Summary

Lexa is a semi-professional MMA fighter and works at a gym with her friend Lincoln as personal trainer. She lives with her former foster sister Anya who is as teasing and as annoying as any normal older sister.

Clarke has just started her third year pre-med and is busy with her studies. Her roommates and friends Octavia and Raven try to get her to have a little more fun every now and then.

OR

Octavia's budding romance with her TA Lincoln turns out to lead to the joining of two worlds.
Sweat is dripping down her forehead but she doesn’t wipe it away. All her attention is focused on the girl in front of her. Or more precisely, her eyes.

They’re a grey sort of blue and she rarely blinks. Lexa knows she’s trying to unnerve her with her intense stare. She applauds the girl’s confidence, not many keep as much eye contact during a fight. Usually their eyes jump all over the place. From Lexa’s eyes to her shoulders to her gloves and back. Always moving. Always trying to stay ahead of Lexa’s next move. It’s never worked for them so far. One girl even kept glancing down to Lexa’s feet. That one she knocked out in under a minute.

But this one, this one holdsLexa’s eye contact and it makes for an interesting fight. She seems to read Lexa better for it and when Lexa fakes a right she blocks the following left without hesitation.

“Come on, Lex! Knock her on her ass!” she hears a distinct voice cheering from the small crowd around the ring.

The girl takes that moment to fling a low jab towards Lexa’s stomach and Lexa has to jump back to avoid the black boxing glove. The girl follows and Lexa throws up her fists to block the sharp blows towards her face that come in rapid succession not a moment later. One, two, three, four, five.

They’re hard blows and Lexa has to use all her upper body strength to stay in place as the hits rain onto her gloved hands and exposed upper arms.

The second the blows ease up Lexa steps forward and catches her opponent by surprise. A carefully placed hook to the girl’s jaw knocks her backwards and she stumbles against the ring’s ropes.

It’s in that second that Lexa knows she’s won. And so does the crowd.

When the fight is over and the referee let’s go of her wrist Lexa lowers her arm and looks at the other fighter to nod at her respectfully, but when she sees her grinning it takes Lexa by surprise. “Good fight.” The girl says conversationally while she starts unwrapping her gloves as the tall man walks off. They’ve both taken out their mouth pieces already and stowed them away in their boxing shorts pockets.

Lexa nods once. “It was.” She confirms. “You almost went the distance.”

Out of the corner of her eye Lexa can see the small crowd dispersing slowly, some people walking off towards the exit while others stay and linger. Maybe they want to talk to Lexa or the other fighter, or maybe they are waiting to ask the trainers and coaches something.

The brunette lets out a laugh. “Yeah, well I wasn’t expecting that last uppercut.” She admits lightly. “I have to admit I pegged you for more of an out-fighter before that last round.”

Lexa only hums. She doesn’t really know what to say. She’s been trained to be as unpredictable as
possible and that means not committing to only one style of fighting. Sure, Lexa’s fights always have thought behind them and she does feel more comfortable with certain styles than with others, but all in all she tries to embody parts of all of them. The less consistent you are, the less likely it is that your opponent can predict your next move. Of course Lexa isn’t obnoxious enough to think a skilled observer couldn’t tell which combinations and forms of attacks come more naturally to her, but she hopes – and the past few months of fighting have so far seemingly confirmed that hope – that she isn’t as easily found out as some others. Even though boxing and mixed martial arts aren’t exactly the same you can still tell a fighter’s general style, no matter what ring they are in, and Lexa is sure that she isn’t the only fighter whose coach takes them to their potential opponents’ training matches to gauge their overall tendency to lean towards one fighting style or another. She doesn’t think she has seen this girl at one of her other practice fights before though, and although Lexa never really pays much attention to the crowd during a fight she still registers her surroundings carefully enough to have noticed her. Maybe her coach has seen Lexa fight at some point or maybe she was at one of her MMA fights. The crowds there are huge and the rooms are dark and Lexa couldn’t possibly take notice of everyone in attendance.

The girl smiles at her for another moment before stretching out her right hand. “Well, it was a pleasure being knocked out by you, Commander.” Sparkling eyes seem to ask something Lexa doesn’t quite feel like answering.

Lexa raises her left eyebrow at the hand. She’s still wearing her gloves.

When the girl notices she laughs again. “Oops.” She lightly taps Lexa’s gloved hand with her own fist before Lexa can even lift it. “See you around, Woods.”

The girl gives Lexa one last lingering smile, but when Lexa only bows her head in a slow nod, she turns around and heads off to her corner where two men and a woman are already waiting for her.

Lexa turns around as well and walks toward her own, lifting her right wrist to her mouth to pry the Velcro open with her teeth.

“Finally!” She hears.

Anya is hopping up onto the outside of the ring and pulls up the middle rope for Lexa to climb through.

“I thought you were never going to be done flirting.” She teases as Lexa ducks through and comes to stand next to her.

“I wasn’t flirting.” Lexa gives back with a little roll of her eyes. “We were being polite.”

“Sure.” Anya draws out and Lexa sighs internally. She’d hear about this for the next week at least.

The two lower themselves from the little platform and approach a black woman who is waiting for them at the bottom of the ring steps just to their left. “Nicely done.” She addresses the fighter and Lexa gives a small smile at the praise. “But next time don’t let her eyes distract you, you should have had her in four rounds, not seven.” Her coach adds, ignoring Anya’s snort.

“I wasn’t-"

“Get changed. I’ll see you in my office in ten for debriefing.” Indra interrupts before Lexa can defend herself.

Lexa clenches her jaw but doesn’t object. “Yes, coach.” She replies with a single nod, which Indra mirrors before turning away and walking towards the front entrance of the Boxing Room where most
of the crowd is filing out of the double doors. Some people come up to her and she exchanges a few words with them on her way out.

“Come on.” Anya swings her arm over Lexa’s shoulder, still grinning. She starts leading Lexa in the other direction. They make their way towards the back where a small red door leads to a narrow hall. The staff locker rooms are located across from the two main boxing rooms and a little ways down that hall. Lexa smiles politely at the few people who congratulate her and pat her on the back. She knows most of them from around. They’re trainers from other gyms in and around Portland and she even recognizes two or three of her MMA regulars. Or ‘fans’ as Anya likes to call them.

She only started fighting semi-professionally a few months ago but she’s already caught the attention of trainers and MMA enthusiasts alike. She doesn’t mind them for the most part. She’s doing it for the fights, not the fame.

It still baffles her when people come all the way from another city just to watch her though. Especially when it isn’t even an official fight. This was a boxing match her trainer Indra had set up so she could practice and stay quick on her feet before her next MMA fight in Tacoma two weeks from now. She isn’t even sure how anybody would know about it and still she drew a small crowd to the Holladay Park Gym.

Lexa is glad that nobody seems to expect her to stay and chat tonight and instead let her pass without trying to hold her up.

When they reach the other end of the room and slip into the hall beyond the sounds from the remaining people are abruptly cancelled out as the heavy red door swings shut behind them. The air is fresher here and feels cool against Lexa’s sweat coated skin. They walk quietly down the hallway, their steps echoing loudly now in the silence, and once they’ve reached the locker room Lexa feels herself relax. With another door between herself and the steady noise of people talking and shuffling about most of the tension the fights always bring with them slips away. She walks over to the bench in front of her locker and sits down as she starts pulling off her sweat-drenched red hand wraps. It’s always been a soothing routine for her. Open the Velcro, fold it once over, then start rolling up the wrap. Around and around and around her own wrist she follows its path until it’s all rolled up in a neat little reel.

“I didn’t think you were coming.” Lexa says, looking over at Anya as she starts the same procedure with her other hand. The other woman is leaning against the door, one foot propped up against it. It isn’t an accusation, just an observation. Anya has come to most of Lexa’s fights, but she’s been really wrapped up in work lately, so her presence tonight surprised Lexa.

“Didn’t have anything better to do.” Anya simply shrugs. “Thought I might as well watch my little sis’ beat someone up for a change.” Her grin is lazy and Lexa knows her well enough to know she’s trying to hide how tired she is.

“You weren’t in your room when I went for my jog this morning. How long did it go last night?” Lexa asks, getting up to get her duffle bag out of the faded green locker.

“Threw the last ones out around six. Thought the one girl would throw up on Jerry when he helped her and her friend up the stairs.”

“Did she?” Lexa asks, putting her gloves, mouth piece and wraps in her bag and zipping it up. She reaches into her locker again and gets out her forest green, too-big-for-her hoodie and pulls it over her head. The hem of it pools over her hip bones before she tugs it down until the baggie piece of clothing hangs loosely around her, reaching almost down to her knees.
She’s had this hoodie for over six years. She doesn’t remember where she got it from exactly. In her last group home one boy or another probably left it lying around and Lexa must have simply been cold at some point and taken it.

It’s a weird thing, being in foster care, you develop a very ambiguous sort of relationship to your things. Especially if you’re one of the unlucky ones who gets moved around quite a lot during the span of your young life.

On the one hand you have just a couple of things that are really important to you. Those things are yours, and only yours. If anyone tries to take them from you, you will fight for them. For Anya it was her collection of lighters and her leather jacket. For Lexa it was the small penguin beanie baby, which was the only thing of hers aside from some clothes she had had with her when they took her from her mother when she was five years old, and the bike Anya got her when she was fifteen. Anya had paid for it all on her own with the money she had worked for so hard as soon as she got out of the foster system at seventeen. If anyone even tried to ride it Lexa would make sure they never even thought about doing that again. Yes, some things you get extremely protective over.

But then on the other hand you aren’t as attached to most material things as some other people. Especially if it’s a group home you’re living in and not a foster family. Group homes can be a lot like shelters sometimes. Lots of different kids of different ages and backgrounds and with lots of different personal shit to deal with come and go and most of the time it’s basically just pure unrestrained chaos more than anything else. So you get used to things getting lost or stolen or broken every now and then and really, after a while you either allow it to drive you insane or you learn to see it as less of a loss and more of an exchange. Unless they’re special to you somehow clothes and things are just that after all. And at least to Lexa it was mostly all the same. Because at the end of the day for every shirt that goes missing you find a sweater. There was always someone who would leave their things lying around just as carelessly as you and just like that you were even again.

And so this hoodie must have made its way into Lexa’s possession at some point and now it was one of her favorite pieces of clothing. It was big and warm and practical to just throw on over your training bra after a work-out or a fight like now.

Lexa pushes her left hand into the front pocket as Anya shakes her head.

“Nah. I’m really glad I wasn’t her cap driver that night though.”

Lexa hums and slings her bag over her shoulder. “So, did you get any sleep at all?”

“Yeah, I caught a couple of ‘Z’s before going to pick up Gramps at one.”

One of Anya’s first jobs out of the foster system was being a dog walker amongst other things and even though she’s been working at The Grounders Nightclub for over six years now she still walks one of her old regulars at least once a week. Gramps’ real name is actually Theodore but Lexa took one look at the salt and pepper speckled Australian Cattle Dog and named him Gramps instead. He’s never been called anything else by the two women since then.

“That’s not much.” Lexa frowns as she walks past Anya who’s pushing open the heavy door for them. “Being the manager means you can actually take a night off every once in a while, you know.”

“Lexa, don’t. I’m not having this argument again.” Anya’s retort comes almost automatically. Lexa has been dropping hints that Anya should lighten her work load for the past couple of weeks now, but Anya doesn’t seem to agree. They walk through the now almost empty Boxing Room and take a right towards the front of the Gym.
“I’m just saying, An! You spend so much time at that club that I’m starting to think you have a crush on Jerry.” Lexa teases with a lop-sided grin as the women walk towards Indra’s office at the end of the hall past the other training rooms and the reception desk.

Anya snorts. “Ha ha. Funny.” She punches Lexa’s arm amicably and Lexa chuckles as she sways slightly.

“Be right out.” Lexa says as they arrive in front of Indra’s door. “Here.” She drops her back unceremoniously over Anya’s shoulder, who huffs dramatically.

She only knocks on the door out of habit while she’s already opening it.

Indra is sitting behind her desk facing the door. She’s on the phone and merely nods to Lexa to take a seat, so Lexa quietly slides into the armed wooden chair opposite the older woman.

She lets her eyes wander through the small room while Indra continues her call.

Even though Lexa has only been working and training at Indra’s gym since she came back to Portland almost a year ago she feels like she’s been here a lifetime. She knows all the titles of the books on Indra’s dark shelf behind her desk and doesn’t need to turn her head to know exactly which photographs, framed newspaper articles and awards decorate the wall to her left and on both sides of the door.

Of course some of that can be accounted to her almost impeccable observation skills, but it’s not just that she knows what this place looks like as well as the back of her hand. It’s the feeling she gets when she walks through the doors in the mornings and the calm she feels when she sorts away the training sheets and course plans in the evenings. It feels like something she once thought she would never feel. It feels like home.

“Alright, I will. – You too, First Sergeant.”

Lexa turns her attention to Indra who is now placing the phone back in its station on the desk.

“Was that Gustus?” she inquires curious.

She hasn’t talked to her old instructor in weeks. Usually he calls to check up on her every ten days or so, but lately the periods between his calls have been growing longer.

“Yes. He says to tell you that he apologizes for not replying to your last calls. Apparently the new recruits are even more stubborn than you were.” Indra pushes the reading glasses she was holding in her left hand during the phone call back up on her nose and then proceeds to eye Lexa over the rim of them, folding her hands in front of her chin.

Lexa smirks.

She remembers the first week of her basic combat training or Boot Camp as they called it at Fort Benning.

All her life Lexa had despised being in the foster system. The relentless string of bad homes and shitty people had made her desperate to finally be out of there. Out of the system, so she could be the one controlling her own life for a change. And yet, something drew her to the army, where you arguably have the least control over your own life one can have under normal circumstances.

So when she found out there was a possibility to leave the foster system early through emancipation and join the army as early as seventeen she jumped at the opportunity and did everything in her
power to leave at the soonest time possible.

But although Lexa was for all intents and purposes a model recruit once you saw past her not always exactly law-abiding background she still gave her instructor Gustus more than his fair share of grey hairs as he liked to put it.

Especially her tendency to question the more traditional rules and customs in the military got her into trouble more than she would like to admit.

But it had all worked out in the end and after initially butting heads a lot, Gustus and Lexa found themselves growing fond of each other rather quickly.

In Gustus Lexa had finally found a steady figure in her life to which she could look up to. He was strict and hard on every one of them, but Lexa found his booming voice more calming than frightening and before too long she trusted him more than she had ever trusted a person of authority in her entire life.

Over the years she spent in Georgia at the military base Gustus became somewhat of a mentor to her and when Lexa came to him with a problem or question, he always took as much time for her as he felt she needed to figure out what she should do.

When her infantry training at the base came to an end earlier than expected after only three years and nine months, Lexa confided in him that she was unsure of where to go next. She knew she wanted to return to Portland, if only to spend some time with her foster sister Anya, but she didn’t know if she wanted to stay in the city that knew her so well, that knew her darkest moments and her ugliest mistakes.

Even though he didn’t know much about Lexa’s past, except what was in her file, Gustus knew her well and intuitively understood Lexa’s uncertainty. He offered to talk with an old friend of his about getting her a small job so she could take some time to think about what she wanted to do next.

Lexa agreed and Gustus made a call to Indra, an old army buddy of his, who offered to give Lexa work at her gym at the edge of the Holladay Park.

Back in Portland Lexa moved into Anya’s run-down apartment just east of Interstate 205 and started working at the gym five times a week.

She doesn’t know when exactly her uncertainty about staying faded away. Maybe it was when Indra told her in an off-hand comment that she had decided to promote Lexa to be a personal trainer only a little over a month after she had started working for her. Maybe it was when she entered her first amateur boxing fight and won within two rounds. Maybe it was when Anya decided it was time for them to get a new apartment with two bedrooms and a bigger kitchen or maybe her doubts quieted even as soon as her first day at the gym when she met Lincoln, who first showed her the ropes of her new job but soon became not only a frequent work-out buddy and co-worker, but a friend as well.

All she knows is that somewhere along the road she just didn’t feel like running anymore and judging by Gustus’ warm smile when she told him she would be staying in Portland over Skype she knew that he had been hoping for just that all along.

Even though Gustus and Lexa couldn’t see each other in person a lot since Gustus was still stationed at Fort Benning for the foreseeable future, they never lost contact and she was looking forward to seeing him again in the winter and showing him their new apartment between Boise and Humboldt which were both really nice neighborhoods and pretty central as well.
“He also told me to remind you that a good soldier never lets her guard down in a fight.” Indra continues, her expression unchanged.

“I’m sure he did.” Lexa hums, not convinced. “And anyway, I didn’t.” Lexa protests indignantly. “I won the fight, didn’t I?”

Indra frowns at her and lowers her joined hands onto the desk. “Round seven? We both know you could have had her in less hadn’t you been too busy staring into her eyes.”

Incredulous, Lexa stays quiet. Indra has never implied that Lexa acted unprofessional before. Not training hard enough, too stubborn about her technique or even too stiff, yes. But unprofessional?

“Well?” Indra inquires, raising her eyebrows. “Is there something you want to say to me?”

Now Lexa feels a familiar burning sensation in her stomach. It’s small compared to the fire that has often raged inside her before, but it unsettles her nonetheless. She hasn’t felt this unjustly treated and angry in months.

“I was staring her down.” She almost growls. “I did exactly what you taught me to do.” She feels the arms of the chair digging into her palms as she grips them tightly and makes a conscious effort to relax her hands.

“No, she did exactly what I taught you to do. She got under your skin. She should never have gotten close enough to fling those flurries to your side in the fifth round and then again to your head in the last. You got careless. Care to explain why?” Indra leans back in her chair and removes her glasses without relinquishing her intense stare.

“I-“ Lexa isn’t sure what Indra wants her to say. She won the fight! Isn’t that enough?

But of course it isn’t. If it were, Lexa wouldn’t be Lexa and Indra would never have offered to train her in the first place. As quickly as her anger can rise, it takes her more time to stomp out the flames, but she can see now that this is another lesson and probably one she should be paying more attention to. She sits up a little straighter in the chair.

“I wasn’t expecting her to read me so well.” She states quietly, trying to find the mistake she’s apparently missing, and it takes all her will power not to clench her jaw or avert her eyes when Indra doesn’t reply right away.

After another moment the older woman slowly leans forward until her elbows rest on the table once more, her expression still stony and unreadable.

“And what does that mean for you?” She points her glasses at Lexa.

Lexa thinks for a minute. “Not to be… so arrogant?” she tries and that gets a small smile out of her coach.

“What else?”

“I don’t know. That I need to work on my poker face?” she sighs. She’s starting to feel the day’s work and her fight in her muscles. There’s a straining ache in her lower back and really, she just wants Indra to tell her how she can improve herself, get home and take a shower.

“That too.” Indra gives an agreeing nod, before placing her reading glasses on the pile of paperwork to her left and slowly standing up. Lexa watches as the older woman walks around the organized desk. She turns and scoots her chair back a little to face her coach when she stops to her right. Indra
looks down at her. The woman pauses another moment before finally adding in a quiet but firm voice, “It also means that you must always expect your enemy to learn your tactics and use them against you. She knew your strength lay in your quick assertion of your opponent and that you would be most dangerous as you think ahead and read her movements. She used that against you by establishing a routine of combinations and body language in the first rounds and then breaking it once you had gotten used to it.”

Lexa is silent as she thinks back to the match. Now that she knows what she is looking for she can’t help but notice the reoccurring combinations of blows the other fighter had repeated over the first rounds. “Huh.”

She can’t help but feel a little disappointed in herself for not picking up on the other fighter’s tactic on her own. Observation was a skill Lexa greatly prided herself on and it doesn’t sit well with her that she is apparently not as accomplished in that aspect as she thought she was.

Indra hums. “So you see now.”

“Yes.” Lexa nods slowly, still working over what she just learned in her head. “That was a smart move.” She admits. Although she does so begrudgingly she is also impressed. Looking back up at the other woman she sees Indra nod.

“It was. Which is why you should have used it against her instead.” She presses, raising her eyebrows and inclining her head slightly to the side to stress her point.

Lexa takes a deep breath and stands up from the chair, facing Indra. “I’ll work on it.”

“Good.” Indra now smiles again and reaches out her right forearm. They embrace each other’s lower arms as they always do in a gesture of respect and Indra gives Lexa’s shoulder a short squeeze with her other hand. “You fought well nonetheless, Lexa.”

“Thank you.” Lexa acknowledges the compliment in a quiet voice and smiles back, before Indra dismisses her and walks back around her desk.

Lexa carefully pushes the chair she sat in back in its place closer to the desk and then exits her coach’s office. In passing she looks up at the framed picture of Indra and Gustus that hangs just over the light switch to her left. She makes a mental note to try calling him again soon.

“What is it with making me wait today?” Anya asks as Lexa closes the door behind her and walks towards the older girl who is sitting against the wall of the hallway.

“Sorry. I’m done now.” Lexa apologizes as she heaves Anya up with one hand while taking her bag from her with the other.

“So what’s the verdict?”

They take off through the now sparely lit hallway. It’s already past nine on a Saturday which means that the gym is officially closed and Lexa and Anya are probably the last to leave except for Indra and maybe Carl the janitor.

“She was on me for letting that girl read me so well.” Lexa tells Anya, pulling her hood over her tied back hair as they step into the early October night.

“Yeah, that was kind of impressive actually.” Anya agrees with Indra’s chiding. She fumbles in the front chest pocket of her black leather jacket until she produces her jingling car keys. “It was almost like she channeled you and beat you at your own game.” She laughs, stopping in front of her old
Pick-up Truck while Lexa goes around the front to the passenger side. She waits for Anya to unlock it before climbing up into it and shoving her bag down towards the front of the foot compartment as she shuts the door.

“First of all,” she starts, while buckling in. “I didn’t get beat, I won.” Lexa reminds Anya, lifting a finger and raising her eyebrows. Anya chuckles as she slams her own door shut and starts the engine.

“And second of all,” she continues and opens up the glove compartment where they always keep snacks just in case. “No one channels me, okay?”

She retrieves a sad looking Snickers bar that must have melted at one point and then leans back in her seat, closing her eyes as her lips envelop the chocolate.

She’s always starving after a fight and she hopes that there is still some left-over lasagna from the day before stored away in the oven at their apartment.

The car starts moving and Lexa feels herself relax.

Ever since the very first time Anya picked her up in the old truck Lexa has felt indescribably comforted by the low chuckling of the engine and the feel of the partly torn leather seat beneath her. Back then, when Lexa was still in the foster system and struggling with losing Anya as her comrade in arms so to speak after the older girl had gotten out of the crappy foster house they had been living in together for what felt like forever, Lexa was angry at Anya for leaving her behind. But whenever the other girl drove up to take her away for a few hours, Lexa’s heart felt just a little lighter and the minute she couldn’t see the broken wind-chime dangling off the front porch light in the rear view mirror anymore the world always regained some of its color. It was them against the rest once more whenever they drove in this truck and just as it was back then, the worn down Pick Up is still only theirs in Lexa’s eyes.

“Whatever you say, Commander.” Anya gives back, sarcastically addressing Lexa by the title the MMA community has unofficially awarded her. Lexa doesn’t dignify her with a response and just hums lowly while chewing on the bar. As Anya steers the car towards home she blindly reaches for the radio.

She leaves it at a station announcing the end of their Beatles day and stretches her feet out as best as she can over her duffle bag while the first notes of Penny Lane fill up the car.

The gentle swaying of the car and soft notes of the song slowly lull Lexa into a light slumber. Her breathing slows to deep long breaths that relax her even further, her body melting into the comfortable car seat. Her head is turned to her right and every now and then she opens her eyes and sees the trees, houses and street lights race past her window, but her lids grow heavier by the second.

“Hey, don’t fall asleep!” something punches her left outer thigh.
Lexa swats at Anya’s hand and grumbles. “Quit it!”

“We’re meeting Linc for a beer at the Happy Horse later, remember?”
Lexa groans and stifles a yawn. “Crap.” She forgot about that.

“Wow, so enthusiastic.”

“I’m just really tired. And I need a shower. And food.” Lexa still doesn’t open her eyes and instead concentrates on the familiar turns the car takes. They will be home in three minutes she knows.

“You can take a quick shower, make it a cold one so you wake up a little, but we’ll eat at the pub.
We’re already late since missy had to go to the principal’s office.” Anya chides playfully.

Lexa looks over at Anya and glares. “Fine.”

“Fine.” Anya quips with the hint of a smirk as the car harshly rolls onto the sidewalk where they always park and Lexa is bumped in her seat uncomfortably, making her huff.

“You did that on purpose.” She grumbles as she unbuckles.

“Prove it.” Anya gives back unapologetically, still grinning as she hops out of the Pick Up and starts toying with her keys on her way to the front door of their building.

Lexa takes a deep breath and half rolls her eyes up at the truck’s ceiling, before she swings herself out of her seat, grabbing her bag as her feet hit the pavement, and follows as well.

It has started raining.

“Clarke, come on! We’re going to be late.”

“Alright, alright, I’m coming!”

Clarke hurries out of the bathroom, grabs her jacket and purse from the coat hanger beside the door and only just remembers to take her keys from the bowl before Raven pushes her out of their apartment. “Move it! Chop, chop!”

She clumsily tries to wrestle into her jacket as the two girls rush down the flights of stairs of their apartment building, since the elevator isn’t working – again – and make their way to the bus station.

They catch it just in time and Clarke sighs as they sink into the blue cushions. Raven rubs her left leg as the bus vibrates and then takes off towards its next destination.

“Sorry.” Clarke apologizes, eyeing Raven’s leg. If she hadn’t forgotten the time, they wouldn’t have had to jog down those stairs. Clarke knows that Raven’s leg has been bothering her again lately even though the brunette hasn’t complained about it.

“It’s fine. Just put the brace on too tight.” Raven waves off, turning towards Clarke a little to retrieve her phone from the back pocket of her maroon colored pants.

Clarke looks down at the old watch adorning her wrist. Its moss green nylon strap is a little worn down and the color has paled a bit but apart from that it looks almost new. It reads already twelve minutes past nine. They told Octavia they would meet her at a quarter past in front of the theater. I guess she’ll have to wait a little, Clarke thinks as the bus comes to a halt at the next traffic light.

The ride downtown is quiet and Clarke has to yawn more than once. Raven is playing some room escape game on her phone and Clarke hears her grunt and mumble some profanities under her breath as she gets stuck. Clarke leans against her and loops her arm through Raven’s, resting her head on the other girl’s shoulder. She watches Raven try different ideas and gives some suggestions here and there what Raven could do next to get the door to open and move on to the next level. At the next stop she glances up at the screen at the front of the bus that shows the following three stops. They’ll have to get off in two. When Raven breathes out a hissed ‘yes’ Clarke returns her attention to the
Today has been one of those days. It started out with her not hearing her alarm clock in the morning and therefore waking up an hour later than she had wanted to. It’s not like she needed to be anywhere, it being a Saturday and all, but her sleeping schedule is still not what she wants it to be and she really needs to fix it if she’s going to pick it up a notch this semester. So after a sloppy start into the day she couldn’t shake the feeling that she had to make up for it by studying harder to get ahead in her classes. Concentrating on Neuroanatomy is however not as easily done when your roommates are playing a very loud game of Mario Cart in the next room. After two hours of making herself stare at the pages of her Biology book without retaining any of the content Clarke eventually gave up on trying to cram more information about synapses and neurotransmitters into her brain and joined Raven in the kitchen to prepare an early dinner, while Octavia left to meet her brother at their mother’s house to help her clean out the garden shed. Even though she managed to sit herself down at her desk for at least part of the day Clarke still feels like she isn’t doing enough. She always knew being pre-med would be no walk in the park, but soon into her first year she learned that studying wasn’t the hardest part about it. It was the constant stress of comparing yourself with the others and fearing to fall behind in the constant underlying competition to shine. Now she’s just started her third year and already she feels like her classmates are racing past her, scoring internships and completing volunteer programs and just generally seeming to have their lives together. Clarke still kicks herself internally that she didn’t sign up for a volunteer program over the summer herself. She had enough time. Why didn’t she just help build houses or put on a candy striper outfit instead of spending time at the beach in Astoria with Raven and Octavia at Raven’s grandparents’ place and doing practically nothing while visiting her mother in Seattle?

“Hey.” Clarke’s head gets bumped up as Raven shrugs the shoulder she’s been leaning against.

“That’s our stop.”

Clarke quickly slides out of her seat and the two jump off the bus just in time before the double doors snap shut behind them.

“Finally!” Octavia exclaims in lieu of a greeting.

The smaller girl walks towards them as they approach the theater right next to the bus stop. Clarke feels some odd rain drops hit her face as it starts to drizzle.

“We’re not that late.” Raven defends as the three quickly embrace each other before fast walking towards the brightly lit entrance.

“Bell and Murphy are already inside.” Octavia informs them, ignoring Raven. They walk down some steps to the small atrium of the theater. The place is quite crowded, as can be expected on a Saturday night, and Clarke holds on to Octavia’s elbow as she leads them through the horde of people standing in line to buy tickets or milling about in groups of varying sizes, munching on their popcorn and waiting for their movie to start. Clarke spots their friend Murphy leaning against a wall in a less crammed corner as they move towards him. He looks up from his phone when they reach him.

“There you guys are.” He greets them as Raven and Clarke move into his spread arms for a hug.

“Bell’s getting our tickets.”

“Oh, okay, so we just need some snacks and we’re good to go.” Raven concludes cheerfully, stepping out of Murphy’s embrace and turning around to eye the snack counter. She groans as she sees the line in front of it.
“I don’t think we have time for that.” Octavia says and Clarke hears the familiar tone of annoyed impatience. Octavia loves watching the previews in theaters and therefore hates being late. One time she sulked for two hours after the movie when they had missed the trailers because Raven had miscalculated the time it would take her to dismantle and reassemble their radio back home that had needed fixing for quite a while. Raven told them she wouldn’t leave before all the parts were back where they belonged and she found out if she had managed to get rid of the increasing static that had annoyed all three of them to no end for the better half of a week.

“There’s always time for snacks, O.” Raven gives back over her shoulder, still checking out the line of people shuffling forward in slow motion.

“Well, there would have been if you guys would have been on time for a change.” Octavia complains and folds her arms over her chest.

Clarke’s still standing cuddled against Murphy under his left arm and feels his chest expand as the slightly taller boy takes a breath. She looks up at him and sees him eyeing the two girls exasperatedly. “Guys,” he starts.

“Alright, I’m going in. What do you guys want?” Raven interrupts him and turns to their little circle, looking at them expectantly. Behind her Clarke can see that the line is noticeably shorter than just a minute ago, but suspects that won’t last for long.

Octavia lets out an exasperated sigh of her own, but seems to have given up on trying to convince Raven that they don’t have time to get anything. “Want to share some nachos?” she addresses Clarke instead and Clarke nods, adding, “Cheese.”

“Got it. Next?” Raven points at Murphy as she’s already taking a few steps backwards towards the snack counter.

“I’ll come with you.” He draws his arm back from around Clarke and follows Raven, who’s already turning around. “Drinks?” he asks Clarke and Octavia.

Clarke shakes her head but Octavia orders a large Orange Juice and a Coke for Bellamy.

When they’re alone Octavia grabs Clarke’s wrist and clicks her tongue as she reads the time off her watch. Clarke glances down as well. The admittance into their theater hall is set to start in four minutes.

“We can still make the previews.” Clarke reassures her, but Octavia only hums non-commitedly.

Clarke looks around. The atrium has somewhat emptied and she has a good view of the movie posters hanging all around on the blue carpeted walls. She hasn’t been to the movies in quite a while and doesn’t recognize any of the titles being promoted as currently or soon to be playing in ‘a theater near you’.

One poster shows a tall sweaty tan man with protruding arm muscles and an overshadowed face holding a huge machine gun in one hand while the other is grasping at a partly burned children’s doll. In the background one can only make out the ruins of a smoking city. She can imagine what the plot will revolve around.

The next poster shows several colorfully animated zoo animals with huge eyes and excited faces in the process of escaping from their cages and climbing over fat human zoo keepers towards freedom.

“It’s actually supposed to be quite funny.” Octavia comments, apparently having followed Clarke’s line of sight.
“Yeah? It looks a little…”

“Over the top?”

“Way over.” Clarke looks back at the poster. There’s an elephant in the left corner which Clarke reckons to be the comedic clumsy one of the bunch as he’s pictured tripping over a trash can and running in the wrong direction towards a popcorn trolley.

Octavia hums. “I actually really want to see that one sometime.”

Clarke looks over and sees the other girl pointing at another poster on a wall to their left. It’s too far away and Clarke can’t really make out what’s on it or what the movie is called. “What’s it about?” she asks.

“It’s about this bunch of teens having to survive in a post-apocalyptic world with like mutant animals and savage bush people and stuff like that.” She explains and Clarke raises her eyebrows.

“Sounds kind of Hunger Games-y.” she comments. “And ‘savage bush people’? Isn’t that a little… I don’t know I’m expecting a not very culturally valuable representation there.”

“Yeah, maybe.” Octavia concedes with a shrug, which makes the strap of her purse slide off her shoulder. She pushes it back up. “But the concept sounds kind of interesting. Like, they have to figure out how to work together and who to trust and probably build stuff in the jungle or whatever.” She shrugs once more. “Could be fun to watch.”

“What could be fun to watch?” Raven asks as she and Murphy show up next to them again. They’re both loaded up with snack and drinks and Clarke and Octavia quickly move over to take their own things from the lot.

“The Delinquents.” Octavia answers, taking two tall cups from Raven’s arms while Murphy hands Clarke her and Octavia’s nachos.

“Ah.” Raven nods, seemingly already having heard of it. “Well, why don’t you just ask mystery hottie to go with you? I mean it’s perfect for a third date. You know, it’s dark, there’s a back row…” she trails off wiggling her eyebrows meaningfully at Octavia.

“Who?” Murphy asks around his straw.

Octavia slaps Raven’s lower arm lightly, who only chuckles and looks to Murphy, “This guy from her Genders and Nations class.”

“Whoa, whoa, hold on.” Clarke frowns. “Third date? What do you mean third date? When did she have two other dates with him?”

Last time she heard Octavia was only thinking of suggesting getting some coffee or something together, but hadn’t actually done it yet.

“We went for coffee.” Octavia informs her just then.

“Already? Twice?” Clarke asks more than surprised.

“Yep.” Raven pops her lips and grins at Clarke.

Octavia was never shy about asking guys out, so that isn’t the thing that surprises Clarke. But how had she not heard about this?
“When? How the hell did I not know about this?” she pesters on, feeling a little hurt at being kept out of the loop.

“Well, you’ve been hauled up in the library all week.” Octavia defends herself and Raven snorts and shakes her head at Clarke.

“Nerd.”

Murphy’s eyebrows rise. “Seriously? Isn’t it only like the second week of semester for you or something?”

“First.” Raven deadpans and Murphy laughs.

“I need to study, okay? I have to ace the MCAT this year!” Clarke gives back defensively.

“Still…Smurphy is right. The semester hasn’t even really started, Clarke. What are you even studying?”

Clarke chooses to ignore her and turns to Octavia only just catching Murphy frowning at Raven, obviously not appreciating her newest nickname for him.

“Why didn’t you tell me you guys went on a date?” she questions Octavia again.

“Two.” Raven corrects, as Octavia reaches over to snatch a nacho from their shared plate. The brunette looks at Clarke and shrugs.

“Like I said, I haven’t really seen you much the past week and when I did it was always super short and it just didn’t come up.”

Clarke wants to point out that she could have texted her at any time during that week, keeping her updated, but her curiosity wins over her stubbornness.

“Fine, well…how did it go?”

“How did what go?” Bellamy asks as he joins their little group.

“There you are!” Octavia grabs her brother’s lower arm and is already starting to move towards their theater hall.

“O’s date with her professor.” Raven offers from next to Clarke as the girls and Murphy follow the Blake siblings along the right side of the atrium.

“What?!” Bellamy whips around to Raven before staring at his sister alarmed.

“TA! He’s just my TA, Bell. He’s probably younger than you. Chill.” She shoots Raven a glare the other girl just smirks at as she soothingly pats her brother’s upper arm.

Bellamy still doesn’t look completely convinced but doesn’t press it any further as they arrive at Theater 3.

“Well?” Clarke raises her eyebrows at Octavia as Bellamy hands the usher their tickets who does a quick head count before ripping them and handing them back to the dark haired boy, wishing them a pleasant viewing.

“It was nice.” Octavia tells them as they file into the Theater. Bellamy checks their tickets again and directs them towards one of the upper rows. “He’s really sweet. A little quiet, but we got along really
Bellamy points out their row, before letting Murphy go in first, following in after him. Clarke, Octavia and then Raven shuffle in after them, who adds, “And he’s hot.”


“I want to see a picture.” Clarke immediately demands at the same time as they hear Bellamy’s “Show me!”

“Alright, alright, hold on a second.” Octavia tells them as they all find their seats and settle down, taking off their jackets and things and putting them down by their feet. The snacks and drinks are placed in the retainers between their seats and on their laps and then Octavia hands Clarke her phone and Bellamy leans in to get a better look.

The phone shows a picture uploaded to an Instagram account. The selfie was taken from a slightly elevated angle and you can’t see below the chest of the guy in the picture. The first thing Clarke notices are the muscles in the arm holding the phone. The guy is tan, has a black three-day stubble and sparkling dark brown eyes as he looks smugly into the camera, sucking on a straw. He’s wearing a baggy, white work out shirt that shows off just a little bit of his slightly sweaty chest.

“Wow. Yeah, okay.” Clarke says appreciatively. There’s no denying it, Raven saying that this guy is hot is in no way an overstatement. She notices something written under the picture and scrolls down to read it, ‘When your work-out buddy’s too busy and leaves you hanging and you go get the new mango-papaya smoothie she can’t shut up about. All. By. Yourself.’

“So what’s his deal?” Bellamy’s skeptical voice comes from Clarke’s left and she looks up at him. He’s still frowning at the picture, before leaning forward a little to get Octavia into his line of sight passed Clarke.

“Like I said, he’s my TA at the Race and Gender thing.” Octavia repeats slowly, giving her brother an exasperated look. “He’s very nice. A real gentleman.” She quips in a fake accent. “I’m sure he’ll ask you for your permission next time before going out with me, big brother.” She can’t hold back a laugh and Bellamy gives her a look, before Murphy pulls him back in his seat so he can get a look at the phone as well, which is still in Clarke’s hand on the armrest between her seat and Bellamy’s.

“Damn!” Murphy exclaims, looking impressed, and Bellamy almost growls, looking straight ahead.

“See?” Raven pipes up from the other side of their little row. “Even super picky over there thinks he’s hot.”

“I never said-” Bellamy starts but Octavia interrupts him, “Okay, can we stop discussing how hot Lincoln is now? Thanks.”

She stretches herself across Clarke and grabs her phone back from Bellamy who has just taken it from Clarke’s hand.

“I was just-“ he tries again, but this time Clarke joins in when Octavia shushes him as the lights start dimming around them and the heavy red velvet curtains covering the big screen in front of them start swinging open.

The first trailer starts with a loud boom as a helicopter explodes on screen and people scream loudly while a deep, raspy voice begins narrating the plot of the promoted movie.

Bellamy shuts up and for the rest of the movie all of them remain quiet with the exception of Raven’s
“I did not flirt with her, god damn!” Lexa bristles. She can feel her cheeks warming up and is sure it’s from the alcohol. She’s on her second apple cider and she’s starting to feel it. Her smile comes more easily and her voice has grown a little louder trying to stand her point in the argument.

It’s a lost battle however, she knows, as Anya and Lincoln merely give each other a look and grin at her knowingly.

Lexa rolls her eyes and slumps back against the cushioned leather banners that are draped to the wooden walls of the pub as back rests. Their booth is kind of hidden in a darker corner and Lexa likes it this way. She likes sitting with her back to a corner, it feels safer somehow and she can keep an eye on everything. Plus, it’s cozy.

Of course right now she’s more focused on the two idiots clinking their bottles obnoxiously just to piss her off even more.

“You’re acting like children.” Lexa scoffs, taking another gulp of the cold beverage, but all she earns is another round of laughter.

“Naw, have we offended the big Commander?” Anya leans forward and tries to pinch Lexa’s cheek. Lexa swats her away indignantly and Anya sits back, chuckling. “You know, we’re only trying to help you.”

“Help me?” Lexa frowns. “With what?”

“You haven’t been on one real date since I met you.” Lincoln points out, placing the bottle carefully onto the coaster in front of him. Lexa doesn’t know why. That table probably has more stains than a rug in a car repair shop.

Lexa glares at him over the bottom of her own bottle as she takes another sip.

“Yeah, I still don’t know why you threw away that one girl’s number; you know the one from the club?” Anya looks at Lincoln for help.

“From Escape?” Lincoln asks, referring to the popular nightclub the three of them have been to a couple of times, but Anya’s already shaking her head.

“No, no the one from that club where they had those mirrors on the ceiling.” She throws her head back groaning. “What was her name?”

“Cassandra.” Lexa offers the answer begrudgingly.

“Yes!” Anya points at her with the hand that’s still holding the bottle. “Yes, Cassandra! Why didn’t you ask her on a date? She was cute!”

“And totally into you.” Lincoln adds.

“She wasn’t my type.” Lexa shrugs and crosses her arms over her chest, the bottle pressing against her hipbone and the cold seeping through the material of her black pants. She really doesn’t like where this conversation is going.
“Oh, please!” Anya scoffs. “She was everybody’s type. I doubt she paid for one single drink that night and still she brought you one. How the hell do you always do that anyway?”

Lexa cocks an eyebrow. “Jealous?” she teases in a means to direct the topic of conversation away from her admittedly quiet dating life.

“Hell, yeah!” Anya admits without hesitation and Lincoln simply nods and hums in agreement.

“You really have an uncanny way with the women, Woods.” He agrees and then smirks a little when Lexa can’t hold back another eye roll.

“Like women don’t fall all over themselves to have you be the one to train them.” She shoots back waving a hand in the general direction of her co-worker.

Now Lincoln is the one to object, “Not true.” He shakes his head and calmly folds his hands over his lap as he slouches comfortably on the bench he’s sharing with Anya across from Lexa.

Anya and Lexa scoff in unison, making Lincoln chuckle. “What? They don’t!”

“So do.” Anya interjects not looking at the boy sitting next to her on her left.

“How would you even know? You’ve never even seen me at work!” Lincoln points out as Lexa sees the waitress coming towards their corner.

A moment later she’s standing next to Anya and the other two notice her as well.

“I’m sorry, can I get you anything else? It’s last call.” She informs them with a polite smile.

Earlier in the evening Lexa and Lincoln already voiced their guesses that she must be new and Anya agreed. Usually the waiters in this pub are way less formal with their customers and Lexa, Anya and Lincoln are becoming somewhat regulars at that.

“Last call, already? Yeah, could you just get those two another round?” Anya asks pointing at Lexa and Lincoln, who each finish the last sips of their drinks at that, before placing their bottles on the table for the waitress to take. Lexa is grateful that Anya never complains - much - about being their designated driver and so oftentimes can’t have more than one beer. She always says that she ‘manages a fucking bar’ so it’s not like she’s missing out on drinking anyway. Since Indra put her on a new training schedule a few weeks ago Lexa hasn’t been out for drinks like tonight too often either, never feeling it was worth the added energy her morning jog would require of her after a night out. The day after a fight is always a down day however, so she’s enjoying not having to worry if she might be a little slower the next morning for once.

“Sure.” The waitress nods once and then collects the empty bottles. Anya puts down her non-alcoholic beer and continues their conversation as if they hadn’t been interrupted, while the short haired brunette turns around to the next table.

“And I stopped by the gym just the other day.”

“When?” Lincoln asks skeptically, raising one eyebrow.

“You weren’t there.”

Lincoln huffs out a laugh and throws up his hands, “Well how would you even know whether women throw themselves at me then, if I wasn’t even there!”
“Because,” Anya starts and now she’s talking to him as if she were talking to a child. Lexa remembers how she used to hate that when she was ten. Anya would always talk to her like that and even though Lexa knew she was only doing it to rile her up she couldn’t help getting pissed off at the playfully condescending tone just the same. Good times, good times. “This girl kept bugging Lexa here,” she gestures towards Lexa, “and asking her where you are.”

Now Lincoln looks honestly confused. “What girl?” he looks over at Lexa for clarification, but seems to get it a second before Lexa says her name.

“Lauren.” They say at the same time.

“Geez.” Lincoln widens his eyes. “That woman will not take a hint.”

Lexa nods profoundly and hums in agreement. Lauren had won a free personal training session with Lincoln about four months ago in this summer fair raffle that the children’s hospital had organized to raise awareness for cancer research and in which Indra had entered the gym, offering free training sessions and fitness check-ups as prizes.

She had developed a serious crush on the black muscular guy and had immediately signed up for ten more sessions and then five more after that, always doing more staring and awkward flirting than push-ups or any of the other exercises Lincoln had prepared for her.

“Why don’t you just tell her to fuck off?” Anya suggests unceremoniously and earns herself a look from Lincoln. “What? If she doesn’t get it otherwise?”

“No, but you see, Lincoln can’t ever be mean to anyone.” Lexa throws in with a mockingly meek voice.

“Oh, very funny, Lex. Why don’t you call Cassandra and maybe Anya can finally stop asking me if there isn’t a girl I might know that we could set you up with.” Lincoln throws back and Anya promptly punches his arm.

“Lincoln!”

“Ou! What? Like it was ever going to work!” he rubs his upper arm and just then the waitress is back with their drinks.

Lincoln and Lexa pay and say their ‘thank you’s as she puts the bottles onto the table in front of them and then Anya is right back to glaring at Lincoln. “Well now it won’t!”

“Are you kidding me?” Lexa sighs and furrows her eyebrows. Now she’s really starting to get annoyed. “I don’t need you to play cupid, Anya! For fuck’s sake!” She harshly grabs the already opened bottle of Strongbow Cider from the table and lifts it to her lips. The cool liquid feels even colder going down her throat and she swallows another sip before settling the bottle on her lap between both of her hands, glaring at the woman across from her.

“Oh, yeah?” Anya challenges, cocking an eyebrow as she retrieves her own half empty beverage. “Then tell me what was wrong with Cassandra. Hm?”

Lexa clenches her teeth and lifts her chin. “Anya don’t.”

“What? What ‘Anya don’t’?” Anya gives back and there is no hint of teasing in her voice anymore. “You can’t hide away forever, Lexa.”

“I’m not hid-” Lexa almost shouts before checking herself and consciously lowering her voice. “I’m
“The hell you aren’t.” Anya screws up her face and leans back again, looking at Lexa with a scrutinizing stare as she lifts the bottle to her lips.

Lexa stares back unblinkingly. “It’s perfectly normal not to go on dates with every person you meet in a club.” Her voice is calm and even but she feels her throat bob as she swallows around a lump forming there. Anya still hasn’t lifted her eyes from Lexa’s. It feels like a stare-down and Lexa fully intends to win it. She will not sit here and be treated like someone who needs to be told how to live her life. She’s had that. First in the foster system and then in the army. Anya should know better.

“Guys, come on.” Lincoln cuts in just then. “If Lexa wants to keep her awesomeness all to herself it’s her choice.” He argues jokingly with a little shrug to Lexa and she’s grateful when Anya doesn’t seem to be too stubborn about it.

She eyes Lexa for another second but then takes a small breath and just shakes her head at her. “Fine, whatever.” She concedes, turning her left palm upwards as she places her bottle back on the table with the other. “But I’m telling you I will not be your roommate until I’m fifty.”

“Like I’d even want that.” Lexa shoots back, but just like that all the tension has vanished from the conversation and they’re back to their usual light banter. Lexa decides to turn the tables on Anya. “And what about you? Haven’t had to use ear plugs in quite a while either.” She raises her eyebrows challengingly at her former foster sister.

“God! Too much information, Lexa!” Lincoln screws up his face and closes his eyes for a second. “I don’t need to hear that.”

Lexa and Anya share a laugh as Lincoln takes a sip of his beer, his nose still crinkled.

“You’re such a prude, Atwood.” Anya playfully pushes his face away from her with her left hand.

Lexa hides her smile behind the bottle, taking another swig. She likes their little group. She likes how Lincoln and Anya seem almost like siblings as well now and she loves the way Anya has come to care about him. She knows it by the way she teases him and the way she tells him almost as much as she tells Lexa. Anya isn’t open to many people. Not any people really except for Lexa. And now Lincoln. She and her are very alike in that way. Lexa doesn’t like sharing things about herself either and she knows that Anya’s and her carefulness stems from the same source. The foster system doesn’t really encourage giving too much of yourself to someone. People usually don’t stay in your life for too long and when they leave…well you don’t want them to take that piece of you with them.

“You’re avoiding the question, Anya.” Lexa reminds her and sees Anya fight not to roll her eyes. “Not really, I’ve just been working a lot.” She waves off Lexa’s attempt to rattle her.

It’s true, Lexa has to admit. Between managing the club and still walking Gramps at times Anya really hasn’t had much time left to herself let alone someone else. For a second Lexa considers taking the opportunity and steering the conversation towards Anya’s insane working schedule but decides against it. She really doesn’t want what remains of their evening chat to turn sour again.

“What about you, Linc? Any ladies in your life aside from Lauren?” Anya addresses Lincoln somewhat jokingly when Lexa doesn’t press her any further.

He takes a second too long to pull down the corners of his mouth and shake his head and it’s enough to tip both girls off that they’ve hit the jack pot. The way he awkwardly scratches at the label of the beer in his hands is only an added give-away.
“Oh my god, spill!” Anya nudges him with her lower arm and Lexa and her both sit up a little straighter, intrigued by Lincoln’s evasive behavior.

“It’s nothing really.” Lincoln waves them off but at this point he must know there’s no turning them away.

“Come on, Linc, sharing is caring.” Lexa coaxes and he groans, leaning his head back against the leather before taking a deep breath.

“Okay, fine. But like I said, it’s not really anything.”

“Yeah, but you want it to be.” Anya coaches with a grin, scooting back a bit and drawing up her left knee against the wall to angle herself more in Lincoln’s direction. He definitely has her attention now.

“Well, there’s this girl in my Gender, Race and Nations class—”

“The one where you’re the teacher’s pet?” Anya asks.

“Teacher’s Assistant, but yes.” Lincoln corrects her. Anya rolls her eyes and nods for him to just go on and he does, “Well, and I mean she just—she has this awesome sense of humor, it’s great. And she’s really sassy, too.” He tells them and can’t keep the little laugh from escaping as he probably thinks back to something funny or sassy the mystery girl must have said.

Lexa is as interested in Lincoln’s story as Anya now. She hasn’t really ever heard him talk about girls much. Let alone one specific one. This girl must be quite something.

“And?” Anya encourages him to go on, reaching for her near beer again.

The pub around them has quieted some and Lexa knows it must be around one in the morning by now. Even though Pubs usually close around that time Lexa isn’t worried they’ll be kicked out before they have finished their drinks. The owner here is as laid back about the official closing times as Anya is at Grounders.

“I don’t know. I mean we just went out for coffee twice, so—”

“What?”

“Hold up. You already went on a date with this girl?” Anya seems as scandalized as Lexa feels.

“You never told me that.” Lexa points out and thinks back over the past week since classes have started back up. They’ve had at least four shifts together since then. When would he even have had the time to go out with the girl, let alone twice?

“It wasn’t a date!” Lincoln defends himself but Anya is quick to challenge as always.

“Was it only the two of you?”

“Yeah, but—”

“Did you go somewhere that doesn’t have wheels under the counter?”

“Any, come o—”

“Did you pay?”
“Actually, I didn’t. She did.” Lincoln throws in quickly, before Anya can come up with another argument.

Anya opens her mouth but stops for a second and then gives a little surprised hum. Lexa can tell that she likes that bit of information. Lexa does, too.

“That was definitely a date.” Anya concludes with a finality to it that leaves little room for discussion. She leans back and looks over at Lexa. “Back me up here, Commander.” She gestures to Lexa with her free hand and Lexa looks at their friend.

“I have to agree. It sounds like a date, Lincoln.” Lexa shrugs with one shoulder, sliding her hands further down on the bottle in her lap to feel the remaining coolness of the part of the glass her palms haven’t warmed yet. The condensation droplets pool at her palms, but she doesn’t mind the wetness. She likes the feeling of cool water on her warm hands, especially since her cheeks haven’t stopped feeling hot.

“Two dates, actually.” Anya reminds her.

“Right.” Lexa holds up her hand showing Lincoln two fingers. “Two.”

He shakes his head. "Whatever. I think it’s not really anything yet and anyway, she’s a student.”

Lexa notices the ‘yet’ and hides her smile. Lincoln really seems to like that girl and she’s starting to hope that it might go somewhere with him and her. Of course it is a little early to really say anything about anything yet.

“So are you.” Anya frowns, not understanding his point.

“But in that class I’m the TA.” He argues and Lexa can see why he might find that problematic.

“So?” Anya obviously doesn’t.

“So I will be grading her papers and maybe even conducting an oral exam with her- don’t –“ he nips Anya’s immature comment in the bud, before continuing, “and that wouldn’t really be fair to anyone if I started dating her.”

Anya scoffs. "Oh god, get over yourself. You’re a glorified coffee boy, not the judge and jury.”

Lincoln looks almost offended by that but seems to think better of it than to start arguing with Anya about the works and responsibilities of a Teacher’s Assistant. Lexa grins. Smart guy.

“So what’s her name?” Lexa asks him, curious to find out more about the girl that has Lincoln being so secretive and who obviously didn’t care too much for boring stereotypical gender roles.

“Octavia.” He tells them and again he can’t keep from smiling. And even though she truly feels Lincoln deserves to have found someone he seems to click with Lexa can’t help but envy him a little, too. A quiet kind of melancholy starts pulling at something inside her, but she pushes it away immediately. She takes a breath and swallowing it down with another sip of cider.

Anya purses her lips. “Weird name.”

Lincoln shrugs. “I like it.”

“Of course you do.” Anya snorts, but Lincoln ignores her.

“It suits her.” He tries to explain. “She’s – I don’t know. Just different.” He shrugs again and looks
down to the bottle. The label is almost completely peeled off at this point and Lexa finds herself almost wanting to coo at him and how obviously nervous he is about this girl.

“Well, tell her to come out with us next time.” She suggests earnestly and he looks up at her. “It won’t even be a date that way.” She adds with the hint of a smile and he hums, slowly wiggling his head from side to side.

“I don’t know.”

“Anya will promise to behave herself.” She tries again and he eyes her skeptically like wanting to ask if she really thought that was even possible.

Anya scoffs, but doesn’t object, and finally Lincoln seems a little more inclined to give in.

“Alright, maybe I will.” He says and then takes his bottle to his lips, emptying it in one gulp.

Lexa notices that her bottle is still half full, but the cider inside has been warmed up by her hands by now and she really doesn’t feel like drinking the rest of it anymore. She places it on the table next to Lincoln’s coaster and takes in a deep breath. The effects of the alcohol make her feel a little warm inside and it only increases her fatigue.

“Well,” she sits up straighter. “Shall we get going soon?” she asks, suppressing a yawn and arching her back against the stiffness. She feels a few little cracks in her spine more than she hears them and groans as the movement reminds her of her tired muscles.

“Yeah, let’s go.” Anya agrees with a decisive nod, slapping both of her hands lightly onto the table. Lincoln stifles a yawn as well and nods. “Okay.”

He reaches to his left and retrieves his and Anya’s leather jackets, giving the latter to its owner.

“Do you need a ride?” Anya asks him as the three of them slide out of the booth. Lexa can feel her thigh muscles protesting the movement after sitting still for so long. She shrugs on her grey blazer over her white button up as Lincoln zips up his light brown leather jacket.

“No thanks, you know how I like the walk home. Sobers me up.” Lincoln declines and after throwing a thanks and goodnight in the general direction of the bar staff they head out into the crisp night air.

“Okay, see you Tuesday then, right?” Lincoln gives Lexa a quick hug as they come to a halt in front of the entrance and she nods in confirmation. They’d be working together for most days of the coming week and Lexa is almost looking forward to maybe grilling him a little more about this new lady in his life.

He embraces Anya next. “See you, Anya.”

“Night, Linc.” Anya pats him on the back and then they part ways. Lincoln pushes his fists in his jacket pocket and looks left and right before jogging across the street to the opposite sidewalk. He nods at them once more as they wave goodbye and then Lexa and Anya turn away and start walking towards the parking garage a few blocks down the street. It’s an unusually cold night for early October and Lexa shivers a little and wraps her arms around herself. They walk side by side and Lexa enjoys their silent closeness. As it often does in Portland, especially in the fall, it rained in the afternoon and then again in the evening and the few cars that pass them make this distinctive slushing sound that cars make when they drive on wet streets. It’s a nice sound Lexa thinks. She couldn’t explain it to anyone if they asked why, but it just feels very calming to her.
For a while neither of them speaks before Anya hums a chuckle and Lexa turns her head to look at her. “Our little Lincoln has a crush.” Anya grins and this time, without anyone else around, Lexa gets to see a little different smile. Anya isn’t hiding her happiness for Lincoln behind the usual teasing curl of her lip.

Lexa smiles as well. “She sounds nice enough.”

“Oh.” Anya hums. “We’ll see.”

And Lexa smiles a little bigger.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading!

For any questions, ideas or comments you can visit my tumblr. (ofdreamcatchersandgaythings.tumblr.com)

I also opened another blog that’s dedicated solely to this fic and will feature moodboards and character backgrounds. You can also ask questions concerning this fic there. (clexa-portland-boxing-au.tumblr.com)

I will post links and updates to this fic on both blogs.

All my love,
Lea
“Gramps!” Lexa yells, but the joyfully wagging tail is already disappearing down the hill and out of sight.

“Leave him, he’s been inside with Mrs. Windsor almost all week.” Anya grips Lexa’s wrist as she’s about to hurry after the dog.

“I just don’t want him to scare anyone. He’s so excited today.” Lexa’s still staring at the spot where the Australian Cattle Dog just disappeared between the trees as they stroll up the path.

Columbia Park is especially beautiful in the fall and whenever she can Lexa loves accompanying Anya when she takes Gramps here. Since the dog’s owner, Mrs. Windsor, lives just a little east of the parkland grounds Anya usually takes him either to this place or to Arbor Lodge Park which is about just as far from Mrs. Windsor’s home on the other side.

“He’s fine. He looks like he’s constantly on happy drugs, nobody’s going to be scared of his stupid grinning face.” Anya reassures Lexa.

“It’s not an off-leash area though.” Lexa argues, lowering her sunglasses from the top of her head as the afternoon sun beams shine through the leaves. Her shades get caught in some of her hair and she struggles a second to untangle them, before she can fully place them onto her nose.

“He’s great with people. He knows not to get too close if he senses they’re uncomfortable. Remember that time he ran towards that kid full speed, but the second he started squealing he stopped dead and just sat down still like ten feet away?”

Lexa chuckles. “Yeah.”

“He just sat there like the most patient dog in the world until the kid’s mum came over and encouraged him to pet him.” Anya recalls and Lexa smiles. Gramps really is a special dog. Smarter than any animal Lexa has ever encountered and happier than is normal even for dogs. He always looks like he’s wearing a big smile and the few times when he actually does bark it’s neither loud nor frightening. It almost sounds more like he’s trying to start a conversation, especially when he tilts his head to the side and looks at you with those curious eyes. While Anya usually mimics him in a comical way whenever he does it, Lexa actually does start conversations with him at those times. Assuming no one else is around, that is. She would always tell him about her day or ask him what he thought of the book she is reading at the time. Of course she knows he doesn’t actually understand what she’s talking to him about, but his attentive demeanor and the way he follows her around from the kitchen to her bedroom and back to the balcony as she’s tidying the apartment for example, or making some food, just gives her a warm feeling. He’s the best listener Lexa knows.

“So, have you been able to get in touch with Gustus?” Anya directs their conversation back to what they had been talking about before their four-legged friend dashed off, tongue lolling and tail wagging in pure delight at all the sounds and smells around him.

“No, not yet. I’m going to try again tonight though. He was talking to Indra yesterday when I went to her office after the fight.”

“Yeah, you said.” Anya nods and gestures for them to take a right as they come to a fork in the road.
Lexa sees Gramps’ hind legs and tail vanishing behind a tree a little ways to their left and is reassured that he isn’t straying too far.

“He’s just busy with his recruits.” She echoes her coach’s words from the night before and blows a strand of hair from the corner of her mouth.

Anya makes a disapproving noise in the back of her throat. “He could still at least call back or text you. It’s not like you’re not busy, too and you still make time to pick up the goddamn phone and leave a message for him.”

Lexa appreciates Anya’s sentiment, but doesn’t let the lack of communication on Gustus’ part discourage or hurt her. She knows he would contact her more if he could. After all for the first few months after she had moved back here he checked up on her almost to an annoying degree.

They pass a playground on their right and Lexa sees Anya watching two girls on the swing set. A memory from a lifetime ago comes back to her and she smiles as in her mind a thirteen year-old Anya is looking down at her from the swing next to the one Lexa is sitting on.

“Come on, it’s not even that high up.” The older girl coaxes her. “Or are you scared?”

Lexa scowls at her new foster sister’s challenging expression for a second and then decisively pulls herself up into a standing position as well.

The other girl cheers and starts pushing down into the swing, bending her knees and then standing back up again to push herself higher and higher.

The whole set sways with the force of the girl’s swinging and Lexa clenches her jaw as she grips the cold iron chains harder with both of her hands. She looks down to her own feet and carefully positions them a little further apart on the black rubber seat to stand a little sturdier.

She hates the way her stomach flips every time her own seat tilts a little whenever the other girl’s swing races past her with a swooshing sound, but she called her a baby and Lexa is not a baby.

“Go on! You gotta lean back and push down to get it to swing.” Anya calls at her and Lexa glares, not raising her eyes from her feet.

“I know that!” she gives back harshly and then swallows dryly, readjusting her grip on the chains.

Carefully she bends her knees a little and tilts her weight back just a bit. Immediately the feeling in her stomach gets worse and she feels her heart speed up inside her small chest.

Another loud cheer of joy from the girl next to her as she hits another peak makes Lexa try again and this time she pushes down a little harder.

The swing sets in motion and Lexa feels the muscles in her arms strain as she pulls herself forward to counteract the movement.

She’s still staring down and the view of her own feet moving in and out of sight make her grip the chains a little tighter yet.

