person around who doesn't know what she did.

Together they ride off towards Polis, Clarke looking back just once before it disappears between the trees. They ride in silence for the whole day, only stopping to let the horses eat and drink.

Clarke feels different somehow. She's just been kicked out of the place she's called home for the last three years and doesn't know whether or not Ryka will follow her to Polis. But it doesn't weigh her down.

If anything, she feels lighter and stronger than she's ever been, finally owning who she is rather than running from it in fear and denial.

Sure she doesn't want everyone to know she's alive yet, but for the first time in four years, Clarke feels like she can live her life again. She’s angry at the chief, but somehow thankful that she brought Clarke out of her denial.

As the sun sets behind the trees, the pair stop for the night. After a light dinner, Clarke takes first watch while her escort sleeps.
Roughly one candlemark into her watch, Clarke hears footsteps coming towards the camp. The steps are loud compared to the forest, standing out against the gentle chirp of insects. Clarke moves swiftly and silently from her spot towards the intruder.

She steps in front of him abruptly, knife at his neck, her eyes fixed on the man.

"Who are you?"

Clarke's voice is low, not wanting to wake up her guard unless absolutely necessary.

The intruder is a short man with dark hair going slightly grey at the temples. He has the build of a blacksmith rather than warrior, his hands calloused in different places than Clarke’s. His eyes are dark but full of sensitivity and wisdom.

"Ai laik Wilson kom Ingranronakru (I am Wilson of the Plain Riders). I have come to speak to you, Kal kom Trishanakru."

His expression is honest and his hands don't twitch as if wanting to grab a weapon, but Clarke doesn't trust him.

"You are a long way from home, Wilson."

Her blue eyes glare at him, waiting for some sort of reaction, but his body remains still.

"You are the mother of a nightblood, correct?"

His question throws Clarke, only Lexa and people from Haro know about Jake.

"How do you know that?"

Clarke pushes the knife into his neck more, a small bead of blood trickling down her blade.

"I saw you get lashed in Polis. The only reason why someone would attempt to kidnap a nightblood is if you care about them. I almost tried myself many years ago."

The honesty and pain in his voice plucks at Clarke's heart strings. She pulls the knife away and gestures for them to walk away from her little camp. Once Clarke's sure that her guard won't hear them, she stops and waits for Wilson to speak.

"I am part of a group of families of nightbloods. We started to gather together when the conclave changed a few years ago. Now that our children aren't necessarily going to die, we want rights to be able to at least see them. We gained a little support from a few clans, but none want to go against Heda. As it is, the most outspoken of us are banned from Polis on threat of banishment from the coalition, or death. A few of us manage to get in now and again, but for the most part we are restricted in our movements."

Clarke had heard rumours of some resistance to Lexa, although there was always someone who didn't agree with her. She could relate.

Clarke hadn't heard about any major rebellion since Lexa killed the Ice Queen. The wanna-be monarch challenged Lexa a few months after the mountain, but had evidently underestimated the strength of the commander.

"What does this have to do with me?"

Wilson pauses as if trying to figure out how to phrase the next part of his argument.
"We think you would be a good addition to our group. You have access to Polis and clearly you still care about your son even though he is a nightblood."

Clarke considers the proposition for a minute, rolling it around in her mind to try to see all the angles she knows Wilson isn't telling her.

"You can think about it. I will be in touch in two weeks."

Without further ado he walks away in the direction he came from, leaving Clarke alone in the dark with her thoughts. She slowly makes her way back towards her guard, Wilson's words filling her mind.

The obvious choice is to join the group. She could help them. They are innocent people in a similar situation to herself.

But things like this can easily grow out of control. Clarke doesn't want to hurt anyone, or to be banned from Polis. She needs to be close to Jake, even if she can't see him.

She's so lost in thought Clarke almost forgets to wake her companion for their watch. As she lays down to sleep, her eyelids closing heavily, all she can think about is Jake.

Polis

Lexa

Tonight is the last night of the mountain festival. There are people crowding the streets of Polis, dancing, drinking and generally having a good time. It's the third day of partying, the first two as full of drunkenness and debauchery as the last.

Lexa is more relaxed this year than she has been in the past. The last three festivals were dampened somewhat for her by thoughts of the woman she betrayed. The woman she thought was dead.

Lexa wanders around Polis with no war paint and without her distinctive red sash. Most will still recognise her, but this is the only chance she gets at any sort of reprieve from her duties, finally allowing herself to enjoy the merriment around her.

She tastes all sorts of food from many different clans. Barkeeps respectfully offer her their wares, which she usually declines. She may be having a break, but she can't let her defenses down.

Late on in the evening, Lexa ends up finding Octavia, Lincoln and Kane deep in conversation. She's mildly surprised to see Kane here, he usually goes back to Arkadia for their own remembrance day. Lexa hasn't witnessed their rituals, but from what Kane has told her it's a much calmer event than it is here.

Lexa watches Kane for a moment until he catches her eye, then waits for him to approach her before setting off at a gentle stroll again.

"Good evening, commander. Are you enjoying the festivities?"

His tone is light and his face red from the heat and alcohol.

"I am, thank you."
Lexa pauses while they walk through the crowds, thinking about how to phrase what she actually called him over for.

"I have allowed Kal to remain in Polis for as long as she wishes, although I have also asked her to inform me of her movements outside of the city."

Kane hesitates, not looking at Lexa but at the vibrant world around him.

"Thank you, Commander. If Abby were to ask about her location, would you give me that information?"

Lega considers the request seriously.

"You will have to ask Kal about that. I will leave that decision in her hands."

Lexa tries and fails to hide her concern for the blonde. Kane is sensible enough not to mention it, only nodding slightly in response.

They continue in tense silence for a while longer, somehow ending up near the tower.

"Enjoy the festival, Kane."

"Mochof, Heda." (Thank you, Commander.)

They part ways, Kane returning to the centre of the celebrations, whereas Lexa decides to call it a night. She heads towards the tower, drunken shouts of Heda echoing around her.

Lexa heads up to her room and changes into a lighter dress for the night. The weather is warming up now, summer on their doorstep. She steps out onto her balcony, watching her people frolic and have fun from above.

Lexa stands there for a while, enjoying the breeze in her hair and the sounds coming up from below. The replica of the mountain in the main square is almost burned completely down now, the embers glowing red as her people dance around it.

After a while the cold starts to nip at her toes, so she returns inside the building. Lexa is full of energy from the people around her, yet completely exhausted from the last three days.

She worries that Clarke has disappeared again, even though the woman has an escort this time. Lexa doesn't blame her for leaving Polis during the festival, but howling jealousy rages through her mind at the thought of who she must have gone to visit. Her wife.

Lexa ignores her feelings, settling down on a sofa and picks up the book she started a long time ago but hasn't had time to finish. Before she's even reached the end of the page she is fast asleep.

Jake

Jake is amazed at the celebrations going on around him, at the people dancing and laughing. The joy surrounding everyone is so bright it makes him giddy.

The nightbloods have been allowed to join in the festivities, as long as they stay in Titus’ sight. They have a table set up for them near the tower, overflowing with more food than Jake has ever seen in one place.
Jake still doesn’t know anything about the mountain really, and he hasn’t had time to ask Aden all of his questions yet. Now seems as good a time as any.

The boy weaves between groups of people until he finds Aden sat with some of the other nightbloods in a circle on the ground. Jake likes Aden. He’s kind to everyone and is usually happy to answer anything he is asked.

Jake goes to sit next to Aden, questions forming a queue in his mind.

“Are you enjoying the festival, Jake?”

Jake nods enthusiastically, his whole body shaking from the motion.

“We didn’t have anything this awesome back home.”

He pauses a second before asking anything.

“Can you tell me about the mountain? It all happened before I was born.”

Aden looks down at him, perhaps considering which stories to tell him.

“For years the mountain men took our people from us and turned them into monsters called reapers. We couldn’t fight the mountain men, they had more advanced and very deadly weapons, and an impenetrable mountain to boot. But then the Skaikru came.”

Aden pauses in his story. If Jake had a seat, he would be on the edge of it.

“The Skaikru were our enemies at first, but their leader proposed a truce to save both our peoples from the mountain. Heda saved our people, but at the expense of the Skaikru left inside the mountain.”

Jake’s mouth forms a little ‘o’ at the anecdote, eyes wide and eyebrows heading towards his hairline.

“The story doesn’t end there. Nobody really knows what happened after that, but legend says that the Skaikru leader defeated the mountain men herself and saved her people. She disappeared after that, no-one knows what happened to her. Not even Heda.”

“Woooow.”

Jake is blown away by the tale, it’s much more than his nomon or mom ever told him. The group of nightbloods around him make similar noises, previously silent and listening intently as Aden spoke.

“That’s why we have this festival, to remember those we lost and to celebrate our freedom from the mountain.”

Some of the other kids ask for more details, especially about the battle at the mountain, but that’s all the information Jake can soak in for one night. He can ask who Klark is another day.

“Mochof, Aden.” (Thank you)

Jake wanders off again, dancing in the firelight, imagining what the fabled Skaikru leader might have looked like.

Arkadia
Raven

The festivities at Arkadia are reserved as always, but it’s a celebration all the same. Dinner is larger than their every-day rations and everyone gets drunker than they usually do. Later on in the night some try to dance, often ending up in a tangled pile of limbs on the floor.

Raven is enjoying this year’s traditions more than she has done for the last three years. Before it only reminded her of the pain the mountain men put her through and the smell of burned flesh as they died.

This year though, she has a very welcome distraction in the form of an incredibly attractive Trikru warrior. Since Octavia left for Polis, Ash has been at Arkadia to train the Arkers, a job that is by no means easy. The Skaikru are a stubborn lot and don’t take orders easily.

Tonight they can both relax, Raven sat on Ash’s lap as they drink and enjoy each other’s company, the outside world disappearing into the background.

“I’m glad you’re here...”

Ash turns her eyes towards her drink, still not accustomed to receiving affectionate words.

“You’re a much comfier seat than anyone else, and trust me I’ve sat on quite a few of these laps.”

Raven winks at Ash, trying to lighten the mood that suddenly became way too sappy for either of them. Ash smiles back up at her, the alcohol loosening her face muscles and actually allowing her to show some emotion. They chuckle softly together, appreciating their joint warmth in the increasingly chilly air.

“Don’t suppose you’ve heard anything from O? She’s been gone for weeks.”

Raven worries about the small brunette, even though it’s not that unusual for her to be gone for so long.

“No I haven’t, but the longer she’s gone, the longer I can stay..”

Ash’s voice is sultry and soothing, simultaneously calming Raven’s nerves and exciting her. The rumble in her throat vibrates Raven’s chest in a way she wishes it would somewhere else.

“Sounds like someone’s actually starting to like it here.”

Ash nuzzles her face into Raven’s side, her next words almost inaudible over the chatter from everyone else around them.

“I don’t like it here. I like you.”

Raven melts yet freezes at the words. Her life is so much better when Ash stays in Arkadia, but she still feels some amount of guilt at moving on from Finn. He was her family, when he died she had to make do with the Arkers that were left here. Can she risk this gorgeous woman being her new family?

She avoids the thoughts as she always has when Ash visits by kissing her passionately, not caring who’s staring or cat-calling them. The sweet taste of alcohol burns on their intertwined tongues, Raven shifting to get a better angle.

“We should go back to your hut.”
Ash’s eyes are dark and looking up at her reverently, her cheeks red and lips full from the sudden heat between them. Raven winks at her and moves off her lap, grasping Ash’s hands and pulling her up.

“Race you.”
Developments

Chapter Notes

Sorry there’s been a longer gap than usual - I was super busy at a conference & kinda got out of the habit of editing. Also my girlfriend is away and I miss her (she’s really awesome and great to bounce ideas around with, the cat misses her too).

A few people have commented that Lexa is rather cold in this fic, which I see but that’s kind of how I saw her in season 2 most of the time..? Hopefully I can write her being a bit warmer, I don’t know.

Keep the comments coming, I love reading your thoughts! I have a tumblr with the same name if anyone wants to chat about Clexa/life, I mostly just reblog awesome stuff from other people.

Anyways sorry for the ramble, enjoy! :)

Two Weeks Later

Polis

Octavia

Clarke returned to Polis two weeks ago in what Octavia deemed to be an even worse mood than when she left. Despite that she seemed to be much stronger and even more determined, probably due to her back being almost healed.

Octavia had asked what happened, but Clarke had shrugged off the question and changed the subject. It annoyed Octavia at the time, she thought they’d got past the stage of not telling each other about their lives now.

But she had to admit, Clarke had been a good companion over the last few weeks. She’d helped her out with some of the chores Indra had given her, especially some of the more gross ones like mucking out the stables. They got on with the work together, finishing earlier than if Octavia had done it one her own. It gave them time to train together in the evenings which they both appreciated.

Clarke was better than Octavia expected, despite the fact that her back wasn't fully healed yet. They often trained before dinner, the early summer heat making their sessions become increasingly sweaty as time went on.

Currently, they're working on their hand-to-hand combat, trying to pin each other to the ground and force the other to tap out using a lock.

They circle each other slowly, looking for an opening to exploit. Movement at the edge of the training grounds catches Octavia's eye for a second. She doesn't have time to identify what it is before all she can see is blue sky as Clarke knocks her on her back. Darn it.
Octavia tries to recover but Clarke has her leg in a tight lock, her body out of reach of Octavia's flailing limbs. Reluctantly she taps out and Clarke releases her. Octavia curses at herself for getting distracted. She stands slowly, looking over at whoever it was that distracted her. Of course it's the two people she least wants to see.

Indra and Lexa.

The pair are standing talking, but Octavia knows they are watching her and Clarke train from a distance. They're probably commenting on Octavia's weaknesses. She'll show them.

Clarke doesn't seem to have noticed their observers, or at least she hasn't reacted to their presence. She's already crouched and ready to go again.

Octavia takes her position, her full concentration on Clarke. She watches all of her movements, trying to predict an attack.

Clarke's hand appears from nowhere on her left. Octavia moves to block it and catch Clarke's wrist. What she doesn't expect is a leg sweeping her feet away from under her, landing heavily on her back yet again. Clarke twists her weak grasp on her wrist around so that she is in control, pulling Octavia's arm into a lock that could dislocate her shoulder. *Shit.*

Octavia begrudgingly taps out again, laying in the dirt for a second to regain the breath that was knocked out of her by the fall.

They go a few more rounds, Clarke winning more than Octavia is willing to admit. She's totally going easy on Clarke because of her back. Yeah.. that's why..

They eventually decide to call it a day, exhaustion and hunger getting the best of them. As they gather up their weapons and waterskins, Indra strides towards them. Octavia has no idea where Lexa might have gone, but it doesn't matter to her.

What does matter is that her mentor saw Octavia get her ass kicked, by Clarke of all people.

"**Indra.**"

Octavia instinctively bows her head towards her mentor, waiting for whatever awful task she has planned for her tomorrow. Indra keeps her eyes on Octavia, barely even acknowledging Clarke's existence.

"**Octavia, we are heading back to Ton DC tomorrow. We leave at dawn.**"

Indra walks away as quickly as she appeared, leaving Octavia stunned. She can finally leave Polis. Sure it's an amazing city, but Octavia misses the forest and the trees. They remind her of when they first landed on the ground, of freedom and Lincoln.

Lincoln.

She needs to let him know their new orders. He's been helping the healers at the medical building, not that they really need it. They've probably been hunting or training the whole time.

"**Need help packing?**"

Octavia turns around to look at her friend, seeing disappointment in those blue eyes that is otherwise pretty well disguised.
"Sure, you can keep whatever I don't need if you want?"

Clarke nods silently, a small smile quirking her lips up at one side. They can enjoy this last night in Polis together.

**Next Day**

**Clarke**

At about mid-morning Clarke finds herself wandering the streets of Polis with no real destination in mind. The last two weeks she'd distracted herself from reality by helping out Octavia wherever she could and by training. With her gone, Clarke needs to actually think about what she can bring to the community here in Polis.

Being a healer would be an obvious choice, but there's already a surplus in the city. Even so, she might as well make some inquiries. Haro was pretty well known for the medical care they provided there.

Thoughts of Haro cause an uneasy feeling in her stomach, but she can temporarily ignore it by taking in the life around her. Watching the wide range of people around her carry on with their lives in harmony brings Clarke some strange sort of peace of mind. There are traders of food, weapons and everything else you could ever need from each corner of the coalition. Certain aspects of being on the ground will never cease to amaze her.

As she walks, she catches movement at the entrance to one of the alleyways. The man's face is visible only for a second before it disappears into the shadows.

Clarke carefully makes her way over to the alleyway, trying not to look suspicious.

Once in the shadows, it takes her eyes a second to adjust and see the open doorway on the left near the end of the alley.

She tiptoes towards it, her shoes making no noise on the ground like she practiced for hours on end. Her shoulders are tense, just in case she misidentified the man.

Clarke enters the building carefully, taking in her surroundings before going too far in. She's in a small room, only a table and chairs taking up space in the middle and a small fireplace next to a tiny window facing the alley. At one end of the table she spots someone sat down.

Wilson.

"I assume you've had a chance to think about our offer?"

His voice is muted, loud enough for her to hear him but quiet enough so that no-one can eavesdrop.

"I have."

Clarke stands just inside the room, studying Wilson in daylight now. He looks younger than he did in the woods, but still not a young man by any means. His eyes are as honest and vibrant as she remembers them. A dark cloak is draped over the back of the chair he's sat on, his boots muddy as if he's just come from the woods.

Wilson waits patiently for her to speak again, not pushing her. Clarke has thought about his offer
ever since he surprised her in the forest. She's very tempted by it, but she can't let herself get pulled in so deep that she can never return to Polis. Clarke couldn’t forgive herself if she caused yet another barrier to be put up between Jake and herself.

"I am willing to join your group, but only as long as it stays peaceful and depending on what you want me to do. I will not do anything I am not comfortable with."

He considers her words for a second, then nods deeply.

"We understand. You will get orders in a few days."

Clarke takes that as a sign to leave, exiting the building the way she came in and quickly rejoining the bustling crowd.

She has a purpose again now, but she has no idea if it is the right thing to do. The mother in her knows that she should help them, but the leader realises that this could quickly get out of hand.

Clarke decides to wait for the orders, to determine for herself whether or not these people are truly peaceful in their intentions. She can't justify another war, especially one that could put her son in danger.

Thoughts of Jake remind her of Ryka. What would the woman think about Clarke agreeing to join the resistance?

Clarke hasn't heard anything from Ryka since she was forced out of Haro two weeks ago. This is the second time the healer hasn't followed her to Polis in the last month. Maybe she should just that her beloved will never come to live with her in Polis. Clarke can't give up, but thoughts of the woman she loves just make her feel miserable and rejected. Her first priority is Jake, she has to concentrate on somehow getting to see him for now.

Despite the huge numbers of people mingling around her, Clarke suddenly feels lonelier than she has in a long time.

Arkadia

Abby

It's been over a month since Kane told Abby that Clarke is alive. He'd promised to let her know if there was anymore news, but she's barely heard a peep from him since he left.

She'd almost gone all the way to Polis to confront him and the commander about Clarke, but things at Arkadia kept her too busy to seriously consider going.

Abby's in a Trigedaslang lesson led by Ash when Monroe pokes her head inside, eyeing Abby to follow her. She voices her apologies then leaves the room, glad to have a reason to go. She knows she needs to jog her memory on the language, but there's so many things running around her head that nothing seems to stick at the minute. She's good enough for now.

"Poda is here to see you, she's waiting in the council room for you."

"Thank you, Monroe."

Abby makes her way towards the Ark, enjoying the sunshine on her face before entering the
remnants of the cold space station. Summer is definitely her favourite time of year, its warmth something she never felt in space.

When Abby enters the council room, Poda is stood near the window looking out over Arkadia. She’s a small woman from the Plain Riders, just a bit younger than Abby and trained to be a healer for her village.

Poda had approached Abby a long time ago to discuss their different healing methods, both learning from the other. They’d spent a lot of time together in the forest or in Arkadia over the first few months of their relationship. Poda taught her which plants have the most effective healing properties, while Abby showed her the advanced machines and techniques the Arkers had in space. They got to know each other very well, becoming closer than Abby had with anyone since Jake was alive.

She was the first grounder Abby felt like she could really trust. But as with most people, Poda wanted more than to just teach Abby about plants.

Poda and her brother started a group consisting of parents of nightbloods, but their meager numbers meant that they had no way to talk to Lexa about their cause. Poda had come to Abby to try to get the support of the Skaikru. The group had sent messengers to all of the clans, but most had not been receptive to their ideas.

At first Abby was not open to her suggestions and she refused to talk to Poda for a while due to her initial deception. It didn’t take long for Abby to realise the strength of her feelings for the woman and to forgive her. It took even less time after that for her to agree with the other woman’s objectives.

Skaikru were suddenly the group’s most important allies, with Abby smack bang in the middle of it.

A few individuals had joined the cause, mostly parents from around the coalition. Some had taken their nightblood children into hiding with protection from the rest of the group. Abby knew most of what went on, but Poda and Wilson were pretty much in control of everything that went on.

However, ever since Kane had been forbidden from talking about their issues with Lexa, the resistance had stalled without much support from the other clans.

Abby has no idea why Poda would be here. She hasn't heard from her in a few weeks, no doubt busy rallying support in other clans.

"Poda, it's good to see you."

The woman turns and comes towards her, smiling a little at Abby.

"Hello, Abby. I'm sorry it's been so long since I last visited."

Abby goes to hug the woman briefly, holding her tightly for a moment. She’s well aware of the grounders’ general view on overt affection.

"No problem, I know you’re busy. Has something happened?"

Poda motions for them both to sit, their joints aren't exactly what they used to be.

"We have a new member. Wilson sent me a message over one of your devices earlier today."

Abby nods approvingly, but she's not sure why Poda would come all this way to tell her this.

"Is there something special about the new recruit? I doubt you would come all this way just to tell me
about another concerned family member."

Poda nods enthusiastically, her face breaking out into a rare full smile.

"She is.. impressive. She almost managed to take her nightblood child from Polis, but was caught in
the process. She could be a valuable asset."

"If she was caught, how come she isn't dead?"

Abby is well aware of how harsh grounder laws can be. Most of their conflicts with the other clans
are over the severe punishments they tend to dole out.

"Heda appears to have a soft spot for the woman. She got away with lashes, and is even allowed to
remain in Polis!"

The excitement in Poda's voice is unmistakable. Abby hasn't seen her eyes sparkle so bright since
she first agreed to help them.

"A valuable asset indeed.. What are you going to have her do?"

Abby doesn't want the poor woman to be in any more danger than necessary, but she knows that
Poda will have the same concerns. Some of their other members can be more forceful. Abby knows
from experience.

"We're not sure yet, maybe some recon to start with. Wilson and I need to discuss it more fully now
that she's accepted our offer."

Abby reaches across the table to grasp Poda's hands in hers, squeezing slightly.

"This is excellent news Poda, I'm glad you told me about her. I could ask Kane to liaise with her if
Wilson is struggling to get in and out of Polis?"

"I would appreciate that Abby, but we're not sure whether we can trust her yet. I don't want her to
know the Skaikru's full involvement until we've observed her for a short while."

They stare at each other for another moment, enjoying a fleeting positive moment in their long
campaign.
Hi again! Got this finished today so here you go! Hopefully this makes up for the gap before the last one.

Enjoy :)

That Evening

Clarke sorely misses Octavia. Usually at this time they’d be working or training together, but with her gone Clarke hasn't got a workout buddy.

She wanders towards the training grounds, hoping that there's someone or something there to practice with. What she doesn't expect to see is an empty arena apart from one person.

Lexa.

Clarke almost storms back the way she came, but the fluid movements of Lexa’s sword keeps her eyes transfixed. She stands there much longer than she'd like to admit, admiring the footwork and power going into each strike.

Clarke assumes that Lexa hasn't seen her watching, so she's surprised when she hears her steady voice.

"Are you going to watch all night or do you want something?"

Clarke is stunned for a second, Lexa glaring at her with her sword held down by her side. Clarke quickly regains her senses and casually approaches Lexa. She’s still angry at the woman, but she's had to learn to keep it under control given that they live in the same city now.

"I usually train with Octavia, but she’s gone to Ton DC."

She stands an awkward distance away, well out of swords reach but not too far so she appears to be a little interested in what Lexa has to say.

"You may train with me if you like. It would be good to have a decent sparring partner, although be aware that I won’t go easy on you”

Clarke manages to hide her surprise at the compliment. As far as she’s aware, Lexa has only seen her fight once, when they first reunited and Lexa easily overpowered her.

"Will I get into trouble for training with Heda? You are a nightblood after all.”
Clarke’s sarcasm doesn’t seem to affect the other woman as much as she wanted it to. Lexa’s face remains as stoic as it ever was, perhaps her lips twitch but it’s gone before Clarke can even acknowledge its existence.

“No, you won’t.”

Clarke slowly draws her sword, rolling her shoulders to loosen them a little.

She moves closer to Lexa, stepping carefully in the dirt. Clarke begins to circle carefully, keeping her eyes fixed on her opponent. That’s all Lexa is to her in this moment, someone who can make her a better warrior.

Lexa circles in the same direction, those deep green eyes fixed on Clarke, as if the rest of the world doesn’t exist anymore. Just the two of them and the space between them.

Clarke’s foot scuffs against a stone, a sting of pain shooting through her foot.

That’s all the opening Lexa needs.

The commander leaps forward, her sword thrusting towards Clarke’s head. Clarke just manages to parry, twisting her body away and regaining her stance.

Again they circle, Clarke scanning for any sort of opening.

Lexa narrows her stance slightly. Clarke spots it and takes a chance.

She swings her sword towards Lexa’s abdomen, stepping forward enough to sweep Lexa’s front leg simultaneously.

But Lexa predicted her movements. A swift boot lands in Clarke’s belly as their swords collide. She stumbles backwards a few steps before regaining her footing.

They continue exchanging blows for hours, sweat pouring down Clarke’s back. Frustratingly to Clarke, Lexa lands many more of her strikes than Clarke does, a few cuts now adorning her moist body.

Eventually Lexa calls an end to their sparring, sheathing her sword and turning away to collect her other belongings. Clarke replaces her own sword and takes a long drink from a waterskin.

“I told you emotions are weakness.”

Clarke looks around at her, confused. Her muscles are tired and already aching from training with someone much stronger than Octavia.

“At the river, your feelings towards me clouded your judgement and made you weak. Right now, you just showed me your true potential.”

At that Lexa strides off towards the tower, coat billowing out behind her in the rapidly disappearing light.

Clarke is left in stunned silence. It’s the first time in a few hours that she acknowledges who she was actually training with. She’d somehow managed to lock that information away while they sparred, but now it makes her sick, working with the person who is responsible for her son being taken away. But perhaps there’s an opportunity here. Getting in Lexa’s good books can only be a positive thing for Clarke going forward, especially if she can persuade the stoic woman to let her see Jake.
The next evening, Clarke finds herself wandering towards the training grounds out of habit, and yet again she finds Lexa there, alone. She stands watching for a moment, observing her flowing style and the strain of those solid muscles as she swings her sword.

"It's almost like you were expecting me."

Lexa pauses what she's doing briefly to turn and look at Clarke over her shoulder.

"Maybe I was."

Her tone is softer than Clarke expected, making her pause to actually think before automatically going to train with the woman. Her feet are planted in the ground as she considers her next move.

*I don't have to like her to learn from her.*

They continue in that way for the next two weeks, unintentionally making a routine of training together in the evenings. They rarely talk other than grunts of pain or Lexa giving Clarke advice on her technique.

The gradually lengthening days mean that they can workout for longer, Clarke appreciating the increased endurance the practice is giving her, as well as the additional strength from working with such a powerful opponent. The number of bruises Clarke receives decreases with every session, but she still has a long way to go if she ever hopes to become as proficient as the commander.

As always Clarke returns to her quarters covered in sweat, her belly yearning for something to sate it. She enters her small dwelling, just a room in one of the buildings from before the bombs that Octavia managed to set her up in. There isn't space for anything more than the bed and a small table with a chair next to the fireplace. It's not much, but it's home for now.

She moves automatically in the darkness, her clothes sticking uncomfortably as she slowly strips her weapons and places at the head of the bed.

"Kal."

**Wilson**

Wilson has been watching Kal carefully while he's been in Polis for the last few days. To start with it was to see whether or not she'd managed to settle in and who she'd made acquaintances with, trying to evaluate what use she could be to them without drawing any suspicion.

What he didn't expect to see was Kal and Heda training together, not quite like old friends but as if they'd known each other before. It intrigued him, and gave them many more options than he originally expected for the new recruit.

After a few days observing her routine, Wilson sneaks into her quarters and waits for her to return. Knocking would attract too much attention in this neighbourhood. Just after the sun sets on the horizon, Kal enters the room, not noticing his presence in the shadows.

"Kal."
His voice obviously surprises her, a knife at his throat mere seconds after he spoke. Her fiery blue eyes glare into his for a second before recognition crosses her face and she moves away from him. He rubs his neck a little out of habit, checking for any cuts.

"Sorry Wilson, I wasn't expecting you."

She sheathes her knife and lights a candle on the table, giving them a small amount of light. She doesn't move any further away, waiting for him to speak.

"I notice that you've become friendly with Heda."

Kal's brow crinkles in the centre, her eyes studying him closely. He doesn't mind. She needs to be able to trust him as well as the other way around. Maybe breaking into her home wasn't the best idea for their first proper meeting.

"I wouldn't say friendly. I tolerate her while she makes me a better warrior."

He considers her tense form, sensing there’s more to it than that. Wilson decides to let it slide for now.

"Would you like to sit? We have a lot to talk about."

She nods silently and pulls up the single wooden chair for him, opting to sit on the bed. The chair isn't the comfiest thing in the world, but it takes the weight off his feet for a while.

They talk well into the night, darkness falling over the city outside. Wilson tells her a little about his background and how the resistance came to be. His daughter was a nightblood, taken from him and his family many years ago. His grief overwhelmed him, knowing that his only child would either die or become the next commander. When the conclave rules changed, he had hope again. He travelled throughout the coalition, forming a group of people with similar goals as him.

Kal tells him a little about her son, then asks what the resistance specifically want to achieve and how. Wilson tells her as much as he knows is general knowledge, not quite trusting her enough to divulge all the details yet. The conversation is relaxed, bouncing ideas between the two of them about what they can realistically accomplish.

Wilson mentions some of the other members of the group and their intentions, including the Skaikru.

"The Skaikru chancellor has been very supportive of us since we approached her. We didn't expect them to help us given that they have no nightbloods. But she surprised us, even bringing up our issues with Heda through their ambassador."

Kal seems to grow tense again at the mention of the Skaikru. Wilson assumes the reaction is because of bad experiences with them when they first arrived on the ground.

"Have you dealt with any Skaikru before?"

There’s a long pause before Kal answers.

"A few."

Wilson waits for her to elaborate, but her lips are pressed tightly shut.

"With it becoming more and more difficult for me to get into Polis, you will have to liaise with the Skaikru ambassador from now on. He has a communication device that can send me messages so
we don’t have to meet in person."

The ‘radios’ as the sky people called them had become very useful in their campaign, one of the many useful contributions the Skaikru had blessed them with. Wilson was wary of the mountain-like devices at first, but he grew to appreciate how useful they can be.

Kal seems to consider his proposal before nodding her agreement, her shoulders still tight from when he mentioned the Skaikru.

"I will introduce you to him tomorrow night."

"There's no need. I know where to find him."

Her response catches him off guard. Apparently this woman is more resourceful than he first thought. Then again, she is training with Heda. There seems to be no bounds to her abilities.

Next Evening

Kane

A knock at Kane's door jerks him out of a light nap. He was expecting Wilson a few candlemarks ago with the new recruit, but the man never knocks, he just appears.

Kane rises and crosses the room to the door, wondering who the hell it is at this time of day.

He doesn’t expect to see Clarke on the other side.

Her features are softer than when he last saw her, although she was being lashed at the time. Nevertheless, her blue eyes hold a fire and determination that Kane has only seen few other times in his lifetime.

Clarke’s dyed-dark hair is tied up in braids around her head, a slight sheen of sweat visible on her forehead. A sword is strapped around her back, with at least two daggers visible in other places around her body. She’s barely recognisable from the girl he knew in space.

"May I come in?"

"Of course, please do."

They're both a little awkward as Clarke enters his home, he hasn't spoken to her in over four years after all. Kane's hospitality side takes over in response.

"Can I get you some tea?"

"No, thank you. We need to talk."

Kane gestures towards his little seating area, usually only occupied by himself. Three old armchairs are arranged around the fireplace, a small table to one side covered in papers that he needs to read at some point. The fire heats the room to an almost uncomfortable temperature given the time of year, but it’s the main source of light.

Once they are sat comfortably, he waits for Clarke to speak first. She came to see him after all, he doesn't want to seem pushy.
"Wilson sent me."

Ah.

Clarke must be the new recruit.

This throws a spanner in the works.

"Right. He said he was going to introduce me to the newcomer. I had no idea it was you."

"I had no idea that Skaikru were involved at all."

Her words are cold and slice the humid air like a knife. Kane shivers slightly as a chill runs down his back, but he doesn't take his eyes off Clarke.

"Does Wilson know who you are?"

"No, and it's going to stay that way."

Her eyes glare at him as she speaks, similar to how Lexa does when giving direct orders. Being on the ground has brought out all sorts of surprising capabilities in the Arkers. Clarke is clearly a leader, no matter what her current circumstances are.

"Of course, Clarke."

Silence falls again, mildly more comfortable than before but the tension still hangs between them. Kane dares to broach one of the many elephants in the room, speaking quietly.

"Your mother worries about you."

Clarke looks down to her hands, fiddling with a knife on her thigh. Her expression is full of guilt.

"I'm not ready to see her yet."

Clarke’s voice is quiet and calm despite the emotions he knows must be bubbling underneath the surface. He feels for Clarke, but Kane has seen first hand what her disappearance did to Abby. It almost broke the chancellor. The only thing that kept her going was the hope that Clarke was still alive out there somewhere.

"Let me know when you're ready, I can arrange something."

"Mochof. (Thank you.)"

Clarke stands slowly, Kane copying her movements.

"I'll come back when I have information for Wilson."

Kane nods, and she leaves without another word. He slumps back into his chair, thinking about how long he can keep Clarke’s presence a secret from Abby.
I Need You

Chapter Notes

This chapter is all Clexa, hope you like it :)  
I’m going to switch to uploading 1 chapter a week from now on, just so I don’t put too much pressure on myself. There may be more than 1 a week sometimes, but I can’t guarantee when/if that will happen.

Enjoy :)

Next Evening

Polis

Lexa

Lexa has started to look forward to her training sessions with Clarke. She scolds herself for it, but she can't help it. It's been a long time since anyone trained with her full on. Most tend to go easier than they would do otherwise in fear of hurting the commander and being reprimanded for it. She can tell Clarke doesn't care about that. It’s a good thing for her training, but deep down Lexa doesn’t know if she likes or hates it.

Whatever her mixed up thoughts are about their arrangement, here she is, warming up while waiting for Clarke to arrive.

Lexa has some idea of what Clarke gets up to during the day, regular reports from the chief healer in Polis indicate that the woman spends at least some time at the medical building. Apparently she had a number of excellent suggestions despite having spent only a short amount of time in the city.

Lexa herself has been trying to spend a lot of time training the nightbloods when she's not in meetings. There are eight young nightbloods now, so their lessons are much more crowded than before. They are a talented bunch, as you would expect from those with black blood. Jake has even been teaching some of the ones similar to his age Gonas leng (English) to help them catch up to his knowledge. The only disappointment is that there should be more of them. There’s usually at least one child from each clan, so they’re a few short.

When Clarke arrives, Lexa pushes all other thoughts out of her mind and they get straight into training, today working on hand-to-hand combat. She didn't realise how rusty she was until these sessions with Clarke.

The close proximity to the woman almost renders Lexa’s limbs incapable of action. She gets caught by Clarke on more than one occasion when her mind drifts to certain images she will deny ever existed. Lexa gives Clarke those small victories, using the losses to knock some sense into her and make her focus on her own movements rather than Clarke's nearness and impressive musculature.

By the end of the session, they're both covered in sweat and panting in the early summer heat. As
they drink greedily from their waterskins, Lexa builds up the courage to talk to Clarke other than just remarks on her technique.

"I have a somewhat delicate issue I'd like to discuss with you. We can take a break from training tomorrow evening and talk about it then, if you want."

Lexa says the last bit quietly, suddenly worried that the woman in front of her will deny her invitation. Clarke seems flummoxed at Lexa's request, confusion passing through her eyes. She's much harder to read now, but Lexa stills gets glimpses of her thought process now and again.

"Okay. I'm pretty sure my shoulder could do with a night off after what you did to it earlier."

Lexa manages to mask her surprise at Clarke's approval, smirking slightly at the memory of the throwing Clarke over her shoulder onto the floor earlier. She nods to the woman before retrieving her belongings, then walks back to the tower with a small smile playing at her lips.

The combination of adrenaline from training and the smell of flowers on the air makes her giddy on the way to the tower. She can temporarily forget the seriousness of the conversation she knows is coming the following day.

**Next evening**

**Clarke**

In the warm evening sun, instead of heading to the training grounds Clarke makes her way towards the tower. She has no idea what Lexa wants to talk about, as far as she knows she obeyed all of the rules laid out about seeing Jake.

As she approaches the entrance, a guard stands blocking her way.

"I am Kal kom Trishanakru. Heda is expecting me."

The guard nods once and shifts to allow just enough space for Clarke to pass them.

"Second floor, first room."

"Mochof.” (Thank you.)

Clarke heads up the stairs, guards posted on each floor as far as she can see. There seem to be more than when she was first here. Her escapade with Jake seems to have increased security in the building. At least one good thing came out of it.

The floor she’s sent to seems to be very similar to the one she came to not long after her flogging. It’s pretty much a grey concrete tunnel with multiple doors leading from it, candles placed every meter or so for light.

Clarke approaches the first door and decides to ignore any sort of manners by pushing it open, not caring whether or not Lexa is here yet.

The brunette is standing across the small room, reading some sort of documents from a large pile on the single piece of furniture. Of course she’s here, Clarke hasn't known Lexa be late for anything.

Candles light the room as they did the corridor, the sky starting to turn orange outside as the sun sets.
What remains of the sunlight glows through the single window, highlighting Lexa’s magnificent profile. Clarke appreciates the sight for barely a second before she looks away and bites the inside of her lip, reprimanding herself for letting such thoughts exist.

Lexa turns towards her, any annoyance at Clarke’s lack of manners hidden by her typical stoic expression. Clarke can deal with stoic. It’s the softer version of Lexa that has Clarke’s heart questioning her head’s decisions.

“Thank you for coming, Clarke.”

“Wasn’t sure I had much choice in the matter.”

Clarke daren’t let Lexa think that she’s forgiven her for everything that’s happened, still happening in fact, that their little training sessions have fixed their relationship. Everything is just as broken, despite certain organs trying to tell her otherwise.

Lexa just looks at her, a faint hint of guilt passing through her expression. Clarke doesn’t let her recover before speaking again.

“How’s Jake doing?”

Lexa turns back to the table and away from Clarke, fiddling with a few pieces of paper on its surface.

“He is doing well, his English is very good.”

Clarke smiles a little at that, immensely proud of her son. The smile is quickly replaced by a frown as thoughts of Jake bring up all of the heartbreak she has been trying to ignore.

Another awkward silence falls between them, Clarke still not knowing why she’s there. Even so, she’s not going to give Lexa the chance to get out of bringing up whatever it is she wanted to talk about first.

“I trust that you have heard about the resistance?”

Lexa is still facing the table, which Clarke is very glad for. She knows how to school her expressions now, but Clarke knows Lexa can still read her pretty well. She could have given everything away in that moment. She’s surprised Lexa’s taking to her about this of all things, maybe it’s a warning?

“I’ve heard rumours, nothing substantial.”

She’s going to keep her cards close to her chest for as long as possible, especially around the commander. Lexa finally turns her eyes up to meet Clarke’s. The green is as vibrant as the trees in the forest, captivating Clarke for a second before she looks away and towards the pile of papers instead.

“They are a group, predominantly made up of the families of nightblood children, who wish to make changes to how the nightblood system works. As you well know, families are not allowed to see their children once they are brought here for training. The resistance wish to change that.”

Lexa pauses a moment, her eyes roaming Clarke’s face to judge her reaction to the information. Clarke decides to play along.

“Sounds like they have a valid point.”

“I agree, however there’s not a lot I can do. I only just managed to change the rules of the conclave. I
will lose the respect and support of many of the ambassadors if I try to implement yet more changes. Peace between the clans has to be my priority.”

The slight frown in her brow tells Clarke that Lexa might actually feel for these people, she has been through the whole nightblood process after all. What confuses Clarke the most is why Lexa brought her here to talk about a group of people who they both agree with.

“Why are you telling me all of this Lexa?”

The brunette takes an almost invisible deep breath, but Clarke has gotten better at reading Lexa over the last few weeks.

“I need you, Clarke.”

All sorts of emotions well up inside of Clarke. Someone actually needs her again, but it’s the one person she doesn’t want to help. The woman who betrayed her, the woman who has caused so much pain in her life, needs her. Like I needed you on the mountain.

Clarke almost immediately scoffs at her words, but the softness in Lexa’s voice stops her. The sincerity in her green eyes is so intense that Clarke has to turn away to collect herself.

She’s already decided to help the resistance, how the hell is this going to work. She doesn’t say anything, taking deep breaths to keep calm. Lexa takes the opportunity to elaborate.

“All those in the resistance are peaceful and don’t want anyone to get hurt, they just want to be able to see their children. However, there are some who are less concerned by this, driven by either desperation or greed for power. The information we get about any skirmishes is limited and often incorrect. I need someone on the inside to give me accurate information about any planned attacks against my people.”

Clarke runs a hand through her hair, considering what the woman is proposing. Clarke working as a spy for her ex-ally. She could use the position to feed relevant information to the resistance. Options and potential plans run around her head, threatening to overflow.

“I don’t expect that it will be an easy task. You may take some time to think about it.”

Clarke doesn’t look at Lexa, only nods slightly then turns to leave. She barely pays any attention to the world around her as ideas and choices play out in her mind.

**Next Day**

**Lexa**

Lexa spends most of the next day thinking about her conversation with Clarke. It had gone much better than she expected it to, Clarke didn’t threaten her or anything. Perhaps their friendship is recovering, although Lexa knows it will take much more for Clarke to forgive her.