Anya is right, it’s not a big fall, and Lexa has been on swings plenty of times before. But she’s never stood on one. This is completely different. This is not at all fun and suddenly the fact that the swing moves back and forth does not in the slightest seem like something it should be doing. It doesn’t feel like when you sit on it. When you sit on it your feet drag across the ground and you feel settled securely on the rubber seat. Now? Now she just feels like her legs are made of jelly and every time
she gets the swing to move it does so way more than Lexa wanted it to. She can’t control it and the way the other girl’s violent swinging makes the whole set wobble is not helping one bit.

“Stop it!” Lexa growls, her heart beat ringing in her own ears. The chain rattles and trembles and its hard links dig deep into Lexa’s palms, so much so that it hurts.

“What?” Anya shouts swinging high up and then almost pummeling down again on her way back. The swing set creaks and Lexa’s chest tightens uncomfortably.

“Stop it!” Lexa repeats, and this time it’s shrill and loud.

She can’t see suddenly as her eyes blur with tears and it’s really hard to breath.

“Stop!”

Stop it! Stop!

“Stop!”

She wants off. She wants off right now. It’s too high. It’s too high and it’s not safe. Lexa’s legs are going to give in any minute. She knows they will and then she won’t be able to catch herself when she falls. It feels like the ground is dropping away beneath her feet and there’s nothing she can do! There’s nothing! She’ll fall and there’s no ground!

“Hey! Hey, it’s okay!”

Someone’s grabbing at Lexa’s sides and she wants to push them off but her hands are holding the chains and she can’t let go because she’ll fall! She has to hold on! Just hold on! She can’t fall!

“Hey, kid! Lexa!”

Lexa barely hears the voice through her own shallow, rapid breathing. Tears are running down her cheeks now and her chest feels so, so tight.

“Hey, I got you. Come on, let go.”

One of her hands is being pried off the chain and the second she releases it she grabs at the next best thing.

It’s a shoulder and Lexa can see two eyes looking at her through her blurred vision. It’s Anya. Anya’s there. She’s tall and she’s solid. She’s right there. She won’t let her fall.

Lexa grabs Anya’s shoulder a little tighter and the other girl steps in a little closer and winds her arms strongly around Lexa’s middle.

“Come on. It’s okay.”

She feels safe enough now to let go of the other chain and quickly swings her second arm around the other girl’s neck. She’s still breathing way too fast though and it’s making her dizzy.

“It’s okay. I got you.”

Anyas voice is close to her ear. Quiet and soothing and Lexa presses her tear-stained face into Anya’s warm neck as she’s being lifted off the now almost unmoving swing seat.

“You’re okay.” Anya hushes again and Lexa closes her eyes and sniffs. She tastes salt and licks
her own tears from her lips. Finally her breathing is calming down a little and her chest doesn’t hurt so bad anymore.

Arms and legs wrapped around the other girl’s body, she lets her carry her away from the swing set. One hand is stroking her hair and with each step Lexa’s panic lessens bit by bit.

It’s alright. She’s alright.

“I’m f-fine.” Lexa hiccups and now that her heart has started to slow down she feels heat rise into her cheeks. Strands of hair are sticking to her wet cheeks and Lexa has to sniffle again because her nose has started running.

This is so embarrassing. It was just a swing set! How could she be so scared of a swing set! It’s for babies!

“I’m fine!” she repeats and this time raises her now raspy voice a little and begins to struggle against Anya’s hold.

“Alright! Hold on.” The tall girl carefully loosens her hold on Lexa so she can slide down until her feet hit the soft grassy ground below.

Her legs are still shaking and the ground doesn’t feel as stable as Lexa knows it actually is, but she has to get away.

“Hey, wait,” Anya calls as Lexa turns around on the spot and blindly starts speed-walking away from the other girl. She quickly wipes the remaining tears away from her face and resents the next hiccup that forces itself through her chest a second later.

“Lexa!”

“Go away!” Lexa shouts over her shoulder and picks up her pace, almost breaking into a run. It’s getting dark now and Lexa shivers as a cool fall breeze blows over her head. She can only just make out the wooden poles of the swing set as she passes it.

“You’re going the wrong way!”

Anya’s voice sounds a little further away now and Lexa slows down a little. She’s not chasing after her. Good. Lexa doesn’t want her to follow her. She doesn’t.

Another hiccup slices through her next words. “I do-on’t care!”

She sniffs again and almost stumbles over something as she crosses from grass to pavement. It’s so dark now that she can barely see what’s in front of her, but she doesn’t care.

She just wants to be as far away from Anya and that stupid swing set as possible.

She hears a loud groan in the distance. Anya is mad at her now.

Lessa swallows.

She doesn’t care.

She doesn’t. She doesn’t. She doesn’t.

The hiccups continue and some more tears well up. She angrily brushes at them with the hem of her
sleeve. It makes the sweater Mrs. Maynard gave her just this morning all yucky with snot and tears, but Lexa doesn’t care. She doesn’t care about anything anymore. Caring is stupid. Caring is weak.

She’s reaching the edge of the park now and tall trees shut out what light remains as the only sources are the sparsely established street lamps on the roads surrounding it.

Suddenly she hears footsteps quickly approaching from behind, but before she can turn around a hand roughly grabs at her upper arm.

“Get off!” Lexa struggles against the grip.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” Anya spits at her. “Where are you going?”

“Away!”

“Away.”

“Yes! Away!” Lexa is still struggling against Anya’s grip and when the other girl releases her without a warning she stumbles backwards and falls to the ground. It’s late October and the dry leaves make crunching, rustling sounds beneath her that seem louder than usual in the nightly silence.

“Fine.”

They’re glaring at each other and Lexa almost wants to scream when another hiccup undermines her fury and makes Anya’s lips twitch, fighting a grin.

“Stop!”

Now Anya is actually laughing soundlessly and Lexa scrambles up, leaves sticking to her arms and probably her back and butt, and flings herself at the taller girl. She pushes her with all her might but the other girl barely staggers a step back.

“Sto-op it!” Lexa shouting as loudly as she can, but the second hiccup only makes Anya laugh harder.

“I hate you!” Lexa cries and pushes at the girl’s stomach again, but this time Anya is ready and catches both of her wrists in another hard grip.

“You’re not gonna be able to push me over like that.” Anya holds Lexa back by pressing Lexa’s own arms and fists against her body.”You’re tiny.”

“I’m not!” Lexa yells. She can’t move out of Anya’s grip though and she is so angry it feels like everything inside her is drowning and on fire at the same time. “I’m not!”

“Okay, not tiny, but you’re small for your age.” Anya amends calmly, not impressed by Lexa’s fury. She isn’t laughing anymore though. And she doesn’t sound mad at Lexa either and for a second Lexa wonders why. “You can’t come at someone who’s taller than you like that. You gotta go for their weak spots.”

Lexa’s struggling slowly eases up. She doesn’t stop glaring at the girl looking down at her though. She wants to learn of weak spots. She wants to learn how not to be weak. And she wants to know what makes other people weak.

Anya lifts her eyebrows and carefully relinquishes her hold on Lexa. “Don’t run off again, okay?”

Lexa doesn’t respond and just gnashes her teeth behind tightly pressed lips. She doesn’t run
“Okay.” Anya kneels down in front of Lexa and Lexa swallows again. Her heart is still racing and her hands are balled to fists at her sides.

“When someone tall bothers you and you want them to stop you have to go for the parts you can actually reach, okay?” she lightly taps at the backs of Lexa’s knees. “Like here. Just kick them here really hard and that’s your best chance of actually getting them to fall down. Or, you know, if it’s a guy go for his guy parts.”

By now Lexa’s eyes have adjusted to the darkness surrounding them and she can see the expression Anya is wearing. It’s an expression Lexa hasn’t seen directed at her very often in her life and she feels her heart twist in her chest when she realizes it’s worry. Anya’s is worried about her. Does Anya care? About her?

“And when they’re down you run.” Her eyes bore into Lexa’s and Lexa feels glued to the spot. “Got it?”

It takes a second until Lexa’s head obeys her and she nods.

“Good.”

Anya eyes Lexa another moment. For a moment Lexa thinks she’s about to reach out and touch her, brush through her hair or something, but Anya just nods and then she stands up.

“Can we go now? The old hag already hates me as is. Don’t need her calling the cops on me for kidnapping your tiny ass.”

She’s raising an eyebrow at Lexa again and scowls at her. It doesn’t seem like she really means it though.

Lexa frowns. “I’m not tiny.” She mumbles and this time when she catches Anya grinning out of the corner of her eye she doesn’t feel so angry anymore.

“There you are.”

Anya’s voice brings Lexa back to the presence and she sees Gramps galloping towards them. He’s panting happily and goes first to Anya and then to Lexa to receive some pats on the head and the side.

“Where’d you go, hm?” Lexa inquires quietly, but Gramps just licks at her hand and then falls into a hopping sort of trot next to them as they move on and leave the playground behind.

“Anyway, if you ever reach him tell him to stop pretending he’s so busy and actually get his ass up here. He hasn’t even seen the new apartment yet.” Anya continues their conversation from before, throwing Gramps’ chewing ball up in the air and catching it again with her right hand. She repeats the action a few times and the dog’s eyes follow it, highly alert. Lexa sees Anya pretending not to notice, before suddenly flinging it into the bushes to their right.

The grey dog tears after it, almost losing his footing as he races down the slight hill.

“Okay. I’ll tell him that.” Lexa says sarcastically, trailing behind Anya as two kids on matching blue bikes ride passed them on the narrow path, shouting things to each other over their shoulders.

“Good.” Anya nods, seemingly appeased, and then turns her head and shows Lexa the ghost of a
“Still can’t believe that we just went to uni on a Sunday.” Raven shakes her head in disbelieve, acting like she never thought she’d sink this low. “You’re such a bad influence on me, Griffin.”

Clarke eyes Raven’s profile with an amused sort of exasperation. “You wanted to come!”

“I wanted to go get coffee.” Raven corrects, wagging her index finger at Clarke.

“We will.” Clarke rolls her eyes, but smiles a second later when Raven sways and bumps into her shoulder before linking their arms.

“So what do you need that weapon disguised as book for again?” she nods her head towards Clarke’s backpack.

“It’s basically a how to guide to get through the MCAT.” Clarke explains as they walk down the street leading away from the University of Portland campus. “It covers almost all the topics you need and has references to which books you can look into for more information.”

“More books?” Raven asks incredulously. “You got a book that basically just tells you what other books to get? Don’t you know there’s such a thing as the internet?” she laughs lightly.

“Ha ha. It’s not just a list of books, Raven. Like I said, it actually treats most of the topics itself and it’s supposed to be really well written.”

When Clarke saw that a fellow student who’s in his fourth year already had finally answered her questions about how to best prepare for the MCAT on Facebook this morning she was adamant to check out the book he recommended right away. Thankfully the university library still had a copy available and was open even on Sundays.

Despite the fact that the huge book really does have a very intimidating look about it Clarke feels a lot better now. It’s like she is finally actually doing something to get ahead and get a grip on her studies up front. Having a more concrete plan - at least concerning her test preparations - and the means to follow it through is a huge relief to her.

“Alright, if you say so.” Raven gives in and squeezes Clarke’s arm with hers. “But please remember that you have friends and family who care about you outside of your room and that goddamn library.” She adds and Clarke knows she’s only being partly sarcastic.

“I know. I won’t totally go off the grid, I promise. But I really do have to pick it up a notch, Ray. It’s like I’m the only one who’s not done a million volunteer programs and internships yet and it’s stressing me out.”

Clarke frowns as they stop at a traffic light. Raven turns until she stands in front of her, facing her. She lightly grips both of Clarke’s upper arms and looks at Clarke imploringly.

“I can promise you, Clarke, that that is a hundred per cent not true.”

Clarke wiggles her head, not quite believing Raven. She knows she probably isn’t the only one, but it damn sure feels like it and she has heard almost everyone in her courses talking about one thing or
another they’ve already done that Clarke hasn’t.

Raven catches her eyes again. “Hey, I’m serious. You need to get it out of your head that everybody else is always better than you. You used to be so sure of yourself and this stupid program has you doubting yourself way too much.”

Clarke smiles warmly at Raven. Even though the other girl is sarcastic and playful and way too hyper a lot of the time Clarke couldn’t think of anyone aside from maybe Octavia as well who she’d rather call her best friend than Raven. That girl is so fiercely brave, extremely smart – academically as well as emotionally – and above all just always, always in your corner.

“It’s green.” Clarke says quietly as the light behind Raven changes and the two other people next to them start crossing the street.

Raven playfully narrows her eyes at Clarke’s diversion but moves to her side again so that they can walk on as well. They amble side by side for a while, talking about their courses this semester, Octavia and her hot TA and where they should go get some coffee once they’re downtown and then Raven suddenly stops in her tracks.

“Let’s head through here.” Raven gestures towards a park to their left. “I want to sit down for a little.”

“We can catch a bus as well if you can’t walk all the way back.” Clarke suggests. The walk from the university campus back to the city centre or even just their apartment is quite long and they usually drive there by car, but Octavia needed it to drive out to her mum’s again today to finish cleaning and redecorating the shed.

“No, it’s fine, I just need to rest it for a bit.” Raven casually claps her hand against her leg and Clarke glances down to it.

“It’s bothering you more again lately, isn’t it?”

“A little.” Raven admits and Clarke knows that it must be more than a little if Raven doesn’t deny feeling anything at all.

“You should really get it checked out, Ray. Maybe you need a new brace or get this one readjusted or something.” Clarke tries, but knows that it’s no good.

“I’m not going there.”

“Raven.”

“No, Clarke. No way.” She shakes her head energetically. “Those screw ups touched me for the last time.”

“There are other hospitals in Portland, you know.” Clarke points out as they follow a little path through some trees. The mid-afternoon sun is peaking through the leaves above and Clarke squints one eye closed as she glances at the girl beside her.

“Yeah, and we’ve been to them all, Clarke. None of them are as good as your mum.”

“You can’t just not go to a doctor again ever just because my mum moved back to Seattle.” Clarke tries to reason with her.

In their senior year Raven suffered an injury during one of her and Octavia’s soccer games with their
school varsity team, the Lady Warriors. She tore her ACL and with a simple surgery and a few weeks of physical therapy she should have been completely fine. But something went wrong during the operation. Some surgeon royally screwed up and Raven was left with a permanently unstable knee that required her to use a removable leg brace almost all of the time indefinitely. Clarke’s mum Abby was a surgeon at the hospital Raven was brought to as well at the time. She wasn’t assigned to her surgery however and when she found out that something had gone wrong and that is was because of human error she was absolutely furious. Clarke had rarely ever seen Abby as mad as she was in those weeks following the operation. Octavia and she spent most of their time at Raven’s side while she was still in the hospital and whenever they saw Abby she was usually arguing loudly with some doctor or another. She jumped through hoops until she was allowed to take over Raven’s case, but never let her colleagues live their mistake down. She was fierce and assertive and Clarke knows that she has been a rock for Raven throughout all of it.

Abby’s relationship with her coworkers and superiors had suffered some very hard blows though and so when Thelonious Jaha, an old colleague and friend of hers and the Griffin family in general, offered her the position of chief of surgery back at her old hospital in Seattle when Clarke had just started her second semester of her first pre-med year, Abby decided it was time to move back home. Clarke, being nineteen and living with Raven and Octavia already, didn’t mind too much. After all, many kids move away for college, in her case it was just sort of the other way around. But for Raven it meant losing the doctor that knew her and her case inside and out and who had stood by her and helped her through all the struggles recovery brought with it from the very beginning. Clarke understands how Raven must be feeling, but still it worries her that Raven hasn’t been to any other doctor since her mother left Portland two years ago.

Of course whenever Abby visits or Clarke, Raven and Octavia head up to Seattle to visit her and go out in the city she always checks up on Raven’s status and Raven always pretends like Abby’s concern is completely unnecessary and over the top and downright annoying, but Clarke sees the way it reassures Raven every time her mother tells her that she’s fine or what little adjustment they will be making to her brace or care routine.

Clarke knows that there’s no one Raven trusts as much as Abby when it comes to her leg and she hates having to push Raven to see another doctor, but she’s noticed her massaging her leg more and more often lately and she just can’t not say anything anymore.

“I’m fine. It’s the weather. Once winter settles in for good I’ll be fine.” Raven deflects and for once her chipper demeanor is unconvincing.

Clarke sighs but acknowledges that she won’t be able to convince Raven to find another specialist. Not today anyway. Not without back-up. She might just have to assemble the gang to intervention Raven on this one.

“Is this good?” Clarke asks, changing the subject. She gestures to a little colorfully painted bench a few feet from them and Raven nods. The sun shines through some branches of the trees around them again here and the bench is illuminated almost like it’s sitting in a spot light.

“Yeah, here’s good.”

They sit down and Clarke stretches out her legs and crosses her feet at the ankles as she slides her backpack off her back and places it to her left. Raven is bent forward, her elbow leaning on her right leg as she is rubbing the left one.

Clarke shoots her another worried look, but Raven doesn’t see it and Clarke doesn’t say anything more about it. She just gets out her water bottle and wordlessly offers it to Raven, who shakes her
head. Clarke shrugs and takes a few sips herself, before leaning back against the back rest of the park bench.

The bigger part of Columbia Park is behind their backs, but a little patch of green stretches out in front of them as well and Clarke smiles as she sees a little girl chasing some bursting bubbles a man, probably her dad, is blowing for her. The bubbles are shimmering as they catch the sun’s light and Clarke nudges Raven to look.

“Hm?” Raven turns towards her, before looking to where Clarke is pointing at. Once she has spotted what Clarke is smiling about her lips stretch as well.

“Cute.” She comments and Clarke hums in agreement.

Two kids on matching blue bikes are racing along a path on the other side of the green patch and Clarke can hear them laughing all the way up to their bench. She wonders if things like this make Raven happy or more melancholy.

Whether Raven is missing doing things like biking or any other sports Clarke doesn’t have to ask. There have been many, many conversations and drunken angry rants about it. Some of them were Raven venting her anger and resentment at the fact that her natural active personality is being stifled by her disability now and some were Clarke trying to talk some sense into Raven after she had been stubborn again and gone on an adventure - usually with Octavia - neither Clarke nor Abby would ever approve of. But Clarke wonders if things like seeing kids on bikes always only remind Raven that she can’t – or shouldn’t – really do that anymore, or if moments like that can maybe also pass without her relating them to her injury. Raven doesn’t seem upset as she’s watching them now, Clarke thinks, and she really wishes for Raven that she can really just enjoy the sight without getting sad about it.

“Oh!” Raven yelps surprised as out of nowhere a salt and pepper speckled dog jumps from between the trees behind them and excitedly jogs towards them. “Hey, there!” Raven grins and leans forward, extending her arm to lure it closer.

The dog seems to grin at her, its lolling tongue hanging out of the side of its mouth and its tail wagging happily back and forth. At the sight of Raven’s out-stretched arm the dog’s wagging picks up and it immediately comes over and buries its nose in Raven’s palm, sniffing it.

Raven giggles and Clarke has to grin as well. The dog leans into Raven’s hand as she starts scratching it behind its ears and then closes its eyes in enjoyment.

“Aren’t you a cutie!” Raven says to the dog in the baby voice she always uses with dogs and cats and just animals in general. And People too sometimes, to annoy them no doubt.

The dog looks up at her as if to agree and Clarke chuckles. The sound draws the dog’s attention toward her and he trots over, sniffing first the ground and then Clarke’s outer thigh.

She pets it as well and smiles as it lifts its front paws onto the bench beside her to press its head against her side.

Raven laughs and reaches over to ruffle through the dog’s neck fur. She catches a little dog tag that dangles around the dog’s collar and turns it over.

“Theodore Windsor,” she reads off it, pulling down the corner’s of her mouth impressed, and Clarke looks at the dog’s seemingly smiling face again.

“Hi, Theodore. I’m Clarke and that’s Raven.” She glances at the other girl. They’re both grinning.
“He doesn’t look as royal as his name sounds.” Raven chuckles and Clarke has to agree.

“Maybe he’s called Teddy.” Clarke thinks aloud, pulling a funny face at the dog and then giggles when he tries to lick her nose.

Raven turns around on the bench. “I can’t see his owner anywhere. Do you think he ran away?” Clarke looks around as well and can’t spot anyone that seems like they’re missing a cute dog.

“I don’t know.” She returns her attention back to the dog. “Did you run away, sweetie?”

The dog just pants happily and before Clarke can do anything else he suddenly turns his head, ears pricked, listening for something. He only stays like that for a second though before relaxing again and returning his attention back to the girls who are still patting him.

He licks Clarke’s hand again and then presses his nose against Raven’s leg as he turns around. He shakes himself, ears flying about and making a funny flapping sound, and then he’s gone as fast as he came.

Raven chuckles again as they watch him disappear through the trees.

“What a cool dog.” Raven turns to Clarke, laughter in her eyes.

“ Totally.” Clarke agrees, widening her eyes and nodding.

“Clarke, can’t we get a dog?” Raven starts whining and Clarke closes her eyes. She’s had this talk too many times.

“No, no, no! Raven! Not this again!” she throws her head back and groans loudly while Raven starts tugging at her jacket sleeve like a little kid. Clarke swears sometimes she feels like she’s a single mother of two. She knows if Octavia were here she’d only egg the other brunette on.

“But Clarke, he was so cute! And don’t you love Raina?” Raven argues and when Clarke shoots her a look she sees that the other girl has put on her best pout.

“Of course I love Raina. But that’s different! Bellamy lives in a house with a garden, Ray. We can’t have pets in the apartment!” Clarke repeats for what feels like the hundredth time.

“Murphy has pets in his apartment!” Raven gives back, throwing up her arms.

“Stop being a child, come on. Our super said we can’t, so we can’t. It’s not like I’m the one that’s standing in the way of you and O going all crazy cat and dog ladies on me.” Clarke defends and she throws Raven another look. Raven pouts another moment, before she rolls her eyes and slumps back against the bench.

“Fine. Kill joy.” She mumbles.

“Kill jo-!” Clarke starts, offended at Raven’s unfair accusation, but the other girl interrupts her before she can even get riled up.

“I’m kidding, I’m kidding!” She grabs Clarke’s arm and sways into her playfully. “Chill. I know we can’t have a pet. But how cute would a guy like Theodore Windsor be, hm? Might even turn me off women again.” She jokes, winking at Clarke and casually linking their fingers.

“Ray.” Clarke tilts her head and looks at the other girl skeptically. “Nothing could turn you off. Any gender. At all. Ever.”
Raven scrunches up her nose and nods along with Clarke’s words. “So true. So, so true, my dear Griff.” She pats their joined hands and lets out a heavy sigh. “What can I say. I’m a mere mortal amongst all these hot people. It’s just not possible not to appreciate all the awesome around me. It’s like I’m a magnet for awesomeness ‘cause I’m so awesome myself.” She explains wisely and Clarke snorts.

“Wouldn’t that be more like you repulse awesome people if you’re also awesome? You know, being magnets and all?” Clarke reasons bemused, but Raven just draws her hand out of Clarke’s and covers Clarke’s mouth with it instead.

“Shhh. I’m an engineer. I know this stuff.” She pats Clarke’s cheek with her other hand and then smooshes her face with the one still covering her mouth. Clarke mumbles a loud protest and pushes Raven off. The other girl laughs as Clarke wipes over her mouth and frowns at her.

“You’re so annoying.” Clarke shakes her head. They both know she doesn’t mean it though. Not that Raven isn’t annoying, she is. But Clarke still loves Raven’s teasing in some sort of weird way. It’s like she’s the older sister she never had. And the younger one. And her child. Basically Raven is all sorts of family to Clarke and she loves her to bits. And Raven knows it.

The brunette grins at Clarke and then pecks her on the cheek before getting up and pulling Clarke with her by her hand. “Come on, hot stuff. We gotta get some coffee in me.”

Clarke turns around and grabs her backpack from the bench and then they head out of the park to catch the next bus downtown.

When Lexa arrives at the gym on Tuesday morning Lincoln is already waiting for her. He’s sitting in front of the double doors on the steps, two cups in his hands. She smiles at him as she swings her right leg over the back of her bike and lets it slowly roll toward the bicycle stand.

Even though it isn’t new, wasn’t even new when Anya bought it for her in fact, Lexa’s bike is her pride and joy. It’s a regular city bike. Painted a dark, mossy green that’s flaking off a little at places and with handles higher up than the light brown leather saddle and roundly bent so that they face towards the back. It has the average rack over the back wheel and Lexa’s also been thinking about adding a basket on the front so she can divide her things between her duffle bag and the basket to make the bag less bulky. That way it wouldn’t always be so annoying to balance the duffle bag on her back while trying to steer the bike to work and back. Right now it’s sometimes a bit of a challenge to not have her gym bag accidentally slip off her shoulder and thus considerably shift her weight to one side or the other making her wobble dangerously. Especially when the bag is heavy, for example on days when she needs to shower and change at the gym after her work-out because she has a tight schedule and doesn’t have time to go home, it is particularly difficult to balance it without tilting to the side at least once. So Lexa really has been thinking of all the use a basket could be to her. She might go to the bike shop near her and Anya’s apartment later this week. Have a little look around and decide if she likes any of the ones they have there.

After locking up the bike Lexa readjusts the strap of her duffle bag over her shoulder and then walks over to where Lincoln is still sitting, looking up at her and squinting against the sun behind her. She takes the cup from him. “Thanks.”

He only nods with a greeting smile as she sits down next to him on the rough stone steps. Lexa
Lincoln is one of the weirdest morning people Lexa knows.

She’s known people, like Anya for example, who you should never wake if you value your life because they will bite your head off. Those are just generally the grumpiest people in the mornings, barely talking and if they do utter some words it’s usually to point out how shit everything is. Then there are the ones, like some of the kids from the foster homes from her childhood, who would be up at the break of dawn and have more energy than some people can muster over the whole day and just chat away happily. Lexa likes to think that she has become more that sort of person in the mornings although she still isn’t particularly talkative – at all – but then again, she never talks that much to begin with. Since she’s started training regularly however she at least feels like she has fairly efficient energy in the mornings and getting up is never hard for her, which Anya keeps telling her is just unnatural and also annoying.

Lincoln however, Lincoln is interesting. Lexa doesn’t know how well he gets up in the mornings, never having actually spent the night with him on any occasion that would mean she would see him get out of bed in the morning, but in general she finds his behavior at the start of the day quite peculiar. At least on those occasions when he apparently hasn’t had the time to fully shake off sleep yet when she sees him. On those days he seems very happy all things considered, usually gives warm smiles and friendly hugs as he does at any other time of day as well, but he doesn’t talk. And with doesn’t talk Lexa means he literally does not utter one single word. Depending on how long he has been up and how little sleep he got that night Lexa estimates it varies between thirty minutes and two hours of complete silence in the mornings. Or maybe it’s just until he has had either a shower or some coffee. She’ll have to watch out for those constants more closely.

Either way she doesn’t mind it at all. While very chipper and loud morning people don’t annoy her as much as they do Anya she still prefers some peace and quiet herself. So this works well for her over all. She does wonder how he ordered their drinks however and ponders this question as they each sip on their warm beverages. Judging by the smell Lexa knows Lincoln’s drink of choice is a Cappuccino as per usual. Her cup holds green tea and she is grateful he remembered that Indra switched her from her beloved coffee to green tea while she is still in training for the upcoming MMA fight in Tacoma in two weeks. Even though it was a little hard for her to quit her coffee routine at first she has gotten used to the less caffeinated substitute and even finds it doesn’t taste half bad. Although she knows that her will power to withstand the delicious bean beverage probably has a lot to do with the fact that there’s an end in sight. She doesn’t delude herself into believing that she’d do so well with quitting coffee if she was told that she wouldn’t be able to drink it again ever, instead of merely having to give it up for a few weeks. No, that is one guilty pleasure she would not deny herself so easily.

They finish their drinks almost at the same time and Lexa takes off her lid and holds her cup towards Lincoln so he can stack his into it. They get up and Lexa throws away their empty cardboard cups as she passes the bin on the other side of the steps leading up towards the double doors of the Holladay Park Gym entrance. Their shift doesn’t actually start until this afternoon but they agreed to meet at eight anyway to train together and work on Lexa’s technique a little.

As they pass Luis who mans reception on Tuesdays they wave a ‘good morning’ to him and then continue on their way to the staff changing rooms, which are located just passed the regular changing room for women down a sparsely lit broad hallway on the right after the entrance area. No natural light reaches this part of the gym and the only source of lighting are the small lamps shining onto the various pictures of athletes and news articles that are hung up on the long walls. They part ways to their respective changing rooms and Lexa quickly gets into her work-out gear. Aside from her there are four other female employees working at the gym at the moment. Izzy, who’s quite busy with college but works behind the bar on weekends, Marney, who’s been working the reception with Luis
and Clayton since she got out of high school three years ago and Deb, who's the third personal trainer in the little boxing gym and who started around the same time as Lincoln as far as Lexa knows. And then there’s supposed to be a new girl who would replace Tom behind the bar now that he’s moving to Seattle to study, but Lexa hasn’t seen her yet.

Neither of the others works on Tuesdays however, so Lexa is the only one in the locker room this morning. Once she’s put on her three-quarters training tights and zipped up her light grey hoodie over her sports bra she quickly does up her hair in her usual high pony tail and fills up her water bottle in the adjoining bathroom before meeting back up with Lincoln on the other side of the room where another long hallway, running parallel to the broad, dark one, leads to the different work out and training rooms.

“I’m going to start with a little run out back, I didn’t get my morning jog in today.” Lexa informs him, pointing her water bottle towards the glass door at the end of the hallway that leads outside where she can see the trees of the Holladay Park on the other side of the street. Some of their leaves are already changing and Lexa is looking forward to fall transforming everything around her into a beautiful myriad of colors. She looks up from her wrist where she has just finished fastening her fitness tracker and lifts her eyebrows. “You in?”

Lincoln nods again and hums in agreement.

They bring in six rounds, which add to about four miles, before they head back inside.

Lincoln has obviously finally found his voice after all as he quite excitedly starts telling Lexa about this new set of weights he convinced Indra to order as they start their work-out routines.

“Good! Keep going! Just two more!”

The red-faced teenage girl groans and pulls her upper body up towards Lexa, who’s kneeling in front of her on the mat, with great effort.

“You just said that!” The girl complains with a pressed voice, before slumping heavily down onto the mat again.

“I know, but you’re doing great, Kaitlyn. Let’s beat your record, come on.”

As Kaitlyn groans again loudly Lexa sees the door open out of the corner of her eyes. She looks up and sees a girl with long brown hair walk in. She’s not wearing work-out clothes and Lexa briefly wonders what she’s doing here. The question is quickly answered however when the girl, after scanning the room a moment, spots Lincoln on the other side of the room and starts heading towards him with a smile.

“Lincoln!” she calls out, half-lifting a hand and giving a little wave.

Lincoln looks up from his sixty-something year old client Ralph who is currently bench pressing probably at least his own body weight and immediately a matching smile appears on his face.

“Octavia?” he questions in a surprised tone.
He tells Ralph to take five and claps him on the back as the white haired man sits up, nodding and rubbing his chest muscles, after having heaved the weight bar back onto its holders. As Lexa’s coworker walks around the lifting station and gives the brunette a hug, Lexa’s interest perks up. So this is the girl Lincoln was talking about.

“What are you doing here?”

“My afternoon class got cancelled and I thought I’d check out your gym.”

The girl is still smiling at him and Lexa only notices that she’s still watching them when Kaitlyn lets out a strained grunt before collapsing onto her back on the training mat.

“Well done.” Lexa praises distractedly with some light pats to the girl’s calves which she has been holding down. She turns her attention back to her trainee and smiles encouragingly at her. “You’re getting better every week.”

Too out of breath the teen just mouths a ‘thanks’ and Lexa smiles again and stands up.

“Go fill up your water bottle and we’ll meet at the treadmill in five, okay?”

Kaitlyn just nods and then rolls onto her side before heaving herself into an upright position.

Lexa goes to pick up the clipboard with Kaitlyn’s training sheet from a nearby bench. She glances over towards Lincoln and the girl again. They’re still standing close and talking and Lexa almost flinches when Lincoln suddenly turns his head and looks right at her. She feels her cheeks heat up a bit because he caught her staring, but he only waves her over.

“Lexa!”

She lifts her chin and walks over to them. When she reaches them she grasps her hands behind her back, the left one still holding on to the clip-board, and straightens her back. It’s a posture she picked up in the military. It always made her feel settled and in control and later on helped her assert her power. Now it’s just a habit and most of the times she doesn’t even know she’s doing it.

Lincoln gestures between the two women.

“Lexa, this is Octavia. Octavia, this is Lexa.”

The other girl gives Lexa a weird look for a second but then her face spreads into a big smile, teeth showing and eyes squinting, and offers her her hand. Lexa shakes it. The girl has a confident grip, she notices.

“Hi, Lexa. So, you work here, too?”

Lexa nods once as they release each other’s hands. “Yes.”

“Do you like it?” Octavia inquires, seeming honestly interested.

“Yes.”

“Okay..um..” Octavia glances at Lincoln for a second, smiling a little unsurely now. When the girl’s attention is back on Lexa again, Lexa sees Lincoln glaring at her and she realizes she must come off as a little rude. She quickly scrambles for something to add, “Um, it’s nice to work somewhere so… active.”

Lincoln’s still frowning at her, but this time in confusion. When Octavia only laughs and nods
however Lexa is relieved.

“I totally get that. I love working out.”

“You do?” Lexa asks interested. She looks at the girl a little more closely and notices that she does seem to be in rather good shape. Not like herself or Lincoln, but fairly fit. The white sundress she is wearing shows off her arms and Lexa can see the muscles subtly working when the girl shifts the black leather jacket she’s holding from one arm to the other and lifts her hand to run it through her long dark hair.

For the first time really noticing the weird combination of dress and leather jacket Lexa glances down and sees the girl is also sporting knee high leather boots. Interesting style.

“Yes, totally. I’m more of an out-doorsy kind of gal though, to be honest. Like rock climbing or water rafting or something. I just don’t really have the patience to do weight routines and stuff like that.” She laughs again, smiling at Lexa and then Lincoln when he speaks up.

“Really? Have you ever been to River Drifters?”

“Of course! It’s awesome! Ray and I’ve been there a couple of times.”

“Ray is Raven, right? She’s the engineer?”

Octavia nods her head. “Yeah, exactly.”

Before Lexa can even wonder who they’re talking about Octavia is already elaborating for her.

“Raven’s my roommate. She loves doing those kinds of things, too. She can’t do them as much anymore though. She’s got a fucked up knee.”

“Oh.” Lexa doesn’t know what to say to that.

Octavia doesn’t seem to be too pensive though when she continues.

“Yeah. Technically she’s not supposed to do any sports at all. But, you know, she’s Raven.”

The broad grin and sparkle in the girl’s eyes tells Lexa that this Raven must be a really good friend of Octavia’s. She seems to care for her a lot.

Octavia chuckles. “She always says a little action never killed anybody. Drives Clarke nuts.”

“Is Clark her boyfriend?” Lexa asks and Octavia bursts out into laughter. Even Lincoln chuckles.

She raises her eyebrows at them.

“Clarke’s their other roommate.” Lincoln explains, grinning. “And a girl.”

“Oh.”

Octavia stifles her laughter. “Don’t worry about it. That happens all the time. She keeps getting letters addressed to ‘Mr. Clark Griffin.’” she smirks.

Lincoln is smiling at the other girl again now and Lexa notices that he hasn’t really stopped doing that since Octavia walked in. She suppresses a smile of her own.

“But yeah, River Drifters is awesome.” Octavia returns to the original topic of conversation. “I
should totally go up there again before they close it for the winter.”

“Hey, I’ve been meaning to do that, too. Maybe we could go together?” Lincoln says and Lexa can tell he’s a little nervous from the way he’s glancing at his own hand that’s awkwardly scratching at a sticker on one of the weights on the barbell still sitting on the holder of the lifting station next to them.

“Sure! Yeah, that’d be cool.” Octavia smiles at him and nods again. She doesn’t seem as nervous about it as Lincoln though and Lexa can’t hide her smirk this time. Especially when her co-worker mirrors the girl’s nod and can’t keep the big smile from his face.

“Okay. Cool.” He says lamely and Lexa has to fight real hard not to snort at his awkwardness. She’s never seen him like this and frankly, it’s hilarious.

The two just smile at each other and after a few seconds Lexa quietly clears her throat in amusement. Lincoln seems almost startled that she’s still there but Octavia only looks over at Lexa who reaches out her hand to the smaller brunette.

“Well, I’m sorry to cut this short, but I have to get back to my client.” Lexa explains apologetically as Octavia takes her hand.

“Oh, no problem. I only have a few more minutes anyway, Clarke’s picking me up out front to go do some grocery shopping.” She smiles andLexa mirrors her.

“It was very nice meeting you, Octavia.” Lexa inclines her head and Octavia’s big smile from before is back.

“You, too.”

Lexa nods at Lincoln and then goes to continue her training session with Kaitlyn.

As she opens the door to leave for the other training room she looks over at the two once more. Octavia is laughing at something Lincoln said and Lexa thinks she’s never seen Lincoln so proud of himself.

Clarke hears a clonk and a splash, followed by a loud shout.

“Noooo! Dale!”

“What happened?” Octavia’s voice travels from down the hall, followed by footsteps.

Clarke looks up from the biology book that’s lying open in front of her on the bed. Through the open bed room door she sees Octavia walk by her room and towards the bathroom across the hall where the yelling came from. She takes the last hair clip from her mouth and adds it to the others to fasten the few loose strains at the front that always keep escaping her bun.

“What’s going on?” she calls out when she hears Octavia erupt in laughter.

“She dropped Dale into the toilet.” Octavia answers her, still laughing.
Clarke pulls a face as she grabs her book shut and stuffs it unceremoniously into the back pack next to her. She stands up from the bed and mumbles “Gross,” as she gives her room a once over to see if she forgot anything. Then she heads out into the hallway that joins her room with Octavia’s, Raven’s and the bathroom just opposite her own room.

She peeks around the corner and sees Raven kneeling in front of the toilet with her arm halfway inside, wearing an expression that’s half disgust, half concentration.

Octavia grins at Clarke through the mirror as she’s brushing her teeth.

“How the hell did you drop your hair brush in the toilet?” Clarke asks with a shake of her head.

“He just jumped out of my hands!” Raven defends her clumsiness and Clarke rolls her eyes before heading for the kitchen.

“We’re going to be late!” she shouts over her shoulder, frowning as she retrieves a bottle of water from the fridge and puts it into her bag as well.

“What else is new?” Octavia scoffs rhetorically as she follows Clarke. She stops in front of the counter separating the living room from the kitchen and throws her own book bag onto it.

“What else is new?”

Octavia turns her back towards Clarke and Clarke stands on her tip toes and reaches over the counter to tear off the prize label that’s still dangling from her roommate’s new long sleeved shirt.

“Thanks.”

“Relax, we’ll be ready in a second.” Raven’s voice carries from the bathroom.

Clarke suppresses an annoyed groan. “Can you just hurry up? I just really can’t be late to this lecture again, Ray. The professor already hates me.”

“That’s ridiculous.” They hear the other girl saying, before they hear a grunt and some more splashing. “You’re like the most studious student to ever student.”

“Aren’t there like a hundred people in that class?” Octavia asks Clarke as she passes her on her way to the fridge. Clarke walks to the front door and starts putting on her shoes.

“Yes, but I just don’t think he likes me. When I went to ask him something after class the other day he seemed really annoyed by me.”

Raven appears at the other side of the living room, gingerly holding a wet brush in her left hand. “Of course he’s annoyed. You delayed his freedom.”

“Ew. You’re not going to brush your hair with that, are you?” Octavia screws up her face in disgust as she stops just passed the counter.

Raven smirks and raises one eyebrow. “Not mine, no…” she drawls and Octavia takes a step back again, lightly bumping her hip against the counter top, as Raven stalks towards her.

“You wouldn’t.”

“Guys!” Clarke cuts in, all out of patience. She really doesn’t want to be late again. It makes her feel unprofessional and she hates it when everybody looks at her as she enters the class room, mumbling an apology that professors usually only acknowledge with an unimpressed raise of their eyebrows.
Raven laughs. “Alright, alright. Give me a minute and I’m good to go.”

She turns on the spot and they see her throwing Dale the hair brush into presumably the sink through the open bathroom door on her way towards her own room next to the bathroom.

Clarke groans and throws her head back, barely managing not to stomp her foot like an impatient child. Octavia hands her her jacket and together they wait in front of the door until Raven emerges from her room a couple of minutes later, swinging her own back pack over her shoulders and mumbling an apology through the material of the snap back she holds between her teeth.

Clarke just opens the apartment door and shoos her and Octavia out of it, grabbing their car keys from the bowl on the little stool next to the doorframe, before pulling it shut behind them.

She wonders if there’ll ever be a time when getting somewhere on time won’t be a challenge for the three of them.

“Only two more days.” She mumbles under her breath, reminding herself that it’s already Thursday and the weekend is just around the corner, before following Raven and Octavia down the stairs.

“Hey, Lex! Are you going to the store?”

Lexa walks backwards a few steps until Anya is in her line of sight through the open door of her roommate’s bed room.

“I was actually just going to go for a little walk in Macleay Park.” She answers, jiggling her keys in her right hand, her left holding the book she’s reading at the moment.

Anya’s lying belly down on her bed under the soft quilt Lexa bought her last Christmas. Her feet are resting on her pillow and her head is nestled on top of her arms at the foot of the mattress. She blinks sleepily up at Lexa as she’s walking over and leans against the door post. “Do you need something?”

“I was thinking about maybe making some burgers tonight? I’m just really in the mood for burgers.” Anya says around a yawn and Lexa glances at the clock hanging over their book shelf. It’s only a little after four. Even though it’s Friday the small store around the corner won’t close until eight.

“I can be back before they close and bring what we need on my way home.” She suggests. Anya would easily have enough time to run to the store while Lexa is out, but Lexa knows how hard she’s been working lately and is happy to lighten Anya’s load a little and let her just rest for the remaining day. And besides, if Anya goes grocery shopping she always buys way more than they need.

“Okay, cool.” Anya hums, closing her eyes for a moment. “Can you write some stuff down?” she asks and blindly gestures towards her desk next to the door.

Lexa pushes herself off the doorframe and walks into Anya’s room. It’s a little bit bigger than hers and almost completely squared, whereas Lexa’s is more rectangular. In the middle of the wall opposite the door stands the queen sized bed, with two little night stands on either side, although the one is mainly used to store all of Anya’s glasses and even some half empty water bottles. It drives Lexa mad sometimes that Anya has this habit of hording dishes in her room instead of just putting
them in the dishwasher once she’s done with them. Compared to Lexa, or anyone really, Anya is quite messy in general, but it doesn’t bother Lexa nearly as much having to step over all of her roommate’s clothes almost every time she walks into her room than when she notices that they’ve run out of clean glasses because someone has been stacking them next to her bed and on her desk.

She bites back a comment on the mess as she throws two shirts and a pair of pants off the swivel chair in front of the scattered desk before sitting down. She places her book and the keys on top of her lap and rips out a piece of paper from the notebook in front of her.

“What do we need?” she asks, reaching over yet another glass to pull out a pencil from an ugly yellow coffee mug that functions as a pen holder.

Anya hums lowly for a second before Lexa can hear her shifting on the bed behind her.

“Some Burger buns, those vegan fake meat thingies, lettuce, tomatoes, -“

“I still have some of those.” Lexa cuts in, while she jots down the things Anya’s listing.

“Okay, then no tomatoes. Um, maybe some barbeque sauce or something? I don’t know.”

“I’ll find something. What else?”

“Can you check if they have those little- those balls with the ice cream? You know, the ones Jenna brought to our last party?”

“Oh, yeah, I’ll check. But I don’t think they’ll have them.” Lexa scribbles down ‘little ice cream balls’ before swiveling around and looking at Anya, who’s now lying on her back, her arms folded over her eyes.

“Is that everything?”

“Hmmm…” Anya hums, pulling one arm away and just holding it up in the air. “I’d ask you to bring me some cigarettes, but-“

“No. No cigs.” She shakes her head. “If you want some you’ll have to get them yourself.” Lexa says decidedly and Anya groans loudly.

“You’re so ungrateful! Haven’t I given you everything? Taught you everything you know, showed you how to woo girls, put a roof over your head!” Anya wails dramatically, wiggling down on the bed until her head is hanging off the mattress and she can glare at Lexa accusingly and upside down. “You’d be nothing without me, Woods!”

Lexa only raises an eyebrow. “No cigarettes.”

Anya stares at her for another moment before heaving herself into an upright position, her head already turning red. “Fine.” She huffs. “At least bring me some cheese strings then.”

“That I can do.” Lexa allows, swiveling back towards the desk again and taking her book and keys into her right hand before standing up. “I’ll be back around eight.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.” Anya waves her off and is already snuggling into her quilt again when Lexa trips over a single shoe on her way out. Lexa shakes her head and sighs as she closes the door behind her.
It takes Lexa about half an hour to cycle to Macleay Park. When she reaches the edge of the huge parklands she locks up her bike and starts hiking up the familiar trail.

Macleay Park, as well as the bigger Forest Park and Washington Park encasing it on both sides, is one of her absolute favorite spots in the city. Its tall trees and steep slopes have barely been touched by man and there is always an air of mystery and a pulse of nature all around her. Lexa feels most at home whenever she leaves the well traveled paths and ventures a little further into the wilder parts of the forest grounds. She likes the quiet. The absence of human sounds.

For some people hiking by themselves is so enjoyable because it gives them time to think, and sometimes Lexa uses this time on her own to let her thoughts and worries and ideas chase each other around in her head as well. But mostly, once she’s out in the wilder parts of the park, everything inside her settles in some quiet corner and she simply feels at peace.

Her senses tune to her surroundings and to her own body. She hears the birds chirping high up in the trees, even hears a few hoof beats every now and then, hears her own elevated breathing and her own feet finding their way through the thicket. She feels her heartbeat in her arms and her ears, inside her chest and pulsing against her throat. She smells the fresh, living earth beneath her feet and the different flowers and trees.

Her sweat is dripping down her forehead and slithering down the back and front of her neck, disappearing under her collar as it does when she’s training and she smells the saltiness on her skin when she lifts her wrist to wipe a few drops off her brow.

It’s unusually warm for a day so late in the year. Even in the forest where the trees mostly shield her from the sun Lexa feels the warming rays envelop her and she’s glad she’s only wearing her green hoodie again instead of a jacket as well.

After she almost trips for the second time on a particularly steep part, she pauses her climb and finds a slightly more even part of forest ground to sit down on.

She swings her small, worn-down back pack over her shoulder and settles it in her lap as she reaches inside. She pulls out her book and then retrieves her water bottle from the bottom. After taking a few large gulps she leans back against a slightly tilted tree and closes her eyes. She just listens to the sounds around her for a while and digs her right hand into the ground below her. The earth is crunchy and spiked with pebbles, and as she rolls the dirt between her fingertips she can smell its richness. Peaceful. Everything here is so peaceful.

The forest’s hillside she’s been hiking up for the past twenty minutes now grants her a quite wide reaching view of the surrounding area and when Lexa opens her eyes again she can’t help but be a little in awe of what stretches out in front of her.

A sea of trees colors the grounds below with green, orange, yellow and red on this October Friday and Lexa traces the patterns of different nuances and kinds of trees as she lets her eyes wander. She knows that a little ways down the hill and to her right a narrow creek makes its way through the parklands. Even though she can’t see it through the trees from her elevated spot she can hear it dabling on happily. The never ending, gentle gurgling is wonderfully calming and Lexa takes a deep breath, a soft smile spreading across her face.

She places the bottle she has been holding in her lap next to herself on the ground, leaning it against
her leg so it won’t fall over and roll away. Once she’s sure she won’t have to chase it down the steep hillside she leans back against the tree and opens her book where she placed the mark the night before. Even though she only started reading this one a couple of days ago she’s already almost finished again. It’s her second book on the Humanitarian Intervention Strategies of the United Nations and she’s been engrossed in both of them. While the last one concentrated on the conflicts between military groups and the natives in the Middle East this one covers the reasoning behind different decisions more thoroughly and Lexa is often torn between being appalled at some of them while being impressed by others. She can’t imagine having to choose who to protect and who to fight and how to try to maintain or create peace between whole peoples or nations, but she’s fascinated by the dynamics and the dilemmas that come along with it. When you’re invading a country to help, where’s the line to hurting? When do you cross from hero to villain? How easy is it to lose sight of the fact that you aren’t god; that you don’t have the right to decide if other people even want your help? It’s all so complicated, but so essential. Sometimes Lexa has to stop reading for a while. Those are the times when she feels hopelessness creep in and the questions if peace is even possible and why the hell it’s so damn hard to achieve keep her up at night.

Right now however this book shows Lexa new perspectives and she absorbs every page as if it could actually give her answers to those questions.

Once again she loses herself between the pages for quite a while and only when a cool breeze makes her shiver does she notice that she’s been squinting at the writing in front of her as the daylight slowly slips away. She curses under her breath and quickly retrieves her phone from the front pocket of her backpack to check the time.

A breath of relief leaves her lips when she sees that she’s still got enough time before the stores close. If she hurries, that is. She quickly stows the book, the bottle and the phone back into the bag and when another breeze ruffles her hair and makes her shiver again she curses herself once more. She shouldn’t have been so careless to let her sweaty body cool off this much. If she gets sick before the fight next weekend Indra will kill her and Lexa won’t even blame her. She feels the back of her shirt stick to her with cold sweat and makes a mental note to take a hot shower later and drink some tea to counteract a potential cold.

As always she chooses another way down as the one she followed up. She likes discovering new paths and places and this way it’s unlikely she’ll ever get bored of this place.

Once back on her bike she pushes herself to pedal faster than she did on the way there and she makes it to the store on the corner of their block in under twenty minutes. The clerk doesn’t even blink when a heavily breathing, wind-swept Lexa comes up to the counter with her things and pays with crinkled bills she retrieves from within a little compartment of her backpack. After all, she’s been in here looking way worse after some of her more challenging morning runs or when she stumbled in here sniffing and coughing, when both her and Anya caught the summer flu at the same time.

As soon as she places the key in the apartment door and starts turning it she can already hear Anya shouting from inside.

“Finally!”

Lexus opens the door and Anya comes strolling into the living room that’s right beyond the door. “What took you so long?” she asks instead of a greeting and Lexa ignores her as she places the now heavy bag down to take off her shoes, kicking the door shut behind herself.

Anya comes over and grabs the backpack. Lexa hears her shuffle back into the kitchen with it as she pulls the sweaty hoodie over her head.
She quickly turns left into their bathroom, where she throws the large piece of clothing into their dirty laundry basket next to the sink and then washes her hands, before returning to the living room and following Anya into the adjoining kitchen. Their apartment is quite open spaced with no wall or door between the living room and the kitchen, which is just diagonally off to the left from it and also functions as dining room. One end of their dinner table faces the kitchen corner and the living room while the other faces a modern glass door that leads out onto a narrow balcony, which is mostly used by Anya to smoke or the both of them to sit and talk in the summer. Seeing as they’re only on the second floor the view isn’t breathtaking, but Lexa still enjoys watching the streets below sometimes.

As Lexa enters the kitchen she only just catches Anya taking a big bite from a chocolate Hoho.

“Anya!”

Anya startles and her head dips forward, her left hand coming up to catch the crumbs falling from her mouth. Lexa frowns and snatches the half eaten mini cake from her other hand, Anya protesting loudly.

“We’re cooking dinner now!” Lexa chides, raising one eyebrow at the other woman who just rolls her eyes, before defending herself.

“I thought you were never coming back! I was starving!”

She exaggerates and tries snatching the sweet snack back from Lexa but Lexa is quicker than her and quickly pops the rest of it into her own mouth.

“Hey!” Anya shouts and Lexa only grins broadly, her cheeks round from the tasty cake, and wiggles her eyebrows at her sister.

“Oh, it’s on.” Anya growls lowly and Lexa’s eyes widen as Anya unwraps another Hoho and grins at Lexa mischievously. “You like them so much? Want another one, little sis’?”

Lexa throws her hands up in front of her, index fingers pointing warningly at the other woman, and takes a few steps back as Anya comes stalking towards her predatorily.

“Mo! Anga!” Lexa desperately tries to yell, but she still hasn’t managed to swallow all of the chocolate sweet and her words are barely understandable. It wouldn’t matter anyway though, because Anya ignores her plea mercilessly and a second later Lexa squeals as the taller woman gives chase. Lexa only barely manages to escape to the other side of the table however, before Anya is right there and Lexa is being pressed against the wall in the corner. She pushes both of her outstretched arms against the other woman’s shoulders to keep her at bay, but Anya’s arms seem to be freakishly long, because Lexa can only shake her head energetically before her sister laughingly smears the dark brown Hoho into Lexa’s face.

Lexa shrieks loudly and pushes Anya strongly, but the other woman is already backing away, bent over laughing.

“You asshole!” Lexa splutters and then scrapes a few pieces of mashed chocolate cake off her cheek and flings them back at her attacker. Anya merely shields her face and continues cackling happily.

“That’s what you get for committing petty larceny of food, Lexa!” Anya grins, picking up the pieces of Hoho that landed on the floor and table behind her, before making her way back over to the kitchen corner.

Lexa is still standing against the wall, trying to rid her face of the remaining bits of squashed cake.
“Gross.” She complains in a whining voice as she fingers through her now sticky hair. “You suck.”

She hears Anya laugh again and then the faucet going before a moist kitchen towel is being flung at her. It hits Lexa’s shoulder and chest and she quickly catches it before it can fall to the floor.

“Clean up and help me with this.” Anya orders and Lexa glares at the woman’s back.

“You can cook on your own, I’m taking a shower.” She tosses the towel back at her sister as she passes her on her way to the bathroom.

“Rude!” Anya calls after her and Lexa leans back to poke out her tongue at her around the corner, eyes narrowed.

Anya just grimaces back and then Lexa vanishes into the bathroom and closes the door. When she steps into the shower a minute later she hears Anya turn on the radio and then loudly sing along to Robin Schulz’s ‘Sugar’.

______________________________

Jasper changed the group name to “Bellamy’s Butthole”

Raven: :’D

Bell: Really?

Jasper: Look who finally answers!

Bell: I was at work!

Jasper: Always adulting. Ts ts ts.

Bell: What’s up?

Raven: Haven’t you been following the convo, dude?

Bell: I’m not reading through 34 new messages. You guys need to get lives.

Jasper: Weak man.

Raven: Rude.

Monty: Are you coming to Murphy’s tomorrow? He asked if we wanted to come over.

Raven: He’ll cook!

Jasper: We even got party Griff to come out of hiding! O said she’s coming too!

Bell: Okay sure. But I have to get some work done before so I’ll probably be late.

Jasper: Great! You’re bringing the beer.

Raven: And dessert!
Murphy: Wow, such enthusiasm…

Raven: Naaaawww…he still loves you, Smurphy!

Murphy: No. Enough with the nick names Raven!

Raven: You love it.

Bell: What dessert?

Octavia: Stop texting and start chopping, Raven!

Raven: Sorry boys, gotta go ^_^ Can’t wait for tomorrow, SMURPHY!

Murphy: …

Murphy: You’re uninvited.

“Anything else?” Clarke hears Raven ask as she rounds the corner of her doorway and shuffles into the living room. The smell of food wafts over to her and her stomach growls. Clarke looks up from her phone and sees Raven sitting at the counter that separates the living room from the kitchen. Octavia is standing in front of the oven across from her with her back to the living room. She looks around and notices Clarke walking towards them.

“Look who’s out of her study cave! Welcome!” she exclaims with a little smirk.

Clarke ignores her, starting to get used to the little jabs she gets from the gang about taking her studies so seriously lately, and climbs onto the bar stool next to the one Raven is sitting on. Used cutting boards and a bowl of onion skin and other scraps are scattered in front of the other girl who is concentrated on the phone in her hands.

“Can I help?” Clarke asks, looking around for what’s left to do.

“Now she asks.” Raven quips without looking up from the little screen, but Octavia just shakes her head.

“No, I’m almost done.”

“Sorry.” Clarke apologizes. She really does feel bad for not helping and just being so absent lately in general, but despite their comments and teasing she knows that her friends understand. “What are we having?”

Clarke stands up from the bar stool again to get something to drink. As she opens the cupboard to retrieve a glass she peeks over Octavia’s shoulder as the girl stirs some kind of sauce in their good frying pan.

“Just some pasta with veggie sauce.” Octavia answers pointing at the little selection of herbs and spices to Clarke’s left.

“Smells nice.” Clarke comments as she takes each spice out in turn raising her eyebrows at her friend questioningly until Octavia nods. She hands the garlic powder and nutmeg grind to the cook, before turning around and pouring herself some of the orange juice that’s already sitting on the counter. She walks back around to Raven’s right and sits down on her usual spot again.

The girl next to her giggles and then leans over to Clarke, angling the phone in her hands towards
her.

“Check it out.”

“Isn’t that O’s guy?” Clarke asks as she sees the familiar face.

It’s another selfie of the tan guy Octavia showed them at the movies and Clarke takes the phone from Raven’s hand to get a better look. This time there is definitely not as much to see of the guy as in the work-out one. He’s wearing a cap and a grey hoodie over it and from the darker spots on it and the misty mood of the photo in general Clarke deduces it must have been raining when he took it. Instead of the playful smirk the guy was wearing in the other picture this time his face displays comic shock at the street sign next to him. It says “Dead End” and in the background Clarke can clearly make out the many tomb stones of a cemetery. The picture is titled ‘#yikes’.

Clarke snorts and then scrolls down. “Are you stalking O’s guy on twitter?” she raises an eyebrow at Raven who nods.

“And Instagram and Facebook.” She adds and Clarke chuckles.

“You’re a creep.” Octavia comments without turning around from the stove and Clarke sees her shaking her head.

Raven lets out an appalled sound. “I’m just trying to look out for you!” she defends, pretending to be insulted. Octavia does turn around now and points a wooden cooking spoon at Raven.

“I’m warning you, Reyes. Hands. Off.”

Raven slaps both of her hands over her heart and lets her jaw drop. “I’m offended!”

Clarke shakes her head amused and then returns her attention to the phone as the two start reiterating all the times the other has made eyes at one of their crushes over the years.

As she scrolls down a little another picture comes up and she stops. The photo isn’t of Octavia’s guy. It shows a brunette girl sitting on some stone steps, her knees drawn up towards her body and both of her hands clutching a huge coffee cup. She’s looking somewhat annoyed at someone off camera, probably that Lincoln guy, and half her face is hidden in a red and white scarf while a red knitted hat with a big bobble adorns her head. Clarke has to smirk as she reads the caption.

*TBT to when I found Waldo. #spitting image #where’s waldo #she’ll kill me for this*

Clarke’s still grinning as she scrolls through some more pictures and posts until another selfie captures her attention.

Again the guy seems to have been working out just before the selfie, but this time he isn’t alone in the picture. He has his arm around the girl from the other photo and they’re both in work-out clothes and slightly sweaty. Clarke notices the glistening skin of the girl’s collarbone and can almost imagine it heaving with heavy breaths from the run they must have been on. They’re on some sort of mountain or hill and you can see the sun rise over Portland’s skyline in the background. It tinges the picture in a beautiful warm light and Clarke thinks it shows off their tans even better. The girl almost looks a little uncomfortable, but is wearing the ghost of a smile and Clarke thinks they don’t fit with the scowl she wore then. Here however the light upward curve of her lips is almost shy and when Clarke looks at the girl’s eyes she feels like the girl is actually looking at her. They’re swirling pools of green that turn to orange just around the pupils, but what really catches Clarke’s attention are the prominent dark rings around the irises. They seem to draw
her in and Clarke stares at the girl’s eyes a little harder, not really sure what more she’s looking for.

After a moment longer Clarke draws back a little. She notices she’s been moving her face closer to the phone to get a better look and now feels almost embarrassed. She looks at the girl at large again and then at Lincoln, who in contrast is wearing a very broad smile, before scrolling down a little to read his caption.

*These are the moments getting up at 5 am really pays off. #breathtakingview #sunrise #SheLovesItTooDon’tLetHerFoolYou*

She scrolls down a little again, this time specifically looking for another picture with the girl that would maybe tell her more about who she is. When she doesn’t find anything she scrolls back up to the sunrise one and looks up at Raven and Octavia.

“Hey, who’s she?”

Raven leans over to see and Octavia turns around as well.

“Woah!” Raven exclaims and tries to take the phone back from Clarke, but Clarke quickly pulls it out of her reach.

“Let me see?” Octavia directs and Clarke turns the phone around for her to see and stretches her arm over the counter as the other girl steps closer.

Octavia covers Clarke’s hand with her own around the phone to keep her steady as she bends forwards and takes a closer look.

“That’s Lexa.” She says instantly, leaning back and nodding at the phone. “She works with him. I met her the other day at the gym, before you picked me up.”

“She’s hot.” Raven grins and for some reason, even though she has to agree, Clarke finds her annoying in that moment.

“You think everybody’s hot.” Octavia scoffs and turns back around to the stove, turning off one of the tops.

Raven shrugs. “Well, there’s just a lot of hot people out there. That’s not my fault.”

Clarke and Octavia give each other a look, before each returning their attention on the thing in front of them.

“You so need to get laid.” Clarke mumbles, without looking up at Raven. Out of the corner of her eye she can see Octavia pointing a finger at her in agreement.

“Rude. But no argument here.” Raven sighs wistfully and Clarke just shakes her head.

Ever since Raven and Finn broke up when she was a junior in high school and he was a senior - after a few months of getting over him of course - Raven has been very open to new people. She probably goes on twice as many dates as Octavia and Clarke combined and has at least as many hook-ups as that, especially since she figured out she was bisexual in their freshman year of university. In the beginning after Raven’s coming out Clarke was almost a little jealous of all the attention her friend was getting from girls and guys alike and sometimes she thought Octavia was as well. It wasn’t like the two of them weren’t happy with their own dating lives, but sometimes Raven’s accounts of dates with girls made at least Clarke think about her own sexuality. She’d always found girls beautiful and could appreciate their sensuality, but she’d never really thought
about them in a sexual way. Or even just a more loving way. Not until Raven started talking about
girls like that. Almost like they were different creatures than herself. Something mesmerizing.
Something to be worshipped. It changed Clarke’s perspective little by little and she couldn’t help but
suddenly notice all the things Raven was talking about. The way girls could be soft but powerful at
the same time and how their complexity, if you really thought about it, was something beautiful in
itself. It was weird thinking about girls in an admiring sort of way when you were a girl yourself, but
somehow it made sense and in a way Clarke couldn’t quite explain it helped her see herself in a
different light as well.