She barely concentrates in her meetings during the day, only half listening to the mindless arguments between the ambassadors.

When she’s finally done with her duties, it’s roughly the right time for training with Clarke, assuming that the woman shows up. They haven’t exactly had a conversation about training together, they just
went along with it as long as the other turned up. Lexa hopes that Clarke comes today, that all of the time they have spent together over the last few weeks wasn’t in vain.

As she makes her way toward the training grounds, Lexa admires the blueness of the sky, no clouds in sight. The trees on the hills around Polis are green and flourishing, enjoying the sun beating down on them. Lexa misses the sound of the wind in the leaves and the feel of grass underfoot. Maybe she can arrange an afternoon hunt sometime.

When she arrives at the training grounds, Clarke is already there, sharpening her sword. Lexa knows she isn't late, she never is.

As she approaches the woman, Lexa strips off her coat and hangs it on a post to one side. She smoothly rearranges her sword to lie across her back rather than at her hip.

“Shall we work on our sword play this evening?”

The repetitive sound of a whetstone against metal ceases, Clarke appearing to consider her a moment before replying.

“I'll do it.”

It takes a moment for Lexa to realise what she means, totally taking her by surprise. She'd hoped Clarke would help her, but realistically she never expected her to. Lexa nods her head slightly, not trusting her voice to cooperate fully.

Clarke puts the whetstone to one side as Lexa draws her sword, both of them stretching their muscles after a day off from training.

They continue as they always do, although Lexa notices that Clarke has definitely improved since their first session. Lexa is impressed at her swift progress, and proud that she is the cause of it.

Clarke’s movements are less predictable now, and her strength has definitely increased. The regular training has also helped Lexa to sharpen her skills, small nicks from Clarke’s blade reminders that she is not indestructible.

They go at it for a long time, sweat dripping from their bodies in the heat. Finally Lexa calls an end to it, sheathing her sword and reaching for a water skin to quench her thirst. Her belly growls almost audibly, reminding her that she hasn't eaten since morning.

“Would you like to join me for dinner? We can discuss the details of your upcoming mission.”

Her stomach almost flips at the suggestion that fell out of her mouth. She isn't sure how Clarke will feel about it, especially when she remembers all those hours in her tent eating together while they considered different war plans before the mountain.

Clarke still hasn't spoken. Lexa wants to run away in denial of the feelings that consume her when she’s around Clarke, more than anything she’s afraid of the influence the woman has over her. Nevertheless, Lexa knows that she could never run away from her again.

But Clarke has a wife. Whatever Lexa’s feelings are towards her, they could never happen. Even if circumstances were different and their relationship not already ruined, Lexa could not break such a sacred bond.

“Ok. I'll go wash up then head over to the tower.”
Clarke immediately walks away towards the city, leaving Lexa frozen to the spot in stunned silence.

**Clarke**

As Clarke heads to her quarters to wash up, she questions her decisions yet again. Helping Lexa means that she has information from both sides and can decide how to proceed by herself. But it also puts her in a position where her choices could put other people’s lives at risk. Again.

Her thoughts completely absorb her as she washes and changes, leaving the majority of her light armour behind but still belting her sword around her back. Clarke only notices her hunger when she’s ready to head to what is going to be a very late dinner with Lexa.

As Clarke walks to the tower for the second night in a row, she thinks back on all of her interactions with Lexa over the last few weeks. Does the woman trust her? Or does she just tolerate her presence in the city?

Questions about the ever mysterious commander continue to plague her, only one of which she knows the answer to. If there’s one thing she understands about Lexa, it’s that she will protect her people with her life, especially the nightbloods. Jake will be safe here in Polis, no matter Clarke’s actions.
That Evening

Polis

Lexa

Lexa is never nervous. Sure she gets anxious for battle to begin, or eager to get difficult tasks out of the way. But never nervous.

The somersaults in her stomach force her to reconsider.

Lexa waits patiently in one of the rooms on her private floor, the second highest in the building. The only room above her quarters is the throne room. The entire floor is for her own personal use, but she spends very little time there.

There are three rooms, all accessible by the corridor, but they also have doors between them. Two bedrooms sit either side of a more general room that she uses for dining and relaxing, not that she gets much time to do that around her duties.

It's a large room, mostly cluttered with old weapons, armor and scrolls scattered on tables around the edge of the room. A sofa and armchairs sit close to the fireplace at one side, the pit empty thanks to the gradually increasing temperatures.

The walls are decorated with the weapons of Hedas before her. There are many magnificent swords of varying sizes and shapes, with the odd warhammer interspersed between them. Lexa never understood the appeal of a hammer, it lacks the grace and flexibility of movement that her sword allows her.

A large table sits in the middle of the room with a few chairs tucked underneath. It’s usually covered in papers for Lexa to read through, but she had cleared them away to allow enough space for her and Clarke to eat comfortably. Currently it holds plates of a small range of foods, hastily put together by her staff when she returned to the tower earlier that evening.

Piles of candles are spread around the room, perhaps more than necessary. The flames help remind her that the world around her is always evolving, that she needs to remain flexible to be able adapt to the winds of change that may come her way. Plus this way she should be able to see all of her guest’s micro-expressions during their conversation.

Lexa decided to have dinner with Clarke here of all places mostly because she knew they wouldn't be disturbed or overheard. What they are to discuss is extremely sensitive. She hasn't even told Titus about asking Clarke to help them yet.

She stands on the balcony of the central room, enjoying the leftover heat from the day despite the darkness. Lexa is wearing no armour at all, relishing in the lightness and freedom of her clothing. She has a dagger hidden in her boot out of habit, but is otherwise unarmed.

Lexa can hear laughter from the streets below, but her face is tilted towards the stars. She searches the heavens with her eyes, letting her mind wander briefly. She still doesn't understand how anyone could have lived up in the sky. Lexa had to quickly accept the fact that it was possible when the
Skaikru fell to the ground four summers ago, bringing all sorts of trouble with them. Including a certain blonde.

Footsteps in the corridor attract her attention, so Lexa turns back to the room, checking once again that everything is in order.

The door opens and Lexa instinctively stands straighter, but tries to keep her body and expression open and relaxed, her hands clasped behind her back. She ignores the mild sweatiness in her palms.

Lexa’s heart almost skips a beat when Clarke walks into the room. Her face is no longer in the permanent scowl Lexa has come to expect. Instead it's relatively impassive with a hint of curiosity, gradually taking in her surroundings before acknowledging the other woman. Clarke is wearing very little armour, but Lexa is disappointed to see that her sword is still strapped around her back. Hopefully Clarke will start to trust her again through this new alliance.

Lexa gestures for them to sit, not trusting her suddenly dry mouth to say what it should. Clarke looks almost relaxed, yet more powerful than Lexa has ever seen her. She’s absolutely breathtaking.

They sit at the table in silence, not too close but near enough so that they can talk without raising their voices. Lexa offers the plates to Clarke before helping herself to some meat and fruit, having resisted eating anything until Clarke arrived. She’s positively ravenous.

They eat quietly together for a while, both women trying not to get caught glancing at the other. In one such glance, Lexa notices Clarke looking around the walls at the arrangements of weapons on display.

“They are the weapons of the commanders before me. One day my own sword will be hung from these walls.”

Her words somehow break the deadlock of silence between them.

“I prefer the more recent style, some of these are rather.. crude.”

Lexa nods and smiles slightly in agreement. The sequence of weapons consistently make her appreciate the advances they’ve had since some of those on the wall were forged. They also remind her of the responsibility she bears, the legacy she has to uphold. Her heavy thoughts are interrupted by Clarke.

“Can we get to the point? I don’t fancy talking about old weapons all night.”

Lexa looks over to her guest to see a tired but meaningful glare pointed towards her.

“I do not intend on keeping you all night, Clarke.”

Lexa chuckles internally, thinking of all the things they could do with an entire night to themselves. She softly pushes those thoughts down, allowing a small smirk to cross her features, then rises to fetch a scroll from a nearby table.

“Can you read our script?”

Clarke nods, so Lexa brings the scroll back to the table and pushes it towards Clarke as she sits down again.

“This is the information I have about the resistance, including names of their higher members, their objectives etc. None of this is definitive, I cannot tell you how much of it may be incorrect.”
Lexa wrote the document herself the previous evening in case Clarke agreed to help her. It doesn’t actually contain everything she knows, but enough to show Clarke that she is willing to share her information.

“I see that Kane and my mother are on here.”

Lexa pauses before replying. Of course this would be the first thing she spotted. Lexa had considered leaving them off the list, but Clarke deserves to know what the Skaikru are getting themselves involved in. They’re still her people.

“Kane has been reprimanded multiple times for bringing resistance issues to council meetings. The chancellor is on there by association.”

Clarke nods, giving no other reaction to the news. Lexa watches her eyes slowly drift down the page before she looks up again.

“How is this going to work? I’m not taking orders from you.”

The blue eyes glaring at Lexa are steely and cold. Lexa knows that she couldn’t order Clarke to do anything and expect her to obey. The sky woman never followed her direction without an argument.

“I don’t expect you to. However, I do want regular updates on your progress.”

Clarke’s eyes narrow minutely at her words, perhaps studying Lexa’s face for any sign that what she’s saying is untrue. Lexa takes a drink to give her hands something to do while she waits for a response.

“I can update you while we train, if you want to keep that up.”

Lexa considers her suggestion. It would certainly bring about less suspicion than if they were to regularly meet in the tower. Breaks in routine are an obvious sign to an enemy that something is going on. Lexa manages to subdue her disappointment at not seeing Clarke more often, but at least their training will continue.

“As long as no one else is present, yes.”

The room falls into silence once more, both women having had their fill of food and awkward conversation.

Clarke stands slowly, readjusting her sword once she’s fully upright. Lexa follows suit, clenching her fingers together behind her back.

“Reshop, Heda.” (Goodnight, Commander.)

“Goodnight, Clarke.”

Next day

Kane

Kane has always enjoyed Polis. The people are interesting and colourful, mingling peacefully with each other as they trade wares and stories. He especially likes the food market. There’s a huge range of items from all over the coalition, forming a wonderful amalgamation of smells that assault the
senses before you even reach the square. There’s usually something he hasn’t tried yet, despite having lived in the city or a few years now.

He's wandering through said market when Clarke silently walks up behind him and slips a note into his hand, unnoticeable to anyone around them. Her dark hair passes by and away from him, only looking back once to check he's received the message.

Kane stuffs the note into an inside pocket and cuts his walk short by heading back to his quarters. All of the ambassadors were given housing close to the tower, he guesses so that they have no excuse to not attend each and every meeting. Not that Kane would ever dare to miss one.

Once inside, he tucks into the meat he purchased at the market and rummages around his pockets for the note from Clarke.

_Tell Wilson I am making progress with Heda. I will have more information for him in a week._

Kane had wondered what Clarke’s mission was in Polis that he could not complete himself. However, there’s no doubt in his mind that Clarke has a connection to Lexa that he does not. Not many people in the coalition would be able arrange a meeting with the commander, let alone get anything useful from the woman.

Once he's finished his mouthful, Kane gets up and retrieves one of the radios from a locked trunk under his bed. He has two, one specifically for contacting Arkadia, the other to get in touch with Wilson. Lexa only knows about the former.

"Wilson, come in. This is Kane, over."

He barely has to wait until a recognisable voice crackles through from the other end.

"Wilson here, go ahead Kane."

"Kal is making progress with Heda, she will have information for you within the week."

"Excellent. Ask her to find out if Heda knows about any specific names or locations. It would be good to know if we have to move anyone."

"Will do Wilson. Over and out."

Kane switches off the radio and replaces it in the trunk, making sure the lock is secure before pushing the trunk back under the bed. He hopes Clarke knows what she's doing.

A week later

Clarke

In the week that's passed, not much has really changed for Clarke, despite working for both sides of a disaster waiting to happen.

She decided to wait a week before giving any information to Wilson, using the time to figure out from what he told her how much of Lexa's information is actually correct. Clarke didn't see his name on the list Lexa gave her, but that doesn't mean the commander doesn't know about him. She knows that Lexa won’t have given her everything, but neither did Wilson.
Clarke has met with Kane a few times, mostly so that she can tell Lexa that she is actually working on her mission. Truth be told, Clarke does it to get more information from Kane about the resistance. She's sure Wilson will have told her a more amicable version of events, but Kane has been a part of the organisation for a while. He must know something about the people she's trying to help.

So far, she's gathered that the resistance have a main base of operations in one of the more southern clans, but even Kane doesn't know the name of the place. Clarke has also found out about Poda, Wilson's sister and another key member of the resistance. Apparently she's the one who persuaded Abby to help them. This Poda must be a very convincing person indeed. Clarke got her stubbornness from Abby after all.

A few other names pop up, some from the list, some not. The names that coincide, Clarke passes onto Wilson, wanting to give him something to work with for now. Anything else can wait until she's got a better idea of what's going on.

Mostly Clarke and Kane discuss possible courses of action, what is within the group’s capabilities and what isn't. The main factor that seems to hinder any progress is a lack of numbers, or rather a lack of enough high-ranking individuals who could make a huge difference. Apparently the support from Skaikru isn’t enough to persuade others to join the cause.

Clarke thinks about different ways she can help these people, trying to come up with as many nonviolent options as she can. She can't really do much for them in her current situation other than attempt to get information out of Lexa, which is an almost impossible task in itself. But she has time. It takes as long as it takes.

Tonight she has training with Lexa, as always, but the weight of the decisions in her future make her shoulders tense. She tries to relax, but it’s in vain. Each roll of her shoulders tightens her muscles rather than loosening them.

As soon as Lexa sees her, those green eyes see the tension she's holding. The brunette doesn't say anything, but Clarke can tell that Lexa knows something’s up.

Training goes even worse than usual. Clarke’s limbs are tight and inflexible as Lexa moves so gracefully around her. Damn this gorgeous woman.

No. Not that. Infuriating, annoying, heartless. Not the other thing.

Clarke cuts off their training early, claiming soreness from all of the exercise from the last few weeks. It's a weak excuse, but it will have to do. Lexa nods her reply, concern in her eyes as she carefully studies Clarke, waiting for any updates.

"I'm talking to Kane. He's got me in but I haven’t found out anything useful yet. I'll keep you informed on my progress."

Clarke walks away quickly, not wanting Lexa to see anything in her expression that could give her away. It's still too soon for them to have that conversation.

That Evening

Titus

Titus had been preoccupied by the sheer number of nightbloods for the last few weeks, but the fact
that Heda has been training regularly did not pass him by. He was completely shocked and furious when he saw that her sparring partner was Clarke of all people. Nevertheless, Titus has to admit that he’s rarely seen Heda in better shape than she is now.

This evening though, he’s had enough. Once the nightbloods are sorted for the evening, he goes looking for Lexa, knowing that she will probably be training with the traitor woman. Again.

Titus heads out to the training grounds, keeping calm but ready to unleash his displeasure at the situation. He sees Heda ahead of him, walking towards the tower with a frown on her face. It's practically invisible to everyone else, but he's known her longer than anyone in the coalition. Titus taught her how to hide her feelings from the outside world, he knows how to read the minute flaws in the commander’s stoic mask.

Titus stands still, waiting for Heda to approach then falls into step beside her.

"I wish to speak with you, Heda."

She glances over at him, concern and suspicion showing in her eyes but nowhere else.

"Of course, Titus."

They continue to walk in silence. Titus only starts to speak once they have the privacy of their usual meeting room in the tower.

"Why are you training with her of all people? We have much better warriors than her who you could train with."

Lexa just raises her eyebrows at him and rolls her eyes as she turns away slightly to look out of the window.

"I told you of my plans for her. How else am I meant to win her trust?"

She has him there. Titus had completely forgotten about her idea to use Clarke to their advantage.

"There are other ways, Heda. You are showing preferential treatment to a traitor-"

"I am showing her a tiny portion of the treatment she deserves. If it wasn't for her sacrifice, we would still be plagued by the mountain men."

Lexa has turned back to face him, but her defence of the woman only angers Titus even more.

"We did not need her. She makes you look weak, Heda."

The glare he receives then is one that is rarely directed at him. Her eyes aflame with rage, her jaw clenched and almost a snarl pulling at her lips.

"She makes me stronger, Titus. I don't need you belittling her. Get out!"

Titus clearly hit a nerve. Lexa just proved to him that Clarke is her weakness, but he does as she says, bowing low as he shuffles out of the room. He’ll have to keep a closer eye on his Heda from now on.
Flexibility

Chapter Notes

This chapter wasn’t originally going to happen, so it’s mostly fluff (ish) and very little plot. Major plot returns in the next chapter, but I think we deserve a bit more clexa before that happens :) Enjoy!

Part of the training bit in the first part I took from the black widow boxing scene in Iron Man 2 because it’s freaking awesome!

Two Weeks Later

Polis

Clarke

Clarke has managed to settle into her role between Lexa and the resistance. She has control over the transfer of information between the two, giving her power that she’s hasn’t really had in over four years. It’s daunting yet strangely familiar, and Clarke is quickly adapting to the pressure. Her thoughts are becoming somewhat easier to hide, helped in part by the training with Lexa.

The commander is incredibly talented at hiding her feelings. Before Clarke got to know her better, she could barely tell what was going on behind those green eyes, adding to how terrifying Lexa is when you first meet her.

Things are different now. Clarke would like to think she knows how to read Lexa, although her impenetrable mask often returns during training. The sky woman has had to learn how to school her own expressions even further to stand a chance against Lexa in combat.

Tonight, they are practicing their hand-to-hand combat again. Clarke’s muscles feel stronger than ever, but she’s noticed in recent weeks she isn’t quite as flexible as before. Her movements are generally more fluid than they were, but some techniques are starting to become difficult simply because her muscles don’t stretch as far.

When Lexa throws her to the ground for what feels like the millionth time, Clarke just lies there a second to catch her breath. As she gradually stands, she groans inwardly in pain and embarrassment at being floored yet again.

Lexa is already prepared for the next round, crouched a few feet away and gently shifting her weight between her feet.

Clarke mimics Lexa’s position, her back complaining at the number of new bruises scattered along its length. She uses the pain to focus herself, eyes and limbs permanently moving as the pair inch closer together.

As they come within touching distance, Clarke swears she can feel the heat radiating off the other woman’s body. She can trace the individual lines on Lexa’s face, but the blend of deep greens in her
eyes completely captivates Clarke.

Unfamiliar feelings take over her mind, clouding her thoughts. She needs to make a move to clear the fog, to tear her gaze away from those stunning features.

Clarke sees Lexa’s eyes shift down, so she does something slightly foolish. She punches the beautiful face that once haunted her dreams.

As soon as her arm is away from her body, Clarke knows she made a mistake.

Green eyes snap back up. Lexa easily blocks the punch and grabs Clarke’s fist, twisting it away from her body.

Clarke would hiss at the pain, but all the air is knocked out of her lungs as she is rolled and lands on her back. Again. Somehow Lexa’s legs are tightly wrapped around her neck and Clarke’s arm is pinned beneath the brunette’s body.

After a small squeeze with her strong thighs, Lexa releases her, leaving Clarke breathless on the ground.

Clarke slowly stands up once she’s regained her breath, rubbing her shoulder and neck slightly.

“How the hell did you do that? I swear my legs don’t get anywhere near that high.”

Lexa smirks at her, clearly pleased with herself. Clarke rolls her eyes unsubtly. Goddamn commander-show-off.

“I’m rather flexible, if you hadn’t already noticed. I can help you with your flexibility if you like? You might even be able to pull off that move with a bit of practice.”

The smirk is firmly plastered to Lexa’s face as she speaks, her eyes sparkling with a mixture of amusement and something unidentifiable. Clarke can’t tell if she is making fun of her or not, but the rumbling of her stomach and the pain in various other parts of her body tell her to call it a night. She can get her back tomorrow.

“Maybe another day.”

Clarke turns away from the brunette, straps on her weapons then heads off towards the city. Everything hurts as she makes her way back to her quarters, cursing the talented commander and her flexibility.

The next day, Clarke’s body feels more battered and bruised than it has in a long time. She’s glad she doesn’t have anything to do today, her limbs ache so much that lying in bed seems like the best way to spend the day.

It doesn’t take long for her to get bored. She carefully pushes herself out of bed, groaning as she pulls on clothes over aching muscles. Her shoulder feels extremely sore, Clarke’s barely able to lift her arm above her head to tug on a shirt. Lexa just had to go and show off didn’t she.

Clarke decides to spend the day wandering the city, talking to the people and stopping to sketch now and again. Her first sketch is an old man enthusiastically selling fish from the Floukru (Boat people), his figure blurry to try to capture his expressive movements as he entices the shoppers wandering by.
She always liked dealing with the Floukru. They are happy talking about fish for hours at a time, never once repeating the fascinating stories from their boats. They are a calm and peaceful people, a necessary quality for their line of work. If she hadn’t already found herself a family in Haro when she first met them, Clarke would have eagerly joined their clan on the coast. Well, if they taught her how to swim.

Clarke has a wonderful day roaming the city, the sun and people bright and cheery, helping her to forget the decisions and choices that lie both in her past and her future.

When evening comes around and the markets start to pack up for the night, Clarke deposits her art supplies in her quarters before heading towards the training grounds. Her body has gradually relaxed over the day, but it still has multiple complaints for her. Especially her back.

As Clarke approaches the arena, she’s not surprised to see Lexa already there. However, she’s confused when she spots what appears to be two mats laid on the ground next to each other. Lexa is sat on the one furthest away, her hands held lightly together on crossed legs, feet bare and eyes closed. Clarke has never seen her look so serene.

Clarke approaches slowly and carefully, testing to see how close she can get before Lexa hears her footsteps. Definitely not because she doesn’t want to disturb her. That would imply she actually cares about the woman, which can’t be true. Can it?

Just when Clarke thinks she’s close enough to pounce on the commander, green eyes find blue.

“You’ll have to do better than that to sneak up on me.”

Lexa smirks at her playfully, causing Clarke to huff a little, but neither move from their position. From this distance, she can tell that Lexa is completely unarmed, not even wearing boots to hide a weapon in. Even so, Clarke knows that the commander could take her down easily, despite the fact that she is still fully armed and standing.

“What are the mats for?”

Lexa rises gracefully, no awkward knees or elbows. She faces Clarke, hands held loosely behind her.

“I said that I would teach you how to become more flexible. The mats help it to be more.. comfortable.”

Clarke never expected this, she thought Lexa was just teasing her last night. Apparently not.

She quickly strips her weapons, leaving them in an organised pile at the end of the second mat. At least her body will get a rest from their usual exhausting training.

She was wrong.

“Are you sure this is meant to make me more flexible?”

Lexa has her standing on one leg, body bent over with her other leg in the air behind her, arms splayed to either side. Her hands are starting to shake with the strain of holding them up for so long, her supporting leg wobbling dangerously. Lexa is perfectly still, barely shaking at all.

“Among other things.”

Clarke swears she sees another small smirk on the brunette’s face, but it’s gone before she can turn
her head to check. The swift movement of her head tilts her off balance, face plummeting to the ground before she can stop herself. Clarke’s groan covers up any small chuckles that may have escaped from the unmoving commander beside her.

They carry on despite Clarke’s lack of balance, moving between positions slowly. Lexa’s soft voice guides her through each posture, advising her on how to breathe and alter her stances. Some of the positions seem absolutely impossible, but she tries anyway, copying Lexa’s every move.

One particular position has Clarke’s body complaining again. Her legs are crossed in a weird way, one foot near her butt while the other is next to the opposite knee. One arm is bent backwards over her shoulder, trying desperately to grab the fingers of the opposite hand below.

Lexa asks her to close her eyes, telling her to concentrate on the different parts of her body that are touching the floor, keeping her grounded. It sounds like bullshit when Lexa says it, Clarke’s brow furrowed in scepticism.

“Just do it Klark. Believe me, it works.”

Clarke is still doubtful, peeking at Lexa briefly, but she goes along with it. Her voice soothes Clarke’s busy mind as she does what she’s told. They concentrate on the ground, then on breathing, letting some tension leave their bodies with every out breath.

By the end of the session, Clarke is thoroughly exhausted. The movements and positions had individually seemed slow and non-energy consuming, but all together it was more tiring than she anticipated. Her limbs hurt just as much as they did before they started.

Lexa rolls up the mats as Clarke gathers her weapons, carefully replacing them around her person. Once her sword is securely fastened around her back, she looks up to see that Lexa has also replaced her weapons and boots, the mats tucked under one arm.

“I can help you with those.”

Clarke has no idea why she says it. Maybe their training has made her too relaxed around the commander.

“I should be fine, thank you.”

A hint of a smile plays at Lexa’s lips, but the hardness has returned to her voice, the walls that were down during their practice slowly returning.

“Right, well.. Goodnight, Leksa.”

“Goodnight, Klark.”

They nod to each other before heading off in separate directions, neither daring to look at the other retreating figure.

Next Morning

Aden

Since the arrival of the new nightbloods, the previous contingent have been drafted in to help train the younger ones. To start with, it was necessary for the classes to run smoothly, simply due to the
number of nightbloods in Polis.

As time went on, Titus and Heda agreed that it was a good addition to their training. They wanted to see how well the older ones can instruct others in what they have learnt over the years, and to observe how much patience they have when dealing with people who haven’t had the same experiences as them.

This morning, Aden is helping the young nightbloods in their writing class. He enjoys teaching them, sharing the knowledge he has built up from many years in Polis. They’re like long lost little siblings to him, despite the fact that the only thing they have in common is the colour of their blood.

Currently, the kids are concentrating on copying Trigedasleng letters from a board at the front of the class. The scratching of eight charcoal sticks on scrolls fills the room which is otherwise silent. All of their little faces are scrunched up, intensely focused on the task at hand. A few little tongues peek out of mouths here and there, much to Aden’s amusement.

He slowly walks around the room observing the children, offering advice when it’s needed. As Aden approaches Jake, he looks carefully at what the young boy is doing. He appears to be concentrating just as hard as the rest, but apparently on something slightly off task.

Rather than copying each letter as they are written on the board, Jake seems to be rearranging them to form what could be words, although it’s hard to tell from the shaky letters and who knows how many spelling mistakes.

“Whatcha doing here buddy?”

Aden keeps his voice quiet and soft, not wanting to distract the others from their assignment.

“I figured I’d remember my letters better if they were in words I like.”

Aden gives him an inquisitive look. It’s a different approach to what he’s used to, but if it’ll help the boy, he knows that he shouldn’t dismiss it immediately.

“Okay, so what’s this word?”

Aden points to the third row of squiggles, trying to decipher what it could mean.

“That’s ‘nomon’. (mother)

Aden nods a little, just about seeing it, although it looks more like ‘munom’ to him. Jake seems to have struggled more than most with homesickness, a sad look overcoming his usually cheerful face whenever Trishanakru are mentioned. He clearly misses his family, even now.

The boy carries on without any further encouragement, pointing out two more sets of lines.

“This one is Kal, my mom, and this one is Klark.”

Aden is thrown off for a second, studying the page to check if he heard Jake correctly. There’s only one Klark he’s ever heard of, Wanheda.

“Klark, as in..”

Aden doesn’t want to presume why Jake wrote that particular name, and the boy is more than eager to explain.

“Heda called my mom Klark when we came back here. I’m not sure why, she said something
Realisation hits Aden and the air suddenly feels cold and unbreathable. Jake is Wanheda’s son.

Little things he’s noticed about Heda in recent months start to fall into place. She goes a little easier on Jake than the others, although it’s barely recognisable if you aren’t looking for it. Aden has caught her stealing quick glances towards the boy when she doesn’t need to. They all know that she cares for each and every one of them, but Aden has had a niggling feeling that there is something different about the young Trishana boy that only Heda knows about.

It all makes sense now.

He decides to keep this new information to himself for the time being. The fewer people who know that Wanheda is alive, the safer Heda will be. Aden remembers the uncertainty after the mountain was defeated, clans debating whether or not Lexa was worthy of her title. All thanks to the actions of one woman.

Even so, it’s not Aden’s decision to tell the world about the legend’s existence, especially when she hasn’t told her own son who she really is.

Aden straightens up, replacing his previously soft expression with a more stoic one he’s been working on. He hates doing it, but to protect both Jake and Lexa, he has to. His voice is hard and cold when he speaks.

“Concentrate on the task at hand, Jake. No more of this. You know what will happen if I catch you doing it again”

He locks eyes with the boy for a second, disappointment clear on the kid’s face as Aden turns away. It pulls at his heart strings, but he manages to remain outwardly stoic. How does Lexa do this on a daily basis?

That Afternoon

Lexa

Lexa spends the afternoon training the nightbloods, all of them gathered together for once. She watches over each and every one of them, but notices both Aden and Jake looking a little off.

Jake has a frown plastered to his forehead, and although it is similar to his usual concentrating face, his eyes betray something deeper. Aden keeps glancing between Jake and herself during the session, trying to maintain what is starting to become a very impressive stoic expression.

It’s confusing why both of them are acting strangely at the same time, and Lexa briefly considers talking to Aden about it. She knows that the two have become close since Jake arrived. However, whatever happened, they should work through it together without interference from her.

When she’s finished with the nightbloods, Lexa heads out to the training grounds. The early-evening sun beats down on her as she turns her face to the sky, closing her eyes briefly to soak up the light and heat. She hates being cooped up indoors all day, missing the warmth of the day and the life that comes with it.

As she approaches the arena, she stops in her tracks, catching sight of a lone figure ahead.
The woman is turned away from her, but even from here Lexa can tell it is Clarke.

What surprises her isn’t that Clarke is early, but the undeniable fact that she is actually practicing some of the moves Lexa taught her last night. Apparently something went in, despite her incessant grumbling.

A small smile grows on Lexa’s face before she can stop it.

Lexa carefully makes her way over to Clarke, stepping quietly so as not to distract her.

“I see you learnt something after all."

Clarke visibly jumps at her voice, twisting quickly to set eyes on its source. She glares for a second, and Lexa swears she sees a small hint of red in her cheeks.

“I will admit that it may have helped.. a little..”

Lexa smirks before turning away to remove her unnecessary clothing. She’s surprised by Clarke for the second time this evening when she speaks up again.

“I have a few ideas about how to proceed with the resistance. Could we talk about it after training?”

The suggestion catches Lexa off guard, she’s glad Clarke can’t see the confusion and optimism cross her features before she can stop them. Lexa manages to regain control before she turns to Clarke, hopeful blue eyes boring into her green.

“Of course, Klark.”
A Month later

Polis

Lexa

The last month has passed with little to no problems. The resistance have been quiet, the regular updates from Clarke reassuring Lexa that they aren’t planning anything, giving her worries a rest for once.

Surprisingly, nothing major at all has happened in the coalition. This has to be the longest Lexa has spent in Polis in the summer months. The heat tends to frazzle people’s minds and they start to make stupid decisions, like attacking their neighbours. She usually has to visit certain villages and clans to ensure that everything runs smoothly, or at the very least she checks up on those she trusts the least to remain at peace.

Lexa misses the forest, but training with Clarke has brightened her time in the city significantly. They train every evenings until the sun disappears over the horizon, semi-regularly having dinner together afterwards to discuss the resistance. Lexa has never felt better, physically and mentally.

The only downer to the whole situation is the heated arguments that regularly occur between the two. Their verbal engagements are just as intense as their physical training, challenging each other to think of more inventive solutions for the problem at hand. It can be extremely long and exhausting, but it makes them both better leaders.

Clarke wants to fix everything for everyone, but so far Lexa has had to refuse all of her suggestions. Many of them Lexa could go along with, with a few adjustments, but she knew that Titus wouldn’t agree. He is the nightbloods’ primary trainer, she can’t just go and change their training program without his knowledge or consent. Similarly, Clarke has ruled out all of Lexa’s ideas, claiming that the resistance would not settle for less than their primary goal.

Currently Lexa is preparing for another one of their dinners, quickly washing after a strenuous workout in the heat left-over from the day. Clarke had mentioned that she has another option to discuss, but Lexa doubts she will be able to accept it.

She wonders how much longer Clarke can go on like this, carefully poised between two opposing forces. Lexa mildly regrets bringing her into this mess and putting her in what must be an impossible position. But Lexa still needs her. More than she’d like to admit.

Lexa tries to forget her worries for now, dressing in a thin tunic and trousers. There are no weapons on her person, although her rooms have enough scattered around and within arm’s reach if she were to ever need one.

She wanders through to the central room, carefully closing her bedroom door behind her. Lexa decides to wait for Clarke on the balcony, gradually sinking into a chair that she specifically placed out there so that she can watch the stars. Lexa drifts in and out of consciousness, the heat lulling her into a comfortable and relaxed state.

The door suddenly opens behind her and wakes her up. She has no idea how long she was asleep.
Lexa quickly stands, stretching her back slightly as she reenters the room, pretending that she hadn’t just been dozing off.

Clarke looks tired, her shoulders sagging lower than they often do, her blue eyes not as bright as the fire Lexa knows exists beneath the surface. Clearly there is much weighing on her mind.

They sit at the table in silence, both concentrating on consuming some food before starting what is no doubt going to be yet another intense discussion. The table itself is covered in more papers than the first time they met here, pulled out during their discussions over the last few weeks. They contain a multitude of information, from the history of the nightbloods to knowledge about current high-ranking members of certain clans.

Eventually Lexa has had enough of the silence. She sorely craves her bed in the room next door, and experience has taught her that postponing the inevitable is never a good thing.

"You had another suggestion for me, Clarke?"

Clarke continues to stare down at her plate, toying with the morsels of food left on it.

"Give me a minute."

The request is quiet, but Lexa gives her the time she needs. Lexa stands and returns to the balcony, this time leaning on the railing and looking out over Polis. A few people wander the streets, more than there are in the winter months. The air is still warm, encouraging her people to indulge themselves in drink and entertainment while they can.

Lexa closes her eyes and listens to the sounds around her. Footsteps on the streets below, the chirp of birds calling to each other, the steady beat of her own heart in her chest.

After a short time, the sound of a chair being pushed back brings Lexa out of her reverie. She cracks her eyes open to see Clarke leaning against the railing to her left, also looking out over the city. Soft rays of moonlight highlight the contours of her face, emphasizing how beautiful the sky woman really is.

Lexa pushes those thoughts away and turns back to the city. For goodness sake Lexa, Clarke has a wife! Although thinking of said wife, Clarke hasn't mentioned her at all during their conversations. Then again, they haven't really talked about anything other than the nightbloods and the resistance.

"Are the nightbloods trained in how to hunt?"

Clarke has asked similar questions to this during their meetings, searching for a way to come to some sort of compromise. She knows much more about the nightbloods now, thanks to her probing.

Lexa wouldn’t divulge such sensitive information to anyone she doesn’t trust to keep it secret. It could be very dangerous in the wrong hands. Mystery has kept the nightbloods safe for this long, Lexa can’t risk changing that.

"Yes. They don't get to practice as much as I'd like, given current circumstances."

Clarke nods, still looking out over the city.

"What if their families take them out on hunting trips every so often? Technically they would still be training, but also get to spend time with their families."

It's another good suggestion, but again Lexa is going to have to refuse. Titus rarely lets the
nightbloods out of his sight. Allowing them disappear for whole days with people he doesn't trust? No way. Even with some adjustments, Lexa doubts that they would come to any sort of agreement.

Lexa rubs her forehead with one hand in weariness and frustration. They've discussed so many different ideas, but there's always something in the way. Usually Titus.

"I will run it by Titus, but I can tell you now that he will disapprove."

The set of Clarke's shoulders changes, a whole new determination taking over her presence. Lexa straightens up herself, not taking her eyes off Clarke’s suddenly changing figure.

"I'll try to come up with something else then."

The bitterness in her voice is not lost on Lexa, but there's not a lot she can do. She's just as stuck as Clarke is in this. Her people's traditions and rules block every avenue for progress. Of course she has her own reservations about changing things, but at least she’s willing to consider new ideas.

Clarke suddenly stands to her full height. She briefly looks at Lexa, the intense fire that was missing when she arrived returned to her eyes. Clarke heads towards the door and disappears into the night without another word.

Lexa sags against the railing, desperately wishing that there was something she could offer Clarke other than dismissals of what she knows are promising ideas. She truly believes that with more time they can find a solution. Lexa hopes that Clarke can wait until they get to that point. As she once said to her, it takes as long as it takes.

**Next Morning**

**Kane**

Kane is preparing for a long day of meetings with the other ambassadors and Lexa. He appreciates not being at war with the other clans, however the tedious arguments about what feels like trivialities can get on his nerves sometimes, as well as everyone else’s.

He’s about to head out to grab some breakfast when Clarke comes hurtling through the door, her face set in a no-nonsense expression and apparently not caring that he was about to leave.

Kane closes the door behind her swift figure, while Clarke scans the room to check no-one else is present.

“Good morning. Is there something I can help you with?”

She quickly turns to him, her eyes filled with more fire than he’s ever seen in one human being.

“I need to talk to Wilson, in person. Can you contact him?”

Kane pauses for a second, but no longer. He doesn’t dare waver under the stare she is directing at him.

“Of course, give me a minute.”

Kane goes through to his bedroom and carefully removes the radio from the trunk under his bed. He returns to the living room, Clarke pacing back and forth, impatience clear in her whole demeanor.
Kane makes sure that the curtains are drawn before he turns the device on.

“Wilson come in, this is Kane, over.”

The pair watch the radio intently as white noise blares out from the speaker. Clarke starts to fidget as the minutes go on, her eyes fixed on the device while her fingers toy with a dagger at her hip. Eventually a recognisable voice comes from the radio.

“Wilson here. Is there something urgent Kane?”

Kane usually updates Wilson on how things are going in Polis every week or so at a specified time, more recently including the reports from Clarke. The only times Kane has strayed from their routine were because of Clarke.

He hands the radio over to the restless woman, assuming that she knows how to work it. Clarke was born on the Ark after all.

“Wilson, this is Kal. I have an idea that will actually get us somewhere, but I need to run it by you first. We should meet. Soon.”

There’s a pause on the other end, allowing Kane to wonder what the hell Clarke has thought up. Collectively the group have come up with tons of plans of varying viability, but none of them have worked out in their favour so far.

“Meet me at Kane’s in two days. Over and out.”

Kane is a little annoyed that Wilson just assumed they could meet in his quarters, but it does make sense. There aren’t many places in Polis where they are free to speak without being overheard.

Clarke hands the radio back to him, her expression stoic and unreadable.

“I’ll need you here when Wilson comes.”

The request mildly confuses Kane. What could he possibly bring to the conversation? Nevertheless, he nods his confirmation to Clarke. He’ll find out what all this is about soon enough.

Two days later

Wilson

Wilson waits patiently in Kane’s home as darkness falls over the city outside. He assumes Kal has training with Heda as usual, whereas Kane has gone to fetch something for all of them to have for dinner when she arrives.

Kane returns shortly, carrying an unidentified bundle that smells extremely pleasant to Wilson. They sit on the armchairs next to the empty fireplace as they tuck into the food. In the current temperatures, a fire would be very uncomfortable. Instead, candles are dotted around the room to give them just enough light to be able to see each other.

Wilson can tell Kane wants to ‘chat’, as he calls it, from the thoughtful expression on his face and the mindless twiddling of his fingers. Wilson has noticed in his dealings with the sky people that they have a tendency to want to fill silences with unnecessary words. He dreads the upcoming conversation, until Kal walks through the door, putting an end to the potential for uneasy small talk.
“Wilson, thank you for coming.”

Kal moves to sit in the spare armchair, facing the two men. Her hands are clenched on her lap as she leans forward slightly, her knuckles white from the tension.

“You had an idea to discuss with me?”

Kal nods sincerely, visibly taking a deep breath before uttering her next words.

“I haven’t been completely honest with you Wilson. For that, I am sorry, but I’m sure you will understand once I explain.”

Wilson’s mind goes into overdrive. What has she been hiding? Has she been telling Heda their secrets all along? He almost leaps up from his chair with the adrenaline that runs through his veins.

However, when Wilson looks into Kal’s eyes, there is no guilt there. Instead, they are alight with hope and power. The strength he sees in her gaze he has only witnessed in a few others in his lifetime.

“Kane can confirm what I am about to tell you..”

The woman pauses for a moment, honesty filling her words.


The information immediately overwhelms him. Wilson needs a second to take in what she is saying. It can’t be true, can it? Wanheda was said to have died after the mountain. No-one knew what happened to her.

The conviction in Kal’s eyes tells him that the stories are wrong.

Everything to do with Kal makes sense now. Why Heda let her stay in Polis, why she would train with her, how Kal knew Kane before Wilson introduced them.

“She speaks the truth, Wilson. I’ve known her since she was a child.”

Kane’s confirmation helps it to sink in, but puts even more doubts into Wilson’s head. What else has Kane kept from him?

“I am honoured, Wanheda. Now I understand how you were able to get so close to Heda.”

New plans and ideas crop up in his mind. With Wanheda on their side, they could actually cause some real change. They could convince so many more people to join their cause.

“I have been gathering information about the nightbloods, trying to figure out ways for Lexa and the resistance to come to some sort of agreement. Unfortunately, my investigations have led me to believe that it won’t be possible in the current circumstances. We need Wanheda, not Kal kom Trishanakru.”

Wilson nods solemnly in agreement. He knows all about the sacrifice she made for her people in the mountain. The woman before him isn’t a killer, she did what she had to to save her people, coincidentally saving them all from the threat of extinction as well.

“You still have not mentioned your idea. You would not tell me about your true identity unless it was a necessary part of your plan.”
Clarke nods slowly, taking a moment to study him and gauge his reaction to their conversation so far. Kane has barely moved a muscle, simply letting the conversation unfold before him.

“It is. I want to meet the other leaders of the resistance before we do anything. I cannot go through with something on this scale with people I have never met before.”

Wilson can understand that, but he knows how volatile some of the other members of their group can be. Hopefully Wanheda will be able to keep them loyal to the cause better than he and Poda. His sister is a force to be reckoned with. Paired with Wanheda, they could be unstoppable.

“I can call for a meeting with all the leaders in a week. I will meet you a candlemark south of Polis in three days to escort you.”

“Good. Don’t tell anyone who I am yet. We don’t want Lexa to find out what we’re doing because rumours of my presence got spread around.”

Wilson simply nods his head in agreement. They finally have a chance to accomplish what they set out to do. They need her.
The Meeting

Chapter Notes

This chapter went somewhere I didn’t expect it to, but that was kinda cool.

Thanks again for all the kudos & kind comments, they help so much with actually getting my ass in gear to write more :)

Enjoy!

Two Days Later

Polis

Lexa

The two days after Clarke and Lexa’s most recent argument proceed as they always do. Neither woman brings it up again, knowing that doing so would be pointless.