Although Raven’s coming out changed Clarke’s perspective in many ways she still doesn’t think
she’s ever had a crush on a girl or something along those lines. She’s kissed girls, even Raven once,
and it was good, maybe even better than with most boys, but it’s just not her. Sometimes she’s almost
disappointed that she’s straight, but she’s just never felt the kind of connection or attraction to a girl
that Raven talks about.

She looks back down at the phone.

Lexa.

The name really fits her somehow, Clarke thinks.

“Oh, can you guys quit stalking Lincoln now and set the table? Dinner’s practically done.”
Octavia commands and then takes the large pot from the stove and pours its content into the metal
colander she’s already placed in the sink. White steam rises up from the hot pasta and Clarke’s
stomach growls again.

She and Raven slide off their stools and Clarke looks at the picture one last time before placing
Raven’s phone aside with her own to make room for the plates Raven is getting out of the cupboard
above the sink.

When they all sit down to eat a couple of minutes later Clarke suddenly remembers something.

“So, I’m going to Murphy’s tomorrow?”

“Oh-“ Octavia and Raven share a look. “-eah, we forgo- to tell you abou- tha-.” Octavia says around
a mouthful of food, obviously trying to sound casual and Raven just nods, humming in agreement
while chewing her food and avoiding Clarke’s eyes. Clarke can tell by the way they’re acting that
they haven’t ‘forgotten’ to tell her at all, but she just smiles. She knows it’s their way of trying to
trick her into hanging out with them and the others more and she feels her heart warm.

“Allright, good to know.” Clarke just shrugs and smirks at her plate. She really misses just having a
nice night with the gang and the way Octavia and Raven not so secretly share a surprised but
triumphant look just then when she doesn’t object tells her how much they’ve been hoping to be
successful at convincing her to go and how much they obviously didn’t think it would actually work.

She silently vows to make more time for them. The last few weeks have been so exhausting and
unsatisfying, always just studying and missing out on almost all the fun or even just the quiet
evenings, chilling on Raven’s bed and talking about nothing. Apart from the movie she let herself get
talked into going to the week before she hasn’t really socialized much at all. Of course her main
objective is still acing her courses and especially the MCAT this year, but maybe she just needs to
find a better balance. Studying for hours on end really takes a toll, especially when she deprives
herself of too much of her social interactions, but Clarke knows it’s something she’ll just have to get
used to if she wants to succeed.
Yes. She needs balance.

*Study hard, party hard.*

“I’m still going to the library tomorrow though.” She decides.

The other two look first at her, then each other and then they simultaneously shake their heads.

“Nerd.”

“Weirdo.”

---

Chapter End Notes

Alright y'all!

I hope you enjoyed this update. It's gotten really long and I thought about cutting it, but it just fits quite well like this I think.

Let me know what you think and if you noticed both times clexa almost met ;)

Happy Pride, everybody!!

Love is love is love is love,

Lea
Meeting Lincoln

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

After dinner Raven and Clarke clean up while Octavia goes to take a shower.

Raven connects her phone with Octavia’s little portable speaker she and Clarke bought the other girl for her last birthday. Even though it’s technically Octavia’s it’s always usually either in the kitchen or the living room for everybody to use. Raven puts on a playlist which Clarke has heard coming from her room or the bathroom at least once a day for the past week or so. And that’s impressive seeing as Clarke hasn’t been home much at all lately. But in fact any time she is home and Raven is as well the same dozen or so songs play over and over and Raven never seems to get tired of hearing them or singing along. You’d think Clarke and Octavia would go nuts, but Raven’s always been like that. She’s always loved music and she’s always had phases where she gets obsessed with some songs and then plays those over and over until she gets bored of them or can’t listen to them herself anymore and then it starts all over again with a new playlist. So Clarke and especially Octavia, knowing Raven the longest of all of their friends, have gotten used to it and even though from time to time they do ask Raven to ‘put something else on for crying out loud’ they usually don’t even notice the endless repetition anymore.

The first song has a funky beat to it and Raven starts dancing as she sorts their plates and cutlery into the dishwasher. Clarke has to laugh as Raven blocks her way to the trash bin by bumping out her ass and twerking against her, almost pushing her against the bar counter. Raven wiggles her eyebrows at Clarke over her shoulder as she sings along to the song, practically grinding on Clarke, and then cheers and laughs as Clarke lightly slaps the other girl’s butt, playfully signaling Raven to let her get through. When Raven backs up a little Clarke slides past her and empties the onion skins and the other waste into the bin below the sink.

It takes Raven only one more song to infect Clarke with her good mood and for the rest of the clean-up Clarke and Raven dance around each other, occasionally leaning their heads together to belt the lyrics they obviously know by heart by now into a dirty glass or a sponge.

After they’re finished and the kitchen looks as spotless as it did before, Raven unplugs her phone and the both of them grab a chocolate bar from the cupboard. Clarke quickly goes to retrieve her book and her biology notes from her room before joining Raven in hers. The other girl is already sitting at her desk, doing something on her computer, when Clarke walks in and throws her things onto Raven’s bed to the left before walking over to the hammock Raven installed against the wall between her bed and the desk to the right.

At first when Raven decided that now that she finally lives on her own she wants to fulfill her life-long dream of a hammock in her bedroom and started boring into the ceiling Clarke got a stomach ache. Just thinking about all the ways this could backfire on them stressed her out to no end. What if the ceiling gave out or Raven electrocuted herself, accidentally boring into a power line? She voiced all those concerns to Raven. Multiple times. But the other girl just waved her off and told her to ‘not get her knickers in a bunch, I thought I wasn’t living with my abuela anymore!’ And as so often Octavia wasn’t really a lot of help either, calling dibs for eternity while holding the ladder for Raven as the girl put in some Rawlplugs.

In the end, after Clarke saw that the hammock even held two drunk boys and an excitedly hopping Octavia, her fears quieted and she’s had to admit that it is incredibly relaxing to sink into the comfortable cloth swing and just let loose. You can’t actually swing much with it, seeing as you have
the wall right behind you, but you can lazily push yourself back and forth a little with your foot or hand, and that is really all a hammock is supposed to do anyway, Clarke thinks.

She sighs contently as she pushes the little dark red throw pillow a little higher up behind her head until she is comfortable enough and then she hears the water shut off in the a-joining bathroom.

While they hear Octavia walk back and forth between the bathroom and her bed room across from Raven’s a couple of times, Raven shows Clarke a few videos on YouTube. Lately the Latina has been all over this sport called ‘tricking’ where people, usually young, fit men, do all sorts of fascinating stunts and twirls and gymnastic tricks on the grass or using their natural surroundings like picnic tables and the likes to do somersaults and other fancy stuff off of. It reminds Clarke of that Parkouring thing everybody seems to be doing or talking about now and Raven explained to her that the two were similar, but not quite the same. Clarke knows Raven told her a couple of differences, but all she can remember is that with Parkour you try to get from one place to another and ‘tricking’ you kind of just do on the spot for fun. There’s also another thing called ‘Free-running’, which is apparently a mix between the two, but Clarke honestly stopped paying attention at that point, so now when Raven asks her with a smirk if she could tell if they were doing tricking or free-running in the video Clarke quickly squints at the title displayed over it, hoping it would hold the answer.

“Free-running,” she quotes part of it and Raven seems almost impressed until she catches on and throws a pencil at Clarke as punishment for trying to trick her. Clarke quickly pulls the hem of the hammock over her head and the pencil misses her, first hitting the outside of the hammock and then falling to the floor below with a light clatter.

“Cheater.” Raven shakes her head at Clarke, who carefully peeks over the edge of the hammock and toothily grins at her friend.

Just then the door opens and Octavia shuffles in, wearing her baby pink sleeping shorts and oversized The Who hoodie. She’s also sporting her neon orange fuzzy socks and they clash horribly with Raven’s soft maroon rug over which she almost trips as she’s too focused on the phone in her hands to pay attention to where she’s going.

“Are you texting Lincoooln?” Raven drawls in her best girly gossip voice, as she swivels around in her chair and watches as Octavia sinks down onto the rug covered floor in front of Raven’s bed. The other girl only hums in confirmation and then holds up a finger, typing another second, before finally looking up at them.

“Yep.” She affirms again and then places her phone next to herself on the floor, folding her legs until she’s sitting cross-legged, before leaning back against the mattress. “I asked him if he wants to tag along to Murphy’s tomorrow.”

“Really?” Raven and Clarke ask at the same time and then Clarke adds, “What did he say?”

“I just now sent it.” Octavia tells them and then looks behind herself to see what’s poking against her head and drags Clarke’s MCAT preparation book that’s still lying on Raven’s bed towards herself until it slides off and heavily drops into her hands. She groans as the back of her hands get slapped against her own thighs with the weight of it. “What the hell is this?”

“Clarke’s new best friend apparently.” Raven tells her and Octavia raises an eyebrow at Clarke.

“Seriously?” she asks, looking down at the huge book in her lap in bewilderment, and Clarke throws out her hands.

“I’m trying to get into medical school here, people! It’s not news that it requires a lot of studying!
“Well, you didn’t study as much last year,” Raven interposes and then quickly goes on, before Clarke can interrupt. “And, yeah, yeah, we know that this year you have to pass that huuuuge test to get in,” she wiggles her head from left to right, acting like it’s all Clarke ever talks about. Clarke throws the girl a look, but Raven doesn’t even seem to notice as she continues. “But we just didn’t expect you to be so busy this early in the year.” Raven explains, leaning back in her desk chair.

“I know, I know.” Clarke sighs, rolling onto her back in the hammock and looking up at Raven’s ceiling. It’s mostly white except for that one spot from the time Raven found her old toys in one of the cardboard boxes in her grandparents’ basement and brought home a small green hand, made of some smelly, sticky rubber-like material and attached to a string of the same texture. She very excitedly showed Clarke, who had never seen anything like it before, how you played with it. Basically you just held on to the end of the string which had a little ring attached for you to put your finger through and then you just threw it out kind of like you’d do with a fishing rod and it would stick to anything it touched. Like the bed frame, Raven’s lamp or, yes, the ceiling. It got stuck on the latter and when they finally were able to pry it off again it left a stain that is still visible now.

“But I mean I agreed to come to Murphy’s tomorrow, so can we, like, stop the Clarke chiding for at least a little while?” Clarke continues, almost whining. She’s going back from being used to the teasing to being annoyed by it again and she just wants some peace.

“I guess that’s fair.” Raven concedes and then Clarke feels the girl’s foot prod at her side. It tickles and Clarke squeaks a little and jerks away, but Raven just starts lightly pushing her back and forth in the hammock and Clarke relaxes.

She closes her eyes and hums contently. “Good.”

She wants to ask Octavia to question her a little on the material she already studied, but the gentle swaying lulls her into a state of relaxed calm and somehow she must have dozed off for a moment, because when the pressure from Raven’s foot suddenly vanishes and she hears her roommate’s voice from behind her instead, Clarke jerks awake and she just has the feeling that some time has passed.

“Is that him?”

Clarke blinks the weariness from her eyes and struggles to sit up a little straighter in the hammock, looking at Raven and then following her eyes to Octavia who is still sitting in front of the bed. The dark haired girl nods, looking down at her phone again, and Clarke finally catches on. Lincoln answered.

“And? Is he coming tomorrow?” she asks and her already sleep-scratchy voice breaks mid-sentence and she has to clear her throat.

Octavia’s smile answers the question before she does. “Yeah. He says he’d love to.” She grins up at them and Clarke can’t help but grin back.

“All right!” Raven claps her hands excitedly and then holds one of them out to Octavia who eyes it suspiciously.

“What?” she asks and Raven wags the hand impatiently.

“Give me that.” she raises her eyebrows at the phone and Octavia snorts.

“Yeah, right.”
“Oh, come on! I’ll make sure he’s packing flowers and condoms.”

“Raven!” Clarke and Octavia call out and Octavia hugs the phone to her chest. “We’ve only just had our first kiss the other day!” she declares almost scandalized and Clarke’s eyebrows rise. They did?

“Besides, we’re going to Murphy’s!” Octavia reminds their roommate and shakes her head, throwing Clarke a meaningful look.

Clarke mimics it, but thinks it’s a little unusual for Octavia to be so… proper about it all. She usually doesn’t care much about whether things develop slowly or quickly and Clarke gets a feeling that this Lincoln guy might be more important to Octavia than she originally thought. Maybe this was more than just another cute and interesting guy to her roommate. She eyes Octavia curiously.

“Oh my god, you guys are no fun.” Raven rolls her eyes, but can’t hide the smirk, giving her joke away. Clarke huffs out a little disbelieving laugh.

“Please just call Tyler back.” she groans, abandoning her interest in Octavia’s love life for the moment in favor of Raven’s apparently growing horniness, and rolls onto her side in the hammock. She can’t get comfortable however and her arm is kind of stuck beneath her and it’s just not working, so she sits up with a sigh and heavily swings her legs over the side of the blue and turquoise hammock, stretching her back.

“I second that.” Octavia agrees with Clarke’s suggestion for Raven to get with her semi-frequent hook-up guy again.

“Nah,” the girl shakes her head and grimaces. “I’m through with him. He kept wanting to listen to Justin Bieber while we got it on. Total turn off.”

Octavia snorts and Clarke has to grin as well as Raven pretends to violently vomit over the side of her chair, her pony tail whipping after her.

“That’s what you get for dating a younger guy.” Clarke teases and Raven mouths it back at her and then slides down in her chair a little and tries to kick Clarke’s butt from under the hammock.

“I’m not dating him.” She clarifies as Clarke swats at her foot and pushes the hammock and herself backwards until she feels the wall against her back to avoid Raven’s kicks. “Quit it!” she commands emphatically, with a little laugh, when Raven continues trying to find a way through Clarke’s defenses, but the other girl just grins at her and then launches herself out of her chair without another warning and flies towards Clarke who squeals loudly.

“NO! Raven! Raven!”

Raven cackles like a witch as she slumps her body down on top of Clarke, pressing her hard into the hammock. Clarke’s face is being squished against the cloth and her yells are muffled as she tries to protest. Even though she’s very lean, Raven’s body is extremely heavy and Clarke groans as she has trouble breathing. Especially when Raven starts tickling her. Clarke bucks up and squeals even louder, calling out for help from Octavia as she tries to fight off Raven’s hands at her sides.

Octavia doesn’t seem to be too eager to come to her aid however and Clarke is left to her own devices. Her own giggles are shrill in her ears as she kicks her feet and bumps her hips back against the other girl’s body to throw her off her back, but Raven is stronger than her and has the advantage of a better position.

“Stop!” Clarke begs between hoarse laughter once she manages to turn her head to the side, Raven’s wiggling fingers always escaping her desperate grasps, but the other girl doesn’t let up. Not until a
stray kick from Clarke hits her bad knee and she yelps out in pain and cringes back. Clarke freezes.

“Shit! Raven!”

The other girl pulls back, drawing in a hissing breath through her teeth, her face grimacing in pain, and Clarke quickly scrambles to sit up next to her. Octavia is there in an instant as well, one hand already over Raven’s which are clasping around her knee.

“I’m sorry!” Clarke apologizes sincerely, her heart racing from the tickling but also from the shock that comes when you accidentally hurt someone. “Are you okay?” She carefully places a hand on the other girl’s back, who still hasn’t said anything and is now rocking back and forth a little her jaw and eyes shut tight.

“Ray?” Octavia enquires as well and Raven shakes her head.

“I’m fine. It’s fine.” She says through gritted teeth and then slowly blows out some air, opening her eyes and seemingly relaxing a little.

“I’m so sorry.” Clarke repeats and finally Raven looks at her.

“It’s alright. I’m fine.” She promises again, slowly releasing her own leg and tenderly placing her foot on the floor, but Clarke isn’t convinced. Octavia isn’t either by the looks of it, because she starts pulling up Raven’s comfortable training pants. They’re the kind that are a little tighter at the bottom of the legs however and she stops trying halfway up Raven’s left calf.

Raven reaches down and pulls them back down, grabbing Octavia’s hand with her other one. “I’m fine, really!” she insists, but Octavia won’t hear any of it.

“Come on, let Clarke take a look.” Octavia urges, standing up and holding a hand out to Raven to help her up so she can take her pants off herself, frowning in concern. Clarke nods and stands up as well.

Raven looks up at them with an exasperated sort of look in her eyes and doesn’t take Octavia’s offered hand.

“Guys, seriously, I’m f- “

“If you say you’re fine one more time, Raven, I swear to god!” Octavia interrupts her impatiently, raising her voice over Raven’s, and Clarke can tell she’s really pissed now. Her jaw is clenched, her muscles showing at the sides, and Clarke can see Octavia struggling to keep her breathing even as her shoulders and chest heave up and down. She’s glaring down at Raven and Clarke watches the two exchange some sort of staring contest, before Raven apparently gives in and lets Octavia help her up.

Raven carefully wiggles out of her pants and then hobbles over to the bed, begrudgingly letting Clarke help her. She sits down on the mattress and Clarke kneels in front of her, shuffling closer until she can carefully place Raven’s foot between her legs and get a better look at the knee.

Together Clarke and Raven open the buckles of Raven’s knee brace and then hand it to Octavia who is still standing next to Clarke on her left, watching.

Raven places both of her hands behind her on the mattress and leans back, letting her head hang as Clarke starts examining the leg. Of course Clarke isn’t a doctor yet, but she has been present for almost all of Raven’s check-ups and when her mum decided she would be moving back to Seattle she made sure Clarke knew as much as she could about Raven’s leg. She explained everything she
was doing when checking up on the girl and told Clarke exactly what to watch out for in case of an emergency or just to make sure everything was alright every once in a while. Clarke paid close attention and even jotted down a few things to make sure she didn’t forget anything.

Gently Clarke stretches Raven’s leg and then bends it again, all the while keeping one hand on her knee to feel for any misplacements, larger swelling or tenderness. She’s relieved when she can’t detect anything greatly amiss, but knows that doesn’t necessarily mean everything is alright. Raven’s knee does look a little swollen to her in general, but that might also come from the brace that Raven has been wearing every day lately. The straps might cut off some of the circulation and cause the slight swelling on the sides.

When Clarke puts a little pressure on the back of Raven’s knee the girl jerks and hisses. Out of the corner of her eye Clarke sees Octavia immediately take a step closer, probably out of reflex, and she continues her examination even more carefully. Even though Clarke is usually the one nagging Raven about taking better care of her leg and not doing sports or something equally dangerous for her, when something actually is wrong and Raven is in pain Octavia is like a mother lion watching over her cub. She always used to hover over exams and asked the doctors at least as many questions as Clarke usually did although most of the time she had to look to Clarke for explanation when the medical talk exceeded her knowledge on the matter. And whenever Octavia catches Raven limping you can be sure to find her massaging Raven’s knee later that same day. Aside from Abby Octavia is also the one person Raven listens to the most and Clarke knows to use that whenever Raven is being exceptionally adamant about being reckless. At those times she concentrates more on convincing Octavia that whatever Raven was planning would be a bad idea than Raven, because she knows getting Octavia on her side is probably the best way to get Raven to actually comply anyway.

This time however it’s not that easy, because Raven hasn’t actually done anything ill-advised. Something’s just wrong and all Raven is really doing is not doing something. Not getting herself the help she should be getting. And for a change it’s actually harder to get Raven to do something rather than not, which is usually the bigger challenge.

“Raven,” Clarke starts carefully as she places Raven’s foot back on the floor between her legs and looks up at the girl. Raven’s avoiding her eyes and staring at her lap instead. Clarke knows that Raven knows what’s coming and she also knows that Raven knows that she’s right and she has no doubt that Raven hates it.

“You really need to get it checked out.” She implores quietly and Raven is still not looking at her as she starts shaking her head.

“Yes!” Octavia counters Raven’s unsaid denial. “You do!” The girl moves and sits down on the bed next to Raven, never taking her eyes off the other girl who is now staring out the window, facing away from them. It’s dark outside by now and Clarke notices the silence. While Clarke’s and Octavia’s rooms face the street outside, the windows of Raven’s room lead out to the little shared inner courtyard between their apartment building and the one next to it. Even though it’s not very loud, Clarke is still used to the noises of the street below her windows at night and the absence of the sound of cars driving by becomes particularly noticeable to her as Raven remains quiet.

“Please,” Octavia almost whispers as she leans into Raven, eyes searching the side of the other girl’s face. “RaeRae. Please?” she takes Raven’s right hand into hers and squeezes.

Raven shakes her head once more, looking up at the ceiling, and Clarke thinks she’s doing that to keep the tears at bay. Clarke swallows hard against the sadness she feels for Raven in that moment and then the girl finally turns to them and looks at Octavia.

“I’ll call Abby tomorrow.” She concedes quietly, her voice layered with so many emotions. Sadness,
anger, exhaustion, surrender. And when Octavia opens her mouth to protest Clarke grabs her ankle and shakes her head. This is as far as they will get and Abby will tell Raven the same thing they are anyway. That she needs to stop being so stubborn and find another specialist in Portland. Octavia considers her a moment, before sighing once and nodding.

“Fine.” She gives in, squeezing Raven’s hand once more before getting up. Clarke knows Octavia would have loved to hug Raven, to just show her that they’re there for her, but they both know Raven well enough to know that she wouldn’t want that right now. She’s very touchy-feely, except when she’s really upset. Then she just needs her space and won’t let anybody near her. Only a few people would have even been allowed to hold her hand like that when she’s practically fighting tears already and Clarke knows it took a lot from Raven not to pull away. Octavia knows that too, though, which is probably why she pulled back herself and got up from the bed.

“I need some rest.” Raven says, her voice still quieter than usual, and she’s back to avoiding eye contact. Clarke understands the dismissal and after looking at Raven for another second she pushes off her knees and gets up as well.

“Okay, well I’m setting my alarm clock to eight tomorrow in case anybody wants to have breakfast with me.” She informs both of them, changing the topic as she reaches behind Raven to get her notebook. Octavia bends down and picks up her book for her from the floor.

“I might be up.” Octavia says, handing her the weighty tome and then they’re both eyeing Raven again who has gotten up from the bed as well by now.

When she notices the both of them looking at her, she just snorts. “Yeah, right. No way.” She shakes her head and her expression is almost back to normal when she gives Clarke and Octavia a look that tells them to not be ridiculous.

Clarke smiles and shrugs. “Fine, suit yourself.”

“Thanks, I will.” Raven presses her lips together in a sassy sort of smile of her own, before ushering the both of them out of her room with some shooing noises.

Clarke’s glad the mood is practically back to normal as she and Raven gather into the bathroom, Raven trying not to limp and Clarke pretending not to notice, and get ready for bed. Octavia who already brushed her teeth after her shower earlier says goodnight and vanishes into her room, already texting again.

Raven is very rarely ever noticeably upset, and when she is, it usually doesn’t last long. Clarke has always admired the girl’s ability to get over things so quickly, but sometimes she wonders if Raven really does though, or if it’s all just an act. Either way it means that it happens as good as never that there’s a bigger issue between them, but on those rare occasions that it does happen Clarke always hates it when they go to bed with that weird vibe hanging over them. It makes it hard for her to fall asleep.

Today she’s not worried about that anymore, however, as Raven grins broadly when Clarke frowns at her in the mirror, eyeing Dale the brush with a little disgust as he glides through Raven’s silky hair.

Right, left, right. Side step. Left, right, left. Duck back. And again.
Her heart is racing in her chest and sweat is dropping down every part of her body. With every hit her shoulders ache more and her core is so tight she knows she won’t be able to relax it completely for quite a while after her training. Her knuckles feel raw, but she hasn’t drawn blood yet. At least not through her wraps. Indra has been having Lexa go against the bag with ungloved hands for a few months now, upping the duration of those work-outs gradually over time. Many other trainers would frown upon that, but Indra wants Lexa to strengthen every part of herself and training like that hardens her mind and her body at the same time. At first Lexa bled more easily, she would be distracted by the pain during the training sessions and her hands would sting for days after, but now she barely feels the blows anymore. And during real fights, when she’s in the ring, she doesn’t feel pain that much anymore at all. At least she doesn’t really register it in the moment. It’s getting easier and easier for her to just slip away into a state of total, unwavering focus and she knows that these bare-knuckled sessions have a lot to do with that.

Today she’s a little off her game, however, and she can’t quite shut out the way her muscles strain and her fists burn. She hopes it doesn’t show.

“Good!” Indra’s voice comes from behind her. She’s quiet but Lexa has no problem hearing her despite the loud thuds her hands make on the dangling punching bag and the shouts and sounds from the few other people that are training in the room as well. She’s always tuned in on her coach’s voice. “Go again! Be more fluent.” She directs and Lexa wishes they were outside, because then she could spit the extra saliva that’s making her lips sticky onto the pavement and it probably wouldn’t be so hot either.

“Come on, concentrate!” Indra barks a little louder this time and Lexa quickly rubs her wrist over her forehead, trying to wipe off the perspiration. Her arms are just as sweaty though and it’s not really doing much good at all. She mentally shakes herself and gives it her all again.

*Right, left, right. Side step. Left, right, left. Duck back. “Lower!”*

*Right, left, right. Side step. Left, right, left. Duck back. “Better. Pick up the pace, Lexa!”*

*Right, left, right. Side step. Left, right, left. Duck back. “Good. One more!”*

*Right, left, right. Side step. Left, right, left. Duck back. “Go free!”*

At her coach’s command Lexa immediately ducks down and flurries at least seven blows onto the heavy bag, making the chains holding it up rattle loudly. With a strained cry she flings a sharp right hook upwards from her lowered position, before dodging an imaginary jab at her chest. Then she wraps her upper body sideways around the bag and knees the bottom of it as hard as she can two times. She takes a step back, spinning on the spot, and then launches such a powerful high kick at the punching bag that it wobbly sways back and forth. Lexa pretends it’s her ‘opponent’ coming towards her and slides underneath it, before jumping up on the other side with her back to it and crying out loudly once more as she turns with her entire body, hitting the bag hard a few times in succession as she spins. *Right elbow, right fist, left fist, kick!*

“Alright! Stand down.” Indra’s command jerks Lexa out of her flow, but she can’t stop her momentum and throws another high hook, before she can reel herself in and take two steps back. She holds her hands out in front of her as the bag swings back towards her, but it only taps her lightly and then swings back.

Her breathing is heavy and fast and only now does she really notice how truly drenched she actually is. The training room is hot and stuffy and it tickles as beads of sweat chase each other down her face, her legs and her spine where they pool at the small of her back. She wishes she hadn’t forgotten to take her towel with her from the weight room, but a second later Indra calls her name and when
she turns around she sees it in her hands. She must have seen Lexa walking passed it and picked it up behind her. Indra tosses the drying cloth to her and Lexa gratefully presses it against her face, her arm muscles quivering from the exertion. She keeps it there for a few more seconds until her breathing is closer to normal and then rubs it over her hair, neck and arms as well to dry herself off a little.

When she’s done she walks over to Indra who is still standing near the punching bag, writing something on Lexa’s training sheet.

The other woman doesn’t immediately look up at her and instead hands Lexa her water bottle while she continues writing. Lexa takes the bottle and squeezes it hard, making a jet of cold water squirt into her mouth from an inch away. Lexa can feel the cool liquid making its way down into her stomach and she lifts the bottle to her lips again to take another gulp. A minute or so later Indra is finally done and looks up at Lexa over her reading glasses.

She doesn’t speak for another second and Lexa patiently waits for her assessment. She’s used to Indra’s long silences and piercing looks by now and usually doesn’t get nervous or squirmy under her intense gaze anymore.

When Indra starts talking she looks back down to her notes, “You’re posture has improved. Your center is harder which is good, but you have to be careful not to let it take away from your agility. Keep your shoulders more flexible, too, she’s big on fakes before flurries.”

Lexa knows Indra is referring to the woman she will be fighting a week from today and she nods, fully concentrating on retaining all the information she gets from her coach. Anything to avoid another mistake like the one from her training fight last week.

“You’re defensive stance is good, but don’t get too comfortable with your fists up. Give her chances to attack. Lower your guard on purpose. That way when she jabs at you, you know it’s coming. You’re quick enough to react in time.” Indra goes on and Lexa stares straight ahead as she nods again.

“Got it.” Is all she says, repeating Indra’s instructions to herself in her head. Be agile, be flexible, let her come at you.

“Good. Now get your Grappling Gloves.” Indra orders and Lexa nods once and watches her walk over towards the other corner where Lincoln just started his sandbag work-out himself, before she turns around to retrieve her Grappling Gloves from her duffle bag that’s lying next to the door near the punching bag she just worked on herself. She likes the Grappling Gloves a lot more than her Boxing ones. For one, because they are lighter and not as hot, but mostly because it almost feels like she isn’t wearing any gloves at all and it grounds her. That’s one of the reasons she prefers Mixed Martial Arts fighting over Boxing in general. In the MMA ring she’s free.

No big, bulky gloves, just her smaller Grappling ones; no shoes, just her bare feet; and comparably less rules, just her instincts and her imagination when she thinks of ways to defeat her opponent.

MMA fighting is swift, raw and real. It feels more like facing an actual enemy and the fights spike her adrenaline so high that she usually barely remembers what she even did until Indra shows her the tapes.

When Lexa walks back over towards the boxing ring across from the three training sandbags Lincoln is already putting on some combat gloves himself. She smiles at him as he greets her. She had one client this morning, so she’s been here all day, but Lincoln only came in about an hour ago and the two haven’t had any chance to talk yet. Now isn’t the time either though as Indra hands them two mouth pieces and tells them to go up into the ring.
Sparring with Lincoln is one of Lexa’s favorite training methods. Sparring in general really, but with Lincoln she’s always just that little bit more motivated to win. Anya calls it her natural sibling rivalry. She likes to remind Lexa that their fights used to always end with Anya sitting on top of Lexa’s chest, her knees pinning down Lexa’s arms, for years. Lexa likes to remind Anya that she could take her in under a minute now, but somehow Anya never seems impressed.

“Ready?” Lincoln mumbles through his protective mouth piece, smirking at Lexa as the two of them meet in the middle of the ring. Lexa just raises an eyebrow and Lincoln grins a little wider. “Alright then!” They tap gloves and then each take two steps back, bouncing on the balls of their feet.

Once they hear Indra declaring their practice sparring fight open they begin their dance. They jump back and forth and test each other out with light jabs as they circle the ring. Lexa is the first one to attack. She flings herself at the muscular, black guy, bending down and grabbing him around the middle. She manages to wrestle him backwards a few steps, but he’s too tall and heavy for her to get him to the ground this way and when he finds his footing again she quickly releases him and jumps back so he can’t take advantage of her position and punch her exposed sides or back. He steps in with two quick strides and Lexa is forced to duck away to her right as he swings a heavy fist towards her face. Following the direction of her movement she fires two jabs at his stomach area and Lincoln tightens his abs and takes a step back from the hits.

They go back and forth like this for a while, Lexa making herself, and therefore his target, small and trying to unsettle him with swift changes in direction and a few high kicks, and Lincoln, who is more used to boxing than the more free MMA style, hunching over and trying to catch Lexa off guard with alternating hooks to her face and her sides.

Indra calls out orders to both of them from outside the ring, directing Lexa to be more creative and Lincoln to stop playing by the rules and challenge her a little more. Lexa is just about to prepare herself for a butterfly kick when Lincoln bends over and comes at her like she did at the beginning of the fight. She isn’t quick enough to sidestep him and he easily tackles her to the ground, being at least a good fifty to sixty pounds heavier than her.

She follows their momentum however and when her back hits the ring’s matt she grunts as she arches it and brings her knees and legs up with all her might, hurling Lincoln over her head as she rolls over her own shoulder. He huffs out some air as his back hits the floor, but before Lexa can scramble on top of him, he has turned onto his hands and knees and then quickly springs back up. Lexa gets to her feet as well, but remains in a very low stance. She stares at his eyes and he stares back for a second, both of their bodies heaving with fast breaths and ready to pounce. Then he launches another attack, attempting to wrap both of his arms around Lexa’s neck so he can either lock her in at his side or knee her in the face or stomach. She predicts his move however and manages to duck away under his left arm and circle around. That’s her chance. With all her might Lexa kicks the six-feet-two-inches tall guy in the back of his knees and he stumbles to the ground in front of her. In the blink of an eye she’s on his back and now her right arm wraps around his neck from behind, her left hand pulling at her own wrist to tighten the hold. His hands grasp at her arm and he tries to buck her off, but after another two seconds of Lexa holding her death-grip he tabs out and she releases him and slides off his back.

Lincoln coughs a few times as he stands up again and then clears his throat, turning around to face Lexa. “Slick move.” He says appreciatively, taking out his mouth piece and Lexa smiles at the compliment. She kind of wishes Anya had been here to see her just then. She would have been proud.

“Good!” Indra claps twice and Lexa looks over at her coach, who’s just climbing through the ropes, her clipboard with her notes in her hand.
“How did you defeat him?” Indra asks Lexa without wasting time as she comes to stand in front of her and Lincoln shifts his weight from one foot to the other a little awkwardly next to them. Lexa can’t stop her smile as she takes out her own mouthpiece and puts it in her training shorts pocket. This time she knows the answer right away.

“I took advantage of his weaknesses.” She lifts her head and folds her gloved hands behind her back.

“What was his weakness?” Indra inquires further. The way her eyes sparkle makes Lexa think she might just have missed something after all. Suddenly she feels a little unsure.

“Um…” she releases her hands. “I kicked him in the back of his knees.” She answers and even as she says it she thinks that it sounds incredibly obvious and lame and is probably not at all what Indra is getting at. She frowns and thinks back to the fight, trying to find what Indra is looking for. God, it’s frustrating that she never seems to know what her coach is thinking. It’s just never what she expects lately.

“That you did.” Indra confirms the obvious, her face unreadable, and Lexa swallows. “But what was his weakness? How could you even get behind him?” Indra presses on and finally Lexa thinks she’s got it now. She straightens her back and suppresses a smile in case she is wrong again.

“I was agile.”

“Yes!” Indra affirms, pointing at Lexa, and Lexa is a little surprised by the way Indra seems to almost be excited. About what, she doesn’t know. “Yes you were! You were agile. You were fluent. You used your seeming disadvantage in height, weight and muscle power to your advantage and you relied on your strength.”

Surprise is monumentally surpassed at this point. Lexa is awestruck and pretty sure it must show on her face, but she can’t help it. She has never heard Indra compliment anyone like this. Ever. She feels like she has just been congratulated by the mayor and the president and she doesn’t know what to do with it. Or what she did that was so special. She’s won plenty of fights and practically all of them more exciting and important than this one. She has no idea why Indra seems so excited about this one in particular. She didn’t do anything different than always. Or did she?

Indra takes a step toward her and lays a hand onto Lexa’s shoulder, her expression serious. “You’re fast, you’re agile and you have good instincts. If you only concentrate!” she gazes at Lexa imploringly, a certain urgency in her voice.

Lexa is still so thunderstruck that she forgets to even do as much as nod, but Indra doesn’t seem to mind. She eyes Lexa another moment, before nodding and lightly patting her upper arm. Taking a step back she takes her reading glasses off her head and puts them on. Then she looks at Lexa one more time over the rim of them. “Remember your strengths, Lexa.”

This time Lexa does nod and Indra mirrors her before turning to Lincoln who is still standing patiently next to them. “Mr. Bryant had to cancel his session for today.”

The change of topic is abrupt and only adds to Lexa’s perplexity. She feels as if something just flew passed her and she’s struggling to catch up with it, but it’s already out of sight. She shakes herself inwardly and looks at Lincoln who’s frowning in surprised confusion at the new information. “Really? He didn’t text m-“

“It appears he has lost his phone. He called in at reception and Marney relayed the information to me this morning.” She informs him and a smile breaks out on Lincoln’s face.
“Sweet!”

“Alright.” Indra turns around, seemingly having said all she had to say, and Lexa and Lincoln follow her off the ring platform. They briefly stop at the bottom of the steps and Indra tells them to disinfect their mouthpieces before they leave and then takes off with a reminder to Lexa to stick to the diet plan she set for her. Lexa is still a little bit perplexed, but promises she will. Usually fighters have a very restricted diet weeks before a fight, but seeing as Lexa is still kind of new to this and only fights on a semi-professional level Indra has allowed her a little more freedom with that than she would if Lexa were a professional fighter. Aside from the coffee switch there haven’t been many changes at all really. Partly that is because Lexa does already lead a quite healthy lifestyle most of the time. Indra did chide Lexa for drinking the other week however after it came up in conversation and Lexa has sworn to quit alcohol three weeks before a fight from now on.

She doesn’t mind these restrictions much. They always had some constraints or others in the military. Not necessarily dietary ones, but over all Lexa has found that it isn’t all that hard for her to heed to them. As long as they don’t go against her morals that is. She always thought that being in foster care would mean she’d want to be even more free once she had the opportunity to choose for herself, but somehow she seems to always seek out ways of life that restrict her in some way. Sometimes she thinks that maybe she’s damaged somehow and subconsciously just doesn’t trust herself to be free, because she wouldn’t be able to keep herself in check at all anymore if that happened. That something would unleash within her and take over. Whenever her thoughts take her there she feels this fear strike her that there is something inside of her, something powerful, uncontrollable, that needs to be held back at all costs. It’s a scary thought and whenever it pops up Lexa tries to reason with herself that she’s just being dramatic or tired or in a weird mood and that maybe she’s reading way too much into all of it. Maybe she was just always going to be a naturally very controlled person when she grows up and all the times she acted out when she was younger were just normal puberty glitches in her personality. Maybe all the things she did and thought and said back then, when she felt like everything was a nightmare, were just what the foster system made her and not who she was. Maybe she simply got over it and there is nothing left that could be slumbering deep inside her, threatening to break through. Maybe she’s not controlling herself, or holding anything back at all. Maybe she’s just happiest when there are some rules for no other reason than because she’s a stick-in-the-mud. Yes. Maybe that’s all there is to her. Maybe she’s just boring. Lexa hopes so, but she doesn’t quite believe it.

Either way she mostly isn’t bothered by the rules and restrictions that come with fighting and aside from some rare times when she just wants to let loose she feels most grounded and secure and at peace when abiding them. Plus, sometimes the restrictions do challenge her and Lexa always likes a good challenge. She likes proving to herself that she can always rise and be better than she was before. It’s about pride, really. Pride. And hope.

Now that Lincoln’s only client for the day has canceled and he’s free to leave, he seems quite excited about it. He walks straight back to the boxing bag he trained with earlier and Lexa sees him retrieving his phone from the bench next to it as she follows part of the way to grab her own things. She knows that he usually leaves his phone in the locker and Lexa thinks she can guess why he’s suddenly so eager to be reachable.

She smirks as she approaches him. “So, are you going to ask Octavia to spend your free afternoon with you?” she asks and Lincoln smiles big and nods as he types out a message.

“Yeah! She already asked, but I told her I couldn’t meet earlier, because I had to work.”

“Earlier?” Lexa frowns as Lincoln picks up his water bottle and the two walk towards the staff changing rooms.
“Oh.” Lincoln glances at her quickly from the side. “Yeah, we uh… she kind of invited me to this thing tonight.”

“Thing?” Lexa echoes interested and eyes him with curiosity. “What thing?”

“Well,” Lincoln starts, holding open the door for Lexa as they pass into the hallway. “One of her friends invited her and her roommates to come to his place and she asked if I wanted to join them.”

Lexa raises her eyebrows. “Oooh! You’re meeting her friends! That’s exciting.” She smiles at him, genuinely happy for him, and she swears if his skin weren’t so dark she’d see him blush a little.

They arrive in front of the staff rooms and he merely hums and then asks if she wants to grab a smoothie with him. She doesn’t have any more clients today either, but she wanted to get some more training in before going home. On the other hand, she really wants to hear more about this thing at Octavia’s friend’s place tonight and it’s still early in the afternoon. She’ll have time to do both she decides.

She says yes and they agree to meet in front of the gym in half an hour. That should give both of them enough time to clean their mouth pieces, shower and change into some new clothes.

“So are you nervous?” Lexa asks point blank once they’ve both sat down in their usual space. The little juice and smoothie place a couple of blocks from the gym only opened a few months ago and Lexa and Lincoln have been regulars ever since. By now they’ve tried out every smoothie they have here, but every now and then the employees here come up with a brand-new concoction, giving Lexa and Lincoln another fruit medley to appraise. The store only holds two small booths inside, but when the weather isn’t too cold they put up little white bar tables made out of plastic out front, each of them flanked by two or three high stools in different colors. One of those tables is set up just at the corner of the shop, halfway underneath a chestnut tree, and Lexa and Lincoln have declared it their spot. Whenever they are in the mood for a smoothie, assuming they have time, the weather is right and nobody else has already claimed it, they sit here at this table and just talk. The tree is what makes it so great they agree, because it’s huge and big-leaved and shields them from the heat on warm days and from wind or rain on cold ones. It’s perfect, really.

Lexa eyes Lincoln in amusement as the black guy sucks on his strawberry and banana smoothie. He takes longer to answer than necessary and Lexa is curious whether he’ll admit to being nervous.

“I don’t know. I mean Octavia and I get along really well and from what she’s told me about her friends they’re all cool people…” he shrugs and Lexa takes a sip from her own smoothie. It’s cool and kind of sour. Lemon, mango and kiwi fruit. Her favorite at the moment.

“But?” she pries, sensing there’s something more. A slight breeze rustles the leaves above their heads. Lexa loves the sound.

He looks at her and Lexa raises her eyebrows for him to just tell her already.

“Her brother will be there, too.” He finally says and he’s guiding his phone through the fingers of his left hand as he does so, again assuring Lexa her assessment about his nerves is dead on. She gets it though.

“Ooh.” She grimaces at him sympathetically. Family can be tricky. But then again, who wouldn’t
like Lincoln?

“Yeah.” Lincoln nods, looking down at his cup. “And the way she describes him, he seems very…”

“Very what?” Lexa probes.

“Very…protective.” Lincoln screws up his face and Lexa can’t help but laugh. He looks up at her when she does and frowns. “What?”

She shakes her head, still laughing a little. He just looks so unsure of himself and it’s not something she’s ever seen on him. And the fact that he’s actually nervous about meeting Octavia’s brother, not even her parents, is so sweet actually.

“What?” he asks again and Lexa tips her head to the side.

“Linc, you’ll be fine.” She assures him, with an encouraging smile. He’s the sweetest guy she’s ever met and she doesn’t just mean that he has good manners and gives nice compliments. He’s a truly, truly good guy and he’s so passionate about equality and fairness and just people in general that she thinks any girl would be lucky to have him.

Lincoln’s not entirely convinced though it seems as he continues to frown at her, gnawing on his straw. Lexa watches him amusedly as thoughts seem to chase around in his head. It’s like she’s seeing a whole other side of Lincoln and either he doesn’t care that he’s showing it so freely to Lexa, which she’d find incredibly flattering, or he just simply doesn’t even realize how open and vulnerable and utterly adorable he’s being.

“But-“ he lifts his head from the cup and starts with a little whine, but just then his phone vibrates in his hand and slips out from between his finger, hitting the table with a tiny clatter. He scoops it back up and Lexa doesn’t have to ask who texted him. He answers, only typing a word or two, and then smiles at his phone another moment, before laying it back down and focusing on Lexa again.

She must be wearing an adoring look on her face, because his smile immediately turns embarrassed and her tries to draw his eyebrows together. “Lexa.” He says simply and it sounds like a mix between a plea and a warning.

“I’m not saying anything!” she smirks and takes the red straw between her lips again, nodding towards his phone. “T’she say?”

“She’ll be here in half an hour or so and we’ll hang before the thing tonight.” He tells her.

She smiles at him, but refrains from saying anything more. She just wants him to know that she’s happy for him. “You’ll be fine.” She merely repeats and Lincoln nods to himself as if to assure himself that he will, in fact, be fine.

Lincoln relaxes a little after that and for the next half hour they talk about other things. Only when they see a brunette jay walking over the street towards them, hair flying behind her, does Lincoln lose his cool a little again and as he jumps off the stool to greet her he bumps into the table and knocks over his cup. Fortunately it’s already empty and the moment passes without any greater embarrassment as Lexa catches it before it can roll off the table and Octavia simply smiles at him and then hugs him tightly. After she lets go of him she turns to Lexa and, to Lexa’s surprise, briefly embraces her as well. Lexa awkwardly half-returns the unexpected hug and then Octavia is beaming at them with that big smile of hers again. She asks Lincoln how his day has been and as he starts telling her about his work-out and Lexa and his sparring she pays him her fullest attention, not even interrupting him as she grabs another stool from the neighboring table to sit down with them.
The three of them talk for a little while and then Lexa checks the time and informs them she has to get going.

“Oh, you have work?” Octavia asks, sipping on her own smoothie by now.

“No, I don’t have any more clients today, but I need to get some more training done.” Lexa says as she slides off the stool. The slight wind from earlier has picked up a little and she zips up her hoodie.


“Yes.”

“There’s one next week.” Lincoln tells Octavia and she raises her eyebrows.

“Oh! Okay!” she nods understandingly. “Well, I’m sure you’ll kick ass with all that training.” She grins at Lexa and gives her a little wink. Lexa smiles back and inclines her head.

“Thank you.”

They say goodbye, Octavia hugging Lexa again from where she’s sitting on her stool, and then Lexa walks off with a small wave. As she crosses the street she gets out her phone, untangles the small, white earphones and then puts on some music for the way back to the gym. She has to grin when she sees a message from Anya.

I’m quitting. Two of the three potential bar tenders I interviewed today asked if they were allowed to drink on the job and the third couldn’t even make a Gin Tonic. ‘Experienced and hard working’ my ass.

“Hello! Crystall and Missy here. You ordered a private dance party?” Raven drawls into the speaker above Murphy’s doorbell, leaning against the frame and pretending to chew gum in the most obnoxious way.

Clarke grins and readjusts the heavy case of beer she’s balancing on her hip. Bellamy asked them if they could bring the beer, since he won’t be there until a little later, and promised that he had something great for dessert to make up for it.

Over the intercom they hear a snort and some hollering in the background, before Murphy’s slightly distorted voice answers. “Great! Come on up girls!”

The door buzzes and Raven pushes it open and holds it for Clarke as she passes her. Their footsteps echo in the dark and cold entrance hall that leads towards the staircase and thankfully an elevator, since Murphy’s apartment is located on the seventh floor.

When the silver doors slide open a couple of minutes later to expel them onto it they can already hear some gentle bossa nova jazz coming towards them through Murphy’s ajar apartment door. Murphy always puts it on when they have a ‘dinner party’ at his place, but usually after not too long he gets overruled on the music front and Charlie Byrd and Luiz Bonfá have to yield to Busty and the Bass, Lawrence or Amy Winehouse.
As Raven pushes the door open further and they enter, the first thing Clarke sees from behind the other girl is Jasper’s long legs stretched out on the coffee table in the open living room area to the left. He hollers at them, but doesn’t look away from the game of GTA he’s playing on Murphy’s flat screen.

When Murphy first showed Clarke, Raven and Octavia his new apartment after he had just moved in about a year ago they were all stunned and utterly jealous. The whole place is basically a loft and looks like it could be a celebrity’s penthouse suite. As you enter you immediately notice the floor to ceiling window front that makes up the whole left side of the apartment. It stretches from the living room area with the big corner couch right to the left next to the entrance all the way to the kitchen corner. To the right a narrow hallway leads passed a small walk in closet for coats and other things to stow away to Murphy’s bedroom to the left and the toilet to the right. Since it’s a single apartment it doesn’t matter either that you can only access the bathroom through the bedroom and once you see the huge, marble shower you’re done for it anyway. It is by far the coolest place Clarke has ever seen and the dark brown paint makes it look distinguished and almost kind of sophisticated.

The jazz definitely fits this ambience and Clarke feels underdressed as always even though everybody else isn’t wearing anything special either. Jasper wears one of his usual hoodies and his Portland Winterhawks snap back cap, Monty, who is sitting at the kitchen island doing something on his laptop, has on a simple flannel shirt and some dark skinny jeans and Murphy, who’s greeting them from where he stands in front of the stove, looks his usual cuddly self with a white patterned wool sweater over what Clarke assumes is a blue button up underneath, judging by the collar you can just see around his neck. He’s also wearing a simple red apron over all of it though, so you can’t really judge his style right now anyway.

All in all Clarke’s comfortable khaki green wing-sleeve shirt fits in just as well as Raven’s maroon and grey baseball Henley.

The girls make their way over to the kitchen island, Raven roughly rubbing Jasper’s hat covered head hello as they pass him, where Clarke heaves the pallet of beer onto the counter with a grunt and then stretches her back with a small groan. Monty looks up at them from the screen of his laptop and smiles. Clarke thinks he looks a little tired and she walks over to him and wraps him in a hug. She says a gentle hi against his ear, realizing how much she’s missed him when she smells his subtle perfume. They haven’t seen each other in almost six weeks. She hasn’t seen Jasper in quite a while either, but she feels like she has since he sends her a lot of Snapchats all the time.

When she releases Monty she leaves her arm casually draped across his shoulder and gives him a warm smile, which he mirrors, before looking over at Murphy who is receiving a hug from Raven. Clarke notices Raven stealing half a cocktail tomato from the cutting board behind Murphy and popping it in her mouth over his shoulder. She isn’t very stealthy though and when she reaches for another one Murphy grabs her wrist before she can snarf it.

“No snacking before dinner!” he chides and Raven forces her grin into a pout. He only shakes his head at her though and the girl rolls her eyes good-naturedly as she places her hand bag onto the kitchen island and shrugs out of her jacket. It almost looks like she isn’t undressing at all though, since her Henley looks almost exactly like the jacket anyway. Except that the jacket’s sleeves are made of leather and black and the body is red, whereas the shirt has it the other way around with the grey and maroon coloring.

Raven comes back around the counter and holds out her hand to Clarke and she quickly takes off her jacket as well and drapes it over the girl’s arm. As Raven puts their jackets away in the closet Jasper cheers loudly and Clarke looks over her shoulder as she pulls herself onto the bar stool next to the one Monty is occupying at the moment. She can only just make out Jasper doing a little victory
dance where he’s slouched on the couch with his back to them, but she doesn’t care enough about the game to try and figure out why. Instead she looks at what Monty’s doing on the laptop. It looks like some sort of programming language.

“Are you working on something for uni?” Clarke asks and the boy nods, his black shiny hair smoothly swinging back and forth at the movement.

“I have to finish coding two more small frame programs before my seminar on Monday.” He explains, typing away while Clarke senselessly reads along. She has no idea of coding or anything to do with a computer really. She handles Word and PowerPoint okay, but that’s about the extent of her knowledge on that.

“Will that take long?” Clarke asks, having no idea how long coding a program usually takes. It sounds like a really complicated and time-consuming task to her.

“I’m almost done with this one. I’ll do the other one tomorrow.” Monty tells her and Clarke nods even though he’s still concentrated on the screen and probably doesn’t even register it.

Raven doesn’t come back for longer than it should take her to go to the closet and back and Clarke assumes she’s gone to say hello to Murphy’s grumpy cat Lieutenant Dan who is probably hiding in the bedroom. When the Latina does come around the corner again she stops at Murphy’s stereo which is set up on his book shelf against the right wall. Murphy notices too late what she’s about to do and can only open his mouth to protest before his music gets killed by Raven and Busty and the Bass’s ‘The Real’ starts playing instead as she replaces his iPod with her phone in the station.

“Thank god!” Jasper quips as he climbs over the back of the couch and joins them in the kitchen corner at the same time as Raven. Clarke isn’t surprised to see Monty’s camera in his hand. The two roommates both love making films and one of them is always recording when they all hang out. It can be annoying at times, but nobody complains too much about it, since they always enjoy the videos the guys cut together in the end. They’re a great way to capture memories and everybody always has to laugh at Jasper’s choice in background music as well.

Now the young looking boy is swinging his arm around Raven in a belated greeting and she wraps her arms around his middle, too. There aren’t enough seating opportunities in the kitchen area for them all to sit down, though, so Jasper and Raven stay standing behind Monty and Clarke.

“So, when’s dinner ready, Gordon?” Jasper asks Murphy, looking at the little camera screen instead of at the guy himself as he’s filming him. Murphy doesn’t answer right away however. He’s busy getting the garlic bread out of the oven. After he has safely placed it onto a silver, oval serving platter he turns back around to them and slides it towards them, before looking into the camera. “Soon. About…” he checks his wrist watch, “ten to fifteen more minutes.”

Raven groans and Murphy smilingly hands her a bread knife and adds, “But you can slice this up and help me prepare the salad and it’ll go faster.”

“Okay!” Raven agrees cheerfully and Clarke knows her well enough to know that there’ll be at least two slices of bread missing once the girl is done.

“Hey, here,” Clarke slides off her stool so Raven can sit down while she chops. “I’ll get the beer in the fridge.”

“Thanks, Clarke.” Murphy calls over his shoulder as something hisses loudly in the frying pan he’s already expertly rattling again. The smell emerging from the stove makes Clarke’s mouth water and she can’t wait to eat. Murphy is an excellent cook and whenever he invites them for dinner they
know they’ll eat like in a five star restaurant that evening.

Clarke’s just stowing away the last cans of beer into the fridge when a loud buzzing sound tells them someone is at the door downstairs.

“I’ll get it.” Jasper offers and walks across the apartment to buzz the new arrivals in, camera readily pointed at the door. Clarke guesses it’ll be Octavia and Lincoln since Bellamy said he’d be late and she’s almost excited to meet her friend’s…date? Crush? Boyfriend?

No, she’d know if they had made it exclusive. She’ll just stick with ‘Lincoln’ for now. Octavia’s Lincoln.

Clarke and Raven throw each other a look and grin. This is new. Octavia hasn’t really dated anyone since high school. Not seriously anyway. Definitely not anyone she would invite to a big group hang-out like tonight and they’re curious to see how it will play out. And of course Clarke is interested to finally meet Lincoln and get to know the guy that Octavia seems to be getting to like quite a lot.

They hear Octavia’s voice even before they see the pair and Clarke thinks she sounds reassuring. She smirks at the thought of that big, muscular guy being nervous to meet her and Octavia’s other friends.

When they finally arrive at the door they stop for a second and Octavia raises her eyebrows at the camera in her face and then the room at large. Clarke glances at the others and sees that each and every pair of eyes is on the two newcomers and can guess what it must feel like for Octavia. Or Lincoln for that matter, who’s eyeing the camera a little warily. Clarke clears her throat and shuts the fridge with a little more force than necessary. The thud seems to shake everyone out of their small trance and Murphy cusses under his breath as he hastily continues stirring the content of one of the other pots on the stove.

“Welcome, welcome!” Clarke hears Jasper call out before the door falls shut as she hands Murphy the crème fraiche he’s wagging his hand at urgently.

“Hey, guys.” Octavia greets them, throwing a wave at the camera in passing, and Clarke sees her taking off her jacket and holding her hand out for Lincoln’s as well. “Sorry we’re a little late.”

“No problem.” Murphy waves them off, shooting them a quick smile as he continues stressing over his dinner. “You’re just in time, I’m almost done.”

Monty and Raven get up from their stools at the same time as Clarke steps around the counter and the three walk towards Lincoln and Octavia together to greet them properly. Raven is the first there and Clarke notices Octavia giving her a look as she moves in to hug her that says that she better behave. One after the other Clarke and Monty hug Octavia as well and then the three of them move on to shake Lincoln’s hand. Clarke doesn’t need to introduce herself as Octavia gestures to each respective person and tells Lincoln their names as they shake his hand, but when it’s her turn he grins and nods. “Ah, Mr. Clark Griffin.”

Clarke tilts her head and raises an eyebrow at him and he quickly shakes his head. “Sorry, a friend of mine thought you were Raven’s boyfriend when Octavia talked about you.” He explains, glancing over at Octavia, still smirking a little. She wanders over from the closet where she just put their jackets and chuckles, obviously having overheard them.

“I told them you’re used to it.” She rests her elbow on Clarke’s shoulder as she smiles at her, her eyes sparkling. Clarke thinks she looks young and excited today and she already likes Lincoln just
for that, because she’s sure he’s the reason for Octavia’s obvious giddiness.

“Yeah, unfortunately.” she admits and then Murphy calls for someone to set out the plates and cutlery and Octavia and Monty go to help. Since the apartment doesn’t have a dinner table for them all to sit at they’ve established a sort of buffet style for these dinner parties. Murphy sets everything up at the kitchen island and then everybody queues up to fill their plates with all the good things their host has prepared for them. They then move on to the living room area where they all gather around the small coffee table and each find a space to sit down in, either on the couch or on the soft, thick rug on the floor. It’s a little unconventional, but Clarke loves the comfortable, familiar atmosphere. It’s casual despite the amazing food and it makes it all the much better. Kind of best of both worlds, Clarke thinks.

“Wow that looks incredible!” Lincoln exclaims as he and Clarke get to the kitchen corner as well and he sees what Murphy has prepared for them. “Are you a chef?” he asks the boy with the messy slick hair and Murphy laughs, visibly enjoying the compliment.

“No, no! It’s just a hobby.” He says and wipes his hands on his apron, before stretching one out to the tall, black guy. Lincoln shakes it over the counter, but is still admiring the various delicacies in front of him. Clarke can’t blame him. It does look like something Gordon Ramsey or Jamie Oliver could have conjured up and she’s quite proud of her friend. After all, he did teach it all to himself and is commendably humble about it as well.

Murphy takes off his apron and folds it over the oven handle. He then claps his hands and tells them all to help themselves. Clarke gets in line behind Jasper, who’s bouncing on his heels. He’s put away the camera in favor of a plate he’s now taking from the stack Octavia just erected to the side of the dishes and clutches it to his chest in anticipation. Clarke moans a little as the smell envelops her again and her stomach growls.

A few minutes later they’re all seated in the living room area and everybody is quiet for a while as they each happily enjoy their food. Only the occasional praise to Murphy interrupts their silence as nothing else can be heard but their chewing and Raven’s music in the background.

Their plates are already empty and they’re lazily lounging about when another buzzing sound announces Bellamy’s arrival. Jasper groans as he makes to get up from the floor, heavily rolling to the side on his spot on the rug, but Monty just pats his shoulder from his seat a little higher up on the couch and walks over to the door himself, pushing the button to let Bellamy inside.

As the curly haired guy steps through the door a couple of minutes later he snorts at the sight of them sprawled out across the living room area. Clarke imagines they probably all look like stranded whales, but can’t be bothered to sit up straighter. The couch and Raven’s shoulder are just too damn comfortable.

“Hello, my dear children.” Bellamy speaks in his low voice and then grinningly dangles two large cup holders, filled with delicious looking decorated muffins, in front of them. “Anyone in the mood for cup cakes?”

A collective groan makes him chuckle and he mutters a little “Alright then” as he walks passed Clarke and the others, presumably to put the desserts into the fridge for now. Clarke is too full and contented to turn around however, but the sound of the fridge door opening and then closing again
tells her she was probably right.

“So, what did I miss?” he calls over to them from the kitchen and a second later he walks into Clarke’s line of sight again, shrugging out of his jacket, while Jasper tells him how he beat his own high score at GTA.

“Oh yeah, and we met him.” The lanky guy adds after Bellamy gives him a high five for his victory, pointing his thumb at Lincoln who is seated between him and Octavia on the floor.

“Right, yeah! Lincoln, right?” Bellamy offers his hand over Jasper’s head, who ducks forward a little, and Lincoln scrambles to an awkward kneeling position to shake it, obviously unsure about whether to get up or not when no one else did.

“Yeah, yes! Hi!” He nods as they shake and Clarke thinks it’s quite funny how Bellamy’s chest seems to be puffed out a little and his shoulders squarer than usual. She wouldn’t even put it passed him to grip Lincoln’s hand tighter than necessary. It sure looks like it to her.

Bellamy nods once and then releases the black guy’s hand. “Bellamy Blake, Octavia’s older brother.” He announces like it’s a royal title and Clarke sees Octavia roll up her eyes and sigh in exasperation next to Lincoln. Raven’s shoulder under Clarke’s cheek shakes as the other girl quietly giggles to herself and Clarke can’t hide a grin either. Sometimes Bellamy’s protective brother routine is just ridiculous. She’s ready to bet Lincoln will have been subjected to the ‘if you hurt my sister, I’ll kill you’ speech by the end of the evening.

Lincoln presses his lips together in an awkward smile. “Nice to meet you.”

Bellamy merely hums deeply in his chest and then tells them he’ll put away his jacket real quick. As he turns around Clarke sees Octavia subtly rub Lincoln’s back and murmur some words to him. They make Lincoln smile and Octavia mirrors his expression, before briefly leaning against his side.

Clarke glances up at Raven to see if she noticed the interaction as well. The Latina wears a curious look on her face and Clarke can’t quite tell what she’s thinking. A second later Raven apparently notices Clarke’s eyes on her though and smirks down at her. “Too cute, right?” she whispers and Clarke nods.

They are. Very cute. And Clarke thinks she understands Raven’s look after all. Even though the three of them have been best friends for over four years now Clarke knows Raven and Octavia have been inseparable since way back when they met in Kindergarten. It must be harder for Raven to share Octavia with someone else and it looks like Lincoln might just be someone who could become very important to their friend. Who already is very important to her to some degree, Clarke amends as she watches Octavia’s smile widen when the muscular guy leans in and whispers something else into her ear.

Clarke cringes a little and jerks her head around when Bellamy loudly claps his hands right behind her without warning and then rubs them together. “Alright! Dinner time!” he grins and then heads to the kitchen counter to load up a plate of his own.

Once he’s seated at the connecting part of the corner couch between Raven and Murphy he hums in anticipation, before digging in.

“Ugh,” he rolls his eyes with relish and points his fork at Murphy. “You, my man, are a culinary genius.”

Murphy, comfortably nestled into one of the black leather couch’s soft back cushions, grins and folds his hands behind his head. “A man did his best.” He shrugs nonchalantly and Clarke recognizes the
‘Game of Thrones’ reference with a smirk. Those two have become addicted to the popular HBO show and Bellamy shows his appreciation for Murphy’s innuendo by nodding and chuckling as he continues devouring his food.

While Bellamy enjoys his dinner, some light conversations develop around the coffee table, everyone slowly waking up from their food comas, and when he’s done and informs them he for one will go get himself some dessert now they all agree they’ve got some room for cupcakes after all. Clarke and Monty get up to help Bellamy set out the desserts for everyone and once they’re out of ear shot of the others Bellamy grabs Clarke’s elbow and pulls her to the side a bit while Monty opens the fridge.

“So, what’s your read on that Lincoln guy?” he asks her in a low voice, glancing at the pair over his shoulder. Clarke looks back over at Octavia and Lincoln as well. The younger Blake and Raven, who’s sitting on the couch opposite the two, are both laughing loudly at something Lincoln said and Octavia is leaning into him again like it’s the most natural thing for her. He looks like he couldn’t be prouder and Clarke has to smile at the sight.