They continue to train together, barely speaking at all. Lexa can tell that Clarke is not completely happy with something, it shows in the slight furrow of her brow and the tension in her shoulders. It’s nothing new given the last few weeks, but now there’s something more lying behind those eyes.

During a break in their training, Lexa grabs a waterskin and takes a long drink, the summer heat making her even hotter than she usually is. Clarke also takes the opportunity to have a drink, a small trickle of sweat running down her cheek and over that perfect jawline.

Lexa averts her eyes slower than she should have, replacing the waterskin with her other belongings and reaching for her blade once again. Before they continue sparring, Clarke speaks quietly.

“I've been invited to a meeting with some of the senior people in the resistance. I will have to leave Polis tomorrow to attend.”

The information surprises Lexa. From what Clarke has told her, she has been struggling to find out much about the people actually running the resistance, only managing to get tidbits from Kane. This could be a well-needed break through for them.

Lexa tries to keep her expression as stoic as possible, tilting her head slightly while she contemplates what to do. Clarke interrupts her thoughts.

“I would appreciate it if I went alone, without a guard. It would be suspicious if I turned up with one of Heda’s warriors accompanying me.”

Lexa takes a moment to consider the request. It makes sense logically, and in any other circumstances she would have insisted Clarke take a guard with her. She’s only just got Clarke back, she can’t lose her again.

But the information from this meeting could prove to be invaluable.
Lexa toys with the hilt of her sword for a moment, considering her options before replying.

“I expect a full report when you return. Names, locations, plans etc.”

Blue eyes bore into green, locked together until Clarke replies.

“Sha, Leksya.” (Yes, Lexa.)

Five Days Later

Resistance Head Quarters - Ingranronakru (Plains Riders) Territory

Abby

Abby waits in the meeting room with other members of the resistance. A large oval table stands in the middle of the room, large candles placed in its centre for light. The only other items in the room are chairs, pushed back against the walls to give enough space for everyone to stand around the table.

Those in attendance are predominantly chiefs of villages or people of influence from some of the southern clans. Most wear skin-tight clothes, very similar to the Trikru, although there are some subtle differences in style and colour. A variety of swords hang from belts, a wide range of hilts and shapes that Abby hasn’t seen in the northern clans. A few have smudges of warpaint across their features, masks hanging round necks or placed messily on the table.

The variations are astounding, but there is only one thing in common with every single grounder she has met. Their determination to survive.

Right now, all Abby wants it to sit down. It took three days of hard riding for her to get here, and her legs are feeling the effects of being on horseback for that long. The only positive about the whole riding situation was that Poda had been the one to escort her. They’d had long conversations about anything and everything, simply enjoying some time alone for once. They don’t have the luxury very often.

Abby scans the faces around the table. She’s met most of them before at similar meetings to this. The ones she doesn’t recognise, Abby can guess who they are from what Wilson and Poda have told her. The latter currently stands at the head of the table, while the former is yet to arrive.

She partly wishes Kane were here. He’s much better at dealing with grounder politics than she is. Unfortunately, if he left Polis for over a week, Lexa might suspect that something of this nature is going on. They can update him via radio if need be.

The only person Abby hasn’t met yet is the newbie, Kal. As far as she has been able to wrangle out of Poda, Kal is the one who asked for this meeting. Wilson must believe her information is pretty important to call such a large meeting. It doesn’t happen very often.

Abby stands next to Poda, watching over the small conversations going on in the room. They’ve been waiting a while, the noise gradually growing as everyone becomes impatient for the meeting to start.

Eventually the door opens and all eyes turn towards it. Wilson strides through, looking as strong and sturdy as ever, taking his position at the end of the table opposite his sister.
Abby has to lean to one side to see the woman following him. First she sees the clothing, leathers very similar to those around the table, but with a hint of luminescence perhaps. A straight sword is belted to her hip, daggers strapped onto each muscular thigh.

She scans upwards, catching fair skin and braided dark hair. But she doesn’t pay attention to the hair. Abby can’t tear her gaze away from the woman’s face. Familiar bright blue eyes stare right back.

“Clarke..?”

**Clarke**

As Clarke enters the meeting room, dead ahead of her is the one person that she knew would recognise her. It takes everything in her to control the relief at finally seeing her mother. She keeps her face as stoic as possible, knowing that she needs to earn the respect of those in the room. Hopefully Abby can control herself as well.

"Clarke..?"

Abby runs around the table to Clarke, pulling her into a tight hug that squeezes most of the air out of her lungs. As the hug carries on longer than Clarke anticipated, she realises that Abby won’t let go unless prompted to. All she wants to do is let go and sink into her mother's warm embrace, but Clarke didn't come all this way for a reunion. She has a job to do.

"Mom."

Abby pulls back slightly, not letting go of Clarke. Her eyes are welling up, almost setting Clarke off as well. They’ll both have to desperately try to hold back the tears.

"I thought -"

Clarke can see the pain and anguish in her mothers eyes, pain she caused by not keeping in touch. But now really isn't the time for this conversation.

"Mom, we can talk after, ok?"

Abby looks as if she’s about to complain, but instead nods quietly and finally releases Clarke from the death grip she had on her arms.

The pair turn towards everyone else in the room. They had completely ignored them for the past few moments. Abby stays close to Clarke, barely an inch away from her. Clarke’s surprised that she doesn’t immediately grab hold of her hand.

Confusion is clear on every face in the room, together with a mix of anger and fear. Clarke pulls herself to her full height, looking each person in the eye as she sweeps the room.

"Ai laik Klark kom Skaikru, Wanheda." (I am Clarke of the Sky people, Commander of death.)

She lets it sink in for a second, scanning the room again to capture everyone's reactions. Whispers of Klark and Wanheda start to grow louder, but Clarke speaks again before they become much more than murmurs.

"I have been in talks with Heda about our objectives. However, it has come to a point where I
believe that she will not do anything to help us without some incentive. I am here because I want to see my son. I will not be allowed to do that unless we all work together."

The people around the room start whispering to each other again, although Clarke only catches the odd word in the quiet din. A small woman stands almost directly opposite from her, brown eyes boring into Clarke. She looks remarkably similar to Wilson, her greying brown hair tied up in a bun. She must be Wilson's sister. Poda, Clarke manages to recall.

Clarke holds the woman’s gaze until Poda looks towards Abby, her eyes softening slightly. Clarke turns slightly to look at her mother, seeing her eyes locked with Poda's across the table. She might be reading it wrong, but Clarke detects more in that look than just two people who work together to reach a common goal. She will have to ask Abby about it later.

"How do we know you are really Wanheda? No-one has seen her in four years. Who are you to claim her title?"

The voice that spoke up is low and bitter. Clarke turns to look at the man, glaring with a fire that rivals Lexa's.

"She is my daughter. I would not lie about that!"

Abby's response is almost a hiss from beside her, the anger very real from Clarke’s experience. However, the man does not back down that easily.

"I am not going to believe that she is Wanheda on the word of one sky woman. I will not stand here and be made a fool of."

He makes a move to leave, but is grabbed by Wilson and kept in place. Clarke swears she never saw Wilson move from her side. He's much quicker than she thought.

Wilson speaks softly, but everyone can hear his words.

"You would be a fool to leave. She is the best chance we will ever have to achieve our goals."

Everyone's eyes are on Wilson, including the man he is holding. The taller shrugs off Wilson's hands and begrudgingly returns to the table, lips clamped shut in a tight line. When everyone has settled down again, the woman across from Clarke finally speaks with clear authority.

"I assume that you have some sort of plan. You would not have come out of hiding and gathered us here without one."

Clarke looks the woman in the eye yet again, seeing the challenge presented to her. The lengthy arguments with Lexa might actually pay off for something. If she can rival the commander, Clarke should be able match whatever Poda brings to the table.

"I do."

Hours Later

Abby

When the meeting is finally over, Abby is completely drained. The long arguments and discussion on how to move forward seemed to go on forever, not just the few hours she knows they spent in the
It wasn’t helped by the fact that Clarke was stood right next to her. Finally. Abby kept catching
herself simply staring at her daughter, barely believing that she was right there. She never dreamed
that ‘Kal’ could actually be Clarke. Nothing anyone had told her about the mysterious woman had
even hinted that it was her own daughter.

Abby makes a mental note to have a nice long chat with Kane when she sees him next.

As the other members leave the council room, Clarke and Abby stay behind. Poda gives a small
squeeze on Abby’s shoulder on her way out, the exact gesture of comfort she needs right now. Abby
told Poda all about Clarke a long time ago, one of the many conversations between the pair as they
laid beneath the stars.

Once the door closes behind Poda, silence blankets the room. Abby’s thoughts are clouded by all the
emotions she had to suppress during the meeting, now threatening to burst out.

Abby looks up at her daughter, tears on the brink of falling from her eyes. Clarke's face is full of
guilt, more open and readable than it had been for the last few hours. In this moment, they can be
vulnerable together.

She grabs onto her daughter again, holding her as tight as possible while still being able to breathe.
She feels Clarke's arms come around her waist, pulling them even closer together. They stay in that
position for what seems like hours, both women starting to cry quietly as their walls come crashing
down.

When they finally separate, they don’t stray very far. Abby cups Clarke's cheek with her hand, gently
stroking the tanned skin with her thumb.

Her daughter has changed so much in four years. Then again, so has she. The ground has changed
all of them.

"I missed you so much Clarke. I thought."

A lump sticks in her throat, the words suddenly hard to say out loud. Clarke's blue eyes, that remind
Abby so much of Jake, stare back at her, giving her the time she needs.

"I thought you were dead. I never gave up hope, I tried looking for you but.. It was hard. On all of
us.”

There are so many questions Abby wants to ask. She's missed out on four years of her daughter’s
life, not even knowing if or how she survived in the wilderness on her own.

Clarke takes Abby’s hand in her own and pulls them towards some chairs.

"We have a lot to talk about, you might want to sit down."

She cooperates as Clarke pulls two chairs close together, never letting go of her hand. Clarke’s eyes
are sincere, yet burning with incredible intensity despite the tears falling from their edges.

Abby’s complete attention is focused on the girl - no, woman - in front of her. Clarke isn't the
teenager she sent to the ground anymore. She now carries a huge weight of responsibility on her
shoulders, that Abby only now notices seem to be much larger than when she last saw Clarke.

The older woman takes a moment to actually scan her daughter from head to toe. Abby first notes the
three weapons she clocked when Clarke initially walked into the room, although there may be more hidden away. The clothes are familiar to her now, mostly leather with small metal pieces of armour sown in here and there.

Clarke’s forearms are bare, and Abby can see the sinewy muscle ripple beneath sun-tanned skin. Multiple scars litter the skin that is visible. It takes everything in her not to brush her fingertips over their surface, wondering how Clarke received each one.

Abby turns her eyes upward, tracing the dark intricate braids in Clarke's hair. She misses the blonde locks, but understands why she hid them. Her face appears to be the same, but minor differences catch Abby’s attention. Her cheeks are shallower, and a small white scar adorns her chin. The main difference is her eyes. They contain the same drive as the grounders now. The will to survive.

Clarke sits straighter and more rigid during Abby's examination, confidence oozing out of every pore. She’s not the innocent girl who grew up on the Ark anymore.

"I'm here, mom. I'm ok."

Clarke must have seen the disbelief in her eyes. Disbelief that her daughter is alive, that she is here, now.

Abby nods and squeezes Clarke's hand a little tighter. Their eyes lock and a small smile pulls at Clarke’s lips. She has so many questions, but there’s only really one place to start.

"What happened, Clarke?"
Four Years Ago.. Part 1

Chapter Notes

Flashback chapter!

This got super long so I split it in two, the second half will turn up somewhere later, not sure where yet. Let me know what you think! :)

Also, I go to Finland on Sunday for a week so the next update might be a bit late :

Enjoy!

Just After The Mountain

Trikru Territory

Clarke

Clarke’s feet hurt. A lot. It feels like the soles are made of nothing but blisters at this point. But she keeps walking. She doesn’t have a direction, wandering aimlessly as the memories of what she did consume her.

She only stops when the darkness means that she can barely see her own hand in front of her face. Clarke buries herself into the roots of a nearby tree, comforted ever so slightly by the wood enclosing her body.

She doesn’t have a plan. She can’t think. When she closes her eyes all she can see are hundreds of charred bodies. The people she killed.

Clarke doesn’t sleep that night, too afraid of what could happen in her dreams and in the real world around her. She has no idea where she is. Anyone could find her in the state she’s in.

By morning, all she knows is that she has to disappear. She has to survive on her own for a while. She isn’t ready to go back and face what happened. Not yet. But if Clarke knows one thing about her mother, it’s that Abby won’t let her go willingly.

For the next week, Clarke struggles to stay alive. She tries to remember what they were taught on the Ark about survival on the ground, but that was a long time ago and about the Earth before the bombs. It hardly seemed relevant now. She’d learnt some things from spending time in the grounder army camp, but no-one had actually shown her how to do anything other than ride a horse.

Clarke hadn’t planned on leaving. The only possessions she has are the clothes on her back and the gun at her hip. She despises it, the cold metal heavy on her hip and her mind. She almost threw it away the first day she left, but had just enough sense in her not to discard the only way she knows how to defend herself.

Right now it’s also the only way she can hunt.
She manages on familiar looking berries for a while, but they barely sate her hunger as she roams the woods. Clarke knows she needs to figure out how to catch some sort of prey. Anything will do.

When she comes across a stream of clear water, Clarke immediately breaks out in a rare smile, overjoyed at the idea of washing herself for the first time in days. The entirety of her clothes and body are covered in a thin layer of mud and grime from her exhausting travels. She smells almost as bad as when Anya covered her in gross mud.

After what feels like hours bathing and drinking in the fresh water, Clarke finally extracts herself from the pleasurable stream. As she pulls on her cleaner but still damp clothes, she decides to follow the path of the small river rather than stray too far from it. She has no idea where the next water source could be.

Apparently it was the sky.

Beneath the canopy, Clarke hadn’t noticed the darkening of the clouds above. She regrets that now, curled up in a ball as close to a tree trunk as she can get. There is nothing in the vicinity that she can see to protect her from the weather she had no idea was coming. She has a lot more to learn about surviving than she thought.

The downpour lasts for two days. By the time it’s finished, Clarke is completely soaked, her clothes and hair sticking to her skin uncomfortably. In this moment, she finally appreciates the meaning of ‘feeling like a drowned rat’. Not that she’s ever seen a rat.

The forest smells different after the rainfall, new scents filling the air. It would be pleasant if Clarke weren’t shivering from head to toe. She needs a fire, but everything around her is sodden.

So she walks. Her limbs feel heavy, her eyelids drooping as her body tells her to sit down, just for a little while. Clarke knows she shouldn’t, but it’s so tempting to collapse on the ground and forget about the world around her.

Despite what her body tells her, Clarke keeps walking, not even caring where she’s going anymore. She needs to get out of these clothes. The damp, sticky fabric is starting to rub against skin all over her body, most noticeably between her thighs. It hurts like hell, but Clarke marches on.

After what feels like hours, Clarke comes across a cave almost completely hidden by bushes and vines. Clarke draws her gun as she approaches the gloomy entrance, even though it’s next to no use in its soggy state. She enters the cave cautiously, scanning the inside for any sign of movement.

At first she can see nothing at all, only darkness ahead. As her eyes adjust, Clarke notices a large pile of wood at the rear and what could have been a small fire pit near the entrance. Moving slowly, Clarke steps further into the cave, listening hard. All she can hear are her own feet shuffling forwards, the cave otherwise silent. She’ll have to work on that.

When she’s sure it’s safe, Clarke clips the gun back into place on her hip and gathers some of the wood to make a fire. It warms her up quickly, immediately feeling almost as good as before the storm hit.

Clarke stays in the cave for the next few days, waiting until the sun dried out the surrounding area. It’s become a little home from home, but she can’t stay. She can’t stop moving. Not yet.
As the days drag on into weeks, Clarke teaches herself how to survive by herself. She learns how to listen to the forest, how to look for signs of life, and even remembers to check the weather every so often. She manages to just about feed herself, eating berries and nuts that she recognises, even trapping a few small animals in makeshift traps. It isn’t much, but it’s enough.

One particular day, Clarke attempts to climb a tree. She reckons it would give her a better view of her surroundings, as well as giving her a good hiding place of sorts if she ever needed it.

It takes multiple attempts for her to get the hang of it, falling embarrassingly often onto the unforgiving ground. She rips her jacket and trousers on the rough bark, small grazes and cuts appearing across her hands and arms as the day wears on.

Clarke is completely beside herself when she reaches what she deems to be an acceptable height for her first attempt. All she wants is to jump up and down for joy, and she would if she weren’t clinging to a branch who knows how many feet in the air. Clarke accomplished this all on her own. She can survive this harsh world.

Only one thing is on her mind in that moment. How the hell does she get down again.

As the weeks turn into months, Clarke begins to think less and less about the mountain, although it never truly leaves her thoughts. She’s managed to find some sort of fruit that dyes her hair darker, hopefully making her less recognisable. Blonde isn’t all that common on the ground.

Her old clothes have been exchanged for second-hand leathers, tightly fitted to her form. Her gun is long gone, buried somewhere in the woods. Instead, she has an old sword strapped to her back and a small dagger tucked into new, sturdier boots. She has some idea on how to use the weapons, but luckily her fledgling skills haven’t been put to the test yet.

The few people she has come across were wary of her, but didn’t physically attack her. A kind woman at a trading post helped her lot, giving Clarke much more than she thinks her small kills were worth. Clarke promised herself that she would make it up to her one day.

Clarke is a new person, molded from who she used to be. She’s even got a new name.

When the leaves start to turn from green to orange, Clarke finds herself in a part of the woods she has never been to before. It’s a subtle change, barely noticeable if you’re not paying attention. Gradually more and more of the plants and trees around her have a dim luminescence that Clarke has only seen when she first arrived on the ground.

It’s even more striking after the sun has set.

Her first night in the glowing forest she spends in a tree, not wanting to leave herself exposed on the ground in unknown territory. She climbs up while she still has light, tying herself securely to a branch.

She’s used to the dark now. It no longer scares her as it did when she first left her people, using all her senses rather than just relying on her eyes to scan her surroundings.

But tonight is different. The darkness doesn’t come.

Instead, the forest almost lights up in response to the lack of sunlight. From above, Clarke can see almost every detail of the ferns and shrubs below. Insects buzz between the stunning flowers, a whole range of larger creatures appearing every now and then.
The sight ignites the artist within her that has laid dormant and ignored for months. She only vaguely remembers the feeling from when she was back on the Ark.

When morning comes, she plunges further into the glowing forest, continuously marvelling at the incredible nature around her. Clarke can’t help but be amazed at how the Earth adapted to the radiation humans subjected it to almost a hundred years ago.

The weather grows colder by the day, and Clarke realises that she actually needs to find somewhere to survive the winter. She has no idea how to do that, or what the weather will do. They didn’t exactly have seasons on the Ark.

Clarke forges on regardless, keeping the furs from her kills for warmth as the temperature continues to plummet. Just when she’s lost almost all hope of surviving the cold, she comes across a beautiful waterfall.

The way the light dances in the mist captures her imagination, immediately yearning to put charcoal to paper yet again. Clarke doesn’t know how long she stands there watching the water roll over the edge, eddies and currents rippling in the pool beneath.

When she finally tears her gaze away from the water, Clarke approaches the cliff, hoping for some sort of cavern she could stay in, at least temporarily.

About halfway up the cliff she spots what looks like a medium sized cave, the entrance half covered by vines. It’s only accessible by a narrow ledge, making it difficult for anyone to creep up on her, but also reducing her options for escape if she ever needed to.

The lack of other choices forces her to go with it. She can scout out other locations later. Right now, she needs somewhere to set up camp and get warm.

Clarke stays there for about two weeks before she sees another human being. She’s sitting quietly on the bank of the river, wrapped in furs as she waits for a fish to bite. Her fingers and toes are cold, but she needs to eat. Clarke hears footsteps in the trees behind her, but tries not to visibly acknowledge that she heard them. She doesn’t know if they’re a friend or foe after all. Her hand slowly moves towards the dagger next to her, grasping it tightly as the stranger comes closer.

“You’ll be waiting a long time for a bite. The fish around here aren’t interested unless you use a specific bug to lure them.”

Clarke turns towards the soft voice, understanding most of what the woman said but not all of it.

A few feet behind her stands a beautiful woman, dark hair tied back simply and curious brown eyes focused on Clarke. She carries what appears to be a bag full of supplies over her slender shoulders, but Clarke can’t tell what exactly. The woman appears to be unarmed, but Clarke doesn’t dare relax. She’s still not that good at evaluating people.

“Ai laik Ryka, fisa kom Haro.” (I am Ryka, a healer from Haro.)

Clarke only stares at the woman, wondering why the hell she is talking to her. She can manage just fine on her own, thank you very much. She has done so far.

Eventually the dark-haired woman gets the hint.

“I will leave you to your fishing then.”
Ryka walks off into the forest, the sound of her footsteps quickly disappearing until all Clarke can hear is the river flowing past her.

Two days later, Clarke is about to try fishing again when she sees the same woman, this time with an empty satchel and fishing rod in hand. Clarke studies her from the entrance of her cave, not moving in case she’s seen.

She watches as Ryka sets herself up on a rock next to the river, pulling a small jar of lures from her bag. From Clarke’s current position, they look like small black specks. The lures could be absolutely anything, from tiny berries to mysterious bugs. Ryka attaches one to the hook on her line before throwing it into the river.

Clarke is extremely surprised when barely ten minutes later, Ryka is pulling the line out of the water, a large wriggling fish latched on. It took Clarke over an hour to catch a tiny little one.

After a while Clarke's curiosity gets the better of her, so she slowly creeps out of her cave and approaches the woman. If Ryka saw her leave the cave, the woman doesn't give any indication that she had.

Clarke crouches on a rock nearby, watching as the hook bobs in the running water. Only then does the other woman acknowledge her presence, turning her head with a small smile pulling at her lips.

“You never told me your name, stranger.”

Her voice is as soft as it was two days earlier, a comforting change from the majority of people Clarke has met on the ground. She stares at the river a while longer, not really knowing what to say to the woman. Clarke can barely understand her as it is, picking up the odd word she recognises.

“Ai laik Kal.” (I am Kal.)

Clarke leaves it at that. She doesn’t know enough about the other clans to claim that she’s from any of them.

The smile on Ryka's face only widens.

“It's nice to meet you, Kal.”

When Ryka draws yet another fish from the river, Clarke watches intently as she attaches a new lure to the line. Up close she still has no idea what they are. Ryka catches her eyeing the bait.

“They are called nightbeetles. There are many colonies in the area around my village. The fish tend to like them a lot, as you can see.”

The pair sit in silence until Ryka’s bag is full of fish, at which point she starts to pack up her supplies. Clarke keeps her eyes on the river, not really knowing what to do.

“Maybe I will see you again, Kal.”

Clarke doesn’t miss the concerned look on her face, but the woman leaves without another word and disappears into the trees. When Clarke eventually looks over to where Ryka was sitting, she sees a small pile of the bugs left behind. Another kind soul she will have to repay one day.

She uses the bugs sparingly over the next few days, not wanting to run out too quickly in case she can't find any more. The cold really starts to set in, seeping through her clothes and more often than not she finds herself shivering from head to toe. The fire is barely enough to keep her warm, and dry
wood is becoming harder to find.

Clarke is sitting by the river again less than a week after she last saw Ryka, shivering as she waits for a fish to bite. She has furs wrapped around her, but Clarke can feel the tips of her fingers and toes starting to go numb.

Eventually she gives up, deciding that sitting beside a fire will be more pleasant than catching dinner. When she starts to pack up her meagre belongings, the crack of a twig in the tree line has her spinning around, a dagger in her hand at the ready.

Blue eyes lock with brown, recognition coming slowing due to the cold. Clarke gradually lowers her dagger, but doesn't take her eyes off the woman.

“Why are you here so often if you’re a healer?”

Clarke has no idea if Ryka knows English, for the sake of communication she hopes so. A frown forms on the woman’s face, probably trying to comprehend what Clarke just said. She tries using the little Trigedasleng she knows.

“You are a healer, why you here again?”

Her words are slow, trying to get the pronunciation right. Ryka tilts her head slightly, the frown shallower but still there.

“I need to collect supplies for the winter. The entire village helps out before the snow falls.”

Ryka’s eyes scan Clarke's figure, catching the shiver that she can't conceal anymore.

“You are cold. Do you have anywhere to stay for the winter?”

Clarke just stares at her, getting the gist of what she said but not giving any sort of reply. She can't deal with people. Not yet.

“If you need somewhere to stay, Haro is less than half a day’s walk from here. You would be welcome there, Kal.”

Her voice is sincere and concerned, but Clarke can't trust her or her soft demeanor. Not after what happened with the last grounder she trusted.

When Clarke doesn't move, Ryka gives her a resigned nod and retreats into the trees. Clarke gathers up her things and heads up to her cave, hoping that a fire will warm her up.

The temperature drops even further than Clarke guessed it could, way colder than she ever felt in space. She struggles to keep herself fed and warm, quickly running out of food and wood as she tries to stay inside the cave for the majority of the time.

Soft wet flakes start to fall from the sky, covering the Earth is a thin layer of white. If Clarke weren’t so cold, she might be able to appreciate its beauty.

She's sat by the fire when Ryka turns up again, although Clarke has no idea why she would be outside in this weather. The dark haired woman is wearing a large fur that covers almost her entire body, her feet poking out of the bottom as she walks. If Clarke were awake enough to notice, she would see Ryka catch sight of the smoke from her small fire and head towards the cave.

Before she can protest, a large fur is placed over Clarke and the dying fire is rebuilt with what's left
of the wood. She gradually starts to warm up, her mind waking up with the increase in temperature, especially when the smell of cooking fish assaults her senses.

“Why you help me?”

Ryka tends to the fish on the fire, barely turning to look at Clarke.

“I am a healer. I help people, even if they don’t want to be helped.”

She dishes up the fish and hands it to Clarke. She swears it’s the best thing she’s ever tasted, although that might just be her empty stomach talking.

“Mochof, Ryka.” (Thank you, Ryka.)

The woman nods simply, allowing Clarke to devour the food in silence.

“Please come back to Haro. We have a good community there, you will be welcome to join us.”

Clarke vaguely understands her but is still sceptical. However, it is rapidly becoming obvious that she can’t make it through the winter alone. If she wants to survive, she should go with this woman.

She nods uncertainly, staring at the base of the fire. What could she even bring to this unknown community?

Clarke doesn’t have a chance to brood on it before Ryka starts to pack everything up. She stuffs what she can see of Clarke’s belongings into a bag, then holds out a gloved hand to help Clarke stand.

They walk through the woods in silence, Clarke growing steadily more nervous with each step.

What if someone recognises her? What if they aren’t as welcoming as Ryka?

Questions and worries cloud her mind. She pushes the thoughts away by concentrating on putting one foot in front of the other, following Ryka’s footsteps diligently.

If there’s one thing Clarke has learnt on the ground, it’s that she will do what she must to survive.
Two Weeks After Clarke Left Polis

Polis

Lexa

For the last two weeks, Lexa has been worrying about Clarke almost constantly in the back of her mind. The woman had requested to not have a guard accompany her to the mysterious resistance meeting, but Lexa couldn’t let her go alone. She had sent one of her most trusted warriors to follow Clarke, just to make sure she was safe on her travels, of course.

Unfortunately, the warrior had returned to Polis after only four days.

This worried Lexa even more, although she was glad to know that the warrior had seen two pairs of tracks before they disappeared in the plains south of Trikru territory. At least Clarke wasn’t alone. Lexa has no idea who she could be travelling with, something the sky woman had failed to mention when they last spoke.

For now, Lexa has to dismiss those thoughts, concentrating on buckling her various pieces of armour for a meeting with the ambassadors. The armour isn’t necessary, but she likes to make herself look as intimidating as possible.

While she prepares herself physically, Lexa also prepares mentally, going through the most recent reports in her mind and predicting what each ambassador may want to talk about. It will probably be yet another tedious day of arguments, but she can look forward to training the nightbloods if the meeting finishes early enough.

As per usual, Lexa makes her way up the single flight of stairs to the throne room, her back straightening and her face becoming as stoic as humanly possible as she climbs. By the time she reaches the doors to the throne room, she is every bit the personification of Heda.

The guards at the entrance bow their heads in respect, then wordlessly push the doors inward for her.

Lexa strides through the open doorway, her coat billowing out majestically behind her. She silently takes in the assembled ambassadors as they bow in front of their chairs, but keeps her eyes focused on her destination. The wooden seat of twisted branches lies dead-ahead, waiting for Lexa to take her rightful place upon it.

When she reaches her throne, Lexa turns to face the room. As she takes in the scene before her, there
is one thing obviously wrong. Kane is missing.

Lexa glances at Titus on her right, asking the obvious question with just a look. He usually notifies her before the meeting if anyone has sent apologies for their absence. She had not been informed of this.

Titus merely looks angry, nothing new, but there is confusion behind his eyes. Clearly he doesn’t know what’s going on either. Uneasy at the situation, Lexa refocuses on the room and the kneeling ambassadors.

“Rise.”

The ambassadors stand carefully and take their seats. A banner from each clan hangs behind their chairs, some much older and more moth-eaten than others. The newest hangs furthest from Lexa, a plain white sheet with a simple black symbol painted on. Compared to the other banners, it’s colourless and cold, reflecting the space station the Skaikru used to live on.

A few questioning glances are shared as the ambassadors gradually notice that Kane is missing. So far he has a perfect attendance record, it’s very unlike him to be late, nevermind absent. Before the glances can turn into whispers, Lexa decides to get the meeting underway.

“Welcome, ambassadors. Let’s begin with-”

Her words are cut short as the doors are flung open.

Lexa doesn’t expect to see Clarke striding towards her.

Clarke walks into the room confidently, the dye removed from her hair. It now shines golden in the sun from the window, as radiant as it was four years ago. Her blue eyes are full of fire, complemented by an old blue Skaikru jacket, similar to the one she wore when they first met.

A sword is strapped to her back, daggers fastened to her thighs, and no doubt more hidden elsewhere. Her shoulders are set strong with determination, and there’s a power emanating from Clarke that is undeniable.

In this moment, she truly embodies her title of Wanheda.

Clarke stops a few steps in front of Lexa, bowing her head ever so slightly before blue eyes dance with green.

“Klark kom Skaikru.”

The ambassadors’ eyes almost pop out of their sockets as they stare at Clarke and Heda. A legend has appeared before them, however Lexa needs to make sure she is the one in control of this meeting.

“Heda. I am here to replace Kane as the ambassador for the Skaikru.”

Those blue eyes never waver, and for the first time Lexa cannot read Clarke. She has no idea what is going on in the blonde’s head, putting Lexa on edge. Nothing about this is good. At all.

Lexa tries not to give away her concerns, merely gesturing to Kane’s usual seat.

“Welcome, ambassador.”

Clarke finally turns away, and while all eyes are on her, Lexa chances a glance over to Titus. He is
really fuming now, face red and hands clenched tightly at his sides as he watches the sky woman take her seat.

Whispers of *Wanheda* start to spread until Lexa glares at every single person in the room, silence falling once again.

Lexa can’t help but ask herself what the hell is Clarke doing here, struggling to keep her gaze away the woman. She is uneasy to say the least, but Lexa has to carry on as if the blonde’s presence hasn’t affected her at all. Right now, Lexa needs to be *Heda*.

“Now, who would like to raise their concerns first?”

**Clarke**

Clarke knows she’s late for the meeting. But that’s the point. She needs agitate Lexa as much as possible to even have a chance of pulling this off without getting killed.

As she approaches the tower, the guard at the doorway blocks her way, but she can see the apprehension in their eyes. Clarke locks her gaze with theirs, not letting them look anywhere else.

“I am Klark of the Sky people. *Wanheda*. I am late for a meeting.”

The guard visibly gulps, their throat bobbing mere inches away from Clarke. But they don’t move from their position.

Clarke glares at them intently, her fingers starting to toy with the hilt of a dagger on her thigh.

“I don’t want any problems here. Let me through.”

The guard’s eyes widen at her implication, finally succumbing to her will and giving Clarke enough space to walk past them and into the tower.

“*Mochof.*” (*Thank you.*)

Clarke heads straight to the lift, ignoring the stares of guards and servants in her path. The guard at the lift is a vision of surprise, mouth open slightly and eyes almost bulging from their sockets. Clarke has met them before on a few of her previous visits to the tower, although apparently the hair change and jacket makes a bigger difference than she thought.

“*Throne room, please.*”

The guard nods quickly, their eyes never leaving Clarke as she enters the lift and closes the door behind her.

As the lift slowly climbs, nerves start to buzz in her belly. Clarke ignores it, concentrating on the task at hand. She still has a lot to do today.

When she finally arrives on the top floor, Clarke finds yet more guards posted outside the throne room. The pair don’t give away their thoughts as easily as the guards she’s met so far this morning.

When Clarke approaches the doors, they cross their spears in front of her, blocking her way. She looks at both of them, but neither meet her gaze.
“I am the new ambassador for Skaikru. Would you like me to tell Heda that I was late because her guards would not let me in?”

The guards barely move, but their eyes swiftly glance at each other before landing on her. Clarke stands straighter, not buckling under their stern stare. After another minute of this, they move out of her way, reluctantly opening the doors for her.

Clarke takes a deep breath before striding through the doorway. She’s sure her expression the most stoic it has ever been.

She may have been to the throne room before, but the sight in front of Clarke threatens to take her breath away. Lexa sits directly opposite from Clarke, as regal and powerful as ever on her intricate throne.

A pauldron sits securely in place on Lexa’s shoulder, the signature red strip of fabric tied beneath it and flowing round the commander’s back to end on the floor at her feet.

It’s all so very reminiscent of when they first met. The only thing missing is the war paint.

The ambassadors sit facing Lexa, but Clarke pays no attention to them. All she can see is the impressive woman ahead of her. All she can hear is blood pumping through her ears.

Confusion and surprise passes through Lexa’s expression for an instant as Clarke approaches her. She stops a few feet in front of the brunette, smirking to herself as she bows her head ever so slightly. So far so good.

As blue meets green, the softness that Clarke has become accustomed to is almost completely gone from Lexa’s eyes, replaced by a cold wariness.

“Klark kom Skaikru.”

Clarke holds Lexa’s gaze, not acknowledging anyone else in the room.

“Heda. I am here to replace Kane as the ambassador for the Skaikru.”

She keeps her voice calm but powerful, making sure that everyone in the large room can hear every single word. Lexa barely reacts, merely gestures towards a chair somewhere behind Clarke, no doubt the one that Kane usually occupies.

“Welcome, ambassador.”

Clarke finally turns away from Lexa, subtly surveying the ambassadors around her as she takes her seat. She notices the banner behind the chair before she sits, immediately recognising the symbol from the Ark. A whole host of memories spring up in her mind, but Clarke pushes them all aside.

Wanheda is whispered more than once, but as Lexa’s eyes sweep the room, silence descends. Maybe Clarke underestimated the sway Lexa has over her people.

“Now, who would like to raise their concerns first?”

Kane had briefed Clarke on how the meetings tended to play out the day before. Normally, if a clan has an issue, big or small, the ambassador will stand and address the group with the problem. He mentioned that it often becomes a tiresome argument between certain members of the group, which Lexa is usually forced to put an end to.
Clarke decides to watch for now, keeping quiet as she studies the people around her.

The first to stand is the ambassador from Azgeda. Clarke doesn’t pay much attention to what they are saying, concentrating on reading Lexa and the ambassadors who will hopefully be helping her in a short while.

A couple fidget nervously in their seats, stealing glances towards Clarke. Lexa however seems to be doing the exact opposite. Her body is stiff and she keeps her eyes firmly away from Clarke’s location.

One person in the room seems to be absolutely fuming, he’s been glaring at Clarke from the moment she stepped into the room.

The bald man stands on Lexa’s right, his face an interesting red colour as his eyes never waver from Clarke’s face. She locks eyes with him for a moment, immediately seeing the rage and distrust there. This must be the Titus that Lexa has spoken of so many times.

Clarke turns away from him as the Azgeda ambassador stops speaking. Lexa gives them some sort of reply that seems to sate them for now, but Clarke has no idea what they were talking about. Once she’s finished with the Azgedan, Lexa’s eyes scan the people before her suspiciously.

Now is Clarke’s moment.

She stands, back straight and hand clasped behind her. All eyes are on her.

“Skaikru would like to discuss the nightbloods. Again. We, and others, believe that they should not be taken away from their families at such a young age to never see them again.”

Clarke takes a breath as Jake enters her mind, but she carries on with renewed vigour.

“It is not only Skaikru who wish to bring this issue to you. The Plains Riders, Lake people, Broadleaf and Shallow Valley support us in this.”

At their cue, the ambassador from each of the clans she names stands. The surprise on Lexa’s face is pretty clear to Clarke, although most would miss it. She takes the opportunity to drive her point home.

“We will no longer be ignored and unheard. We want justice for the families with nightblood children. If we cannot come to some sort of agreement here, we have no option but to consider more severe action.”

She can see the shock in the seated ambassadors’ expressions. With the backing of not one but five clans, Lexa can’t just ignore the resistance anymore. No-one can.

Clarke waits in silence as she sees realisation hit Lexa. She swears the commander doesn’t breathe for a second, rage and disappointment immediately shining from her eyes.

“What you are suggesting has been discussed before. Many times. Just because you want this to happen, does not mean that the entire coalition agree with you. Does anyone else here concur with what Skaikru are suggesting?”

Clarke doesn’t expect anyone else to stand up, and they don’t. It was hard enough to get the other four clans to join them in the first place.

“You do not have a majority, hence I cannot agree to your conditions. You therefore threaten the
safety of my people. If you refuse to back down, I will have no choice but to remove you and your clans from the coalition.”

Clarke had thought this might happen.

They had discussed it at length with everyone in the resistance, especially when they reached out to the clan leaders. The clans had started preparations for the worst about a week ago, but it only hits Clarke now what that means to her. She will be forced miles away from Jake, with no idea if or when she will get to see him again.

Clarke pushes through, doing what she has to do. For the people in the same position as herself.

“We understand.”

Clarke knows Lexa will recognise her stubbornness in this, that she’s not going to back down. She will get to see her son. Some day.

Lexa’s brow furrows, her eyes full of a deep sadness.

Clarke is the reason why the coalition is going to break apart. Just like Lexa broke the alliance that night on the mountain.

The silence is thick and no-one dares to move as Clarke and Lexa lock eyes. Wanheda vs Heda.

“The Sky People, Plains Riders, Lake People, Broadleaf and Shallow Valley are hereby removed from the coalition. All trade agreements are terminated. Your people have one week to leave the coalition peacefully. Get out.”

Her voice is loud, low and menacing, but there’s barely a flicker of her renowned fire behind it. Clarke knows the anger will come, but for now Lexa will be reeling from the shock. She knows all too well what it’s like to be in her situation. There’s just one more thing to rub salt in the wound.

“May we meet again.”

Clarke takes one more second to glare at Lexa, briefly reading her reaction, then she turns to lead the other ambassadors from the room. She finally releases the breath she didn’t realise she was holding in once they’re outside in the corridor. At least that part is over.

Jake

The nightbloods are all having lunch in their usual dining room, chatting about the classes they had that morning. Jake enjoys having other kids his age to chat to, accidentally slipping between languages as he speaks.

The doors suddenly open, and Jake assumes it’s the guards to escort them to their next class. Yet as he contemplates his plate, it’s clear that they are earlier than usual. He’s barely eaten half of his food yet.

Jake looks up at the figure in the doorway, completely confused but absolutely overjoyed.

“Mom!”

He jumps up from the table and runs to his mother, leaping into her waiting arms. She picks him up
and holds him close, just like she used to.

“Jake, I missed you so much.”

Jake nuzzles his head into her neck, scrunching his nose as it’s tickled by her hair. Blonde hair.

He pulls away a little to look at his mom, love pouring out of her watery eyes. She carries him over to one side of the room, away from the other nightbloods.

“Your hair.”

Jake gently strokes a strand of the golden locks. He’s never seen hair this colour before. Kal smiles at him a little, then puts him down and kneels in front of him.

“I will explain some other time. For now, just know that I love you and behave yourself, okay?”

Jake swears tears are about to fall from her eyes, and her voice cracks a little when she speaks. He's never seen her like this, his own eyes tingling as tears start to form.

“I love you too mom.”

Someone clears their throat behind them. It's only then that Jake notices Aden lurking not far away. The other nightbloods are silently filing out of the room, although their eyes are wide, watching Jake’s conversation with his mom. He guesses because none of them have seen their family since they came to Polis.

“Jake, we should go.”

Jake turns back to his mom, not wanting to say goodbye so soon. He hugs her tightly, Kal’s arms wrapping firmly around his small frame.

“Ai hod yu in.” (I love you.)

Her whisper is barely audible in his ear as she squeezes him. They reluctantly let go of each other and she nods towards Aden. He knows what she means.

With tears threatening to fall from his eyes, Jake turns away from his mom. Aden takes Jake's hand, the older boy giving a small nod in Kal’s direction.

As they trudge out of the room, Heda stands stiffly in the doorway. He has no idea how long she has been watching, suddenly embarrassed that she saw him so close to crying. Heda only looks down at him once, pain and disappointment obvious in her usually unreadable expression.

Jake focuses on the floor in front of his feet, not even thinking about where Aden is taking him.

When he finally brings his head back up, he’s surprised to see that they are alone rather than with the other nightbloods. Aden kneels in front if him, much like Kal had, and looks him directly in the eye.

“There’s something you need to know, Jake.”

Lexa

After every single person has left the throne room, including a very angry and reluctant Titus, Lexa
completely collapses in on herself. Her head falls into her hands, elbows propped up on her knees as she tries to comprehend what just happened.

Tears threaten to fall from her eyes as all her hard work comes crashing down around her. The coalition she spent so much time and energy building is now split in two, because of a woman she had completely underestimated. She never thought Clarke would do this.

The old Clarke wouldn’t have done this. The Clarke that fell from the sky, wanting nothing but freedom, broke that night on the mountain. Lexa had seen it happen with her own eyes, not knowing at the time how deep the crack would go.

This new Clarke would do anything for her family. For Jake.

**Jake.**

Her head snaps up at the thought. Surely Clarke wouldn’t try to take him again. Would she?

Lexa runs across the room to the doors, crashing through them before she dashes down the stairs to the nightblood floor. It’s not far, but Clarke left long enough ago for her and Jake to be long gone by now.