She shrugs, “I don’t know, Bell. They seem happy. I’ve only just met him today, you know.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know.” Bellamy frowns and lets go of her arm, apparently not satisfied with her answer. “I just...I don’t trust him.”

Clarke furrows her eyebrows at him, snorting, “You don’t ‘trust’ him? He’s not the enemy, Bellamy.” She noiselessly chuckles and he eyes her unconvinced.

“So, you think he’s a good guy?” he presses on undeterred, not letting her obvious lack of seriousness dissuade him from his worries. Even though Clarke finds his whole big brother thing totally over the top she knows it’s not just an act. It comes from a real place. He truly loves his sister and just feels very protective over Octavia. Judging by his urgency Clarke thinks he must have observed the same thing she has. That Octavia really likes this guy. More than she has liked anyone in a long time. Maybe ever. Clarke also knows however that Octavia would, and probably will, tell Bellamy that his demeanor is nothing short of sexism and that he should get his head out of his 18th century ass and stop behaving like he’s her keeper. So she puts both of her hands on the black haired boy’s upper arms and tries to look at him with all the gravity she can muster, when she says, “I think he is, but I also think that if he turns out not to be Octavia will rip him a new one.”

Bellamy almost glares at her, chin set and lips in a tight line, but he doesn’t say anything and she knows it’s because he knows she’s right. Octavia is perfectly capable of taking care of herself. She’s proven that plenty of times already.

“She’ll be fine, okay? Don’t worry your pretty little head so much, Blake!” she grins easily and encouragingly pats his arms before turning around and helping Monty with the cupcakes. When Bellamy joins them a second later he looks grim but remains silent. Clarke’s curious and maybe even a little anxious to see if she made it better or worse for Lincoln and sincerely hopes Bellamy gives the guy a chance and doesn’t do something stupid. For both Octavia’s sake and his. Because Clarke is sure beyond a doubt that if he screws this up for her there’ll be hell to pay and Octavia is not someone you want angry with you. And Clarke can really go without another battle between the Blakes. The last one wasn’t much fun at all.

For now however it seems like Bellamy is behaving and she’s glad to see him even initiate a conversation with Lincoln after handing him, Octavia and Raven three small paper plates with cupcakes and sitting down on the couch next to the Latina. To his right Jasper and Murphy have started another game of GTA, completely ignoring the plates of dessert Monty and Clarke place in front of
them onto the coffee table, and Clarke sits down at their feet, leaning against the couch. Monty places his cup cake on the table as well and gets up again to retrieve the camera from where Jasper put it on the shelf earlier. He also resets the playlist Raven originally put in to the beginning as the songs YouTube has been suggesting have been getting continually worse over the past half hour.

As Busty and the Bass’ ‘The Real’ starts playing once more Clarke sighs happily. She has missed this. Hanging with all the people she loves most and just feeling relaxed and content.

“This was a great idea.” She nudges Murphy’s leg next to her and smiles up at him. He briefly glances down to her before refocusing on the screen and smiles as well.

“Feeling sentimental, Clarke?” he teases softly and she just nudges him again, a little stronger this time, and then slings her arm around his leg, lightly leaning against it. He reaches his hand down and sweetly fondles the top of her head a few times before he yelps, giving a jerk, and quickly grabs the controller again, cussing as Jasper cheers and then laughs triumphantly next to him.

Clarke sees Monty circling their little group, carefully stepping sideways as he films the scene. When the camera is on her she pulls a face and sticks out her tongue. Monty grins, looking at the camera’s screen and then walks towards Clarke. He keeps the camera on her as he slowly sinks down onto the floor next to her.

“So, Miss Griffin, tell me. You’ve been gone for quite a long time. How is it being back in the real world again? Do you miss your books? Have you re-adjusted to natural lighting already?” he interviews, not able to pull off a serious expression. Clarke however puts on her best poker face and frowns as she pretends to think the question over.

“Well, Mr. Green-“

“Oh, Monty, please!” he interrupts her shaking his head in fake modesty and Clarke has to hold back a chuckle. She smiles toothily at him though, before looking at the camera lens again.

“Alright, Monty,” she emphasizes his name, getting back into character. “To be honest, it’s been a tough road. But I believe if I just remember what I’m doing this for I will come out on top. I mean I have the most amazing friends and they’ve been a great support for me throughout all of this.” She nods solemnly and Monty mirrors her, visibly fighting another grin, but managing to compose himself and adopt a passably earnest looking expression as well.

“That is truly great to hear. We’re all rooting for you here at Studio Twenty-one and are in awe of all that you have accomplished already. So what’s next for you? We know you’ve already been asked to sign another contract with StudyNasa. Do you feel ready for another trip into space?” Monty asks her, grabbing his still untouched cup cake from the table and holding it out towards her as if it were a microphone.

Clarke sways her head from left to right, play-acting uncertainty. “That is a tough question, Monty. I can’t say I’m not tempted to stay here on the ground for a while, but I feel there’s still something left for me to do out there and I don’t think I’ll be able to settle down before I’ve at least tried my best, you know?” she explains and it feels less like she’s playing a character now.

Monty seems to pick up on it as well and when he smiles at her it’s warm and genuine. He nods understandingly and puts down the cup cake. “Well,” he starts, looking directly at Clarke instead of at the camera’s screen. “If anyone can do it, it’s you, Ms. Griffin. Don’t forget, America stands behind you.” He winks at her and she forgets to look at the camera when she says a quiet ‘thank you’. He closes the filming device and gently lays it on the ground next to her, before holding out his arms. She happily pouts at him and lets him wrap her up in a tight hug.
“Thanks, Monty.” She repeats as she snuggles against his chest and he rubs her arm with his left hand, the other arm pulling back.

“Sure.” Is all he says and Clarke likes his simplicity. Once again she is reminded that she truly has amazing friends. And as she looks over at Lincoln she has an optimistic feeling that he might just make their group even better. He seems to fit right in anyways as he, Octavia, Bellamy and Raven seem to be wrapped up in a heated conversation about soccer. Clarke hears Bellamy rant about the US national team being shit this season and sees Raven and Octavia nodding in agreement. When Lincoln points out that the Women’s team is amazing though, Raven leans back and shakes her head first at him and then at Octavia with a stunned expression. “Yo, I love this dude, O.” she deadpans in a serious voice. Then she huffs out an excited laugh and holds up her hand, requesting a high five from Lincoln, who happily obliges.

Octavia notices Clarke watching and grins at her, gesturing for her to join them. Clarke hasn’t really had the chance to talk much with Lincoln yet and she apologizes as she shrugs out from under Monty’s arm. He just nods for her to go and then pulls himself up onto the couch next to Murphy to watch the guys play.

Clarke crawls over to where the others are sitting in a badly shaped circle with Raven and Bellamy sitting on the edge of the couch while Octavia and Lincoln occupy the floor across from them. Murphy and Jasper pull back their legs to make a path for her and Raven scoots over a little so Clarke can join her on the couch. She shakes her head though and instead moves to sit in front of the Latina between her legs. Raven immediately starts running her fingers through Clarke’s hair and Clarke smiles at everyone around. “What’s up, guys?”

“Raven just declared her love for Lincoln.” Octavia grins and Lincoln looks almost a little bashful. The brunette laughs and wraps her arms around his left one which is stretched out against the floor as he leans on it.

“I overheard.” Clarke admits, grinning at Lincoln’s endearing expression. “Did you coach him on that comment, O? Not everybody knows the women’s national soccer team is the way to win Raven over.”

Octavia holds her palm up and shakes her head with raised eyebrows, wordlessly denying having any part in it, and Clarke laughs.

“Hey, so Clarke,” Raven starts, tapping Clarke on the shoulder. She tilts her head back and looks up at her roommate, seeing a toothy grin on her face. “Did you know Lincoln’s friend Lexa is an MMA fighter?” she wiggles her eyebrows and Clarke’s interest spikes as she hears the name. She is temporarily confused, however. The girl from the picture? A fighter? No way.

“What’s MMA?” she asks, not sure she understands what Raven is telling her. That girl couldn’t be some sort of boxer, right? She just looked so… quiet.

“It’s mixed martial arts,” Octavia explains and Lincoln nods, before elaborating.

“Yeah, it’s kind of like boxing, but there are less rules and the attire is a little different.”

“And it’s in an octagon!” Octavia adds, seemingly more excited about the form of the fighting ring than anything else. Clarke raises her eyebrows at her in amusement. “Get it? Octagon? Like Octavia?” she bores her head forward, trying to make Clarke understand why it’s so cool. When Clarke only nods her head once though, sarcastically widening her eyes and mimicking an impressed expression, Octavia waves her hand at her and shakes her head. “You guys don’t get it.”
Bellamy snorts. “We understand the implication, Octavia.” He smirks at her. “Incredibly clever.”

“Now that’s just condescending.” Octavia deadpans and narrows her eyes at him, making the others around her laugh. Only Lincoln is sweet enough to try and hide his grin when Octavia turns to him and Clarke sees her roommate’s eyes sparkle, before she complains in a quiet voice, “It’s funny, okay?”

Lincoln nods, pulling his lips into his mouth. His eyes are laughing though when he soothingly strokes up and down her arm, and she lightly hits his chest. “Traitor.”

Despite finding the two very sweet Clarke is more interested in hearing about Lincoln’s friend again. She just can’t wrap her head around the fact that the girl from the picture is supposed to be a fighter.

“So,” she starts, eager to bring the topic back to this Lexa girl. “your friend, is she like…a professional fighter?” The question is directed at Lincoln and the guy looks up from grinning at Octavia, who is mouthing something at him Clarke isn’t really paying attention to.

Raven is still massaging her head and it makes Clarke feel a little tingly.

“No, she’s semi-professional.” He tells her, but apparently her face displays her ignorance on what that means, because he continues, “it’s basically the same, but there’s less media coverage and she doesn’t really get paid much for it.”

“That sucks.” Raven throws in from behind Clarke and Clarke has to agree. If the fighting is the same, why shouldn’t she get paid as well? She voices that thought to Lincoln and he shrugs and shakes his head.

“I agree, but that’s just how it is.”

“Why doesn’t she fight at professional level then?” Bellamy throws in, playing with the crumbled up cup cake paper in his hand.

“Lexa doesn’t really care much for publicity and money.” Lincoln tells them and finally that’s something Clarke can combine with her mental image of the girl she saw on Lincoln’s Instagram. She didn’t peg her for someone who would like a lot of attention. Even next to Lincoln she almost looked uncomfortable knowing that her picture was taken and Clarke can’t help but wonder why. Why would she be camera shy? She’s beautiful and surely she must know it. Clarke would bet that this Lexa girl constantly gets compliments from boys and that she probably doesn’t have trouble getting a date either. Somehow Clarke is annoyed by that. But it’s ridiculous to be jealous of a girl she doesn’t even know. Besides, it’s not like she has the time or patience for a guy right now anyway.

At that another thought flashes through her mind. Maybe she has a boyfriend…

Clarke feels the urge to ask Lincoln if Lexa is in fact dating anyone right now, but she knows it would be inappropriate and none of her business anyway, so she doesn’t.

Raven’s fingers are still running through her hair, but it’s not really very soothing anymore and Clarke grabs her friend’s hands and holds them steady at her shoulders instead. She must have missed part of the conversation somehow, because when Raven asks whether Lincoln could ‘get them in for free’ Clarke has no idea what they’re talking about.

“I don’t know about for free, but I can definitely get you cheaper tickets.” He tells her and Raven squeezes Clarke’s hands in excitement and squeals a little.
“Tickets to what?” Clarke asks confused, looking from Octavia to Lincoln. Her roommate gives her a bewildered look and Clarke feels Raven and Bellamy eyeing her curiously as well.

“Um…Lexa’s fight?” Raven laughs, and then untangles her right hand from Clarke’s to lightly tap against her temple. “Did you have a stroke?” Clarke tilts her head aside to avoid Raven’s annoying prodding and frowns.

“No, I was just thinking about something else.” She explains only half truthful and catches Raven’s hand in hers again to stop her from poking her some more. Raven and Octavia laugh as Bellamy speaks up, looking at Lincoln.

“Well, unfortunately I have some onsite inspections next weekend, but maybe I’ll take you up on that some other time.”

Lincoln nods. “Sure. If you want I can let you guys know whenever she has another fight coming up.”

Clarke likes the way Lincoln seems so excited about his friend’s fights. It’s sweet and she gives him great credit for it. She also likes the idea of the girl having someone so supportive in her corner. It’s always good to have someone like that.

“Definitely!” Raven says with vigor and Clarke feels her friend’s excitement rubbing off on her. What did they just say? Lincoln would get them cheaper tickets for one of his friend’s fights? Did they say next week?

“When’s the fight?” Clarke asks for clarification, not caring if she sounds clueless again.

“Next Saturday!” Raven answers and Clarke feels the Latina’s hands slap her shoulders and the couch behind her move slightly as Raven hops up and down a little. She’s really excited and if Clarke didn’t know that she loves sports in general, especially with female athletes, she would think Raven is just eager to meet the girl, who she labeled as ‘hot’ in the picture, in real life.

“Are you in?” Octavia asks her as Bellamy gets up and tells them he’ll go get some beers for everyone and Clarke is about to say yes when she remembers something. She can’t. She has to study! She can’t just party every weekend, she has to stay focused.

“Come on, Clarke!” Raven grabs her back and lightly shakes her back and forth. “It’ll be awesome! We haven’t had a road trip for ages and we could visit Abby, too!” she exclaims, drawing in an even more excited breath, apparently just having thought of that.

“What?”

Now Clarke is really confused. Visit her mum?

“Is the fight in Seattle?” she asks, heart sinking. If that’s true she really, really can’t go. Seattle is over three hours away! It would mean she’d lose most of the weekend instead of just one evening of studying and she just can’t afford that.

“In Tacoma.” Lincoln repeats what they must have already talked about earlier. Great. That’s basically the same.

“Come oooon!” Raven leans forward and presses her own cheek against Clarke’s, squishing it a little bit. “It’ll be fun! Plus, you guys said I should have someone check out my leg…” she adds slyly and Clarke turns to her with a frown.
“Not fair.” She comments, but Raven only pouts at her.

“I’m sure your mum would love to see you again.” She tries further. Clarke shakes her head at her friend’s ruthlessness, but can’t help to be reeled in. It really would be great to see her mum again and even though Raven mainly said it get her to come she also knows that having her mum check on Raven would make them all feel a lot better about the leg problem, too.

Plus, Clarke can’t deny that she is intrigued to see Lincoln’s friend fight, which is so out of character for her and frankly surprises her about herself. Clarke doesn’t like fighting. She doesn’t like aggression and she certainly doesn’t like people hurting each other for fun. It’s stupid. But there’s just something interesting about that girl. Clarke just can’t really get a read on her at all and it’s a little frustrating and makes her want to get to know the illusive girl with the startling green eyes. Clarke throws back her head and groans and Raven squeals again and pumps her fist in the air.

“Yesssss!” she exclaims, knowing that she’s won her over.

“So, you’ll come?” Octavia looks for confirmation and Clarke sighs and nods.

“Yeah,” she affirms, but when Raven starts excitedly wanting to plan the trip, she turns around and holds down her legs to keep her steady. “But!”

“But?” the Latina tilts her head to the side, eyeing her almost exasperatedly.

“But, we’re just going to the fight. No partying! I can’t lose what would be left of Sunday to a hangover.” Clarke insists to get things straight in advance.

Raven just claps her hand over Clarke’s mouth however and rolls her eyes. “Blah, blah, blah, we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.” She deflects and then thanks Bellamy who just got back from the kitchen with a can of beer for each of them.

Clarke mumbles a thanks as well as she opens the can with a hiss and sighs inwardly. She better get a lot done this week, because the way things are looking right now she won’t be very productive the coming weekend.

It’s a curiously ambivalent feeling she’s experiencing. Because she does feel bad for having given in so easily to Raven’s convincing, but then again she can’t help but share her roommates’ excitement.

That night when Clarke, Raven and Octavia get home and Clarke is in bed and slightly buzzed from the beer she takes out her phone and goes to Lincoln’s Instagram again. In the dark the girl’s eyes seem even more mesmerizing and Clarke imagines what her voice might sound like, but finds that she can’t. She wonders what it will be like to see Lincoln’s friend Lexa fight someone and she is confused by the way her stomach flips. Maybe she shouldn’t have drunk that last beer, she thinks, as she rolls onto her back and takes a deep breath. The nightly street noises outside her window seem to ebb back and forth, lulling her to sleep, and the last thing Clarke thinks about before slips away is that to truly look like Waldo the girl should have worn glasses.
So here's chapter three!!
It got a lot longer than I anticipated. Again!
Better like this than too short, though, right?

I hope you guys enjoyed it and leave me some comments here or asks on my tumblr!
Can't wait to hear your opinions!

All the best,
Lea
“Hi, honey! Everything okay?”

Clarke pinches the cell phone between her shoulder and her ear to free her other hand as she rummages through the book bag she’s badly balancing on her elevated knee, looking for her student ID.

“Hey, mom. Yeah, I’m fine. How are you?”

The 20-something year-old barista gives her an exasperated look and Clarke mouths an apology to her. She glances down into her bag and almost drops her phone. Barely managing to catch it against her collarbone, she lets out a stressed groan.

“Clarke?” her mom’s muffled voice comes from below. Clarke quickly presses the phone to her ear again. “Hold on, mom.”

Holding the phone against her chest, she addresses the brunette barista who is tapping her fingers impatiently against the coffee cup she just prepared for Clarke. “I’m sorry, I can’t find my ID. Could you just-”

“No ID, no student discount.” The girl cuts in in a bored voice.

“Really? Come on, I’m in here every day, can’t you just-”

The girl stands up straighter and crosses her arms over her chest. “Look, if you can’t pay you’re gonna have to get out of the way. There’s a line f-”

“No, no! I’ll pay. I got it.” Clarke quickly holds up her hand in a yielding gesture and then digs out her wallet from her book bag. Wow, isn’t she just a ray of fucking sunshine, she thinks disgruntled as she gets out a five dollar bill and hands it to the girl. The barista drawls a sarcastic ‘thanks’ and then passes over the coffee and Clarke’s change with a blatantly fake smile, before calling up the next customer who basically elbows Clarke out of the way.

“Geez…” Clarke murmurs, slightly stumbling and almost spilling her coffee. She shakes her head at the overall rudeness and swings her bag back over her shoulder with the hand that’s still holding the phone, stepping out of the little crowded campus coffee shop.

It’s windy outside and Clarke’s hair whips across her face as she puts her cell back to her ear again.

“Clarke? Honey?”

“I’m here, mom. Sorry, I was just getting some coffee.” Clarke apologizes as she strolls along the path. Despite the weather growing colder the sun still manages to peek through the clouds and Clarke blinks against it as she rounds a corner to get away from the noisier parts of campus. “Do you have a couple of minutes or are you busy right now?”

“I just got out of the OR so I have some time.”

Clarke hears some rustling through the phone and imagines her mother unwrapping one of the
sandwich snacks she always used to pack for Clarke, herself and Clarke’s dad Jake. She stopped doing that after he died and for a second Clarke has to smile at the thought of her mum having readopted that habit. She never noticed it before Abby stopped doing it, but her mom’s sandwiches had always been a comforting constant in her life. Just a very ‘mom’ thing to do. And as Clarke takes a sip of the luke warm coffee she feels a little ache in her chest and she realizes that she really misses her mom.

“So what’s up? Is everything okay? Raven called me the other day and said her leg was acting up a little. She told me it was nothing, but that girl has really gotten worse at pretending she’s fine. Or maybe it’s easier to detect her BS over the phone…”

Clarke laughs and nods even though her mom can’t see her. “Yeah, maybe.” She smiles down and thinks to herself that Raven has also just never been so good at hiding things from Abby. Maybe that’s another mom thing. Abby just always seems to smell a lie from a mile away. Which is useful no doubt, but also extremely frustrating when you’re a kid and can’t even get away with the littlest things. Clarke can’t count the times she thought her mother was spying on her when Abby told her she knew Clarke hadn’t gone straight home after school but hung out with Wells in the park instead despite the fact that she hadn’t done her homework yet. How could her mom possibly know that when she got home later than Clarke did anyway? It remained a mystery to this day, but right now Clarke was glad for Abby’s motherly instincts. This way she didn’t have to convince her mom that something was wrong with Raven’s leg despite what the Latina said. Abby already knew.

“Actually Octavia and I told Raven to call you.” Clarke explains and she hears her mom hum as if she had already figured that. Clarke also hears her chewing and again the image of her mom’s sandwich pops into her head. She would kill for one of those right now. Instead she takes another sip of her coffee. It really isn’t that good. “She hasn’t complained much, but it’s getting worse and she’s refusing to let someone check it out here.”

“I don’t blame her, but it’s not just going away.”

“I know and I’ve been telling her that. But you know Raven…”

“Oh, do I ever…”

Clarke smirks as she hears the slight frustration in her mother’s voice. As much as Raven trusts and respects Abby she’s still headstrong as hell and even Abby has had to struggle with her patient’s stubbornness from time to time.

“Anyway, so we were hoping that you might be able to convince her to see someone, but actually we’ve kind of spontaneously decided to head up to Seattle this weekend anyway!” Clarke lets her mom know and smiles at her classmate Brenda as she passes her. Brenda returns the smile excitedly as she spots Clarke and then mimics talking on the phone and mouths ‘call me later’ as she rushes on, probably late for her next class. Like always.

“-for?”

“Hm? Sorry?” Clarke apologizes, returning her attention to her mother on the phone.

“Honey, are you alright? You seem very distracted.”

Clarke sighs and sinks down onto the grass across from the library building. It’s mostly deserted this time of year, but in the summertime students always sit around in small groups and hang out on the grass between classes. Unless it’s been raining a lot of course, which isn’t all that unusual in Portland. The campus grounds of the University of Portland are beautiful though and very green and
Clarke has always loved the small paths that zig-zag over the large park-like lands. The whole campus looks like a big noble estate of sorts and from time to time Clarke gets hit with a feeling of gratitude that she’s able to study in such a beautiful place.

“I’m sorry, mom. I’ve just been studying a lot.”

“Yes, Raven mentioned that as well. You know, you shouldn’t overdo it, Clarke. Medical school is a marathon, not a race, sweetie.”

Clarke can practically hear her mother’s frown and sighs. Of course Raven directed the conversation onto Clarke instead of her leg. Unbelievable.

“I’m not even in Medical School yet, mom. That’s kind of what I’m studying for here.” She argues, trying to hold back the bite that’s threatening to sound through. Even though lately she’s had this conversation plenty of times with her friends already, and she’s kind of tired of it, her mom doesn’t know that and it wouldn’t be fair to be annoyed by her simply for addressing the issue this once.

“I know, honey. I’m just saying. Don’t overwork yourself this early in the semester. There’ll be more than enough time for that the rest of your life. Not to scare you off, but I haven’t slept more than ten hours over the last three days combined and I just saw an intern cry in front of the elevator.”

“Wow, thanks mom.”

“Sorry. Just don’t shut yourself off from your friends, is all I’m saying.”

“Well, actually, as it turns out I apparently suck at that anyway.” Clarke sighs and frowns at the darker cloud front that’s quickly spreading over the sky. She’s lived in Portland long enough to know what that means and she pushes herself off the ground with a small grunt, almost spilling the rest of her coffee.

“And why’s that?”

“Did Raven tell you about Octavia’s new…friend?” Clarke asks, switching the phone to her right hand to brush herself off with her dominant one. She isn’t sure what to call Lincoln, but she thinks ‘friend’ works either way. They’re definitely very ‘friendly’.

“Yes, mom. Lincoln.”

“What about him?”

“Well, he works at this gym,” Clarke tells her, even though she’s pretty sure she already knows that, too. “and he works with this girl Lexa who’s some sort of fighter.”

“A fighter?” Abby asks and Clarke hears in her tone of voice that this particular detail at least is one she didn’t already know.
“Yeah. Like a boxer, but a little different. MMA or something? I don’t know. Anyway, so she has a fight on Saturday and Lincoln invited Octavia, Raven and me to come and watch.”

“Okay?”

“And the thing is that it’s in Tacoma, so we were thinking we could drive there on Saturday, watch the fight, and then come up to Seattle to visit you?” she says in a questioning voice. She knows her mom would never say they couldn’t all come and stay at her house, but it’s simply something you don’t just presume.

“Until Sunday?”

“Yeah. Would that be okay?”

“Of course, sweetie. I’ve got a morning shift on Sunday, but if you girls want we could get lunch or something.”

Clarke hesitates. She actually planned on driving back to Portland Sunday morning to write application letters for volunteer programs. But she doesn’t really want to tell her mom that she just wants to have a place to sleep, but can’t be bothered to hang around to actually see her. Plus, that wouldn’t even be true either. She really does miss her and having lunch with her mom sounds really nice actually.

“That’d be great, mom.” She says finally, before draining the last of her coffee in two huge gulps as she’s walking back towards the front entrance of the library. It has started drizzling and Clarke hopes it won’t turn into a downpour. Octavia already took the car home and she’ll have to walk to the bus station and then home. She should have listened to Raven this morning and grabbed the umbrella before leaving the apartment.

“Great.” Her mom echoes and then Clarke hears someone calling her mother’s name in the background. “I gotta go, sweetie. Text me when you know when you’ll be here. You still have your keys?”

“Of course, mom.” Clarke widens her eyes, slightly irritated. Her mother always asks her that. *You lose your keys down a drain one time!*

“Allright, great. Can’t wait to see you girls. We’ll talk soon.” Abby says a little hurriedly now and then Clarke hears smooching noises as her mum blows her kisses through the phone. “Love you, Clarke.”

“Love you, too, mom. Bye.” She smiles and then hears her mother’s voice a little quieter as she calls out to someone at the other end,

“Allright, I’m coming. I’m coming, page Dr. Kane and get the patient to OR Three!” There’s some rustling and then her mother’s voice is clearer again. “Bye, sweetie. Kisses to the girls.” Abby hastily calls into the phone and before Clarke can say anything more the line goes dead.

Clarke shakes her head with a small smile and then stows her phone away in her bag again as she enters the main lobby of the big, open-spaced library. She checks in at the counter, finally having found her student ID after all, and then pushes her things into one of the empty lockers. On her way to her usual semi-secluded study spot behind some shelves near the back she locates a bin and throws out her empty coffee cup. It doesn’t really feel like it helped boost her system a lot, but once Clarke is settled down again at the single table against the window she occupied earlier as well it doesn’t take her long to get back into the material.
Only when the rain drops pound heavily and loudly against the glass in front of her does she look up. By that time it’s almost completely dark outside and a look to her wrist watch tells Clarke that they’ll close the library in under twenty minutes. She finishes the chapter on the effects of brain stimulation on language and then packs up her things. As she walks out she’s one of the last to leave and once she’s out of the door she hears the lights shut off behind her inside and everything around her is suddenly encased in darkness with the exception of the motion-triggered lamp just outside the library’s entrance. Its yellowish light bulb is not very strong however and barely brightens the narrow canopy in front of the double doors. She lingers there a little, but when the rain doesn’t let up she sighs in surrender and starts jogging towards the bus station.

By the time she turns the key inside the door to her apartment she’s soaking wet and yawning and when Raven sees her coming in like that from her spot on the couch she immediately coos and gets up to make her a cup of tea while Clarke goes to take a hot shower.

The water is warm and soothing against her cold skin and Clarke relaxes, letting her head fall back under the shower head. There’s nothing better than this, she thinks, as she slowly feels the warmth return to her body and the cold, wet strands of hair sticking against her neck and shoulders loosen up and become one with the hot stream of water. Nothing better four sure.

“Lexa? What the hell are you doing?”

Lexa tilts her head back and looks up. “Hm?”

Anya’s standing over her a few feet away, her hands on her hips and her eyebrows raised. “Are you drunk?” she questions with a confused but highly amused look on her face.

“No?”

“They hell are you…what…what is this?” her former foster sister bursts out laughing, gesturing to all of Lexa.

Lexa looks down at herself. She’s lying on her back in front of her bed on the floor with her legs propped up on the mattress in a ninety degree angle and the book she’s been reading still lifted above her head.

“I’m reading.” She explains the obvious, if slightly embarrassed, and frowns when Anya just laughs louder. “What? I was just working out before!” Lexa justifies the admittedly somewhat unusual position she’s been found in. She was just doing some abs exercises though and when she was done she thought about something in her book and wanted to check if she remembered it right. And she just…well, kept reading.

“You’re so weird.” Anya shakes her head and turns to leave before she apparently remembers what she came into Lexa’s room for in the first place and turns her head back around, saying over her shoulder, “Oh, and I got Saturday covered.”

At this Lexa shoots upright and twists to face Anya, but the girl has already walked out of her room. “Really?!” Lexa shouts after her and hears a simple ‘Yep’ from the living room, before the sound of something plopping onto something soft tells her that Anya is now lounging on the couch. She
quickly scrambles up and follows the older girl. “So you’re coming?” Lexa asks from her bedroom doorway, barely containing her excitement.

Anya told her two weeks ago that she might not make it to her fight in Tacoma because of work. Of course Lexa wasn’t mad at her or anything, but now she has to admit that the prospect of fighting without Anya in the crowd to cheer her on has been a little disappointing. Not that she notices anything while she’s in the ring, but just knowing Anya is there always helps settle Lexa before and after the fights. Plus - and maybe that’s the more prominent reason she’s so glad to hear Anya will be coming after all - she really didn’t want to have to drive all the way up there with Indra. She admires, respects and at times even likes her coach, but she’s not really a person Lexa would particularly enjoy a two to three hour car ride with.

“Yes, I am.” Anya confirms again and despite her best efforts Lexa sees the smile Anya can’t quite hide, undoubtedly knowing that she’s made Lexa’s night.

“Oh, thank god!” Lexa exclaims with a sigh of relief, dropping all pretence, and Anya chuckles freely now. Lexa walks over, her book still in her hand, and takes up a seat in the big arm chair diagonally from the couch, folding her legs underneath her.

“What, not sad you won’t be road tripping with Coach Stern Face?” Anya asks sarcastically and Lexa gives her a meaningful look, shaking her head once. Really not. Anya smiles to herself, flipping through the motorcycle magazine that’s propped against her legs which she has pulled up on the couch. For as long as Lexa can remember Anya has been talking about wanting to have her own motorcycle. She’s had a subscription to two biker magazines for years, but she’s never felt comfortable and secure enough to spend her savings on something she doesn’t actually need as she explained it to Lexa. Lexa gets it. They aren’t rich and they’ve had times when they had to be really careful how they spend their money. Especially Anya. After emancipating Lexa was in the army. She didn’t really need a lot of money there, but Anya has been on her own since she was seventeen and Lexa knows there were times when Anya was anything but well off. She doesn’t know exactly how bad it was. Anya doesn’t talk much about that time. Only that she was just so glad to be out of the system. But Lexa knows she had three jobs at once for quite a while and she can’t imagine that that would have been too easy. Now, of course, having worked her way up to manager of a night club Anya is doing quite well for herself and Lexa is happy to see that the older girl is treating herself to more things just because. Mostly those things are unhealthy snacks though, or new clothes. Not big things like getting a motorcycle. Lexa thinks Anya would deserve one though. It really has been a life-long dream of Anya’s.

“You should get one.” Lexa tells Anya, looking back down to her book.

She only hears Anya hum however and lifts her eyes to the other girl again. She hasn’t moved and it doesn’t look like she’s planning on saying anything more on the matter.

“Why not?” Lexa interprets the non-committing noise. She frowns at Anya who throws her a look, telling her to stop it. “What? You can afford it!”

“No, I can’t.” Anya disagrees and Lexa hears in her voice that she’s already annoyed by the subject. She refuses to drop it so easily though.

“Why not?” Lexa presses. “You’ve been saving up forever! Why wouldn’t you buy a motorcycle with that money? You’ve wanted one for as long as I’ve known you!” she argues, slightly frustrated at Anya’s stubbornness. Why wouldn’t she treat herself to this? She deserves it.

“Because it’s not important.” Anya counters. “I don’t need a motorcycle.”
“But you really want one.” Lexa points out and claps her book shut. She’s determined to get to the bottom of this now. “It’s okay to buy what you want sometimes, An. You’ve worked really hard for it!” She almost desperately tries to convince the other girl, but Anya is already shaking her head.

“What I want is a fucking education.” She practically fires at Lexa, before frowning back down onto the magazine and Lexa stops. This is news. Anya has never talked about this before. Ever. She wants an education? Like college?

When Lexa doesn’t immediately reply Anya suddenly gets up, almost angrily throwing the magazine behind her on the couch, and briskly walks into the kitchen where she vanishes behind the corner. Lexa is still a little stunned by the abrupt change of topic and mood as she hears the tap turn on and then water running. She quickly puts aside her book as well and follows Anya into the kitchen area. The girl doesn’t look up when she comes in and Lexa knows something is wrong when she sees Anya washing the dishes. Anya never does that. Not just out of nowhere like that. Not when she doesn’t need those things exactly to cook. Especially not since, well, they have a dishwasher.

“Do you want to go to college?” Lexa asks almost softly. She feels that Anya is really upset about something, but she isn’t sure what just happened. Anya doesn’t reply. She just keeps scrubbing the same plate over and over as if it did something to her, without sparing Lexa even one glance. Her profile looks hard and angry to Lexa and she doesn’t understand what’s going on.

“Anya?” she tries again and suddenly Anya stops scrubbing and whips around, glaring at Lexa. “What?” she practically spits and Lexa almost cringes. She is utterly confused, but now that Anya is finally looking at her again Lexa can read something aside from anger on her face. It’s so rare that it takes Lexa a second to name it by which time Anya has already returned to forcefully wiping the dish with the sponge.

It’s fear.

“Okay,” Lexa starts slowly, shaking her head. She really needs Anya to break this down for her and explain to her what’s going through her head. “Hold on. What’s happening right now?” Lexa questions Anya, hand hovering halfway between her own body and Anya’s but not touching her.

Anya keeps up her furious scrubbing for another moment before she lets the dish drop noisily into the sink and grabs the edge of the counter with both hands, stepping back and letting her head hang between her arms. Some water is dripping onto the floor and Lexa sees Anya’s back move with a deep breath, before Anya looks back up at her. She looks so young suddenly and Lexa is reminded of all the times Anya wore this expression when Mrs. Maynard, their foster ‘mother’, was furious with Lexa. Anya next to never looked this lost when Mrs. Maynard was shouting at her, but whenever the old woman’s anger was directed towards Lexa Anya’s face would slip. Lexa will never forget what it felt like the first time she saw Anya like this. She thought she’d never seen someone so worried for her. Never.

Seeing that expression on Anya’s face again pains Lexa and she swallows dryly.

“Anya.” Lexa speaks softly and inside her chest her heart is aching. “What’s wrong? Why is you going to college so terrifying?”

Anya lets out a soft laugh that Lexa thinks was supposed to be a scoff and then stands up straight again, facing Lexa.

“It’s not terrifying. It’s just…it’s…” she looks around the kitchen for the right words as if they were written on the wall somewhere. Finally she sighs and shakes her head at Lexa. “It’s college. College,
Lexa considers Anya for a moment, trying to figure her out, and when she thinks she has she decides it’s time for a little tough love.

“So?”

Anya frowns, obviously taken aback. “So?”


Anya practically gapes at her before her disbelieving expression turns into an angry one. She almost looks betrayed and Lexa has to make a conscious effort not to drop her charade right then and there, but she knows Anya needs this right now.

“What’s the big deal?” Anya echoes again, a little louder.

Lexa simply shrugs, mostly just to rile Anya up further, and it’s working. Anya scoffs and shakes her head at Lexa’s insensitivity. “Wow.”

Lexa only raises her eyebrows and crosses her arms over her chest. “Look,” she says, pretending to be almost bored by the conversation now. “If you want to go to college, fine. Do it. If you don’t want to, then don’t. I really don’t get what your problem is.”

It’s a lie. By now Lexa has caught on. Lexa knows exactly why Anya is seemingly unfoundedly anxious at the thought of attending college.

It’s not something she ever saw for herself. She always told Lexa she would get out of the system and then get out of that shitty town as soon as she could. She didn’t care where she went or how she got there – unsurprisingly a motorcycle would have been her first choice though – she just wanted to leave it all behind. It’s not an uncommon wish amongst children in the system and Lexa could always picture it. Anya and her, riding away into the sunset, not looking back on any of it. Not even for a second.

But of course that particular dream was impossible. Because when Anya got out Lexa was still very much in. And even though Anya never said one word about it Lexa knows beyond a doubt that Anya stayed for her. Of course travelling around the country to somewhere else and starting a whole new life there wouldn’t have been easy or cheap anyway and it was certainly another factor that contributed to Anya staying in Portland, but Lexa knows she is the main reason. She knows that and she will never be able to tell Anya just how much that meant to her. Still means to her. And Lexa also knows that when she herself decided to leave for Georgia, for the military no less, an institution Anya was and is anything but a fan of, Anya had every reason to be angry with her or disappointed. But Anya wasn’t. Or at least she never let Lexa feel anything of that sort. On the contrary, Anya was there when Lexa came back with doubts and unsure of her future. She took her in without a single thought and told her she could just take this time to figure out what she wanted. Anything she wanted.

For all her outward childishness Anya has always been more mature than Lexa ever could be with things like this, Lexa thinks. Like letting someone go. Like taking the high road and really wanting the best for someone else. Because when you love someone you don’t care how much they hurt you. Lexa knows she’s hurt Anya. She knows she hurt her when she was angry with her for leaving her behind in the foster system when Anya was already doing everything she could for her. She stayed
for her for Christ’s sake. Lexa also hurt her by leaving Portland, but Anya would never hold it
against her. She’s hurt her and Anya was never anything but simply there for her.

So now it’s time for Lexa to be there for Anya. Because Lexa knows where this fear is coming from.

Anya never wanted to settle. Not ever and especially not in Portland. She wanted to be anywhere but
here, wanted to be wild. And free.

And now? Now she’s the manager of a club. She works almost every day, walks a cute dog, pays
their bills, does her own and the club’s taxes and rents an apartment that has efficient and morally
acceptable energy usage. It’s a good life. But Lexa knows it’s not the life Anya always imagined for
herself. And college? College is another thing Anya never saw for herself. College is another
responsibility, another mature thing to do, another step into a direction Anya never planned to go.

But Lexa also knows that it’s what Anya wants now. She’s just scared. Of becoming someone else.
And of losing herself in the process.

Lexa knows the feeling. She felt like that when she joined the military. She didn’t know why she
wanted to. She couldn’t understand her own desire to join and it drove her crazy. But she knew she
had to do it. Even though her own reasons were closed off to her at that moment she just knew she
had to follow her gut on that. And so should Anya with this.

“My problem?” the girl echoes, still reeling. “My problem is that it’s fucking expensive, Lexa! It’s
expensive and honestly I don’t even know if it’ll be worth it.”

“So don’t do it, then.” Lexa shrugs as if she couldn’t care less, passing Anya and getting a glass out
of the cupboard, not looking at Anya. She can practically feel the girl bristling behind her and again
it takes a few seconds before Anya finds her words.

“I can’t just manage a club without ever having attended one single course at college! I have no idea
what I’m doing!”

Lexa doesn’t mean to, but she can’t help but snort. Anya is an amazing manager or she wouldn’t
even have been offered the job. Especially not at only twenty-five years of age.

“That’s ridiculous. You’re a great manager.” Lexa tells Anya as she gets the rest of the fitness
smoothie she made for herself earlier out of the fridge. As she pours it into the glass she hears
nothing but the slow trickling of the fruit mix. When the glass is full she slowly turns around and
leans against the counter behind her, eyeing the other woman.

Anya is still standing in front of the sink. Her arms are tightly crossed over her chest, her shirt
showing dark spots where her wet hands have touched it, and her expression is hard and angry. She
glares at Lexa.

“You don’t get it.” She spits almost condescendingly, but Lexa knows it’s only said in anger and
ignores the stab behind the words.

“Why don’t you explain it to me then?” she asks coldly. “You have the money to go, you obviously
have a reason to go, so unless there is something you haven’t explained to me yet there is absolutely
nothing standing in your way, Anya.” She finally starts spreading it all out for the other girl. “You
work mostly nights so I guess attending night classes could be difficult, but I’m sure there’s a way
around that. You’ll have no problem getting into business classes, which is what I’m assuming
you’re thinking of, because you already know heaps about it. You won’t even have to look for
student housing because you’re already settled.” She takes a sip from the cold beverage to leave
Anya room to protest, but to her mild surprise the Asian-American stays quiet. So Lexa continues.

“You have no reason to be flipping out over this. And the only reason why you are is because you’re scared to become an adult.” She tells Anya without reserve. “Something you never wanted to be. You’re scared you might fail and you’re scared how being a business major or whatever on top of having a good job and a good apartment will fit in with your own perception of yourself, but that’s stupid. You always want everyone to think you’re such a bad-ass, Anya, but you know what? I think the most bad-ass thing about you is how you accomplished all of these things without anyone at all. You did that. You worked your ass off and found something you’re not just good at, but something you actually enjoy doing in the process, and now you’re scared to go after it?” Lexa has talked herself into a sort of rage by now and she scoffs loudly, putting the still almost full glass harshly down onto the counter.

“You’re being whiny and unsure and it’s ridiculous. You’re the most bad-ass person I know. The most accomplished and the most brazen. So get your fucking head out of your ass and just…” she lifts her hands in front of her as if she wanted to hold something invisible up in the air as she tries to find the right words to convince Anya to just go for it.

“Just…do it! Just do it, Anya. Go for it! Get a fucking degree and then open your own club! Or hang it on your wall and never look at it again. I don’t care. Just do it.” Lexa laughs. *Just do it. Do something for yourself.*

Anya’s angry expression has run away from her a little and what Lexa can make out displayed on the face of the woman across from her now, to her great satisfaction, is shock.

Again Lexa shakes her head at Anya and takes a breath, calming herself down. She eyes her for a little longer and then a soft smile spreads across her face.

“You’ll do fine, An.” She repeats a little quieter, but matter-of-factly, and then takes the glass back into her hands and lifts it to her lips once more. Over the rim of it she watches as the emotions change almost visibly on Anya’s face. Shock, disbelief, thoughtfulness, and finally, amusement.

Anya’s lips slowly turn upward and she narrows her eyes at Lexa in a playful way.

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard you speak this many sentences consecutively since Peter Fanley stole your bike and you read him his rights after you chased him down with that baseball bat.” She laughs softly and Lexa gives her a small smile over her glass.

“Of course, I did. It’s an awesome bike.” She states simply.

They look at each other for another moment and Lexa instinctively knows her tough love worked. And she’s almost a little proud of herself for apparently having found the right words. She’s not always so good with words. At least not when she hasn’t had time to think about what she really wants to say.

Finally Anya takes a deep breath and closes her eyes for a moment, nodding to herself and murmuring something under her breath Lexa can’t quite make out. She supposes it’s something encouraging and likes that she’s apparently not the only one who needs to repeat good advice to herself after having gotten it. When Anya looks back up Lexa knows the moment has passed. And she’s glad.

As much as she likes being serious, too serious can be exhausting and frankly Anya being overly serious is always very intense and a little shocking. So, yes, Lexa is glad they got this out in the open, but she’s also glad the conversation seems to be done for now.
Changing the subject altogether Anya asks if Lexa wants to order pizza and Lexa declines, reminding Anya of her pre-fight diet. Anya spends the next five minutes ranting about how there’s such a thing as eating ‘too healthy’ and Lexa simply lets her, quietly finishing her smoothie at the table and watching Anya gesticulate as she sorts the badly washed plates into their small dishwasher.

An hour later they’re both sitting over their salad dinners, Anya watching something on her phone, while Lexa contently turns the pages of her book.

Outside the last rays of daylight are being smoothly swallowed by dusky darkness and as Lexa looks up between chapters she feels her pre-fight jitters slowly set in.

Only three more days.

“Clarke!”

“Brenda! Hi!” Clarke and Raven turn around and see a blonde girl briskly walking towards them, smooth hair whipping behind her.

“Hey, Raven.” Clarke’s classmate perkily smiles at the brunette next to Clarke. Raven returns the smile halfheartedly and then tells the both of them she has to get going.

“I’ll see you later.” She throws to Clarke, raising her eyebrows meaningfully, before she turns the corner and is out of sight.

For some reason Clarke hasn’t been able to fully figure out yet or get Raven to tell her Raven never seemed to like Brenda very much. Whenever Clarke asks her about it though she just shrugs and says she’s just not her kind of people.

Sure, Brenda can be a bit of a gossip queen and oftentimes when you talk to her you get the feeling of being back in high school, but all in all Brenda has been nice enough to Clarke and they’ve shared notes and rants on various of their shared classes and professors. They aren’t exactly very close however and Clarke hasn’t even seen the other girl that much lately. Brenda isn’t really a library kind of student. Which, to Clarke, is kind of impressive when you considered that Brenda is pre-med as well. Raven once suggested that Brenda’s dad probably paid off the school. It was well known that Brenda’s family was quite rich and influential, but Clarke doesn’t like to assume and Brenda’s been a nice enough friend to her, so she mostly just ignored Raven.

“You didn’t call me the other night!” Brenda says in an accusatory voice as she loops her arm through Clarke’s on their way to class.

“Oh, yeah!” Clarke remembers. “Sorry about that. I got home really late and totally forgot.”

“It’s alright.” Brenda waves her off and then grins at her in a way that makes Clarke frown. She doesn’t like that look. That look is giddy and when Brenda is giddy it usually means she has something incredibly scandalous to talk about. Either that, or…

“So, you know my friend Lionell, right?”
“Yes?” Clarke admits carefully. She thinks she knows where this is going.

“Well, his friend Jackson told him to ask me if youuu,” she wiggles her finger at Clarke with a huge smirk and Clarke wants to close her eyes and groan, “are single!” Brenda almost squeals.

**Whoomp, there it is…**

“Brenda, no.” Clarke shakes her head as they walk passed a guy holding the door open for them. She smiles at him in thanks, while Brenda goes on, not paying attention to anything around her at all.

“Yes! Clarke, this is him! He’s the one!” she insists and then stops in front of the staircase and pulls Clarke around to face her. “He’s perfect for you! He’s smart, he’s hot, he’s nerdy! Clarke, he even likes art!”

“So?” Clarke asks, still frowning. Brenda always does this. She sets Clarke up with any guy she knows and gets way too excited and pushy about it and it’s tiring. The guys are usually boring and stuck up anyway and Brenda always chides Clarke for not giving them a proper chance when she doesn’t see them again after the first date. She really doesn’t need this right now.

“So? You like art!”

“I know.”

“So, he’s perfect for you!” Brenda repeats, obviously not understanding how Clarke isn’t getting this.

“I’m not looking for anyone right now though!” Clarke explains, but since it’s the same thing she always says when Brenda tells her about this ‘perfect guy’ she found for her Clarke isn’t surprised when it doesn’t deter her this time either.

“Oh, that’s ridiculous!” Brenda waves her off with a snort as if Clarke just told her she wanted to go skiing in the Sahara. “He’s a total ten and what’s more important, he thinks you’re a ten, too. Look,” she gets out her phone from her purse and starts looking for something while Clarke leads them up the stairs with the rest of their class. “Look, here, that’s him.”

Clarke glances down at the screen. The guy in the picture does look handsome by every standard. He’s tall, dark haired with blue eyes and a three-day stubble. His bare upper body shows off his impressive abs and perfect tan which he probably got from surfing in the Caribbean or somewhere equally beautiful and expensive if the picture is any indication.

“Isn’t he hot?” Brenda presses, lowering a voice a little as they file into the lecture hall.

“Sure, he’s fine.” Clarke admits, choosing a seat in the second row from the front as usual.

“Fine?” Brenda chuckles disbelievingly and Clarke suppresses an exasperated sigh. “Clarke! He’s not just fi-“

“Look,” Clarke turns around to Brenda and holds up her hands to interrupt her. “Brenda, this is very nice and all, but I’m just really not interested in dating anyone right now.” She says forcefully and by the scandalized way Brenda gapes at her she knows she’s offended her despite trying to avoid just that. “I’m sorry.” She adds calmer. “I know you mean well, okay? I’m just…not interested.”

She doesn’t know how else to say it. There’s really no way she could make it any clearer. Brenda stares at Clarke for another second, her phone still angled towards Clarke on the table, before she seems to gather herself and puts her big smile back on. It seems a little fake to Clarke though, but she
frankly doesn’t care at this point.

“Sure. No, I get it.” Brenda shrugs and Clarke’s sure it’s supposed to sound unfazed, but she’d probably describe it as snippy if she were asked. She’s also sure that Brenda doesn’t get it at all and judging by the way she barely utters another word to Clarke throughout the whole lecture she probably feels that Clarke is an ungrateful bitch.

Clarke is sorry that she blew Brenda off like that – again – and made her mad, but not enough to not still enjoy the silence that follows. Maybe she’ll be so mad at her this time that she won’t try to set her up anymore, Clarke hopes. It’s a nice thought, but somehow Clarke doesn’t think she’s that lucky.

And sure enough that evening when Clarke is back in her room her phone announces a message from an unknown number.

*Hey, it’s Jackson. Heard you’ve been trying to get in touch with me ;) Tomorrow evening sound good?*

Clarke groans and angrily throws her book bag onto her bed. She can’t believe Brenda actually did this. She’s always been persistent about setting her up with one of her friends, but she’s never been this blunt and Clarke starts to see what Raven meant with ‘just not her kind of people’.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Octavia peeks around the doorframe to Clarke’s room, obviously having heard Clarke’s noise of frustration. Clarke just shakes her head and closes her eyes, setting her phone down on the desk.

She hears Octavia step fully into her room and pinches the bridge of her nose between her eyes. She can feel one of her headaches coming on. “Clarke? Everything okay?”

After another second of silence Clarke takes a deep breath and turns around to Octavia who is kind of hovering near the door, her phone in one hand and a cup of what smells like fruit tea in the other.

“You know Brenda?” Clarke asks as she walks over to her bed and throws herself down on it. The softness of it makes her sigh in relief and she can’t believe how tired she is. *Thank god it’s Thursday!*

“The Cheerleader?”

“What?” Clarke frowns and props herself up on her elbows, squinting at Octavia in confusion. Her head is starting to pound. The other girl walks over to her bed, careful not to spill her hot drink, and sits down next to her.

“The perky blonde with the cupid complex?”

Clarke snorts and lets herself fall back onto the mattress, flinging her arms over her eyes. *Raven.*

“Yeah, her.” She confirms into the crooks of her elbows.

“What about her?” Octavia asks and then Clarke can make out some blowing sounds and a slurp.

“She gave my number to this guy even though I told her I’m not interested in dating anyone.” She whines and then lets her arms fall to her sides, spread out wide. She pouts up at Octavia. “Why can’t everybody just leave me alone?”

She knows she’s being extra cranky today, but it’s been a long week already and she feels like somebody is always on her. Her professors, her friends, herself. ‘You need to study more, Clarke!’;
'You need to study less, Clarke!'; 'You need to get your fucking life together and find a balance that works for you!' And of course then there’s also the fact that the small road trip to Tacoma and Seattle on the weekend is already stressing her out. Since she let Raven talk her into going she’s been annoyingly nervous about it and it’s just all a little too much. “Naw, poor baby.” Octavia pouts back, not able to hide a small grin, and leans towards Clarke, giving her a sweet kiss on the cheek. Clarke just hums in self-pity and closes her eyes. She feels Octavia move away, but before she can ask her where she’s going the girl is already back again and snuggling against Clarke’s side. “Is the guy hot at least?” Octavia asks and then laughs when Clarke blows out an annoyed breath of air. “I’m kidding.” She hushes and then they fall into a comfortable silence. They’re quiet for a little and Clarke feels her body get heavy and her breathing slow down. She’s so tired she could fall asleep right here and now. She doesn’t even care about brushing her teeth or changing her clothes and she didn’t put on any make-up this morning anyway because - surprise - they were late again. A couple of minutes later she’s already drifting in and out when Octavia suddenly pulls her back by speaking up. She’s talking softly, but Clarke nevertheless jerks a little, quickly opening her eyes. “Sorry.” Octavia apologizes quietly and Clarke hums and clears her throat, blinking a few times to readjust her eyes to the dim light of her room. She only switched on the desk lamp when she came in and it’s not bright or big enough to light up the whole room, but Clarke’s headache hasn’t gone away and it makes her somewhat photosensitive. The light of the lamp throws an even shadow onto the ceiling and Clarke manages to relax a little again as she traces its outline. “S’okay.” She mumbles and awkwardly pats Octavia’s shoulder with her left hand as the other girl is resting on that same arm. “What d’you say?” “I asked why you don’t want to date anyone right now.” Octavia repeats and Clarke feels her tilt her head back from her shoulder to look at her. “Is it just because the guys that girl sets you up with are shit, or…” “No.” Clarke quietly says, still staring at the shadow of the lampshade. She doesn’t really know. She just knows that she hasn’t really been in the mood for small talk and flirting and all those little games. It just seems more trouble than fun lately and she’s already torn between her friends and studying. She doesn’t need a boyfriend thrown in the mix as well. She tries to explain all that to Octavia and the other girl remains silent after Clarke is done. If Clarke didn’t hear the quiet thudding of Octavia turning her phone over and over on the mattress and letting it slap down every time, she would think the girl has fallen asleep. As it is however she just waits for her to get her thoughts together and say what she wants to say. She knows she won’t push her like Brenda would or think she’s hiding something like Jasper or Bellamy might, so she’s not nervous as Octavia takes her time to reply. Instead she lets her own thoughts roam freely, thinking ahead to the coming Saturday and what still needs to be organized and figured out. Lincoln asked if they would mind if he tagged along in their car and of course neither Raven nor Clarke had any problem with that. The fighting will begin at eight, but it won’t be until like an hour later that Lexa would be up, he told them. They agreed to all meet up at the girls’ apartment at five. That should easily give them enough time to drive up to Tacoma and find the location of the MMA competition. After talking to her mom on Tuesday, Clarke also told Raven and Octavia that they
could all stay with her over night and the girls said they were looking forward to a lunch with
‘Momma G’.

When the three of them became friends and started hanging out in each other’s homes they all got to
know their respective families. Raven’s grandparents and Octavia’s mom and of course Bellamy
were all very nice to Clarke. They always made her feel welcome and told her she could come over
any time and of course Abby did the same with Octavia and Raven. But it wasn’t until after Raven’s
accident that her friends developed an even stronger bond with her mom. Each in her own way they
sought Abby out. Raven, of course, being devastated at the news of being permanently handicapped
to some degree, looked to Abby for hope and guidance and someone to build her back up in every
sense of the word. Octavia on the other hand needed something else. She needed advice on how to
deal with Raven and with what had happened. She was so angry and sad and at the same time she
didn’t feel like she had the right to be when she was supposed to be there for Raven, who had much
more reason to be upset as Octavia always stressed whenever Clarke asked her about it. Of course
Clarke, Octavia and Raven were there for each other, as were the other members of the girls’
families. But Abby, being in the middle of it all as first a doctor at the same hospital and then
Raven’s doctor after that had a different kind of standing. She was their rock, encouraging them
when they were overwhelmed or discouraged, and their champion when the other doctors in the
hospital stuck together to try and make it all go away quietly. She was in a position to really help
them and they all leaned on her the most. That’s when she became ‘Momma G’ to Raven and
Octavia and Clarke knows that her friends became like second daughters to her mom as well.

Back then it was, and still is, a little hard for Clarke to kind of share her mom like that sometimes.
Not because she is necessarily afraid that Octavia and Raven will somehow steal her away from her
or become more important to her mother than her, but because it’s difficult to unite the image of
Abby they see with what she feels sometimes. To them Abby was and is this amazing woman, who
came through for them and never let them down. Who fought for them and stood by their side and
who they could trust implicitly. Someone who is always honest with them. Clarke understands why
they see her like that and with Raven’s leg and everything around it Abby truly has been all those
things.

But Clarke knows more than Raven and Octavia do. She knows that Abby isn’t always honest. She
knows her mom can be arrogant in thinking she always knows what’s best for everyone else and she
knows when that happens she doesn’t listen to anybody but herself. She knows her mom is
unwaveringly stubborn that way and can also be selfish. When she thinks she’s right, which is all the
time, she doesn’t allow any other options or opinions. She doesn’t listen to your ideas or objections.
She empathizes and ‘understands’, but she doesn’t truly put herself in your shoes. She doesn’t even
try.

Back when her father was still alive before the accident Abby’s and Clarke’s relationship was a little
different. Jake was the ‘fun’ parent most of the time and Abby was often the one to set the rules and
the one to enforce them as well, but it was never a big deal. Jake and Abby practically always
worked as a team, but at the same time her dad also made Clarke feel like he was on her side. Or
more precisely, that there were no real ‘sides’. Whenever Clarke felt her mom had treated her
unjustly and Abby was frustrated with her daughter Jake helped them both to see things from the
other’s point of view and understand where they were coming from. It always worked, but most of
the time there was no need for that anyway. Most of the time the three of them got along great and
Clarke remembers her childhood as an incredibly happy one. She remembers picnics and birthdays,
family vacations and trips to the zoo or the community pool. She remembers everyone being happy.
Her dad, her mom, herself, and of course Wells and Thelonious, who they spent more time with than
without. They were all one big, happy family. And then Wells got sick.

Clarke was fourteen when her best friend in the whole wide world slowly slipped away from her and
that same world and everything in it suddenly seemed horrible and painful and cruel and gray.

She thought she’d never get over the pain, but her dad helped her pull through. And then, when she finally felt like she could breathe again, like her life would go on and there would be brighter days ahead, her mother got the call. Her dad had been in an accident. A drunk driver had run him off the road and he was gone. Just...gone.

He just wasn’t there anymore from one second to the other. No goodbyes, no illness, just gone. Nothing.

And Clarke broke apart. Every last piece of her that she and her dad had so carefully picked up and glued back together was in itself shattered into a million more pieces. She was a pile of broken glass and with every step, every breath, every thought the shards bored into her, pierced her heart and left her bleeding and there were no brighter days ahead anymore. There was just pain. And anger. And some more pain.

And her mom. Her mom was there. Her mom who cradled her in her arms when she cried at night. Her mom who cried with her and told her it would be okay. Her mom who held her hair when she couldn’t keep anything down for weeks. Her mom who promised they would get through this over and over and over and that she’d always be there for her. Her mom who let her scream out her anger and who told her it was okay to hate her dad for leaving her.

Her mom was there. She was there in the hospital before Clarke. She was there when Clarke’s dad’s heart was still beating and he was still fighting for his life. She was there when the doctors explained that he had slim chances. And she was the only one there when she decided to kill him.

Clarke got pulled out of class that day and was brought to the hospital where they told her that her dad was gone.

Her mom was there. Her mom was there to tell her what had happened. Her mom was there to tell her that there was nothing anyone could have done. Her mom was there to tell her that he had died instantaneously at the site of the accident and that Clarke couldn’t see him, because they had already taken him away.

Her mom was there.

And she wasn’t honest with Clarke about anything and she didn’t fight for Clarke to be able to say goodbye to her dad and she didn’t come through for her by believing in Jake like he had always believed in them. Her mom was there and she betrayed her.

And when Clarke found out what had really happened almost two months later she knew she could never trust her mother again.

Over time, after a lot of therapy, acting out and moving to another city, the pain lessened and Clarke knew she couldn’t hate her mother forever. And she didn’t. She didn’t hate her. Or at least the hate didn’t cancel out the fact that she still loved her. She knew her mother had though it was what was best. She knew she had thought it was the only right thing to do. She always does. She knew that her mom had just wanted to protect her. Clarke knew all that, but it didn’t change anything.

Still, she couldn’t be angry anymore. She couldn’t carry all that pain and resentment around with her anymore. But she couldn’t forgive her mom either.

So she buried it. She buried it all and she moved on.
They don’t talk about Jake anymore. Not to each other anyway. On the anniversary of his death Clarke visits his grave. She assumes her mother does too but they don’t go together. On his birthday Clarke shuts herself off in her room, ignores her mother’s phone calls and stays in bed, sleeping or crying or just lying there, until it isn’t that day anymore. Sometimes her mother will bring him up in conversation and Clarke will tell her to stop.

They don’t talk about him anymore. They can’t. And that’s the only thing that Clarke was ever allowed to control in this whole shit fest and so that’s that.

Clarke moved on and now she can laugh with Abby again and tell her about her problems and listen to her advice and call her in the middle of the night when she’s scared on her way home from the subway and knows Abby is on call. Now she can just miss her mom sometimes. Her mom who she loves and who she knows loves her. Her mom who did everything right with Raven and who was their rock and their champion. Her mom who she can’t wait to see next weekend.

“But don’t you ever get like…lonely?” Octavia’s question tears Clarke away from her thoughts and it takes her a second until she knows what they were talking about again.

“Not really, no.” she answers honestly and Octavia hums in thought. “I mean,” Clarke starts to add and Octavia turns her head on Clarke’s arm to look at her again. “It’s not like I would mind having someone, you know? Like if a guy I liked who happened to like me back and was quiet, thoughtful, funny and considerate and didn’t mind me studying all the time and not wanting him around for anything else but cuddling, sex, to quiz me or listen to me ranting would be lying here right now instead of you…” Clarke shrugs her shoulder a little, making a non-committing sound, and Octavia snorts, nestling back against Clarke’s shoulder.

“Well, good thing you’re not picky or anything.” She chuckles and Clarke grins as well, before getting back to being serious.

“I just don’t think I could handle a boyfriend right now. And sure, sometimes I would like someone around, but I’m honestly just too busy. Especially for the whole charade of getting to know someone better. It’s just not the right time right now.”

“And you think once you get into Medical School the timing will be better?” Octavia questions skeptically and Clarke has to admit that she never really thought that far ahead. She just knew she wasn’t eager to play the dating game right now, but now that Octavia mentions it, it scares her a little how much of her future is actually already kind of…well full. She’s always wanted a plan. Always loved when she knew where she was going and she still couldn’t handle not having a goal to work towards. But she never really thought much about what that all entailed. In theory, of course! She knew she’d have a hard road of studying her ass off ahead and then, if she got where she wanted, a job that had insane hours. She knew there would be times when she would have to cut back on her social life to put in the work, but she never really thought much about what that could actually mean for the other aspects of her life. In the long haul. What if this is actually the easiest part of it all?

She’s kind of been having this feeling of just having to push through a little longer and then there would be a relief. Less pressure. Light at the end of the tunnel. Time for her to do all the things she’s missing out on on the way there.

But what if that was just a fool’s error in her calculations?