When she reaches the correct corridor, she sees the nightbloods trooping out of their dining room, whispering to each other with astonishment clear in their expressions.

Lexa strides towards them, freezing in the doorway when she catches sight of Jake and Clarke in a tight embrace. Aden is stood a few feet from them, watching the pair carefully. At least Lexa can rely on him to be loyal to her.

As Clarke releases Jake, the small boy moves towards Aden reluctantly. Jake only notices her as he passes through the doorway, teary blue eyes looking up for a moment before he disappears with Aden into the corridor.

Lexa closes the door behind them, her back to Clarke as she tries to calm her breathing. Her heart is beating so hard, her eyes prickling uncomfortably. She’s no idea what is going on inside of her. What’s even worse is that she can’t control it. She doesn’t like this. At all.

Lexa eventually turns to look at Clarke, not meeting the stormy blue eyes that are almost as wet as her son’s. Her throat doesn’t want to cooperate with her mind, her voice coming out as a tiny squeak.

“**Why?**”

“**You know why.**”

Lexa finally meets Clarke’s eyes, her own betraying every single thing she is feeling. This woman has completely unraveled her, just as Titus warned her so many times. It felt so worth it before. Now she’s not so sure.

Clarke’s expression quickly returns to one full of determination, anger and fire. Any sign of weakness has almost completely vanished.

“**Now you know what it feels like to be betrayed.**”

The blonde storms past Lexa into the corridor and away, leaving her frozen to the spot, an absolute mess for the first time in a very, very long time.
Repercussions

Chapter Notes

Just got back from Finland! It’s definitely given me some ideas for later on in the story, so look out for that!

Thanks to everyone who left kudos/comments! I was so worried everyone was going to hate the last chapter, so I greatly appreciate the feedback :)

Anyways, enjoy! :)

That Evening

Ton DC

Octavia

Octavia is returning to the village from a long watch duty on the perimeter when Indra approaches her. The older warrior is just as stern and formidable as when Octavia first met her, but since then she’s learnt a few little things that give away some of what her mentor is thinking. The tightness of her jaw immediately tells Octavia that something is up.

They walk through the village in silence, Octavia following Indra’s lead. They seem to be heading towards the village’s general meeting room, a small structure used for all sorts of purposes. Everyone is allowed to borrow it, but it’s most often used in the winter months for meetings about watch rotations, training plans, even food distribution.

Octavia knows that this much silence from Indra can't be good. She tends to get straight to the point rather than dragging things out, and she’s not afraid of berating people in front of the entire village.

Once they enter the meeting room, Indra closes the door gently behind them as Octavia lights a few candles. The sun has started to set outside, shrouding them in almost complete darkness in the windowless building.

“I have just been informed that Skaikru are no longer a part of the coalition.”

Octavia’s mouth drops open in shock. Usually she would care what Indra thought about her reaction, but the news catches her completely off guard. It takes her a moment to wrap her mouth around one of the many questions in her mind.

“What happened?”

The Arkers and the coalition have managed to live peacefully for years now, only something major could divert them from that path.

“Apparently Wanheda now leads the resistance. Skaikru and four other clans have left the coalition, to make a point it would seem.”
Octavia doesn’t miss the contempt in Indra’s voice when she says *Wanheda.* and her words bring up a whole new bunch of questions. *Clarke did this?* Surely she wouldn’t put her own people in danger just to help the resistance?

But then she remembers. Clarke’s child is a nightblood.

A torrent of emotions runs through her, all of the blood draining from Octavia’s face as another realisation hits her.

“I have to go back to Skaikru, don’t I?”

She daren’t look at Indra, despair claiming her heart. Sure the Arkers have grown on her, but Octavia never feels completely comfortable with them. They’re the ones who forced her to spend sixteen years hiding under the floor. They’re the ones who killed her mother because she had a second child.

No amount of time getting to know them will ever redeem what they did to her family.

And what about Lincoln? He’s the one person she knows she can rely on in this harsh world.

“You have a choice Octavia.”

Octavia looks up at her mentor, confused but hopeful, her eyes prickling uncomfortably.

“Since you are bonded with Linkon, you are both Skaikru and Trikru. You can choose to go back to Arkadia, or to remain here with us.”

She swears she sees a spark of affection in Indra’s eyes, but it’s hard to tell in the dim light.

Octavia has a choice, but what should she do? Staying in Ton DC would mean abandoning Bellamy. They already have a ton of issues to work through, being on opposite sides of a war would only makes things worse. But if she returns to Skaikru, will the Arkers accept Lincoln as one of their own?

All this and more runs through her head too fast for her to comprehend, along with a whole range of emotions that she can’t suppress or deal with. Indra can tell what’s going on in her mind. She always could do that.

“Talk to Linkon. I expect you to inform me of your decision by morning.”

Indra gives her a knowing nod on her way out, leaving Octavia with her thoughts. *What the hell am I going to do?*

Next Day

Polis

Lexa

She never thought it would come to this.

Sure it was hard keeping all the clans in check, but Lexa never thought that the coalition she had worked so hard to build would actually break apart.
Especially because of the Skaikru of all people. They needed so much help just to survive when they came down from the sky, the least they could do is thank her for all the support she gave them, rather than throwing it right back in her face.

No-one else would have given them a chance. Helping the sky people almost put her own life at risk, with many of her subjects disagreeing to their addition to the coalition.

Lexa only gave them that chance because of Clarke. The one woman who showed her the potential of the Skaikru, and that maybe life could be about more than just surviving. The one woman who could break her.

The woman she betrayed, and who betrayed her in return.

Lexa shakes herself out of her thoughts. She desperately needs to concentrate on preparing for the meeting this afternoon, but her mind keeps drifting back to Clarke. Those steely blue eyes haunted the few hours of sleep she got last night, and continue to do so throughout the day.

She carefully applies her warpaint in a mirror, as she has done so many times in her life. Since she became *Heda*, this is the longest period of time Lexa has gone without having to wear the dark mask. The longest period of peace Lexa has ever known.

But now that’s over.

When she’s finished, Lexa goes back through everything she’s read for the last day, reviewing all of the discussions she had with her generals in Polis about the upcoming war. So far they’d managed to look over maps of the southern clans, as well as warrior and supply numbers. There is still much to do before the week is up, but they have made excellent progress so far. It helps that Lexa worked almost all night, any rest plagued by nightmares of failure and blonde hair.

Lexa tries to remain focussed, burying herself in the papers in front of her to forget why she’s having to do this in the first place. She needs to be on top of it all before the meeting with the remaining ambassadors. They will be anticipating orders for their armies, and will no doubt have multiple questions for her about the upcoming months. Questions she may not have the answers to.

After a few candlemarks of reading and planning, a knock on the door indicates that it is time for her meeting. As always, the meeting is in the throne room, although this will be the last with Lexa present.

The room is eerily empty when she strides in, the ambassadors bowing as she enters. It’s strange having this few people in the large space. The flags of the departed clans have been removed and destroyed, leaving the room feeling even more colourless than normal.

Lexa sits on her throne rigidly, back stiff, shoulders back and studying each ambassador thoroughly as they take their seats. She can’t afford to be fooled again.

“*Have your leaders been notified about the break in the coalition?*”

They all nod silently in reply, every single person meeting her stern gaze.

“*Good. I want your armies prepared to march within the week. Once you have given the order, surrender your radios to Indra. We will use our old methods of communication from now on. Anyone found in possession of an unauthorised radio will be severely punished. Is that understood?*”

Another round of quiet nods, the general mood rather sombre.
“Orders for your generals will be sent out later today to each of your clans. I expect your people to be ready when the messengers arrive.”

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

Lexa slowly scans the room again, taking in any and all tiny details about the people in front of her. She notices the Trikru ambassador fidgeting with their robe, twisting the thin fabric between their fingers. When Lexa’s eyes meet theirs, they stand and bow low to her before speaking.

“Heda, what will happen to Arkadia? It is technically still in Trikru territory, correct?”

Their question is one she has asked herself many times over the last day, weighing up the various alternatives in her mind for hours. She still doesn’t have a definitive answer.

“It will be dealt with.”

Arkadia

Raven

Raven can’t believe it.

Just when she’s gotten used to having Ash around, somebody fucks up and the warrior has to leave. Just when they’re finally comfortable in each other’s space, they can’t see each other for who knows how long, if they live long enough that is.

It sucks. Hard.

Raven watches from a distance as her Trikru warrior rides away. She sees Ash look back just once before she heads into the tree-line and out of sight. Anyone who pisses her off today will be getting an earful.

She manages to distract herself for the rest of the day, packing up various bits of supplies for their journey south. Abby specifically asked Raven to come with them the day before, claiming that her expertise would come in handy. That she could help keep everyone safe.

As long as she isn’t forced to come up with some sort of weapon to be used on the Trikru, Raven doesn’t have a problem with the resistance. It’s not like she has much choice anyway. With her leg the way it is, she doubts any other clan would willingly take her in. Especially in the current situation.

As the afternoon wears on, Raven decides to go outside get some air and a well deserved break. Her workshop has become even more unorganised than usual in the effort to collect whatever could come in useful on their trip. Everyone has been getting in her way in the rush to pack up, making the cramped room hot and leaving her cranky.

Once outside she can take a deep breath to try to calm her mind, staring at the clear blue sky before taking in the chaos that is her home. What Raven doesn’t expect to see is a small brunette and her hunk of a husband striding towards her.

“Raven!”

“O!”
The pair embrace tightly when they finally come together again. It’s been months since they last saw each other, although Raven would never admit out loud that she actually missed Octavia. Eventually they release each other, allowing Raven to acknowledge her husband’s presence.

“What’s up Lincoln.”

She punches him on the shoulder lightly, his only reaction a small smile. Raven doesn’t need to ask why they’re here. It’s the same reason why Ash had to leave.

“I’d love to chat but I need to talk to Abby first. Have you seen her?

Octavia is completely serious, her brow furrowed and no hint of her previous smile remaining.

“Yeah, she’s in the medical bay I think.”

Octavia and Lincoln nod, briefly taking in the disorder around them.

“I’ll come back after we’re done with Abby, okay?”

“Sure thing, you know where I’ll be.”

Raven gives them a small smile, smirking as she slaps Octavia on the butt as the couple head off towards the medical bay. She’s glad they’re back, even under the current circumstances.

Near Arkadia

Clarke

It’s late afternoon when Clarke can finally see Arkadia in the distance. She hasn’t returned in over four years. The sight brings back more bad memories than good. The mountain. Her dad.

She pushes the thoughts down, fiddling with the reins and the daggers strapped to her thighs as a distraction.

Other than Kane, Octavia and her mom, Clarke hasn’t seen any of the Arkers since she left. She vaguely wonders how they’ve changed, how they’ve adapted to life on the ground, if they’re the same people she abandoned.

What’s more worrying is how they will react to her return. She’s not looking forward to confronting a few people in particular.

“Everyone will be glad to see you, Clarke. To be honest, most of us thought you were dead.”

Clarke turns her head to look at Kane. She appreciates him trying to reassure her, but it doesn’t help ease her anxiety.

“I doubt they all agree with what we’ve done.”

Kane nods in understanding, gazing blankly at the path ahead of them.

“True, but we did what we thought was right. They can understand that.”

Clarke can’t help but think that doing ‘the right thing’ comes at a high price on the ground. She
wants to see her son, and for others to be able to see their children, but was going to war really the best option?

Her thoughts go back and forth on the matter, as they have done for the last few weeks, but ultimately Clarke knows she needs to concentrate on what happens next. What’s done is done. All she can do is move forward.

As they approach the outer wall, Clarke is brought out of her reverie, overjoyed at the progress her people have made. Arkadia’s borders are much further out than they once were, giving them enough room to grow plenty of food for themselves and the surrounding villages. It’s remarkable really, how well they have managed to adapt to life on Earth.

Octavia had told her about their development, but nothing could prepare Clarke for seeing it in real life. She’s never been prouder of her people, but it only emphasizes the shame she feels for dragging them into this mess.

Once through the gates, Clarke can see a few people are scattered about in the fields, but they are predominantly guards patrolling the perimeter. Clarke doesn’t recognise many of them, although the new clothes, braided hair and sun-tanned skin makes it difficult to identify anyone. That and four years away.

No-one acknowledges her presence, although it’s hard not to notice the wide-eyes and quiet whispering. Clarke ignores the stares, eager to get to the centre and help pack the supplies they need to take south.

Abby and Clarke had discussed in length what the Arkers could do if they left the coalition. Realistically, they can’t stay in Arkadia surrounded by Trikru territory. It was one hell of an issue they needed to deal with, and after hours of debate, evacuation seemed like the best bet.

But the Arkers have been given a choice. Those who wish to stay can, although Clarke reckons that the majority will head south with Abby and herself. Clarke is up for trying to persuade as many to come with them as possible. They need as many allies as they can get, and she has no idea what Lexa’s plans for Arkadia could possibly be.

A small stable stands outside the inner wall, forcing the pair to dismount before entering. There are more guards patrolling here, and shouts go out as Clarke and Kane approach the gate.

*Here we go.*

When they enter, a small crowd quickly gathers around them, many mouths dropped open in stunned silence. Clarke feels completely exposed under their scrutiny, but she stands straighter, trying to give the impression that she has all the confidence in the world.

“Clarke?”

She turns to see Bellamy in utter shock, a few others from the original 100 near him. It’s good to see them all, alive and well, but she can’t help but feel a twinge in her heart. These are the people she saved from the mountain men. The people she killed hundreds for in an instant.

Clarke clears her mind and walks over to the group, extending her arm to Bellamy. He ignores it and immediately pulls her into a tight hug. She almost tears up as she holds him, but manages to keep herself in check. Clarke’s not the same person she was when she left them. She’s not the same teenager they all knew.

“It’s good to see you, Bell.”
He finally lets her go, and she rakes her eyes over his figure. Bellamy is wearing one of the guard jackets, somehow still intact, and a sword is belted loosely around his back. He appears to be otherwise unarmed and his face betrays every thought, as it did when they first crashed to the ground. She could kill him in an instant if necessary.

Apparently there are still some improvements to be made with her people.

Suddenly another body flings itself at her, and it takes Clarke a second to realise who it is. She chuckles slightly when she does.

“‘It’s good to see you too, Monty.’”

He pulls away as more and more people come up to greet her, hugging and shaking her hand enthusiastically. It’s all overwhelming, the faces she once knew suddenly here again. But there’s one person she really wants to see. Someone who helped her when she needed it the most.

Between the heads of everyone around her, Clarke manages to catch sight of Raven in the distance. She’s standing still, hand on her hips, that recognisable red jacket wrapped around her slim figure.

As questions start being asked by the crowd surrounding her, Clarke tries to excuse herself to head towards Raven. Before she can even extricate herself from the group, Clarke sees a small brunette storming towards her.

“Clarke Griffin, what the hell did you do?!”
Arkadia

Chapter Notes

The training move at the end is the same as in chapter 17 if you remember that far back :)

A lot of the comments on the last chapter point out that going to war is kind of a bizarre move for Clarke, and maybe I let my plot run away with itself rather than following the characters, but hey, what's done is done. This is my first fic so I'm still trying to figure out how to do this whole writing thing, but hopefully you'll like where the plot goes as I upload more chapters.

Sorry for the rant! Enjoy :)

Arkadia

Octavia

“Clarke Griffin, what the hell did you do!”

Octavia storms up to Clarke, absolutely fuming at the sight of her. She briefly notices the return of the blonde hair, but that thought is quickly swept away by her rage at what she has done.

She ignores the stares of the people gathered around them, eyes fixed on her target.

“O, why don't we go somewhere more private to talk about this.”

Clarke's voice is infuriatingly calm compared to the whirlwind of her own emotions. *Doesn't she know the hurt and upset her actions have already caused?*

“No. We can talk right here. You can tell everyone how you've managed to start another war!”

Octavia can tell her temper is getting out of control, but she doubts she will be able to calm down any time soon. Her whole life has been uprooted. Again. The great thing about being on the ground was actually belonging somewhere. Right now, she’s not sure where she should be, or whose side to take in this futile conflict.

The crowd start to disperse a little, seemingly ashamed by her words or just wanting to avoid the ensuing drama.

“I did this for my son. I can't carry on for the rest of my life and never see him again. I can't just let him go like that.”

Clarke's voice is low, her eyes burning with a passion unlike anything Octavia has ever seen before. But she doesn't let her off that easily.

“So you did this for yourself. I've questioned your decisions before, but I swear this is the worst one yet. Did you really have to start a war just to see Jake? Have you seen what your actions have done
She gestures vaguely at the people dashing around Arkadia, fortifying the inner wall, collecting supplies, gathering whatever they can carry. Most are preparing to leave for the plains, while the rest hope to survive Lexa's forces coming their way. Abby had only just told her as much, giving her a choice to stay or join the convoy heading south. The choice was obvious to her.

“What if it was your kid who was a nightblood, O. Would you just let them be taken away? I'm doing this for everyone. You can't call me selfish for that.”

That's what pulls at Octavia’s heartstrings. Her and Lincoln had talked about having children many times over the years, but it never felt quite right. Between her training with Indra and helping Arkadia to survive, it never seemed like the right time. They wanted somewhere to call their permanent home first. Now it appears that that dream will be almost impossible.

Octavia doesn't know what to say to Clarke. She won't back down, she's still furious at the woman for her terrible decisions. But she can't help but know that if it were her child, she would do anything to get them back.

“I would have figured something out. You of all people should know that war isn't the answer, or do you not have enough blood on your hands already?”

It's a low blow, a tense silence filling the air around them.

She's surprised when Bellamy’s voice appears out of nowhere. Octavia was so focused on Clarke that she had completely ignored the other people still standing nearby.

“Clarke did what was necessary, O. All these people know is war. If we want to make a point, this is the only way.”

Octavia turns to face her brother, barely believing what he just said. Her own brother. One of the few people she thought might have learnt better than that.

“Maybe if you left Arkadia once in a while, you’d realise there's a lot more to their culture than war and death. They aren’t that different to us, we just happened to have grown up in a metal box in the sky rather than on the ground. The Arkers still killed people for no reason, or have you forgotten what happened to Mom?”

She's had enough of this conversation, her fingers twitching for a blade in frustration. Instead of waiting for a reply, Octavia stalks off in the direction of Raven’s hut, ignoring the hurt expressions behind her and hoping for a sympathetic ear to rant at.

**Abby**

Once a placated Octavia and Lincoln leave the medical bay, Abby quickly gets back to helping Jackson to pack up essential medical supplies. She knows she can't take any of the equipment from the Ark, but she has some of her own improvised portable kits, and Poda gave her a list of what would be useful in the plains.

Thinking of Poda puts a small smile on her face. She should be arriving soon to escort them all south. That thought wipes the smile away. Abby knows that they have to leave Arkadia, but it's still hard
not knowing how long they will be gone for, or even if the old space station will still be here when they come back. She hopes that everything will be sorted out in a month or two, but from what Clarke has told her, she highly doubts that Lexa will agree to their requests any time soon.

When her back is turned, she hears the door open for what feels like the millionth time today, assuming there’s yet another issue that she has to deal with. As chancellor, Abby has been the one to coordinate the move, with help from the other councillors of course, but it seems like all the Arkers come to her with every tiny problem.

“Abby..”

His voice is low and as soft as ever, although more tentative than usual.

And rightly so.

Abby spins round to fix her gaze on Kane.

“How could you not tell me that Kal was actually Clarke?! She was in Polis for months and you still didn’t tell me!”

Kane visibly gulps. He’s gotten better, but she can still melt him under her stare.

“She asked me not to tell you, so I respected her wishes. I figured she'd reach out to you eventually..”

"Eventually may not have happened if it wasn't for the resistance. If she hadn't joined, would you have told me what happened to her? That her son, my grandson, is a nightblood?"

When Clarke told her about the attempt to get Jake back, the hope turned to devastation in her voice almost broke Abby’s heart. She can't believe she almost achieved such a feat, but then again, she is her daughter.

“If I got her permission, yes. I didn't know she was going to stay in Polis, I thought she might go back to Trishana. Even Heda would have refused to give me her location if I asked, assuming she managed to keep track of her.”

His words don't help the betrayal and anger burning through Abby’s veins. Maybe time will heal the hurt, but she has bigger things to deal with right now.

Abby turns away from him towards the bag she was packing when he walked in, his puppy dogs eyes growing unbearable.

“We have a lot to do and very little time. I suggest you get to work.”

He nods silently before leaving the room, disappointment and regret clear on his face. She might have been a little harsh, but she doesn’t have time to dwell on it. There's a million things to do in the next two days before they leave for the plains.

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Clarke

Octavia’s words hurt. No-one has blamed her for what she did at the mountain since she left, but then again she hasn’t seen anyone who could confront her about it. Clarke avoided everyone she knew for four years so that it didn’t happen.
She takes a deep breath as Octavia walks away, irritated at Bellamy for butting in when he wasn’t needed. She can take care of herself.

“Are you ok?”

His concern is the last thing she needs right now, grating against everything she has worked so hard to become.

Clarke turns to him, any sign of the hurt she feels inside wiped from her expression.

“I’m fine. Where can I find my mom?”

Her voice is cold, wanting to get out of the awkward situation she’s found herself in as soon as possible. Her hands are itching with the need to do something, anything.

“She’ll be in the medical bay. It’s in the same place it always was.”

Clarke ignores whatever thoughts pass over Bellamy’s face. She desperately needs some time to collect herself. All these people she grew up with suddenly back in her life is more than a little overwhelming.

She nods at Bellamy and what remains of the group before heading towards the fallen space station. It looks a little worse for wear now, vines crawling up its sides and covering the gradually rusting metal. Arkadia has been built up around the structure, so many wooden buildings of various sizes surrounding it within the inner wall.

Everything seems set up here now, causing yet another twinge in her heart at having ripped this settled life from the Arkers.

She keeps to herself that night, setting herself up in a small tent near the inner wall. Abby had tried to convince Clarke to stay in her quarters with her, but she knew it was far too soon for that. They may be talking again, but Clarke knows it won’t take long for them to get in some sort of argument.

The next morning, Clarke rises bright and early, ready to get on with the day. They are scheduled to leave at dawn tomorrow, so they don’t have a lot of time to make sure everything is prepared for the journey.

When she emerges from her tent the sun is barely up, casting the place in a soft orange glow. It almost looks like a grounder village, although certain things distinguish it from any other village in the coalition. Most notably the gigantic metal structure in its centre. Only a few figures stumble around in the dim light, no doubt wishing they were wrapped up in furs like their comrades.

Clarke heads straight for the council room, knowing that her mother will be there to coordinate the day’s activities. It’s no easy task, figuring how much to take with them so that those who stay behind won’t suffer. Clarke hopes Lexa will go easy on Arkadia, although she wouldn’t be surprised if the commander burnt it to the ground. Especially after her betrayal.

Her footsteps echo in the halls of the Ark despite her training, the air cold and sending shivers down Clarke’s back. The sooner she’s out of here the better.

When Clarke finally finds the council room, Abby is already bent over a tablet, endlessly scrolling through supply lists. Apparently the Skaikru still utilise a lot of the old tech, equipment that Clarke hasn’t touched in years.

Abby looks up at her when she enters the room, scanning her face and overall appearance. Clarke
had decided to wear her weapons despite being in friendly territory, more out of habit than anything else. She knows that more than a few Arkers still have their reservations about her, and being prepared for anything can’t hurt.

“Good morning Clarke, did you sleep well?”

Abby is clearly exhausted, dark circles forming under her eyes.

“Yes, thank you. What can I do?”

Her mother’s brow crinkles in thought.

“I have no idea what to do about weapons, could you take a look for me?”

Clarke nods and smiles a tad at her mother. She had some experience of this type of thing with the grounder army, although back then she didn’t quite appreciate the tiresome talks about what she deemed to be unimportant at the time. She knows better now.

Abby passes over the tablet, and Clarke soon finds herself squinting at the glare from the device. Once she’s got a general idea of their arsenal, she places the tablet on the table between them.

“Lexa will come here first, how well do you want to defend Arkadia?”

Abby frowns in what could be sadness or regret, probably both. This was the one of the issues that had her questioning Clarke’s plan, but they had agreed it was a necessary risk. All they can do is hope that Lexa will be merciful towards those who decide to stay behind.

The Lexa Clarke had reconnected with over the last few months wouldn’t kill her people for the sake of it. But who knows what her betrayal will have done to the commander, what Lexa will be expected to do given the circumstances. It’s a dour thought, one she hadn’t quite given enough time to before.

“Arkadia doesn’t stand a chance, especially with over half the population leaving...”

If the sadness weren’t clear in her face, it’s completely obvious in Abby’s voice. She’s going to be leaving the place she has spent her entire life, knowing that it might not be there when they return.

“Where’s the armoury? I’ll get on it.”

Abby gives her directions to a building not far away, and Clarke takes her leave. When she finds the armoury, there’s none other than one of the 100 standing guard. Monroe, Clarke vaguely remembers.

“Morning Clarke.”

Clarke nods silently in response as Monroe quickly moves out of her way.

As she stares at the racks in front of her, Clarke can’t help but think that Skaikru have the absolute worst assortment of weapons she has ever seen. She can tell without even picking one up that the swords are blunt, heavy and unwieldy. The spears and arrows are in even worse condition, the shafts bent and the tips barely sharp enough to pierce skin.

Don’t they know how to look after their weapons?

If she were in Haro, Clarke would have set them aside for training or sent them to the blacksmith with an angry scowl. But this is all they have. She has more to do than she bargained for.
Working with Monroe, Clarke spends most of the morning separating the usable weapons from the rest, loading them into a cart for the journey. The guard already have a sword each, although by the looks of it no-one carries any other sort of weapon day-to-day. It’s odd to Clarke, having gotten used to wearing at least two daggers at all times.

By the time the sun is high in the sky, Clarke is sweating profusely from the heat and exertion. She drops her coat off with the rest of her belongings, but doesn’t remove any of her weapons. She needs to set an example, to show the Skaikru a little of what it’s like outside their fragile walls.

As evening comes around, she finally decides to find the two people she’s been actively avoiding all day. Octavia and Raven. She has a vague idea where Raven’s workshop is, although she drags her feet when walking towards it.

Clarke heads in cautiously, not wanting to accidentally set anything or anyone off.

“Raven?”

A head pops up from behind a counter at the far end of the room, brown eyes as bright as ever.

“Hi Clarke.”

Raven should be furious at Clarke. Deep down she is, but not as much as she expected to be. Her and Octavia had had a good long rant the night before, working through their rage at the current situation together.

Now she needs to get her shit together.

Raven dumps the wires she’s holding onto the table, then limps around to get closer to the blonde. She’d seen her from a distance the night before, but up close Raven can see the changes in Clarke more clearly. Her bright hair is braided back from her face, skin tanned from the sun, and Raven can see at least three weapons on her person, although she expects more are hidden elsewhere.

“The ground suits you Griffin.”

A small smile tweaks at her lips at the compliment as blue eyes scan the room.

“You’ve made yourself a little nest I see.”

Raven grins widely. Her workshop is her pride and joy, her own little sanctuary from the harsh world outside. She can spend hours here tinkering, trying to mesh together whatever they have to make something useful, or at least entertaining.

“It’s home.”

Guilt flashes through Clarke’s eyes for a second, turning away to examine the wall beside her. She’s almost as good at hiding her feelings as Lexa, but Raven knew Clarke long before the commander entered their lives.

As the tension builds between them, they are interrupted as Octavia storms through the door.

“Raven, wanna get some dinner before the savages eat all the food?”
She stops short when she spots Clarke.

“Oh, uh, I’ll just.. meet you there.”

Octavia almost makes it back out of the small room before Clarke stops her with a gentle hand on her arm.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to put you and Lincoln in this position. I wasn’t thinking clearly about all the possible consequences of my actions, including what would happen to you.”

The pair lock gazes, and Raven has no idea what will happen next. They could move on and deal with their differences, or they’ll explode in yet another argument. It could go either way with Octavia in the mix.

Eventually Octavia nods slowly to the blonde, although they all know that Clarke isn’t off the hook just yet.

“Fancy training before dinner? I could do with a good workout.”

Clarke smirks and nods.

“Prepare to get your ass kicked.”

Raven smiles in delight. This should be fun to watch.

“Princess versus Grounder Pounder, this I have to see.”

“You’re one to talk Reyes.”

The smile is wiped off her face and immediately replaced by a blush and a frown at Octavia’s reply. The three laugh as they make their way to the training grounds, avoiding everyone still dashing around camp.

Raven takes a seat on the edge of the area, glad to be off her feet. Her leg isn’t as bad as it used to be, but what with all the running around trying to get everything stored or packed away safely, it’s starting to complain at her. She hasn’t even gotten on a horse yet.

As she wriggles into a comfortable position, the two warriors strip off their weapons, opting for hand-to-hand combat. She’s watched Octavia training multiple times before, but she’s never seen Clarke fight. Raven doesn’t quite know what to expect from her, but what’s not to love about watching two girls roll around in the dirt?

She watches as the pair fight, surprised at how often Clarke knocks Octavia to the ground. Raven can tell how frustrated the brunette is getting, whereas Clarke is managing to show no emotion at all. The focus is impressive, her eyes locked onto Octavia’s figure despite Raven’s catcalling and cheering.

Gradually more people crowd around Raven to observe the fight, cheering loudly whenever someone is thrown to the floor. Clarke and Octavia don’t seem to notice the growing attention they are getting, rarely glancing away from each other.

They circle slowly, feet sliding over the ground silently. Octavia throws a punch, and Raven swears it hits Clarke. But it doesn’t. She blocks the fist just before it smacks into her face, twisting Octavia’s arm away.
What she does next has Raven wide-eyed and whistling low.

Clarke pulls Octavia off balance, using the momentum to somehow hook a leg around the back of her neck as she rolls to the floor. Her second leg quickly wraps around the front of Octavia’s neck, her arm pinned beneath the blonde’s body.

A gentle squeeze later and Clarke is standing again, almost grinning from ear to ear. Octavia is still wheezing on the floor, groaning and rubbing her neck slightly. The crowd around Raven are in a state of shock, half with their mouths hanging open while the rest holler and whistle enthusiastically.

“Nice! Where the fuck did you learn to do that Griffin?”

Clarke’s face falls a little, quickly replaced by an unreadable expression.

“Something I picked up from Lexa.”

Clarke shrugs a little before offering a hand to Octavia, pulling her up from the floor. Raven’s belly rumbles noisily, loud enough for everyone to hear.

“So, you guys wanna get dinner? I’m starving.”

The pair chuckle slightly as they rejoin Raven, slowly strapping weapons back onto their sweaty and dusty bodies.

“Great idea.”
A Week After The Coalition Split

Polis

Lexa

It’s been a week since the coalition split in two. The one week Lexa gave the clans to withdraw from her territory. It seems to have dragged on forever, but at the same time feels like absolutely no time at all has passed.

Lexa spent the entire time bent over maps and consulting her generals about the upcoming war. In all honesty, she hopes there won’t be much bloodshed, but you never know what could happen on the battlefield. She’s barely gotten any sleep between meetings and nightmares.

The Azgeda army has joined her in Polis now, the main body of the Trikru and Trishanakru armies should be waiting for her further south. The majority of the people in Polis have been on edge, old tensions suddenly brought to the surface by apprehension of the impeding war, even the occasional fight has broken out over some nonsense. The sooner the armies are marching, the better.

The morning of her departure from Polis, Lexa wakes up well before dawn, the long list of things to do forcing her out of a fitful sleep. She pushes herself off the bed with a groan, her back aching from too little rest and too much time hunched over scrolls.

For the first time in a long time, Lexa dons her full armour and warpaint. It’s like an old ritual, her fingers moving out of habit rather than her brain telling them what to do, gliding over the various buckles and fastenings as she adds each piece.

Once she’s finished up in her own rooms, Lexa quickly scans the surfaces for anything she could have forgotten. She takes a deep breath as she shuts the door behind her, pausing briefly in the corridor. It could be a long time until she returns.

Lexa shakes herself from her thoughts. She then heads up to the war room to check all the necessary scrolls have been packed, even though she knows she carefully placed each and every one in a trunk the night before.

Her final stop is Titus.

He usually keeps things ticking over in Polis while she’s away, sending her regular updates on how the rest of the coalition are doing. He’s been particularly rude and grumpy all week, but the last thing she needs right now is another lecture. She’s done this all before. She’s not a child anymore.

Lexa steps into their usual meeting room, expecting Titus to arrive soon. Somehow the bald man
manages to survive on even less sleep than herself. She stands next to the window, trying to ease the tension in her shoulders as she watches the sun beginning to bathe the city in light.

There’s much more movement than there usually is at this time in the morning, her warriors meandering through the streets as they prepare carts and horses for the upcoming journey. Overall it’s still reasonably quiet, the sounds of bird calls just about audible on the wind.

That will all be disturbed once Lexa’s generals start shouting at her troops.

Titus arrives a few minutes later, closing the door quietly behind him before speaking.

“The army is starting preparations for departure. They should be ready within the next two candlemarks.”

Lexa turns towards him and nods slightly. She can tell from the view outside how close they are to leaving Polis, although she has no idea how long they will be away. Titus takes her silence as a sign to carry on.

“Please stick to our plan for Arkadia, Heda. Remember, the Skaikru are the reason we are in this mess.”

Lexa glares at Titus, her nose crinkling in anger.

She doesn’t need telling what to do. And he should trust her to do what has to be done.

But the sky people aren’t entirely to blame for all of this. There were so many decisions that lead them here.

Lexa allowed the sky people to join her coalition.

She let Clarke live when she took Jake from Polis.

She asked Clarke to infiltrate the resistance, knowing the risks that it entailed.

This is Lexa’s fault, all because she has a weakness for that one woman.

These thoughts don’t help her, turning her mind into a mushy goop of regret and guilt. Lexa needs to be strong, to not let her emotions get the better of her. More now than ever before. She can do it, as she has done so many times in the past, but that doesn’t mean it’s an easy task.

“I know what needs to be done, Titus. You do your job, and trust that I will do mine.”

They lock eyes in a battle of wills for a moment. Titus clearly wants to give her yet another lecture of what went wrong, of what she should have done to prevent this. She’s seen that expression too many times this week. It’s not like he’s lived through many periods of peace in his lifetime, she did pretty well considering her people’s violent history.

Titus eventually bows his head, lips in a tight line to stop himself saying anything else on the matter.

“Ste yuj, Heda.” (Stay strong, Commander.)

He leaves the room quickly but quietly, no doubt off to wake the nightbloods. Lexa trusts that he will look after them well in her absence. They have always been his priority and she knows he cares deeply for them, even if he doesn’t show it very often.

Lexa spends the next hour going back over their plans and watching the army’s preparations from
the window. She can sense the apprehension and nerves in the air, creeping its way under her skin.

She tells herself this just like any other war, similar to the hundreds her people have fought in the past. But deep down Lexa knows it’s not, and so do her warriors. She will need to be the fiercest Heda she has ever been to inspire her troops this time around.

After an hour of going over plans she has already memorized, Lexa finally remembers the advice she gave to Clarke all those years ago. There’s no point hanging around in the tower any longer, so she heads outside to oversee the final assembly of her army.

The first stop on their journey: Arkadia.

Aden

At breakfast the nightbloods are silent as they eat, the weight of the day’s events weighing on their minds. The older kids know what it’s like when Heda is away from Polis, but they still don’t like it. Titus is a good teacher, but no-one can compare to Heda.

That and the fact that if she were to die in this war, one of them would have to take over as commander. It’s a harsh reality, one that they are reminded of every day, but only really hits home at times like these.

Aden munches away at his food, watching each of the others carefully as he does so. As the oldest nightblood, he often takes it upon himself to make sure the younger ones are doing alright, that their training isn’t affected by the events going on around them. They have to learn to battle on even in the worst of circumstances, but it’s a lesson that takes time, something Aden experienced the last time Heda was away at war.

Muffled sounds can be heard from the street outside, shouting and clanging of metal against metal as the army gathers in the streets. A few heads pop up at the noises, eyes turned towards the window in intrigue.

Eventually one plucks up the courage to walk over to the window and gazes out at the systematic chaos below. Aden isn’t surprised that it’s Jake.

He’s noticed how quiet Jake has been over the last week. His mother’s true identity has proven to be something the boy thinks about far too much to be healthy, shaking his previously cheerful demeanor. The other children had chattered about her for at least a day before Aden quietly asked them to stop. He has no idea what could be going through Jake’s head, especially with all the unsubtle whispers about Wanheda among the guards and staff.

Aden stands to join Jake at the window, the small boy’s nose pressed to the glass as he tries to get a better view. Polis looks like absolute mayhem, lines of warriors clogging up the narrow lanes, horse-drawn carts interspersed between companies. Aden easily spots the captains yelling at their troops, and grooms trying desperately to keep their horses under control in the confined space.

The one thing he can’t see anywhere is that distinctive red sash.

More nightbloods appear at the window beside him, peering over and around each other comically. Their faces are a mixture of awe and fear, but they all have wide eyes, absorbing everything. Aden takes the opportunity to apply one of their lessons.
“Nightbloods, how long do you think it will be until the army departs?”

They might be able to guess, although it would be incredible if any of the youngest ones were to estimate correctly.

“They look ready, all the people are there.”

Aden looks down at the young nightblood, a small smile on his face as little eyes stare up at him.

“Do you see Heda anywhere?”

The kid scans the streets quickly, lifting onto tiptoes to try to see as far as they can.

“No.”

“Then they aren’t going anywhere yet. Heda will lead the army out of Polis when they leave. If she is not there, then they are not ready. Any other guesses?”

Aden glances over the tops of all the small heads gathered round him, most of the older nightbloods still sat at the table eating breakfast. They’ve seen all this before, although the atmosphere is somewhat gloomier this time.

“I think they’re about a candlemark away from leaving.”

Aden nods at the kid who spoke before looking back out over the crowds below.

“That would be my guess.”

They watch for another few minutes or so before growing bored, returning to their breakfast with slightly more excited faces. Jake remains by the window, tracking the movements outside with a serious expression.

“What’s wrong, Jake?”

Aden speaks quietly, not wanting the others to overhear their conversation.

“I heard some things. All of this is because of Wanheda. Because of my mom.”

A frown covers his tiny face, pulling at Aden’s heart.

“This will all be over before you know it. Training will take your mind off the war.”

Jake nods slowly, but Aden’s not sure the boy completely believes him. His eyes suddenly move to a street near the tower, his face transforming into an expression full of wonder, worry and concern.

“Look! There’s Heda!”

The young nightbloods all run to the window again, trying to get a glimpse of Heda in her full war regalia. Who knows when she will be able to return to Polis.

Aden knows she’ll come back.

She always has.
Monty waits nervously at the inner gate, shuffling his feet in the early-morning chill. Once the week Lexa had given them was up, everyone had been on edge. But last night they saw the fires from her army’s camp only a few miles north of Arkadia.

When the sun comes up over the tops of the trees and blinds Monty for a moment, that's when he hears it.

The sound of hundreds of boots marching towards them.

A shout from the lookout confirms what he can hear. Monty immediately sends out orders for everyone to be woken up and brought to the open area behind the gate. They have barely any weapons to defend themselves, and the ones that are left are blunt and barely usable.

The only thing standing between them and an army are two walls that suddenly look far too thin.

As a crowd slowly starts to gather behind him, Monty straightens his back and looks out towards the outer wall. He can just about make out a small group of horses walking through the now open outer gate, followed by a huge dark blur that must be the rest of Lexa’s warriors.

He gulps, his whole body tense with nerves. Of course he had to volunteer to stay behind, inadvertently setting himself up to be the one to meet the intimidating commander.

Well, they had all been given a choice, although neither option was terribly appealing. Monty had initially decided to go south with Clarke, but he couldn't leave Jasper behind. That and the fact that the council had agreed that at least one of them should stay with the remainder of the Arkers.

Thinking of Jasper, Monty searches the crowd for his best friend. Their friendship had been strained after the mountain, fighting almost constantly as Monty tried to help him through his grief. It had taken a long time for them to work out the friendship, but it was definitely worth it in the end.

Monty spots him near the front, sending a nervous smile in his direction. Jasper doesn’t react, his eyes transfixed by the figures marching towards them. No one dare look anywhere else.

He turns back to the path leading towards them, now able to discern individuals from the masses. A relatively small contingent are slowly making their way towards the inner wall.

Leading the group is the woman he's met only once or twice before. She sits tall and imperious atop her white steed, the black war paint across her features making her look even more intimidating and fearsome than he’s ever seen.

As they approach the gate, the last obstacle in their path, Monty can hear whispering and shuffling behind him. He doesn't look at the crowd, instead ordering for the gate to be opened for the commander.

The mounted party pass through the gate at an excruciatingly slow pace, their eyes scanning every inch of the compound. Monty recognises Indra on Lexa’s right, but he has no idea who anyone else is. They all wear either warpaint or masks that cover the majority of their faces, an incredibly fierce and off-putting force.
Monty takes a deep, shaky breath before speaking.

“We don’t want a fight. Those of us who stayed here don’t want a war, and disagree with the rest of our people. We just want to live in peace.”

Lexa stares at him, taking in his words but not showing any sign of what she’s thinking.

“The decision has been made for you. You have one candlemark to collect your meagre belongings. Anyone found carrying weapons or technology will be severely punished.”

Lexa’s voice carries over them all, stern and strong. They should all know to take her threat seriously.

Monty nods then turns around to his people, all seemingly frozen in place. He’d hoped they had realised that realistically they wouldn’t be able to stay here, in what is now enemy territory. From the terrified looks on their faces, maybe a few hadn't quite understood what it meant to stay behind.

“We’ve got one hour people, let’s get a move on.”

They disperse slowly, much slower than he'd like. He has a lot to do in the little time they have.

Once he's sure everyone is getting on with packing up what they can, Monty heads to his own small tent. All his belongings are already packed, having anticipated needing to leave pretty quickly however the situation played out with Heda. The only things he needs to sort out are his tent and a small radio, the last one in camp.

The first thing he does is pick up the radio, making sure the volume is low before turning it on.

“Clarke, come in, this is Monty, over.”

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**Plain Riders Territory**

**Clarke**

By Clarke’s estimate, they have a few more hours of walking and they should be at Lidu, the resistance’s base of operations. Everyone is fed up, but conversation flows fluidly as they draw nearer to the end of their journey.

Clarke herself is at the head of the train of people and supply carts, mounted on a horse beside her mother and Poda. Her face is streaked with dark warpaint, a mark of her title for when they arrive in Lidu.

“Clarke, come in, this is Monty, over.”

The voice is so quiet she almost misses it.

She pulls the radio out of her coat pocket, giving her mom a quick look before answering. They knew this call would be coming sometime soon.

“Clarke here, what’s going on Monty?”

There’s barely a second before she gets a reply.

“I think we’re being moved out of Arkadia, and we can’t take any tech with us. I don’t know what’s
going to happen to us or Arkadia after we leave. I’ll try to look after everyone and get in touch, but I can’t promise anything.”

Clarke sighs a little in relief. At least Lexa hasn’t slaughtered them, although there’s nothing stopping her doing so if the Skaikru become a problem later on. The whole reason they left was because they knew Arkadia would be the first place Lexa took her army.

“That’s ok Monty, stay safe. May we meet again.”

Clarke carefully replaces the radio in her jacket, thinking over what Lexa might do with Arkadia and her people once they are moved.

Abby looks over at her expectantly, her eyes curious but worried.

“Lexa is making them leave Arkadia. Monty doesn’t know what she’s going to do with them yet, but it sounds like it could be a while until we hear from him again.”

Her mom nods sadly in response. She’d tried so hard to persuade everyone to come south with them, not knowing what could happen to them if they stayed in Lexa’s territory. But of course there were those who thought they knew better than Clarke and Abby, or simply didn’t trust their plan.

Clarke doubts Lexa will just have them killed for the sake of it, especially if they surrender peacefully. It’s the rest of the coalition she worries about. They have deep-rooted expectations of what Lexa should do, ones that could lead to her people being killed simply to make an example out of them.

Poda speaks up from the other side of Abby, pulling Clarke out of her disturbing thoughts.

“We have scouts watching Heda’s movements. They should be able to find out what happens to your people, I will make sure of it.”

Clarke sends a grateful smile her way before turning back to the path ahead of them, her mind wandering through the options of what to do next. This is only the beginning.
Restless

Chapter Notes

Going to Copenhagen next weekend!! I'm so excited, anyone else going?

Hope you enjoy the chapter :)

One Month Later

Lidu, Plains Riders Territory

Clarke

It's been a month, and they've gotten absolutely nowhere.

The coalition is still split up, leaving everyone in an awkward sort of limbo on the brink of war. There have been a number of skirmishes on the border with Trikru, although most have been small scouting missions or attacks that ended before they even began.

Most of the resistance’s forces are camped near Lidu waiting for orders, although they do have some troops closer to the border. Clarke can tell the warriors are starting to get restless, hell even she is, but the group of leaders don’t seem to be able to come to any sort of agreement of what to do going forward.

Without an commander who has outright authority over everyone, they're a bit lost. Even with Clarke in Wanheda mode, there are still a few that don’t take her seriously, undermining her influence over the rest.

Unfortunately it's becoming clearer with every meeting that some of the clans only joined for their own sake and not for the resistance’s cause. They didn't want to help, they don’t care about the fate of the nightbloods. All they want is control over the people who were previously their allies.

It’s a struggle to prevent all out war from breaking out, even within their own ranks.

The one and only positive for Clarke has been training with the Skaikru. She’s taken the time to catch up with everyone, to find out about their lives since she disappeared, although it's frighteningly apparent that not many of them leave the confines of Arkadia. Another worry is that none of them have really fought in a war before. Not with a sword anyway.

Right now, none of that bothers Clarke.

All she’s thinking about is putting one foot in front of the other. The early morning breeze is incredibly refreshing, removing any sleepy cobwebs as she jogs around camp with Bellamy and Octavia.

It's become a routine of theirs to run together in the mornings. At first it was a little weird, the tension high and conversation strained as they tried to mend their relationships somewhat. Now Clarke can't imagine her day without it. It clears her head before the undoubtedly infuriating meetings she has to
attend for the rest of the day.

As they come to the end of the route, they silently nod their goodbyes as they head to each of their own tents to clean up.

Clarke walks towards her own tent, rolling her shoulders and neck as she goes. The camp is slowly coming to life around her, the smell of breakfast lingering on the wind. She only has a candlemark or so until she’s trapped in a stuffy tent for hours of yet more arguments. Great.

Once she’s washed and donned her armour, Clarke grabs something to eat from the cooks before heading to the largest tent in the centre of the camp.

She’s managed to get on the good side of the cooks, talking to them about their food and the spices they use. Clarke enjoys the relaxed conversation, and it helps morale in the whole army if she can keep them happy.

Plus if they just happen to give her a little something extra from time to time then she’s not going to complain. At least someone in this place likes her.

When she enters the large meeting tent, the makeshift table in the centre is still covered in papers from the day before. Her companions aren’t as tidy as she’d like them to be.

Clarke busies herself around the table, munching on her breakfast as she gathers up the scraps of information and organises them into piles. She’s completely engrossed in the task when Poda and Abby join her in the tent.

“Good morning Clarke.”

She jumps slightly at the sound, although recovers quickly.

“Morning. Sleep well?”

Abby smiles and nods in reply. They haven’t had much opportunity to have a ‘normal’ life on the ground together, but the little things help in times like these.

“I did, thank you. I’m glad the temperature is coming down a bit, I’m still not used to the summer heat.”

Clarke smiles a little at her and Poda, but their conversation is cut short by the Plain Riders’ general walking in. Her stoic mask is immediately replaced, moving to take her position at the head of the table. Abby reluctantly leaves Poda to stand next to her, whereas the smaller woman moves to her place beside the general.

Gradually all of the generals file in, some having whispered conversations while others simply wait in silence. Octavia joins them, taking her place on Clarke’s right hand side. Clarke and Abby had almost instantly agreed that Octavia was the obvious choice to lead their own meagre forces. She has experience none of the rest of Skaikru could compete with.

Once the last person has arrived, Clarke begins.

“Good morning everyone. First of all, Poda, are there any updates from the scouts at the border?”

Poda shakes her head slightly as she replies.

“No, Wanheda. Heda’s army remains as it was.”
Before she can say anything else, the Broadleaf general speaks up.

“We should attack them. Our warriors sit and grow fat while we debate day after day. My kinsmen are growing impatient. We have an army that easily rivals Heda’s, we should use it.”

A few around the room nod their heads in agreement, many staring at Clarke for a response. She has to stop herself from rolling her eyes at how often Danyl has suggested this, repeating himself almost every day so far. She’s not surprised when someone adds to his argument.

“He is right, Wanheda. It won’t be long until the snow comes. We should act now before our movements are hindered and our army is weakened by the cold.”

They had talked about this so many times, but Clarke and many of the others had always vetoed attacking Lexa’s army. They never wanted an outright war, just an open conversation. However Clarke has come up with a compromise that no-one can really refuse.

“We could march part of our forces north to the border, but not attack. I want to offer Heda the chance for negotiations first. Where we go from there will depend on how that conversation goes.”

Hopefully movement of some sort will satisfy the more belligerent among them.

“How do we know you won’t divulge details about our entire operation in these negotiations? Heda’s troops have intercepted us at every turn so far. How do we know that you aren’t the one feeding them information?”

The accusation hits Clarke hard. She can’t deny the obvious, there's most definitely a spy in their camp. But how dare they suggest that it's her.

“I am the one who decided to help the resistance and go ahead with this entire war. Why would I feed information to our enemy? You should think before throwing accusations around.”

Her voice is loud and fierce, a tone she has only discovered she had in the last month while dealing with the generals and leaders. She's having to use it more and more as of late.

Clarke locks eyes with the her accuser, daring them to talk again. She swears she sees a tiny bob of their throat in response. Inner Clarke smirks. She enjoys being intimidating sometimes.

Surprisingly Poda is the next to speak.

“I agree with Wanheda. If we can at least talk to Heda, we have a chance of ending this without any more blood being spilt.”

Her words are calm and careful, relaxing some of the building tension in the tent. Most nod along in agreement, eyes darting between Poda and Clarke. Together they make a great team, a powerful force to be reckoned with. When they agree that is.

“Good, we will leave the day after tomorrow.”

That Afternoon

Octavia

Once the meeting is over, Octavia is glad to get out of the sticky tent and away from the frustrating
generals. There are a few who she gets along with, but for the most part they irritate her to no end. Especially the ones who seem to be particularly excited to meet Lexa’s army in battle. Just the thought of killing anyone from Trikru makes Octavia want to hurl.

She quickly heads back to her own tent, subtly checking the surrounding area before entering. Clarke will have assumed that she went directly to the Skaikru part of camp to notify those going north with her, but she has another task to complete first.

Octavia kneels on the furs, pulling her bag of belongings towards her. She digs her hand in deep, searching for the hidden pocket halfway down. Usually it contains a spare knife or rations, however currently it holds a small radio.

“Ash come in, this is Okteivia. Over.”

She waits silently as the device crackles for a few minutes, listening out for the sound of footsteps anywhere near her tent.

“Ash here. Do you have new information for us?”

Octavia sighs in relief. Of all the messages she’s managed to send across the border, this is probably the most important so far. It’s a miracle Ash was even listening out for the radio.

“Over half of our army is heading north to a village called Popil the day after tomorrow. We should be there in four days by our estimates.”

The radio is quiet for a minute before a reply comes through.

“Mochof, Okteivia. I will relay your message to Indra.” (Thank you, ..)

Octavia smiles a little.

When she’d proposed the idea to Indra that she could feed them information from inside the resistance’s camp, Octavia swore she saw surprise in the warrior’s eyes. They had discussed it for as long as they had time for, what with them both heading in opposite directions from Ton DC.

She had only suggested it to try to keep the peace, to stop her friends on both sides from being killed.

“Wait, there’s more. Klark wants to talk to Heda. She’s going to send an envoy with the location and conditions once we have arrived in Popil.”

Silence fills the tent once more as Ash digests her message.

"Mochof. Ste yuj.” (Thank you. Stay strong.)

The radio goes dead immediately after her reply, so Octavia stashes it away again. Hopefully they will believe her message.

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**Trikru - Plain Riders Border**

**Lexa**

It's only been a month, but Lexa is already sick of being on the brink of war. Her warriors are restless, merely acting as guards to her territory and rarely engaging with the resistance's forces. The
few collisions that have happened they were forewarned about, either from their own scouts or from
the valuable information sent by Octavia.

Lexa has to admit that she never expected such deception to be carried out by Octavia, or for her to
suggest it herself. So far her information has all proven to be correct, although Lexa is still wary.
Octavia didn’t tell anyone that she knew Clarke was alive after all.

She’s training with Indra late one afternoon, as they often do, releasing the tension after yet another
day spent watching and waiting. Lexa pauses their fight when she spots Ash jogging over to them.

“Heda, Indra. I have a message from Okteivia.”

Lexa turns to give the warrior her full attention, sheathing her sword in the process.

“Wanheda’s army is moving north to Popil the day after tomorrow. They should arrive in four days,
at which point Wanheda would like a meeting with you, Heda.”

She takes in Ash’s words, contemplating her next move. Lexa had thought that Clarke would want
to negotiate peace with her, although she’s surprised it took her this long to do it. Perhaps she’s had
trouble convincing the other clan leaders.

“Is that all, Ash?”

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

Ash bows low then marches back to her post. Lexa and Indra collect their stripped clothes before
slowly making their own way back to camp.

“I want scouts sent out at dawn to confirm Okteivia’s information. Notify the generals to prepare
half their troops for departure by noon tomorrow. Dismissed.”

Indra nods only once before rushing off to another part of the camp, leaving Lexa alone with her
thoughts. Thoughts that can’t help but think about the last part of Octavia’s message. Wanheda
would like a meeting with you. It took the better part of a month for Lexa to stop having nightmares
about those stormy blue eyes, and even longer for the pain of her betrayal to dim.

Now the pain has been replaced by a fierce anger and determination, her generals even more timid
and fearful than ever before. Lexa needs them to be afraid of her, she needs to appear unbreakable
now more than ever before. Clarke found a crack in Lexa’s carefully constructed walls, one that she
won’t allow to be exploited again.
Hi! Sorry this is a week late - life and Copenhagen took over a tiny bit..

But yeah, hope you like the new chapter! :)

Four Days Later

Popil, Plains Riders Territory

Clarke

During the journey to Popil, Clarke had scouts continuously informing her about any movement of Lexa’s army. A day or so after they left Lidu, their opponents had managed to place themselves almost directly across the border from Popil, reinforcing the fact that there’s a spy within their own ranks.

There are so many people with radios now thanks to Raven’s efforts, the mole could be almost anyone. It could even be Raven, given her connection to a certain Trikru warrior. The thought of someone betraying her trust like that is incredibly unnerving, but Clarke has other things to think about right now. If things go well with Lexa, it won’t make a difference anyway.

The first thing Clarke does when they arrive at Popil is to send an envoy to Lexa’s camp, a carefully crafted message wrapped up in leather and strapped to their hip. Nerves start to wriggle in Clarke’s belly once the horse disappears from sight, hoping with everything she’s got that they return from the other side of the border unharmed.

She hasn’t even tried to contact Lexa since her rather dramatic departure from Polis. Clarke left the commander in the most vulnerable state she has ever seen her, those carefully constructed walls almost completely demolished by Clarke’s betrayal.

Clarke has no idea how long it will take them to mend their very broken relationship, or even if they will ever have the chance to.

I did what had to be done.

The phrase rolls around and around her mind, constantly on repeat. It’s what Clarke has been telling herself to keep going in this complicated mess of emotions and war, although she’s becoming less and less convinced every the day.

Clarke pushes down her feelings for the millionth time, distracting herself by marching around camp and checking everything is going smoothly as they settle into their new location.

Once she’s satisfied with the state of the army, Clarke returns to her own tent for a quick nap. She didn’t get much sleep on the way here, what with worrying about the details of their journey here, nevermind the wording for the message for Lexa. If things go according to plan, she’ll need all the
rest she can get before mentally and potentially physically sparring with Lexa.

Clarke curls up in her furs for what feels like five minutes before she’s woken by a hand on her shoulder. She immediately springs up at the touch, grabbing a knife and holding it to the offender’s throat.

It takes her mind a second to catch-up and recognise a wide-eyed Octavia next to her.

“Sorry, O.”

Clarke pulls the knife back, sheathing it before rubbing at her eyes. The tent is almost completely dark, a single candle lighting up Octavia’s face. No wonder she can’t see very well, she must have slept longer than she thought.

“The messenger has returned, they’re waiting outside.”

The queasiness in her belly comes racing back, her mind waking up far too slowly. Clarke stands gradually, Octavia joining her.

“Give me a minute to light some candles then send them in.”

“She, Wanheda.” (Yes, Wanheda.)

She internally winces at Octavia’s use of the name, still not accustomed to one of the Skaikru saying it to her face. The young warrior leaves the tent quickly, not noticing the reaction, and placing the lighted candle on a trunk on her way out.

Clarke pulls a sheet across the centre of the tent, separating what little there is of her private quarters. She then retrieves the lit candle and uses it to light a few more, dotting them around the tent to give the best light. It’s not much, still giving an ominous feeling to the space, but it’s enough given the time of night.

The messenger enters soon after she’s finished, clearly exhausted if their slouched shoulders and heavy eyelids are anything to go by. The fact that they’ve returned at all is a very good sign.

“Wanheda.”

They bow their head respectfully, never meeting her eye as they stand straight again.

“Heda agreed with your terms. She will meet you at noon tomorrow.”

Clarke nods in response. This is the best possible outcome she could have wished for, although she’s suddenly apprehensive by the easiness of it. Lexa must have something up her sleeve.

“Thank you, go get some rest.”

“Mochof, Wanheda.” (Thank you)

They nod their head slightly before leaving the tent. Barely a second later Octavia is poking her head through the doorway, waiting for Clarke to give her orders.

“O, tell the other generals that Heda has agreed to our terms. After that go get some rest, I want you with me at this meeting.”

Octavia only nods in response before disappearing once more into the darkness. Clarke’s unlikely to get any more sleep tonight.
Just over three candlemarks before noon, Clarke is prepared and ready to go. The butterflies in her stomach refused to sit quietly throughout the night as she tossed and turned in her furs, hoping her mind would quieten if only for a minute. Currently it feels like a tornado is trying to rip its way out of her gut.

Clarke and Octavia sit patiently on their horses, getting a good view of the surrounding camp. They can see the man they’re waiting for slowly making his way towards them from a distance, taking his time to finish buckling on his sword and snatching a piece of bread from a nearby warrior.

She knows he’s doing it just to frustrate her, something that’s becoming more and more common as they’ve been forced to spend more time together. Clarke never really got along well with the Broadleaf general, mostly due to differing approaches to certain conflicts. In fact, she can name the members of the Broadleaf clan that she trusts somewhat on one hand. They may live in the trees, but they are a completely different people to her old Trishanakru friends.

“Danyl stop wasting time, we need to get going.”

Her stern look does nothing, a self-satisfied smirk covering his face as he moves impossibly slower. It’s irritating beyond belief, especially since he was the one who had insisted on coming to this meeting.

“Sha, Klark.” (Yes, Clarke.)

His tone is smug and grating, only adding to the long list of reasons why she doesn’t particularly enjoy his company. Plus his use of her name rather than her title truly shows how little Danyl respects her.

When all three of them are finally ready, they steadily make their way out of camp and begin the short journey to the border.

**Edge of Trikru Territory**

**Lexa**

Lexa sits astride her finest horse, wearing full armour, weapons and warpaint as she slowly travels through the gradually thinning undergrowth. Indra and a guard follow close behind, scanning the trees around them for any sign of danger. She has some of her most trustworthy warriors placed strategically throughout the forest, but that doesn’t stop their eyes being on a constant lookout for movement.

They arrive at the designated location a short time before noon, hanging back in the tree line for cover. The meeting spot itself is right on the edge between Trikru and Plains Riders territories, a small grass covered hill that leads down into the seemingly endless plains on the southern side.

As the sun creeps higher in the sky, blinding Lexa if she stares towards the hilltop, she starts to worry that this was all a setup after all. Sweat trickles down her back uncomfortably, mostly due to the unusual heat for this time of year, although she blames the temperature to avoid confronting her feelings about the upcoming confrontation.

Lexa wants to fidget, to shift in her saddle and take her mind off the impending meeting. But that
would be weak, something Lexa desperately cannot be right now. She needs to be the intimidating *Heda* that Clarke met when they first spoke.

Just as she’s about to send Indra back to check on her army, three short whistles sound from the trees not too far away.

*Three horses.*

She glances at Indra and her warrior to check they are ready, then together they emerge from the trees and head up to the top of the hill. From their superior position, Lexa can see the approaching horses forging through the long grasses at the bottom of the hill.

The sun catches blonde hair in the centre brilliantly, everything else fading into the background. Lexa has to take a second to compose herself, to remember to breathe. She may be angry at Clarke and hurt by her actions, but that doesn’t make her any less breathtaking.

As they grow closer Lexa is able to see more, absorbing every tiny detail.

Warpaint covers Clarke’s eyes and forehead in a black band, blue eyes sparkling brightly out of the darkness. Her hair is braided back intricately, similarly to Lexa’s own, warpaint smudged into the hairline and dulling the golden locks around her forehead.

Instead of her typical blue Skaikru jacket she’s wearing full armour, protecting almost every inch of skin in leather and scraps of metal. In fact the only obvious vulnerability Lexa can find is just above her rather impressive bust, although Lexa knows the danger lurking near that weakness. Clarke producing a knife from between her breasts isn’t exactly something you forget.

Lexa is so entranced by Clarke that she only briefly lets her gaze wander to the other two figures on either side of her.

She immediately recognises Danyl, a rather unruly general from the Broadleaf clan only promoted to his current position after his predecessor was killed in Ton DC. She never had enough time with him to build any sort of trust between them, although Lexa’s not sure it would have been time well spent if she had.

What does surprise her is Octavia riding on Clarke’s right hand side. The young warrior must be relatively high up in the ranks of their army to be here, as well as a trusted friend to be on Clarke’s weaker side. No wonder she always had such accurate information, and why it came so sporadically.

When the two groups are only a few horse lengths from each other, Lexa finally locks eyes with stormy blue. The determination and fight is still there, never faltering, never subsiding.

“*Klark.*”

“*Leksa.*”

Lexa can’t read what’s going on behind Clarke’s stony expression. Apparently she trained her too well during their brief time together in Polis. However, she knows why Clarke called this meeting. Lives lost and bloodshed are the last things either of them want.

Clarke makes a move to dismount, her movements smooth and effortless as she touches the ground. Lexa never takes her eyes off her as she copies the motion, silently handing the reins of her horse to Indra.

They close the distance between them slowly, eyeing every inch of one another as they once did
during training. They stop once within a sword’s reach, glaring as if trying to set the other on fire.

If only it were that simple.

Well, it could be. Lexa once vowed she would never resort to that unless absolutely necessary, despite some of her generals’ animated suggestions. She’s seen too many die in such a painful manner to consider it that easily.

They stand in silence simply glaring. Finally seeing her up close again, Lexa can only ruminate on the pain caused by her betrayal. She has no space to consider what Clarke may be thinking, nevermind the capacity to care. Every emotion is on lockdown, only pain and anger leaking out and burning deep in her gut.

“If you have something to say, spit it out Klark.”

Lexa’s voice is harsh and low, barely recognisable from the last time they spoke. She lifts her chin that little bit higher, challenging Clarke to keep up the silence.

She doesn’t.

“I asked for this meeting so we could arrange a truce. However, we have some conditions.”

Lexa had anticipated this. Clarke is still Clarke after all.

“We are not going to come to any sort of agreement as long as this concerns the nightbloods. We have our ways, Klark, and for good reason. The rest of your people however..”

Lexa pauses for dramatic effect, gauging Clarke’s reaction. There’s a flash of anger in those eyes, her face scrunching ever so slightly.

She knows she has a huge bargaining chip here. Lexa had been incredibly surprised that Clarke allowed some of her people to stay at Arkadia when she left for the safety of the plains. Then again, the sky people still have rather different customs to the rest of her people, despite having lived as part of the coalition for many years.

Lexa gets the retort she expected.

“If my people are harmed in any way-”

“You left your people in my territory. It’s your problem if they are hurt in all of this.”

Lexa can feel the fire flaring inside her, threatening to burn too bright too early. She need to rein herself in, something she has always struggled to do in Clarke’s presence.

They both take a second to calm down, their eyes never leaving the other’s face.

“Are my people safe?”

Clarke’s voice is threatening yet there’s undoubtedly a pleading undertone, her stern expression breaking for second.

“They are. For now. I cannot guarantee how they will be treated the longer this carries on. I’m surprised your scouts couldn’t tell you what happened to them already.”

She allows a small smirk to cross her lips. It only frustrates Clarke even more.
“Look, we need to come to some sort of agreement here. Neither of us want anyone to be killed.”

“I don’t need to do anything, Klark.”

Lexa can tell how irritated Clarke is, her jaw clenching and her knuckles starting to grow white. She’s seen Clarke like this before, but this time she has to treat it differently.

“Go back to your army. Once you’ve come up with a realistic offer, send a messenger and I may consider it. May we meet again.”

At that Lexa turns and strides back to her horse, never once looking back at Clarke until she’s remounted her horse. This was never going to be easy, but turning away from the blonde seems to be a recurring theme in their turbulent relationship.
That Afternoon

Trikru Territory

Lexa

It's late afternoon by the time Lexa returns to her army. Only once she’s sure her warriors are safe does some of the uneasiness settle. She hadn’t been completely certain that Clarke’s meeting wasn’t a trap, but the scouts had assured her that the opposing army hadn’t moved an inch in the time she was gone. It’s unnerving having them so close, yet oddly reassuring to know where the enemy is.

Once Lexa is back in the camp, she doesn't have time to stop, to think through what just happened with Clarke. She needs to keep moving forward.

Lexa immediately dismounts her horse, then eyes Indra to talk to her. The warrior immediately joins her, both striding powerfully towards Lexa’s tent, the largest in camp.

“Gather the generals for a meeting in a candlemark. Double the guard, and I want updates every few candlemarks from the scouts.”

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

At that Indra disappears between the rows of tents, whereas Lexa carries on towards her own. She watches warriors wander around the camp out of the corner of her eye, the previous restlessness now turned into something more akin to anxiety. Lexa tries to ignore the sombre mood, focussing on the task at hand. She has a meeting to prepare for.

After almost exactly a candlemark, Lexa makes her way towards the meeting tent. The generals are already there, stood around the huge table in the centre and talking quietly. Once she enters, they bow their heads and silence falls, waiting respectfully for Lexa to take her position in front of the throne.

“I met with Wanheda earlier today.”

Lexa keeps her voice level, surveying the reactions around the room. A few expressions grow
worried or angry, but none dare question why she agreed to such a meeting. Indra had privately expressed her concerns about it beforehand, yet had agreed to go. Lexa is pretty sure that she only wanted to join her in case she got the opportunity to kill Clarke herself.

“She wants to form a truce, however that did not happen today. If she wishes to pursue this further, she will send a messenger in the next few days. Until then, I want all our warriors on high alert and all scouting reports to come directly to me. Is that clear?"

A satisfying chorus of “Sha, Heda” (Yes Commander) fills the tent, heads nodding in agreement and obedience. She scans each face carefully, studying the conviction behind their eyes.

“Why don’t we send Wanheda a sky person’s head? I'm sure that would encourage her to agree with your conditions.”

The suggestion twists Lexa’s stomach in knots. Images of Costia’s head rolling onto the floor at her feet instantly flash through her mind. She hasn’t thought about that day for a long time.

Lexa covers up her discomfort with a wrathful stare at the speaker. Unsurprisingly it’s the young Azgeda general, white paint smeared across her scarred features. Lexa hasn’t had much time to get to know her, barely speaking other than in meetings, although she trusts Roan’s judgement to appoint his own generals.

“No, that won’t be necessary.”

She accompanies the statement with one of her signature glares, one that most submit to unless they’re being particularly stubborn. It’s a challenge to act against her orders, a test to see whether or not they think their opinions are worth risking their life for.

The Azgedan matches her, her face stony and barely readable, although Lexa can still the disappoint in her eyes at having her idea rejected. Eventually she yields, bowing her head in submission.

“Dismissed.”

The generals slowly file out the tent, Lexa pretending to be extremely interested in one of the scrolls on the table as they depart. She only looks up when she thinks everyone has left, but is surprised to find the young Azgedan loitering at the other end of the table.

“Is there something else you wish to discuss, Ontari?”

Ontari

At one point in her life, Ontari would have taken this moment alone with the commander to kill her. All she would have to is to get close enough to slit her throat, just as she had been taught ever since she was a child.

But she isn’t a child anymore.

Nia tried to make Ontari into a monster, her own little play toy to be manipulated into doing her own bidding. That quickly grew thin as Ontari got older and saw through her twisted plan, the intensity of the blood lust in the Ice Queen’s eyes bringing her to her senses.

Things are different now, Nia is dead and Roan is much fairer and worthy king, although Ontari often finds herself resorting to her old ways. She has to remember to stop and think, her instincts
leading her to solve problems in a bloodier way than necessary at times. Roan has helped her through the transition somewhat, and once he saw the extent of her skills he immediately put her to good use in the army.

To this day he has no idea why Nia had locked her up.

“Is there something you wish to discuss, Ontari?”

She meets Heda’s steely gaze once more, green eyes boring into hers. There may be a table between them, but that doesn’t stop Ontari’s knees shaking a little. Not that she’d admit it to anyone.

“I didn't mean to speak out of turn earlier. I should not have suggested what I did.”

Ontari tries to make her expression softer and more open to convey her sincerity, although it’s never come easily to her. This is the woman who should have trained and mentored her, not that crazy lady in Azgeda.

She isn't rewarded for her openness. Lexa turns away towards a smaller table at the edge of the tent to look at some piece of parchment, although she never completely turns her back. It seems the commander doesn't completely trust her yet. Perhaps that will change some day.

“You are young still, you have a lot to learn.”

The statement hits Ontari hard, rage starting to burn inside. It's true that she’s one of the youngest generals in Azgeda history, but that shouldn’t be a disadvantage. It’s a huge insult to her that Heda believes it is.

“I worked hard to get where I am today. We may not agree on all our methods, but the least you can do is respect the position I hold. You have no idea what I had to overcome to get here.”

Ontari can tell her temper is threatening to boil over, her words a tad louder that she intended at the start of her rant.

However, it makes Lexa turn back around to face her again. The silence is almost palpable as her eyes scan Ontari from head to toe. She pauses here and there on a weapon or scar, an almost invisible frown appearing briefly.

“You wear Azgedan marks but you were not born there, correct?”

Most people Ontari has met have seen the white scars on her skin and automatically assumed that she is originally from Azgeda. Only a few have given her strange looks, something not quite sitting right in their minds.

It took a long time for Ontari to realise herself that she wasn't quite the same as everyone else around her. She only started to believe it with confirmation from a rebellious servant in the ice palace. They died a few weeks later.

“Azgeda warriors took me from Trikru many years ago. I was too small to remember what happened.”

Lexa takes a moment to study her again, but Ontari can’t read anything else that might be going on behind those piercing eyes.

“I am surprised you are alive. I heard stories that Nia would take children from my people, then send their heads back to their families to taunt them. She always denied such claims, and was
Ontari remembers the blood, the screams, barely understanding at the time why she was allowed to live when so many others were killed around her. The memory is like a dull thorn in her chest, blunt, but still there even after all this time.

She glances down at the table, resting her hands on it and squeezing her eyes shut for a moment to steady herself. Nia had kept her a secret for years. Ontari hasn’t revealed why to anyone, not even Roan.

“Nia kept me alive. She took the children because she was searching for nightbloods.”

Ontari looks up at Lexa again, shock and unquenchable anger evident in her entire body. One fist is wrapped tightly round the pommel of her sword, her face contorted into a vision of pure rage.

Maybe now wasn’t the best time to bring this up, but Ontari can’t - no, won’t - hide any longer.

“You are a nightblood.”

It's more a statement than a question, hissed out from between clenched teeth.

Ontari pulls a knife from its sheath at her hip, carefully picking the skin of her index finger. A drop of black blood seeps out as she holds it out towards the commander. It’s the only reason why she’s still alive. The reason why she had to withstand Nia’s torture and mind games.

“I am. There may be those that disagree with the nightblood traditions, but it has to be better than what that ice bitch did to me.”

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**Popil**

**Danyl (Broadleaf General)**

The ride back to camp is silent and tense. Danyl thought nothing would come of the meeting, but he had to know what happened either way. If his king’s plan is to work, Wanheda cannot be allied with Heda.

The Broadleaf leader is a close friend of Danyl’s, having grown up together in the same village. They have the same values and ideas, the most pertinent being that peace is boring. They miss the rush of battle, the sweet taste of victory. It's been a long time since any of them have had the chance to engage in real combat without Heda interfering in their affairs.

Now the only people who stand in their way are Clarke and Poda. Together they're managing to drive the 'peaceful solution' train and everyone else is blindly following them. Danyl has had enough. It's time for the Broadleaf clan to take control of the south once and for all.

Once the three have dismounted back at camp, Danyl knows he will need to act soon. Clarke will try to come up with any sort of compromise to have that second meeting with Heda. He can't let that happen.

“*O, go fetch the other generals for a meeting immediately. Danyl, I expect you to be there.*”

Clarke eyes him strangely, trying to be intimidating but she's so tiny he can barely take her seriously. Still, he has to play along for now.
“Sha, Wanheda.” (Yes, Wanheda.)

They split off in different directions, Danyl taking his time to return to his tent before heading to the meeting with the other generals. It's not that he needs anything, but winding up Clarke is one of his favourite pastimes these days.

The meeting itself turns out to be incredibly infuriating, full of too many people wanting peace and going on and on about the fate of the nightbloods. If only there were more of his clansmen here so they could have some sway over the conversation, to concentrate on more important things like land and power.

By the end Danyl is completely exasperated, storming out of the tent in a huff. It’s practically dark now, the bright moon peeking out between thick clouds. He can smell the impending storm in the air, not a good omen for their camp in the next few days.

Instead of heading back to his tent, Danyl waits in the shadows outside the meeting tent until the other generals have left. If he times this right, he can claim he saw one of Heda’s assassins kill Clarke and then disappear in the direction of Trikru. That should get everyone’s blood pumping for revenge if nothing else, especially that Wilson bloke who hangs onto every word she says for some reason.

Danyl has been watching Clarke ever since she came to Lidu with her people, trying to figure her out. He has no idea why everyone seems to think she’s this amazing leader, all he’s seen is endless talk and no action. Not exactly the Wanheda he was expecting.

Every night after their tiresome meetings, he’s watched Clarke walk around the camp, studying the warriors from afar. Occasionally she strays outside the firelight and into the darkness, probably to escape prying eyes and not-so-subtle whispers.

A strong leader shouldn’t have to hide from their people.

Tonight is like every other. Clarke leaves the tent once everyone else has disappeared into the camp, as ever starting her tour at the Skaikru section.

Danyl follows at a distance, keeping her in sight but staying silent and hidden between the tents. Dense clouds cover the sky and hide the moon, giving him even more places to conceal himself as he tails his prey.

When Clarke approaches the Broadleaf section of camp, she just so happens to stray a little further away and out into the grasses beyond the last line of tents.

Danyl takes his chance.

He closes the distance between them, treading quietly and remaining as invisible as possible. It’s harder without the cover of tents or trees, but he’s spent enough time in the plains to know how to sneak up on someone.

His breathing quickens, feet moving eagerly through the grass. Any second now.

Once he’s just over a sword’s length behind her, Danyl swiftly unsheathes the dagger on his belt and lunges forward.
Once the three of them return to camp, Clarke immediately heads towards the meeting tent. She’s had the journey back to think over the conversation with Lexa and prepare what to say to her generals, but her mind keeps repeating the same image.

Lexa turning away.

It was so reminiscent of the mountain that the two memories start blur together.

Once inside the tent, Clarke rubs her eyes roughly, trying to remove the sight burned into the back of her eyelids. Even after all these years, Lexa still occupies her thoughts, easily breaking through Clarke’s walls and finding a spot to sit and gloat at her for thinking she could forget. It’s incredibly frustrating and distracting.

Clarke’s brought back into the present when the first general walks in. She immediately stands straighter, hands held behind her back as the rest gradually file in. When Danyl finally finds his way to the meeting, they begin.

It takes much longer than Clarke had anticipated for their discussions to end. Ideas are thrown around or discarded, a certain few suggesting that a well-timed attack on Lexa’s army would give them an advantage in the negotiations.

After what seems like hours in the stuffy tent, they manage to agree on a non-violent compromise. There are kinks to iron out, but as barely stifled yawns pass round the group Clarke calls an end to the meeting.

Clarke waits until everyone has left to finally let out a deep breath of relief. Her legs ache from riding all day and standing still for too long afterwards, and her mind can’t help but contemplate every single angle they could take, how each plan could go wrong.

When Clarke finally leaves the miserable tent, she immediately feels better. The chilly air on her face wipes away some of the lines of frustration, and as she walks she can feel the tension in her shoulders starting to melt away. Clarke vaguely wishes that she could see the stars. They remind her of where she came from, and how much she’s changed since her time in space.

As she wanders around the camp, Clarke’s thoughts are still fixated on Lexa and their potential alliance. Will this work? Will Jake be safe? Will I ever see him again? Questions Clarke has asked herself a million times, but still doesn’t have the answers she’s looking for.

Clarke can feel eyes following her progress through the camp, but it’s nothing unusual. She’s overheard a few of the stories that circulate about her, claiming she’s done all sorts of horrifying things that never happened. As always she ignores the stares, instead concentrating on putting one foot in front of the other.

The night air is cool on her exposed skin, though her armour staves off the worst of it. Clarke keeps
to the edge of the light from the camp’s fires, watching the movements of her warriors from afar. She catches snippets of conversation as she meanders, but doesn’t stay anywhere too long to hear much more. Most seem better for the move, exchanging old stories between themselves around the fire. From what she can tell, morale generally seems higher, so at least one good thing has come from the trip so far.

At some point during her walk, Clarke notices a figure moving between the tents at a crouch on her left. It’s not the first time someone has followed her, but she’s never been able to identify the culprit. She always assumed it was one of the clan’s lackeys, gathering whatever information they could find out about her. She did disappear for four years after all.

In fact, that’s the entire reason why Clarke hasn’t spoken at all about her time in Trishana since arriving in the Plains Riders’ territory. Despite a number of the Skaikru asking her all sorts of intrusive questions, there are way too many opportunities for people to overhear, to use what they hear against her in some way or another. Clarke won’t let that happen. She can’t put Jake or Ryka in even more danger than she already has.

Clarke brushes off the sadness that threatens to take over at the thought of her favourite humans. She misses them both dearly, thinking of them often when she isn’t consumed by war strategies or diplomatic compromises.

But now isn’t the time for sadness. Now is the time for strength.

She keeps track of her follower out of the corner of her eye, otherwise tracing the route she would usually take. They keep up with her, always staying the same distance away but never approaching. Same as always.

As she reaches the Broadleaf part of camp, Clarke wanders a little further into the darkness. She still hasn’t managed to persuade them to mingle with the rest of the army, keeping to themselves most of the time. Clarke doesn’t trust them anywhere near as much as the clans, but that might be due to a certain general rather than anything else they might have done.

Clarke disappears from sight in the grasses, the firelight dimming to a mere twinkle in the distance. It’s not a terrain she’s used to, although the last month has been incredibly insightful. The light brush of grass against her calves and thighs was a sensation to get used to, especially when trying to stay quiet. There aren’t exactly that many places to hide out here.

Just as she’s about to head back towards camp, she hears a noise. It’s barely there, a shuffling of grass that could just be the wind or her own inexperienced feet.

Except that the air is completely still.

Clarke carries on as if nothing’s wrong, subtly loosening a dagger on her thigh. Gradually the sound starts to resemble that of footsteps, but it’s definitely coming from behind her and doesn’t match her own stride.

They grow closer with every step, and Clarke’s body automatically tenses in anticipation.

Any second now.

The short slither of metal against leather is her only warning.

Clarke spins quickly, blocking a rapidly moving blade with her own. Pain slices through her arm as she’s barrelled to the floor by her attacker’s momentum. Her back lands hard, the grass barely cushioning the fall.
She tries to wriggle free, but the weight of the man has her right arm pinned to her chest. The stench of sweat fills her nostrils as the air is squashed out of her lungs.

He lifts himself up, a knee in her stomach causing her to wince. She might have heard the crack of a rib if her head wasn’t already throbbing.

Clarke raises her arms to defend herself against an onslaught of punches to her head and torso. He has her hips pinned beneath his superior weight, leaving her legs effectively useless.

As the blows hammer down, her arms grow tired and incredibly painful, no doubt covered in a multitude of purple bruises.

If she doesn’t act now, she’s dead.

Clarke takes a risk.

Using her left hand, she aims a well-timed punch to her attacker’s nose. There’s a satisfying crack as her knuckles connect, but she receives a heavy hit to her shoulder in return. He retracts his hands to hold his broken nose, blood already pouring from it as a curse roars from his throat.

It’s the last thing he ever says.

She draws the dagger from between her boobs with practiced ease, slicing through the brute’s neck before he even knows what happened.

He sways on top of her for a second, his eyes wide with surprise before they droop.

The man collapses on top of her, warm sticky blood pouring from his neck. It covers her neck and torso, the smell making her want to hurl.

Clarke wriggles beneath the dead weight, trying desperately to free herself. It takes much longer than she’d like, her vision going spotty from the lack of air reaching her lungs.

One last push does it.

Clarke just lays there for a while to catch her breath. She stares up at the sky, watching stars moving around in circles in front of her eyes. Eventually her vision clears, thick clouds replacing the bright stars she swears were there just a minute ago.

She glances over at her attacker, just about able to identify him now in the faint light from camp.

_Danyl._

_Good riddance._

A sharp pain in her arm brings Clarke back to her senses. She looks over at it, red blood coating her usually pale skin. Her own blood.

__Octavia__

Octavia returns to her tent late, having spent a large portion of the evening reassuring the Skaikru troops. Lincoln is already curled up in the furs when she enters, so she removes her weapons and armour as quietly as possible before joining him.
“Reshop, ai niron.” (Goodnight, my love.)

Maybe he wasn't as asleep as he seemed. Even after years spent together, Lincoln continues to surprise her.

“Reshop.”

She lets the tiredness from the day engulf her, the warmth from Lincoln’s body soon lulling her into sleep.

All too soon she’s awoken by a hand on her shoulder and a softly spoken voice.

“Octavia.”

Her eyes open slowly, peering into the darkness towards the voice she recognises. Octavia’s sleep- addled brain can’t quite place it. Fortunately her husband is much more astute.

“Klark, what’s wrong?”

The silence is tense before she speaks again.

“I needed to check you were alright, and we need to speak to my Mom and Poda, right now.”

Octavia catches the urgency in her voice, immediately getting up to unlock the chest containing the radio. She lights a candle on the way, turning round to find blood smeared across Clarke’s face and body.

“Clarke! What the hell happened? Are you ok?”

She moves swiftly across the small tent, visually checking her friend for wounds in the minimal light.

“I'm fine, most of it’s not mine. I need to talk to Mom.”

Octavia’s not convinced. For starters she can see a huge gash in Clarke’s arm, blood oozing slightly through a thin strip of cloth loosely tied around it. Whatever she’d like them to think, Clarke isn’t fine.

“Linc, go grab some bandages and water. Clarke, sit down right now before I make you.”

Lincoln instantly does as he’s told, dashing out of the tent into the cool night air. Clarke however takes a bit more convincing.

“O I’m fine, just give me the radio!”

Her voice is still a whisper, but not just for secrecy. Octavia can see the slight sway of her body and the paleness of her skin, betraying how badly hurt she really is.

Octavia isn’t going to be responsible for Wanheda’s death.

She grabs Clarke’s jacket firmly, then sweeps her legs from under her. The blonde cripples far too easily, only held up by Octavia’s tight grip. She lowers her down onto the bed slowly, only letting go once she’s sure Clarke is securely planted on the furs.

Lincoln races in a moment later, going straight to Clarke’s side to assess her injuries. He kneels in front of her, not touching her wounds until she gives him the nod to proceed. Clarke continues to scowl at Octavia instead.
“Octavia. I need to talk to my Mom.”

“Only if you let Lincoln help you.”

Her voice is determined despite its volume. She’s not going to let Clarke get her way this time.

Reluctantly, Clarke gives smallest of nods to Lincoln. A loud hiss escapes her as he starts to gently remove the makeshift bandage. Clarke grits her teeth together, glaring darkly at the offending appendage.

“Give me the radio.”

Satisfied, Octavia rummages in the chest briefly before handing over the device. What happened? Was it Lexa? Did she send an assassin to their camp to kill Clarke?