“Clarke?” Octavia’s voice brings her back to their conversation and a second later her friend is looking down at her from above, raising her eyebrows.
Clarke moves to sit up as well and Octavia scoots back a little to let her. Clarke takes a slow breath and rubs her eye with her left hand.

“I don’t know.” She admits tiredly. Her headache still hasn’t let up and it makes her groan. “I really don’t know, O. I guess when the right guy comes along I won’t have a choice anyway, right? Isn’t that kind of how love is supposed to work?” she looks at the other girl, who’s eyeing her with a compassionate sort of smile. Raven and Octavia know her well enough to be able to read her expressions and know when one of her headaches is coming on. Clarke can tell by Octavia’s sympathetic countenance that she must look about as tired as she feels.

“Yeah, kind of, I guess.” Octavia agrees and Clarke notices a thoughtful look passing over the brunette’s face. She thinks Octavia must be thinking about Lincoln, but she’s honestly too tired to start a conversation about him right now.

She just nods and then buries her head in her hands as her lips are being forced apart by a huge yawn. Feeling Octavia get up from the bed next to her she opens her eyes and cumbersomely stands up as well. Right at that moment they hear footsteps coming closer and sure enough a second later Raven’s head appears in the doorway before her body follows.

She eyes the two a second with an amused look on her face, before she simply says, “You look like shit, Griffin.”

Clarke lets out a tired, soundless breath of a laugh. “Thanks, Raven. Ever so charming.”

“Sorry,” Raven shrugs, pressing her lips together, “just calling it how I see it.”

Octavia rolls her eyes and gently shoves Raven out of Clarke’s bedroom in front of herself. Clarke follows the two out into the hall and then crosses into the bathroom, where she starts brushing her teeth, her eyelids heavy and her head pounding painfully.

Octavia joins her a minute later and starts taking off her make-up. They each go through their evening routine in silence and then Clarke hugs Octavia goodnight.

On her way to the kitchen to get herself a glass of water Clarke walks passed Raven who’s sitting on the couch with her laptop on her outstretched legs which are resting on the coffee table.

“Hey, Clarke?” Raven calls out and Clarke turns around with a hum. “Want to drive me to Whole Foods tomorrow to get snacks for the road trip?” she shoots her a toothy smile and Clarke nods.

“Sure. When’s your afternoon break?” she turns back around and shuffles into the kitchen.

“My last class ends around three. Yours?”

“Half past. Let’s meet at the car, okay? We can go to Whole Foods and then I’ll drop you off at home before going back.” she suggests as she holds the glass under the tap.

“Awesome!” Raven exclaims and holds out her hand for a high five. Clarke slaps it with hers in passing on her way back through the living room and calls out a somewhat hoarse ‘goodnight’ over her shoulder, which Raven echoes.

Once she’s closed her door behind her another yawn forces itself from her and she can’t wait to get to bed. She undresses quickly and leaves her clothes carelessly on the floor, before pulling her sleeping hoodie off the back of her desk chair and over her head. Before slipping into bed she nudges the heavy book bag off the mattress and then walks back over to her desk to take a painkiller from one of the drawers. She chases it down with a gulp of water, hoping it’ll quickly get rid of the
pounding in her head. Another yawn forces her lips apart as Clarke shuts off the lamp and then she blindly finds her way to her bed.

As her head hits the pillow she immediately closes her eyes and sighs in relief. *Finally.* She’s so tired that not two seconds later she’s fast asleep.

It’s quiet for a Friday Lexa thinks as she puts the tea thermos down onto the floor next to her chair and pulls her soft red blanket tighter around herself, before sinking into it. Their small balcony overlooks the streets below and there are a few pubs and bars not far which usually spill people, who can oftentimes be heard laughing or hollering in all stages of drunkenness, out into the night. But tonight the only sound that reaches Lexa is the distant noise of the odd lonely car driving through the darkness every now and then.

The balcony’s low lighting extinguishes as Anya turns off the lamps inside and then steps out into the night, pulling the glass door shut behind her. She steps over Lexa’s feet and settles down on the only other chair on the narrow porch with a heavy sigh. Lexa watches her and then, once Anya has wrapped herself in her own quilt, hands her the beer she brought out with her for her roommate. Anya thanks her and the two fall into a comfortable silence.

They often sit like this, side by side, looking out into the night and talking about anything and everything or not talking at all. Especially before Lexa’s fights it’s become somewhat of a tradition between the two women and Lexa always draws strength and ease of mind from their nightly togetherness out in the fresh air.

They don’t live in the city’s centre and the surrounding houses and street lights thankfully don’t give off enough light to hide the brilliant stars shimmering above their heads. Of course out in the forests around Portland you’d have a way more incredible view of the nightly sky, but Lexa is happy with what she has right here. She likes gazing up and looking for the many constellations and tracing their paths across the firmament as the earth steadily marches on on its path through yet another year. There’s nothing more timeless and more calming than that, Lexa thinks. And one day she hopes she’ll get to go to a planetarium and learn even more about space and all its secrets. Well, maybe not all. For one, mankind could never fathom the sheer vastness of infinity, and second, there should always be some mysteries left unsolved. Without mystery life would be incredibly boring after all and utterly pointless indeed.

“Are you nervous?”

Lexa turns her eyes away from the starry sky and settles them on Anya instead. Her eyes have fairly adjusted to the darkness, but she can still mostly just make out Anya’s features as the other woman lifts the can of beer to her lips and drinks.

Lexa leans back in her chair and snuggles deeper into her blanket, nothing but her head uncovered as her legs are crossed on the seat and her arms neatly folded against herself, holding the blanket in place. She thinks for a moment.

“More excited.” She decides and Anya hums and nods, cradling the pop top between her hands. “Are you?” Lexa asks back, referring to a conversation they had earlier, when Anya came into her
room to let her know – very casually – that she has decided to apply to Portland State University for business classes next semester.

Anya doesn’t answer right away and Lexa simply waits, looking back up to the stars, until the woman finally speaks.

“More anxious.” Anya admits in a rare show of emotion.

That’s another thing that’s so great about their nightly balcony talks. The balcony… it brings its own atmosphere with it, a whole different kind of reality somehow, and feelings seem bigger here, but less scary, too. At least saying them out loud isn’t as difficult when the night wraps you up in darkness just as tightly as the blanket around your body and the words fall into silence and simply float away and up, up towards the stars. A million, trillion, gazillion light years away.

Lexa tells Anya again that she’ll be fine, but the other woman only hums and then they’re back to enjoying the quiet, each lost in her own thoughts.

In Lexa’s mind the following day plays out and she makes a mental note to put her head phones out onto her desk next to her already packed bag before she goes to bed tonight. She needs them for the hours before the fight. The big, red and black ear cushions cancel out all other sound and the music allows her to fade away into her own world right up until the moment she has to get into the ring. She’s found out that this works best for her. No conversations before, no pep talks too close to the beginning of it, no last minute work-out routine. Just herself and her music and nothing and no one else.

“Raven, please be careful with those!” Clarke glances over to Raven in the passenger seat and frowns. If Raven drops those powdered doughnuts it’ll take her forever to clean the car later.

“Yeah, yeah.” Raven waves her off and then turns around and hands first Octavia and then Lincoln their round sweet cakes before biting into her own and letting out a loud appreciative moan. “Sho Goog!”

Clarke is still unhappily eyeing Raven’s fingers which are already completely coated in white confectioner’s sugar. But when Raven smirks at her, looking like she’s about to drop a comment on Clarke’s uptightness, she returns her eyes to the road and begrudgingly accepts that there’s not really anything she can do about Raven’s sticky fingers right now. She resists the urge to check on Lincoln’s and Octavia’s progress with the messy pastries in the rear view mirror and turns on the radio instead as she directs the car onto Interstate 5.

To Clarke’s great surprise they actually managed to get on the road on time and she relaxes a little as Octavia and Raven start telling Lincoln about that one time they went to River Drifters when the water was quite wild and Octavia got thrown at least twenty feet from the boat. Clarke swears the last time the two told this story to someone it was still ten feet…

She tunes out for a little while and lets her mind wander back to the night before. After she told this Jackson guy on Thursday that Brenda had actually given him her number without her permission he was actually really nice about it and even apologized, saying that he hadn’t known. They texted back and forth a few times and Clarke discovered that Brenda hadn’t just been trying to sell her on him
when she had told her that Jackson liked art. She was kind of surprised that they had so much in common after all and that he actually seemed like a decent guy who could hold a good conversation and it made her rethink her initial inclination to shoot him down. Maybe a date sort of thing could actually be fun with this guy. They definitely wouldn’t run out of things to talk about. Of course, his ‘invitation’ to do something on Friday had been kind of taken back when he apologized though and Clarke hadn’t wanted to sound like she’s crazy asking him out when she just told him she hadn’t even wanted him to have her number a minute earlier. So she hoped he would ask her again, but he didn’t. Not yet anyway.

Clarke decides that if he hasn’t tried asking her out again by Monday she’ll change her spots and ask him out herself. If she’s not too wrapped up in uni work that is.

The next seventy minutes the drive goes by without any complications; Raven tries several times to get a game of ‘truth or dare’ going, but Octavia and Clarke agree that it wouldn’t work, because they couldn’t even do any dares in the car and also they’re way too old to do that anyway, thank you very much. After a little debate they settle on ‘two truths and a lie’ instead and Clarke and Raven are quite impressed with how much Lincoln already seems to know about not only Octavia, but them as well. Since the girls practically know everything about each other though the game quickly loses its appeal and they fall silent for a little while, Raven tackling ‘Escape’ on her phone again, until somehow a discussion about ridiculously gendered products gets started and Octavia very nearly talks herself into a rage. They’ve just moved on to arguing over whether the putative sexual innuendoes in a number of Disney, Pixar and DreamWorks movies were put there intentionally or if people just imagined them now because you could find innuendoes in everything if you just looked hard enough, again Clarke can’t quite recollect how they got there, when suddenly the density of cars seems to thicken and Clarke has to slow down until a few minutes later everything comes to a standstill.

“Seriously?” Octavia groans from the backseat and Clarke cranes her neck to see if she can spot what’s responsible for the hold up. It seems however that the traffic jam is already very long and she can’t see any end to it. She lets out a frustrated grunt as well and slumps back in the driver’s seat. Great.

Raven turns the nub of the radio until she lands on a station currently reporting on their traffic congestion. Apparently there was an accident and a huge truck with some goods or others tipped over and spilled its content all over the road. The interstate in that direction will be clocked for at least another 40 minutes and the girls and Lincoln vocally proclaim their discontent.

“Is there another way?” Octavia asks and Clarke sees her hopefully looking at Lincoln in the rearview mirror. He gets out his phone from his jeans pocket and starts working on finding an alternative route. After a minute or so he regretfully relays to them that there isn’t really any other option for them. The only possibility would have been Washington State Route 7, but they already passed the exit and anyway it would have taken them an hour out of their way at least.

So they sit there, Clarke practically fizzling as she tries to stay calm, starting the car every ten minutes or so just to let it roll about three yards further and then kill the engine again. It’s frustrating and if it weren’t for Raven and Lincoln the atmosphere in the car would have gone south in record time. Octavia and Clarke are more alike when it comes to things like this. They like their plans and schedules stuck to, but the other two are apparently equally likeminded in their optimistic flexibility and it only takes them a few minutes to come up with another fun game to pass the time. They start spying on the other traffic jam affected and imagine what names, backgrounds and reasons these people might have for being on this road with them. Clarke is more reluctant than Octavia to play along, but when Raven and Lincoln break out into a laughing fit over Octavia’s suggestion that the three older gentlemen two cars diagonally in front of them with the bushy moustaches, fierce
expressions and stained wife beater shirts with exceptionally ugly, and from person to person progressively worsening, Hawaiian prints are probably on their way to cosplay at a Magnum convention, Clarke can’t help but laugh with them.

“Maybe they look so angry because they’re fighting about who had dibs on being Magnum.” Raven snorts between giggles and Clarke can totally see it as she glances over at the men again.

They pass the time like that for a little while longer, but soon there aren’t any more people to make up stories for and Clarke grows increasingly more impatient. Octavia behind her has unwittingly started tapping her foot as well and the atmosphere tenses again until finally the tie-up loosens and Clarke starts the car once more. They all give sighs of relief when it seems to be dispersing entirely and the traffic around them grows steadily more fluent until they’re driving at the speed limit once more.

Still, they’ve lost at least half an hour if not more and Clarke asks Raven what time it is about every ten minutes. They’re late.

She tries to make up for it by overtaking car after car - within the legal limit of course - but in the end, once they’ve finally passed into the city of Tacoma, the clock already reads 8:34 pm. The event has started and Clarke feels herself tense up. She hates being late. Especially to something like this. Lincoln explained to them that these fights are extremely short. They only have three rounds, each of them no longer than five minutes, and it would really suck missing Lincoln’s friend. After all, she’s what they’re here for.

Lincoln, who has been here for one of Lexa’s fights before, directs them to the place where it’s being held. As Clarke steers the car into the parking lot Raven and Octavia speak exactly what Clarke is thinking.

“Whoa, she’s fighting in a Casino?”

Lincoln unbuckles even before they have properly come to a halt, apparently now impatient about their belatedness as well, and nods, “Yeah, they have regular fighting matches in one of their Showrooms.”

“That is so badass.” Raven almost whispers and Clarke can tell she’s in heaven right about now. She’s already been talking Clarke’s and Octavia’s ears off about this fight for the past week, she’s been so excited about it, but now she looks positively in awe.

Once the car is parked the girls hurriedly climb out of it and follow Lincoln towards the front entrance. Above the doors three huge letters present the acronym of the casino’s name to the visitors and a little below the smaller, written-out version can be seen as well.

**EQC – Emerald Queen Casino.**

“Oh my god!” Raven practically squeaks, hopping up and down next to Clarke and holding on to her arm. She’s all smiles and Clarke’s stomach flips, her friend’s excitement easily infecting her. They’ve been rushing in, but once they get into the entrance hall Clarke stops dead. She has never seen such a huge room. It almost seems like the inside is bigger than the outside lets on and she’s more than a little awestruck. The ceiling is so high up that she can’t even really make out the details of its ornaments, which wind themselves all around. Everything is subtly colored in a soft sort of green and only after she sees a larger than life-sized painting of a Queen wearing a toga-like dress in the same colors does Clarke understand that it’s emerald green. She almost feels like she’s in a forest and even though it’s anything but quiet with a crowd of people talking and bustling about and all the steps echoing loudly on the marble floors she has the urge to shush Octavia when she calls her
name. The entrance hall - or maybe ‘atrium’ is a more fitting term – just gives off a vibe of almost holy grandeur and Clarke feels humbled by it.

“Clarke! Over here!” Octavia calls again and Clarke reluctantly lets her mind be pulled back to the reality of the moment. And then she’s overwhelmed in a different sense. So many people! She tries to figure out what direction Octavia’s voice came from just a second ago, but before she can detect them on her own Raven has already found her and is dragging her towards another pair of double doors to the left. These are a lot smaller than the entrance ones, though still quite big, and covered in soft-looking emerald green carpet. Clarke and Raven join Octavia and Lincoln, who is at that moment talking with a middle-aged man in a tux, showing him their tickets. The man gives them a cold smile that doesn’t reach his eyes and then unhooks the heavy-looking, red handrail rope that functions as a cordon between the atrium and the door.

They thank him, Clarke now flooded with excitement again, and then step through the double doors.

Beyond is a long hallway and as the doors fall shut behind them the sounds of the buzzing crowd from the atrium cut out. For a second the silence is almost deafening, but only a few steps later the noises of a quite different sounding crowd grow steadily louder. As they walk towards doors that are twins to the ones they just entered through Clarke can practically feel the enthusiasm, the exhilaration of the people beyond them. They’re shouting, chanting and screaming and one voice clearly stands out from all the others. It’s not hard to recognize it’s an announcer who seems to be commenting and narrating the already ongoing fight even though Clarke can’t make out what he’s saying yet.

“Come on!” Lincoln urgently calls for them as he breaks into a kind of jog for the last few yards. “It’s her! She’s already on!”

Clarke briefly wonders how he could possibly know that, but then Lincoln pulls open the double doors and they step into another world.

Clarke couldn’t say if the room was bigger than the atrium, because she can’t make out where the blackness hits solid walls. It almost seems like it doesn’t and Clarke’s heart races. She feels like she is suddenly standing on a giant platform that’s hovering in nothingness. Suspended in space.

The crowd seems to be everywhere. From seemingly none-existent wall to none-existent wall. Their shouts are so powerful that Clarke can feel them vibrate around and inside her as if she were surrounded by huge loudspeakers playing the sickest bass beats she’s ever experienced. Bright flashes zap through the darkness and Clarke feels like she’s walking through a concert hall or maybe a red carpet event. A very rowdy, excited, paparazzi-filled red carpet event. Aside from the camera flashes Clarke can only make out one other source of lighting. Three bright, round lamps are hanging from the invisible ceiling, casting the middle of the room in a giant spotlight. In that spotlight the infamous octagon fighting ring stands, marking the perfect center of attention, and Clarke can just make out three shapes moving inside it, one slightly set apart from the other two.

The Octagon is like a magnet and Clarke hasn’t even noticed that she’s been following Lincoln, Octavia and Raven, who’s excitedly rambling on about something Clarke can’t understand over the crowd, down the flat, broad stairs leading there until she almost trips. As she gets closer the shapes turn into people and she can see that two of them are women. They’re clad in what looks like training bras and very short shorts and when one of them flings a sharp high kick towards the other’s head Clarke notices with surprise that they are both barefooted. The woman who just tried to kick the other one looks wild and angry. Her red hair is tied back in a tight knot, but some strands of hair have come loose and are now sticking to her sweaty forehead. The other fighter stands with her back to Clarke, her brunette high ponytail pressed against the net as she jumps backwards, avoiding another attack. They’re very close to them now, only in the third row back from where three people
sit at a table that is set apart from the shouting crowd, and Clarke can hear the red haired woman yelling out an aggressive shout as she flings her fist towards the brunettes face with such force that Clarke reflexively jerks back. So does the other fighter however and the attacker misses once again.

When someone grabs her wrist and pulls her to the side Clarke looks away from the fight so she won’t trip over anything again. She follows Raven into a row towards a blondish Asian-looking woman at the end who seems to know Lincoln. As soon as they come to a halt in front of some empty chairs, which must be theirs, an excited outcry goes through the crowd and an animalistic shout from the ring draws Clarke’s attention back towards it.

The red haired woman is launching towards the other fighter again, punches flying angrily at the brunettes head, and Clarke lets out a sharp cry. Somehow the fighter seems to fend the red fury off however, her raised arms effectively protecting her head from the blows and then the brunette moves. It’s almost too fast for Clarke to register, but suddenly the attacker is craning her own head back, trying to avoid the other’s lightning fast jabs at her face. One, two, three, four, five they hail onto her and Clarke can’t fathom where they’re coming from. The space between the two women is practically none-existent and yet the brunettes fist seem to have enough room to draw back and shoot forward as if blasted from a machine-gun. And with the last blow the brunette fighter with the black and red, hand-shaped gloves unexpectedly flings her arm around the other woman’s neck and tears her back with such force that she practically flies backwards and their positions are reversed. As the red head is roughly thrown against the net the brunettes face finally comes into view and when she throws her head back as she pins the other woman against the ring with her lower arm Clarke gasps involuntarily.

She’s like something out of a warrior’s dream. Wild and untamed and glorious and Clarke can’t believe her own eyes. The woman’s face is almost completely covered in black paint – war paint, for lack of a better word – and it makes her look fiercer than anything Clarke has ever seen. The paint expands mainly over the woman’s eyes, almost like a mask, and reaches all the way to her temples. Three black lines of different lengths run down over each cheek and Clarke can’t decide if they look like tear traces or claw marks.

A shout different from the ones before draws Clarke’s attention towards the brunettes mouth. The warriors lips are drawn back in what could only be described as an aggressive growl and she’s baring her teeth like a wolf about to attack. Clarke feels her stomach flip again and her heart is pounding with the excitement of the fight.

The brunette warrior – no, Lexa, Clarke has to remind herself – has the other fighter harshly pinned against the net and the red head is visibly struggling to fight her off. Her hands are pushing against Lexa’s chest and neck and one of her knees is awkwardly drawn up in a futile attempt to get more distance between herself and her attacker.

Lexa’s grip seems stronger however and Clarke’s full attention is completely and utterly focused on the brunette fighter. As the interlocked women shift a little to the side Clarke notices that Lexa has two large tattoos on the right side of her body, but she can’t quite make out the designs through the net. They both have a tribal look about them though, one on her upper arm and the other snaking its way from under the girl’s training bra, over her ribs and onto her stomach. It only adds to the woman’s warrior-like appearance and Clarke can’t help but feel like she’s looking at a creature from another time, another universe. Lexa, in this moment, embodies the feeling Clarke got when she first stepped into the Emerald Atrium. She’s grand, awe-inspiring and overwhelming in the way she moves and strikes and Clarke can’t tear her eyes from the other woman’s body. It screams raw strength and unrestrained power the way Lexa’s muscles work as she throws out blow after blow at her struggling victim, but what captures Clarke the most is how when the red head gets a jab in as well Lexa reacts so quickly and so nimbly that is almost seems like she is made of water. The woman
It seems like a contradiction in herself to Clarke and it almost frustrates her how much there seems to be to her that she can’t quite wrap her mind around. How can a few movements alone make you question your own powers of observation?

It seems like the red head is about to lose the fight and Clarke looks up to Lexa’s face again to see her expression, but when she does she almost jerks back and freezes.

Two piercing green eyes are staring at her through coal-black, vicious-looking war paint and Clarke forgets to breathe for a second as the world around her seems to stop. Only the magnetic pull of the Octagon is still tugging at Clarke as it has been since she stepped through the doors, but now the chanting of the crowd is muffled and distant and all Clarke can hear is her own shallow breathing and her heartbeat pulsing against her throat and ears. She feels goose bumps spread over her back and neck as green meets blue and right then Clarke couldn’t have told you her own name.

But then the connection is lost.

Their eye contact is severed as a gloved fist makes contact with Lexa’s face and everything comes rushing in again.

“Oh my god!” Clarke yells out and clasps a hand over her mouth, the crowd reacting much the same and almost deafeningly loud to Clarke now as the weird spell disperses. The red head has somehow regained control and Lexa is forced to her knees by the next hard punch her opponent deals her.

“Oh my g-“ Clarke can’t watch, lifting her hand halfway in front of her eyes, but she can’t look away either as the red headed fighter with the black and blue gloves pushes herself off the net and wrestles the brunette warrior to the ground with a furious scream. It’s a good thing Clarke didn’t avert her eyes however, because in the blink of an eye the roles have reversed again and Lexa is pinning the other woman to the ring’s floor instead. Again it was too fast for Clarke to even comprehend and all she can do is stare as Lexa wraps herself around her opponent with every limb, effectively rendering the red head immobile.

And the crowd around Clarke explodes.

Raven is painfully slapping Clarke’s arm, jumping up and down next to her. And as her roommate starts chanting along with the multitude of voices around them Clarke thinks she now knows how Lincoln knew Lexa was in the ring even before they entered the Showroom.

Commander! Commander!

Commander! Commander!

Commander!Commander!

Chapter End Notes

Hello, my darlings!!

So this is chapter four! I know it’s got a few heavier bits to it, but it’s also when the gals FINALLY meet. Well, sort of.
I hope you all enjoyed it and are ready for the story to begin! Because we all know this is where Shadow Boxer really starts...
Now question for you! Who of you, my lovely readers, noticed the countdown to our favorite girls finally laying eyes on each other??
Let me know in the comments or on my tumblr!!

Can't wait to read what you're thinking.

All the best,
Lea
The chants of the crowd are still ringing in Clarke’s ears, even after the fight has ended. To no one’s surprise after that amazing tackle reversal, Lexa won and Clarke was clapping and calling the fighter’s ring name along with what seemed like the majority of the people all around them. Since Lexa’s was the last of the two fights of the evening the audience has started to disperse slowly, everybody talking and chatting loudly, and Clarke turns to their little group.

Octavia and Raven are apparently already in the middle of excitedly retelling every detail of the fight to each other and Lincoln smiles at Clarke when she steps over into their little circle. The blondish woman from before is nowhere to be seen. The space between the rows is fortunately big enough for them to gather together in front of their seats and Clarke lightly leans back against the back rest of the now unoccupied seat in front of Octavia’s spot.

“And when she jabbed her in the chest? Did you see that? It was like – BAM!” Raven mimics one of Lexa’s lightening fast punches and Lincoln chuckles as Octavia nods enthusiastically, before adding, “I know! And the thing where she –” she ducks down twice, imitating another one of Lexa’s moves and Raven points at her excitedly. “Yes! Oh my god, that was unreal!”

“Clarke!” Octavia gestures at Clarke and Raven turns to her as well. “Wasn’t that insane? I mean I know you don’t really like violence and all, but come on! That was amazing, right?”

They’re all looking at her expectantly now and her heartbeat is speeding up again. She nods quickly. “Yeah! No, I mean, that was…she was…yeah!”

She doesn’t know why she’s so nervous. The fight was good! Amazing even! And Lexa… Clarke doesn’t know anything about fighting, but even she knows that Lexa is something special. So why is it so hard for her to just say that? Obviously the other two were just as impressed by Lincoln’s friend as she was. It shouldn’t matter that she always said she thought it was a stupid sport. Clarke isn’t usually too proud to admit when something or someone has changed her mind.

But then again…has she really changed her mind? Does the fact that Lexa was amazing in the ring and that Clarke was excited and completely focused on the fight the whole time really mean that she doesn’t still think that hurting someone for fun is idiotic? Again she’s torn and with an internal sigh Clarke thinks that that has seemingly become her baseline state of emotion lately and it’s really not that much fun.

“Wow.” Raven deadpans, quirking an eyebrow at Clarke before lightly shaking her head. “You’re really putting the Clarke in ‘tough crowd’, aren’t ya?”

“That doesn’t even make any sense.” Clarke gives back slightly defensively, but Raven has already put her hand up to silence her and has turned back to Octavia to fangirl over Lexa some more.

Even though Clarke knows Raven doesn’t mean it and is just being her usual, over-the-top self, she can’t help but feel increasingly annoyed by the other girl. Just because she isn’t hopping up and down like crazy and doesn’t always show her excitement the same loud way as Raven, that doesn’t mean her opinion should be just pushed aside like that.

Reflexively Clarke crosses her arms over her chest. She can feel her mood plummeting at once as she
watches Raven and Octavia banter over how Lexa actually managed to flip the other girl over when she was already on her back, but she tries to push it away. She doesn’t want to spoil their night and anyway, it’s a stupid thing to get upset over. Raven’s just being Raven and really, Clarke should just ignore her. She doesn’t have anything to prove; to anyone.

She’s here and she enjoyed it and that’s all that matters. Whether or not Raven believes her should be all the same to her.

It’s not though.

“I thought the most fascinating thing was how she was so strong but so agile at the same time.” Clarke suddenly throws in, not really paying attention to what they were exactly talking about, and three heads turn towards her. When they all just stare for a second, Clarke shifts her weight from one foot to the other and shrugs her shoulders, more an awkward gesture than anything, and then goes on, “I mean, she was like this fierce warrior goddess and like pinning the red head against the net and then the next second she was like, just, super fast and impossible to catch, so…that was cool.” She ends lamely.

Two pairs of eyebrows are drawn up in surprise, while Lincoln just smiles and nods next to the others, seemingly knowing exactly what Clarke was talking about and agreeing with her.

“Warrior Goddess?” Raven snorts then and Clarke feels her cheeks heat up. That’s not what she meant. Raven makes it sound like something ethereal and outer worldly and ridiculous. Maybe that’s exactly what she meant.

Except for the ridiculous part.

Before Clarke can decide whether she should defend her wording however she sees Octavia slowly starting to nod.

“Yeah…yeah, you’re right, that’s totally what she looked like!” the girl next to Lincoln agrees and suddenly Raven seems to see it as well. She tilts her head to the side with a thoughtful expression for a second and then looks first at Octavia and then at Clarke, narrowing her eyes.

“You’re right. I think it was that sick make-up she wore. What even was that?” She turns to Lincoln and Clarke does the same. She really wants to know more about that as well; about the make-up and just Lexa in general. The black guy only shrugs however and eyes first Raven and then Clarke and Octavia.

“I don’t know. I think Anya came up with that. I think she said they used to pretend to be warriors sometimes when they were younger or something? I’m not sure though. They don’t really talk much about that.”

“’Bout what?” Raven asks and Octavia seems just as interested in the story as Clarke feels. She must not have heard it yet either.

“Um…” Lincoln looks a little uncomfortable now and it only adds to Clarke’s curiosity. She thinks he seems like he isn’t sure if he’s allowed to tell them and while she really wants to know what it is that Lexa doesn’t talk about much, at the same time a sense of being intrusive comes over her. If it really is something the woman wouldn’t talk to them about of her own accord – three people she doesn’t even know – then they should respect that.

“Who’s Anya?” Clarke asks instead to prevent Lincoln from actually spilling a secret he maybe shouldn’t. She doesn’t think he’s the type to do so, but either way he seems grateful for the
“Oh, she and Lexa live together. They’re kind of more like sisters, though.”

“Aah.” Clarke nods and smiles. She knows exactly what that’s like she thinks as her eyes meet Raven’s and Octavia smiles at them as well. Clarke realizes at that moment that she’s apparently over being annoyed and she’s glad for that. She hates it when she’s at odds with one of her friends.

When Raven turns back to drill Lincoln some more about Lexa, Clarke’s attention snaps back to him as well. He tells them that Lexa only started fighting semi-professionally like a year ago and Raven mirrors Clarke’s impressed expression as they look at each other. Octavia apparently already knew about that. With a little smirk he also mentions that Anya originally suggested Lexa’s ring name to be Lexa ‘Raccoon Eyes’ Woods. The girls chuckle along with him at that little bit of trivia and then Clarke finds out that Anya is actually the blondish woman that stood next to Lincoln before. Apparently Lincoln already told them that though. Clarke must have not been listening at that particular moment.

“So what happens now that Lexa won?” Raven asks then and Clarke thinks back to when the fight ended. As far as she could tell, the way the referee called out the winner’s name and held up her fist was like it would be in a normal boxing fight as well. She was kind of surprised however that after the fight was finished the three judges that resided at the table she had seen on her way in took a little time before passing on their verdict to the referee. Or the commentator, or whatever his role was called.

After that it was all very anticlimactic. Clarke imagined that other fighters might have celebrated, done a victory lap around the ring, fist pumped or shown their pride over having won in some other way along those lines. But Lexa just stood there, back straight and her gloved hands crossed behind it, before she turned to the other fighter. They shook hands, the red-head doing so with obvious misgivings, and then each respectively went over to the two opposite lying exits of the ring. At the one Lexa went to, a black woman with short hair and a crescent shaped scar that framed her left eye was waiting for her. Clarke assumed that must be Lexa’s coach as she saw her say something to Lexa, to which the fighter just nodded, and then pat her back a few times, before the two turned around and vanished along an aisle that led through the cheering crowd, probably towards the changing rooms. Neither of them even spared the people around them a second glance let alone a smile and Clarke wondered if Lexa even realized how many fans she had. Somehow she doubted it.

“Well, she’s probably already been checked out by the ring-side physician and Indra, her coach I mean, usually debriefs her during that. So I think it should be fine if we head back there now.”

“Back where? To see Lexa? Like Backstage?” Raven asks excited again and Clarke can see Octavia grinning just behind the other girl. Lincoln must obviously have already told her about that and Clarke would bet anything that Octavia told him to make it a surprise. Octavia loves surprising people. Especially Raven.

“Yeah, sure. I thought, you know, that you guys might want to say hello?” he shrugs, barely containing a grin of his own at Raven’s visible delight, and then gestures to his right towards where Lexa and the other woman went earlier.

“Are you fucking serious?” Raven grabs Octavia’s arm unconsciously, who is laughing soundlessly by now as she takes in Raven’s excitement, and stares at Lincoln. “We get to go to the back?”

Even though Clarke can’t see Raven’s eyes as they’re still trained on the black guy who is openly wearing an amused expression now and lifting his eyebrows at Octavia, she knows they’re probably sparkling like crazy. Raven is what Clarke and Octavia like to call a ‘fangirl extraordinaire’; at least
with athletes. As soon as a guy or a girl tells her they’re into some kind of sport, let alone do it professionally, she is practically undressing herself right then and there. Clarke always thought it was hilarious. Now, for some reason, not so much.

Despite how over-the-top she thinks Raven is still behaving, Clarke nevertheless shares a little bit of her excitement about getting to go ‘backstage’.

“Sure. I’m usually her corner man anyway.” Lincoln chuckles as he begins leading them the few steps down towards the ring.

“Corner man?” Clarke echoes questioningly, looking down as she follows Raven and Octavia out of their row and then falling in step next to Lincoln.

“Yeah, it’s kind of like a motivator. Did you notice how between the rounds they always go back to their corners and someone talks to them while they get some water squirted into their mouth or something?”

Clarke nods.

“That’s the corner man. They’re basically just telling the fighters to kick the other one’s ass. Psych them up, you know?” he grins and Clarke nods again.

“So you’re usually in the ring with her?”

She didn’t know that the two were this close and that Lincoln was an actual part of the fighting team.

“Yeah, usually. I mean sometimes it’s just Indra, but I think I’m better at riling her up.” He smirks again and Clarke wonders what kind of things he says to the fighter to get her pumped enough to beat someone else up. The idea of it being something that actually angers the brunette doesn’t sit right with her, but maybe it’s more like telling her that she can do it. Either way it’s not her place to judge or worry about it anyway.

They walk along the side of the ring until they reach one of the spots where it opens. Right of the block of seats facing them, there is an aisle leading away and Lincoln directs them down it.

“I feel like such a VIP!” Octavia smiles, now visibly excited as well, as the four make their way past the rows of seats. Kind of like in a movie theater or sports stadium the ranks of seats go higher up the further back you get and the entrances, like the one Clarke and the others entered through earlier, are at the very top of the stairs. The back rooms however are apparently on the same level as the octagon, so as they walk on the walls rise up to either side of them until they’re walking into a tunnel of sorts. Immediately it gets brighter. Here the equally spaced apart lamps on the ceiling give off a comfortable, warm yellowish light and again the emerald green color is displayed all around them, if slightly more inconspicuous than in the entrance hall. An emerald green picture frame here, an emerald green light switch there, and of course subtle emerald green ornaments painted along the walls where they meet the ceiling. Clarke wonders if it was just a random design choice or if the owner of the Casino just really, really loves this particular shade of green. She almost hopes it’s the latter. It would make for a much more interesting and fulfilling story.

“Come on, it’s back here.” Lincoln points to their left as the tunnel-like hallway comes to an end and leads off in two different directions and they all round a corner. Once they have, Clarke can immediately guess where the fighter’s room is. Three doors lead off from the small hall they just entered, but only one has a huge, black, bodyguard-like security guy standing next to it.

She hears Raven hush out a little ‘whoa’ and understands the reaction completely. The man looks
like something out of an action movie. At least half a foot taller than even Lincoln and arm muscles so big and chest so broad that his lower arms can’t even touch his own sides he looks like he could kill a gorilla with his bare hands.

“Hey, Clive! What’s up, man?” Lincoln greets the man dressed in a simple black security shirt, who upon seeing him cracks his stony, murder façade and smiles broadly.

“Yo! Lincoln, mah man!” The beefcake named Clive exclaims a little surprised but enthusiastically and his voice is so deep Clarke can practically feel it vibrate inside her chest.

“Hey, I thought Erin was working this fight.” Lincoln pauses and Clive’s face immediately grows serious again.

“Nah man, she’s out sick. Been ralphin’ all week I heard.” He and Lincoln grimace in unison. But then they start laughing like guys sometimes do when they greet each other and proceed to perform some sort of weird choreographed hand check they must have made up themselves.

“It’s good to see you again, man!” Lincoln says in a very high, but earnest tone as they embrace halfway before leaning back. “You headin’ down to Portland again soon? Anya could really use another hand. Jerry’s getting old.” He jokes and they both laugh.

Clarke has no idea who they are talking about, but when she looks over at Raven and Octavia for help they both look just as amused and baffled as she feels. She sees Raven turn to Octavia who only shakes her head and shrugs with a bemused expression on her face.

The motion apparently catches Clive’s attention and he turns his gaze on the girls for the first time.

“So, who are these lovely ladies you brought, Atwood?” he asks and again it astounds Clarke just how deep his voice is. A charming smile spreads across the big guy’s face and it makes him look a lot less like an angry, black hulk.

“Oh!” Lincoln exclaims and turns around to introduce them. “Sorry, this is Octavia,” he gestures to Octavia who smiles and shakes Clive’s offered hand. Clarke watches very closely to see if the guy will break her roommate’s fingers, but he seems to be very gentle and Octavia’s polite expression never wavers.

“Raven,” Lincoln goes on, now pointing at Raven who says a cheerful ‘hi’ and shakes Clive’s hand as well, before the security guard turns to Clarke.

“And this is Clarke.” Lincoln ends his introductions.

“Hi, Clarke, Clive.” Clive bows his head a little and Clarke is the last to shake his hand as well. It’s as huge as the rest of him and her own practically vanishes from sight as she takes it, but his grip is gentle and his skin quite warm, if also a little rough.

“Nice to meet you all.” He directs at the three girls at large and they echo the appropriate responses back at him.

“Well,” Clive takes a big breath through his nose and straightens his back again. He had to stoop a little to greet them all and Clarke can’t help but wonder if he ever has any trouble getting through doors. “I’m guessing you’re here to see the Commander.” He says in a serious tone and for a moment Clarke actually feels like she is about to meet a real commander.

“Yeah, are they done?” Lincoln asks and when Clive confirms that Indra already left and that they can go in now, Clarke gets a little nervous again. She blames Raven, who is at that moment grinning
at her so excitedly that Clarke could probably count all of her teeth if she wanted to.

“Alright, come on.” Lincoln waves them over, before he knocks on the door twice and then opens it for them without waiting for an answer. Octavia is the first to step over the threshold and Clarke follows in after Raven who goes next. The room they are entering is a little darker than the hall before. It’s a kind of changing room Clarke gathers. Although more the dance theater kind than the gym kind she thinks as she only passes one single row of – surprise – emerald green lockers. She also spots a full-length mirror and a small, fancy looking sofa to one side, but before she can take in anything else Raven moves aside a bit in front of her and she sees her.

Lexa.

She’s sitting on a sort of sports massaging bench that makes it so your feet don’t touch the floor because it’s so high and the blondish Asian looking woman from before, that Clarke now knows is Anya, is there as well. She’s standing by the fighter’s side, dabbing some sort of cloth against Lexa’s left cheek bone and wearing a smirk while Lexa’s eyes are looking up at the ceiling through her dark make-up, giving off the impression that she is somewhat annoyed by the other woman as she grumbles something in a low voice.

With a drop in her stomach Clarke realizes that the brunette is bleeding as she sees the dark spots on the cloth that look just a little different from the make-up stains on it and she frowns. The injury on her face also doesn’t seem to be the only one. Clarke notices the fighter’s left arm protectively hovering over her other side, hand lightly touching her ribs, and for a second she feels the urge to rush over to this woman, who is basically a stranger to her and check if she is okay.

It’s the doctor in her. Clarke’s always been a healer. She’s always wanted to take people’s pain away; especially after Wells. It’s nothing new. It’s not.

“Hey, Commander! Nice fight!”

At Lincoln’s words both women look over at the new arrivals and for the second time that evening Clarke is staring into green eyes.

Immediately her heart speeds up and it annoys Clarke just as much as it surprises her. She’s never been nervous about meeting new people. Even if they’re kind of famous or known or just won an MMA fight in a room filled with at least ten thousand people, of whom easily more than half came all the way there just to watch that person and cheer them on. Clarke’s never been impressed by things like that. And she still isn’t. She’s not.

“Hey, Commander! Nice fight!”

At Lincoln’s words both women look over at the new arrivals and for the second time that evening Clarke is staring into green eyes.

Immediately her heart speeds up and it annoys Clarke just as much as it surprises her. She’s never been nervous about meeting new people. Even if they’re kind of famous or known or just won an MMA fight in a room filled with at least ten thousand people, of whom easily more than half came all the way there just to watch that person and cheer them on. Clarke’s never been impressed by things like that. And she still isn’t. She’s not.

She thinks she sees the brunette pause for a second as they lock eyes, but before she can even blink it seems like the moment never happened as Lexa directs her eyes at the black guy standing between Raven and Octavia now.

“Lincoln. Thank you.” Lexa says calmly and slowly lowers the hand that has been hovering over her side. In the same movement she also carefully glides off the table and Clarke watches as the brunette assumes a curiously stiff posture. She squares her shoulders and lifts her chin somewhat, giving her an air of authority, and the feeling of meeting a real life commander returns to Clarke in a heartbeat. Unexpectedly a small smile effortlessly forms on the girl’s lips at her friend’s compliment though and it takes Clarke aback. It suddenly seems too stark a contrast to the woman’s perfectly straightened stance. What catches Clarke even more off guard, however, is her voice. Her voice is soft and quiet and almost small and it shouldn’t fit her at all but somehow it does and it’s another contradiction Clarke already knows will drive her crazy. Why is this woman not at all what she seems? Is anything about her what Clarke expects it to be? Then again, since Clarke really couldn’t pinpoint a certain image of the woman from the start, she guesses that would be an impossible task. Can’t meet or not...
meet expectations that could never be formed in the first place.

“You were awesome!” Raven suddenly bursts out to Clarke’s left before anyone can even utter another word and Lexa’s eyes focus on her instead. Since Clarke is standing right beside the girl, just a little further back, it’s almost like Lexa’s looking at her; but not quite. It’s a weird feeling, being in the fighter’s peripheral line of vision but not having her look straight at her and not knowing if she really notices Clarke at all. It makes Clarke fidget from one foot to the other and she quickly trains her eyes on Raven as well. Her roommate is wearing her I’m-charming-and-confident-but-also-a-little-starstruck-right-now look that probably only three people in the world would recognize on the girl’s face with as much ease as Clarke does and even though it’s usually somewhere between adorable and hilarious Clarke finds herself once again feeling annoyed by the athletic engineering-major.

It’s because she doesn’t want Raven to sell herself short and make people believe she’s nothing but a groupie when she is so much more. It is.

The woman next to Lexa, who is now casually leaning against the bench with her hip, arms folded over her chest and legs crossed at the ankles, snorts and Lexa raises her eyebrows, looking a little surprised at Raven’s enthusiasm. “Um…thank you.”

“No, seriously! That was so badass!” Raven goes on, grinning at Lexa and shaking her head like she still can’t believe how great the fight was. “The way you just…” she once again mimics throwing a couple of punches and Clarke watches Lexa’s lips curl into a small but amused grin. It’s obvious she’s trying to hide it - probably not to embarrass Raven – but she can’t quite keep it off her face. It suits her Clarke thinks.

“You really were great, Lexa.” Octavia chuckles, agreeing with Raven, who’s still fake boxing the air in front of her, and Lexa turns her attention to the girl next to Lincoln with a soft smile.

“Thank you, Octavia.” She inclines her head a little and Clarke doesn’t think she’s ever seen someone their age, or anyone really, look so… stoic. The woman gives off an almost royal vibe, which really shouldn’t be possible for someone who’s dressed in nothing but a training bra and shorts and whose face is currently covered in black paint and blood. And yet…

“Okay, so introductions!” Lincoln speaks up and Clarke tears her eyes away from Lexa. Lincoln is looking at the woman he told them is Anya as he continues and Clarke gathers that Octavia must only have met Lexa before tonight. “This,” he gently places his left hand on Octavia’s back and smiles down at her. “is Octavia,”

Octavia smiles a toothy, dimple-producing smile back at him for a second, but then directs it at the woman next to Lexa.

“Octavia, this is Anya.” Lincoln gestures at Anya.

“Hi. It’s nice to meet you.” Octavia says cheerfully and then takes three big strides and offers Anya her hand.

To Clarke’s surprise the other woman doesn’t take it however. She only stares at Octavia, not showing any sign that she is about to accept the proffered hand, and her face is completely immobile. Well, except for the wandering eyes that seem to be assessing Octavia in a painfully slow way, and Clarke wonders how Octavia is remaining so calm. She doesn’t seem to be unsettled one bit by the woman’s cold demeanor, unlike Lincoln who Clarke catches frowning a little nervously at his friend.

Another moment passes, but then, finally, Anya moves. In an almost abrupt motion, she unfolds one
arm and takes Octavia’s still outstretched hand into her own.

“It’s nice to meet you, too, Octavia.” Anya says and shakes her hand twice, before letting it go and reassuming her previous position. Her arms seem just a little less tightly crossed over her chest however and when Octavia turns back around to stand back with Clarke and the others again Clarke sees her shoot Lincoln a quick wink.

The big guy seems relieved like the worst part is over and then continues on with his introductions. For a brief moment Clarke wonders how close Lincoln really is with Lexa and Anya. It sure seems like their opinion means a great deal to him.

“Alright, and these are Octavia’s roommates,” he starts, looking to his right where Raven and Clarke are standing, and smiles warmly at them. As she glances at Lexa again Clarke thinks she sees the fighter’s eyes flicker away from her, but then Lincoln gestures to Raven and Lexa focuses on Clarke’s roommate again.

“Raven,” Lincoln gestures to Raven, who smiles charmingly, mouthing ‘hi’ at Lexa and the other woman as she casually throws up her hand in a small wave, “and Clarke.”.

For the first time since Clarke entered the room Lexa’s eyes really shift towards her and Clarke hates how she can feel her heart hammering inside her chest and against her throat.

She hates it. She does.

And then their eyes meet again.

Green.


Blue.

Lexa can’t believe how blue the girl’s eyes are. They’re so blue that even an hour earlier, when they stared at her through the darkness of a showroom, they seemed to shine.

Clarke.

So that’s her. That’s Octavia’s roommate Clarke. The one that is driven nuts by her other roommate’s reckless behavior. The one who picked Octavia up from the gym that one time. The one that Lexa thought was the other one’s boyfriend because her name sounds like a guy’s.

So she’s the one.

The blonde girl is merely looking at her and it’s enough for Lexa to feel the same draw she felt during the fight.
And it makes her angry.

What is wrong with her? Indra was right. She’s being unprofessional. When did she start letting herself get distracted by pretty girls while she’s supposed to be giving it her all in the ring? She thought it had been an unfair accusation before, but here she is again, cheek still throbbing from the punch she caught while she was too busy staring into some girl’s eyes instead of focusing on what’s really important.

“Raven, Clarke, meet Lexa and Anya.” Lincoln conducts his introductions. It takes Lexa another second before she can tear her eyes away from the blue orbs and then she smiles at that Raven girl again.

At the smoothie place Octavia told her and Lincoln a lot about her two roommates. Especially about Raven. And Lexa has to say that so far the image of the girl from Octavia’s stories fits very well with the girl that is standing in front of her now. Raven looks every part the active, outgoing person Octavia described her to be, from her sporty looking low cut tank top to her silky high pony tail that happily swings with every one of the brunette’s excited motions. She also notices the knee brace Octavia briefly mentioned and she can imagine a girl like Raven feeling very much restricted by it. Lexa certainly would.

She can tell Raven really enjoyed watching the fight and even though the unrestrained enthusiasm was a bit surprising at first Lexa is quickly realizing it is probably just the girl’s way. She gives off an almost vibrating energy.

Clarke however… Clarke is another story. The blonde seems much calmer in a way. She’s been very quiet so far, not saying anything and merely watching the interactions, and despite her best efforts Lexa is intrigued. She thinks back to what Octavia told Lincoln and her about her other roommate, but finds that it wasn’t a whole lot.

She’s pre-med at the moment and extremely busy with her studies, which means she isn’t home much. She’s from Seattle originally and her last name is Griffin. Octavia also said that Clarke is probably the most mature one of their group but then laughingly admitted that that didn’t mean much, before starting to tell some stories about ‘Party Griffin’ Lexa now wishes she had paid better attention to.

When her eyes flicker over to the blonde again she is still watching her and Lexa’s stomach twists in an uncomfortable way. Her eyes are just so blue!

“Alright!” Lincoln’s voice almost startles Lexa and her annoyance grows considerably at her own jumpiness. This is ridiculous.

She suppresses a frown as she shifts her gaze onto Lincoln who is addressing her again.

“Well, we just wanted to congratulate you on your win, Lex. Although of course; I never doubted you.” He winks at her and Lexa raises an eyebrow at him and hums low in her throat. Despite her impatience over letting herself be distracted so easily by this blonde girl she barely knows she’s still slightly amused by his obvious giddiness. He looks like a huge, happy puppy and as honest as she knows his praise was she has a feeling that the fight played only a small part in his current delight.

At Lincoln’s joke the others chuckle and Lexa’s eyes quickly flicker to Clarke once more. Her brief laugh, although quiet, caught Lexa’s attention yet again. It was gravelly, almost as if her voice had broken halfway through, and Lexa finds it incredibly… attractive. And it annoys her even more. Why can’t she get a grip on herself?
“Hey, so, um, O and I were talking,” The brunette girl named Raven says then, and Lexa thinks she sees her and Octavia exchange a look before carefully glancing at Clarke.

“Yeah,” Octavia picks up Raven’s thread. “We were thinking, you know since it doesn’t happen every weekend that we’re up here, that we all could-“

“Guys!” Clarke interrupts immediately and Lexa can tell that the blonde must know exactly what her roommates were about to suggest. And that it has seemingly been discussed before. “We agreed no partying!”

Ah. This must be what Octavia had been talking about when she mentioned Clarke being very responsible with her studies lately.

“Yeah, but I mean we’ve been talking about checking out that one club in Seattle for a long time, Clarke!” Octavia throws in, quickly wrapping both of her hands around her blonde roommate’s right arm.

“I said we’d cross that bridge when we come to it.” Raven corrects almost at the same time and her demeanor is more confident than pleading. Lexa silently applauds her unapologetic nature, but carefully eyes the blonde for her reaction.

She seems annoyed at being put on the spot like this, but Lexa can’t detect any real ill-willed feelings towards the other two. The blonde’s heavy sigh affirms Lexa’s assertion that this comes not at all unexpectedly to Clarke and she wonders how often Clarke actually finds herself being faced with the two brunettes trying to convince her to do one thing or another. Suddenly she would like to hear Clarke’s version of what Octavia described as her roommate’s ‘study craze’. She has a feeling that the brunette might have been exaggerating slightly. Nothing wrong with staying home on the weekend every now and then. She smirks inwardly at the mental picture of the two brunettes whining and tugging at the blonde’s shirt sleeves. Like children.

“Guys!” Clarke groans again, quietly so as to not project their little disagreement in front of everybody else in the room as much, but before she can say anything else Raven saunters over closer to her as well.

“Oh, come on, C! You know we can’t let this opportunity pass!” she says, slinging her arm around the blonde who’s eyeing her with an unimpressed look in her eyes that basically says ‘Oh, this is gonna be good’. “They have a three hour long happy hour at Re-Bar tonight!”

At this Lexa’s ears perk up. She has never been out in Seattle, but even she knows that Re-Bar is a pretty well known LGBT night club.

“That’s not a thing.” Clarke snorts and frowns disbelieving, but Raven nods energetically.

“No, really! It says so on their facebook page!”

“Raven.”

“I swear!” the brunette lifts both of her hands defensively. Clarke narrows her eyes at her suspiciously and Raven draws a cross over her heart with her right index finger and mouths ‘I swear’ again at her friend.

Lexa is so concentrated on the girls’ exchange that she flinches and gasps when something suddenly touches her cheek again and a stab of pain shoots through it.

“Sorry.” Anya says, drawing back the cloth again, but Lexa thinks she just saw her smirk.
When she turns her head back to the front everybody is staring at her and she feels uncomfortably put in the spotlight. Raven and Octavia only glance at her briefly though, before they both continue trying to convince Clarke to go out and have some fun. Clarke on the other hand… Clarke is still staring at her. At her abdomen to be precise and there’s a frown on the blonde’s face. Looking down at herself, Lexa realizes that she instinctively clutched her throbbing ribs when the cloth against her face and her resulting startling motion made pain shoot through her right side again as well as her cheek. She hastily drops her hand and looks back up at Clarke. The blonde’s eyes follow her movement and then snap back up to Lexa’s. Lexa thinks she sees worry in them and for a moment she feels a somewhat familiar warmth spread through her. They look at each other and Lexa wants to look away, but again the color of the other girl’s eyes mesmerizes Lexa for a second. The color and something else…

But then it’s gone.

Raven calls the blonde’s name – seemingly not for the first time – and Clarke breaks their eye contact and looks over at her friend instead. It leaves Lexa feeling slightly unsettled.

“What?” Clarke mumbles, looking a little disoriented herself, and Lexa’s stomach flips at the thought that she caused the girl’s momentary confusion. Suddenly she’s a lot more aware of her own heartbeat and it makes her want to ball her fists, but she restrains from it.

“I, um, I said we don’t even have to stay that long?” Raven slowly repeats herself. Lexa’s still a little distracted by her own pulse flutteringly tapping against the little dip between her collarbones from the inside and she almost misses the way Raven glances at her with a confused expression of her own, before Clarke draws her attention again.

“Fine.” Clarke gives in unexpectedly and a huge grin spreads across Octavia’s face. Raven seems to take a second longer to process that Clarke effectively just gave in, meaning her and Octavia’s persuasion tactics actually worked. The moment she does though her expression mirrors the other brunette’s and the two high five in front of Clarke. Octavia toothily grins at Lincoln, who quietly watched the whole debate from behind Raven. He smiles back at Octavia over Raven’s shoulder and then looks over at Lexa and Anya.

“What about you guys?” he asks and three heads turn towards them. Lexa is very conscious of a certain blonde’s eyes on her, but keeps her own steadily trained on Lincoln.

“Yeah, I don’t think so.” Anya answers Lincoln. Lexa was about to give the same answer and yet, somewhere deep inside, she feels a little disappointed. “Lexa needs to relax a little.”

“Relax at the club.” Raven suggests and as Lexa looks at her the girl is smirking charmingly and shrugging. “I’ll even buy you a victory drink.”

There’s a wink and Lexa suddenly feels very self-conscious.

“Um,” her eyes flicker to the blonde for a second, but Clarke’s eyes are positively glued to Raven and she quickly returns her gaze to Raven as well. “Thank you, Raven, but Anya is right. I really do need to just unwind tonight.” Lexa declines and Raven shrugs again, not seeming all too broken up about it.

“Alright, can’t blame a girl for trying.” She grins lightly and then turns to Lincoln. “Hey, you’re coming with though, right?”

Lincoln laughs out loud. “Well, since you girls are my ride it’s not like I have a choice anyway.”
Raven nods with a put on serious expression. “Now that’s what I like to hear!” she turns back to Clarke and Octavia and claps her hands once, obviously ready to get the party started as soon as possible. Lexa can’t imagine how Clarke could possibly top this girl at letting loose, but she sure would like to see it. “Should we head out then?” Raven suggests.

“Okay, yeah, let’s leave these guys to it.” Octavia nods and then addresses Anya and Lexa. “It was really nice meeting you, Anya.” She smiles sweetly.

“You as well.” Anya returns from next to Lexa and Lexa is still impressed by her foster sister’s polite demeanor around Lincoln’s … girlfriend? Anya really is on her best behavior tonight. She didn’t even glare at Octavia once as far as Lexa could tell. Costia wasn’t so lucky she remembers.

“I really enjoyed watching you fight, Lexa.” Octavia says then and Lexa knows she’s sincere. So is Lexa as she gives the other girl a brief smile. “Lincoln said you were hardcore, but it’s really another thing seeing it for yourself.” Octavia admits as she slips into the black leather jacket she’s had on every time Lexa has seen her so far. It kind of reminds Lexa of Anya’s and she wonders if it has some sort of personal significance to Octavia as well.

“Thank you, Octavia.” Lexa once again inclines her head at the compliment and then shoots Lincoln a small smirk. She knows he probably doesn’t really mind Octavia telling her what he said, but she’s amused by his alleged wording.

“Hardcore, huh?”

“Don’t let it go to your head, Woods.” He simply comments and Lexa’s smirk grows into a soft grin. He grins as well and then he walks over and wraps her into a brief hug. Whether it’s congratulatory or a hug goodbye Lexa doesn’t know, but she appreciates it either way.

It’s strange really. Lexa never thought of herself as much of a hugger. She never thought she liked other people touching her, which was probably one of the reasons why she and Anya got along so well. They respected each other’s boundaries and understood each other’s dislike of physical touches. Costia was the first person who ever showed her that casual touches could be really nice actually and very reassuring. Costia was the first to show her many things about herself in fact and Lexa still feels immensely grateful for that. After Lexa joined the army and left for Georgia however there was no more room for that. No more room for Lexa to want to be held and no one there for innocent physical contact just because. And Lexa was fine with that. She was. In fact she was reminded why she never wanted it in the first place. It’s temporary. And Lexa dislikes temporary things. But that’s just how things always are and she knew that only too well. She never needed it before Costia and she didn’t need it after her either she told herself. She didn’t. And she didn’t deserve it anyway. So she was fine. Glad really; that there was no one there to hug her anymore. It just wasn’t her. She was never a hugger. Never missed it and never wanted it. She didn’t.

And then she got back from Georgia. And she had Anya again. Anya who loved her and who she loved back. Anya who didn’t want any physical contact either. She didn’t. Just like her. And everything was just as it had been and everything was just fine.

But then, then she met Lincoln. And Lincoln was warm and smiley and friendly. And Lincoln liked to hug her every now and then. And the weirdest part was that she didn’t hate it.

She still doesn’t like to be touched. She likes her space and she likes being alone. Riding on her bike, or working out or just reading. But she doesn’t mind Lincoln. She doesn’t mind going on bike rides with him or working out together just like she doesn’t mind Anya quietly coming into her room and just sitting next to her, playing on her phone, while Lexa reads. But what’s more is, she doesn’t mind Lincoln hugging her from time to time.
It’s strange really. But she doesn’t mind at all.

“You sure you don’t want to come?” Lincoln asks Lexa almost softly against her ear, before releasing her. She just shakes her head at him with a small smile. He nods, simply accepting her declination, and then steps over to Anya and hugs her as well. Lexa likes that Lincoln is never too pushy with her and Lexa also likes that Anya doesn’t mind Lincoln’s hugs either.

“You’re not driving back tonight then though, are you?” Anya questions him sternly as he releases her and Lincoln shakes his head, like a good son promising his mother he’ll be back by curfew. Anya isn’t one to be concerned about things like that usually, they are all adults after all, but the past summer Lincoln had a motorbike accident at night once. Fortunately he wasn’t actually hurt, just some scrapes and bruises, but ever since she’s been more wary about him and any kinds of motor vehicles at night. Even though she’d never openly admit to that. Not that she’s hiding it very well.

“No, no, we’re actually staying in Seattle tonight.” Octavia reassures her from behind Lincoln and Anya focuses on her instead. “Clarke’s mom lives there. We can stay with her.” Octavia explains and Anya frowns.

Lexa looks over at Clarke with interest. She knew Clarke was from Seattle, but she didn’t know that her mom still lived there. She wonders why that is. Maybe Clarke moved to Portland with her dad?

“All of you?” Anya inquires skeptically, eyeing Lincoln with raised eyebrows, and Lexa sees Clarke nod while Octavia confirms.

“Yeah, Abby has enough room. And she’s super cool, so she doesn’t mind.”

That really does sound cool of Clarke’s mother, Lexa thinks; especially since she doesn’t even know Lincoln. She wonders if he is nervous at all though. It’s not like he’s meeting Octavia’s mom, but from what Octavia has told them the three girls are really close and Lexa thinks if she were him she might be a little nervous about meeting the mom of her girlfriend’s close friend as well. Lincoln doesn’t seem too obviously concerned about it however. Which Lexa thinks might only be an act though as she remembers his anxiousness before meeting Octavia’s brother. On the other hand, as far as he’s told her that went well enough, so he really might not worry that much about it anymore after all. Either way she doesn’t think he has any reason to anyway, like she’s been telling him all along.

As long as they don’t get caught doing …things…at least. That Lexa can truly not recommend. At all.

“Okay, well I think we should probably get going.” Octavia says and Raven nods in agreement before throwing Anya and Lexa another wave as she did when Lincoln introduced them.

“Last chance, Commander.” The brunette points out jokingly, throwing her head to the side and lifting her eyebrows. Lexa only smiles at her, knowing that Raven knows she has already made up her mind. “Alright,” Raven throws her arms around Clarke and Octavia’s shoulders and sighs dramatically. “Your loss.”

When Lexa’s eyes find Clarke again of their own accord the blonde is wearing a small, awkward smile, too. It’s more like a pressing together of the lips as people sometimes do when they politely nod at each other on the streets, but it causes Lexa to pause either way. The smallest dimples are showing on the corners of the blonde’s mouth and for a moment Lexa can’t stop staring until the smile vanishes and she realizes what she’s doing. She quickly looks up from Clarke’s lips and once again finds blue eyes staring back at her.

Like most of the times before, the moment only lasts for the blink of an eye however, and then the
four say their goodbyes. It all goes over fairly quickly, all of a sudden and before Lexa can even really shake off whatever is going on with her, the door falls shut behind the three girls and Lincoln and the room seems almost eerily quiet from one second to the next.

It’s silent for a moment and Lexa just sits there, trying to sort through her mind. Fight nights are always exciting, but this whole evening went by in a blur and she just feels like she needs another second to catch up to everything that’s happened. But then she hears Anya snort beside her and turns to her with a frown.

Anya is wearing the biggest smirk and is shaking her head at her.

“What?” Lexa asks, confused by Anya’s expression, but the other girl looks like she doesn’t buy it.

“You are so busted.”

What?

“What?” Lexa gives back perplexed and Anya tilts her head to the side.

“Come on.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Anya scoffs and shakes her head again. “Wow. Nevermind.”

“No, I want to know what the hell you’re talking about!” Lexa demands again, but Anya simply rolls her eyes and walks over to the small, plain desk in the corner. It doesn’t really fit the rest of the room’s interior design choices like the velvety couch next to it and Lexa suspects that it might have been brought in just for her; or for fighters in general maybe. The event managers must know that they like to spread out their stuff a little. Lexa’s almost empty duffle bag is lying on top of the white surface and her things are sprawled out all over the table. Her headphones, two towels, a bottle of water, a thermos with green tea and a spare roll of hand wrapping tape. Anya picks up one of the towels and turns to face Lexa, holding it up for her to see.

“Are you going to shower here or should we head back to the hotel?”

Even though the Emerald Queen Casino is also a hotel Anya and Lexa booked a room in another establishment a few blocks further down the road seeing as there is no way in hell they could afford even just one night in here. And even though Lexa is pretty sure Indra could, her coach chose to stay at the same hotel as Lexa and Anya as well. Lexa thinks it might be because Indra cares for big, loud crowds and fancy furniture about as much as she cares for neon colored hair extensions. Which is not at all, to put it politely.

Lexa still very much wants to know what Anya was getting at, but she’s quite honestly too exhausted to try and pry it out of her at the moment. So she merely frowns at the other woman in annoyance for another minute. When Anya only raises her eyebrows at her however and wiggles the towel in her hand Lexa gives up and grumbles “Fine.”. Her ribs have started throbbing even harder now and she’s starting to get a stabbing kind of headache as well. She wishes she could just take a long, relaxing bath somewhere, but she doubts their hotel will have a nice, big bathtub; let alone one that looked sanitary enough for Lexa to actually be able to feel at ease in.

“Let’s go.” She says tiredly and Anya nods and starts repacking Lexa’s bag.

It only takes them a few minutes to clear the room and Lexa is thankful to Clive for showing them out the back entrance. She really isn’t in the mood for any more huge crowds or even the odd group
of people anymore tonight. On the way to Anya’s Pickup Lexa’s mind wanders to Octavia and her roommates. She wonders if they’re already out of Tacoma and whether Lincoln would send her pictures of their night out. Probably. Or maybe he’ll just post them on one of his social media accounts. Either way Lexa expects there to be some sort of documentation of his night out in the morning. He typically takes a lot of selfies and Lexa doubts tonight will be any different. As Anya unlocks the doors of the truck Lexa gets out her phone from the front right pocket of her baggie training pants and puts it on silent. She really just wants some peace and quiet tonight.

The drive to their hotel only takes a few minutes, but Lexa still almost falls asleep in the passenger seat. Only the steady pulsing of pain through her head and ribs keeps her awake. She usually doesn’t like taking any sort of medication, but tonight she’s glad Anya always packs a bottle of Ibuprofen anyway just in case.

As expected the bathroom of their hotel room isn’t even big enough to fit a bathtub in, but the shower seems to be in a fairly good condition and Lexa sighs in relief when the shower head hisses awake without any problems and a strong, steady stream of warm water hits her face. Good water pressure is everything to her and she lets out a contented moan as she hangs her head forwards and lets the water run down her back.

When Lexa comes out of the bathroom at least half an hour later Anya is sitting at the tiny table next to the window. There’s only one chair in the room and Anya is currently tipping it back against the wall as she listens to someone on the phone. As she hears Lexa she turns her head to the side against the wall and smiles at her.

She twists her phone a little so that the part you usually talk into is a little further from her mouth and then quietly tells Lexa that she got her something to eat from the hotel’s vending machine. She nods towards the double bed they’ll be sharing tonight and sure enough resting on the duvet is an only slightly disgusting looking cheddar cheese sandwich.

Lexa smiles gratefully and tries unsuccessfully to suppress the yawn that forces itself through her mouth.

“Work?” Lexa asks, wiping at the tears that the yawn brought into her eyes, and Anya nods and rolls her eyes.

Lexa shuffles over to the bed, snatching up the sandwich in passing, and then heavily flops down against the headboard.

She debates for a second if she should eat now or just go to sleep right away, but ultimately her growling stomach makes the decision for her. She’s always starving after a fight and the power bars and banana Indra handed to her after the fight have long since run out of their effectiveness.

The sandwich has a horrible, soggy consistency and barely any taste at all, but Lexa is happy about the snack either way. As she chews she closes her eyes and just listens to Anya talking one of her co-workers through some problem or another. She’s not really taking in any of the words, but Anya’s voice is soothing and familiar and Lexa is perfectly content just letting it wash over her. Anya is the most constant person Lexa has ever had in her life aside from herself and sometimes, when she’s sentimental, she thinks that if someone asked her to describe home to them, it’d probably be wherever Anya is. At the very least Anya’s voice has become as known to Lexa as her own and she finds comfort in the sound of it.

Lexa didn’t notice that she has already been drifting off to sleep until someone is tearing the sandwich from her loose grip, effectively startling her awake. She grunts a little by accident and Anya giggles as she plops down next to her, biting into the half finished sandwich with relish.
With a deep sigh the Asian-American woman leans her head back against the headboard as well and crosses her legs at her ankles over the covers.

They just sit there next to one another in silence and as Anya finishes the rest of the sandwich Lexa closes her eyes once again. She wishes she didn’t still have to brush her teeth, but she knows she won’t be able to sleep before she’s done that anyway. She’s very nitpicky about her teeth, or oral hygiene in general and usually brushes them at least three times a day. It’s because her teeth are pretty sensitive, have always been so. Even as a child she could never understand the kids that could just bite into their ice cream cones. The one time Lexa did that her teeth hurt so badly she cried. Since then she’s noticed a few more things her teeth are hypersensitive about. For example she can’t go even one evening without brushing her teeth or they’ll hurt like hell. It’s especially bad when she’s been drinking alcohol for some reason. Her dentist once explained the science behind it all to her, but she didn’t really understand it and frankly didn’t care too much as long as she knew how to keep her teeth white and healthy.

“How’s your pain?” Anya asks quietly and Lexa hums to clear her throat before answering.

“Better, thanks.”

The minute they arrived at the hotel Anya had dug out Lexa’s pain meds and handed them to her, ordering her to take two and not argue about it. Lexa didn’t even have to say anything about the throbbing aches, Anya has known her long and well enough to be able to tell when Lexa is in discomfort, and Lexa is grateful for that. She doesn’t like admitting she is in pain. Not that she thinks it’s weak or anything, but somehow she just doesn’t like people paying her attention because of something like pain. She doesn’t like to make a big deal out of it. Maybe that’s because the only thing she remembers about her birth mother is that she always complained a lot about everything hurting all the time. Pain, any kind of pain, is a tricky thing you see, because on its own it’s not so scary. On its own it’s really only your body’s way of directing your attention to where you need to take better care of yourself, but once you let it consume you it grows and grows until it’s so big that you can’t see where it’s coming from anymore and you can’t see anything else and you just end up losing control over it altogether. It will eclipse everything around you and there’ll be no room for anything but that pain. And you’ll be all alone.

Lexa knows that her mother wasn’t a good mother to her, but she also knows that her mother was sick. She knows that she was in a lot of pain and that that pain just didn’t leave any room for anything else; didn’t leave any room for Lexa.

She doesn’t hate her mother. Not anymore. But she’ll always be reminded what losing control over your pain can turn you into. And that’s not going to happen to her.

So Lexa doesn’t like to talk about pain; her pain especially. But luckily enough she has someone who knows her as well as Anya and who doesn’t need her to spell everything out for her all the time.

After another few moments of undisturbed silence, except for the incredibly considerate person in one of the rooms on the floor above theirs who’s watching ‘Die Hard’ at maximum volume at half past midnight, Lexa gets up with a drawn out groan and drags her tired body into the bathroom again to brush her teeth and get ready for bed.

When Lexa gets back to the main room a few minutes later Anya is neatly curled up into a ball on one side of the bed and seems to be about to fall asleep. Lexa walks over to the unoccupied side of the queen sized bed and tugs on the covers to get Anya to get off them. Anya groans tiredly and does some weird lazy acrobatics to make enough room under herself to allow Lexa to pull the blankets out from underneath her, but all it does is make Lexa snort and the bed a mess.
Finally Anya sits up with another exaggerated groan. She takes another second in which she lets her head hang dramatically, before sluggishly rolling it back and herself off the bed and into a standing position. While Lexa gets under the covers Anya drudges into the bathroom herself and starts her own evening routine.

By the time she is done Lexa is already fast asleep.

“Here you go.”

Clarke turns away from watching the dance floor where Octavia and Lincoln have been dancing very closely for the past… she doesn’t know, but for a long time, and sees Raven balancing two fancy looking cocktails her way.

Once she’s reached her, Raven hands her the right one while she licks her other hand where some drops of her own drink spilled over.

“Thanks.” Clarke tells her and she almost has to shout over the loud music. Even though back here, near the booths it’s a little quieter you still can’t really have a conversation at normal volume. Whether it’s from the alcohol or the general buzz of being out again and dancing and having fun with Octavia and Raven she doesn’t know, but Clarke finds that she doesn’t mind much actually. In fact the music has a really great rhythm to it and the booming bass makes the floor and everything within her vibrate.

It reminds her of the atmosphere in the showroom and she grabs Raven’s wrist and pulls her closer so she’ll hear her better.

“D’you feel that?”

“Hm?” Raven leans even more towards her, their bodies touching now, and turns her ear to Clarke’s mouth.

“The bass! You feel it pulsing through you?” Clarke clarifies and for a second she brings her other hand closer to lay it on Raven’s chest to show her what she means, but then she notices that she’s holding her drink in that hand so she discards that decision again. Instead she takes a big sip of the cocktail. A little dribbles down her chin and she awkwardly wipes it against her own shoulder. It tastes a little sweet, like some sort of fruit Clarke thinks, but all in all it doesn’t taste like much at all. She takes another sip.

She feels Raven’s breath against her ear as the girl giggles. It tickles a little and goose bumps spread over Clarke’s neck.

“You’re so drunk.” Raven grins as she pulls back a little and Clarke simply pokes out her tongue and then frowns. Raven’s not listening to her!

“Ray!” she complains and leans in again, ignoring the other girl’s ongoing giggles. “It’s the same! Like at the fight!”

“What?”

“It vibrates! Like-” Clarke lets out a frustrated groan. Why isn’t she better at explaining this? And
why is Raven not getting it?

“What vibrates?” Raven asks confused, still tilting her ear towards Clarke’s mouth. Clarke wobbles a little and her lips nudge against Raven’s ear and cheek. Her lips tingle. She likes that. They do that sometimes when she’s drunk. It feels weird, but not bad weird. Just weird. “What vibrates?” Raven repeats and reminds Clarke that she had something important to tell her.

“The bass!”

“Oh! Yeah totally! I love the music here.” Raven nods, but Clarke shakes her head. That’s not what she wanted to say!

“No, but it’s like the same as at the fight.”

“The bass?” Raven asks and pushes a little closer to Clarke as someone passes by behind her. Clarke feels like wherever they stand they’ve been in the way the whole night. It’s just one of those clubs or one of those nights. She doesn’t mind though. She hasn’t spilled her drink yet.

“No, the vibrating! It vibrated at the fight, too! Like-” she pulls back a little so she can fit the hand that’s been grabbing at Raven’s elbow while they’ve been talking between them and lays it onto her own chest. “Here! Didn’t you feel that?”

“At the fight? You mean because of the crowd and everything?”

“Yes!” Finally!

Clarke leans back and beams at Raven triumphantly. She gets it!

Raven’s laughing now and Clarke feels the happiness spread inside her as well so she laughs along.

“You’re so weird, Griffin.” Raven giggles, but the smile she gives Clarke only makes Clarke even happier. She loves Raven! She’s the greatest person ever!

She pulls Raven in for a hug and feels something cool slosh over her left hand. It’s sticky, but she doesn’t really care. Raven gives the best hugs! Because she’s not shy, and because she hugs tight and that’s always nice, when someone hugs you tight. When she tells Raven that, the other girl laughs again, but then looks really sweetly at Clarke.

“You’re such a sweet talker, Clarkey.” She smiles a little crooked and then leans in and gives Clarke a gentle kiss.

Even though Clarke’s lips are still a little numb and tingly she can feel how soft Raven’s lips are. They’re really, really soft and Clarke really, really likes how soft they are, so when Raven pulls back Clarke leans forward and captures them again.

Raven hums against Clarke’s lips in surprise, but then Clarke can feel her smiling. She smiles as well and it breaks their kiss.

“What was that for?” Raven mumbles, still wearing a broad smile.

Clarke doesn’t know. She just knows that she’s happy and her body is humming and the music is great and Raven feels really good. And her lips are really soft and it reminds her of something else, but she doesn’t know of what. It doesn’t matter though.

“Just because?” Raven asks her then. Her voice is quiet, but it’s okay. They’re still standing close
enough together that Clarke can hear her anyway. They’re standing so close in fact, that when Clarke nods, her forehead brushes against Raven’s. It feels really warm and a little moist because they’re both sweaty, but it doesn’t matter, because they’re in a club and everybody sweats in a club. Especially if they’ve been dancing as much as Clarke and Raven have.

Clarke feels Raven’s arm snake around her waist and then her hand is applying pressure against the small of Clarke’s back, pulling her closer. It sends an unexpected wave of heat through Clarke’s body and she takes in a sharp breath that is swallowed up by the loud music. Suddenly she isn’t smiling anymore and when Raven leans in again she feels her body tingle like her lips did before. Their mouths are only an inch apart now and Clarke thinks Raven is going to kiss her again, but the other girl just hovers there. Clarke understands why, but Raven doesn’t have to.

Clarke closes her eyes and leans in again and then they’re really kissing.

It feels good, the way Raven’s lips press against hers and Clarke moves a little, shifting the pressure. She envelopes Raven’s lower lip with both of hers and leans a little more into the other girl’s body. It’s strong and lean and when she’s being pulled even closer by the hand that’s still pushing against her back Clarke hums low in her throat.

The bass is still thumping in and around her and Clarke looses herself in the feeling of the beat and Raven’s lips; her soft, warm lips. They were gentle at first, but now they’re becoming more and more demanding and when they nudge Clarke’s to open wider she willingly complies.

Raven tastes like Amarena cherries and alcohol and Clarke likes this way better than her drink. She also wishes she wouldn’t still be holding it, but then Raven’s hand is in her hair and she forgets to worry about it. The way Raven lightly scratches her scalp makes her shiver and she hears a smug chuckle rumble up from Raven’s throat before it escapes against Clarke’s lips.

“Shut up.” Clarke mumbles, but when Raven’s shoulders and chest start silently shaking with laughter at that Clarke’s lips crack into a grin as well.

“Someone’s having a little too much fun.” Raven practically purrs against Clarke’s lips, but can’t quite keep the giggle from her voice.

“Shut up!” Clarke repeats a little more forcefully, not able to suppress a grin of her own all the same, and lightly pushes Raven away. The other girl has lowered her hand from fingering through Clarke’s hair to lightly resting against the back of her neck however, and at Clarke’s push her grip tightens and Clarke is being pulled forward a little again. It’s a bit clumsy but somehow they transform it into a hug and after a second the moment of awkwardness passes and they just stand there in each other’s arms.

Clarke smiles and rests her chin on Raven’s shoulder. Even though Raven usually wears her hair up she decided to let it down for the club and Clarke can smell her perfume. It’s nice and familiar and Clarke thinks Raven is totally right. Girls are definitely magical.

“Hey, what’s going on here?” Octavia’s voice makes Clarke look up. She and Raven untangle, but stay close with Raven’s arm still over Clarke’s shoulder and Clarke’s wound around the other girl’s waist, as their roommate and Lincoln come to stand next to them. Clarke notices that their hands are intertwined and she smiles. They both look really happy, if a little tired maybe and Clarke makes a mental note to ask Octavia later when they’re alone sometime if they’ve made it official yet.

“I want a roomie hug, too!” Octavia demands and pulls Lincoln after herself as she goes in to hug Raven and Clarke. The more they get to know Lincoln the less shy he’s becoming around them and Clarke and Raven laugh as the big guy pouts out an agreeing “Yeah! Me, too!” and wraps his arms
around all of them the best he can. Octavia’s being squished a little in the middle and she squeals with delight and giggles.

It’s all so silly and as Clarke grins broadly she thinks this is one of the best nights she’s ever had.

Lexa wakes up before her alarm goes off as per usual and quietly picks up her phone from the night stand next to her where she put it before her shower to disable it so it won’t wake Anya.

The curtains of their hotel room are nothing more than a couple of white drapes and Lexa screws up her face at the brightness in the room as she places the phone back onto the little table. She rolls onto her back as soundlessly as possible and takes a deep breath.

9 am.

She hasn’t slept in this late in a long while and it feels a little weird. Usually she would be coming back from her morning jog right about now or already be at work.

Slowly she lifts her left hand to her face and carefully feels her cheek. It’s still a little tender and definitely more swollen than the day before, but overall not too bad an injury. It should heal up in about a week or two. She does feel the previous night’s fight in her muscles though. They feel heavier and a little sore, but Lexa doesn’t mind. In fact she loves it. Sore muscles make her feel like she accomplished something. Like she bettered herself in a way and like she added another layer of strength. It’s a very comforting and satisfying feeling overall.

She’s also happy to find that her headache hasn’t returned over night.

As she’s lying there in bed she replays last night’s events in her head. She started the fight out strong, Indra said so as well, and kept her guard up perfectly as she took her time to assess her opponent’s ability and guess at her game plan. The red head, Lexa can’t remember her name now, was strong, but also aggressive and it made her too impulsive. As Indra had told her to Lexa had let her come to her and almost baited her into attacking with the goal of letting her tire herself out a little before her first real attack. And it was working, too! Until…

Lexa frowns as the memory of blue eyes staring at her suddenly returns to her so vividly that even lying motionless in bed she feels her heart speed up.

Clarke.

Before her inner eye Lexa can see the blonde standing in front of her as she did the previous night. She can still feel the girl’s eyes on her and she remembers the way it made her feel; like she didn’t want to look away. It was very strange and Lexa frowns at the memory. She also remembers how the girl’s hands held onto each other in front of her body. It looked casual, nothing special, but Lexa couldn’t help but notice it. Somehow it was endearing to her and almost seemed shy even though that’s not the vibe Lexa got from the girl. But what vibe that might have been she can’t quite tell. Another thing about Clarke that drew Lexa’s attention was her hair. It was blonde and slightly curled and two thin strands from either side of her face had been tugged back and bound together at the back of her head. It almost looked like a little, cute crown and somehow Lexa can picture a wreath of flowers adorning the woman’s head.

She briefly closes her eyes. A wreath of flowers? Really?
She shakes her head at herself and then something shoots through her mind and she quickly opens her eyes.

Pictures.

Lincoln probably took pictures of the four of them at the club and Lexa’s hand is already halfway to her phone when she pauses.

Why is she so eager to see some party pictures of a girl she barely met the night before? This is stupid.

Frowning even darker now she drops her hand onto the mattress and lets out an annoyed breath.

She needs coffee.

After another second of ridding herself of the images of blonde hair and blue eyes she sits up as quietly as she can. When she looks over her shoulder a grin immediately spreads over her face. Anya is lying rolled up in the fetal position at the very edge of the bed, covering only about a third of her half of the mattress and breathing deeply under the blankets.

Lexa has seen her foster sister sleeping like that about a thousand times before, but it never ceases to amaze her how someone as messy and sarcastic and headstrong as Anya can look so peaceful and small and tucked away when she’s asleep.

As she carefully gets out of bed Anya suddenly sighs and mumbles something unintelligible and Lexa freezes with her body still bent over. The other girl quiets however and Lexa quickly tip toes over to the corner of the room where her duffle bag is lying on the floor. She retrieves some change from the little compartment that functions as her purse and then carefully leaves the room.

Once the door is closed behind her she straightens her back and looks around. She can’t see anything but doors on either end of the hallway, but thinks she remembers walking past a coffee vending machine on her way up the previous night, so she takes a left and heads towards the stairs.

The first thing Clarke feels when she wakes up is a dull, painful thumping in her head. The more she wakes the more it pounds and when she tries opening one eye a wave of nausea hits her as well and she groans with a hoarse voice.

“Oh god…”

She slowly rolls onto her back, the blanket that’s only been covering half her body falling off her now, and feels like she’s about to throw up.

“Oh god…no…”

Her throat is horribly dry and she presses her palms against the mattress to stop it from spinning. Unfortunately it doesn’t have the stabilizing effect Clarke hoped for though and she groans again.

This is agony. And she hates herself.

Why? Why does she keep doing this to herself? This is just plain cruel!
“Fuuuuck.”

She feels the urgency to take a deep breath but she’s been hung over enough times to know that that is definitely a bad idea. Instead she keeps her breathing as even and shallow as possible and after what feels like at least another fifteen minutes her stomach settles a little. Carefully she opens her eyes.

It’s dark. Thank god.

A minute passes until her eyes have adjusted to the darkness a little and she can recognize the surroundings around her.

She’s in her room.

And not her room in Portland; her room in the house her mom moved into when she moved back to… Seattle. She’s in Seattle.

“Oh god…”

The drive. The fight. The club.

Slowly the events of last night are coming back to Clarke. Partly anyway. She remembers the fight. She remembers loud music. She remembers green eyes and she remembers soft lips. Clarke frowns. What?

The pounding in her head has started changing into an ugly stabbing behind her eyes and she presses the palms of her hands against her eye lids.

“I’m dying…” she moans and then slowly lets out a long breath. It doesn’t upset her stomach any further and she decides it’s safe to try and sit up now. Carefully she rolls to her side; so far, so good. As she heavily pushes herself into a sitting position Clarke gets a little dizzy and small spots appear in front of her eyes. They only last a second though and as she grabs the edge of the mattress the world around her rights itself.

“Okay. I’m good.”

Just as slowly she stands up and finds that her legs are only slightly wobbly. She’s definitely had worse.

“I’m good.” She repeats to herself, her voice uncomfortably scratching along her throat, and then slowly turns around and… “Fuck!” she hisses under her breath and her hand shoots up to her chest as she stumbles backwards from shock. There’s someone lying in her bed!

It only takes her a second to recognize who it is however and she relaxes. It’s just Raven.

Her heart is still racing a little, but now Clarke feels a lot more awake and just infinitesimally less like a walking, nauseous as sweet hell zombie. That’s dying. From a thousand stabs behind her eyes and a hammer to her head. Slowly and painfully.

As she quietly shuffles around the foot of her bed her foot gets caught in something and her eyebrows pull together again. It’s her bra. Only now does she notice that she’s wearing one of her oversized sleeping shirts and panties, and nothing else.
When did that happen? She can’t really remember undressing. Or anything past the second drink really. But then again that’s happened before. More than she’d like to admit actually. She’s not worried though. It’ll come back to her. It always does. And the rest Raven and Octavia will fill in.

She eyes the sleeping form of her roommate again. Raven is a very calm sleeper, calm and deep. She doesn’t usually move around much at night. Although she does get quiet cuddly sometime, which also explains the way Clarke’s blanket is bunched up between the girl’s legs and hugged to her chest by her exposed arms. No wonder Clarke woke up only half covered.

Turning around, Clarke half blindly and as soundlessly as possible, makes her way to the door and then slips into the hallway.

Out here it’s bright and Clarke sways in front of the closed door for a second, blinking against the sunlight that’s streaming in through the window at the end of the hall of the first floor. The stabbing pain behind her eyes worsens horribly and she really, really needs to find some painkillers.

She turns her back on the window and slowly and a little unsteadily makes her way down the corridor, past a few framed childhood photos of herself and the little cupboard that used to belong to her dad’s mother’s mother, towards the bathroom.

It’s much bigger than the one they have in Portland, if not as big as the one Clarke’s childhood home had, and Clarke makes a beeline to her mother’s medical cabinet next to the sink. With Abby being a doctor it’s always generously stacked and Clarke finds what she’s looking for immediately. She pops two Ibuprofens into her mouth and then turns on the faucet, forming her hands to make a bowl and bowing her head to catch a sip of water to wash them down with.

They go down easily and she bends back down to splash some more of the cool liquid into her face. It makes her gasp a little and her heart speeds up momentarily, but when she straightens back up she feels a lot better. Even though she doesn’t look it as a quick glance in the mirror mercilessly shows her.

Disheveled would be an outrageous understatement if someone were to describe her hair or just her overall appearance in general. She looks like she’s just been pulled through a very rough car wash and then hung out to dry by her ankles all night. There are also black rings collecting under her eyes and she’s sure her smeared make-up isn’t solely to blame for those. She briefly wonders what time it is and when she even went to sleep, but at the sight of her raccoon-like eye area flashes of beautiful green eyes suddenly come back to her.

Lexa.

With a very uncomfortable swooping sensation in her stomach she recalls meeting the vicious-looking, stoic fighter and barely manages to skid over to the toilet and open the lid before the very liquid contents of her stomach are being expelled into the bowl.

She pukes her guts out in another two waves until the immediate, brutal nausea finally lets up a little and her stomach muscles stop clenching like they’re trying to rip her insides apart.

Weakly she leans her head onto her arms and collects herself before leaning back a little. It takes her another few beats before she’s able to heave herself up again and once more make her way to the sink. Brushing her teeth feels like heaven and she’s never been so thankful to her mother for always having a bottle of mouthwash handy.

Finally feeling at last a little refreshed and more secure in her stomach’s ability to hold down whatever – if anything – remains in it, Clarke takes two more painkillers, hoping they will stay down
this time, and leaves the bathroom. As she walks down the hall towards the stairs at the end of it, she pulls her black scrunchie from around her wrist and sloppily does up her hair in a probably very messy bun. She needs something to drink. Right now! Preferably coffee; a shit load of it.

As she descends the stairs, holding on to the handrail since her legs are still not as sturdy as she’d want them to be, she hears voices coming from the kitchen and when she crosses the hall and rounds the corner two heads turn to her and Octavia immediately starts laughing.

Lincoln is grinning as well from where he’s standing opposite Octavia next to the coffee maker.

“Good morning, sunshine!” Octavia is still laughing and Clarke merely grunts as she passes Lincoln and opens the cupboard above the sink to get herself a mug. When she reaches up however she only sees pasta and other groceries and frowns. Damn. She always mixes up what is where in this kitchen! She knows it’s only natural since she didn’t grow up here and hasn’t even been here that often, but it annoys her nonetheless.

“Here.”

She turns around to see Lincoln standing with his hand still on the handle of another opened cupboard and offering her a mug with his other hand.

Great, he’s been here five minutes and already knows her mother’s house better than her.

Biting back another grunt she wordlessly takes the mug and puts it into the coffee maker. Nobody speaks while the machine loudly does its work and Clarke wishes the pain killers would just start taking effect already. Her head is killing her.

Once the coffee is poured Clarke pulls out the mug and slowly shuffles to the other side of the kitchen island where she ungracefully manages to pull herself up onto the bar stool next to Octavia.

She can feel her roommate’s eyes on her, but ignores her in favour of blowing on her hot beverage.

“So...” Octavia starts as Clarke carefully takes the first sip. She can hear the cheerfulness and suppressed giggle in her friend’s voice and it’s already annoying. “How did you sleep?”

Since Lincoln is in Clarke’s line of sight and she’s not turning to Octavia just yet she sees him instead. He seems to very carefully keep his face as neutral as possible, but Clarke thinks she can just detect an air of amusement.

She can’t really blame him she guesses. Even though she doesn’t remember the details of their night out quite yet she’s sure she did something worthy to be smirked about. At the very least she supposes she must have been very drunk by the time they came here since she can’t even remember how that happened and can imagine that her trying to stay quiet in that state must have been quite a sight if nothing more.

God, she hopes they were quiet and didn’t wake her mother!

“What time is it?” she asks and her voice is barely recognizable as such since the hoarseness breaks up almost every word. Finally she turns to Octavia and finds the brunette smirking at her as expected.

She looks way too perky and awake and Clarke pettily resents her a little for it.

“Just past eleven.” Octavia informs her and Clarke feels relieved. At least she still has some time to get it together before they meet her mom for lunch. They agreed Clarke and the girls would come to the hospital around one and then they’d decide where to go depending on how much time her mother
would have. Abby also invited Lincoln along and when Clarke told Octavia that she was really happy and said she couldn’t wait for Abby to meet him. Clarke can’t remember ever having been that excited for her mother to meet one of her boyfriends. Then again she hasn’t really been serious about anybody since high school.

Suddenly Clarke remembers that she still hasn’t asked Octavia if she and Lincoln are officially a couple now or have somehow defined what they are in any way.

They sure look like it Clarke thinks as Lincoln tells Octavia he’ll just step out real quick and get something from the car and Octavia smiles sweetly and nods as he gives her a small peck on the lips in passing.

It brings on a flashback of the two dancing really closely on the dance floor and Clarke thinks she remembers dancing like that with someone as well. She assumes it must have been Raven. Her and Raven are usually the ones that go all out on the dance floor anyway when they’re out partying or throwing a house bash. Octavia tends to join in from time to time as well, but she gets distracted a lot and usually goes from person to person unless Raven grabs her and makes her dance with her.

“So how are you feeling?” Octavia’s voice brings Clarke back to the moment. She swallows the sip of still very warm coffee she just took and then draws up her left foot onto the stool and rests her head on her knee.

“Coffee helps.” Clarke answers honestly and Octavia pouts sympathetically, eyes still laughing. “You were super drunk last night.”

“You don’t say.” Clarke grumbles and throws Captain Obvious a look. “I hadn’t noticed.”

Octavia laughs out loud at that and Clarke screws up her face. “Shhh…” she shushes her, hiding her face against her leg, and Octavia’s laughter quiets down to soft chuckling.

“Sorry.” She giggles and then finally it’s quiet again until the front door opens a second later and they hear footsteps. Lincoln appears around the corner and places the backpack he apparently just retrieved from the car onto the island surface. At the thought of the car Clarke notices that she can’t really remember how they got home. She thinks she remembers leaning against someone in the back of a car and laughing with them, but she doesn’t think it was their car.

“How did we get home? Didn’t we take a cab?” she asks bewildered and Octavia nods. “Yeah, I called us one, remember? You wanted to, but you just kept looking through Lincoln’s pictures instead.”

Clarke frowns. “Lincoln’s pictures?”

“Yeah.” Octavia laughs out a breath and nods slowly. “You were a total snoop!”

“It’s fine.” Lincoln shakes his head, waving it off as he leans against the kitchen island next to Octavia. “There’s nothing on there she wouldn’t be allowed to see.”

“Yet.” Octavia grins, wiggling her eyebrows, and then winks at him.

Clarke is pretty sure if Lincoln weren’t so dark skinned she could probably see his ears turn red right about now. As it is he only looks slightly surprised however and then Clarke is thinking of something else already.

“Why was I using your phone? Why didn’t I have mine?”
For a moment she’s alarmed that she lost her phone again, but at Lincoln’s next words she relaxes.

“Raven took your phone from you when you dropped it for the second time.” He enlightens her and Clarke nods in relief. Thank god. She would have been really pissed at herself if that had happened.

“Yeah, you’re welcome by the way.” Another voice almost startles Clarke and they all turn towards the hallway. Raven is just walking through the doorless entryway to the kitchen and at the sight of disheveled, long brunette hair and Raven’s sleep puffy lips Clarke’s heart skips a beat.

Wait.

In the time it takes Raven to walk to the cupboard over the stove to get out another cup – why does everybody else know her own house better than her? – it all comes back to Clarke.

The dancing, the drinking and then…

They kissed. And not just kissed, they full on made out. First at the club and then…

Clarke feels her heart racing in her chest as she stares at Raven’s back while the girl prepares herself her own cup of coffee.

What all happened last night? They obviously spent the night in the same bed and Clarke definitely remembers pressing her face against Raven’s neck now. Did they…

“Clarke? Are you okay?” Clarke flinches as Octavia’s hand gently touches her back.

“Uh…”

At Octavia’s question Raven turned around and now she’s eyeing Clarke as well with drawn up eyebrows and an amused expression as the machine hums to life again.

“Yeah, you okay there, Clarkey?” she asks in an innocent voice, feigning concern, and Clarke knows she’s probably blushing. Raven’s attempt to keep her expression neutral and a grin off her face fails just enough for Octavia to catch on and suddenly the hand that’s been rubbing light circles on Clarke’s back stills.

“Wait…what’s that look?” Octavia immediately starts giving them the third degree and Clarke groans inwardly. If she could only remember everything! Then she might not feel so… bare.

Raven is fully smirking at her now as she retrieves the steaming cup from behind her and Clarke just wants to hit pause. It’s way too early for this and she’s way too hung-over. “Do you want to tell them or shall I, Sugar Tits?” Raven asks then before cockily drawing up her left eyebrow and still grinningly blowing on her hot coffee.

“Oh my god…” Clarke groans and shields her eyes with her right hand. She did not just call her that…

“What? Tell us what?” Octavia presses and Clarke hears Raven chuckle. “Tell us what?” Octavia repeats impatiently, her voice sharp and demanding. Even though he hasn’t said one word since Raven came down Clarke knows that Lincoln is probably just as eager to find out exactly what Raven meant by that and Clarke isn’t sure if she’s mad at Raven or if she finds the whole situation hilarious. If she only knew herself how far they …

“Clarke?” Raven’s eyes smile at her over the edge of the cup and Clarke throws her a glare just in case she decides she’ll go with the being mad option.
She can feel Octavia and Lincoln both staring at her now and takes a deep breath, before facing them. Octavia’s eyes are boring into her and Clarke braces herself for the loaded reaction she’s about to get.

“Um…well…we kinda…” she starts, but then stops when she realizes she doesn’t even know how to end that sentence. Apparently Octavia completed it for herself however as her jaw drops.

“Oh my god! You had sex didn’t you! Oh! My! God!” she exclaims in a voice that is about two notches away from being so shrill that only dogs would be able to hear it. Clarke’s head pulses painfully at the volume and pitch and she cringes while Octavia disbelievingly stares between Raven and her.

“No!” Clarke defends immediately, putting a hand up to get Octavia to quiet down again. “No, we didn’t! We didn’t have sex! We just - we-” she desperately glances at Raven. “I mean we didn’t, right?”

At that Raven bursts out into loud laughter and Clarke groans again.

“Raven!” Octavia yells out over the other girl’s laughter and Clarke thinks she’s about to murder someone if they don’t all shut the fuck up. “What happened between you two?!” Octavia demands to know and Clarke can’t say she wouldn’t love for Raven to clear that up as well.

What did happen?

When Octavia whips around to Clarke again she helplessly shrugs.

“I don’t know! I- we made out at the club, but… I don’t know! Okay? I don’t remember!” she desperately shouts out as well now, completely giving up on getting rid of her headache right now. Maybe she deserves it anyway. “Raven!” Clarke turns to Raven now as well, but the other girl is still doubled over with laughter, holding on to the counter with one hand as she sways in her laughing fit.

“Oh my god, I hate you!” Clarke groans through gritted teeth, but can’t keep a straight face anymore. The sight of Raven wiping away tears of laughter, her breathing bordering on hyperventilation by now, is so infectious that she can’t help but join in as well and soon the two of them are laughing so hard that Clarke’s stomach starts to hurt, while Octavia keeps yelling ‘What happened?!’ in an increasingly loud voice, grabbing Clarke’s upper arm and shaking her.

Finally, after what seems like minutes, Clarke’s laughter slowly eases up and Raven seemingly gets a grip on herself as well.

“Oh my god, you guys are killing me!” Octavia growls, letting go of Clarke’s arm and shaking her head at the both of them. “What. Happened.” She slowly asks once more, obviously consciously putting an effort into controlling her tone, and at last Raven seems to have mercy with them.

“We didn’t have sex!” She gets out between a last few giggles and Clarke sighs in relief.

“Thank god.”

“Hey!” Raven exclaims, sounding almost a little insulted. “Rude! And also, you totally wanted to hit that, but I shot you down!” she crosses her arms over her chest and leans back against the counter, taking back up the cup she must have placed down at some point.

“Did not.” Clarke snorts immediately even though she really isn’t sure if Raven is joking.

“How would you know? You don’t even remember getting home.” Octavia deadpans and Clarke’s
jaw drops as she rounds on her.

"Whose side are you on?"

Octavia just shrugs. “You’re both impossible, but at least Raven remembers who she made out with. Like for example her roommate and friend!” she accuses and Clarke rolls her eyes, grabbing her coffee mug. The outside of it feels cold by now and when she takes a sip she sadly discovers that the contents didn’t fare much better.

“Thank you!” Raven points at Octavia, who just shakes her head.

“Don’t even! You seduced Party Griffin! Shame on you! You know she’s horny when she’s drunk!”

“Hey! I didn’t seduce anybody!”

“Am not!”

“She kissed me!”

“What?!” Clarke turns on Raven. “Did not! You kissed me first!”

“Aha!” Octavia triumphantly raises her eyebrows at Raven.

“That was a peck! You were the one who went in for more!”

“Oh my god!” Clarke groans, but doesn’t object any further. She acts like that’s because it seems pointless to argue with Raven right now who’s just being stubborn and unreasonable and shakes her head, but really she can’t object. She did go in for more. She remembers liking the feeling of Raven’s lips on hers and pulling her in for another kiss. She wanted that.

And really it’s not that big of a deal. Despite the drama from just now Clarke knows that Octavia and Raven know that, too. She and Raven have kissed before. As have Octavia and Raven as a matter-of-fact. This was just like that.

Except it wasn’t.

Something felt different last night. She was more unbridled. More … just more… excited. For a second she wonders if she might have developed feelings for Raven, but she just doesn’t think that’s it. She loves Raven, but she couldn’t possibly be crushing on her. She would have noticed something. They’ve been seeing each other practically every day for years. And since both Raven and Clarke can become quite cuddly from time to time there’s been a lot of physical touches, too. And Clarke’s never felt drawn to Raven like that. No. That’s not it.

But then again… Clarke can’t deny that when Raven pulled her in last night and scratched under her hair she felt…turned on.

“Hey.”

Clarke looks up and sees Raven looking at her from across the island. Her head is tilted to the side a little and for the first time that day her face is completely free of any kind of smirk, amused expression or devious grin. She’s merely wearing a simple questioning look now.

“You’re okay, right?”

“Yeah!” Of course she is! This is just another morning after. She always goes a little crazy at parties. It’s nothing new. And making out with Raven isn’t even crazy. Anybody with eyes can see she’s
super hot. And it’s not like Clarke hasn’t noticed or even told Raven that herself. They’re close enough that it isn’t weird. And this isn’t weird either. It’s not. “Of course! I’m fine.”

“All right, then I really gotta tell ya that you dropped the ball, Griffin. Just leaving me in your bed like that? That’s no way to treat a lady!” Raven raises her eyebrows and shakes her head at Clarke with a little click of her tongue.

Clarke snorts. “You’re no lady, Reyes.” She mimics Raven’s way of always calling her by her last name. “You’re the tramp at best.” She grins and then sips at her coffee again, before grimacing. She forgot it was already cold. Cold coffee is just gross.

Raven merely shrugs at Clarke’s Disney referencing insult. “He’s cute. I’ll take it.”

They smirk at each other then over their respective cups, before Octavia and Lincoln suddenly break out into laughter next to them and it draws their attention. The two are both looking at Lincoln’s phone in Octavia’s hands and apparently finding whatever is on there quite hilarious.

“What’s so funny?” Clarke asks and she’s pleased to notice that her throat at least doesn’t feel dry anymore. Her voice is basically back to normal as well. Well, almost. And her headache has simmered down to a light pressure at her temples.

“Here, look.” Octavia snorts and angles the phone towards Clarke and Raven, who takes it and scoots closer to Clarke around the island so they can both see what’s so funny.

“I love Party Griffin!” Octavia chuckles and Lincoln is wearing a broad grin as well. Clarke looks down at the phone and wants to facepalm immediately.

Raven is the centre of the picture and it looks like it was taken right outside the club they were at. In the upper right corner you can just make out the first three letters of the club’s neon sign presenting its name. Raven is standing a few feet from the entrance and apparently half shouting, half laughing at Clarke who is really the main attraction of the shot.

Clarke groans, but can’t help from grinning. Why does she always do shit like that? She’s a little embarrassed, but mostly she thinks it’s hilarious.

She apparently decided it was a great idea to pretend the no parking sign next to the club was a stripper pole. The picture very unflatteringly shows her half clinging to and grinding on the grey pole and she’s pretty sure that the guy in the other corner of the picture had a pretty nice view of her boobs as she’s throwing her head back and leaning towards the ground with one hand stretched above her head.

“And to think I could have hit that.” Raven regretfully sighs next to Clarke and she playfully elbows her roommate in the ribs.

“Shut up.”

“Check out the one before, too.” Octavia directs and Raven swipes to the left.

“Naaaw!” Raven coos as another picture slides into view and Clarke smiles as well. It’s a group selfie of the four of them inside the club. Lincoln is a little closer to the camera than the rest of them as he’s apparently holding the phone and it looks like he’s in the middle of a genuine laugh, his eyes almost shut from his broad grin. Octavia to his right is pulling a weird kissy face, the corners of her mouth curling upward as she’s barely containing a grin of her own, and her eyes opened wide at the camera. Clarke’s left arm is curled around Octavia’s shoulder and she is pretending to be licking the back of Lincoln’s head. Raven next to her, on the other side of Lincoln is also showing a genuine
laugh, lips spread wide and perfect teeth showing as she is watching Clarke’s antics. Her right hand is grabbing Lincoln’s shoulder while her other one is swung around Clarke’s neck, holding a drink and seemingly accidentally spilling some of it down the front of Clarke’s shirt.

“So this is why my boobs are sticky!” Clarke exclaims. Somewhere between waddling down the stairs this morning and her laughing fit with Raven she felt her boobs sticking together a little underneath her sleeping shirt, but didn’t really pay them much attention at the time.

Raven bobs her head forward at that and narrows her eyes at the picture, before grimacing an apologetic grin at Clarke. “Oops, sorry.”

“Mmmhm.” Clarke playfully narrows her eyes at Raven, before Octavia reaches over and takes the phone from Raven’s hands.

“There are a couple of cute ones actually.” Octavia says as she’s flipping through the pictures and then looks up at Lincoln who’s standing behind her.

“Is it okay if I send myself some of these?”

“Sure. You can send however many you want.” He nods and Octavia smiles and quips a cheerful ‘thank you’.

“Put them in our group when you got them.” Raven says, referring to the WhatsApp group that includes Clarke, Octavia and herself.

“Yeah, okay.” Octavia nods as she’s already choosing pictures to send herself from Lincoln’s phone.

“Hey,” Lincoln suddenly seems to remember something. “I sent a couple of those to Anya and Lexa. I hope that was okay?” he almost looks a little sheepish, but they all tell him it’s no problem. Neither of them is really very uptight about things like that and he seems relieved to not have broken their trust or somehow made them feel uncomfortable.

Even though Clarke immediately assured him it’s fine as well she internally paused for a second. He hadn’t said which ones he had sent Lexa and Anya and despite not really caring what anybody thinks she still secretly hopes one of those pictures wasn’t the stop sign one.

“Um, guys?” Raven speaks up and when Clarke looks over to her she’s just looking up from her own phone. “It’s almost a quarter past twelve.” She raises her eyebrows at Clarke.

“Fuck!” She totally forgot about the lunch with her mom. “Okay, Ray, you and I gotta get ready. Now!” She directs, immediately stressed, and slips off her stool while Raven nods and opens up the dishwasher to place her empty cup in the top compartment. Clarke hastily pours the rest of her own cold coffee into the sink and then puts her own mug next to Raven’s before closing the machine and following Raven out of the kitchen.

“We’ll be down in ten!” she calls over her shoulder as she and Raven are hurrying up the stairs and she just sees Octavia wave her off without looking up from Lincoln’s phone before the brunette is out of sight.

“Fifteen!” Raven corrects from ahead and Clarke groans.

She hates being late.
So that was it! Finally!
I'm sorry it took me so long! I'm hoping that was an exception.

Either way, I hope you enjoyed the chapter and our gals finally meeting face to face.
Can't wait to read your reviews and opinions.

As always, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns just talk to me on my tumblr (links are in the notes after the first chapter)! I'm always happy to talk about anything relating this fic.

All the best,
Lea
“Here you go, Miss.” The small balding man says as he hands Anya the ice cream cones over the counter. His accent and really everything else about him from the ugly checkered blazer to the too small moustache reminds Lexa of the father of the girl in the movie Matilda and when he very obviously eyes her face she feels extremely uncomfortable. She’s sure others have stared at her bruised cheek bone as well, but usually she can block them out better. This guy however seems not to be concerned if he comes off as rude at all as he openly furrows his thick black eyebrows with a disapproving expression.

“Yeah, thanks.” Anya retorts coldly. She obviously noticed the man’s impolite demeanor as well and Lexa can tell she is debating adding an insult. Lexa doesn’t want any drama however and steps closer to Anya, taking her cone from her.

“Come on, let’s go.”

The guy is still staring at them all the while and Anya throws a glare back at him.

“Anya.” Lexa says quietly but emphatically. She just wants to enjoy their day in Seattle. They rarely get up here and they’ll have to drive back in a few hours already.

Finally Anya seems to concede.

“Fine.” She frowns and places her hand on the small of Lexa’s back, turning the both of them around towards the door. “Let’s go.”

Lexa hopes the guy won’t say anything else to them before they get outside. Anya didn’t sleep very well in the hotel’s bed the previous night and so she’s been particularly cranky and antagonistic all day, relentlessly grumbling about one thing or another under her breath.

Fortunately the boorish Danny DeVito lookalike seems to be happy just blatantly staring after them as they leave the ice cream shop and Lexa is glad when the glass door falls shut behind them, muffling the ringing of the old-fashioned analog doorbell.

“That guy was a dick.” Anya immediately snaps as soon as they start strolling down the walkway and Lexa actually has to bite back a smirk. It requires a special kind of talent to make licking an ice cream cone look angry and dangerous. Anya doesn’t have that talent. She just looks stubborn and six.

“So what should we do?” Lexa asks, ignoring Anya’s comment. They didn’t really make a plan for their day in Seattle and have just been wandering around more or less aimlessly with the only real goal being to find a decent ice cream shop that is open on Sundays. And at least they managed that. Even though the guy wasn’t necessarily what one might have hoped for Lexa still has to admit that the ice cream he served them is really quite excellent.

“I don’t know.” Anya grumbles. “Why don’t you come up with something? It’s your day.”

Right. Her day.

Over the past year, ever since Lexa started fighting, Anya and she established this sort of tradition.
Whenever Lexa has a fight, whether she wins or loses, the next day they do something small she wants to do together. Just the two of them. They’ve been to the impressive Central Library in Seattle already and after her fight in Olympia in August they even visited the Washington State Capitol. Anya always whines a little about Lexa’s choices, but Lexa doesn’t care. She knows the things she drags Anya to aren’t really her kind of thing and despite the woman’s unenthusiastic comments here and there she really appreciates the sentiment. After all, it was Anya who brought this tradition to life in the first place.

Easily looking past Anya’s snarky tone of voice Lexa thinks about what she wants to do before they have to drive back to Portland. She’s only been in Seattle a couple of times before and she doesn’t really know much about the place at all. What could be a nice time spent? She thought about finally visiting the planetarium, but the only events that are scheduled for today are kids’ shows and an exhibition Lexa isn’t particularly interested in. What else is something she has never done before? Well, there’s one thing people always say one should have experienced at some point in one’s life.

“We should go on a ferry.”

At this Anya stops dead in her tracks, making two passersby almost run into her where she stands in the middle of the walkway. She ignores the clicking of their tongues and disgruntled shaking of their heads and looks at Lexa with a perplexed expression, raising an eyebrow.

“You want to go on a ferry.” She repeats in a disbelieving voice and Lexa shrugs as she simply continues walking, not playing into Anya’s dramatics. “You. Want to go on a ferry.” Anya’s voice comes from behind her and Lexa rolls her eyes upward and sighs, before calling over her shoulder.

“Yes, I do.”


Lexa frowns as Anya catches up with her, casually falling into step next to her again. “I’m not scared of heights.” She gives back a little indignantly. She isn’t particularly fond of them, but she’s not scared.

Anya snorts. “Okay.” The word is dripping with disbelieving sarcasm and Lexa clenches her jaw and straightens her back. Anya is so annoying sometimes. She wants to repeat that, no, she’s in fact not afraid of heights. At all. But she’s aware that that would be just a tad bit childish and also probably fall on deaf ears.

“You do know that ferries are high up though, right? And on water. That moves.” Anya’s voice sounds just a little teasing, but underneath Lexa hears a bit of worry as well and really this is ridiculous. She freaked out on a bridge once. Once! And it was really, really high up! And Lexa is like eighty per cent certain the bridge wasn’t even properly secured. It swayed an alarming amount and really anyone who doesn’t think that’s suspicious is just unwise and naive.

“I’m aware.” Lexa says before continuing to lick at her ice cream and Anya stares at her for another full second before she shrugs her shoulders with a small shake of her head.

“Alright.” It sounds almost more like a question and Lexa nods once.

“Alright.”

So they make their way down through the city towards the docks. Seattle has quite a different feel from Portland Lexa thinks. It seems a lot more...polished. More modern and definitely less laid back.
A lot of high buildings with connecting bridge-like pathways make Lexa feel like she’s in a sort of futuristic city. She guesses that might just be this part of Seattle though. The neighborhood where they parked the car seemed quite a lot more like what she’s used to from Portland. More open spaced and suburban looking.

Finally after about fifteen minutes they reach the water and at the sight of the two enormous ferries that are currently put in at the small haven Lexa’s heart speeds up a little against her will. Damn it! She swore to herself she wouldn’t let their sizes unsettle her, but they just look so very imposing up close as they tower over them, blocking out the sun entirely behind them, and Lexa feels goose bumps erupt on her arms and up her neck. Suddenly she doesn’t remember why she wanted to go on a ferry in the first place. She doesn’t need to go anywhere that would require her to travel over water! Especially that high up! Really she was just looking for something fun to do to unwind after the fight. Something relaxing. Longingly she thinks of her book that is currently resting on the front seat of Anya’s Pickup, but she’s aware of Anya’s eyes on her and squares her shoulders.

She wanted to do this. She doesn’t remember why, but now they’re here and she’ll be damned if she doesn’t stay true to her word. She’s not scared. It’s just a damn ferry.

“You sure about this, Lex?” Anya enquires again just then and when Lexa turns to her she sees no sign of a teasing smirk.

She swallows. No.

“Yes.”

Anya eyes her for another second before she raises her eyebrows and presses her lips together.

“Okay then.”

“Okay.” Lexa nods, more to convince herself of her own decision than anything else really, and tries not to dwell on the thought that she could be walking through a quiet park somewhere far away from the water right now.

“I think this one goes to Bainbridge Island.” Anya gestures toward the ferry closest to them, looking up at it for a second. Again Lexa nods.

“Great.”

Her throat feels dry now and swallowing seems to be a little harder than just a minute ago.

“Okay, I’ll go get the tickets then.” Anya says, not yet moving, and Lexa just wants to get this over with. She nods a third time, not making eye contact as she’s looking up at the ferry now as well, and finally Anya turns around to locate the nearest ticket booth.

Okay. It’s fine. They’ll just take a small trip across to Bainbridge Island. No big deal. It'll be over before she knows it.

Lexa hates the way her palms have started sweating and how her heart clenches its muscles just a little tighter than before and how that all just makes it really hard to tell herself that she isn’t afraid. It’s ridiculous and unnecessary and out of her control and she doesn’t like it. An unfounded, irrational fear like this is something she neither understands nor cares for and it makes her a little angry. What does her body think will happen? Ferries are perfectly safe, she tells herself. They’re sturdy and huge and very well equipped to deal with any kind of emergency. Not that one would be particularly probable. After all, it’s only about half an hour from Seattle to Bainbridge Island. What could even happen in that short a period of time?
As she stands in the big ship’s shadow, watching the cars slowly inch forward in line on their way onto the ferry across the lot, Lexa clasps her hands behind her back. New experiences. One should always make new experiences.

It seems like a very long time that Anya is away and it gives Lexa way too much time to think about how the ship’s railing will probably wobble in the wind and how loud the water will crash against its belly, trying with all its might to keel it over.

She’s only ever been on a ship once before. And it wasn’t even really a ship, in fact it was barely a boat. It was on one of the other foster kids’ birthdays in the home she was in before she came to stay with Mrs. Maynard where she met Anya. Their foster parents back then – the Logans – decided to take them out for a boating trip. And with that they meant sending the three younger ones, a six year old Lexa, five year old Alvin and the birthday boy Tyler, who was turning nine, away with the two older ones so they could have the house to themselves. Brendon and Elliot, who were both around thirteen or maybe fifteen as far as Lexa remembers took them to a lake a few miles from their house where they borrowed two rowing boats from a friendly old couple with matching white haircuts who owned a small boat shop at the pier. Lexa doesn’t remember much from that time, but she recalls the old woman’s kind face as she bent down to hand Lexa the paddle as if it were yesterday.

“There you go, sweetie. Can you hold that?”

The old woman’s smile makes her already wrinkly face even more wrinkly and Lexa thinks that if she touched her skin it would probably crinkle and crumble underneath her fingers. She doesn’t touch it though. Instead she takes the wooden paddle the woman is offering her. It’s long and heavier than it looks and Lexa struggles a little not to let it drop to the ground.

The woman coos and reaches to help her, but Lexa pulls the paddle towards her body and glares. She’s not a baby!

“I can hold it!”

The woman looks a little surprised, but then chuckles, looking at her husband behind her. “Such a cute little girl, isn’t she?”

Lexa frowns. She doesn’t like that word. Cute. She’s not cute. Cute people get pushed over. Cute people get underestimated and looked down upon. No, she’s not cute.

“Why does she get a paddle? I want a paddle!”

Someone is grabbing at the paddle from behind Lexa and she whips around.

“Hey! That’s mine!”

“Well, I want one, too!” Alvin shouts and stomps his foot. He’s always like this. He’s always so loud and so demanding and Lexa finds it incredibly annoying and exhausting.

“Well, tough!” Lexa glares at the smaller, red haired boy with the round glasses and walks by him towards the two boats the elderly couple already put out for them onto the grass next to the water.

She hears Alvin starting to wail and screech behind her, but ignores him. He won’t come after her. He’s loud, but he’s a coward and all he ever does is throw himself on the ground and scream.

“Alvin, shut up.” Elliot shouts over the boy’s crying which only intensifies and Lexa knows this will go on for at least another five minutes. She wants to cover her ears to block out all the noise, but she’s still carrying the paddle and the only thing she can do is walk a little faster towards the water.
Tyler and Brendon are already there and currently pulling and pushing the bigger of the two wooden rowing boats into the lake. It’s an awkward process as Brendon, who is much stronger, is pushing from behind while Tyler keeps tripping over in front of the boat. They’re idiots.

“Oh my…” Lexa hears the older woman mutter weakly between Alvin and Elliot’s screams and she clenches her jaw. This always happens. Everywhere they go someone makes a scene and people around them always think they’re animals. Loud, little beasts who have no manners and no respect and Lexa hates them all for it. She hates people for judging them and she hates Alvin for giving them reason to.

And she hates their foster parents. For not caring one bit about them at all. If they did they wouldn’t have made Alvin go to bed without dinner for the last three days because he cried for his real mom when Mrs. Logan spanked him for breaking a glass by accident and if they did they wouldn’t have made Lexa and Tyler stand on stools for hours and hours when they caught them sneaking Alvin some bread and bacon. They don’t care about them. They hate them. And Lexa hates them back for it.

“No, you gotta- no, just pull, Ty! You gotta get out of the way, you-” Brendon grunts, but Tyler is already tripping over again as another push from Brendon makes the boat bump against him and this time he lands in the lake and the splash hits Lexa, who just arrived next to them. The water is really cold and she gasps and drops the paddle, freezing in place.

Brendon lets out a frustrated groan and rushes around the boat, grabbing a spluttering Tyler by the back of his shirt and hauling him backwards out of the water and onto the grass.

“For fuck’s sake, Ty! I told you to get out of the way, man!” Brendon snaps and Ty is already teary eyed. He cries a lot.

Brendon sighs while Tyler sniffles, apparently holding back the water works as best as he can, and then he pulls the younger boy up by his arm. “Come on. You okay?”

Tyler nods, not very discreetly wiping at his eyes, and then the two get back to getting the boat into the water. All the while Lexa still hasn’t moved a muscle. The splash of water hit most of her right side and now her braid on that side is dripping onto her shirt and she can’t believe how stupid boys are.

Angrily she picks up her paddle and stomps over to the other boat. It’s smaller than the one the boys now finally managed to get into the lake, but it’s still way too heavy for her to move on her own and it only annoys her more.

With some effort she manages to maneuver the wooden paddle into the boat and it lands inside with a heavy clatter at which Brendon looks over at her. He frowns. “Why are you all wet?”

Seriously?!

Before Lexa can snap at him however they hear some noise coming towards them and turn their attention to the hill that leads up to the cabin that holds the boat shop. Elliot is leading a shouting Alvin down towards them by the back of his neck and looks about ready to murder someone.

Great. This is going to be such a lovely boat ride Lexa thinks, rolling up her eyes and shaking her head.

“Alvin, I swear to god if you don’t shut the f-” Elliot growls, but before he’s able to finish the sentence Tyler is already intercepting.
“Hey!” he shouts, jogging over to Alvin and Elliot, and putting on an excited face. “Hey, Alvie! Look!” he grabs the other boy’s arm and smiles. “Look, we got the boat in the water!” he gestures towards Brendon, who is knee deep in the water, holding onto the boat.

Alvin’s shouts subside and he follows Tyler’s gaze instead.

“See? It’s so cool, right?” Tyler coos and finally Alvin seems to really relax again. His face is still red from screaming, but now he’s wearing a curious and excited expression and Lexa has to give it to Ty. He’s really good with Alvin’s tantrums.

Elliot seems to recognize Alvin’s calmer state as well and releases his grasp on the boy’s neck, who immediately starts clumsily running over to the water. Somewhere during their screaming match Elliot must have somehow managed to put a life jacket on the little ginger guy and Lexa has to grin against her will. She’s still angry about being splashed and everything, but something about seeing Alvin waddle like that and almost losing his balance twice on the short way to the boat is just very soothing to her.

“Hey, careful!” Brendon chuckles when Alvin practically rams the boat and bounces off it, landing on his butt. For a second Lexa fears Alvin will start wailing again, but when Tyler starts laughing next to him, the boy breaks out into a wet grin as well.

Thank god. She really couldn’t have handled any more screaming right now.

“Lexa!”

She turns around to see Elliot holding out another life jacket to her and furrows her eyebrows. She doesn’t want one! They look heavy and bulky and they make people waddle!

“Just put it on.” Elliot rolls his eyes and throws it to her, before she can even protest. As predicted the jacket is heavy and it falls through her grasp and flaps onto the grass. She glares at Elliot, but the older boy has already turned to Tyler and is now helping him put on his own neon orange life jacket, not noticing Lexa’s stare at all. Seeing that any resistance will probably be useless and just delay their trip even further Lexa begrudgingly picks up the squared floating device and puts it on as best as she can. She manages everything but clicking the last safety belt in place and after several fruitless attempts decides she’ll be fine without it.

Elliot already pushed the other boat into the water and when Lexa walks up towards the edge of the water he directs her to jump inside it. He holds it for her as she climbs over the side of the boat, but it’s still quite wobbly and all of Lexa’s concentration goes into not flipping it over and landing in the water herself.

Finally she makes it and shakily holds on to the small bench inside the boat as its swaying slowly settles down.

“Okay, hold on.” Elliot says and then Lexa almost squeals as he just lets go of the boat.

“Elliot!”

“Just hold on, I’m getting my paddle.” He calls over his shoulder, but Lexa is too busy frantically grabbing onto the side of the boat she climbed over as it starts wobbling again and slowly drifts away from shore.

It feels like she’ll keel over any second and Lexa’s heart races as the swaying seemingly increases by the second.
“Elliot!”

“Alright, alright, I’m here. Jeez!” Elliot’s voice is suddenly right beside her and a moment later the boat almost tips over and Lexa really does squeal now. It’s only for the blink of an eye however and then Elliot is sitting across from her and even thought the boat is still swinging violently Lexa feels a lot better. Because at least Elliot’s there now. And Elliot can swim.

“Everybody good?” Brendon calls over from the other boat. He, Tyler and Alvin are already settled as well and a few feet ahead of Lexa and Elliot into the lake.

“Yeah, yeah.” Elliot calls back and then grabs both his and Lexa’s paddle from the bottom of their boat and starts rowing them into the general direction of the others. Lexa would protest that that’s her paddle, but quite honestly she’s okay with him having it for now. She still feels a little unstable and being in a boat is really a lot less calming and relaxing than the few books she’s read since she taught herself to read with a little help from Brendon have led her to believe.

It takes her another couple of minutes to get used to the semi-consistent rhythm of Elliot’s rowing, but when she finally does they’re already pretty far out into the lake and Lexa marvels at the beauty of nature all around her.

That is until their boat gets close enough to the other guys’ and Tyler splashes her again. And this time on purpose. He’s cackling happily and already lowering his paddle into the water again, when Lexa recovers from the shock.

“Give me that!” she growls and grabs her own paddle from Elliot’s light grasp.

“Go, go, go!” Tyler shouts, laughing, and he and Brendon hectically try to steer their boat away from Lexa and Elliot’s while Alvin sticks out his tongue at her and sing songs ‘Naa naa na naa naa’.

The rest of the ‘trip’ they more or less just circle around each other in the middle of the small lake, hollering, splashing and laughing, and of course it isn’t too long until the first boat keels over.

To Lexa’s immense satisfaction it isn’t hers and when Brendon starts coughing because he got water up his nose from laughing so hard she isn’t the only one who loses it.

Lexa is still grinning at these memories when the sounding of an immensely loud horn startles her and wipes the smile off her face. The first of the two ferries is apparently ready to de-dock and a moment later she sees it slowly moving away from the pier. Its massive body pushes the water in front of it and Lexa clenches her jaw once more when she notices how high up the water reaches. In comparison the two men standing on the first deck overlooking the process look almost tiny and she wants to tell them to step back from the railing so they don’t fall over.

She knows it’s not likely and that these ships are extremely safe, as are their railings, but still…

Blowing out a calming breath through her lips she starts scanning the parking lot that leads to the ticket booths for any sign of Anya to distract herself from these thoughts and feels a mixture of relief and anxiousness when she sees the woman briskly walking towards her. She’s wearing a grim expression that seems just a little off to Lexa, but before she can think about it further Anya is already in earshot and shaking her head.

“I didn’t get any tickets for this one anymore. The idiot in the booth said the passenger boarding is already closed.” Anya relays to her and Lexa breathes a quiet ‘Oh’. She doesn’t want to admit it, but she’s quite relieved at these news and slowly unclasps her hands.

“Yeah. So, do you want to wait for the next boat or should we try another pier?” Anya looks around
to some other ferries that can just be seen in the distance. “I mean, I’m not sure where those go to, but I could f.”

“No!”

Anya turns back to her with raised eyebrows.

“I mean, no thanks, that’s not necessary.” Lexa amends, feeling her ears heat up underneath her sand colored woolen hat. “We can just find something else to do.”

“Yeah, okay, sure.” Anya simply shrugs and nods and Lexa thinks it’s a little out of character for her, but then Anya’s already starting to lead them away from the haven and Lexa just happily follows her back across the street they came from, only half listening to her foster sister telling her something about those damn boat people and their crazy time schedules.