Her disturbing thoughts are interrupted by Clarke speaking into the radio.

“Base camp come in, this is Wanheda, over.”

The radio remains completely silent, not even static noise coming through the speaker.

“What’s wrong with it? Can they hear us?”

Octavia takes the radio back, examining it and checking Clarke had actually turned it on in her daze. Unfortunately everything seems to be in working order.

“Raven said this might happen if the radios stopped working. I have another one, let me see if I can get through to her.”

She dives into the trunk again, eventually finding the second radio under a pile of arrows. It was only meant to be for emergencies.

Behind her Clarke hisses intermittently as Lincoln tends to her arm, although Octavia can feel the burning gaze trained on her back.

“Found it. Hopefully she’s got it on loud.”

Octavia switches it on and holds the speaker up.

“Raven you better be awake. We need to talk, right now.”

Reassuring crackling comes through the speaker, although it lasts far too long for comfort. Octavia’s about to yell into it again when the mechanic’s voice comes through.

“O? Are you ok? Everything’s chaotic over here, please tell me it’s better where you are?”

The three exchange a worried look in the tiny tent. So much for peace.
Hi! So after this chapter there are going to be some big time jumps & Clexa should be back in the same vicinity as each other at least in about 2-3 chapters, so hold on! There’s not much longer to go!

As always, massively appreciate the kudos and comments :)

Enjoy ;)

Earlier That Day

Lidu

Raven

The atmosphere at Lidu completely changed once the majority of the army headed to the border. It was tense and restless before, but those who were left behind suddenly grew even more frustrated. The Plains Riders have been wonderful hosts, but even their patience has worn thin.

This morning is even worse. Warriors tramp around grumpily, their faces in permanent scowls and almost knocking over Raven about ten times on her way to her new workshop.

The other clans were never very careful around her, probably wondering why Skaikru had kept her alive for so long. It’s a refreshing change to the sometimes baby-like treatment she got in Arkadia, but today they seem to be purposefully brushing her shoulder a little too forcefully.

Raven shrugs it off. It’s not exactly anything new, and she has some pride in the fact that she managed to stay upright. Plus with tensions this high, a curt comment could end up putting her in an even worse condition.

Rather than dwelling on it, she concentrates on her work, forgetting that the rest of the world exists outside her workshop.

She only looks up from her work when a familiar figure walks in.

“Bellamy! What can I do for you?”

He smiles at her a little, floppy hair drooping over his eyes. Raven’s told him to braid it back multiple times, but he always comes up with some sort of reason not to.

“Wanna get some lunch?”

Raven’s mind finally takes note of her grumbling stomach, making its protests almost audibly.

“Sure, as long as you don’t steal my food again.”
They chuckle and talk on the way to the mess tent, conversation flowing well between them as they eat. Bellamy tries to secretly steal some of her meat, but Raven catches him in the act.

Then again, she already nabbed some of his without him noticing. Raven always seems to be able to distract Bellamy just long enough to snatch something off his plate and stuff it into her mouth. Not a good sign for a so-called warrior, but a great person to have lunch with.

After they’ve finished, Bellamy drops her off at the workshop, walking all the way to the entrance so she doesn’t get knocked around as much. She knows he does it on purpose, but doesn’t call him out on it. It hasn’t got that annoying yet.

As soon as she enters, Raven knows something’s wrong. Her tools aren’t where she left them, even more junk scattered across the floor than usual. The table she was working on is a shambles, the device itself completely crushed and ripped apart.

She sticks her head back outside the workshop. Thankfully Bellamy hasn’t gotten very far.

“Bell! Get your ass back here!”

He turns around at her yell, curiosity and worry evident in his face. Raven pops back inside and searches the room for any other signs of damage.

“Hey what's wrong?”

His eyes scan everything quickly, but he doesn't seem to see the same disorder that she does.

Raven heads straight over to the chest full of her radios, including the one to talk to Clarke and Octavia. She’s supposed to be the only one with access to them. There are only a couple of generals who Poda and Abby trusted with a radio.

When she pries open the lid, all she can see are smashed bits of metal. The wires have been wrenched out of their casings, hanging loose and useless in the bottom of the chest.

“Floating hell.. We need to talk to Abby and Poda about this.”

Before they go anywhere, Raven searches for the latch to the hidden compartment in the bottom of the chest. Thankfully it’s still intact. Inside there's a few items, things she wanted to keep safe from prying eyes or wandering hands.

There’s a tiny radio, one of the smallest she’s managed to make, lightweight and pretty durable for its size. She places it in her jacket pocket for safe keeping, just in case this isn't some huge misunderstanding.

Next, she pulls out a small dagger, one that Ash gave her at the last mountain festival. She hasn't had the heart to wear it yet. No time like the present. Raven straps it onto her good thigh, it's weight heavy yet oddly comfortable.

The final items are a bow and quiver of arrows, the ones Octavia taught her how to shoot with. It’s been a little while since she had any practice, but it shouldn't be too hard to pick back up again. Right?

When Raven is finally ready, they head out of the ransacked workshop, walking as fast as they can towards the very centre of camp. Abby and Poda are usually together, but Raven has no idea where they could be right now.
“Bell, you check the infirmary. I’ll head to the meeting tent.”

He nods in response, marching off to her right at a blistering pace. Raven carries on ahead, her leg starting to complain at her speed. She grits her teeth against the pain and searches her surroundings for the two women.

As she gets closer to the meeting tent, Raven notices more and more warriors lingering nearby, their eyes constantly moving and watching everyone. It's puts her on edge, especially since she has no idea who most of them are.

Raven looks back towards the tent, trying to move as fast as her leg will let her. She can't quite see the entrance, but a few people are making their way out, no doubt having just finished a meeting.

She speeds up, but stops short when a warrior starts to creep around the side of the tent. They’re crouched down low next to the fabric of the wall, a knife gripped in their hand as they inch closer and closer to the entrance.

No-one else seems to have noticed. Or they’ve chosen to ignore them.

*Floating hell.*

Raven’s brain goes into overdrive, her hands trying to catch up but moving too slowly. She unlatches her bow from the quiver, simultaneously bringing an arrow with it.

She nocks the arrow, staring down its shaft towards her target. She calculates the angle and releases.

Her heart almost stops when the arrow falls short, not even catching the attention of the assassin.

*Shit!*

Raven nocks another arrow and takes her position again, her mind running through every single lesson Octavia gave her. Out of the corner of her eye two figures exit the tent, but she doesn't take her eye off the target.

*Just like you practiced.*

The string twangs against her arm. Her breath catches in her throat.

Only when she hears a groan and a gurgle do her lungs start to work again. She can barely believe that there’s an arrow, her arrow, sticking out of the warrior’s neck.

She gazes at it momentarily, the rest of the world ceasing to exist around her.

It takes far too long for Raven to look anywhere else. Poda and Abby’s eyes are wide and flitting between her and the fallen warrior. Everyone else seems to be frozen in place. You could hear a pin drop in the silence.

It's broken by a deafening roar.

Suddenly everyone is moving, running, drawing weapons. Warriors surge around her, knocking her side to side as she struggles to stay standing.

“Raven!”

She turns towards the shout, seeing Bellamy in the melee. She starts towards him, but something thumps into her head and everything goes black.
Everything is blurry as Raven drags her eyelids open. She has no idea where she is, but she can feel furs or something else equally soft beneath her fingers. Her head throbs on the right side, probably where she got hit. She brings a hand up to feel the area, glad to find a tender bump but no blood.

“Raven, how are you doing?”

She turns towards the voice, her vision clearing far too slowly for comfort.

“Like I got hit on the head pretty hard. What happened?”

Raven tries to sit up, but a hand on her shoulder keeps her lying down. Her mind is gradually speeding up, finally managing to connect the voice to a person. Poda.

“The Broadleaf Clan and Lake People have betrayed us. We’ve driven them off for now, but they will be back.”

Raven lets the information sink in, not quite believing it. Then again it would explain the weird mood in camp over the last few days.

Her heart starts racing when she remembers why she was out in the middle of the fight in the first place.

“Where’s Abby? The radios -”

“Bellamy told me about the radios. They probably destroyed them all to stop us contacting the rest of the army.”

An uneasy silence falls between them.

“Not all of them.”

Poda looks at her questioningly, tilting her head slightly to one side. Raven slips a hand into her coat pocket, wincing as the bruises along her arm make themselves known.

“I made a spare for emergencies.”

The metal is cold against her hand, and surprisingly the radio looks to be in good condition given everything that just happened. Poda looks thoughtful for a moment, then scans the area around them.

“Let's get you somewhere more private before we make contact.”

Raven nods slightly in agreement, replacing the radio before carefully lifting herself into a sort of sitting position. Poda helps her, putting an arm around Raven’s waist as she slips off the bed and onto the floor.

As soon as her feet touch the ground, her leg almost gives way. She only stays upright thanks to Poda’s surprisingly strong support. Raven grits her teeth and bears the pain. It's not the worst she's ever felt after all.

Together they half walk, half stumble out of the tent, which Raven only now realises has other occupants, either unconscious or groaning quietly as healers tend to their injuries.

The darkness outside completely takes Raven by surprise. There are a few fires lit here and there, but only just enough to light entrances to more tents filled with wounded.
She was out longer than she thought.

As they make their way towards Poda’s quarters, warriors run around with slightly panicked eyes, the ground squelching a little beneath their feet despite the fact that it hasn't rained. Thankfully the darkness covers a multitude gorey sights.

When they’re a few feet from their destination, Raven hears a quiet crackling from the radio in her pocket.

“Raven you better be awake, we need to talk, right now.”

Poda hears it too.

“Wait until we’re inside.”

Raven nods in agreement, but they pick up the pace. Once inside, Poda guides her to a chair before shutting the door securely behind them. Raven wastes no time in retrieving the radio.

“O? Are you ok? Everything’s chaotic over here, please tell me it’s better where you are?”

**A Few Hours Later**

**Trikru Territory**

**Lexa**

“*Heda!*”

Lexa wakes with a start at the shout. Her back immediately complains at the uncomfortable position she managed to get herself into while asleep. It’s been a long time since she’s slept on her rather solid throne.

She squints her eyes for a moment, adjusting to the dim light in the tent as she straightens up into a more commander-like position.

“*Enter.*”

The tent flaps open across from her, a messenger almost tripping over their own feet as they rush in.

“*Heda, there’s movement in the enemy camp. It looks like they’re preparing to leave Popil.*”

Lexa’s heart starts racing in her chest, her breath catching slightly. *Why do I always do the wrong thing with Clarke?*

“How long ago was this?”

The messenger visibly cowers under her intense stare.

“A-about a c-candlemark ago, Heda.”

She nods once then immediately rises to her feet, all remnants of sleep vanishing instantly. The messenger jumps slightly at her movement, head down until she speaks again.
“Mochof. Return to your post.” (Thank you.)

“Sha, Heda.” (Yes, Commander.)

They turn and dash out of the tent in a flash, Lexa on their heels.

The cold night air hits her as she exits, pausing to take a breath of fresh air.

There’s still a few candlemarks until dawn, but it’s hard to tell exactly without the moon.

“Indra! Prepare the army to move out in less than a candlemark.”

The warrior moves impossibly quickly, shouting orders left and right as she strides through the camp. It immediately comes to life around her, warriors crawling out of tents, grabbing armour and weapons on the way.

After roughly half a candlemark, the army is ready to go. Lexa barely conceals a satisfied smile at how smoothly her army operates. She sits at the head of her troops beside Indra and another Trikru general, watching as the last few companies join the back of the train.

One nod to Indra and she sounds a horn. It echoes back through the trees as it’s repeated further along the lines of warriors. Time to meet their opposition.

Barely a candlemark into their journey, small droplets of rain start to fall from the sky. They still have decent cover under the trees, but that doesn’t last very long.

By the time they’ve reached their destination, the top of a hill covered in thick lines of trees and underbrush, the rain is almost torrential, soaking everyone through to the skin. Lexa has the advantage of riding her horse, but she knows that the rest of her warriors will be tired and irritable from dragging their feet through the mud.

A messenger arrives shortly after them, heading straight towards Lexa. If Clarke's army is moving towards them, her own troops won’t have much time to recover before they meet.

“Heda. Wanheda’s army started moving south, but they didn’t get very far. They appear to be fighting each other…”

That’s not what she expected.

Some measure of relief goes through her at not forcing her warriors to fight in such conditions, but there’s a small wrench in her heart at the thought of Clarke getting injured.

“Show me.”

The messenger’s eyes bulge slightly at her words, but nevertheless they turn their horse to head south again.

“Indra, stay here with the army. I will send a message if you are needed.”

There’s questioning in Indra’s expression, but she won’t say anything in front of the warriors. She simply nods her reply, returning to the main body of the army.

Lexa leaves her army behind and follows the scout south, riding as quickly as possible in the thick rain. Before long they are in the plains, the land stretching out for miles ahead of them. She can just
about make out the boundary to the west, and the sun is just starting to peek over the hills to the east, but ahead there’s barely any landmarks apart from the odd tree.

They carry on south for a couple of miles, then start to head westward. Lexa can see what should be Popil on her left, but she can’t tell from this distance. The scout slows down then, stopping next to one of the few trees that populate the area.

“We should dismount here, Heda.”

Lexa nods her agreement, dismounting and quickly tying her horse to the tree.

They move on foot through the grasses, keeping low to avoid being spotted. Lexa can hear shouts and yells on the wind, but they’re still too far away to be able to see anything.

Once they come upon a decent sized tree, Lexa immediately climbs to the top of it. The extra height gives her a good view of the surrounding area, including what looks like a battlefield just south of their position.

Lexa’s heart almost stops in her chest at the sight.

There’s blood everywhere, bodies left behind by both sides as they retreat.

It looks like it’s all over.

She can just about make out groups of warriors splitting off in opposite directions. The Broadleaf and Lake clans are slinking off towards the west and their homelands, the other clans recovering somewhere to the east.

She can’t tell who’s come off worst from the fight.

The rain has abated somewhat now, the sun peeking through clouds briefly. The rays hit a single figure in the middle of the battlefield.

Clarke?

She wanders alone through the blood and gore, studying each and every body she passes. Her right arm is in a sling, a bloody sword grasped in her left hand but dragging along the ground.

A heartbreaking cry echoes across the plains.

All Lexa can do is watch as Clarke falls to her knees.
Two Months Later

Plains Riders Camp

Raven

If they thought they were on the brink of war with Lexa, they were wrong.

There was barely any fighting before, very little death. But now?

The ones that aren't killed in battle have to fight against hunger and the cold. They've all practically forgotten about the northern clans. Instead they've had to concentrate on their neighbours.

While others waged war and crossed swords with their enemies, Raven spent the last two months wrapped up in furs, trying to come up with something, anything to help them.

The first thing she suggested was a bomb.

Clarke immediately rejected the idea, claiming that they didn’t need explosives to kill hundreds of people just to win a petty war. Even so, Raven kept it on the back burner, working on it whenever she got the chance, although the restricted supplies seriously limited progress on any of her projects.

One freezing morning, she has a breakthrough.

When she's sure the device is the best it can be, Raven leaves her workshop in search of Clarke. The chilly air nips at her face and she stuffs her hands tightly inside fur-lined pockets.

She heads to the meeting tent first, but finds it empty. After a momentary glance from its entrance, she spots Octavia a few tents over.

“O!”

She turns around at the shout, soon seeing Raven and heading over.

“Have you seen Clarke? I need to talk to her.”

Octavia just rolls her eyes.

“And here I thought you might want me for something. She’s probably in the infirmary, the truce talks didn’t exactly go to plan yesterday.”

Her face falls at the memory. They probably lost more warriors in the attempt to bring about peace.
“Thanks O.”

They split off in opposite directions, and Raven soon finds herself at the large infirmary building. It’s the only building in camp, the only significant structure in the area in fact. Originally they used it for meetings, but the sheer number of casualties meant that they had to convert it.

Raven steps inside, a wall of clammy air hitting her. It’s a stark contrast to the temperature outside. The smell alone is enough for her to choose the cold over the sticky warmth.

She searches the figures walking around, trying to find Clarke in the gloom. She doesn’t have to look for long.

“Raven? What are you doing here? Is everything ok?”

Turning around, she finds an extremely tired looking Clarke coming towards her. Blonde strands of hair fall loose from her usually immaculate braids, and her hands are full of bloody bandages.

“Clarke, I’ve got it working. We can-”

“Raven! Outside.”

Clarke leaves what she’s carrying on a nearby table and almost drags Raven out of the building and back into the cold.

“What the hell Clarke! No ‘Thank you Raven’ or ‘Well done Raven’?”

She stands her ground, folding her arms across her chest in defiance. Definitely not just because of the cold.

Clarke faces her, feet planted and hands on her hips.

“We can’t use it Raven. The other clans won’t like it, and to be honest neither do I!”

“What other choice do we have?! We’re losing. Badly. This will give us an advantage they can’t compete with! I made some adjustments so the bombs are as good as they’re going to get. Well, unless you find me some extra materials, in which case-”

“Wait, bombs? Plural?? Raven-”

“Clarke! We’re dropping like flies! At this rate you’re never going to see Jake again and you’ll end up dead before any of us get the chance to go home.”

Raven doesn’t bother waiting for a reply. She limps past Clarke and back to the relative warmth of her workshop. If Clarke won’t listen, maybe someone else will.

A Week Later

Broadleaf Territory

Clarke

Clarke creeps as silently as possible through the dense and leafy undergrowth, keeping her eyes and ears peeled for any sign of movement.
The bag on her back is heavy, but she daren’t jostle it too much. Raven reassured her that it was safe to carry, but Clarke isn’t entirely certain that the bombs on her back won’t explode if she shakes them too hard.

She silently curses herself for taking on the job, although deep down Clarke knows that she wouldn’t trust anyone else to do it. Planting bombs in enemy territory isn’t exactly something any of them wanted to do.

Clarke moves slowly, being careful to stay as hidden as possible. Her hood is over her head to disguise the colour of her hair, but it seriously limits the use of her peripheral vision. The dye she used to apply was more helpful than she gave it credit for.

Eventually she comes across a rocky hill, with fewer and thinner trees growing along its surface. There’s nowhere to hide, barely any bushes or brambles to conceal her, but the place she’s looking for should be on the other side.

Clarke takes a detour round it, not wanting to be seen at all. If their plan is to work, no-one can know she was here.

She soon finds the valley Poda suggested, a tree-filled dip in the ground with the treeless hill on the side closest to the plains.

Clarke wastes no time enjoying the scenery.

She digs a series of small holes in the ground roughly equal distance apart. Raven gave her very specific instructions on how deep to bury the bombs: too deep and they won’t do any damage, too shallow and their own warriors’ feet might set them off.

Clarke carefully places one of the bombs in each hole, then covers them with a layer of dirt and dead leaves as if nothing was ever disturbed. There’s only one bomb left to plant when she hears the crack of a twig.

Clarke’s head swivels on instinct.

At first she doesn’t see anything, but she keeps watching, constantly scanning the trees for any sign of movement. The brush gives nothing away.

Instead she lets her eyes travel skywards, searching the tree-tops for a clue as to what made the noise.

That’s when she sees them.

Two Broadleaf warriors sat high in the trees, bows drawn and aiming straight at her.

Clarke dives behind a tree. She hears the whistle of arrows, but they land in the spot she just occupied.

She looks around for any other cover, only then realising that she’s still holding the last bomb. Two more arrows land either side of the tree as she places the explosive back in her bag, instead drawing a dagger and planning her escape route.

Another arrow buries itself in the ground beside her, but the second never comes.

Clarke steals a glance around the tree towards the warriors’ previous position. One is still sat in the tree, another arrow nocked and ready to let fly. She can’t see the other one, but there’s a blur of movement sliding down to the ground.
She needs to move. Now.

As soon as the next arrow hits the ground, she runs. Her feet dance nimbly between trees and bushes, keeping her body low but her eyes fixed on her target. She can just about see them ahead, but they’re moving faster than her, gaining distance with every step.

At some point the whistle of arrows around her ears stops, but Clarke barely notices. She can’t see the path ahead, driving forward blindly and following a blur that gradually disappears between the trees.

Eventually she takes a second to stop and take in her surroundings. There’s no trail to follow other than the one she created in her shoddy attempt at chasing the warrior, and she has no idea where she is.

*Shit!*

Clarke ducks behind another tree, crouching down to catch her breath.

If she goes back, all of Raven’s hard work will have been for nothing. But if she keeps going, there’s no guarantee she’ll be able to catch up with the scout, and she could end up in an extremely dangerous situation.

She doesn’t have long to contemplate her options.

The second warrior suddenly appears beside her, their sword cutting a deep wound in her right arm before she can even react. Clarke rolls away and springs to her feet, only just dodging a second attack.

She doesn’t have time to draw her sword, ducking and diving to avoid the scout’s thrusts as best she can. She gets a cut here and there from the tip of their blade, but it’s nothing she hasn’t had before in training.

What’s more worrying is the stream of blood running down her arm.

Clarke ducks behind a tree, her opponent’s sword slicing into the trunk where her head just was. The blade sticks in the wood, giving Clarke time to close the distance.

She plunges her dagger into the warrior’s neck, blood spurting everywhere as their mouth gasps for air. Pulling the dagger out, their body crumples to the floor.

*One down, one to go.*

Darkness starts to fall in the forest as she bandages her arm using the scout’s shirt. It’s stopped bleeding for the most part, but could do with stitches when she gets back to camp. If she gets back to camp.

Clarke knows there’s no chance of catching the other scout now, and she’s completely lost track of which direction is which. But, she still has the last bomb.

Clarke crouches in the darkness, waiting.

There’s a small fire not far away, just enough to illuminate the warrior she killed earlier strung up on a tree. Her eyes constantly scan her surroundings, watching for signs of anyone on their way to undo
her handiwork in the valley.

Her eyes start to droop a few candlemarks into her watch, but thankfully the sound of boots stamping out the fire wakes her up. There’s a group of warriors near the body, drawn to it by her little signal.

Now is her chance.

She quickly lights the end of an arrow with a splint. One warrior shouts at the sparks and points towards her location. They start to move towards her, but not quick enough.

Clarke nocks the arrow, aims and lets fly.

A blinding light is the last thing Clarke sees.

The bomb tucked inside the scout’s shirt explodes on impact. The blast throws Clarke into the tree behind her, knocking her unconscious.

Next Evening

Plains Riders Camp

Abby

Walking wounded trail into the infirmary one after the other. Abby and the other healers try their best to treat to everyone, but there are just so many.

Octavia was given a bed as soon as Lincoln carried her into the crowded building. A particularly lucky knife somehow made it through her armour and into her abdomen, although apparently that didn’t stop her killing her attacker. Abby has every faith that she will pull through, especially with Lincoln permanently by her side.

What’s puzzling is that Clarke had reassured Abby that this battle would be better than the others, that there would very few wounded on their side at least. If anything there seems to be more than ever.

Abby’s so focused on treating her patients that she doesn’t notice Poda approach her.

“Abby.”

She turns to look at the woman, both of their clothes covered in other people’s blood.

“Poda. I thought we were meant to win this one, what went wrong?”

Poda’s face is as stoic as ever, but there’s something in her eyes that Abby can’t quite place.

“Let us walk.”

“But the wounded-”

“There are other healers. Please, Abby.”

The ’please’ catches Abby’s attention. Poda barely ever uses that word.
Abby wipes her bloody hands on a relatively clean patch of cloth as they make their way out of the packed infirmary. They walk in silence for a little while, although Abby’s patience soon wears thin.

“Poda, what happened out there?”

They carry on walking towards their own quarters, ignoring everyone around them.

“According to one of my warriors, Raven’s bombs didn’t work. Our troops were left open to attack when they shouldn’t have been.”

They reach the entrance to their quarters just as she finishes speaking, Poda opening the door for Abby to enter.

She moves into the tent, pacing the room in thought. That damned mechanic and her inventions.

“Raven promised me the detonator would work...”

“It wasn’t Raven’s fault. They knew we were coming.”

Abby stares at Poda, trying to understand the meaning behind her statement. The straightforward woman could never speak plainly when she didn’t want to tell Abby something.

“What do you mean? How could they know? Clarke planted the bombs herself, she wouldn’t let-”

Her voice catches in her throat as realisation hits her.

“Where’s Clarke?”

“Abby-”

“Where’s Clarke?!?”

The silence before Poda replies almost chokes her. When those serious eyes come up to meet hers, she knows something is very, very wrong.

“I don’t know.”
Four Months Later

Lidu

Poda

Things have been quiet in the plains. The snow stopped everyone from attacking each other, although it also meant extremely short food rations. It's not something they haven't done before, but after years of prosperity it took a little getting used to for a lot of people.

Now the snow has cleared, they can finally get more scouts out to watch their enemies. Their supplies and warriors are low, but that's no excuse to allow one of their opponents to approach without forewarning.

About a week after the scouts leave to take up their old positions, Poda finds herself in yet another meeting about rations and supplies. The winter hit them hard, many dying from cold, starvation or disease. They don't have the strength to attack their neighbours, so their defences definitely need revisiting.

Thankfully everyone agrees for once.

“The scouts in Broadleaf have detected movement now the snow has cleared. Their army is reforming. It will take them at least another two weeks until they will be prepared to march on us, so we still have a little time. We should prepare our defences now while we still have the chance.”

The mood in the tent is solemn, as it has been for months. A fire in one corner provides some measure of warmth, although not enough to stop the familiar numbness creeping into Poda’s toes.

Before they get any further, a scout runs in, hair flying behind them.

“Poda! I have a message from Heda!”

The air in the tent changes instantly, becoming even more tense and anxious than before.

They had all but forgotten the northern clans, needing to concentrate all their efforts on the western border. Scouts had kept them informed of Heda’s movements, but so far there hasn’t been anything too worrisome to note.

Poda takes a deep breath.

“What’s the message?”

Every single person in the room stares at the scout, who gulps nervously before proceeding.

“She would like to offer an alliance, for us to become part of the coalition again. If we do not agree to her demands, Heda’s army will march into our lands anyway.”

Numbers and options run through Poda’s mind, but she isn’t the only one who needs to make this decision.
“Wait outside.”

The scout bows briefly before making their exit.

“We cannot seriously consider Heda’s offer, not after everything we’ve been through?”

The speaker’s voice is full of anger, but Poda can see the desperation in their eyes. All of the faces around the room are conflicted. Poda went into this with the hope that they could change something for the better. All they’ve managed to do is get people killed.

“I don’t think we have a choice. We can barely defend ourselves from the Broadleaf and Lake clans, nevermind Heda’s forces from the north. If we want our people to live, we have no choice but to accept her offer. We will probably lose territory either way, but I do not want to be responsible for any more lives being lost because of our stubbornness.”

The tent is silent as her words sink in. No-one has the energy or the ideas to fight back.

“Fetch the scout. We will send Heda a reply.”

A few candlemarks later, Poda heads over to the infirmary. Abby has basically made herself a nest in there, trying to drown out the pain of losing her daughter by treating the wounded.

Poda has struggled to get through to her since Clarke disappeared, a wall of denial and loss blocking her out. She knows Abby just needs time to heal, but they don’t have that luxury anymore.

She slips inside silently and looks along the rows of sick and injured. As always, Abby is walking between patients, taking time for each and every person and helping in any way she can. Poda heads towards her and gently takes her hand when she’s close enough.

“We need to talk, ai niron.” (my love)

Abby’s gaunt features turn and contemplate her for a second, a silent nod the only indication that she agrees.

Together they head out of the infirmary to their own quarters, although many times over recent weeks Poda has spent been there alone. The silence between them is awkward now, not the peaceful comfort it used to be.

Poda breaks the silence once they are alone.

“Heda has proposed an alliance with us, one that we cannot refuse. As a leader of one of the clans that defected, she will want to kill you publicly as a deterrent to anyone who dare betray her.”

The despair on Abby’s face only worsens. Their relationship may not be the strongest currently, but Poda can’t bear to imagine what horrors Heda has in store for Abby. She only knows one way to protect her from such a fate.

“If we leave now, before Heda gets here, we can-”

“No.”

Abby’s steely gaze is trained on Poda for a second, but her hopeless eyes return to the floor as tears start to form.
“I can’t leave not knowing what happened to Clarke. If I can just talk to Lexa, if I can beg her to find Clarke, I would willingly die for that.”

Abby looks back up at Poda then, the determination she knows all too well back for the first time in months. Poda knows she has no chance at changing her mind.

“I have to make sure my daughter is safe.”

A Week Later

Popil

Octavia

Octavia almost jumped for joy when she heard about the re-alliance with Lexa and Trikru. The only thing that stopped her was the despair and defeat in the expressions of those around her.

That and the knowledge that if Clarke is somehow still alive, Broadleaf will kill her as soon as Lexa’s army come anywhere near their territory.

They had somehow agreed to meet Lexa in Popil, a place Octavia hoped she could avoid for the rest of her days. The sheer brutality that occurred there is still fresh in her mind, despite the other atrocities that have filled her memory since. Perhaps this new peace will help her to forget the images from a bloody war.

Only the clan leaders and a few generals make the journey to Popil, not wanting to leave the western border vulnerable and unprotected.

Octavia joins them, hoping to see her old mentor again and to perhaps get word to Lexa about Clarke. Her radio was destroyed in the battle at Popil, but despite her best efforts she never managed to fix it.

As the relatively small group ride just north of Popil, they are soon greeted by a line of guards, all mounted and guarding the perimeter of Lexa’s army. Among the warriors is Indra.

No-one says a word to them, yet they all follow obediently, surrounded by Lexa’s troops. There’s no turning back now.

They’re led straight to a large tent in the centre of the camp. More and more warriors crowd round to watch their approach as they get further into the sea of tents. There are curses and insults shouted at them, but Octavia ignores it. None of this was her fault after all.

Indra searches each and every one of them from head to toe before they are allowed to enter the meeting tent. It was in the agreement to bring no weapons, but that doesn’t mean someone didn’t try to sneak in a blade. They are soon led into the tent, flanked by fully armed guards.

Inside, they are confronted by Lexa on her throne in full Heda regalia, as regal and intimidating as ever. Her eagle eyes watch them carefully, but her expression never changes.

Lexa’s generals stand on either side of the throne, eyes narrowed and suspicious. Indra takes her place on Lexa’s right, chin up and eyes boring into each and every one of the newcomers.
Octavia takes her place beside Abby. They are the only two Skaikru who made the journey.

She scans the line of people, recognising many of the generals from her time training with Indra, but there are a few faces she doesn’t know.

“Welcome. We are here to discuss provisional terms for the Plains Riders and Shallow Valley clans to re-enter the coalition. The details of the agreement going forward will be discussed over the next few weeks, however, there are certain rituals that need to be completed first.”

Octavia shuffles slightly on the spot. They all know what that means.

Abby and the other two clan leaders step forward together and fall to their knees before Lexa.

“My head is my penalty, Heda.”

“You may have my head as punishment, Heda.”

“My head is yours, Heda. But please, find my daughter.”

Lexa

As Lexa waits for the group to arrive, she desperately fights the urge to fidget, although she seriously considers playing with her knife the way she did when she first met Clarke. Strange how things come around again, and Clarke will once again be asking for an alliance with her.

When the first people start to walk in, Lexa stares each and every one down. She gives them all her attention, but she’s waiting for one person. The woman who started this war.

Clarke never comes.

Lexa doesn’t change her expression, although she’s mildly surprised to find that she is disappointed Clarke didn’t come to the meeting.

It's very unlike her, causing Lexa to question the true motives of those present. Then again, from her scouts’ information, the situation with Broadleaf demands attention. She could be back in Lidu organising the army, but it’s still unusual for Clarke to pass up this sort of exchange.

Lexa ignores her inner battle, carrying on as she rehearsed so many times in her head. She keeps her voice level and intimidating when she speaks, and the three leaders soon step forward. They know what she needs for them to proceed with a new alliance. Their betrayal meant the break of the coalition; their deaths will ensure that balance is restored.

“My head is yours, Heda. But please, find my daughter.”

Abby's pleading eyes turn up to Lexa, practically begging her to agree. It catches Lexa off guard for a second, but her gaze never wavers from Abby’s desperate expression. Clearly her scouts forgot to give her a vital piece of information.

Either that or this is some sort of ruse and Clarke will appear from nowhere to challenge her once again.

“That will not be necessary, Abby. Skaikru will not be rejoining the coalition.”
There’s an audible intake of breath in the tent. Octavia eyes go wide, flitting between Indra and herself. Abby’s brow furrows deeply as she stands, never breaking the eye contact between them.

“What?! You said you wanted us all to join the coalition again.”

In any other circumstances, Abby’s tongue would be cut out for speaking back to Lexa. Then again, the Skaikru never fully understood their allies’ traditions.

There’s a tense silence, everyone watching and waiting for Lexa to speak.

“You may rejoin the coalition. However, you cannot return to Arkadia as Skaikru are no longer a clan. Your people may have learnt our ways, but they do not live by them. Your ignorance lead to this war.”

The shock on everyone’s face is clear, although Abby’s initial distress quickly turns into anger.

“What are we supposed to do? Arkadia is our home, do you expect us to wander aimlessly forever?”

Only Octavia’s hand on Abby’s shoulder stops her from stepping closer to the throne.

Lexa had anticipated having this conversation with Clarke, someone who has spent more time with her people than any of the Skaikru. Clarke might be able to understand why she’s doing this, but the same cannot be said for her mother.

“That is your punishment, one far worse than your death will bring. My people may take you in, but only if you learn and live by their ways.”

Lexa turns to the two kneeling leaders. She’s spent far too much of her time in conversation with pompous sky people.

“You will be executed at dawn. Your clans will be reintroduced to the coalition after your deaths.”

Two guards pull the leaders to their feet, leading them out of the tent to be restrained for the remaining hours of their lives.

“I require at least one person from each clan to remain here as a representative. The rest of you may return to your people. My army will arrive in a matter of days. I expect no hostility, is that clear?”

The visitors all nod obediently.

“Dismissed.”

They gradually make their way out of the tent, although it takes a hard shove from Indra to force Abby to stop glaring at Lexa. Her generals follow suit to return to their duties. They will be moving south soon.

Lexa exits the tent last, watching over her army’s preparations from the entrance. She can see the visiting cohort leaving camp, however Octavia lingers at the back, whispering urgently to Indra. The general looks back at Lexa briefly, and Octavia follows her stare.

She nods once and retreats inside the meeting tent, taking her place on the throne once more.

After a short while, Indra enters followed by Octavia. She nods her head slightly towards Lexa.

“Heda.”
Lexa studies her carefully. The winter hasn’t treated her well, and there’s a slight limp in her step, no doubt an injury from the war.

“Tell me Okteivia, why is it that you are here and yet the leader of the so-called ‘resistance’ is nowhere to be seen?”

She keeps her voice level and intimidating, the growing concern she feels remaining buried and hidden. Octavia holds her stare, she barely even flinches at Lexa’s words.

“Klark went into Broadleaf territory to set a trap four months ago. We haven’t seen her since.”
Clarke

Four Months Earlier

Broadleaf Capital

Clarke

There’s a dull throbbing in the back of her head as Clarke starts to wake up. Every muscle aches, and she groans slightly at the overall pain in her body. The ground is cold beneath her, and harder than she remembers it being in the woods.

Gradually her eyelids obey her brain, opening to reveal filtered sunlight on her face. She blinks a few times, rubbing her eyes in an attempt to clear her vision.

She moves to draw a dagger despite her blurry sight and painful limbs. Even if she can’t see, she still needs to defend herself.

Clarke feels around on her leg. Her dagger isn’t there, not even it’s sheath.

Her heart starts to beat furiously. Clarke’s hands roam her body feverishly in search of any of her other weapons.

They’re all gone.

Clarke tries to feel around her for something, anything to grab onto, but all she finds is more cold stone. She rubs at her eyes again. Only then does her vision clear enough for her to see that the sun isn’t filtered by leaves, but by bars.

She crawls over to the wall with the window, leaning against it as she pulls herself up into a standing position.

The window is too high to see anything other than the sky, not even nearby treetops. Clarke can just about reach the bars, and she would be able to lift herself up if her arms weren’t complaining so much.

Instead she turns to examine the rest of the room.

She’s in a cell similar to her prison on the Ark, although the cold walls are made of stone rather than metal. A thin fur is bundled in one corner, but there’s nothing else of note other than faint scratch marks on the walls.

A thick wooden door stands opposite her. A thin rectangular window has been cut into the wood, but it’s barely wide enough for an arm, nevermind a body.

There’s no escape.

Clarke paces the room for what feels like hours, trying to figure a way out of her prison. There’s nothing to see outside the door, just a dark hallway that runs as far as the faint light from her window can reach.

She pulls herself up to the window a few times, but it doesn’t help her to come up with any sort of
escape plan.

The window is too small for anyone larger than a child to get out, and even if they did, a fast-moving river runs a few meters below it. Various structures are built on the other side of the river in all directions, trees filling the land beyond that.

Clarke has to stop pulling herself up to the window when the recent cut in her arm tears open from the exertion, fresh blood seeping out of the wound. She wraps it up as best she can, then sits quietly in the corner, closing her eyes and listening to the world outside. Waiting.

When it’s almost dark, she hears a tiny creak of a door in the corridor.

Clarke’s eyes open instantly. She moves to the slim window and sees a flicker of firelight starting to illuminate the previously dark corridor. The light is moving towards her cell, as is the sound of three pairs of boots.

Clarke steps behind the door. The fire comes closer, casting constantly moving shadows through the thin hole.

A key clicks in the lock.

As soon as the door opens, Clarke pounces.

She punches the first warrior with all her strength, knocking them back through the door and into the other two.

Clarke makes a run for it.

She leaps over the flailing bodies and dashes blindly down the corridor. The light is faint, but she can see another thick door ahead.

When Clarke reaches it, she feels around in the darkness for a hinge, a key, anything. The metal latch is cold against her palm, but the door doesn’t shift when she shoves it with her shoulder.

Boots race up behind Clarke, her desperate attempts to open the door becoming more frantic.

A firm arm shoves her into the wood and holds her torso tightly against it.

“Not so fast, Wanheda.”

She tries to wriggle free, but the other two guards are soon upon her. They tie her hands behind her back, almost ripping her arms from their sockets.

“You can’t keep me here! My people will come looking for me!”

A bag drops over her head, muffling anything else she might have to say. She’s pulled back from the door roughly, then pushed through the space it just occupied.

A guard takes each of her arms and they practically drag her along with them. She makes it as difficult for them as possible, shoving their shoulders and planting her feet. Whatever she tries, they keep moving forward, jostling and tripping her to keep her unbalanced.

Eventually the hands push her down into a chair and tie her wrists and ankles to it.

She just about hears the three sets of boots walk away, then the loud slam of a door.
Clarke can’t see anything beneath the bag, only vague points of light or shadow. There’s a steady drip of water behind her, but she can’t hear much else. The bonds restraining her are tight, but she strains against them anyway.

“*There’s no use struggling, Klark.*”

The smooth voice stops her wriggling. She swears she didn’t hear the door open.

Feet move towards her, and suddenly the bag is ripped off her head. She blinks for a second, her eyes adjusting to the dim light.

In front of her stands a thin man, thick furs wrapped around his spindly figure. His face is pale and clean-shaven, dark hair slicked back from his forehead. Grey eyes stare at her, watching every twitch of her eyes as she examines him.

“What do you want?”

Clarke’s voice is rough, her throat dry from lack of water and overexertion with the guards.

The man just smirks at her.

“What I *want* is to kill you, parade around the head of *Klark kom Skaikru* and become the new *Wanheda*. However, my employer would rather I get some information out of you first.”

He turns around to a table against the wall, and slowly unravels a thick piece of leather covered in various daggers. There’s a huge range of sizes: the smallest barely big enough to cut a piece of meat; the largest a small sword in any other context.

Slender fingers run over the arranged handles before choosing one from the middle. He tests the blade against the tip of his finger, a tiny droplet of red blood seeping from the cut.

“If you cooperate, this can all be painless for you. Although if it were up to me, I’d much prefer it if you didn’t.”

A smirk twitches at his lips. Clarke doesn’t say a word, ignoring him and staring at a knot in the wood of the door.

“What did you use to blow up our people?”

She stays silent.

A firm punch to the jaw is Clarke’s reward. Her lip splits, the familiar tang of blood on her tongue.

“I will ask again. What did you use to blow up our people?”

Clarke looks up at him for a moment, then spits blood into his self-satisfied face.

“Go float yourself.”

She smirks at him, and receives another punch to the face for her troubles.

They carry on like this for a while, Clarke giving him nothing but snarky responses despite the pain he inflicts on her.

Eventually the bag is replaced on her head, and guards return her to the cell.
When she’s alone once more, Clarke just sits and rests her back against the wall. Her mind is restless, going over every useful detail she’s learnt so far. It’s a thankful distraction from the pain in her arms and face due to a multitude of cuts and bruises.

*I’m in Broadleaf. They know who I am. They don’t know how to use the bombs, or how many we’ve got.*

*They want me alive. For now.*

The click of the key in her cell door wakes Clarke up. She didn’t even realise she’d dropped off.

Clarke immediately stands, making her dizzy but her feet are planted. The familiar pain comes back when she tenses her sore muscles.

This time they are ready for her.

Two warriors enter together with swords drawn, immediately pinning her to the wall and tying her hands. She doesn’t even get a punch in, although she somehow manages to dig a knee into one of her captor’s ribcage. They collapse to the floor groaning after that, and a small cackle almost escapes Clarke’s lips.

She is soon restrained and the bag is placed over her head, and again they drag her to the pale man with the knives, Clarke fighting for freedom every step of the way.

Clarke tries to keep count of the days, how often she’s dragged out of her cell to be questioned. But the days and nights start to blur, and it becomes more and more difficult to keep herself sane. Healers tend to her wounds in what she’s come to know as the torture chamber, their soft hands just about keeping her alive for more questioning.

Her attempts at escape grow few and far between as her strength decays. The furthest she gets happens about a month after her internment. She thinks.

Clarke lets the guards take her from her prison, walking obediently between them with her hands tied in front. The bag covers her head as it always does, but she know the route they always take.

She pretends to stumble, her knee jarring on the stone floor. The guards pull her up roughly, but her hands just so happen to brush against a thigh, grasping a dagger on the way. The guy never saw it coming.

Clarke plunges the dagger straight into their thigh.

Their hands retract from her arm quickly, reaching for the wound on reflex. She removes the blade, swiftly bringing her tied fists into their face.

The other guard is slow to react.

She shoves her shoulder into their chest, pushing them off balance and onto the floor. The dagger just happens to slice their abdomen in the process.

Clarke takes a moment to breathe and remove the bag from her head. The stone corridor stretches in both directions, doors and entrances to other parts of the building on both sides.
She runs forward blindly, releasing her wrists on the way. Her breathing is shallow, her heart beating quickly as her body tries to keep up with the adrenaline coursing through it.

Clarke manages to hide in an empty room for a short while, listening to the movements outside and trying to work out which way to run next.

Unfortunately when she does make her move, she turns into a corridor full of warriors. Clarke tries to fight her way through the crowd, her training paying off as her muscles move without thinking. But more warriors turn up, and they soon surround her and back her into a corner.

Her punishment for that attempt is more painful than anything she’s ever felt.

Soon after that, the thin pale man is replaced by a charming older woman. Her methods to coerce answers from Clarke are rather different. There are no daggers, but Clarke’s mind takes a battering. She has no idea if she actually tells the inquisitor anything, but the cobweb of lies she spins is so convincing Clarke almost starts to believe her.

One cold night, the door to her cell opens once more. Clarke doesn't move, waiting for her hands to be tied and for the bag to be put over her head.

It never comes.

“Clarke.”

A woman crosses the small room and sits at her side, examining her quickly. She can't tell who it is in the darkness, the only light a small flickering torch in the corridor.

The figure drags some clothes out of a bag on her back.

“Put these on, and pull the hood up. Your hair is pretty recognisable.”

Clarke pauses, trying to figure out what kind of trick they're playing on her this time. The thin fur she has barely keeps out the cold, her fingers and toes often going numb when she’s alone in the cell. The clothes would be warmer, whatever they plan to do with her afterwards.

She pulls them on, the figure fidgeting and regularly glancing at the doorway. The last thing she puts on is a mask made of animal bones. It covers the majority of her face, leaving just enough space for her to see out.

“Let’s go.”

The woman dashes out of the cell, and Clarke follows warily. Her legs feel weak and unsteady beneath her, and she leans against the wall for support.

“She can barely walk, what do we do?”

“I'll help her.”

Clarke looks up towards the torch as a second figure comes towards her. Their face is covered with a mask similar to her own, giving her no clue as to who they are.

They approach her swiftly but careful, placing an arm around her waist to support Clarke’s weight. Together they move down the long corridor, following the person with the torch.

Clarke doesn't really pay attention to where they go, just glad that she’s not being pushed or shoved. There are stone corridors after stone corridors, but everything looks the same. She can’t even tell if
she’s been here before. She swears her feet feel wet at some point, but it’s more likely that they’re just cold again.

When she thinks her legs are about to give out, they come out into open air, the pouring rain instantly refreshing on her bruised face. She’s led to a horse and lifted onto its back, the person who helped carry her mounting up behind her.

The horse’s rhythm lulls her into a light sleep, only waking up when strong arms lift her off the horse. There are quiet whispers around her, and some other sounds in the distance, but her mind can’t seem to recognise any of it.

The arms carry her somewhere but she doesn’t pay attention, simply enjoying the feeling of raindrops falling on her face. If this is another mind game, she needs to distract herself from everything around her, including the soft voice.

Clarke is placed carefully on the floor, then picked up again, although much more uncomfortably. She closes her eyes to close off the world, and when she finally reopens them she can’t see anything, not even a dim light in the pitch black. A resounding clang comes from somewhere above her.

*So this is my new prison.*

She almost goes back to sleep, her damp clothes rubbing at her sensitive skin. A spark catches her attention in the darkness, lighting the face of her companion.

“Lexa..?”
Rescue

Earlier That Night

Broadleaf

Octavia

What they're doing is crazy.

Octavia may have suggested the bold attempt to rescue Clarke from Broadleaf, but she never thought Lexa would go along with it.

What surprised her even more was the commander deciding to participate in said madness.

And so she finds herself in the company of two very recent allies, creeping through the seemingly endless corridors of the central Broadleaf building. Lexa is steering them through the maze of stone, closely followed by Octavia, Ontari watching their rear.

Octavia hadn’t met the younger warrior before the preparations for their mission, and she hasn’t had much opportunity to learn more about her. The need for silence isn’t exactly conducive to conversation. Still, she can tell by her scarred face that she’s from Azgeda, and yet has somehow become one of Lexa’s most trusted generals. A mystery to figure out some other time.

They see guards here and there throughout the building, but their presence isn’t questioned thanks to their Broadleaf disguises.

She never asked Lexa where the clothes and masks came from, she was just told to change into them when they approached the Broadleaf border that morning. If the stitched up holes across her torso are anything to go by, she doesn’t really want to know what happened to their original owners.

As they delve further into the enemy’s base, Octavia realises she has absolutely no idea where they are. She’d managed to keep track of the twists and turns at first, but some point after the sixth or seventh bend she completely lost track.

She has no idea how Lexa seems to know every inch of the place. Lincoln would say that the commander’s spirit is guiding her, but Octavia still hasn’t fully accepted all of the beliefs his people hold onto. Spirit or not, Lexa never wavers in her direction.

After what feels like hours, they finally arrive at a corridor with only one door at the end. Two warriors stand either side of it, suddenly coming to attention when the three turn the corner. They cross their spears protectively across the door, tensing as if they’d been in that position the whole time.

Lexa heads straight towards the guards, the air swirling with confidence and power around her. She stops just out of sword’s reach and looks both guards dead in the eye. They wilt slight under her signature glare, even though all they can see are her eyes.

“We are here to see the prisoner. Let us through.”

The guards’ eyes narrow and examine the three of them more carefully. Octavia stiffens in response, her fingers itching for her sword.
Lexa had explicitly ordered no killing unless necessary before they entered the city, but that doesn’t stop the urge to at least maim them. Especially after all the bloodshed in the war their clan started.

“Show me the order.”

Octavia’s mind goes blank.

Before she even puts hand to sword, Lexa slits the first guard’s throat in a flash of silver and red. The second has no time to react before her sword hilt collides with their head.

Ontari quickly steps forward to grab one of the falling guards, but their spear hits the floor with an echoing clang. They all pause, muscles tight and ready to fight. More than a minute passes with them frozen to the spot, waiting for the sound of boots to come towards them.

Thankfully all they hear is silence.

A quick search of the bodies reveals a ring of keys, one slightly larger than the others. Lexa takes them and swiftly unlocks the door behind the guards.

“Ontari, keep watch. Octavia, drag the dead one inside and come with me.”

Lexa grabs a torch from the hallway before entering the dark corridor, the light only reaching a few feet in front of her. Octavia hauls the dead guard over the threshold, then follows a rapidly disappearing Lexa.

They make their way down the unlit passage carefully but swiftly, swords drawn just in case. There are a number of doors on the right-hand side, stretching as far as the torchlight allows. They look in each and every cell, but all they find are empty rooms.

When Octavia’s about to give up hope that Clarke is here, or even alive, they come upon one more door. Lexa lifts the torch up to let its light through the thin window.

At first she doesn’t see anything in the tiny room, just the inside of another grey cube. Octavia almost retreats, but the smallest of movements catches her eye.

A fur in the corner rising and falling.

She pulls back quickly and nods to Lexa, who immediately hands over the ring of keys. Octavia rattles through them, trying each one in the lock. Her body is impatient, her hands shaking and practically bouncing from foot to foot in anticipation.

Finally there’s a satisfying click.

She pushes the door open warily, and the light catches dirty blonde hair poking out of the lump in the corner.

“Clarke”

Octavia approaches the curled up human carefully, sitting next to her as she slowly straightens out. The dim light casts dreadful shadows on the pale face that peers up at her, a red scar slicing down her left cheek. Her body is covered in the thinnest fur Octavia has ever seen, the clothes beneath shredded and filthy.

She gazes into those empty eyes for the briefest of moments, absolutely no recognition behind them. The only thing they convey is confusion with a hint of dread.
Octavia shakes herself back into urgency. It might not be long until someone comes to check on their prisoner. She rummages in the small bag on her back and drags some spare clothing from it, holding it out to Clarke.

“Put these on, and pull the hood up. Your hair is pretty recognisable.”

Tentative hands slowly reach out to the leather, gently touching it as she stares at it. Her brow furrows for a second, but she soon takes the clothing from Octavia’s hands.

Oh so slowly Clarke dons each item of the pile, taking longer than Octavia ever thought was possible. She can’t help her restlessness, almost going over to yank the clothes onto her body on more than one occasion. She resists, but only because of the death glare Lexa gives her from the doorway.

Her agitation is eased somewhat when Clarke’s hair and face are finally covered, the old fur discarded on the floor.

“Let’s go.”

Octavia dashes out of the cell and starts down the dark corridor, only pausing when she realises no-one is following her.

She spins around to find Clarke clinging to the walls as she steps out of her cell, and Lexa frozen to the spot watching the struggling woman.

“She can barely walk, what do we do?”

**L**

Lexa can’t believe her eyes when she sees the state Clarke has been left in. The muscular woman she once trained with has been reduced to a quivering, confused mess in the corner of a dungeon.

This isn’t the way *Wanheda* should die, even after everything that’s happened between them.

Lexa prides herself on giving even her worst enemies an honourable death. Letting them rot in a cell just to kill them later speaks for itself how little respect you have for your captive.

It lights a fire inside her that she didn’t know existed anymore. The urge to protect a woman who should just be one of her people, but in reality is so much more.

That and the desire to teach the Broadleaf clan a lesson in honour.

Her hatred of their leader only grows at Clarke’s feeble attempt to walk. Lexa herself is rooted to the floor, barely comprehending the difference between Clarke now and when she last saw her.

Octavia’s voice breaks her out of her revengeful thoughts.

“She can barely walk, what do we do?”

L**e**xa immediately hands the torch to a worried looking Octavia.

“I'll help her.”
She approaches Clarke slowly, not wanting to startle her in her fragile state. When she’s sure the blonde is ok with her presence, Lexa slides an arm around her waist and takes the majority of her weight. Clarke’s arm comes up around her shoulder, but the pressure she puts on it is minimal.

Together they make their way back down the dark corridor, Octavia leading the way with the torch. Their pace is slow thanks to a half-awake Clarke stumbling over her own feet, even though Lexa is practically carrying her. The impatience and anxiety pouring off Octavia is almost palpable, not helped by the dark confined space.

When they reach the door, they find Ontari waiting on the other side with yet another bloody drag mark to a body tucked next to the wall. She only shrugs at Lexa’s questioning look.

“He’s not dead, just a little injured.”

Lexa suppresses the urge to roll her eyes.

“Ontari, take the lead. Octavia, watch our backs.”

They both nod, take their positions and move off as one. They have no weapons drawn, still trying to give the illusion that they belong here, but hands don’t stray too far from a sword or dagger.

The corridors are practically empty on their way out of the building, only one warrior looking at them strangely. Ontari kills him before he even has a chance to ask what they’re doing.

Lexa tips her head and stares at the young warrior as she’s dragging the body into a nearby doorway.

“I said no killing.”

Ontari sighs in response.

“Apologies Heda. Old habit.”

A stern look and they carry on, although Lexa makes a mental note to train Ontari how to knock people unconscious rather than kill them straight away.

They don’t have any more mishaps with other Broadleaf warriors for the rest of the journey to their exit. Clarke barely makes a sound the entire way, and Lexa has to gradually take more and more of her weight as her legs start to weaken.

“Keep going Clarke, we’re almost there.”

Lexa has no idea whether or not Clarke hears her whisper, but a brief tightening of the arm around her shoulder is a signal of sorts.

Only once they reach the tunnel leading out of the city does Lexa relax a little. They’re not safe yet, but the hardest part is over.

Lexa found the passage the last time she invaded Broadleaf thanks to a scroll she found not long before the invasion. No-one seemed to know where or what it was, giving her a perfect route into the heart of the city. Now of course it is better guarded, but the warriors on duty weren’t expecting to encounter Heda tonight.

Water sloshes around their boots as they walk down the dark and damp tunnel, every sound echoing eerily along it. Lexa crouches slightly to avoid hitting her head on the low ceiling, but her main concern is Clarke. Her eyes are barely open if at all, and Lexa has no idea how much of this she’s
They reach the end unscathed other than a few bumps to the head thanks to the low ceiling. Ontari exits the tunnel closely followed by Octavia while Lexa remains inside with Clarke, waiting for the all clear. Barely a minute passes before Octavia is back.

“Ontari’s getting the horses.”

Lexa nods then follows Octavia out of the hole in the ground.

The rain outside is extremely heavy, enough to soak through clothes in minutes. Lexa squints instinctively as water bounces off her forehead and dribbles down her face. They’re a little way outside the capital city, the torches from the streets inside their walls normally visible between the trees.

Lexa internally grumbles at the thought of riding in this weather. It’s going to be painful.

She leads Clarke over to the three horses, their hot breaths steaming in the cold night air.

“Help her onto my horse.”

Ontari comes to Clarke’s other side, and together they manage to get her into the saddle. Lexa swiftly mounts up behind her, careful not to dislodge Clarke in the process.

As the other two mount up, Lexa’s ears prick up at a distant sound behind them.

A horn in the city.

“Move, now!”

The three horses gallop as fast as they can through the forest, dodging trees and undergrowth in their path. Lexa keeps an arm around Clarke so she doesn’t fall off, the woman weak and limp in front of her.

Horns continue to blare behind them, gradually getting closer as they surge blindly through the forest. Her horse is slowed by the weight of two passengers, making it hard for the beast to keep up with the other two. It won’t be long until they are caught, especially in the unknown and slippery terrain.

“Ontari, Octavia. This way.”

Lexa leads them left, following her instincts as best she can in the darkness. Her instincts don’t fail her.

They soon come upon a small cliff rising out of the forest, entirely covered in vines and moss. It marks the centre of the Broadleaf territory, cutting a line east to west in the otherwise dense forest. It’s easily climbable, assuming you don’t have to carry someone else up the rockface with you.

When they’re as close as she dare lead their enemies, Lexa pulls up her horse and slides off into the mud. She carefully brings Clarke’s body into hers, carrying her like she would a small child.

“Follow the ridge to the plains. Find Indra and tell her get the army moving on Broadleaf as soon as possible. Ste yuj.” (Stay strong.)

The two warriors move off without further instruction, and Lexa let’s her horse follow them obediently. She carries Clarke over to the cliff, feeling around with her toe for the entrance she
knows exists. The mud is slippery beneath her feet, and she almost slips over more than once.

After a short time desperately searching, the vines give way to a cavern, and Lexa slips inside with Clarke.

She places the blonde on her feet and helps her walk over to a metallic disk in the ground. Lexa has been here once before, during the first invasion of Broadleaf. She never expected to have to come here again.

Lexa opens up the hole in the ground with one arm, then turns to her companion.

“Clarke, I’m going to carry you down this ladder, but I need you to hold on tight.”

The blonde makes no indication that she understands, blank eyes staring at nothing in particular. Lexa takes that as a sign to proceed. They don’t have much choice really.

She lifts Clarke over her shoulder, holding onto her legs with one hand as she makes her way down the narrow hole, holding onto the ladder with her free hand. When her feet meet solid ground, Lexa places a very damp Clarke on the floor before rushing back up the ladder to close and lock the hatch.

Darkness instantly fills the small space, the air musty but thankfully dry.

Lexa climbs back down, removing the revolting mask that has covered her features for this expedition, then rummages in her bag for a splint. She soon has a small fire going, using the paper left behind by whoever used to live in this strange place.

A tiny shaking voice pipes up from across the room.

“Lexa..?”

She stares into blue eyes that finally have a little life behind them.

“Clarke.”
Chapter Notes

Just a warning, Clarke kinda has a panic attack at the end of this chapter. It’s from Lexa’s POV, but in case it’s triggering to anyone, I’ve separated that section with %s at the end.

Other than that, love the comments as always, keep them coming!

Enjoy ;)

The bunker, Broadleaf territory

Clarke

“Lexa..?”

Clarke’s voice is broken and rough from lack of use, and it shakes far more than she’d like.

She can barely believe it.

The person who got her out of that hell hole is the woman she betrayed all those months ago.

_Or is this a new pit of pain and despair?_

“Clarke.”

Lexa’s face is bare, free of warpaint and the mask she must have worn before. The flickering shadows make her hard to read, her standard stoic expression giving nothing away.

The fire before them is slowly growing, its warmth beginning to reach the tips of Clarke’s fingers and toes. It’s a welcome change from her previous prison.

She reaches up and removes her mask, briefly looking around at her surroundings.

They’re in a bunker similar to the one Finn showed her all those years ago, the grey concrete typical of all the structures from before the bombs. She can just about make out old bunk beds against the wall furthest from them, and shelves full of old possessions she can’t quite make out in the dim.

Eventually she brings her gaze back to the other woman.

“You know we’ll suffocate in here with a fire and no air vents.”

Lexa’s stare is as intense as ever, the flames reflected in her eyes only amplifying it.

“What would you suggest?”

Clarke studies her more thoroughly. The lines of her face, the fit of her leathers, the graceful movement of her hands.
There’s no doubt in Clarke’s mind that it is actually Lexa sat across from her, but there are so many unanswered questions and worries jumbling her thoughts.

*What the hell is she doing here?*

*Did she really save me?*

*What if Lexa was behind this all along..*

She shakes herself slightly and redirects her gaze at those dark eyes.

“I’m not saying anything until you tell me what the hell is going on.”

Clarke folds her arms in defiance, but the squelch of her sodden clothes spoils the gesture somewhat. Water seeped through to her skin a while ago, but it’s only now that she notices how cold it’s making her.

An uncontrollable shiver runs through her spine.

She frowns at her body for giving away her weaknesses.

“You need food and warmth. I promise to explain everything, after we’ve got you into some dry clothes.”

Neither of them move muscle, trying to out stare the other lie they have so many times before. Clarke doesn’t have the energy to fight, and she can already feel sleep tugging at her eyelids. But she needs to know.

“How do I know you’ll tell me the truth? How do I know you weren’t behind everything and this isn’t some elaborate trick?”

Lexa’s face falls, her eyes drop to the fire and her hands clench into fists. Clarke keeps her eyes fixed on her, trying to read all her movements, although she doesn’t really trust her own judgement right now.

“I would never do this to you, Clarke.”

Her voice is low and soft, almost catching her off guard. Nevertheless, she keeps her angry momentum going.

“Then why did you save me now?!”

Clarke’s voice breaks at the end, tears threatening to fall from her eyes. After everything she’s been through, after everything they did to her, why did it have to be Lexa who rescued her?

The brunette makes a move to stand, stepping slowly around the fire and slightly towards her.

“Clarke, you’ve been through a lot. Let’s get you dry-”

“Why?!”

Lexa hesitates in her movements, and the flickering firelight casts moving shadows across her conflicted features. Her voice sends chills down Clarke’s spine when she finally speaks.

“The Broadleaf leader may have used you against me, or killed you to claim the title of Wanheda for their own. I couldn’t let them have that power over me.”
Clarke sags back against the wall, her will depleted and eyes drooping from exhaustion. Of course Lexa had saved her to keep her own power, why else would she do it?

She daren’t trust Lexa, she can’t trust her, but currently she doesn’t have much of a choice in what happens next.

All she can do is prevent them suffocating to death in an underground bunker.

“There should be a switch next to the ladder. That’ll turn on the light.”

Clarke slumps even more, her body and mind completely drained. Her eyes drift close as Lexa’s form moves across her vision, and the last thing she hears before the darkness engulfs her is the click of the switch.

Lexa cautiously presses the button Clarke directed her to, and almost instantly a panel in the ceiling starts to glow a dull orange, accompanied by a low hum. She carefully puts out the fire, then searches the room for any sort of clothing or blankets.

She manages to find some rather odd looking garments in one of the drawers. They aren’t practical at all, too brightly coloured to be able to hide in the forest, and too thin to ward off the weather.

In fact they look pretty similar to those worn by Skaikru when they first landed, although less worn and tattered.

Gathering up an armful of material, Lexa approaches an unconscious Clarke.

“Clarke.”

She touches a damp shoulder softly, not wanting to startle her. A soft grumble is her only response.

Lexa nudges her a little more forcefully and repeats her name louder, but still Clarke’s eyes don’t open.

She pauses a moment, considering what to do. She can’t let Clarke stay in the sodden clothes, but is undressing her while she’s asleep really the right way to gain Clarke’s trust?

Lexa considers the options quickly, then gets to work on Clarke’s boots.

It takes a long time to strip every piece of leather from Clarke’s body, the sleeping woman not waking once during the entire process. Lexa dries her carefully before reclothing her, gently rubbing the pale and scarred skin with a towel to try to get some warmth into her body.

As she works she notices three small star-shaped tattoos on the side of Clarke’s right leg. They aren’t visible like most of her people’s tattoos, they’re so well hidden in fact that Lexa doubts she would know they were there if it weren’t for current circumstances.

When Clarke is fully clothed again, she carries her over to one of the metal structures at the far end of the room. Lexa covers the slightly shivering woman with as many blankets as she can find, even rummaging in the other drawers to see if there are any more.

Once she’s satisfied that there is enough material around Clarke to keep her warm, Lexa goes to
stand at the bottom of the ladder.

Her clothes are sticking to her skin uncomfortably, just as wet as the ones she’s removed from Clarke, but she’s dealt with it many times before. She daren’t change out of her protective leathers, not when their enemies are so close and Clarke is still so weak.

She draws a dagger from its sheath and slowly toys with the blade, her eyes watching the distorted reflections in it and her ears listening out for any noises outside the bunker.

The steady breathing of a slumbering Clarke is the only thing she can hear.

**Clarke**

The rattling of metal against metal brings Clarke out of her nap, but she doesn’t open her eyes. She knows what’s coming, so she waits. The guards will be tying her hands any moment now.

However, the noises continue, and the guards don’t come as quickly as they usually do.

Clarke’s memory finally catches up in a flash.

The walking, the horse ride, the conversation she had with Lexa in what appeared to be a bunker.

*But that was all just one of her dreams, right?*

She stays perfectly still while she tries to figure out what was real and what was imaginary, the noises continuing in the background.

One thing is for certain: she’s not in that cell anymore.

She’s actually warm for the first time in what feels like forever. There’s the weight of at least two or three furs piled on top of her, and rather than a cold stone floor, there’s a relatively soft mattress beneath her.

Clarke cracks open an eye.

The light blinds her at first, and she has to squint until her eye adjusts.

She’s exactly where her memory tells her, in a bunker underground, although she has no idea when she got on the bed.

Clarke peers around slightly, everything exactly as she thought she’d dreamt. The ladder is across the room now, the remains of a fire on the floor next to it.

She finds Lexa with her back to the bed, looking through shelves of old tins on one of the shelves. Clarke can tell how frustrated she must be simply from the amount of noise she's making.

“Looking for something?”

Lexa practically jumps as she spins to look at Clarke. Drops of water fly off her hair and land on Clarke’s face thanks to her speed. She wipes it off with her sleeve, only then noticing what she's wearing.

The thin under-layer is similar to the type of clothing they had on the Ark, a slightly thicker checked
shirt over the top of it with the buttons fastened. It’s unlikely to be what she was given for the ride here, and they’re definitely not common items for grounders to own.

Clarke immediately sits up and pushes the mountain of blankets off her to inspect the rest of her body.

“Did you change my clothes?!”

The sudden movement makes her vision fuzzy and she sways a little on the spot. A slightly damp arm suddenly appears and keeps her upright.

“Careful, you are still very weak.”

Clarke frowns at her words and leans away from the supportive arm, the dizziness wearing off quickly. She can’t be weak, she won’t let herself be weak, but there’s no denying her current state.

“I found some food for us, although I’m not sure what it is.”

Lexa hands her a can of brown lumps in jelly, the label so faded it doesn’t give anything away. She moves away from the bed then to stand at the bottom of the ladder, although Clarke barely notices.

She digs straight into the can, so hungry that she doesn’t really care what the contents are. It’s so much tastier than the dry bread she was fed in her cell, and Clarke has to suppress a groan of delight as she chews.

It's only when she pauses in her meal that Clarke remembers why she sat up in the first place.

“You changed my clothes.”

It’s not a question.

Lexa glances over briefly when she replies.

“You were soaked to the skin, I needed to get you warm. I apologise if it was.. inappropriate.”

Clarke studies those dark green eyes, seeing no malice there, only concern. Lexa quickly returns her gaze to the hatch above her.

She stares at her, but Lexa doesn’t look over again. On any other day she might argue double standards given that the brunette is still wearing her soggy leathers.

Instead she tries a different topic, something that's been worrying the back of her mind ever since she got captured, and amplified by the most recent line of questioning her captors took.

“How are my people?”

There’s a long pause and Lexa visibly gulps before looking at her again, her expression unreadable.

“Many died in the war against the Broadleaf and Lake clans, I don’t know how many were Skaikru. About a week ago I offered an alliance your people couldn't refuse.”

Clarke looks down at her hands, fiddling with the pale label on the can she's still holding. She takes a deep breath before asking her next question, which comes out at just above a whisper.

“My mom?”
She glances up just in time to see the hint of a smirk on Lexa’s lips.

“She’s alive. If it were possible, I would say your mother hates me even more than she did before.”

Clarke lips almost turn up at one side, a strangled chuckle type sound escaping her.

“Somehow that’s not too hard to believe.”

There’s something in Lexa’s eyes, something Clarke simply cannot read or understand.

An uneasy silence falls between them for a moment.

“We will be here for a few more candlemarks, you should rest while you have the chance.”

Clarke tries to search those dark eyes for whatever Lexa isn't telling her, but all she finds is a big fat nothing. She would try harder, push Lexa to tell her everything, but her eyelids are already betraying her.

Without a word, she places the can on the floor and tucks herself under the heap of blankets. Her body relaxes in the warmth, giving her mind no choice but to drift and descend into darkness once more.

%%%%

Lexa

Lexa is immediately woken up by screams coming from across the room. She internally scolds herself for falling asleep while on watch, running across the room to Clarke's side.

The blonde is thrashing side to side in the tiny bed, crying out in pain from whatever nightmare has a grip on her.

Lexa touches her shoulder gently, the cloth damp from sweat.

"Clarke."

She continues to wail, the noise even more deafening than before. Lexa shakes her a little, and tries to raise her own voice over the shrieks.

"Clarke. Clarke!"

The movement suddenly stops and blue eyes shoot open. She sits up quickly, breathing heavily as tears start to fall in buckets.

Lexa retreats a little, giving her more space to breathe, but she never takes her eyes off Clarke.

"It's ok, you're safe."

Clarke doesn't look at her, instead she wraps her arms around her legs and rocks back and forth, her eyes pressed into her knees. Her breathing is fast and shallow, raking sobs shaking her tiny form. Lexa knows she needs to help her to calm down, the question is, how?
She moves to sit on the bed, hands folded neatly in her lap.

"Clarke. You're safe, no-one can hurt you here."

The curled up woman continues to sway but otherwise remaining motionless. Lexa almost tries to reassure her again when a voice barely above a whisper sneaks through the tangle of limbs.

"How c-c-can I t-trust you? W-What if this is another t-trick and you're not L-Lexa?"

She takes a moment to think, never tearing her gaze away from Clarke.

There are many ways to prove who she is, the most persuasive for many being her black blood and the army at her back. But it's a distraught Clarke who has to be convinced of her identity, the prick of a finger won't mean much to her in the yellow light.

Lexa is careful to keep her voice soft when she speaks.

"Ask me something only I would know, something neither of us would have told anyone."

There's silence between them for a long time, but Lexa doesn’t push. Clarke stays curled up, although her breathing does slow somewhat. There's even a twitch to her lips that could have once been a smirk.

"You were g-going to kill Octavia once, before the mountain. I called you out for lying about having feelings, yet you still let everyone die in T-Ton DC."

Lena remembers the conversation vividly. It was the most vulnerable anyone had made her feel in a long, long time.

She thought about that moment for months afterwards, ruminating on her weakness and punishing herself for ever allowing it to exist. It took a long period of self-reflection to realise that Clarke was right.

No matter what Lexa wants her people to believe, what she forced herself to believe, nothing can stop her caring deeply for her people.

In particular, the woman sat right next to her.

"Not everyone. Not you."

Clarke's body visibly relaxes at her words, even turning her head so Lexa can see her puffy red eyes.

She soon stiffens up again as another memory hits her, her body somehow curling even tighter than before.

"Clarke, it's ok, you're ok."

Lexa searches her memories for anything that could help calm Clarke, anything to stop the nightmares haunting her mind.

She's learnt how to combat her own demons, but it took time and considerable effort. A long time ago she almost gave up completely, resigned to her fate as the blood-thirsty Heda, just like the rest of her predecessors. If it wasn't for Costia's help, that's the person she would be today, if she were still alive that is.

"Tell me about Jake."
A single tearful eye looks up from behind an arm towards her inquisitively. Clarke's breathing noticeably slows as she speaks, although a crinkle of confusion and old anger forms in her brow.

"You want me to tell you about Jake? You already know him, you train him."

Lexa nods, and actively tries to make her expression softer.

"Yet all I really know is that he is a nightblood, and that you are his mother. I am sure there is much more to him than that."

A hint of a smile pulls at what Lexa can see of Clarke's lips.

"He's so much more."
Four Years Ago.. Part 2

Chapter Notes

Bit of a long one for you :) This carries on from chapter 20, picking up from Ryka rescuing Clarke from the cold and leading her to Haro. Warning for vague description of childbirth.

I’m not entirely sure what to call the chief of Haro, Haroheda or Heda kom Haro? If someone could let me know which is more accurate (or something else), I would greatly appreciate it.

Enjoy :)

Four Years Ago

Haro

Clarke

The village that Ryka leads Clarke to is almost as large as Ton DC. Most of the buildings meld into the forest around it, with a few larger and more obvious ones in a clearing in the centre.

Clarke tries to keep her eyes and ears sharp, to take every detail in, but walking in the snow for a few hours has let the cold settle into her bones again.

She vaguely wonders if she will ever get used to the feeling.

Ryka guides her through the village towards the centre, then past the old concrete structures. A few people mingle around fires nearby, bouncing from foot to foot to try to get feeling back into their toes. Their eyes follow the pair as they disappear into a small wooden hut, but Clarke doesn’t have the energy to care.

She soon finds herself steered towards a bed, and is rapidly covered in furs from head to toe. Only her face pokes out between them to breathe.

Her body gradually starts to warm up and the violent shivers fade, her fingers and toes stinging painfully. Ryka moves across the room to the fire pit, and quickly the warmth from the fire washes over Clarke’s exposed face.

Eventually she manages to prop herself up on her elbows, shamelessly studying the hut they’re in.

It’s basically one room, albeit a pretty large one, the door standing opposite the single bed. A table sits on the left, the fire burning opposite it and beneath the only window. There are shelves and cupboards covered in clothes and other little things that make the place feel more homely.

Clarke feels like she’s been given a glimpse of a normal life, one that she is intruding on but can’t bear to tear her eyes away.
Ryka sits at the table, silently fixing a hole in a piece of leather and wrapped in her own furs. For the first time in months, the silence is peaceful.

"Mochof, Ryka." (Thank you, Ryka.)

The woman simply nods her response, but a small smile graces her soft features.

The first few days are a challenge, neither of them really knowing the other's language apart from the odd word.

Still, Ryka sets up a second bed in her own home, and she teaches Clarke Trigedasleng without question. Her reward for any improvement is the radiant smile that comes when she succeeds at whatever Ryka is trying to teach her that day. She tries her best to make that smile a permanent fixture.

Within a week, Clarke has her strength back and Ryka takes her for a tour around the village. She shows her the healing building where she works, the central meeting house and various other places that house other essential items or people.

Ryka laughs at Clarke’s confused expressions as she attempts to repeat certain words, the sound echoing between the quiet walls of the village. She covers her mouth in embarrassment, red quickly spreading across her cheeks while she can’t hold back the grin pulling at her lips.

They’re at the end of one of their outbursts when a tall woman approaches them in the centre of the village, sword at her hip and an unimpressed expression on her face.

"Ryka, would you like to introduce me to our guest?"

Clarke doesn't quite follow, but if the sudden apprehension on Ryka's face is anything to go by, it can't be good.

"Kal, disha laik Haroheda. Nomon, disha laik Kal." (Kal, this is the Chief of Haro. Mother, this is Kal.)

Clarke bobs her head a little, the smile wiped off her face and replaced with her best stoic expression. She knows that if she wants to stay in Haro for the winter, she will need to get on the right side of this woman.

Otherwise it's back to the cave for her.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, chief."

The woman looks her up and down, examining every inch of her body. Clarke pulls herself to her full height, hands held lightly behind her back and her chest puffed out a little. Even then, they both know that she is no real threat to the older woman.

"Where do you come from, Kal?"

Clarke gulps.

The one question she doesn’t really want to answer. Also the most difficult to avoid.

"A land far from here."
She leaves her reply vague, despite the skeptical look the chief sends her way. Clarke doesn’t miss the chief’s tanned hand settling on the hilt of her sword.

"I expect no trouble from you, Kal. You will be forcibly removed from this village if I hear otherwise. Understood?"

The chief’s eyes bore into Clarke’s, the second most intimidating stare she’s been subject to in her time on the ground. In her life if she really thought about it. Still, the brown are nothing compared to the forest green she's tried and failed to forget.

Clarke breaks the contact first and nods her head once more.

"Sha, Haroheda" (Yes, Chief.)

The chief moves off with a curious glint in her eye, and Clarke and Ryka both breathe a sigh of relief when he’s finally out of sight. They share a look, one that conveys everything they can't quite say to each other yet.

*So that's your mother.*

*Yes, she is a force to be reckoned with.*

They move on from that spot, Ryka continuing to point out more people and places Clarke should know about, although some of the enthusiasm has left her voice. Clarke sends her grateful smiles and tries to wrap her mouth around the new words, and soon she has Ryka giggling at her awful pronunciation again.

That night, one of the villagers breaks into their home.

Something takes over Clarke's body as she pushes a knife against his throat and forces him out of the hut, the stench of alcohol thick on his breath. She acts out of reflex when he pins her against the wall, her body reacting before her mind can even comprehend what she’s doing.

In a matter of moments he’s lying on the floor clutching a bleeding nose, beady eyes staring up at her. The adrenaline coursing through her veins is exhilarating, fending off the freezing temperatures. It’s only when she turns her head to check on Ryka that she feels the damage the guy did to her ribs.

She holds her ground in the snow, bare feet planted and fists ready until the man gives up and wanders away through the buildings. A few other villagers watch on from a distance, but Clarke keeps her eyes fixed on their would-be assailant.

Once he's out of sight she waits another moment, then returns inside the hut and practically collapses on her bed with a groan.

Ryka pads over, concern evident in all her movements.

"*May I?*

Clarke nods, and soft fingers gently prod the area where the guy hit her. She hisses at a particularly painful spot around her ribs.

Remarkably Ryka smiles at her.
"En’s ogud. Not broke." (It’s good.)

Clarke can’t help her sarcasm when she replies.

"Mochof. Hurts like hell though." (Thanks.)

Ryka’s face transforms into a hilarious confused expression, and Clarke would laugh if she hadn’t just been punched in the gut. She grins playfully as a compromise.

"Ouch."

Ryka nods and smiles once more, then quietly returns to her own furs for the remainder of the night.

The next morning, a large purple bruise adorns Clarke’s ribcage, but the pain has subsided somewhat. She shows Ryka as soon as she sees it, pointing at it repeatedly when the woman doesn’t react as she first expected her to. Eventually she just chuckles at Clarke and throws a top at her face.

She accompanies Ryka to the healing building for the day, eager to learn more about their healing techniques. She’d seen a little while in the army’s camp before the mountain, but her duties often took her away from being able to learn anything from the healers helping the injured.

At about mid-morning, Ryka is showing her their range of herbs and medicines, trying to explain their uses when the chief enters the building.

They both stand up straighter in her presence, exchanging a brief worried glance.

Clarke expects a reprimand for her actions the night before, dreading the words to come. She can’t even look the chief in the eye, avoiding the disappointment and anger she knows will be there.

“You defended Ryka’s home well last night, but your technique could do with improvement.”

Clarke’s jaw drops.

She soon remembers her place, biting her lip and nodding her head slowly, still unsure whether or not this conversation is going to end up with her expulsion from the village.

“You will train with the rest of our warriors from now on. If you are to remain here, you need to be able to defend the entire village, not just my daughter. Training starts in a candlemark.”

At that she sweeps back out of the building, leaving the pair in stunned silence, mouths wide open and staring at each other in disbelief.

A candlemark later, Ryka accompanies Clarke to the training area, where she’s faced with a large group of warriors. They all wear light armour and carry various types of weapons, quietly practising or talking to each other.

Clarke has her dull sword belted to her hip, but it’s nothing in comparison to their well-polished blades.

Ryka gives her a reassuring squeeze to the shoulder and a sly wink before she returns to the centre of the village.
Clarke stands by herself for a few minutes, the nerves building as she watches those around her. They move with a grace she swears she’ll never have, no matter how much training they put her through.

She’s about to follow Ryka and head back to the healing building when the chief appears in her path. The rest of the warriors immediately stand at attention, silence falling in the small clearing.

“Everyone, this is Kal. She will be joining us for training for the foreseeable future. Ten laps around the village, go!”

The entire group suddenly moves off in one direction, and Clarke has to spin quickly to follow them.

She manages to keep up for the first few laps, despite tripping over logs, falling into dips in the ground and almost crashing into trees a few times. There might have been a chuckle from those in front of her, but she tries to ignore them. She keeps her head down and pounds out the rest of the laps with gradually fewer and fewer mistakes.

Safe to say, Clarke is the last back to the training area.

Her legs feel like they’re about to collapse, her eyes and lungs stinging from the freezing cold air.

But they’re not done yet.

All of the warriors are paired up and running through sword drills, the chief watching over them and shouting commands Clarke doesn’t understand. The only one without a partner strides over, clearly dissatisfied with who she ended up with.

“Draw your sword.”

Clarke does as she says and holds it out like she’d practised in the woods. Her partner just rolls her eyes.

A swipe of a sword and a swift kick to her ankle later, Clarke is flat on her back on the ground. She didn’t even think the woman was close enough to do that.

Clarke groans as she stands, brushing the dirt off her hands and looking around to find where her sword landed.

“You hold your sword wrong, and your stance is weak.”

Clarke huffs out what breath she’s managed to regain from the embarrassing fall. She glares at the warrior, her tone sparking something inside her that she didn’t know still existed.

“Then teach me how to do it better.”

There’s a glint in her opponent’s eye, a twitch of her lips.

“My pleasure.”

They spend hours going over stances and the steps between them, how to hold a sword properly and how to use it to defend yourself against the most basic attacks. Clarke feels like she picks it up quickly, although from glances at the sparring matches nearby she can tell there is a long way to go yet.

By the time they finish the sun has almost set, the only light from a few torches around the edge of the clearing. Clarke’s arms feel like they’re going to fall off any second, her feet ache and her hands
have a whole host of new blisters forming.

She’s trudging back to Ryka’s hut when a voice pipes up behind her.

“Kal!”

The warrior who put up with her for hours on end jogs towards her, although Clarke has no idea how she has the energy.

“Would you join us for dinner?”

A small group hangs back behind them, their previously stoney faces softer and more welcoming. Clarke smiles a little. Perhaps this isn’t the worst place to be.

“Sure.”

After that her days are split between Ryka in the healing building and training with the village’s warriors.

She learns a lot more of the language, as well as getting to practise their healing techniques on those injured in training or during a hunt. Clarke even manages to teach Ryka a thing or two she absorbed from her mom over the years.

In training she has gradually improved, the weapons they give her varying every day to keep her on her toes. She’s nowhere near as proficient as her mentors, but they do have years of experience ahead of her. Their quiet appraisal keeps her spirits up, and before long she can hit a moving target from 30 yards with an arrow and can easily keep up with the pack in the run around the village.

About a month after her first training session, the snow is deep around the village, almost too deep to venture out into the forest. The food rations are short and repetitive, but morale within the community more than makes up for it.

Clarke, Ryka and a group of other villagers often gather around a fire in the evenings. They sit close to the flames and to each other, sharing ale and stories, laughing loud compared to the silence outside the village.

They all wear thick furs to ward off the cold, but Clarke and Ryka usually sit slightly closer than absolutely necessary. Clarke chalks it up to sharing body heat, although her alcohol-addled eyes can’t help but admire the beauty sat next to her.

Maybe someday she’ll pluck up the courage to go for it, but she’s not entirely certain what the customs are for dating around here.

She’s almost completely entranced by the brunette when a particular topic of conversation across the fire catches her ear.

“What’s Wanheda?”

Every single face turns towards her.

“You haven’t heard about Wanheda? What land did you come from?”

Clarke clenches her fists slightly, but otherwise looks around the group for someone to explain the
mysterious name. She knows what *heda* means of course, but *wan*? Thankfully one of the other warriors breaks the silence.

“It means Commander of Death. *This land was the victim of the Maunon* - the mountain men - *for as long as we can remember. They took our people, never to return or changed into blood-thirsty monsters - reapers. We could do nothing against the Maunon - they had dark weapons that could kill faster than any of ours can.*”

Clarke gulps slightly, but tries not to show her discomfort. No-one seems to notice.

“The Sky Princess burned them all. Every last one. People have called her Wanheda ever since. She saved us.”

“I heard that she disappeared. Rumour says that even Heda doesn’t know what happened to her.”

Clarke zones out for the rest of the conversation, stories of her friends apparently meeting the ‘fearsome’ Wanheda, of her supposed conquests both before and after the mountain. Clarke just stares at the flames in front of her, not moving an inch, every muscle tense and aching to flee but frozen in place.

She’s startled when a hand touches her leg, flinching away from the contact instantly.

Ryka’s concerned eyes lock onto hers, but the brunette doesn’t question her.

“Sorry. I’m tired, I’m going to head to bed.”

Clarke stands to leave while everyone is still captivated by their bloody stories, and she goes back to their shared hut alone with her broody thoughts.

She doesn’t get much sleep that night, tossing and turning almost constantly under her furs. The tales her new friends told about Wanheda circle her mind, her dreams perturbed by images from the mountain.

*Is that what people think of me?*

*What if they find out who I am?*

*What if I can never be part of this community?*

She doesn’t know if Ryka notices her agitation throughout the night. The soft snores wafting across the hut would indicate that she is completely oblivious to Clarke’s internal conflict.

By the time the sun comes up Clarke knows what she has to do.

She hangs back in the morning when Ryka prepares for a day in the healing building, expecting a few warriors to return to have injuries re-bandaged. She only notices Clarke’s hesitancy when she opens the door to leave.

“Are you not coming?”

Clarke shakes her head, trying her best to keep her face neutral.

“I have early training. I will come later.”