She’s not sorry when they leave the waterfront behind them and find their way back further into the downtown area.

She’ll just make that particular new experience some other time.

The second Clarke, Octavia, Lincoln and Raven step through the front entrance of the hospital Clarke feels as if she travelled back in time.

The entrance hall looks exactly the same as it did before she and her mother moved to Portland over three years ago and the sounds and especially the smell are so intensely ingrained in Clarke’s brain that she almost feels like she is a kid again. Back then she spent a lot of time hanging out with Wells in the doctor’s lounge or the cafeteria where Eleanor, the food lady, would watch over them, or otherwise just wandering through the hospital, pretending they were on an adventure. Lots of people say they hate the smell of hospitals, but for Clarke it always gave her a feeling of being home.

Now however, after not having been here since her dad died, a heavy weight settles inside her stomach at the sight of the familiar front desk and she is glad Raven and Octavia are currently focused on reciting all the times they’ve had to go to a hospital because of one sports injury or another to notice her briefly falter in her steps. It’s only a short moment though and then they’re already gathered in front of the elevators.

A high-pitched ‘ding’ finally brings Clarke’s full attention back to the moment and after two hectic doctors, a male nurse pushing an empty wheelchair and three other people stream out through the silver doors, the four of them file into the little room that is now empty.

“Which floor was it again?” Octavia asks, but Raven is already pushing the button as Clarke replies.

“Four.”

As the doors slide closed and they slowly start gliding upwards Clarke catches Octavia smirking at Lincoln who tries very hard not to grin as he pretends to be annoyed when Octavia winds both of her arms around his left.

“Hey,” Raven nudges Clarke to get her attention.
“What?” Clarke turns and looks over at the girl to her left. Raven looks a little nervous in the bright elevator lights and Clarke is reminded that seeing Abby again also meant that Raven’s leg would finally be looked at. Despite how tough the girl is Clarke knows she’s probably imagining all kinds of horrible diagnoses coming from her mother’s lips right about now.

“Do you think Lincoln will pass the Abby test?” It’s said in a whisper, but one of the kind that’s not actually supposed to prevent the words from being overheard. In fact Raven glances at Lincoln and Octavia behind them with a smirk and Clarke knows exactly what she’s doing.

She’s distracting herself from her own thoughts by shining the light on Lincoln and the fact that he’ll be meeting ‘Momma G’ in a few minutes. It’s the oldest trick in the book and yet Clarke has a feeling it’s not quite working as Raven continues fingering the bird-shaped metal-scrap that is hanging from a leather string around her neck. In all the years Clarke has known the other girl she has only ever seen her not wear it once. And that was around the time Finn and Raven broke up. Clarke only knows the story of how Finn gave that necklace to her, because Octavia told it to her when she explained to Clarke why Raven was throwing it out of the window of her moving car after their break-up in the school parking lot as she dashed off. The fact that Octavia picked it up from the ground right away was a perfect example of how well she really knew the other girl. She knew Raven would regret throwing it away some day and kept it for her until she was ready. And Clarke is still in awe that that day came as soon as a week later. It was then that she knew that Raven was the most forgiving person she had ever met.

More forgiving than Clarke for sure and definitely more forgiving than Octavia who still to this day doesn’t talk to her dad who left their mum and effectively also their family for another woman when she was ten.

“Hey, shut up! He’ll be fine.” Octavia gives back, pretending to be mad, but the way she goes on to pat Lincoln’s upper arm, going “Don’t listen to the mean woman, you’ll be fine, boo.” kind of gives it away.

While Clarke and Raven chuckle Lincoln merely stares ahead, shaking his head, as Octavia continues stroking his arm and doing calming shushing noises.

When the elevator comes to a stop a moment later and the doors slide open again to another ‘ding’ Clarke thinks she hears Lincoln quietly mutter ‘thank god’ under his breath, before they step out onto the fourth floor.

It’s busy here today and Clarke hasn’t taken three steps before a blonde guy, probably an intern judging by his blue scrubs, practically pushes her out of the way as he runs down the hall, carrying two bags of blood, and shouting with a frantic voice, “Watch out! Coming through! I’ve got it! I’ve got it! Coming through!”

“Whow!” Raven calls out, as Clarke stumbles against her, and snorts, looking after the guy. He doesn’t look much older than them and Clarke is painfully reminded of all the semi-finished applications sitting on her desk at home that she hasn’t even sent out yet.

“Two bucks says that guy has a mental breakdown before the end of the year.” Raven says, grinning as she turns back around to their group. Clarke sincerely hopes that he doesn’t. That could be her in a few months. If she even gets accepted as an intern that is of course.

“Betting on someone to fail,” Octavia shakes her head and clicks her tongue. “That is such bad karma, Ray.”

“Hey, I’m not betting on him to fail! I’m betting on him having a mental breakdown. There’s a
difference.”

“Wow, that’s assuring.” Clarke deadpans and Raven shrugs.

“Just calling it how I see it.”

“Clarke?”

At the sound of her name Clarke turns around and sees a man with somewhat shaggy brown hair and matching beard walk towards her. He’s a doctor as the robes show, but Clarke doesn’t think she’s ever met him.

“Um, yes?” she frowns as the man comes to stand in front of her. The warm smile he’s wearing and the look in his eyes make it seem like he’s been waiting to finally meet her and Clarke is quickly starting to feel slightly uncomfortable and very confused.

He looks up from her at the others who have turned around as well and nods at them. “And you must be Raven, Octavia and Lincoln, am I right?”

“Whow…” Raven mumbles again. “Who ordered the psychic?”

The man chuckles. “No psychic here. Abby just told me you were coming.” He explains and Raven draws up her eyebrows.

“You know Abby?” she asks and Clarke hears in her voice that she’s just as surprised as Clarke is. Not that it’s uncommon for doctors to know each other within one hospital, but Clarke has never seen this man before and for him to know about all four of them… it just seems a little weird that Abby has never even mentioned him.

“I do.” He nods, reaching out his arm to gesture to them to make way for the patient that’s being wheeled towards them in his bed by two nurses. They all step aside to let them pass and then the man is addressing Clarke again. “I transferred here a while ago and your mother and I have been working together – well mostly together, quite a lot since then.” He chuckles for some reason and Clarke feels irritated at his demeanor somehow. Raven doesn’t seem any less annoyed at having been kept out of the loop however and merely hums skeptically.

“Come on, I’ll show you to her office.” He again reaches out his arm, directing them down the hall to the right of the elevators they’re still standing next to. “Abby’s still in surgery and said to tell you to wait for her there. She’ll be there as soon as she can.”

“I know where it is.” Clarke almost snaps. She’s practically lived in this hospital her entire life and now some guy who’s been here a few months thinks she needs him to tell her where to go?

“Oh, that’s right! Of course!” he immediately retracts his arm and lets out a quick laugh. “Of course you do.” His smile hasn’t faltered and Clarke is doing her best to hide her slowly building antipathy towards him. “Well, I guess I’ll leave you to it then. I’m sure we’ll see each other before you go back to Portland.” He says and Clarke just nods.

With another smile he turns away from them and checks his pager that’s strapped to his hip and started beeping just a few seconds ago, before muttering ‘shit’ and hurrying down the hallway, his white doctor’s robe billowing behind him.

“Well,” Raven starts and Clarke takes another second to turn back around to face her. “That was weird.”
“Yeah.” Clarke agrees with a frown. It was weird.

“Do you think there’s something going on between Abby and that guy? And what kind of name is Kane anyway?” Raven broods as they start walking towards Abby’s office and Clarke looks up at her.

“Kane?”

“Yeah. The psychic.” Raven vaguely gestures behind them to where the man vanished to and Clarke realizes she must have been smart enough to shoot a glance at his name tag.

“Oh. I don’t know. Why? Do you think there is something going on?” Clarke furrows her brows. Is that why Abby hasn’t mentioned him? Because she’s seeing him? She tries to sort out how she would feel about that, but can’t. It’s all really unexpected and Clarke decides she just really doesn’t want to deal with that right now. She’s got enough things on her plate already without adding her mother’s love life to the mix. So when Raven opens her mouth to answer Clarke shakes her head.

“You know what? I don’t even want to know. Let’s just wait for mom and go to lunch.” She says as they arrive at the office and Clarke opens the door next to the little name plaque that reads ‘Dr. Abby Griffin – Head of General Surgery’.

Lincoln and Octavia file in first, but Raven stops on the threshold.

“Don’t you want to know who’s banging your mom, Clarke?” she almost whispers.

“Raven!” Clarke snaps and Raven ducks her head and giggles as she skips into the room past Clarke. Sometimes Clarke hates her a little.

“My girls! There they are!” Abby laughs as she opens the door about twenty minutes later to find the four of them lazing about in her office. Clarke and Octavia are chilling on the couch, while Raven is sitting propped up on Abby’s desk, playing with her phone, and Lincoln browses through Abby’s book collection.

A huge smile spreads over Raven’s face and she quickly hops off the desk and is the first one there to receive the hug. “Abby!”

“Hey, sweetie!” Abby smiles and then takes Raven’s face between her hands, giving her a searching look, before she looks over to Clarke and Octavia who have stood up from the couch by now.

Clarke is smiling as well at the familiar sight of her mother, slightly sweaty and tired looking, with her surgical cap still on her head. It’s a picture more common to her than anything else and immediately she feels her heart warm. She’s home.

“Come here, you two!” Abby waves them over with the arm that isn’t still wrapped around Raven and Clarke and Octavia obey and crowd into the hug as well, feeling only slightly ridiculous.

“Oh, it’s so good to have you girls here.” Abby hums as she squeezes them and then lets go. She reaches out and gently places her hand on Clarke’s cheek repeating the sentence again, this time a little quieter. And when her mother looks at her as if she wanted to know every single thing she
missed when they were apart. Clarke almost feels overwhelmed. She forgot what it’s like to be immersed in her mother’s love, and she hugs her mother again. This time just the two of them.

“I missed you.” Clarke utters against her mother’s cheek and feels Abby smile.

“I missed you, too, Cookie.”

At the sound of her old nickname, Clarke rolls her eyes, and Raven snorts behind her.

“Naaw, Cookie. I forgot about that!” The other girl coos mockingly, but quickly bites back the smirk at a stern look from Abby.

Clarke narrows her eyes at Raven as she draws back from her mother as a warning not to catch on to that nickname again. It took Clarke long enough to get Raven to stop using it after the last time they visited Abby together. Raven only grins at her though, and Clarke shakes her head. For the love of-

“And this young gentleman must be Lincoln.” Abby says in that moment, drawing all of their attention towards Lincoln, who, until this second, had been hanging back a bit to let them say their hellos.

“Yes, ma’am.” Lincoln smiles politely and Clarke can’t even blame Raven for snorting at that one. The last person who called her mother ‘ma’am’ was probably some five-year-old patient of hers and even then it would have sounded ridiculous to Clarke.

She can see her mother raising her eyebrows as well and when she takes the hand Lincoln is offering her she says, “No need to call me ma’am, Lincoln. Abby will do.”

“Yes, ma’am. I- I mean, Abby!” Lincoln quickly corrects himself, closing his other hand to a fist, and Clarke grins at the way his eyes dart to Octavia for help when Abby laughs. The girl only grins at him though and mouths ‘You’re fine, relax’ with the ghost of a wink.

“It’s, um, it’s nice to meet you.” Lincoln slightly bows his head. Clarke doesn’t know whether that is because he’s nervous or because Abby is quite a bit smaller than him, especially since she’s standing right in front of him now, but either way it reminds her of Lexa.

The way the fighter had conducted herself when they met her, her every move so precise, so seemingly calculated, so stoic, just wouldn’t let go of Clarke. It was fascinating to her in a way and the only time Lexa seemed to slip up even just the slightest bit was when she flinched away from the cloth Anya had put to her face. It was the only time Lexa seemed to be unguarded and it was only for a split second. Clarke wonders if the fighter ever really lets down her guard, but then she remembers the look in Lexa’s eyes when Lincoln went to hug Anya. There was so much there. So much… Clarke wants to say love, but really she has no way of knowing what went on inside of Lexa’s head at that moment. She just knows that it stuck with her somehow. That look.

But maybe that’s just because it was a little out of place with her otherwise almost stiff demeanor. And maybe that demeanor isn’t even how Lexa is usually. Maybe she’s just that way when she meets new people and the fight must have affected her as well in some form. Maybe she’s really very talkative and slouchy and maybe Clarke just needs to stop thinking about how Lexa may or may not act when she isn’t around her.

“Well, did you guys have something specific in mind?” Abby’s words pull Clarke back to the present moment and for a second Clarke feels a little flustered when she realizes that everybody’s eyes are on her.

“What about Benny’s?” Abby suggests herself just then and Raven hums and nods in agreement as
the attention is drawn away from Clarke.

*Lunch locations.* They’re talking about lunch locations.

Even though nobody seems to have noticed Clarke’s temporary mental absence she is still annoyed by it herself. She prides herself on having great concentration and her thoughts never stray. Not that much anyway, and especially not without her even noticing.

“Benny’s sounds great.” Clarke agrees halfheartedly, not really caring where they go. She’s still trying to shake the last images of Lexa and it’s proving to be harder than she’d like it to be. Only with effort does she finally manage to rip herself away from the memory of soft looking, pillowy lips, hard looking, sweat-coated abs and the most beautiful green eyes she’s ever seen.

“Benny’s it is then.” Abby smiles and then lifts her arms to her surgeon’s cap as she takes a few steps towards her desk. “Let me just get changed and I’ll meet you in front of the elevator in a few, alright?”

The girls and Lincoln throw back their noises of agreement and then they’re out the door. They hear it click shut behind them and make their way back down the hallway they came from earlier.

“Well? That wasn’t so bad, was it?” Octavia hushes the inquiry as she pats the guy next to her on the back, before looping her arm through his. Lincoln seems almost uncomfortable by the question.

“Yeah, it was fine.” He mumbles back, seemingly embarrassed that Octavia continues to make it seem like he was really nervous about meeting Abby.

Octavia either doesn’t notice his discomfort or chooses to ignore it and merely nods and smiles, facing front. “Told you.”

As she turns her head to look ahead as well Clarke only just catches Raven rolling her eyes, before they arrive at the elevators. One is arriving at that very moment, but since Clarke’s mom hasn’t joined them yet they just let it close its doors again and start off to wherever someone pushed the button.

They only have to wait another couple of minutes, before Abby comes hurrying down the aisle towards them. Clarke has always admired her mother’s ability to go from looking stressed or tired to presentable or even elegant in a matter of minutes. She guesses as a doctor you really learn to speed up certain everyday routines. It’s a sincere hope of hers that she will catch on to that useful skill rather sooner than later. As for now it’s either be ready in under ten minutes or look passable as a human being. Definitely not both.

“Okay, are we ready?” Abby asks the group at large, slightly out of breath, and when everybody shows their affirmation they step into the next arriving elevator after letting out another stream of people.

They choose to walk to the restaurant they picked since it isn’t too far away and Abby doesn’t have another surgery scheduled until that evening and the walk there goes by fast as the girls catch Abby up on what she’s missed with Lincoln throwing in a few sentences here and there when spoken to.

Clarke thinks despite his quite drawn back demeanor he doesn’t seem to feel left out or uncomfortable. In any case he seems like he’s a rather calm and quiet person over all to Clarke, so she guesses him not saying much is just the way he is. The only time she saw him really break out of that character so far was when he was drunk the evening before and started raging about over-prized work-out clothes, which he somehow turned into a passionate monologue about gender stereotypes.
and their effect on female and male self-perception in society today. All to Raven and Octavia’s enthusiastic sounds of approval. Clarke, of course, would have voiced her own endorsement of his views, but she recalls being too busy thinking of something else at the time. She only remembers snippets of Lincoln’s seemingly never ending string of words, but now that she thinks back on it she can’t quite seem to pinpoint what exactly had distracted her. She thinks she remembers having been preoccupied by flashes of dark ink on tanned skin that wouldn’t leave her mind, but then she almost runs into Lincoln who’s holding the door open for her and when he gives her a strange look Clarke just mumbles a rushed ‘thanks’ and ducks her head as she hurries past him inside.

The minute she steps through the door she’s immediately surrounded by the buzz and clatter of a busy restaurant. Almost every table is occupied as far as Clarke can make out and Raven and Octavia seem to be craning their heads as well, looking for a free spot. Abby however walks straight ahead, passing a few tables, until she’s at the bar. There she seems to be greeting a woman and Clarke is so surprised to see her, she has to look twice to really let it sink in.

“Callie?” the disbelieving question slips past her lips and before she can even really register what’s going on a huge grin spreads across her face and she hurries towards the bar.

She can’t believe it! She hasn’t seen the woman in over seven years! Not since she moved away from Seattle to become a military doctor overseas.

“Oh my god! Callie?!” she grins when she finally reaches the bar and upon seeing her Callie’s face lights up with pure joy as well.

“Clarke! Oh my- you’re so…so grown!” she almost gasps and before Clarke can even reply the Asian woman has already made her way around the bar counter and embraced Clarke in a tight hug.

“Abbs, why didn’t you tell me your very much grown-up daughter was coming?” Callie chides Abby over Clarke’s shoulder, before holding Clarke at arm’s length and giving her a scrutinizing once-over. By now the others have come over as well and Clarke can see Raven and Octavia exchange confused looks out of the corner of her eyes. She doesn’t really care to explain in that moment though, because, oh my god, it’s Callie!

Her mom and Callie Cartwig used to be best friends. In fact, ever since Clarke was born they were so close that Clarke grew up calling the Asian-American woman ‘Auntie Callie’ until she was almost a teenager. She can’t remember one childhood thanksgiving without the black haired woman with the big smile and soft eyes and even on Christmas Callie would often drop by. If just to say a quick ‘happy holidays’ and leave a present for Clarke under the tree.

After Callie left – pretty abruptly Clarke thought – they stayed in contact for a while, writing emails and even calling on the phone for a few minutes every now and then, but then Callie was deployed on some mission and Clarke couldn’t really ever seem to get a message through to her anymore or a even a simple call back. There were a few feeble attempts to maintain the relationship they had, but with Callie hardly ever being reachable and Clarke still going through losing her best friend and sorting out her feelings, their once so strong bond just faded more and more with each passing year. Clarke always thought her mom had lost contact with Callie as well, but apparently that wasn’t the case.

For the second time that day Clarke suddenly has to wonder why her mother would neglect to inform her of being in contact with someone close to her. First that Kane guy she’s obviously been spending a lot of time with and now Clarke finds out Callie is back in Seattle and obviously in Abby’s life as well?

“What are you doing here?” Clarke muses out loud, still awestruck at the unexpected reunion.
“I’m back in Seattle, Lilo! Didn’t your mom tell you?” Callie asks, sounding somewhat taken aback and throwing Abby a questioning look. Before her mom can answer however Raven is already butting in.

“Lilo?” the brunette asks with furrowed brows.

When Clarke opens her mouth to say it doesn’t matter Callie is already answering. “From Lilo and Stitch? I’m Nani! She’s my little Lilo!” she pulls Clarke against her side and wiggles her a little with her left arm. “Isn’t that right, Lilo?” she smiles at Clarke then and Clarke isn’t even embarrassed at her childhood nickname anymore. The way Callie’s eyes shine when she looks at her, like they really are sisters that have been held apart for far too long and have finally found their way back to each other, makes the outlook of potential teasing from her roommates more than bearable. Clarke only now notices how much she’s missed Callie and their ‘us against the world’ kind of repertoire with each other. Callie was always the one standing behind Abby and winking at Clarke when she was being chided for getting into trouble or who giggled along with her when they heard Clarke’s dad Jake coming up the stairs just before they’d jump out of the closet and scare him half to death. Even though Clarke called her ‘aunt’, Callie was always like the big sister she never had and the way she’s looking at her now makes Clarke’s eyes water involuntarily.

“That’s right, Nani,” Clarke replies a little quieter than Callie had been speaking and it’s another testament to how well the other woman still knows her that Callie’s eyebrows draw together in a sentimental expression, before her arms draw around Clarke again.

The ‘I missed you’ remains unspoken in that moment, but Clarke feels it envelop her nevertheless and is sure beyond a doubt that Callie does as well.

After Clarke and Callie let go Callie remembers that Abby asked her to show them to the table she called for earlier and the five of them follow the woman to another room in the back. It’s a little smaller than the main one, but still holds quite a few tables. In the far left corner one of the larger ones has a laminated ‘reserved’ sign on it and Clarke has to grin. She’s almost a hundred per cent sure that laminating the cards was probably Callie’s idea. The woman just loves to laminate. Ever since she can remember all her Christmas, Easter or birthday cards from Callie have always been pressed in plastic for no other apparent reason than that Callie liked it better that way.

When Clarke – not wanting the reunion to be over so soon – asks Callie to join them for lunch the woman’s smile broadens, but she declines. Clarke understands. The restaurant is packed and the way it looked Benny’s was barely staffed enough for the main room, let alone the rest of the guests in here.

Only when Callie excuses herself to tend to the next table over does Clarke realize what should have been the first thing she noticed after seeing the woman again.

“Um…mom?” Clarke frowns completely baffled now.

“What is it, Clarke?”

“Why the hell is Callie here?”

“Well, she told you she’s back in Seattl-“

“No, why is she here?” Clarke repeats, this time gesturing all around her at the last word. What was a top surgeon like Callie Cartwig, who was so renowned she practically got begged by hospitals all
over the state and even the country to join their staff, doing waiting on people she used to work with? “What’s she doing at Benny’s? Why isn’t she at the hospital? Wh-“

“Okay, okay, slow down, honey!” Abby intercepts and Clarke shuts up, getting more and more confused by the second as it all sinks in. Why is Callie back? What happened overseas and why is she here? Working at a restaurant? Was she fired? Or injured? Why didn’t she call Clarke? And why didn’t her mom tell Callie Clarke was coming with her to lunch? Why didn’t anybody tell her Callie was back anyway?

All of these questions are flying around in Clarke’s head, but she’s so desperate for an answer, any answer, she forces herself to reel in her curiosity for the moment to let her mother explain. At least that’s what she attempts to do, but one last question slips past her lips.

“When did she come back?”

Clarke thinks her mom looks careful as she answers. “She’s been back a couple of months.”

“A couple of months?” Clarke repeats high-pitched, not trusting her ears. She can’t believe this. A couple of months? Callie’s been back a couple of months and nobody bothered to clue her in? As she watches her mother give her a look that tells her to not start a discussion here Clarke feels anger boiling up inside her. What is this bullshit?

“Why the fuck didn’t you tell me?” Clarke demands, ignoring her mother’s cautioning look and disapproving tilt of her head at the profanity.

“Clarke.”

“No, mom, why didn’t anybody tell me she was back?” she insists and it’s all she can do not to raise her voice and jump up from her seat. This is so typical! Why doesn’t her mother ever deem it necessary to tell her things? Especially things as important as this?

Clarke is fuming and she knows she isn’t even trying to hide it very well. She can feel the looks of the others but she doesn’t care. She deserves better than this. Callie is practically family and Clarke, for lack of a better word, feels betrayed at being kept out of the loop.

“Let’s just enjoy our lunch, okay?” her mother implores and Clarke is about to snap back that she should stop the bullshit, when Octavia cuts in.

“Clarke,” the way her friend looks at her Clarke knows she understands. The brunette knows enough about Clarke’s relationship with Abby to probably get why Clarke is so angry about this and just knowing that Octavia seems to agree that she should have been told sooner helps calm Clarke down a little. Octavia’s eyebrows are drawn up high and she doesn’t need to say anything for Clarke to get the message. They’ll get to the bottom of this later.

Later. Right. She’s starting to hate that word.

It always seems to be like this.

She’ll know about it later. She’ll have time for it later. She’ll get to that later. She’ll have a life later.

Everything seems to have to be put off for later lately and at the same time everything is happening at once. Clarke feels like she can’t catch up with anything anymore and this is just another later she resents.

But she doesn’t really have a choice. Making a scene now isn’t going to change the fact that Abby is
Abby and it isn’t going to change the fact that Clarke should have been told about this sooner. It’ll just upset everyone and really it wouldn’t be fair to Lincoln, who in Clarke’s opinion looks a little lost now, quietly sitting next to Octavia and obviously overwhelmed with the situation.

So she reigns herself in – as best as she can anyway – and takes a deep breath, not looking at anybody.

It’s quiet now and Clarke wishes someone would just speak. As if she heard her silent plea Raven starts not a second later.

“So, Abby, I was thinking, if you could just give me a bionic leg I think I’d be cool with that. I wouldn’t even use it for evil or anything. Promise!” she begins to ramble and that’s all it takes for Clarke to crack a smile.

As Abby draws up an eyebrow and jokingly plays along, asking Raven what functions she would want her bionic leg to have, the mood around the table immediately lifts. It catches Clarke in a weird, torn state of emotion once again as she feels relieved but resentful at the easy change of topic. She knows it’s for the best and she commends Raven for her uncanny ability to uplift the spirit of everyone around her, no matter how dark they may have been, especially since she usually avoids drawing attention to her leg when she’s already feeling insecure and worried about it anyway, but still…

Still Clarke can’t let go of this feeling. This feeling that once again her opinion and her feelings don’t matter. They’re being pushed aside, put off for later and she despises feeling like this again. It’s exhausting and annoying and she was so looking forward to seeing her mom again. So she tries. She really tries to push this feeling back, just shove it far into the back of her mind and heart and gut and wherever else she feels it and not let anything ruin their lunch. She tries.

And for the most part it’s working. Her mind is still reeling with questions and her heart is still throbbing with bitterness, but she doesn’t let on. She laughs at Raven’s jokes and joins in Raven’s retelling of the party events of the previous nights – obviously leaving out a few details – and when Abby asks Lincoln about his work and he starts telling them about the gym and his and Lexa’s clients she even genuinely forgets everything that’s bothering her.

He tells them that he’s been working for the owner of the gym, Indra, for almost four years now and that she’s a very strict, but fair woman. He also says that he was a little put off by her instructor-like demeanor in the beginning, but that all of that suddenly made a lot more sense when he found out that she actually used to be in the military.

“That’s probably why Lexa’s never really been bothered by that, I guess.” He laughs then and Clarke frowns.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, Lexa was in the army, too.” He shrugs between bites and then frowns himself. “Actually, I think technically she still is…”

“What?” Raven’s jaw drops. “Hot boxer chick is in the army? Oh my god…”

‘Oh my god’ pretty much sums up Clarke’s thoughts as well at this point. Lexa is in the army? Like the real army? She’s still trying to wrap her mind around the fact that the girl from Lincoln’s pictures with the soft green eyes and shy demeanor was actually the same girl that won a mixed martial arts fight not twenty-four hours ago, but a soldier? No, that can’t be…
“That is so-”

“Horrible!” Clarke ends Raven’s sentence and the brunette and Lincoln turn to her.


“I mean…” Clarke doesn’t know what to say. It’s not her place to judge and anyway she doesn’t really know why she said it was horrible. Yes, she hates the concept of teaching people how to harm other people and preparing young bodies and minds for war, but it’s not like she’s never met people who were or are in the army. But somehow the thought of Lincoln’s friend Lexa being in that environment just makes her cringe.

“Was she like…” Raven starts again without waiting for Clarke’s answer and Clarke is secretly thankful as she quickly and demonstratively concentrates solely on Raven with interest. “You know, did she see any action? Are we even fighting a war right now?” Raven asks, looking to Abby for an answer.

Clarke hadn’t even thought of that, but at Raven’s words her stomach bottoms out and her skin crawls. *War. ‘Real action’. What if Lexa actually…*

“I don’t think so. At least she’s never said anything about it.” Lincoln relays and somehow that doesn’t really help quiet Clarke’s fears. At all. He doesn’t think so? He’s one of her closest friends! Shouldn’t he know stuff like that?!

“Is she on IRR?” Abby asks then, seeming interested, and Lincoln nods.

“Yeah, for another three to four years or something.” He tells her and Clarke shakes her head.

“What’s IRR?”

“Individual Ready Reserve.” Abby explains and Clarke turns to her mother. Individual Ready Reserve? She’s never heard of that. But it almost sounds like…

“So she could be called up at any time?” Octavia chimes in, addressing Lincoln again, and Clarke has trouble swallowing as she watches for his reaction. When he nods her stomach lurches.

“Yes, if there were an emergency or an attack or something I think the president has the authority to call up army employees who are in ready reserve. It’s kind of like the back-up army in case the normal one isn’t enough.” He states simply and Clarke just wants to punch him. How can he be so calm about this? His friend could be called up to go to fucking war at any moment and he just sits there and smiles and continues eating his fucking pizza? What is wrong with him?

“That makes sense.” Raven nods, chewing, and Clarke looks at her with disbelief. That makes sense? Do they even hear themselves? They’re talking about fighting a war like it’s just this logical, natural thing to do.

“I think that’s kind of creepy.” Octavia says to Clarke’s left and finally someone says something sensible. Yes! Creepy! Exactly!

“Why creepy?” Lincoln asks and Raven and Abby look curious as well.

“Well, because she’s just like…waiting. Like hovering and waiting if a war will break out and she has to fight. I’d imagine that’d be totally scary somehow, right?” Octavia tries to explain and Clarke is so thankful someone is saying something that doesn’t make her want to throw her food at them,
she nods along with vigor.

“Yes! Yes exactly!” she agrees loudly. “She could be drafted any moment! That’s horrible!” she comes back to her original statement.

Lincoln considers her for a moment and then tilts his head. “Yes, I guess so, I mean I’m not a huge fan of the concept either, but at least we don’t have compulsory military service anymore. Anybody who fights for our country does so because they want to. Lots of other countries don’t give you that choice.”

Choice. Lexa chose this. Clarke just can’t believe that. It just doesn’t fit. And she knows that all sorts of things and expectations don’t really fit with Lexa, but this? This just doesn’t feel right.

When she goes to ask more about why Lincoln thinks Lexa went to the military in the first place Callie suddenly appears next to their table. She asks them if they want anything else and after Raven and Lincoln order their dessert everybody is talking about something else. Raven throws her a look every now and then, checking if she really doesn’t want to share the cheese cake like they had said they would, but Clarke declines. She doesn’t really feel like it anymore.

Even though the others have apparently moved on from the topic Clarke’s thoughts are still stuck on Lexa. Why would she choose to be in the army? Why would anybody? She’s asked herself that question before, but somehow finding an answer seems more important this time around than it ever has.

“Oh my god, I can’t believe you did that.” Lexa frowns, her cheeks and ears still feeling exceptionally hot, even as they quickly cross the street in front of the little two room museum they just stepped out of and the wind picks up.

Anya is still laughing at Lexa’s obvious embarrassment of her and jogs the last few yards to the opposite side walk to catch up with Lexa’s brisk pace.

“We could get in so much trouble!” Lexa repeats almost angrily as she turns to Anya with a glare. The other woman merely continues chuckling though and Lexa shakes her head, righting her beanie in annoyance.

“Since when are you so law-abiding?” Anya snorts unimpressed and now that they’re a safe distance away from the little and obviously self-sponsored museum Lexa slows down a little until they’re walking at their normal pace again.

“Since I’m not a teenager anymore!” Lexa hisses back and then lets out a deep breath. Her heart is still racing and it’s not as much fun as one might think. Whoever said adrenaline rushes make you feel alive and euphoric was a complete moron. All Lexa is feeling is like she’s about one ‘excitement’ away that day from needing a paper bag to breathe and possibly a heart transplant.

“Sheesh!” Anya gives back and even though Lexa is staring straight ahead she knows Anya is rolling her eyes. “It’s not like we stole something! Relax!”

Lexa wants to snap that drawing their initials on displayed art is just as bad, but holds back. She’s too wound up to form the right words right now and Anya probably wouldn’t listen anyway she thinks as her former foster sister nudges her to follow her into a smaller alley that seems to be leading down
to the small man-made river channel they passed earlier. Anya is grinning and seemingly very happy and content with their day’s accomplishments and Lexa once again asks herself how Anya is responsibly and successfully running a night club. In moments like these Lexa can’t help but think back to fifteen year-old Anya and fifteen year-old Anya with her wild, black hair and fuck-everyone mentality would have run a club into the ground in a week, and probably been arrested three times while doing it.

But somehow Anya manages to let her fifteen year-old self live on inside herself without letting her interfere with her business. The only thing Anya’s inner teen is interfering with really is Lexa’s sanity and possibly her coronary health.

“Here, let’s sit down.” Anya directs, before plopping down at the edge of the narrow channel. Lexa hesitates a second, but quickly finds that she doesn’t really care what people think of them just sitting on the ground like that and lowers herself down beside the other woman.

The water isn’t high enough for their feet to touch it and while she knows Anya is probably just fine with that she’s a little disappointed. She doesn’t like swimming much, that’s true, but Lexa’s always loved the feeling of just letting her feet dangle in water. Then again this particular river doesn’t seem too clean, so it might be best they not dip their feet in it. Instead Anya crosses her legs, her nude-colored skin-tight pants tightening over her outer thighs as she does so, and Lexa pulls up her left leg as well and rests her head on her knee – careful to avoid her still tender left cheek bone touching it – both of her arms hugging it closer to her own body.

Even with the wind it’s still quite warm outside and Lexa’s glad she didn’t go for the jacket she considered taking with her. Carrying it around all day would have been unnecessary as her simple, light blue button-up blouse is easily enough to keep her from getting cold. In fact she’s almost a little hot in her long, black smart trousers and her sand colored beanie. Anya seems to be thinking along the same lines because in that moment she lets out a little grunt and shrugs off her leather jacket. It falls onto the stone behind her with a heavy thud and Anya lets out a sigh of relief.

This day turned out pretty nice after all Lexa thinks quietly to herself as she watches the water. A small, blonde girl with her young parents is standing on the other side of the channel and the pieces of bread she’s throwing to the ducks make ripples on the lazily running surface of the water. It’s almost a little hypnotizing, the way the circles grow and multiply so evenly and consistently and Lexa’s mind wanders off to other things.

She wonders whether Indra meant it when she said she was proud of her win. The tough, direct coach rarely pays her compliments and Lexa is pretty sure she’s never heard her say that she’s proud. Not that she can remember anyway. But after the fight the previous night Indra said exactly that. First of course she clicked her tongue and stared at her with a disapproving look so long until Lexa gave in and bowed her head to avoid the intense gaze. When Indra asked her if she knew what her mistake had been Lexa nodded.

Of course she knew!

She had let herself get distracted.

Again.

And she didn’t need her coach to tell her that. In fact, she didn’t need anybody to tell her anything about that fight. This time it was painfully obvious how bad her concentration had been. Embarrassingly so.

Which was what made Indra’s following debriefing in the changing room just the more unexpected.
Lexa almost thought the way the doctor dabbed at her wound so close to her ear had made her mishear her coach when Indra told her she had done well and that she should be proud of herself. Hadn’t she just told her she had made a mistake? And a very blatant one at that?

And yet Indra even let a small smile rest on her lips as she watched Lexa struggle to comprehend her words. But who could blame her, really? Lexa’s astonishment was perfectly normal, wasn’t it? Indra contradicted herself that night in Lexa’s opinion and she can’t remember ever having felt so confused about her coach’s feedback. Angered, embarrassed, enlightened, encouraged, berated, reassured, challenged, strengthened, sure! But confused? Not really. Indra’s assessments of her fights, admittedly not always right away, had still made sense to Lexa every time. By the end of the debriefings at the latest Lexa had always understood why Indra had said what she had said and what she, Lexa, was to do about it. Lexa guesses this time she’ll just take a little longer to comprehend what Indra meant when she had said she was proud of her.

“You’re not still worrying about the museum, are you?” Anya’s voice draws Lexa’s attention and her gaze shifts from the now still water to her friend’s face. Anya’s looking at her with one eyebrow drawn up as she cups her hands around the cigarette in her mouth to shield the flame of her lighter from the light breeze. “It was just a plaque, Lex! It’s not like we drew on the art.” Anya continues, slightly mumbling as the cig wobbles between her lips at every word, and then frowns down at the lighter. She took too long before holding it against the front of her cigarette and the flame went out.

While Anya flicks the lighter to conjure up another flame to light her bad habit Lexa lazily wiggles her head against her knee before lifting it up. “No, no. Although I still think you shouldn’t have done that.” She shoots Anya a look which the older woman ignores expertly, and then takes in a big breath, looking back down to the water. The ducks the little girl had been feeding before are still bobbing around on the surface of the dark water, probably still hoping to find more scraps of bread thrown their way and Lexa has to smile when one of them finds another crumb and happily flaps its wings as it wolfs it down, throwing back its head in three big motions.

“What’s got you staring into space then if not the crippling fear of getting life in prison for defacing a piece of ‘Mona Lisa’-like genius?” Anya asks around her smoke and then leans back on her elbows, taking a long drag.

Lexa rolls her eyes at the woman’s dripping sarcasm. Yes, the painting of the two dogs chasing after a flying sausage with a pig’s tail and panicked eyes didn’t exactly scream Louvre, and the title ‘One man’s dream…’ wasn’t the best choice probably, but she still feels bad for not stopping Anya from adding ‘…is another man’s wiener, no homo’ and their initials underneath it. If and when the creator discovers it they probably won’t appreciate their insight and she’d hate to think they disheartened an aspiring…something. Nevertheless she couldn’t help but giggle nervously at Anya’s contribution. And she guesses if someone really wanted to they could easily replace the plaque so maybe Anya is right and there wasn’t any real harm done there.

“Well?”

“I was just thinking about last night.” Lexa says, scooting to her left and turning a little so as to better face the woman next to her. It looks almost painful the way Anya’s elbows dig into the gravel that separates the channel’s stone from the sidewalk, but the Asian-American doesn’t seem to notice or mind. She merely keeps tilting her head to the side every few minutes to pass the cigarette from her mouth to her left hand and back, eyeing Lexa from below. At Lexa’s words a slow nod is being directed at her and a moment of silence follows. Then Anya hums and redirects her gaze to the ducks Lexa was watching before.

And Lexa frowns.
Normally she doesn’t mind that Anya isn’t exactly one for many words, she isn’t either! But just now it seemed like something was left unsaid and it bothers her. Anya’s hum just seemed out of place. But Lexa can’t quite tell why. Which bothers her even more.

“What?” she asks despite herself and she can feel herself tense up when Anya’s face remains unmoving, her expression unreadable beneath her sunglasses she put on as they walked to the waterfront.

“What what?” Anya asks, still not turning her gaze from the water, or the opposite side of the channel, or god knows what but Lexa.

Lexa is about to clarify that she’d like an elaboration on that hum, but just then Anya’s phone apparently buzzes as she suddenly groans and awkwardly bends her right arm to retrieve it from her jacket’s pocket that’s still lying underneath her back where she dropped it before.

When Anya turns her attention to the screen Lexa snaps her mouth back shut without saying anything and watches Anya’s unreadable expression turn into one of amusement. The woman swipes her thumb over her phone then and when she chuckles Lexa finally gives in to her curiosity.

“What? What is it?” she asks and leans forward a little to catch a view of Anya’s screen, but the other woman quickly tilts it away from her and she only manages to make out that whatever Anya was chuckling at was a picture.

Immediately Lexa straightens her back again.

Lincoln’s pictures from the other night. Those must be them.

From one second to the other Lexa feels herself get restless and tense. After stopping herself from checking if Lincoln sent any pictures right after waking up Lexa shut off her phone completely and put it in her bag. She told herself she just wanted the day to be hers and Anya’s, but the way her stomach is flipping now she can’t deny that another part of it was that she is nervous about seeing how the night turned out for one particular blonde.

And she hates that.

Clarke is attractive, anybody can see that, but it’s unlike Lexa to dwell on a girl she just met. Even for a day. Even an attractive one.

She feels put on the spot by her own reaction to the blonde and she thinks it’s quite unnecessary. Not to mention annoying.

And the most frustrating part is that Anya seems to be catching on even faster than Lexa. At least that’s the conclusion Lexa came to after going over Anya’s ‘you’re so busted’ comment from the other night. After replaying the events of the night of the fight as she was trying to decide what coffee to get that morning at the vending machine Lexa thought Anya must have noticed her noticing the blonde. And even though she’s used to Anya’s incessant and pushy nagging about practically any girl that would according to the other woman be ‘perfect’ for Lexa – at least to fool around with a little more – she really, really wants to avoid Anya starting on that again. Especially with Clarke.

It would just be really awkward, Lexa thinks, having Anya drop hints and very obvious comments around the blonde, since Clarke is Octavia’s roommate and Lexa is sure they’ll run into each other every now and then, assuming Lincoln and her will stay together for a while yet. Which Lexa expects and even hopes for.

Anya always puts her nose in Lexa’s business and usually it’s just mildly annoying, but under the
given circumstances it could potentially be extremely embarrassing. After all, Clarke isn’t like the other girls Anya always wants to set Lexa up with. Clarke will be around.

And Lexa just can’t have that. Lexa can’t have Anya making things weird.

But when Anya smirks at Lexa over the edge of her sun glasses and tells her that she’s probably not ‘ready’ to see the picture Lincoln sent her, Lexa knows that she might be fighting a losing battle.

Especially if the way her heart beat picks up just then is any indication.

She’s so screwed.

“Clarke, sweetie, would you get that?” Abby directs, pointing at the curtain that goes all the way around the single bed as she pulls herself closer to it on a swivel chair.

While Lincoln went to meet up with an old friend who lives in the city, Octavia, Raven and Clarke have been waiting in the brightly lit examination room for the better part of half an hour as Abby finished up some other work she had to do.

Now Raven is already seated on the edge of the hard mattress, pants off and ready for her leg to finally be examined, and the mood in the room is almost as tense as Octavia’s jaw line.

As expected the brunette took up ‘watch’ right next to the bed even before Abby entered the room and after pacing at first she now hasn’t moved a muscle, standing perfectly still in her very much body guard like stance with her arms crossed tightly over her chest, ever since Clarke’s mother sat down and told Raven to ‘hop on’ so she could give the girl her much needed check-up.

Weirdly enough Clarke thinks that Octavia being so tense actually relaxes Raven and it’s almost amusing watching the dynamic between the two. The more Octavia’s jaw muscles tense up and stand out, the more Raven’s shoulders relax, and the other way around. It’s almost comical in a way.

“He needs to be completely honest with me, Raven. I won’t have to bring out the mood chart like I do with my 5 year-olds.”

Raven looks rightfully chastised and even a little ashamed at the reminder of her last examination and throws a couple of quick glances to Clarke and Octavia, before she draws a big breath and turns to Abby. After a second she admits in a quiet voice: “It’s been pretty bad.”

Abby only hums and nods and then starts the examination. She feels Raven’s knee and the area around it, bends it and stretches is, tells Raven to stand up and put wait on it and all the while asks her a number of questions, most of which Clarke has heard before.
How bad does it hurt in comparison to…?
How many times has the pain woken you up?
Does it feel more stiff or more instable?
Can you locate the pain and has it spread?
How often have you been wearing your brace and for how long?

As Raven answers each and every one of them honestly and without trying even once to make light of it, Clarke starts to realize how bad it’s actually been for Raven. She knows Raven always puts on a brave face, even in front of them, her best friends, but she’s almost angry with herself that she didn’t notice how bad it had gotten for Raven.

Of course she and Octavia have been aware that the leg has been bugging Raven more lately, her increased consumption of her subscription pain medication was the easiest way to judge her state if nothing else showed, but Clarke for one thinks she hadn’t really gotten the extent of it. Until now.

Once or twice Raven shoots them glances, but avoids really making eye contact. Clarke knows this must be exceptionally hard for Raven, to admit she’s been suffering in front of not only Abby, but Clarke and Octavia as well. But it’s also another sign of how anxious Raven really feels about it. And if that wasn’t enough her face sure gives it away at the end of the examination.

With obvious trepidation she watches for Abby’s conclusion and Clarke can’t say that she isn’t feeling slightly on edge about the result as well. If she didn’t know any better though Clarke would even say that Octavia is probably the most nervous of them all as she adjusts and readjusts her crossed arms as Abby scribbles down some notes on Raven’s chart and finally just bursts out, “So? What’s the verdict, Abby?”

Clarke’s mother finishes the sentence and then swivels around to Octavia and Clarke with a reassuring smile before directing it at Raven.

“Nothing that we can’t handle.” She says reassuringly, but somehow the vagueness of the statement doesn’t seem to really have the desired effect on any of them. If anything Raven looks more nervous now and it’s almost hard to watch how she declines her head and subconsciously rubs her leg as she swallows hard.

Clarke hears her mumble a quiet ‘right’ under her breath and then Raven is nodding to herself and Clarke catches herself mirroring her.

“It’ll be fine.

Alright, girls,” Abby says a little more loudly and her energetic demeanor kind of wakes everyone up from their stupor just as effectively as if she had clapped into her hands. “I’m going to need a minute with Raven alone to discuss some things. She can fill you in on everything when we’re done as I’m sure she will.”

“But-“

“Now, Octavia.” Abby’s stern look doesn’t leave room for argument and after another second of opening and closing her mouth Octavia seems to surrender and clenches her jaw once more. Clarke sees her eye Raven with worry, but Raven, more back to her usual self, just rolls her eyes at her and smirks, nodding her head towards the door.
“Come on, O.” Clarke says and places a hand on the other girl’s tense shoulder, lightly directing her out of the room.

Once they’re outside of the examination room and Clarke softly closes the door behind them Octavia shakes her head in obvious frustration.

“I knew we should have sent her to get it checked out sooner!” she immediately fires, throwing her hands up in the air, before tightly crossing them over her chest again.

“We did!” Clarke reminds her gently while pushing her a little further down the corridor to a quieter corner. They sit down in two empty waiting chairs there, or at least Clarke does. Octavia can’t seem to stay still for too long and as soon as her butt hits the chair she’s up again and starts pacing in front of Clarke.

“Well we should have dragged her then!” she argues and Clarke is starting to get vivid flashbacks of the time Raven first got the news about her leg. She had forgotten how restless Octavia could be when it comes to Raven’s wellbeing.

“No ten horses could drag that girl anywhere she doesn’t want to go, O.” Clarke counters, trying to reason with the other woman, but Octavia pays her no mind.

“And since when aren’t we allowed in when she gets the results of examinations? Why the secrecy? I mean, what’s so bad that Abby can’t tell her in front of us? And like, especially if it’s really bad, shouldn’t we be there for support? I should be there!” she almost panics and Clarke gets up of the chair as well now, grabbing Octavia’s wrists to stop the incessant pacing.

“Hey! O!” she calls out to get the girl’s attention and restless eyes finally focus on her. “She’ll be fine! Mom said it was nothing we can’t handle and even if it’s something bad, if anybody’s good with defying bad news, it’s Raven.”

She can see at once that the truth in her words got through to Octavia and the brunette girl’s shoulders relax just a tiny bit.

“Yeah…” she nods, more to reassure herself than anything else probably, and then takes a breath. “Yeah, you’re right. She’ll be fine. It’s just another bump in the road.”

“Exactly.” Clarke agrees and it takes her only a little more convincing to usher Octavia into one of the chairs again where they wait another five minutes or so before they see Abby strutting towards them, her doctor’s kit flowing behind her.

“Alright,” she starts without further ado and by the time she’s standing before them both Clarke and Octavia have risen out of their respective chairs. “Raven’s gone down to get some new pretty pictures of that leg of hers taken and two blood tests and she told me to fill you girls in in the meantime. Let’s go to my office.”

It takes a moment for Clarke to catch up to all of that information and it leaves her suddenly having to hurry after Octavia and Abby who are already briskly walking towards Abby’s office.

She catches up just as they open the door and the two other women leave her to close it.

It takes Abby only a short time to explain everything to them, although Clarke and Octavia’s intermittent questions and concerns prolong the process quite a bit without a doubt.

All in all, it’s not as bad as Clarke secretly feared. Her mother tells them that if the tests confirm her suspicions after the check up then Raven’s graft, or one of the screws in her knee, may have shifted
due to poor placement in the first place and other factors such as overworking the limited range of motion.

“So, if I’m right, what we’re going to do is, we’re going to open her back up and correct the placement of whatever is out of order.” Abby simply states after Clarke’s last question whether the graft could have torn as well has been answered with a reassuring no.

“So another surgery.” Octavia frowns and shakes her head when Abby nods.

“Yes, we’ll probably not be able to avoid another surgery, Octavia. But as I said, it’s all rather straightforward. There should be no complications.”

Clarke doesn’t hold it against Octavia when she scoffs and turns away from Abby, who’s halfway perched onto her own desk, calmly watching her and Octavia take it all in.

As the brunette turns to stare – or probably rather blankly stare – at the books in Abby’s shelf, Clarke addresses Abby herself.

“Who will do the surgery? You?” she asks, but thinks she knows the answer.

“No. Not me.” Abby confirms her suspicion and Clarke merely nods. It’s against policy for surgeons to operate on their own family, and even though Raven technically isn’t related to Abby, Clarke knows that the same principal still applies. They’re too close and it might affect Abby’s judgment in the OR.

“Who then?” Octavia’s voice sounds a little strained and Clarke is unsure if it’s anger or tears that coat her friend’s words. Probably a bit of both.

“I will arrange for Dr. Kane to be the leading surgeon on her case.” She tells them and at that Octavia finally swirls back around.

“The psychic?” she questions at once, her tone almost scandalized, and Clarke finds herself sharing Octavia’s obvious, if irrational, aversion to the man they only met a few hours earlier. If she’s being honest Clarke actually didn’t expect Octavia to be opposed to this new doctor as much as she apparently is, but catches herself silently enjoying the fact that she clearly isn’t the only one who still has her reservations about the hospital’s newest, brown haired addition.

“The what?” Abby shoots Clarke a confused look, but Clarke is more concerned with hearing her mother’s reasoning behind wanting him to be appointed to Raven’s case than with explaining the alias.

“Why him?” she asks and when her mother’s brow rises like it did when Clarke would stubbornly cross her arms over her chest and refuse to go to bed or apologize for a delicate question she asked one of her parents’ friends or co-workers Clarke knows Abby must have perceived her as rude just then.

She thinks about another way to phrase the question, but ultimately doesn’t care enough to put it less offensive. Why him?

“He’s not even the chief of surgery. Jaha is. Why can’t he do it?” she presses on instead and Octavia nods along.

Abby eyes them for another moment, seemingly somewhat taken aback by their strong stance against her decision, but then slowly lowers herself off her desk and takes a breath.
“Because,” she starts calmly, “Dr. Kane is one of the country’s most renowned and successful orthopedic surgeons and as such my first choice when it comes to this particular case.”

The stare they both get from her then make Octavia shuffle her feet and Clarke avert her gaze and when Abby asks them if they have any more concerns regarding her judgment they shake their heads in unison.

“Good. Then how about you two get Raven a little something to cheer her up and wait for her back in the examination room. I have to go check up on some other patients of mine and see to it that Harvey hasn’t killed anyone in my absence.”

She shoots them another meaningful glance as they mumble words of compliance and then nods as she grabs her stethoscope from her desk.

“I’ll see you girls in a bit.” She says and then Clarke’s mother is gone and the office door is closed behind her.

For a moment Octavia and Clarke just stand there, looking at each other, before Octavia rolls up her eyes and throws back her head, letting out a frustrated grunt. She presses her knuckles against her eyes and groans, shaking her head.

“This sucks.” She finally blurs out and Clarke can only agree. This does suck. It totally sucks. And if she’s being honest there’s nothing Clarke would love to do more right now than shout out her frustration as well. But it helps no one if they only wallow in their self-pity. It certainly doesn’t help Raven. And wallowing is something Raven wouldn’t do either.

So they have to stop.

“It’s going to be fine.” Clarke repeats the phrase she’s quickly getting annoyed by herself, but pushes on, ignoring Octavia’s scoff. “Let’s just wait and see what the tests say before we jump to conclusions. Maybe it’s not even that bad.”

“Your mom said she needs another surgery.” Octavia reminds Clarke in an exasperated tone, her eyes still hidden behind her fists.

“I know what she said. But even my mom can be wrong. And even if she’s right...”

Octavia shoots her an irritated glance then, which Clarke fully meets before going on, “You heard her. The procedure is straight forward. And apparently that Kane guy knows what he’s doing.”

At the name Octavia grimaces. “I don’t like him.” She confesses and as much as Clarke wants to agree with her, she knows it’s not what they need right now.

“Well, it seems like he’s the best person for the job and I’m not really in with the ‘it crowd’ of orthopedic surgeons, so I think we’ll have to trust mom on this one.” She smiles, making an attempt at lighting up the situation much like Raven usually does. And to her relieve it seems to be working as Octavia lets out a small breath and a smile as well.

“Right.” She concedes.

Clarke steps closer to Octavia, who by now has lowered her fists to cross her arms across her chest once more. Lowering her voice to a more reassuring and soothing tone she lightly puts her hands on her friend’s shoulders and starts gently stroking down her tense upper arms. “You know mom wouldn’t let anybody but the very best of the best get in there again.”
Octavia nods and closes her eyes before she looks at her. “I know.”

“Okay.” Clarke smiles and then squeezes Octavia’s upper arms once more, saying a little louder, “Come on. Let’s see if we can find Raven something to tinker with while we wait for mom.”

It’s an hour later when Abby returns. Raven has been back in the examination room for a solid fifteen minutes and Octavia has cheered up considerably, seeing how well their friend seems to be taking the news of the possibility of another surgery.

In fact Raven seems to be almost excited about it and Clarke is starting to worry that she might be getting her hopes up for something that isn’t realistic to even think about. That the surgery might actually make her better than she’s been since the accident.

She blames her mother for Raven’s false hope. The way Raven relayed to them how Abby explained what might happen it sounds to Clarke like her mother all but called Dr. Kane a magical ACL god. What was she thinking? She shouldn’t make it seem like Raven could come out of this running and kicking and step dancing, all because of her weird and sudden and utterly inexplicable fascination with this Kane guy.

All of this has been running through Clarke’s mind for several minutes when Abby finally steps through the door again. She seems a little hectic and distracted as she tells them the results will take another three hours at least and Clarke’s annoyance only grows.

“We’re supposed to drive back tonight, mom.” She says to remind them all. And it’s a struggle not to let her frustration with her mother show too much.

“I understand that, sweetie, but I think this is a little more important than your travelling plans, don’t you?” Abby gives back in a harsh tone and Clarke raises her eyebrows. She did not expect her mother to snap at her like that and when Abby closes her eyes and apologizes a moment later she thinks her mother looks more than just a little hectic. She looks tired and worn down.

Her hair is a mess and her robes have splatters of only god knows what on them, but that’s nothing new. What really is telling of her mother’s wariness however is the short temper they just witnessed and the way she keeps fingering through her own hair. The way she can’t seem to stand still too long. It’s a clear sign of stress and Clarke decides this is not the day to be antagonistic. She’ll talk with her mother about Raven’s worrisome hopefulness some other time. Soon though.

“You guys can go ahead and drive back.” Raven says just then and all heads turn to her.

“Don’t be stupid.” Is all Octavia says almost seeming offended and when Raven goes to argue Clarke just shakes her head.

“We’re staying.” She agrees with Octavia. “We can drive back tomorrow. Right?” she adds with a glance to her mother.

“Probably.” Is all Abby says, before she leaves them again with a promise to make them hurry the results.

“Well, great.” Clarke murmurs under her breath as the sound of her mother’s steps fade beyond the now closed door.
“It’s okay, Clarke.” Raven reacts to her muttering and Clarke feels relieved but annoyed at her friend’s seeming light-heartedness.

“We’ll just wait for the results and I’m sure we can go home later tonight.” Raven tries to reassure them both. Listening closer to her friend’s voice Clarke thinks she detects a tone of apology underneath the put on façade of ‘it’ll be alright’ and she feels a little bad that Raven feels bad and it temporarily distracts her from her irritation with her mother and the situation as a whole.

She doesn’t point out that it’s already almost seven at night and that the chances of them getting back home this same day are slim to none. Instead she just says okay and then suggests they go to the cafeteria to get something to eat. After all, her mother never said they had to wait right here for those damn test results.

The line in the cafeteria is longer than expected and Octavia, who despite having calmed down considerably still seems to be a little riled up about everything, insists that Raven sit down at one of the little plastic tables. Raven protests of course, but Clarke thinks her roommate knows their friend well enough to know to just let her have this one, because she gives in quicker than she normally would and obediently goes to sit at a round, white table towards the end of the line of waiting hospital staff and visitors across the room.

“What are you going to have?” Octavia asks Clarke and Clarke turns her head to eye the big chalk board hanging on the wall behind the cafeteria staff. There’s not much on there except the menu of the day which doesn’t sound very appealing to her, so she decides to just go for a hot dog she can see displayed behind glass a little further ahead in the line and something to drink instead.

As they slowly shuffle forward Octavia’s phone buzzes and Clarke catches a glance and sees, unsurprisingly, that it’s Lincoln who texted.

With a jolt Clarke remembers the pictures he took the night before and who he sent them to.

This is unfamiliar to her. This feeling of wanting to cringe at the thought of someone seeing pictures like that of her. Usually she doesn’t care a lot. She doesn’t get embarrassed quickly and she doesn’t think having a good time out with your friends and doing funny things like pole dancing on a no parking sign is something to go red in the face over.

And yet…

And yet she can almost feel her cheeks heating up at the thought of Lincoln’s friends seeing her like that. And she doesn’t really understand why. Why is she so… intimidated by Lincoln’s friend Lexa? Intimidated isn’t even the right word. It’s more like she really wants Lexa to like her and for the life of her she doesn’t know why. Yes, they’ll probably see each other from time to time if Octavia and Lincoln’s relationship progresses like it has, but she’s just never been the type to worry about impressing Octavia or Raven’s boyfriends before. Let alone their boyfriends’ friends! It’s just not who she is and she likes that about herself. She likes that she doesn’t care much what others think of her in that aspect and she likes that she isn’t impressed by any kind of celebrity status really. At least she didn’t use to be. But then again, is the fact that Lexa’s a pretty well-known and popular MMA fighter really the reason why she is reacting so differently around her? Something still doesn’t really feel right about that explanation.

Clarke tries to imagine if things were different if Lexa weren’t a fighter, but finds that she can’t. Even though originally she was more than surprised to find out about the fighting, now that she’s seen her in the ring she just can’t get the image out of her head. Lexa, green eyes shining through pitch black war paint, standing over her defeated opponent, chest heaving and body and muscles so undeniably strong and powerful it still takes her breath away just thinking about it.
Clarke’s head snaps back and she looks over at Octavia, startled. Her friend is looking at her with a funny expression, her eyebrows raised, and when she nods towards the left Clarke notices the stressed looking cashier frowning at her.

“Oh! Um, I…”

What did she want again? Right!

“Oh, a- a hotdog please and a soda.” She orders hastily and the woman is already waving to her colleague to prepare her order before Clarke’s even finished the sentence.

“That’ll be seven dollars.” The blonde, elderly woman almost barks and Clarke quickly starts rummaging in her purse for the money.

After Octavia has paid as well and the both of them received their orders they quickly move along, out of the way of the next customers as a loud ‘NEXT’ sounds from the check register.

“Geez…” Clarke mumbles under her breath, walking around the last small pole that separates the cafeteria line from the eating area.

“Where the hell did you just go?” Octavia prods, snorting lightly in amusement, before they even reach Raven’s table and Clarke needs a moment to get what she’s asking.

“I-” she starts once she’s caught up, but then realizes she simply doesn’t know how to explain where her thoughts just took her. How would she explain that she is suddenly worried about someone’s perception of her, especially if that someone isn’t even someone close to her? Octavia would just frown and tell her that she never used to worry about stuff like that and ask her why. And Clarke just doesn’t know the answer to that. Not yet anyway.

So she stalls. She exaggeratingly cranes her neck to look for Raven even though she’s known where she sits since she watched her take that exact seat when she and Octavia went to stand in line in the first place and then she very unnecessarily says something along the lines of ‘ah, there she is!’, before picking up her pace to join their friend. All in all she plays the whole scene so embarrassingly over the top that she is surprised that Octavia is letting her get away with her obvious avoidance of the subject, but for whatever reason the dark haired girl just follows her and takes a seat next to her across from Raven without saying another word about it.

Clarke is grateful for the break but is sure Octavia won’t just forget about it. After all, it isn’t the first time she caught Clarke’s mind wandering that day. Earlier in the restaurant there was another moment where Clarke was very abruptly shaken from her inner musings about whether she would ever find out about the part of Lexa’s past that lead to her friend Anya thinking it fitting to paint her face like a warrior’s. And more importantly, if she would find out from the woman herself. Octavia had called her name then too, and much like just now, Clarke had avoided telling her about what she’d been thinking about. She just didn’t feel like having to explain why she even cared about that and again she wouldn’t have had an answer anyway. Plus, she really hadn’t been in the mood to kick start another fit of Raven unabashedly fangirling about Lexa.

She told herself it’s because she wanted to enjoy the time she had with her mother then, but seeing as that same feeling of not wanting to hear Raven go on and on about Lincoln’s friend is mixed in with Clarke’s current silence as well, she can’t quite uphold that excuse.

Before she can wreck her brain even more, pondering over what lies behind her sudden need to get
to know and maybe even impress Octavia’s boyfriend’s friend, Raven grunts and greedily grabs the plate of chicken noodles from Octavia’s trey.

“Thank god, I’m starving!” she exclaims, already twirling her first load onto the fork, and Octavia shoots Clarke a meaningful look, apparently really not hung up on their previous topic at all.

Happy to go along Clarke forces a smirk onto her face and mirrors the look and then they both start on their food as well, while Raven is praising the hospital’s ‘Asian food chef’ and gestures to Octavia to pass the soy sauce.

"What about some chips?” Anya calls to her from the next aisle over.

They’re at a little rest stop shop around the corner from where they parked the car and Anya insisted they load up on road trip snacks before they continued their drive out of Seattle. It’s not like it will be a long way home and really Lexa is sure that Anya can’t be any more hungry than she is, but Anya says it’s about the feeling, not the need, of buying road snacks and so Lexa doesn’t object.

They end up buying a whole lot of different sweets, chocolates and chips and Lexa is almost certain if anyone ate all of it in one sitting they’d die an instant death by sugar overload.

While Anya pays Lexa’s attention gets drawn to somewhere else as she sees a blonde head of hair walking through the entrance. For a second her heart speeds up, before the woman turns around and brown eyes briefly glance in Lexa’s general direction before moving away again.

Lexa quietly lets out a breath and frowns down at the display of candy bars in front of her, not really looking at them. What the hell?

"Hey! You coming or what?"