Ryka gives a nod and a small smile, one that previously warmed Clarke’s heart but now only drives shards of guilt into it. She daren’t imagine Ryka’s disappointment when she finds out that *Kal* is in
Once the brunette gone and out of sight, Clarke gathers what food and other supplies she can find around their home. She puts on her warmest boots, kindly donated by one of the villagers, as were the rest of her clothes. She gives the place one last look, then heads out into the snow.

About an hour into her journey, Clarke’s nose is already numb from the cold wind, her fingers and toes faring not much better. She wraps her furs even tighter around her body in a vain attempt to warm up, but the wind keeps on howling through the trees and the snow continues to absorb her feet.

She heads in the vague direction of the waterfall, her lack of knowledge of the area giving her no clue as to where else she could possibly stay. It will be the first place Ryka looks for her, but it will have to do for tonight.

After a while Clarke takes a break under the cover of a large evergreen. She sits there for barely five minutes before she’s itching to be walking again, her body quickly growing colder every second she stays still.

Clarke carries onto the waterfall, but is soon distracted by a set of footprints in the snow. They’re pretty fresh as far as she can tell, meandering through the forest in a vaguely perpendicular direction to her. She’s not sure why, but Clarke can’t help but follow the path.

It’s not long until she comes upon the body of heavily-pregnant woman resting against a tree. Her eyes are closed, her forehead scrunched up in pain as she clenches at her belly.

Clarke treads loudly to announce her presence, but keeps her voice soft.

“Hi, I am a healer. Do you need help?”

The woman’s eyes flash open at Clarke’s voice, the pained expression easing slightly.

“I was trying to reach my husband’s family before the baby came. I guess they’re a little early..”

Clarke eyes widen. Her mind forgets why she’s out here in the first place, replaced by one thought. I can’t deliver a baby, especially not in this weather.

She somehow gathers herself and comes up with a plan.

“There is a village not far from here. I can take you there.”

The stranger looks uncertain, glancing at her bump and stroking it gently, though she soon nods her agreement.

Clarke immediately steps to her side, removes her outer fur and wraps it loosely round the shivering woman. She helps her into a standing position and loops an arm around her waist.

They walk like that for a short time, but then the woman suddenly stops moving, her face contorted in pain yet she doesn’t emit a single sound. Soon she’s able to carry on, but again the contractions immobilize her before they can get very far.

“Haro is not far, we can make it. Ste yuj.” (Stay strong.)

The woman nods, and she bravely makes it another ten minutes before the pain almost makes her
crumple to the floor, only Clarke’s support keeping her upright as she lets out a guttural cry of agony. Clarke tries to help as best she can, attempting to soothe her through each contraction, but the poor woman looks close to collapsing altogether.

She has no idea where the strength comes from, but Clarke sweeps up the crying woman in her arms and moves as fast as possible while not jostling her too much. They’re not far from Haro, and soon the recognisable huts peek up over the horizon.

“We are here. It is going to be ok.”

The woman in her arms looks unsure, but another contraction soon grips her and nails dig deep into the skin at the base of Clarke’s neck. She barely feels it.

Clarke moves impossibly faster, reaching the edge of the village in a matter of minutes. She heads straight to the healing building, ignoring the strange glares from the other villagers, including the chief.

When she finally reaches the previously peaceful building, Clarke bursts straight in and searches for Ryka in the dim light.

“Ryka! She needs help!”

Clarke places the woman on a bed and Ryka is immediately at her side, looking over the groaning woman before them.

“I need towels. Lots of them.”

She moves as quickly in the familiar space, gathering a whole armful of soft towels before returning to the bed. Ryka is talking to the woman calmly, both women’s knuckles white from holding their hands together so tightly.

Clarke takes Ryka’s place at the woman’s side and tries to reassure her, but the screams erupting from the stranger’s mouth almost deafen her. She has no idea what Ryka is doing, her focus completely on the woman’s face. Everything else is a blur of noise and pain.

“Your baby is coming. I need you to push.”

The woman nods, sweat pouring off her pale brow. Clarke swears her hand breaks as she pushes the child out of her body, even louder screams ripping through the air.

When her voice fails, tiny cries bring a small smile to both of their faces. Clarke glances over to Ryka, gently wrapping the bawling baby in a towel.

Abby had told Clarke about childbirth on the Ark, Clarke suspects to steer her away from dating guys when she was younger. But despite her theoretical knowledge, nothing could prepare her for the sheer amount of blood.

“Kal! Take the child!”

Ryka hands over the wriggling infant, his pink face poking out from beneath the blanket. Clarke shows him to his mother, her face paler than Clarke’s ever seen, her eyelids fluttering downwards.

“You saved his life. He is yours if you will have him.”

Tears prick at the corners of Clarke’s eyes, gently rocking the newborn from side to side. She doesn’t
have a chance to argue, the woman’s eyes shutting her out and her head lolling to the side before Clarke can even say thank you.

All she can do is gape at the stranger in front of her, the woman she found in the forest barely an hour ago, now dead in Haro’s infirmary.

High pitched wails from her arms bring Clarke back to her senses, and she looks down at the smallest face she has ever seen. Ryka comes up beside her, gazing down at the boy.

“What is his name?”

There’s only one name that comes to mind.

“Jake.”
Night After Clarke’s Rescue

Broadleaf

Lexa

They leave the bunker as soon as Clarke has rested and eaten some more of the tin goo. The blonde had grumbled when putting the damp leathers back on, although they both know the even greater risks involved in their escape if she hadn’t.

Once their masks are firmly secured over their faces, and Clarke’s hood pulled up far enough to cover her blonde locks, they set off into the night.

Lexa keeps her eyes and ears peeled, constantly on the lookout for any Broadleaf warriors, her hand constantly hovering near the hilt of her sword.

Normally it would take her about half a day’s walking to reach the border, but she knows that Clarke’s lack of strength and their need for invisibility is going to significantly increase that estimate. They should be able to reach the border by dawn, although that all depends on how many warriors they come across, and how quickly Clarke can walk.

The blonde in question had insisted that she didn’t need help at the start of their trek, instead trudging alongside Lexa through the forest. Her steps are heavy and laboured, but to her credit she continues to put one foot in front of the other, following Lexa’s lead.

Lexa navigates using the cliff and the moon, just about managing to keep both in sight between the trees. Luckily for them, see doesn’t see any movement other than the wind in the trees.

About a candlemark into the journey, Clarke’s strength is obviously disappearing fast. She stumbles over branches and roots, somehow managing to make an incredible racket in the otherwise silent trees. Anyone nearby would be able to find them easily.

It doesn’t take long for Lexa to forget everything Clarke said earlier. Her stubbornness could get them killed after all.

Then again, nothing new there.

“May I assist you?”

Lexa’s voice is barely above a whisper, but just loud enough for Clarke to break her gaze away from the forest floor to glance over. Her face scrunches, although Lexa isn’t sure if it’s in anger or frustration at her own body.

A reluctant nod later, Lexa has her arm around Clarke’s waist, supporting her weight as she did when they left the Broadleaf capital. Their steps are still louder than she’d like, Clarke’s feet seeming to find the noisiest patches of ground. At least they’re moving a tad faster.

Lexa briefly considers carrying the blonde, but she knows the ensuing argument could end up bringing more attention to themselves than Clarke’s clumsy footsteps. And though she would never admit it, the warmth from their current closeness is a welcome change from the bitter night air.
They walk for what feels like forever but is actually only a few candlemarks, pausing now and again to readjust their position and to drink what’s left of Lexa’s water. It’s slow going, Clarke only staying upright thanks to Lexa’s arm around her.

They’re about halfway there when a noise catches Lexa’s attention.

She pulls them to an abrupt stop, craning her neck to listen out for the sound. Clarke opens her mouth to speak, but Lexa holds up her hand to stop her. She gets the gist.

They both scan their surroundings, trying to see any sign of movement in the darkness.

Lexa can feel Clarke’s body tense up as two warriors appear from behind the trees ahead of them. Her free hand instinctively moves to the hilt of her sword.

“What goes there?”

Lexa turns her head to murmur into Clarke’s ear, pulling the blonde closer in the process.

“Follow my lead.”

Clarke looks uncertainly up at her, before both their gazes return to the Broadleaf warriors.

“I am Dria, and this is my wife Kal. She was hurt on duty, I am taking her to a healer.”

The Broadleaf warriors approach them warily, although they stay just out of sword’s reach. Their eyes scan Clarke and Lexa, lingering on the masks hiding their faces. The pair appear to relax, hands rubbing together for warmth, but their eyes tell a different story.

“Very well. Before we let you go, have you seen a woman with yellow hair?”

Lexa can feel Clarke flinch beside her, but she manages to school her own reaction into one of confusion. Well, they can’t see the hint of a smirk on her lips.

“Do you mean Wanheda? If we had come across her path, we would surely be dead.”

Lexa can feel Clarke quivering under her arm a little, her face turned down towards the ground.

The warriors take one last look at them, then move to either side of their path.

“Very well. You may proceed.”

Lexa sends them a grateful nod, and she tightens her grip on Clarke to encourage her to take a few tentative steps forward again. They both tense when they pass between the Broadleaf warriors.

For good reason.

Just when Lexa thinks they’ve gotten away with it, the warriors rip the hoods from their heads, revealing Clarke’s blonde hair beneath.

“It’s Wanheda! Take her!”

Lexa pulls Clarke even closer into her body as she draws her sword.

She knocks the first warrior’s blade out of their hand and easily slices their neck in the next sweep of her sword. They never stood a chance really.
Lexa swiftly turns to the second warrior, dragging Clarke behind her as she just manages to block an attack. She releases the blonde from her grasp, bringing her full attention to the opponent in front of her.

It doesn’t take long for her to overpower them. After a short exchange of blows, they too collapse to the floor.

**Clarke**

Clarke can only gape from her position on the ground as Lexa battles with the second warrior, watching their exchange with nothing short of admiration.

She can vividly remember the heated training sessions with Lexa, but this is something else entirely. During training she could tell Lexa was holding back, not wanting to cause any serious damage.

Now she’s fighting to kill, and it’s an entirely different intensity.

Barely a minute after their swords first clash, the warrior is defeated, their body motionless other than red blood seeping out of various wounds. Lexa stands there for a moment, her breathing heavier than usual, but her head is up, green eyes searching their surroundings for more enemies.

She doesn’t seem to find any.

Lexa wipes and sheathes her sword, then approaches Clarke. She finally regains her senses enough to stand up again, brushing some of the dirt from her hands. Clarke looks the brunette in the eye with mock seriousness.

“I’m your wife, huh?”

Clarke swears a blush spreads over Lexa’s cheeks, although it’s hard to tell in the darkness. Even so, her immediately averted gaze confirms Clarke’s belief.

“We should keep moving, there may be more and we still have a long way to go.”

Clarke chuckles quietly at the slightly flustered woman, pulls her hood up and allows Lexa to place her arm around her waist once more.

She hears a short hiss next to her, and a quick glance reveals a hint of pain in the commander’s eyes.

Clarke pulls away immediately, scanning Lexa’s body for the cause. Lexa rolls her eyes and tries to put her arm around her again. That’s when Clarke sees the gash in her arm, black blood trickling through the gap in her leathers.

“You’re hurt, let me have a look.”

She moves to examine the cut, but Lexa swiftly retracts the arm out of Clarke’s reach.

“It’s just a scratch. Beja, we need to keep going.” *(Please)*

Clarke gives her a look, one that would normally persuade anyone to do her bidding, or at least compromise with her. But Lexa doesn’t budge, her dark, dark eyes boring into Clarke’s.
She sighs loudly at the difficult woman.

“Fine.”

She moves round to Lexa’s other side, reluctantly accepting that arm in support for the next part of their journey.

They almost get caught again about a candlemark later.

Lexa suddenly stiffens and stops next her again, head tilted to the side slightly. Clarke scans the area, but the darkness hides anyone from her sight.

She feels a tug from Lexa and they’re moving again, only to stop a few feet away at a large hollowed out tree trunk Clarke hadn’t seen a moment before.

The look in Lexa’s eyes and the slight movement of her head tells Clarke everything she needs to know.

Get in the trunk.

Clarke rolls her eyes at the brunette. After a second of contemplation, Lexa’s signals become more urgent, so she does what the brunette wants.

The inside of the trunk is grimy and cramped, neither of them able to be fully on all fours and only just enough room to fit both of them inside. Only one end is open, leaving Clarke squashed next to damp, cold earth in the dark tunnel.

The only thing keeping her from panicking is Lexa’s hand on her arm, holding it tightly but without any force.

Lexa keeps her eyes fixed on the outside world, watching intently with muscles tensed in anticipation, her other hand wrapped around the hilt of her sword.

There’s a slight squeeze on her arm and Lexa silently shuffles further inside the wooden cylinder just as two shadows cross the entrance to their hiding place. Clarke subconsciously holds her breath, fearing that even the slightest sound could alert their enemies to their presence.

A few minutes later Lexa edges forward again, scanning the trees and loosening the grip on her sword. Her other hand never leaves Clarke though.

Eventually the brunette deems it safe enough to resume their journey, smoothly stepping out of the log and into the moonlight.

Clarke can’t help but run her eyes over the leather-clad woman in front of her, every curve of her well-toned body suddenly bathed in black and white.

It’s a wonderful sight to say the least.

Lexa clears her throat quietly and offers her hand to Clarke. She takes far too long to close her open mouth, only just realising how long she had been staring. Heat rises in her cheeks despite the chilly night air.

She takes the proffered hand, slender fingers wrapping tightly around hers and helping Clarke to leave the log much less gracefully than her rescuer.
They carry on as before, the break seemingly giving Clarke a second wind as she purposefully puts one foot in front of the other.

She tries not to think about the powerful arm that holds her up, about the strong muscles that she knows lie just beneath those thick leathers. But after everything she’s been through, maybe she deserves a brief moment to appreciate the undoubtedly gorgeous woman beside her.

At least, that’s what her exhausted and stressed out brain wants to tell her.

Plains Riders/Broadleaf Border

A candlemark after dawn

Octavia

Octavia continually scans the tree line from her horse, waiting just out of arrow’s range from the border. A second horse is tied to the small tree beside her, happily munching on the grass next to it.

Indra had ordered her to be here, to be the one to greet the pair when they finally reach friendly territory. The older warrior never doubted they would make it, an unquestionable faith in Heda that Octavia still doesn’t quite have yet.

She fidgets as she waits, nervously checking every single fastening on the two saddles or sharpening her daggers.

Eventually two figures stumble out of the woods, pausing to squint into the morning sunshine.

Octavia can see them clearly though.

The taller one is supporting the shorter, who seems to be struggling to walk. They both rip off their masks as soon as they leave the tree line, revealing their true identities to the world. As if Octavia needed any more confirmation.

She immediately unties the second horse and rides straight over to the pair.

“Heda!”

Lexa’s face turns towards her shout, and she starts to half-carry an exhausted Clarke in her direction. Octavia stops the horses a few metres from them.

They’re both clearly worse for wear, their clothes and faces streaked in mud. There's even a tear in Lexa’s coat covered in dried blood, not that Octavia would ever mention it to the commander.

Wordlessly, they heave Clarke into the saddle in front of Octavia, the blonde barely conscious and hardly gripping onto the horse.

Lexa’s gaze lingers on Clarke for a moment, then she moves her attention to O.

“Make sure to hold onto her, she is still very weak.”

Octavia bobs her head in agreement.

“Sha, Heda. Your army waits a few miles North-West.” (Yes)
Lexa nods and takes the second horse, smoothly rising onto its back in one fluid motion.

“Lexa..?”

Octavia barely recognises the croaky voice, but Clarke’s head has lifted up slightly, staring right at the brunette. Lexa’s face is as stoic as ever, but the blonde demands the full attention of that gaze.

“Thank you.”

Lexa nods to Clarke, her eyes softening just the tiniest bit and her lips turning up at once side.

“Pro, Klark.” (You’re welcome, Clarke.)

Her voice is softer than Octavia has ever heard it, her mouth almost dropping open in surprise that it was even possible.

Apparently Lexa spots her reaction, giving her a signature death-glare before she turns her horse to gallop away.

“I expect you to join my army for the invasion on Broadleaf, Octeivia. Don't be late.”

At that the stern woman gallops off into the planes without a second glance.

Octavia wraps an arm around Clarke’s slender form, then turns her own horse towards Lidu.
Mentions of nightmares and illness in this chap.

The next one will be a week late - sorry! - but it will mean that I can get going on another project I’m super excited about over the xmas break, between family visits that is :D

Happy holidays :)

That Afternoon

Lidu, Plains Riders Capital

Abby

Ever since the truce began, Abby has spent even more of her time in the infirmary caring for the warriors who still need her.

Poda had immediately ensured that Abby and the remaining Skaikru would be able to stay in Lidu for the time being, but a niggling feeling in the back of Abby's mind keeps reminding her that it's all temporary, that they have no home. The plains riders will only tolerate their presence for so long.

In the tiny amount of time she isn’t treating patients, Abby is almost constantly reminded of her mistakes as chancellor. If she hadn’t agreed to help Poda all those years ago, maybe they would still be in Arkadia. Maybe more of her people would still be alive today.

Life on the ground has never hit her as harshly as it has in the last few months, the weight of her decisions heavier than ever.

Even the return of the imprisoned Skaikru could not lift her spirits.

They were brought to Lidu by peacekeeping troops a few days after the alliance was agreed upon. Most were uninjured, although underfed, and were more than happy to be finally free. Their joy was somewhat dampened by Abby’s bad news.

So she keeps herself busy helping where she can, trying her best to avoid the horrible thoughts that constantly circle her mind like a hawk.

*What's going to happen to her people? Where will they go? What can they trade other than tech that the grounders don't want?*

*What’s happened to Clarke? Is she dead? Will she ever get to see her again?*

For the briefest of seconds, Abby swears she saw a hint of doubt in the Heda's eyes when she mentioned Clarke in that meeting. Of course the commander hasn't done anything about finding her daughter, concentrating only on regaining her land. Realistically, what else would the blood-thirsty
savage do?

Abby’s grief and anger only serves to separate herself from everyone and everything. Even the ever-persistent Kane has stopped trying to get through to her. Only Poda’s comforting embrace and unquestioning support has kept her going this long, but she’s not sure how much more she can take.

She’s re-bandaging a wound on a warrior’s thigh when Raven charges through the infirmary doors. Abby doesn’t look up from her task.

If recent months have taught her anything, no news is good news.

"Abby, you might want to come outside."

She continues her task silently, not even looking over at Raven.

“I’m busy in case you can’t tell.”

Abby finishes off the bandage, checking over her work thoroughly.

“But, Abby—”

"Unless it's my daughter out there, I think I'll stay right here thanks."

She releases the warrior from her care, receiving a short nod in gratitude. Abby walks across the room to her next patient, still completely ignoring Raven’s stare.

"In that case, you definitely want to come outside."

Abby spins quicker than she’s ever moved before, clutching to what she’s carrying with a death-grip. She studies Raven’s face in disbelief, trying to find a sign that the mechanic is messing with her.

There’s nothing of the sort, just a huge smile and honest eyes.

"You mean-"

"Yep. Come on!"

Raven limps over and tugs on her arm, only just managing to get Abby moving towards the exit. Her legs feel heavy and disconnected, her feet dragging slowly across the floor. Her mind is even more confused, trying to figure out what Raven really means, what she must be hiding.

"This isn't.. You're not just.."

Raven gives her a sympathetic look.

"Trust me Doc, see for yourself."

They step out of the building and Abby has to squint in the bright sunlight. Raven keeps dragging her forwards, her feet still not playing ball, her eyes eventually adjusting to see a large crowd of people gathered around a horse with no rider.

Raven drives on even more forcefully, slowly making their way closer to the horse through the horde. There are mumbled words around them, possibly a 'Wanheda' here and there, but Abby can barely concentrate on it.

It’s hard enough not falling with the speed Raven is pulling her at through the non-existent gaps
between people.
"Raven, can you slow-"

Her words catch in her throat when they finally reach the centre of the throng.

There, right in front of her, is an extremely filthy, clearly exhausted woman.

"Clarke..?"

Tears are already falling from her eyes as she takes a shaky step forwards. Soon her arms are wrapped around a swaying Clarke, her nose tucking into muddy blonde locks.

"I thought I'd lost you.. Again."

She eventually pulls back to look into tired blue eyes, the dirt smeared across her features only accentuating the terrible condition she's in. Even so, there's a hint of a smile on her lips.

"Hi Mom."

Abby barely controls the urge to crush Clarke in another hug, instead looking her up and down in disbelief. Eventually she turns her attention to the person holding her daughter upright.

"Octavia, what are you-"

A shake of the warrior's head cuts her sentence short.

"I'll explain somewhere more private. Let's get Clarke to the infirmary."

Octavia's expression is unrelenting and stern, forcing Abby out of her daze.

"Right, yes. Good idea."

Abby immediately springs into action and moves to Clarke's other side to wrap an arm around her waist. Together they start to guide Clarke's fragile form towards the infirmary, the blonde's legs taking barely any of her own weight.

The crowd around them reluctantly dissipates, shooed away by Raven's animated shouting and death glares from Octavia.

But there's only one thing running through Abby's head.

*Clarke's here. My daughter is alive.*

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**That Evening**

**Clarke**

The arrival at Lidu is a bit of a blur to Clarke having fallen asleep in the saddle on the journey. There are lots of people standing around her at some point, the noise from their calls almost deafening. She can't put any names to faces, her vision hazy and disorientating.

The only people she can properly identify are Octavia and her mother.
Abby gives her a thorough assessment of her wounds once they reach the infirmary, Clarke obeying her every word just to get it over with. It seems to take hours, her mom wanting to examine every single scar and bruise, checking for broken bones, anything she can think of that she can treat.

The heartbreak on Abby’s face when she uncovers each new scar is unbearable, the pity Clarke sees in her eyes making her want to run.

The worst is when she cleans the mud off her face, revealing the most visible of all her injuries.

A long scar running down her left cheek. There are actual tears in Abby’s eyes at that point. Clarke doesn’t miss the way her fingers linger on the mark.

She keeps her eyes closed after that, drifting in the space between consciousness and sleep, oblivious to the word around her.

By the end of it Clarke just wants to sleep, her eyes unable to focus on the other people nearby. Thankfully they give her some warmer clothes and leave her alone to rest, although she’s pretty sure her Mom stays as close to her bed as possible without disturbing her.

Unfortunately, nothing could stop the nightmares.

Clarke wakes up suddenly from her terrifying dreams, sweat pouring off her and breathing heavily. The room is dark, the only light a small torch in one corner. It takes a few seconds for her to remember where she is.

She automatically curls up into a ball, tears streaming from her eyes.

“It’s ok, Clarke. It was just a dream.”

Abby’s face is there in an instant, but somehow her words aren’t as soothing as Clarke would like them to be. Still, she manages to calm down a little, her breathing returning to normal even if her nerves remain on edge.

She hands Clarke a cup of water and she drinks greedily, the cool liquid soothing her parched throat.

“Thanks. Sorry.”

Clarke hands the cup back before she sinks back down onto the bed, rubbing her eyes with slightly shaking hands. She glances over at Abby, properly looking at her for the first time in months.

Her mother’s face has even more lines than she remembers, her clothes rumpled from having slept in the chair next to Clarke’s bed. She swears Abby’s never looked so.. old.

“You should go get some sleep, I’ll be fine.”

Abby just gives her a sceptical look.

“You're clearly not fine, and I’ll sleep better in this chair as long as I know you're here.”

Clarke doesn’t argue, instead laying back into the furs. Surprisingly sleep comes easily, despite the terrors that wait for her.

The next week goes by in a mix of nightmare-filled sleep, drowsiness and coughing fits. Abby rarely leaves her side, the only privacy she gets is when the older woman either falls asleep or has to help
other patients.

At some point she tries to get Clarke to take a sleeping-draught to help her rest, but it makes her so
groggy when she eventually wakes up that she soon persuades her mom that she doesn’t need it. She
can survive on less sleep if it means not feeling so out of it.

After a week of being confined to her bed in the infirmary, the coughing finally lets up, and Clarke
can instantly feel her strength returning. Abby still rarely lets her out of bed despite her improving
health, and even then Clarke is only allowed pace the inside of the infirmary.

She gets a few visitors during her stay, but only those Abby deems acceptable. Many of her
approved visitors are Skaikru, wishing her a quick recovery and chatting about nothing serious.
They’re a welcome distraction from her otherwise dreary days, but she can tell that there’s something
they’re not quite telling her, always avoiding certain topics of conversation.

Someone else stops by just after breakfast one day while her mother is treating another patient. His
voice breaks her out of her moody thoughts.

“Hi, Clarke.”

“Monty!”

Clarke leaps up from her bed and practically races across the room to envelop the man in a tight hug.

“It’s good to see you too, Clarke!”

Monty wheezes out his reply between her squeezing arms. She soon releases him and motions
towards her temporary home.

“How are you? I haven’t heard anything since Arkadia.”

They sit in the chairs next to her bed, actively avoiding the one her mother seems to have taken up
residence in.

“I’m ok, still getting used to this whole carrying my belongings in a bag thing, but it’s nice to have
everyone back together again! And oh my gosh I haven’t had my hands on tech in so long! I’ve been
working with Raven .”

“Woah woah slow down a sec. Everyone’s here? In Lidu?”

Monty barely takes a moment to breathe.

“Yeah! It’s so great! I’ve been catching up with Bell, he says you can kick his ass without even
trying!”

Clarke laughs a little, the sound almost foreign, but his enthusiasm is so infectious she can’t help it.

“Yeah, I’ll have to show you how when I’m actually allowed out of here!”

She makes her voice louder at the end, but receives no more than a low grunt from her mom across
the room. Monty grins in response.

“I look forward to it! The weapons, the food, pretty much everything here is so much better than it
was back at Arkadia.”

Clarke smiles, but a troubling thought suddenly crosses her mind to wipe it away again.
“Hey, how come Lexa’s people didn’t take you back there? Surely that would’ve been closer?”

Monty’s brow wrinkles in confusion.

“Has no-one told you?”

His voice is quiet and uncertain, a hint of fear in his eyes. It catches her off guard, the air completely changing between them.

“Told me what? What else did I miss?”

Clarke’s voice raises ever so slightly, and her mother is beside them in a second.

“Clarke honey, why don’t you lie down, I think your temperature might be-”

“Mom! What haven’t you told me?!”

Abby goes almost completely white, her body frozen other than her mouth opening and closing silently. Clarke continues to stare at her, completely ignoring Monty edging slowly towards the door.

Eventually sounds manage to creep their way out of her mother’s throat.

“There was an extra condition that came with the alliance with Lexa..”

Clarke tries to wait calmly for her mother to find the words, but her patience quickly runs out.

“So we’re not allowed back into Arkadia?”

Abby tries to avert her gaze, looking anywhere but Clarke’s penetrating eyes.

“We’re not allowed back, no.”

“So what the hell are we meant to do? Maybe if I can talk to Lexa -”

“Clarke.”

Abby’s eyes finally meet hers, but there’s a sadness and guilt there that Clarke hasn’t seen in a long time.

“Skaikru aren’t a clan anymore. There’s nothing you can do.”

A burning rage lights in the pit of Clarke’s stomach. It rises quickly until she feels like she’ll explode if she doesn’t move.

Clarke practically jumps out of the chair and storms out of the infirmary, Abby fumbling along behind her. She gets some strange looks from the people going about their day in peace, but she doesn’t care.

All she can think about is getting a sword and a horse.

Only a hand on her arm pulling her back brings her out of her murderous thoughts.

“Clarke, where are you going? You still need rest -”

Clarke throws off the hand and closes the distance between them, letting everything she’s feeling show. Abby even flinches slightly under her glare.
She keeps her voice low, somehow more threatening that shouting across the entire city.

“How could you let this happen? Were you so weak that you just let Lexa walk all over our people?”

She takes a step forward, forcing Abby to take a step back.

“We were desperate, there was no food and so many were injured in the war -”

“So you rolled over and let her do what she wanted.”

There are tears in Abby’s eyes, but Clarke can’t seem to bring herself to care.

“I’m going to fix your mess, Mom, but to do that, I need you to get out of my way.”

She’s about to walk away when a familiar body forces itself between them anyway, angry brown eyes glaring right back at Clarke.

“You were the one who got us into this war, Clarke Griffin. You were the one who started all of this. Your mom has tried her best to deal with the shit you got us into, so don’t you dare blame her now.”

Raven scowls at her for another second, then turns and embraces Abby slightly, practically dragging her away from Clarke. The blonde doesn’t see where they go, frozen to the spot by the truth of Raven’s words, completely knocking the wind out of her and making her breathless.

All of the death, all of the sacrifice.

They did it because of her.

For absolutely no reward.

She stands there for a long time, lost in her devastation and anger at herself. Despite the raging storm of emotions inside her, Clarke knows there’s only one thing she can do to fix this.

First, she needs a sword.

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**Two Months Later**

**Edge of Broadleaf/Plains Riders Territory**

**Lexa**

The war in Broadleaf was over surprisingly quickly, and a new leader Lexa approved of chosen within a week of their surrender. There were some teething problems as there always are, most notably the previous leader’s most trusted generals. They soon found out their place in the new coalition, dead or alive.

Now there’s finally peace between the clans again, Lexa can go home.

She misses the hustle and bustle of Polis, the smells and sounds wafting up to her room from the streets below.

Most of all, she misses her nightbloods. Titus has kept in touch of course, but it’s not the same as actually being able to teach them herself.
Other than the peacekeeping force left in Broadleaf, Lexa leads the rest of her army back to the plains and onwards to their homes. Many of them haven’t seen their families since the march on the plains, even more since Clarke first started this pointless war.

Before Lexa can return to Polis though, she has to visit Lidu to confirm the terms of the Plains Riders inclusion in the coalition. The talks should go well, nothing of note seems to have happened in her absence at least.

The only major issue could be Clarke.

A few of her generals have called for the blonde’s death in recent weeks, ‘to ensure she doesn’t do something like this again’. But their concerns are the least of her worries.

Lexa has no idea how angry Clarke is with her for the Skaikru’s abolition. If she’s learnt anything for their time together, it’s that Clarke’s rage is not something to be treated lightly.

When they’re barely a day from their destination, Lexa can’t ignore the nagging feeling of dread clawing at her insides. She holds herself together as she always does, but she can’t escape the thoughts that tell her she’s riding towards yet another battle with the sky woman.

When they do eventually reach Lidu, Lexa leaves her army a little ways out from the city under Indra’s command. She takes a few advisors with her into Lidu itself, including Ontari and the new ambassador from Broadleaf. If even the ambassadors can’t seem to get along, then she knows that there’s no chance of there being long-term peace between the two clans.

Their little procession is met by shouts of Heda and bowed heads, Lexa’s face masked by her usual warpaint. She’s worn it so often in recent months that it’s practically stained into her skin.

Lexa subtly scans the crowd around them as they proceed through the city. She recognises a few people, mostly talented warriors or particular Skaikru, but she doesn’t manage to spot any bright blonde hair.

In fact, Clarke doesn’t even make an appearance during or after the tedious meeting with the new Plains Riders leader. She returns to her tent at a leisurely pace, constantly watching the people around her, and she even gets to eat dinner in peace before anyone disturbs her.

“Heda, you have a visitor.”

“Enter.”

She turns to face the entrance as a blonde headed figure walks in, her face hard set, hand on her sword and blue eyes boring into her own.

“Good evening, Klark.”
Happy New Year! Hope everyone had a good holiday!

I’m really sorry to do this, but Ai Natblida is going on hiatus for the foreseeable future. I so didn’t want to do this, but life things are getting in the way of me being able to write without stressing about it. You may get the odd chapter or two when inspiration hits me, but I can’t guarantee when/if that will happen. Again, I’m really sorry about this, if there were any other way I would keep going :(  

In other news, I have a fluffy soulmate au in the works. Like here, it depends on life things whether or not I will upload soon, but keep an eye out!

Love to everyone, & I hope 2017 treats you well x

Lidu

Lexa

“Good evening, Klark.”

The blonde’s leathers are tight around rebuilding muscles, her strength seemingly returned to some degree compared to when they last saw each other. It shouldn’t be long until she’s completely recovered, physically anyway.

Lexa wouldn’t expect any less from Clarke.

“You didn't tell me about the abolition of Skaikru when you rescued me.”

Those icy blue eyes never waver. Anger rumbles just beneath the surface, under control but waiting for a release.

“No, I did not.”

Lexa holds Clarke’s gaze, wondering what she has planned for this conversation. She wouldn’t put it past her to put a knife against her neck. Somehow she wouldn't blame her.

There's a pause, and Lexa can practically see the cogs whirring in Clarke's head. She takes a step forward, the gap between them reducing to just over a sword’s length.

“What would we- What would I have to do for my people to become a clan again, to live on their own terms?”

Lexa tilts her head a little, as if the new angle could afford her some new insight into Clarke's motives.

She sees nothing beyond the blonde’s calm yet somewhat uneasy exterior.
“There is nothing you can do, Clarke, my decision has been made. I did this for the good of your people as well as mine. You should know as well as I that your people did not live by our laws. This was the only way I could find to integrate them into our culture.”

Frustration fills those blue eyes, a look Lexa is far too familiar with.

“You could have done it differently Lexa. You didn’t have to take away their homes and community just to make a point.”

Lexus steps forward, just invading the blonde’s space with her hands clasped loosely behind her.

“Maybe you should have thought of that before you started this war. I have to think about all of my people, each of the twelve clans, the nightbloods. You. Trust that I have everyone’s best interests at heart, not my own, and this was the best solution for everybody.”

Silence falls between them, their eyes locked in a battle of wills. Eventually Clarke’s head and shoulders sag, a sigh escaping from between her lips. Her voice is quieter than Lexa has ever heard it.

“What if you kill me, like you did the other clan leaders. I was the head of the resistance for all intents and purposes, surely that would be enough for my people to be allowed to return to Arkadia at least?”

There’s a hint of defeat in her words that takes Lexa completely by surprise, barely able to mask the shock at Clarke’s announcement. Sure she had considered the option, but in her opinion Clarke is better as a living ally than a dead martyr. If Lexa wanted her dead, she never would have considered Octavia’s plan to rescue her in the first place.

Pain is clearer than ever on Clarke’s face, her eyes shut tightly waiting for Lexa’s reply.

“You cannot fix this Clarke, not even with your death. You and your people made a mistake, one that has cost many lives. Now you will have to live with the consequences.”

Inquisitive blue eyes turn up to her again, searching for something she didn’t convey with her words.

“Yet you killed the other clans leaders. Why?”

Lexa is momentarily perplexed by the question, turning away and pretending to study a scroll on a nearby table to cover her reaction.

No-one ever asks her why she does what she does, they just follow orders. Barely anyone risks having their tongues cut out by talking back at her. It’s odd having someone who constantly questions her decisions, challenging her every motive.

Odd and frustrating.

“I have my reasons.”

She doesn’t dare look back at the blonde. Clarke knows her well enough that she might understand every single argument why she is still alive with that single look.

They stand quietly for a few minutes, both waiting for the other to break the silence. Clarke is the one to speak next, her words slow and calculated.

“So if you’re not going to kill me, I assume there must be something else you have in mind. It’s
unlikely you’ll allow Wanheda to run around your clans causing chaos again.”

Lexa turns to face her, a single blonde eyebrow raised at her.

“I do. I want you to pledge your allegiance to me, to my people, in front of all twelve of the ambassadors.”

Clarke actually scoffs, her left hand resting on the pommel of her sword.

“If you really think I’m going to do that after everything, then I’ve got a surprise for you.”

Lexa levels her gaze at Clarke, her expression not menacing but serious.

“Many of my people are angry, Clarke. They already demand your blood. I cannot protect you as long as you forgo joining me. If you do not, I cannot prevent those who seek revenge from propping your head on a stick in the centre of Polis for all to see. Including Jake.”

Clarke’s knuckles grow white at the mention of her son, her lips forming a tight line. Lexa can practically see the thoughts running through her head underneath her anger, things that she probably hadn’t considered in her quest for ‘what is right’.

“I leave for Polis in two days. You have until then to decide whether or not you wish to join me.”

Clarke opens her mouth to argue, but rapidly shuts it again. Instead, she storms out of the tent, leaving Lexa to breathe a sigh of relief.

At least that conversation is over with.

**Next Morning**

**Clarke**

Clarke wanders around Lidu in her usual morning routine, but she barely pays attention to what she’s doing. Her body acts out of habit, taking her usual running route around the city without having to think about it.

The fresh air helps to calm her racing mind, completely taken up by thoughts from her conversation with Lexa. Where she could go, possible ways she can still help her people. Potential plans how to see Jake without doing what Lexa wants.

There’s only one thing Clarke knows for sure.

She can’t stay in Lidu.

The people had originally welcomed her back with open arms, surprised and impressed that she had survived so long in Broadleaf’s custody.

Their enthusiasm soon dwindled though, and rumours spread that she’d hidden throughout the bloody war, that she’d been a coward and avoided the conflict. Others blame her for the loss of their loved ones, claiming that she should have protected them with her ‘Wanheda powers’.

Not many really believe the lies, but that doesn’t seem to have stopped the constant wary looks or the occasional jeer in her direction. Clarke has long since learnt to ignore them. She has concentrated
She couldn’t be weak in front of her. Not like before.

Then again, things never do quite go to plan around the brunette.

She shakes some sense into herself, figures out where she is and heads towards the infirmary. Clarke may be back in Lidu, but Abby still spends a ridiculous amount of time in the place, even for a healer.

Clarke pokes her head in the door when she arrives, searching for her mother in the dim. Abby sees her first.

“Clarke! Are you ok? Are you hurt?”

She rushes over and is already examining Clarke before she has a chance to say anything.

“Mom! I’m fine, I just need to talk to you about something.”

Abby raises a sceptical eyebrow then nods, keeping her intrigued eyes pinned on Clarke. She leads them outside and they walk a little ways through the city, no destination in mind.

“What did you want to talk about Clarke? If it was good news you’d have told me already.”

Clarke glances across at the concern on Abby’s face, then returns her gaze to the world around them. She lets the silence hang between them for another minute before replying.

“I’m going to go back to Polis with Lexa’s army. If there’s any chance I can see Jake again, I have to take it.”

She tries to avoid the disappointment in Abby’s expression, but even from the corner of her eye she can see the older woman’s shoulders drop slightly. Her voice is quiet, sad even.

“When do you leave?”

Clarke stops in her tracks. Abby continues for a few steps before realising and turning to face her.

“Tomorrow.”

Tears immediately start to well up in her eyes, her bottom lip shaking from the effort of trying to hold them back.

“I- I only just got you back.”

The defeat in her voice almost brings Clarke to tears as well. Instead she offers a reassuring smile and a steady hand on her arm.

“You know, you could come with me. To Polis. You’re a great healer, I’m sure there’d be a spot for you there.”

Abby’s brow furrows in thought, her eyes staring off into the distance somewhere near Clarke’s feet. She stands still for a while and Clarke gives her the time to process. Eventually weary eyes come back to meet her own.

“I can’t, Clarke.”
She tries to hide her disappointment, failing miserably. Clarke’s head drops a little, the hand on her mother’s arm tightening slightly.

“Most of our people are still here. I can’t leave them behind, and I doubt Lexa would appreciate a hundred ex-Skaikru turning up on her doorstep when they inevitably get kicked out of Lidu. They still need someone to lead them and help them adapt to our new lives.”

Clarke nods, not trusting her mouth to form words correctly. She didn’t really think her mom would come, but she couldn’t help that tiny bit of hope growing over the past few hours.

She hugs her tightly, her chin resting on Abby’s shoulder.

“I’m sorry I can’t stay.”

Abby’s arms wrap tighter around her, holding her close for as long as possible.

“I know Clarke, I know.”

Raven

Raven and Monty are often found in the workshop these days, barely anyone interrupting their lengthy discussions. They’re arguing over some minor detail when a certain Trikru warrior walks through the door.

“Raven?”

She immediately swings her head up to face the familiar voice.

“Ash!”

Raven practically throws down the components in her hands to dash across the room, enveloping the woman in a tight hug before she has a chance to protest. There may a tickle in her eyes, not that she’d ever admit it.

“I’ll just er- go find Bell.. yeah..”

Monty inches his way around them and disappears outside. The pair barely notice.

They hold onto each other for another few minutes, until Raven pulls back to punch Ash in the shoulder.

“Coulda told me you were alive before now!”

The warrior rolls her eyes and pulls Raven closer to press their lips together. The kiss soon warms Raven’s belly, the heat between them as alive as it always was. She drags her fingers across Ash’s back, a delightful shiver running through the other woman.

Ash ends the kiss far too soon for Raven’s liking, and she tries desperately to pull the taller woman’s lips back down to hers. The warrior simply chuckles at her efforts, placing a tiny kiss on the end of her nose instead. Raven pouts and narrows her eyes, only managing to bring a small smile to Ash’s lips.

“As much as I want to kiss you for hours on end, I’m actually here on orders. From Heda.”
Raven pushes her away, leveling a serious glare towards her.

“What the hell does that bitch want from me?”

Ash’s expression completely changes at her words, suddenly serious and slightly angry. Raven knows she’s trying her hardest not to reprimand her for the blasphemy, her fists clenching at her sides. She takes a few calming breaths before replying.

“She wants you to go to Polis with her.”

Raven’s eyebrows raise as high as they can go.

“Me? In Polis? Lexa probably wants to keep an eye on me, eh? Worried I’m going to blow up more of her precious coalition?”

Ash just sighs at her rant, running a hand over her braids.

“Raven.”

Brown eyes lock onto Raven’s, unguarded and honest. Her anger burns away almost as quickly as it came, wanting nothing more than to be embraced by those muscular arms once more. At least Ash is somewhat accustomed to her explosive emotions.

“I don’t know why Heda wants you in Polis, but she wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t important. One positive to consider is that Polis is a lot closer to Ton DC than here. Who knows, I might even move to Polis myself if persuaded by a certain someone.”

Ash pairs the statement with a hint of a smile and a wink, and Raven can’t help but step into her personal space again. If she really has no choice in the matter, the least she can do is make her life as pleasant as possible.

Raven looks up into those gorgeous eyes, putting on her best pleading face and holding onto the warrior’s hips with both hands.

“Ash, my strong, talented warrior, would you please come to Polis with me so I’m not tempted to blow it up?”

She flutters her eyelashes and Ash chuckles, lowering her face towards Raven’s.

“Well, I guess I have no choice then.”

Ash presses her soft lips into Raven’s once more, and suddenly she can’t remember why she was ever angry.

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