At Anya’s prompt Lexa wordlessly turns around, not even reacting to the register girl’s friendly goodbye, and follows her sister, who is already a few steps ahead of her, out of the small garage shop into the cold autumn air. It’s getting dark already and the light from the store behind them throws long shadows of their silhouettes onto the paved ground. Lexa’s shadow hurries along with her as she catches up to Anya and Lexa focuses on the way the length and form of it changes to tear her mind away. Away from blonde hair and the sinking feeling she got when she realized that brown wasn’t the color she had hoped for.

It’s ridiculous really. Ridiculous and so uncalled for, because what is she going to do with this feeling? What is it going to help to feel excited about seeing the blonde again after only having met her once? They haven’t even had a conversation yet! Nothing! They’ve neither talked to one another nor gotten to know anything about one another and Lexa is feeling more and more like all this might just be a weird fluke. Like maybe when she gets back to Portland, back to work and back into her day to day routine, then this will all blow over. It has to, right? Because there is no logical reason for her to be reacting like this. So… she shudders at just the thought of the word… smitten by this girl she knows nothing about. It’s not like her and it makes no sense, so it probably has more to do with the adrenaline of the fight than the girl. After all, fighting often heightens her senses and makes her feel more confident in all kinds of ways, so it’s no surprise perhaps, that after winning in the ring she’d be more open to noticing attractive girls around her and wondering about them. It’s a physical reaction. From the adrenaline. That’s what it is.
“Okay, I’m not one to mother you, but we’re about to hit the highway and if you don’t buckle up in the next two seconds I’ll throw you out of the car, Lex. I won’t even stop.” Anya’s voice interrupts her thoughts and as far as the images came up they disappear again. Only a small fluttering feeling in her stomach remains lingering as Lexa rolls her eyes and reaches her right hand behind her to find the buckle.

“Doesn’t that kind of stand in contrast to the effect you want the seat buckle to have if I get thrown out of a moving car?” she murmurs only loudly enough for Anya to just overhear her over the Pick Up’s humming engine and when Lexa looks over the older woman just grins.

“Mom? Oh, sorry!”

Clarke stops in her tracks when instead of Abby’s brown hair she sees a blonde head turning towards her.

“Um, hi?”

The girl looks about her age and she’s wearing an expression that’s both shocked and also a little angry.

“I’m sorry.” Clarke repeats, already taking a step back into the hallway beyond the examination room door she had just burst through. “I thought I just saw my mom go in here. I didn’t know there was someone already inside. Sorry. I didn’t mean to- I thought my mom was in here.” She repeats herself, rambling rather lamely, and the blonde’s guarded expression turns into a curious one instead.

“Is your mom Dr. Griffin?” she asks in a surprisingly raspy voice and Clarke nods.

When the girl wordlessly points toward the second door in the room, leading to another examination room probably, or maybe a consultation room, Clarke wants to facepalm. How stupid of her to just burst into an examination room just assuming nobody was in there. She just wanted to tell her mom that Octavia and she would drive back to stay at the house for the night with Lincoln who was already preparing dinner for them there – Octavia cooed at him when he told her over the phone and to Clarke’s horror it didn’t even sound sarcastic – and that they’d come by tomorrow to get Raven and say goodbye. Abby had sent an intern a little earlier to tell them that Raven could leave after another test tomorrow morning and that everything else about the very real possibility of another operation didn’t need to be discussed on site, but could be hashed out over the phone.

“Yeah.” Clarke confirms and suddenly the girl rights herself a little more on the examination bed and seems to eye Clarke more carefully.

“Really? Huh.”

“What?” Clarke frowns. What was so surprising about that?

“I don’t know, I just imagined you differently. Clarke, right?”

What the hell?

“Yeah.” Clarke confirms again slowly and she has to say she’s really not a fan of everybody in this hospital apparently knowing more about her than she does about them. “Am I wearing a sign or
“Okay, Julie, so everything looks great! The hormone-treatment has taken effect nicely. How are you experiencing your voice-chang-“ when Abby looks up and spots Clarke awkwardly standing in the doorway she abruptly stops and even snaps the folder in her hands shut noisily. “Clarke!”

“You can’t just go barging into examination rooms, Clarke! Our patients have a right to privacy!” Abby snaps a little louder now, leading Clarke around the corner by her upper arm.

“I know! It was an accident!” Clarke defends instantly, if a little sheepish. She knows her mother is right, but she’s feeling quite defensive at the accusatory tone. It’s not like she did it on purpose!

“You need to be more careful! How would you like it if-“

“I know, mom! Sorry, I wasn’t paying attention.”

It looks like Abby wants to add something more, but decides against it. With a little heave of her chest she calms herself down instead. “Okay, what is it, honey? What were you looking for me for?”

“I just wanted to tell you that O and I are gonna head over to the house for the night. We’ll pick Raven up tomorrow after her test and say goodbye then, okay?”

“Sure.” Abby nods, glancing towards the door of the examination room, seeming a little distracted. “I think there’s some food in the fridge, but it’s mostly-“

“Oh, it’s okay. Lincoln is cooking. I guess he found something to work with.”

“Oh. Okay then.” Abby nods once again and refocuses on Clarke, although Clarke still gets the feeling that her mother isn’t a hundred per cent with her. She knows that feeling only too well. Her mother’s pretty much always been like this. Always busy. Mind always somewhere else. Solving someone else’s problem. “I have to go back in there.”

“Right.”

There’s a silence and Clarke wants to tell her mom that she still owes her an explanation for the Callie thing. And the Kane thing. And just in general why she’s kept Clarke out of the loop so much when she basically knows Clarke’s entire schedule and life happenings in detail. She wants to ask her mother why that is. After everything. After she thought they were finally at a point where they were communicating freely and maturely with each other again. Where they were almost like friends.

But she doesn’t. She doesn’t bring it up. Because her mother has that look again that says that her mind is dead locked on a patient right now and that anything else would just be pushed aside anyway.
“Well…” Clarke starts, a bitter feeling rising up inside her, clogging up her throat and making her clench her jaw. “I guess I’ll see you tomorrow then.”

“Alright, honey. I’ll see you then. Give my best to Lincoln and please don’t lose your keys.”

Clarke rolls her eyes at her mother’s weak attempt at a joke, but lets Abby hug her anyway.

“I love you. Be safe.”

“Yeah, love you too, mom.” Clarke mumbles, but Abby is already halfway around the corner again, and Abby’s mind probably already in the room with her patient.

Clarke stands there a moment longer, trying not to let the bitter feeling consume her too much, but can’t help letting it seethe a bit as well. She has every right to be at least a little bitter, she tells herself. After all, even Abby’s patients know more about Abby’s life than Clarke seems to lately.

She sighs once. Heavily. And then tiredly shakes her head. She’s too exhausted to think about this any further. Her mother will never change. She’ll always keep things from Clarke. She’s never trusted her fully and she never will and lamenting that would just be a colossal fucking waste of energy.

Dark figures race past her window. Other cars, trees, telephone poles and even the occasional house in the distance. As they zoom in and out of her view Lexa is very aware of the weight of her phone in her hands. She turns it over and over and over until she’s not sure if it’s the right way around anymore or not. She doesn’t look down for the longest time, her eyes trained outside the window or to the front where the Pick Up’s head lights shine two cone shaped rays of light onto the grey road.

For some reason the highway is almost empty and Anya has taken up her space in the middle lane, switching to left every now and then to overtake a particularly slow driver.

The seat between them is covered in chocolate bar wrappers and chips crumbs and if Lexa hadn’t known Anya for years and years she probably would have been awestruck by the amount of sweets the thin woman could devour in just over an hour. And all that while driving on the highway at night. Lexa remembers the first time she and Anya drove on a highway together. The memory is still seared into her brain, but even more it’s seared into the muscles of her right hand from clutching the grab handle above the window so desperately. Anya’s driving – thank god – has calmed down significantly since then, but she’s still, as she always has been, a race thrill seeker. Although tonight the eating has slowed her down considerably Lexa must admit.

Thinking about Anya’s driving takes Lexa’s train of thought to her foster sister’s wish for a motor cycle. Maybe it’s not such a bad thing that she is investing her money in a higher education instead after all, Lexa thinks. She thinks she might just get a heart attack every time Anya would mount that thing and take it on the highway. Not that she is the type to mother Anya either, but some things even she can’t help but worry about. Thankfully she won’t have to in the near future. Well, not with Anya anyway. Lincoln on the other hand hasn’t been weaned off of driving his own motor bike yet, even despite the accident from last summer, and Lexa has a feeling that just like Anya she will be more aware of the dangers of driving one of those machines this time around than she was before.

As she remembers a picture of Lincoln posing with his beloved Harley Davidson that he posted on
Instagram once her hands become a tad more restless again and finally she can’t hold back her curiosity anymore.

When Anya had teased her about not being ready to see Lincoln’s pictures from last night when they were sitting at the channel earlier in the day Lexa had merely scoffed and changed the subject, secretly not sure she actually was ready, but the desire to find out what was on those pictures has only grown since then and finally she can’t deal with it any longer.

Quickly, almost embarrassingly hastily, she unlocks her phone and tabs on the little sign on her screen telling her she has five new WhatsApp messages from Lincoln.

As the familiar background pops up her heart picks up its pace and when she sees the blurry outlines of four images appear she wastes no time to click the little download buttons.

Green circles complete themselves painfully slowly before her eyes and Lexa feels awfully aware of the fact that Anya could turn her head at any second.

Finally the first picture is up and Lexa double clicks it to see it on full screen.

It’s a selfie of Lincoln and Octavia taken inside the club and Lexa’s heart unclenches a little, but at the same time she feels disappointed. No Clarke. She shakes it off immediately however.

What kind of friend is she that she would react like this? She frowns at her own behavior and closes her eyes for a second to refocus.

Taking a closer look she notices more little things about the picture and a smile spreads across her face. They must have taken the selfie when they had already been in the club a while and had danced, because both Lincoln’s as well as Octavia’s face have a slight shine to them from a thin sheen of sweat. The shine of their smiles far outweighs the shine of their faces however and Lexa can almost hear Lincoln’s laugh that must have been heard a lot last night, judging by how happy he seems to have been. Another thing she notices is how close the two are standing. Lincoln doesn’t just have his arm around the dark haired girl, she is standing almost completely in front of him and is practically nestled against his chest with her head leaned back a little, resting against his collarbone and neck. They seem very comfortable around each other and once again Lexa gets this feeling in her gut. This feeling that she’s missing out on a kind of warmth she doesn’t really want to remember.

Smiling one more time at the happiness in her friend’s expression she swipes to the next downloaded picture… and immediately knows this is the one Anya must have been talking about.

To her mild surprise her heart doesn’t really beat much faster, but she feels it very prominently against the dip in her collarbone and inside her chest as her eyes wander over the photo. This time it isn’t a selfie. Someone, Lincoln she guesses, caught Clarke doing what seems like a pole dance on a no parking traffic sign. A very drunk pole dance by the looks of it. The way she’s bent over backwards, just barely holding onto the pole with one of her hands, makes it look quite uncomfortable and unstable and Lexa feels the irrational need to go over to the girl in the picture and make sure she doesn’t fall over or drop the purse that’s dangling from her fingers.

That’s her reaction on the first look.

When her eyes move over the scene a second time however she doesn’t know how she didn’t notice Clarke’s cleavage at first. It’s pretty much … well very out there. Feeling her ears heat up Lexa zooms in a little. Not just to see the girl’s breasts a little closer up, mind you, but to better see all of her. Admittedly the cleavage is a nice one. A very nice one actually. But what draws Lexa’s attention even more is the girl’s upside down expression. She seems so different than the woman that stood
before her a day ago. So unbridled and happy and like she doesn’t have a single care in the world. Lexa thinks she’s beginning to get the appeal of ‘Party Griffin’. It’s mesmerizing to see someone so… free.

“Like what you see?” A gleeful voice suddenly asks and Lexa startles so badly she almost drops her phone. Instantly she feels her face and ears turn red when she realizes what this must look like to Anya. Clenching her jaw she zooms out again and swipes to the next picture.

She isn’t even really seeing it, too self-conscious of the woman smirking at her from the driver’s seat, until she finally lets out a small growl. “Shut up.”

Anya’s laughter is loud in the quiet car and Lexa wishes she could just burrow through the bottom of the car, into the street below and never come out again.

Turning a deaf ear to the slowly dying laughter as best as she can she finally focuses on the picture. It’s a group shot of the four of them and once again Lexa has to smile. They seem like a 90’s sitcom cast having the time of their life and suddenly she is a bit sad she didn’t come with them. They all look so much like there’s no place they’d rather be and Lexa can practically feel the good mood wafting over to her through the phone.

As she once again lets her eyes focus on the blonde she notices the drink being spilled right away and has to snort. That probably wasn’t fun to clean up. Although… it only takes her mind the tiniest part of a second to go there and now her ears feel positively on fire. She quickly swipes to the next picture, hoping Anya’s eyes are busy watching the road, and takes a deep breath as quietly as she can.

She can relax. The last photo only shows Octavia. To be fair she looks stunning though. Since this one isn’t a selfie it made it possible for the photographer to take a full body shot of the woman and the black and nude colored dress hugs her like a second skin. Its strategic coloring makes it so it looks like she has an even tinier waste than she already does and it gives Octavia a very attractive hourglass figure à la Jessica Rabbit only less disturbingly sexual. The woman’s smile, again, is big and honest and this time Lexa reads a little spark in it, too. She looks like she’s playfully chiding the picture taker with her eyes and it makes her look sweet and sexy at the same time. Lexa understands why Lincoln is so taken with this woman. Somehow she seems to perfectly combine a lovable sweetness with an air of confidence and badass-ness that shouldn’t work but does and it makes Lexa happy to realize that Lincoln is much the same. They really seem to be perfect for one another.

She almost wants to close the picture then, but at the last second something else catches her eye and her heart sinks. There, in the background beyond Octavia’s right shoulder, is Clarke. Her arms are wound around a girl’s neck and at closer inspection Lexa thinks she recognizes Raven’s shiny brown hair and slim figure. It’s dark where they stand pressed closely together on the dance floor and they’re quite a ways away from Octavia, but Lexa doesn’t need to zoom in to understand what this picture is showing.

She finds it hard to swallow as she leans back in her seat and only when the screen suddenly goes black does she realize how long she’s been staring at the two dark figures behind her friend’s new girlfriend.

She feels cold suddenly and a little nauseous from all the sweets she ate and really, really tired. Her body feels heavier than it did just a second ago and she doesn’t need Anya or anybody else to tell her to know that what feels like a punch to the gut is stone-cold disappointment.

Quickly anger is thrown into the mix of feelings as well and she can’t believe how stupid she’s been, letting her mind wander and settle around the attractive blonde all day. Only now that it feels like
someone stole her favorite bike from her again does she realize just how naively hopeful she had been. About what she doesn’t know. She doesn’t know what she’d been thinking at all. There she was, this girl who Lexa knew little more than her name about, and what? What had been the hope here? That they would meet again? That Lexa would find out more and more about the stranger she was so intrigued by and that the care-free, raspy laugh would be caused by something Lexa said? That those blue eyes and Clarke’s attention would be solely focused on her and that nothing she said or did could put the blonde off? That they just clicked?

Lexa feels like kicking herself. Like punching her own face for letting it have gotten this far. And the worst part about it is that she hadn’t even realized it. Sure she had been catching on to the fact that Clarke’s attractiveness had stolen a couple of minutes of daydreaming here and there, but this? This hopefulness and the resulting disappointment? She hadn’t seen this coming.

Almost angrily she crosses her arms over her chest and turns her head, her phone feeling warm but hard against the palm of her fist.

This time when she looks out of the window she doesn’t see the dark silhouettes of the trees, she doesn’t see the poles rushing by her like huge stick figures in the night, she doesn’t see the shadows of tiny houses far off in the distance. She doesn’t see anything at all.

Chapter End Notes

I’m back!!

I know many of you might have been discouraged and thought I’ve given up on this story, but really life just got in the way as they say...
And believe me, I have no intention on giving up on this fic!

So rest assured, little sweetheart, and if you liked this much overdue sixth chapter I would love to read your thoughts on it, so leave me a comment!

Thank!!!

Love,
Lea
“Okay, I get that you dig Hope in goal, but Ashlyn should have a go, too, for once!”

“I agree and I’m sure she will! I mean it’s not like I don’t love her, too, but I’m just saying that Hope has that certain presence! You can’t deny that, O. She’s like a goddess between the posts and I just think that the team needs her in this game!”

“She’s in every game though. Ashlyn can handle it just as well as her. And anyway, it’s just a friendly.”

Raven gasps, feigning feeling scandalized. “How dare you! Every game is important!” she leans back in the slightly uncomfortable coffee shop chair. “And you call yourself a fan.”

She shakes her head and clicks her tongue at her friend, but doesn’t try to hide the smile underneath. She’s missed this. Not the friendly bantering, they do that all the time, but it hasn’t been just the two of them in a while. Between her leg and uni and Lincoln there just hasn’t been much room for some quality O and Raven time. Not that this really is that anyway. In fact it’s supposed to be quality O and Raven and Clarke time, but once again little lady Clarke is late. For a girl who always stresses them to hurry up so they would be on time she sure is unpunctual a lot herself lately.

“You just want Hope in goal ‘cause you’ve been crushing on her since you were like thirteen.” Octavia counters, raising a perfect eyebrow at Raven as she takes a sip from her coffee cup.

“Okay, that’s not…” Raven starts to deny, but when she thinks about it, that’s probably partly true actually. “Hm, alright, I see what you mean.” she concedes, narrowing her eyes at Octavia in thought and then smirks.

It’s funny, ever since she figured out she’s bisexual she’s been retrospectively finding more and more signs of it in her past. Actually, the more she thinks about it, about her infatuations with female athletes and actresses she’s had practically all her life, the more she’s baffled how she didn’t see it sooner. And now that O mentions it, it’s becoming almost painfully obvious how attracted she’s always been to the strong-minded goal keeper of the US women’s national soccer team, as memories of searching online for hours for the best posters to put up in her room come rushing in.

Wow. Talk about a typical teeny crush.

Raven knows that others who aren’t as comfortable in their own skin as she is would probably cringe at those memories, but she’s decided a long time ago that she won’t apologize for her feelings. No matter how over the top or embarrassing they might be considered by the societal norm.

She’s human. Those feelings are human. And humans are the basis of the societal norm, so there ya go.

“Alright, but still! Yes, I enjoy watching her in goal, but that’s got only a little bit to do with me finding her hot as hell and much more to do with the fact that she kills it every time.” she insists with a little shrug and loves the way her friend’s eyes roll up in exasperation and her chest lifts and lowers with a sigh. Getting Octavia to be just a little bit annoyed by her is weirdly comforting to Raven. It’s their dynamic somehow, their thing. Her stubbornness frustrates Octavia and Octavia calls her out on it but stands by her side anyway if anybody else should voice their own annoyance at it. It’s like this
little secret thing they do, even though, of course, it’s not secret at all. But they’ve been doing it since forever. Since when they met in kindergarten and it somehow feels like this bond, this intimate connection, even though it’s probably the most common thing between friends and nothing special at all. To Raven it is though. It’s special because it’s never changed. In all the years they’ve been friends and everything they’ve been through their dynamic never changed and whenever Raven can coax this kind of reaction from Octavia she feels just that much more grounded. More settled and content, knowing that they’re them and that’s that. Yeah, that’s that.

As she always does, Octavia returns her eyes to Raven’s almost immediately and shakes her head with a little smile of her own as if to say the sweetest words to Raven’s ears: You’re impossible.

“You always have to have the last word, don’t you?” She accuses playfully and Raven shrugs her shoulders again.

“They say save the best for last.”

“That’s not even what that expression is supposed to refer to!” Octavia laughs and throws the napkin she just balled up in her fist at Raven over the small, round table.

Raven giggles and reactively throws both of her hands up, turning her head to the side, even though the deformed, soft, white ball merely manages a sad little arc and never even reaches her chair before falling to the ground between them.

The cold air hurts in Clarke’s throat as she jogs over to the other side of the street, throwing her hand up in thanks to the driver in the dark blue car letting her pass in front of him. Cursing herself for being tardy to meet Octavia and Raven again as she’s been way too often lately, she hastily loosens her broad checkered, beige scarf just before stepping into the busy coffee shop.

She hears Raven’s giggle even before she spots her two roommates sitting at a small, round table at the window closest to the entrance to her left. Already screwing her face up in an apologetic expression, she hurries over, pulling her knitted beanie off her head as well. She’s sure her hair must look a mess, but she doesn’t particularly care a whole lot at the moment.

The second Octavia, who’s sitting facing the entrance, catches her eye Clarke starts apologizing.

“I’m so sorry guys! I got caught up at the library and I know that’s my go-to excuse, but-”

“Hey, hey! Chill, Clarke, you’re scaring the baby!”

While Clarke stops dead in front of the table at Raven’s words, slightly confused, Octavia, of course, has already caught on.

“Shut up, Raven!”

“What? You’re the youngest!” Raven defends nonchalantly, picking something up from the floor as she speaks. Clarke only recognizes it as a balled-up paper napkin when it flies across the table and lands in Octavia’s lap, who gives Raven a look before demonstratively straightening out the napkin and placing her coffee mug on top of it.

“By like half a year.” Octavia points out calmly, but Raven is unimpressed.
“Still counts. And it’s seven months.”

While Octavia sticks out her tongue at Raven, Clarke shrugs out of her coat and places it over the back of the chair next to Raven, before drawing it out and sitting down. With a sigh she places her beanie and scarf onto the table and then looks at the two girls, narrowing their eyes playfully at each other, locked in one of their weird stand-offs they do.

“I can see I didn’t miss much at least.” Clarke gathers, still slightly out of breath, and reaches for one of the folded menus in the menu holder in the middle of their table. She doesn’t get an answer, but didn’t expect one anyway, and just skims the offered hot drinks even though she’s really already picked what she wants. It’s late in October and cold outside and it’s been a long Saturday. If today isn’t a pumpkin spice latte kind of day, then no day is. “Is there only self-service here?” she asks and when she receives two hums and a nod from Raven she gets up again, retrieving her wallet from her backpack, before going to join the few people standing in line in front of the counter.

When she returns to the table a few minutes later, she only just catches the last bits of her friends’ conversation.

“-told her yet?”

“No, when would I have done that? Abby just called yesterday.”

“Mom called?” Clarke frowns as she scoots onto her chair again, her eyes not leaving Raven. “What’d she say? Is everything okay? Did she say anything more about the surgery? Has she finally gotten the test results?”

“Whow, Clarke!” Octavia puts up a hand as Raven snorts, “Slow down there, Griffin!”

“Sorry.” Clarke clears her throat. “What did she say?” she boils her own onslaught of questions down to the essential one.

“She said I have to have another surgery.” Raven confirms what Clarke never really doubted since her mother gave them the facts the previous weekend. What Raven says next however, surprises Clarke far more. “It’s set for the fifth.”

“You already set a date? Wait, the fifth of November?!” Clarke bobs her head back. “But, that’s – that’s in like-” she quickly counts the days in her mental calendar and then furrows her eyebrows in astonishment. “That’s not even two weeks from now!” she exclaims.

“Yeah.” Is all Raven has to say and Clarke shifts her gaze to Octavia. Apparently she’s the only one so taken aback by this piece of news however, because the dark haired girl doesn’t seem too rattled on her part. Then again, Octavia isn’t the one just now finding out about this development.

“Um, okay, well…” Clarke tries to clear her head. It’s kind of all jumbled up with her uni work and her mom’s secrecy and the continuingly returning questions why Lincoln’s friend Lexa would join the army and whether she thought Clarke’s drunk pole dancing was embarrassing and slutty already and now this? It can take a girl a few seconds to sort through and Clarke takes a settling breath. Concentrate. “What’s the plan?”

That’s the main question. Or questions more like. What’s the plan? What’s the literal plan of operation, but also what is their plan? According to Clarke’s calculations the fifth of November should be a Thursday and she knows that Raven has a college workshop on Wednesday morning and another on Thursday evening. Has she cancelled them already? What about Octavia? It’s not even a question if she and Clarke will accompany Raven for her surgery, but there’s so much to take
care of! In her mind Clarke has already started composing the email she will write her professors to excuse herself from the classes she’ll have to miss to go to Seattle with Raven and Octavia. She’ll have to exaggerate Raven’s condition a little as well as their relation to one another, but she’s pretty confident she knows how to approach this. What about the recovery period though? Will Raven be allowed to go home on Friday? Clarke could kick herself for not having written down what her mother said about the potential timeframe of post-surgical recovery. She thinks she remembers something along the lines of one to three days if everything goes as planned, but what if not? For two of her main courses she knows Elias will be more than happy to take notes for her, but since Brenda is still mad about Clarke telling her off for trying to set her up with her friend she might not be so helpful. On the other hand, once she finds out Clarke actually agreed to go on a date with him coming Friday after all she should be back to normal and Clarke could ask her to share her notes. Yes, that could work.

“That’s exactly what we’ve been trying to figure out just now.” Octavia interrupts Clarke’s reeling thoughts and immediately brings her attention back into the moment. Back on her friends. And for once Clarke’s mind feels satisfyingly razor sharp and focused and somewhere underneath her concentration she allows herself to enjoy that feeling for a second. She hasn’t felt this purely engaged and centered in a while. Even during her most effective study periods she’s had trouble fully concentrating lately, but now, now she’s all here, all the way.

“When did mom tell you to come in?” Clarke asks as she reaches into her backpack to retrieve her note book.

Fifteen minutes later the essentials have been cleared up and Clarke’s pumpkin spice latté has gone cold. Raven will drive up to Seattle on Tuesday the third, two days before the surgery is scheduled at half past two in the afternoon. Octavia will accompany her, assuming she’ll get out of going to the seminar, but Octavia practically laughed Clarke off when she asked if she thinks that might be a problem, so Clarke doesn’t think it will be. Or to put it more accurately, Octavia won’t let it be. Clarke will follow the next day by train or bus or something. She’ll figure that out when she’s in front of her laptop at home and has some better wifi to check the internet for travel possibilities. She and Octavia will stay until Friday morning and depending on how the surgery will have gone and how Raven is feeling they’ll either all drive back that day or Octavia and Clarke will and one or both of them will travel back up there once Raven’s ready to go and get her back home.

“Alright!” Raven exclaims, a little hopped up on the double shot of espresso she got herself when they started planning and their intense brainstorming, and drums her fingers on the surface of the table. “Now we only have to plan the party!”

“What party?” Clarke and Octavia ask at the same time and Raven’s tapping immediately stops as she turns her palms upwards and frowns at the both of them.

“What do you mean what party? I’m having surgery! I’m having a going away party!” she sounds like this is supposed to have been obvious to them and Clarke and Octavia share a look.

“But you’re not going anywhere, Ray.” Octavia points out, now wearing an amused expression rather than a confused one.

“What are you talking about? I’m going to Seattle!” Raven corrects indignantly and Octavia tilts her head to her side and shakes it at the other girl.

“You’re ridiculous.”

Raven’s profile shows Clarke the biggest smile for the fracture of a second, before the expression is replaced with one of childish stubbornness once again.
“I’m still having a party before I let anyone cut me open again and you can’t stop me!”

“No one would dare to try.” Octavia sighs, a soft smile on her lips before they’re covered by the girl’s second cup of Chai Tea since Clarke joined them. Ever since she started hanging out more with Lincoln, Octavia has started trying to change her eating and drinking habits to be a bit healthier again. It’s ridiculous to Clarke since Octavia was never one to eat particularly badly. Not more than your typical semi healthy college student anyway, and she sure doesn’t need to watch her weight or anything either. But she’s joined Lincoln for his work outs in the gym a few times now and apparently she’s gotten back into a more ‘health conscious way of life’ as she put it to Raven’s exaggerated sounds of fake gagging the other day. And apparently that means less coffee, more tea for whatever reason. Raven and Clarke actually have a bet going on about that. Raven bet Clarke Octavia wouldn’t make it past week two, while Clarke said she wouldn’t put it past her to reach twenty days seeing as she even made a big declaration about it after they got home from Seattle on Sunday. No more coffee! Just tea and other healthy things! Although when Raven asked her what that meant for Octavia’s Sour Patch Kids she loves so much the dark haired girl grumbled that one shouldn’t overdo it. One step at a time.

“Good.” Raven lifts her chin satisfied and at the sight of Raven’s exposed expanse of neck Clarke quickly looks away. It’s not the first time since their making out session last Saturday that Clarke has had flashes of that night shoot through her mind, but this time the jaw line she imagined was more defined than Raven’s and the skin tone she saw was just a little off. Lexa.

It’s only natural that someone lifting their chin like that would remind Clarke of the MMA fighter since that had been one of the more noticeable mannerisms of the brunette woman when she met her, but having the image of Lexa coupled with the flashback of kissing soft skin made Clarke’s stomach clench just then and she swallows with some difficulty.

“What about making it a Halloween Party?” Octavia suggests in that moment and Clarke tears her mind back to their conversation, her eyes trained on the girl across from her, who is now righting herself in her chair.

“Yes!” Raven says again and beams at Clarke. “So, you’re in?”

A Halloween Party. It wouldn’t be too bad, Clarke thinks. She’s gotten a lot done this week. Three internship applications have gone out, she’s on top of all her classes and her old boss at the campus coffee shop called *Pilot House* agreed to give her back some of her old shifts when she has the time. That reminds her of something.
“Hey, O, aren’t you looking for a job?”

“Uh…yeah? Are you avoiding the question?” Octavia snorts and lifts an eyebrow at Clarke.

“Oh! No, yeah, we can do Halloween. Sounds fun.” Clarke quickly catches up on answering the original question and Raven squeals with her mouth closed and then leans over and presses a harsh kiss on Clarke’s cheek.

Octavia laughs and then looks back at Clarke. “Okay, cool! And yes, I am still very much looking for a job. Why? Do you know of anyone that’s hiring?”

“Well, not directly, but I got my old job back at the Pilot House, at least a few shifts, and I could ask if Roan needs another hand.” Clarke offers, feeling a little guilty that she got her old job back so easily and hadn’t even considered Octavia until now, even though her friend’s been looking for a job for weeks now.

Apparently Octavia doesn’t hold it against her, however. On the contrary, her eyebrows shoot up and she looks at Clarke with a grateful smile. “Really? That’d be awesome!”

“Yeah, sure, no problem.” Clarke smiles back, relieved that her friend isn’t mad at her, and Raven grins between them.

“Nice! Look at us adulting like the bosses we are! This is great! It’s all gonna work out, guys! You’ll see!” she reaches over and pats Octavia’s arm with one hand and Clarke’s with the other and Clarke feels like they’re in a children’s circle or a séance or something and has to suppress a giggle or a mocking snort.

Raven’s right though. It does truly seem like everything is kind of finally just … falling into place.

It’s a mess.

Her room is an utter mess and Lexa is speechless. There are clothes, shoes and some pieces of her old work-out equipment sprawled all over her floor and bed and Lexa can’t even do anything but stare for a second before the fury races through her body like a fire chasing a trail of oil.

“ANYA!” she feels her pulse pound in her ears and against her chest as she storms through the living room and pushes open Anya’s door so violently that it bangs against the wall on the inside of the room.

“What the fuck?!” Anya yells out and jumps about half a foot into the air from where she stands next to her own bed. She drops a piece of clothing onto the mattress that Lexa quickly identifies as one of her own old light gray button ups.

“What the fuck?!” Anya yells out and jumps about half a foot into the air from where she stands next to her own bed. She drops a piece of clothing onto the mattress that Lexa quickly identifies as one of her own old light gray button ups.

“What the hell are you doing? That’s mine!” Lexa barges over to the other woman, just picking up the item of clothing again, and rips it from her grip, unable to control her anger. “And what the fuck did you do to my room?”

In a matter of seconds Anya seems to be catching on and immediately her expression turns from shock to defiant anger of her own. “What I told you to do five fucking days ago!” Anya snaps back at her, one fist on her hip like a mother scolding her child which makes Lexa resent her even more in
that moment. “I told you to get your fucking stuff ready by today! I need to bring everything over to Mrs. Windsor’s by six and you haven’t done shit!”

Right! The yearly Halloween yard sale!

Every year on Halloween Mrs. Windsor’s whole neighborhood hold yard sales to get rid of their old things before the new year. They used to do it around the actual New Year’s day, but one year when half of the people got sick the next day they decided that it was simply too cold and that they had to hold it at a sooner date. So Halloween it was. Ever since Anya started walking Gramps she – and then Lexa as well – brought her old clothes and other things she didn’t need anymore over there the day before Halloween and then helped Mrs. Windsor set up and hold her yard sale on the actual day. Last year was a lot of fun actually, but this year Lexa hasn’t really been in the mood to do anything for Halloween. Especially not something where she’d have to smile and be polite to loud kids and rude adults and painfully slow elderly people and just keep her scowl in check. Because apparently, according to Anya, she’s been wearing one for the most part of these past two weeks. Who can blame her though? The weather’s been horrible, making her daily runs outside not nearly as much fun, everywhere she looks there’s been over the top Halloween decorations for weeks and it’s the only topic anyone can think of anymore apparently. And she’s just had it. She just wants to be left alone. She doesn’t want to carve a pumpkin or meet Lincoln and Octavia for a joined work-out or go to a yard sale or think about why seeing women with blonde, curly hair or a long silky brunette pony tail on a slim, sporty looking girl suddenly makes her clench her jaw. She knows she’s been grumpy since she saw the picture of Clarke and Raven kissing in the club. She’s not totally clueless. But Anya - ever grumpy, moody and opinionated Anya - isn’t really allowed to judge and in fact hasn’t been particularly charming either these past couple of weeks. All she talks about is work and the idiots that apply to be a bar tender and how she can’t believe no one knows how to make a fucking scotch on the rocks the right way anymore, let alone a cocktail with more than two ingredients and dammit she’s getting on Lexa’s last nerve.

“Well, that’s my problem then, isn’t it! Maybe I don’t want to give anything away! Ever thought about that?” Lexa fires back heatedly. It’s not really the reason why she didn’t pack anything. Quite honestly she’s just been pushing any and all things that aren’t her job or her work-out routine to the back of her mind to the best of her abilities and the yard sale didn’t fall into either category. Realizing she’s been basically procrastinating pisses her off even more and she angrily picks two more shirts of hers she recognized and an old training weight up from her roommate’s mattress and turns around on her heel, but not before hissing, “Leave my things alone and stay out of my fucking room!” at Anya.

As she storms out of the other woman’s bedroom again, Lexa hears her calling after her, but ignores the suggestion where she can shove her stuff instead.

It’s almost two hours later when Lexa comes out of her room again. She’s calmed down a bit, listening to her music over her big head phones while rummaging through her things. She threw together some stuff to sell at the yard sale after all. She’s still angry with Anya for just going into her room and looking through her stuff, but she knows she’d feel bad if she didn’t contribute to Mrs. Windsor’s yard sale. After all, like every year, Mrs. Windsor will give all of her proceeds to the local animal shelter where she got Gramps from when he was just a little pup. So she packed one of her old duffle bags she retrieved from the top of her closet and filled it with clothes, a few books and the weight Anya had sorted out already plus its match, making it a pair.

Walking out into the living room, Lexa immediately spots the pile of garbage bags leaning next to the
door. Anya must have found quite a lot of stuff to give away that she could fill three big bags and for a second Lexa is actually impressed. But then she sees a black handle sticking out of one of the bags and rushes over to check if her hunch is right. She thoughtlessly drops her own stuff next to the pile and pulls on the handle and…she was indeed not mistaken.

Just at that moment Anya walks in from the bathroom with another half-full plastic bag and Lexa stares at her. “Why the hell are you giving away our pans? Is - is that my towel?”

“Yes, it is. You’ve had it for years and it needs to go.”

“And why the hell do you think you’re the one who gets to decide that?” Lexa shakes her head. Instead of once again storming over there and snapping it from Anya’s grip she just stares at the other woman. What in God’s name is wrong with her?

“Because apparently I’m living with a hoarder.” Anya simply states as she stuffs Lexa’s towel into the trash bag she’s holding and turns off the lights in the bathroom. Lexa still can’t do anything but stare at Anya as the woman makes her way over to her and then calmly drops the last bag next to the others. Lexa doesn’t even know what to say to that, it’s so ridiculous.

She? A hoarder? She’s got less of everything than Anya and in fact Anya usually tells her she’s crazy for still living so ‘US-Army’ as she always puts it.

Yes, Lexa’s speechless. Anya’s lost it. She’s lost it! That’s the only sensible explanation.

After taking a calming breath while Anya tries shoving the whole pile more to the left Lexa simply opens the bag on top and retrieves two of their better pans and their small pot. “You’re not selling these. We need these to cook. Keep the damn towel, but keep your hands out of the kitchen, Anya. I mean it.”

“Oh, you mean it? Like you meant it when you said you’d get the stuff ready?” Anya snaps again and Lexa can’t even deal with her antagonizing behavior right now. What is going on with her?

“You know, it’s only for the shelter where Gramps is from, but hey, if you don’t care-“

At that Lexa swirls around where she stops dead on the threshold to the kitchen area and glares at Anya. “That’s enough! What is going on with you?”

“I’m sick of doing everything around here!” Anya suddenly shouts, expression furious and that vein on her neck protruding already, and Lexa is so taken aback at the sudden explosion that her jaw literally drops. “I pay the bills, I pay our taxes, I do the club’s taxes and handle more than Fabio ever did and I take care of everything and do I get as much as a simple thank you? No! All I get is some fucking whiny fuckers in their fucking suits telling me how to run my own fucking establishment! It’s my club! And this is my apartment! And if you don’t like it then you and everyone else can get the fuck out!”

The silence after Anya’s last words almost rings in Lexa’s ears. She’s never, never heard Anya shout like that. Not at her anyway. Not once in the decade and more they’ve known each other.

The other woman’s chest is heaving and now she’s letting out another frustrated shout before grabbing the bag that keeps tilting to the side in front of the door and throwing it to the other end of the pile. It lands with a soft thud that seems entirely anticlimactic and unsatisfying under the given circumstances and Lexa half expects Anya to pick up the rest of the bags and hurl them across the room.

But she doesn’t. She merely stands over the pile, back now to Lexa and head hanging low as her hands grip her own hips and her shoulders still heave. And then she wordlessly turns and walks into
The door thunders shut and Lexa feels like she’s in a bad movie when the framed picture of their first night out after Lexa returned to Portland sways on its hook.

She’s not sure how long she stands rooted to the spot, listening to her own heart beat inside her chest and just trying to wrap her head around what just happened, but when she finally moves she’s startled by the pans in her hands. She totally forgot about them. Carefully she puts them down on the counter to her right and then looks back over at Anya’s bedroom door. Should she go over there? Should she check on her? She’s never seen Anya this upset since they moved in together. She isn’t even hurt by the things Anya said. Lexa knows Anya didn’t really mean to imply that Lexa should move out. But seeing her like that… The last time she’s been screamed at like that was in the military and that was entirely different. This here was way worse. Because behind all the anger Anya looked so horribly beaten.

What did she say? Some guys in suits tried to tell her how to run the club? What was that about?

Suddenly Lexa wishes she had paid better attention all those times Anya vented about work in the past couple of weeks, because all she can remember are things about having to hire new employees. She doesn’t recall Anya telling her anything about people trying to bud in to her business as manager. But maybe she’s just not been paying well enough attention.

She’s still wondering whether or not to go over there to ask Anya to tell her what’s really going on, when the door to the woman’s bed room opens and Anya silently walks out. Her face looks tired and almost as if she cried and Lexa is so shocked that she doesn’t move an inch until Anya comes over and quietly, with a slightly broken voice, tells her to move, adding a quiet please when Lexa doesn’t react right away. With a start Lexa steps to the side and watches as Anya opens the cupboard and looks inside for a minute, before retrieving a pack of pasta and shutting the doors again.

“You want some pasta for dinner?” she asks and again Lexa needs a second to respond. When she nods Anya mirrors her and then opens one of the lower cupboards where they keep the pots and pans and freezes. Hunched over with both of her hands on the open doors of the compartment she stays like that a moment, before Lexa can see her back starting to shake. For a horrible second she thinks Anya is actually crying again, but then she hears it. Laughter.

Anya is laughing out loud now and when she finally looks up and meets Lexa’s eyes there are actual tears in her eyes. The shock still persists, but now Lexa can’t help but crack up as well. The whole scene is just so laughable.

And so they just laugh and laugh, probably neither of them really knowing why, and when it dies down Anya walks over to the front door again and retrieves the rest of their kitchen utensils, calling Lexa over to help.

When she gets to Anya’s side and reaches into the bag as well she has to laugh again. “Are those our fridge magnets?”

“The one keeps falling off! It’s annoying!” Anya defends as they carry the things back to the kitchen that really shouldn’t be given away, because, well, they still need them.

“So you chuck them all out?” Lexa chuckles and overturns the cup Anya put the magnets in, letting them fall into her other hand. “Oh my god, even the sunflower one?” she drops her jaw, not even feigning how scandalized she feels now.

They found that magnet in the woods behind their old foster neighborhood together when Lexa was...
only eleven. They felt like treasure hunters, at least Lexa did, when the golden sparkle shone up from the earthy ground. The magnet was old and ugly, but when they got it back to the house they discovered that miraculously it still worked and stuck to the refrigerator. Of course they couldn’t leave it there, for everyone to see and take. It was theirs! So they hid it, taking turns stuffing it in their pockets, socks and pillow cases, and swore to each other that when they were adults and out of the system they’d put it up on their fridge. Because it was never a question if they’d ever live together. Just when and where.

Wordlessly Anya takes the magnet from Lexa’s palm and sticks it back onto their fridge. “That one can stay.” She says simply and Lexa is content with that.

As Lexa starts putting everything Anya collected in her weird frenzy back to where it belongs, Anya checks what they have to work with for dinner, the whole mess of a break down obviously forgotten about- or at least purposefully being ignored for the time being. Lexa is fine with that, too, for now and doesn’t say anything when Anya jots down what they need and then hands Lexa the list.

“You go to the store and I’ll go drop off our stuff at Mrs. Windsor’s, okay?” the taller woman offers a plan for division of labor and Lexa agrees.

“Works for me. I’ll pick it up after my run.”

Anya just rolls her eyes at her, but doesn’t object and goes to change out of her sweats instead, while Lexa changes into them.

A little bit later they’re both ready to leave and Lexa helps Anya carry the bags downstairs and load them into the Pick Up. Before they part ways Anya calls out to her. “Hey,”

“What?” Lexa turns back around, seeing Anya already inside the vehicle but standing and leaning out of the open door, arm resting on top of it.

“You’re not one of the whiney fuckers.”

Lexa just smiles and then turns back around, putting her earphones in. She gets what Anya is saying, but she really hadn’t been worried. Anya would never kick her out. As she starts jogging down the sidewalk she hears the Pick Up’s engine hum to life through her music and a second later she’s being honked at as Anya overtakes her.

They flip each other off in the car’s side mirror and then Anya takes a left turn and drives out of sight.

“What about these?” Raven asks, turning over the pack of party mix sweets to check what all is in it. Regular gummy worms, Sour Patches, Skittles, Starbursts and some Jelly Bellies apparently. Sounds crazy enough for her.

“We need something Halloween-y though.” Octavia points out all serious and Raven can’t hold back the snort.

“What?” Octavia frowns at her.

“Nothing.” Raven gets out, but Octavia’s expression is too funny. She’s so focused and businesslike
about this and it makes it difficult for Raven not to laugh. Especially when a word as cutesy as ‘halloween-y’ is uttered in all seriousness in the process.

“Did you get the pumpkins?” Octavia inquires and peaks around Raven into their cart.

“Yes, of course I did. What’s Halloween without pumpkins?” Raven retorts almost offended and steps aside for Octavia to better see. She’s actually quite happy with the selection they still had here so late before the event and the three orange pumpkins she picked out are definitely better than the ones they had last year. Even though they didn’t throw a party then they still each carved a pumpkin and Raven is already excited to see what the others come up with this time.

“Okay, good. What else is on the list?” Octavia asks and Raven fumbles in her jacket pocket and retrieves the small note book page Clarke left for them on the living room coffee table – of course with specific instructions on almost every item. Since their other roommate is busy going out with that Jackson guy, the party shopping has been left in Raven’s and Octavia’s hands. Their very capable hands, if Raven may say so herself, looking at their almost full shopping cart.

This party is gonna be so awesome!

“Let me see.” Octavia takes the note from Raven and traces her right index finger over the list of things, mumbling ‘got it, got it, got it’ as she goes. She stops near the bottom and hums in an exclamatory way.

“Toilet paper! No toilet paper, no mummies!”

“And also no hangover diarrhea.” Raven adds in amusement and Octavia promptly swirls around and punches her upper arm – hard – shooting her a death glare.

“Ou!” Raven yelps and rubs her arm. “Abuse! It’s not my fault your body can’t handle Jagerbombs!”

“You’re an asshole.” Is all Octavia says and Raven pouts. When Octavia notices she rolls her eyes and starts walking towards the next aisle over where they can spot a towering pile of toilet paper packs over the shelves. “Oh, knock it off, Ray. Come on.”

Dropping the charade, Raven grabs their cart and wheels it after her roommate. “Don’t you think you should be a bit nicer to me?”

Throwing a look over her shoulder as they take a right Octavia scoffs. “Why?”

“Because you never know what they screw up in this surgery. I might wake up without my memories! I might not recognize you! Wouldn’t you feel sorry then?” Raven raises her eyebrows, but Octavia only laughs.

“They’re operating on your leg, Ray! Not your very disturbed brain.”

“Still. Wouldn’t put it past the idiots.” Raven grumbles, her jaw clenching slightly. Initially, after Abby talked to her about the surgery, Raven felt more hopeful than ever that her bum leg could actually get better. Like, a lot better! She even caught herself fantasizing about going on rowing and hiking and climbing trips with Octavia again and just like that the hope turned painful. Scary.

She saw the look in Clarke’s eyes that day and has seen it since. She doesn’t think there is any such hope. And Raven knows Clarke just doesn’t want her to be disappointed, but her cautious approach and view on the operation has seriously put a damper on Raven’s mood. Why did Clarke have to go and be all pessimistic about this? Yes, she never voiced her concerns out loud, not to Raven at least, but they’ve known each other for years. They’ve lived together and been best friends and Clarke
should know that Raven can feel and tell what she’s thinking even without her saying anything. And she should just…stop.

Raven doesn’t want to be careful about this. She doesn’t want to feel cautious and… scared. She just wants her life back. She wants to be free and unrestrained again or at least content, like she’s been the past few years more or less. And despite Clarke’s obvious worries and Abby’s statistics and ‘realistic’ outlook, she still feels hopeful. Because there’s a chance. There’s always a chance.

Right?

But now she also feels stupid for that hopefulness and it’s really fucking annoying to feel that way.

“Hey,” a hand slaps her upper arm and Raven looks up. Octavia is bobbing her head behind her with a surprised but pleased expression and Raven turns her gaze to where Octavia is indicating, “Look, who it is!”

Well, well, well…

“Lexa?” Raven wonders, and then calls out, a grin forming on her lips, “Hey! Commander!”

She didn’t realize how far she’d run, but when she checks her fitness watch and sees that most stores will close soon, Lexa looks around and notices that she’s not in her neighborhood anymore.

“Crap.” Lexa murmurs and slows to a walk. Out of habit she checks her watch again, this time for her pulse, but doesn’t even really register it. She looks around once more and this time she notices the glowing store sign against the already darkened sky ahead and promptly directs her feet that way.

The gust of warm air feels welcome against her damp skin as she enters the brightly lit store a few seconds later. It’s quite big and Lexa briefly pauses to orientate herself, grateful to find that above each aisle a large sign roughly tells what to expect in it.

She rummages in the pockets of her training jacket and gets out the shopping list Anya wrote earlier and a plastic bag she anticipatorily took with her to carry the groceries home in.

They don’t need much. Only some vegetables, spices they ran out of and a pack of toilet paper. Since the latter seems to be what’s closest she walks towards the sign that proclaims the aisle below to hold items in the category of ‘hygiene and toiletries’.

Rounding the corner she immediately spots the large pile of different brands of toilet rolls and walks straight towards it.

She’s just trying to figure out which pack would have the best cost-benefit ratio when someone calls her name and she spins around. And her stomach drops.

She’s been seeing that brunette pony tail everywhere for almost two weeks now, but it’s the first time it actually belongs to the girl she always thinks she’s seeing.

“Raven.”

“O, are you seeing what I’m seeing?” Raven addresses the other brunette Lexa only just notices now. Octavia, next to Raven, just raises her eyebrows, apparently as unsure where Raven is going
with this as Lexa is. “Could it really be that the great commander shops for the same toilet paper as us common folk?”

While it is probably meant as a compliment Lexa has to strain herself not to scowl. Why does that Raven girl do that? Put her up on a pedestal so much that it almost feels sarcastic. When she first met the girl she thought she was just like that. An enthusiastic fangirl type of person. But now? Now she’s not so sure. Is Raven taunting her? Is she talking her up so much in an attempt to make it sound so ridiculous that it actually shines light on the fact that Lexa is nothing special? Is she implying Lexa is full of herself?

“How are you?” Octavia asks instead of waiting for an answer from Lexa and Lexa is grateful to not be forced to think of one. “I haven’t seen you at the gym much.” She adds and Lexa straightens her back.

“Yes, I’ve been on a somewhat different schedule than Lincoln lately.” She tries a small smile and finds that it’s easy with Octavia. The dark haired girl just has this certain calm but lively charisma that makes Lexa feel more at ease around her. Or maybe it’s just that she’s seen Octavia a few times now and has gotten to know and read her better. Either way, she can feel her tension lessening and she’s relieved to discover that the beeping of her pulse watch that has been becoming more incessant over the last couple of seconds appears to be quieting down again. Thankfully neither Octavia nor Raven seems to have noticed anything, as they both nod in understanding.

“So, how’ve you been, Commander? Been in any good fights lately?” Raven asks her then and there’s that smirk again that looks to be the girl’s go-to expression.

“No, I just needed to pick some things up for dinner.”

“And some toilet paper apparently.” Raven adds, expression still amused, and Lexa eyes her for a second before nodding once.

“Yes. That, too.”

“Well,” Octavia starts and then looks at Raven like she just had an idea, before her eyes settle back on Lexa.

“Oh, no.

“I don’t know if you’re doing anything for Halloween, but we’re throwing a party tomorrow, if you want to come. Lincoln will be there, too, so it’s not like you won’t know anybody.” Octavia speaks
out loud just what Lexa feared. What now? She wasn’t prepared for this. Here she stands, in the middle of a horribly brightly lit grocery store in front of a stack of toilet paper packs, her hair probably a mess and her skin shining with sweat, and again her wrist watch starts beeping behind her back where she’s apparently unconsciously locked her arms again. She isn’t one to be vain or embarrassed by such things usually, but she’s also not one to like to be surprised, and being invited to a party to the house of the girl she seems to be crushing on by the girl who kissed that girl is really not something she could have been prepared for today. Well, technically Octavia is asking her, not Raven, but the result is still the same.

“Um, I don’t-“

“Oh, come on, Commander! It’ll be fun!” Raven interrupts her in an attempt not to let her finish declining probably. The chipper girl in the letterman-style jacket wears an excited expression and Octavia, too, looks hopeful. Why, Lexa just can’t figure out. They don’t even know her. Not really anyway. Why would they even care if she comes to the party? Maybe they’re just being polite as well, although it does seem like they would honestly enjoy her presence at the get together. But would they really? How would that go? What if Clarke and Raven are actually more than roommates despite what Lincoln’s and Octavia’s stories have led her to believe? That kiss in the background of that picture of Octavia looked intimate and deep and Lexa hasn’t been able to stop wondering what the two women are to each other since she saw it on the car ride home from Seattle almost two weeks ago. And whenever she does, her stomach turns sour. It’s a ridiculous reaction, she knows; Childish and inappropriate and irrational. But it’s also beyond her control and she can’t help but think that seeing Raven and Clarke together at the party wouldn’t really fare much better with her.

But just as she thinks that, the image of the blonde girl pops into her mind again, vivid and life-like, and her curiosity spikes. She’s not just simply attracted to Clarke’s looks or her incredibly blue eyes anymore, but rather intrigued by her person as a whole, and even though she’s starting to think that that may just be because she’s been thinking way too much about the blonde and has built her up way too high in her head, the aspect of actually getting a chance to get to know her better seems almost too good to pass up.

What should she do?

“Oh, that is the third time you’ve checked your phone, am I boring you?”

“What? Oh my god, I’m sorry! No, no you’re not.” Clarke apologizes, feeling like an asshole.

The boy opposite her chuckles and leans back in his seat, raising his eyebrows at Clarke’s phone that’s still in her hands.

Hastily she drops it back into her purse that’s dangling from the chair.

“There, see? Gone.” She claps her hands together once and then opens them, like she just did a magic trick.

He laughs again and nods, “Okay.”

When he still looks questioning though, she sighs. “My roommates are supposed to be out shopping for this party we’re throwing tomorrow.” She explains. When it doesn’t seem like he understands, however, she realizes that that may need elaboration for someone who doesn’t know Raven and
Octavia as well as she does. “I just don’t want them to buy a shit ton of unnecessary things like strings and banners and whatever and forget all the essentials. Like food. And drinks. And pumpkins!”

For the third time in just a couple of minutes Jackson laughs and when she sees the amused look in his face she can’t help but crack a smile, too.

“Are they really that bad?” he asks skeptically, reaching forward for his drink.

“Yeah!” Clarke shoots back immediately and it’s like she’s the funniest person on earth to this guy apparently, because he snorts and then shakes his head, chuckling silently after swallowing the sip he took.

“Anyway,” Clarke wants to move on from the topic as soon as possible, because it’s stressing her out even more to talk about it. “I texted them if they got everything we needed from the list I wrote and they’re not texting me back.” She frowns, but then takes a breath and shakes her head, reaching for her own glass, which is almost empty. “Whatever, let’s not talk about it anymore, I’m sorry for having interrupted you. What were you saying? Something about…” she wreaks her brain for what the boy had been telling her when he had busted her for checking her phone again, but for the life of her can’t remember. She looks at him sheepishly, “…something.”

He hums as he grins at her from across the table. “Something about something.”

“I’m sorry, I’m a horrible date.” She apologizes again, putting the glass back down without actually having taken a sip. Jackson only shakes his head, however, if somewhat sarcastically, judging by his next words.

“Oh, not at all! The last girl I dated listened to everything I said! It was a catastrophe! She never spoke to me again!” he exclaims and this time Clarke is the one who has to laugh.

“Sounds horrible.” She grins and he nods with big eyes, mouthing ‘the worst’.

“Well, in that case I guess you’re welcome.” She shrugs her shoulders nonchalantly and plays with the fork in her left hand for something to do.

Jackson inclines his head towards her in a playful gesture of thanks and for a moment someone else’s features flash through Clarke’s mind, and their brown hair is a lot longer and their skin a lot softer looking, and then it’s gone again.

“So, tell me something, Clarke.”

“Hm?” Clarke hums, trying not to get distracted again.

“Did your parents just really want a boy or is Clarke more common as a girl’s name than I thought? Because when I told the guys I was going out with someone named Clarke they thought I was coming out to them, so…”

“Really? I hope you didn’t correct them.” She smirks and he facepalms.

“Damn! Why didn’t I think of that?”

Clarke chuckles and then shakes her head. “No, my parents actually named me after Arthur C. Clarke.” Clarke tells him. “They were just really into his work and the kind of man he was or whatever and didn’t really care whether they had a boy or girl, they just wanted to name a kid after him.”
The dark haired boy hums and nods in understanding. “Well, I guess you should consider yourself lucky then.” He says and Clarke raises her eyebrows. “At least they didn’t name you Arthur.”

When Clarke laughs out loud she thinks maybe this date wasn’t the worst idea after all. Even though she can’t say she’s been particularly looking forward to it and mostly did it out of the feeling that if she didn’t she’d let life just pass her by, this guy is actually not the worst company.

“You know, I have a pretty unusual name, too.” He says and Clarke frowns.

“Um, I don’t think you can classify Jackson as unusual actually.” She points out with another smirk, but the way he mirrors it makes her think something’s up.

“Yeah, well, what if I told you Jackson is just a nickname?” he wiggles his eyebrows and Clarke is actually surprised.

“Seriously? What’s your name then?”

“It’s…” Jackson – or not Jackson – pauses ominously, before looking back up at Clarke. “Jeremiah.”

“Jeremiah?” Clarke laughs. “But that’s not that bad! What, too uncool for you? Too biblical?” she teases, convinced she’s right. The guy she pegged him to be based on the picture Brenda had shown her would definitely change his name if it didn’t sound cool enough for his liking.

“Actually,” Jackson – no, Jeremiah – starts, “I like my name.”

“So why change it then?” Clarke challenges, curious now.

“Well, see, in our group of friends there’s already another Jeremiah…” he explains and Clarke has to chuckle.

“Ooooh, I see!”

“Yes, and since he won beer pong that first night we went out he got to keep the name and they started throwing really horrible nick name suggestions at me. Thankfully I got them to settle on Jackson in the end.” He grimaces, probably remembering what he just barely avoided being called from that night on.

“Why Jackson though, why not just use your middle name? Or is that your middle name?” Clarke asks, finding this story more entertaining than originally expected.

“No, actually I don’t have a middle name.” he tells her and Clarke nods. She doesn’t either. “But since my name is actually Jeremiah Ackerson…”

“Aaaah! Gotcha.” Clarke’s nods are even bigger now, and then she looks up when their waiter appears next to her.

He asks them if he can get them anything else as he picks up their empty dishes, and after shooting Clarke a questioning look, which she shakes her head at, Jeremiah declines for the both of them. Before the waiter can leave, Clarke quickly asks him for the check as well, and once he’s gone she sees the boy across from her eye her with confusion.

“And here I thought this was starting to turn around for me.” He says, and Clarke can tell he’s only half joking.

Suddenly she feels bad again.
Clarke smiles a little sheepishly. “Sorry.” she apologizes, realizing what this must come across like. She’s not sure how to explain why she did that though. It wasn’t like she made a conscious decision to cut their date short or anything. Not at all. It just felt natural to call for the check when the waiter came. She thought dinner was fun, actually, but now she’s getting antsy again. She knows the world wouldn’t stop spinning if Raven and Octavia forgot something important and in any case most things they could still get tomorrow since it would be Saturday. But still... knowing they’d still have to decorate their apartment and imagining Raven shakily crawling up their step ladder to hang a banner of paper bats or something because she couldn’t wait for tomorrow just makes Clarke cringe inside. Of course Octavia is still there as well, but apart from fearing Raven could get reckless again Clarke is just starting to feel like she is missing out now, thinking that the others might already start decorating and planning more without her. They haven’t had much time to just hang out the three of them lately and planning that party together with her two best friends, Clarke is starting to realize, has actually been something she’s been enjoying immensely despite being kind of stressed out by it as well. It’s been so much fun discussing the best way to transform their kitchen island into a cocktail bar with her two brunettes and watching Raven go all engineer on the problem, or arguing with Octavia over what music to play until they agreed to just let Monty handle it. To a certain degree at least.

Thinking that Raven and Octavia might get more planning done this very moment, without her, made her anxious to get home.

But how could she explain that to this guy she just met without sounding utterly codependent and like a little bit of a control freak?

There is no way Clarke would even attempt that. So she settles for keeping up her apologetic smile and hoping he won’t be too sore about it or question her any further on the subject.

He eyes her for another second, before shrugging his shoulders and blinking slowly. “That’s alright.” Contradicting his words somehow, his voice seems deliberately higher than usual, Clarke thinks, and when he adds “no, really, it’s fine!” with a fake sniffle, she catches on to his antics. As she chuckles she’s starting to think that despite the fact that her roommate hates Brenda, Raven would probably love this guy. He’s as much a jokester as her and Clarke can see them getting along really well actually.

Maybe she should just introduce those two, she thinks jokingly, but is a little surprised by herself when she discovers that the thought doesn’t even bother her a little bit and she probably wouldn’t even mind if Raven and he hit it off. She’s surprised for two reasons. One, because despite her being so distracted, this date was actually really nice and Jeremiah is a cool guy, so why wouldn’t she mind him getting along better with a friend of hers? And two, well two is less of a surprise and more of a relief, because if Clarke doesn’t mind the thought of Raven with Jeremiah then that really and finally puts her fears at rest that she might be developing a crush on Raven. Because even though it doesn’t feel like a crush, she still can’t shake the memories from that night for some reason and it’s been a little unsettling to be completely honest.

Once again the waiter arriving at their table redirects Clarke’s thoughts and she almost feels bad for what she’s just been wondering about when Jeremiah, very gentlemanly, insists on paying for the both of them, reminding her that despite everything, this is still a date they’re on.

“Thanks. You really didn’t have to.” Clarke thanks him, but he waves off any guilt she would have felt when he tells her that he wanted to because this has been more fun than he’d had all week.

“I don’t know if your pal Arthur was a funny man, but you can tell your parents that their daughter sure can get a few chuckles from a guy.” He compliments easily and Clarke smiles at him.
They get up from their table and exit the restaurant and all the while Clarke tries to figure out what to do if he tries to kiss her goodbye later. It’s not that she wouldn’t want to, but she just doesn’t feel it’s quite fair to him after what just ran through her head. Then again, maybe she’s just really over-thinking this. Maybe she should just stop trying to think ahead so much and give this thing more of a chance. Just because she’s not head over heels for him in the first five minutes doesn’t mean she can’t become just that. Right? There’s no such thing as love at first sight after all and writing off a guy who made her laugh and made her feel comfortable just because she’s not feeling nervous butterflies around him would just be stupid and naïve.

Since Octavia and Raven took the car to go grocery shopping and Jeremiah picked Clarke up for their date, he’ll be taking her home again as well, and as they get back into his car Clarke makes a decision. “Hey, you should come by.” She says, buckling in, and when the guy looks over at her she smiles. “You know, to the party tomorrow.”

“Really?” he seems honestly surprised and Clarke nods. He starts the car.

“Yeah, sure! It’ll be fun!”

“Okay, yeah!” he averts his eyes from her to check over his shoulder and maneuver the car out of their parking space. “I mean, my buddies wanted to go out, but maybe I’ll stop by before or after if that’s alright.”

“Of course, whenever’s fine.” Clarke tells him. She’s starting to really look forward to this party. Although she’ll obviously feel even better once she’s sure they’ve got everything they need for it and that Raven didn’t get those damn disgusting ‘blood shots’ again. Those were awful.

And what’s more is, she’s about ninety per cent sure those were the reason for the red splatters Jasper and Monty couldn’t get off that one part of their living room wall last year. And just above the floor like that is a really awkward spot to hang a painting, but apparently the only thing the guys could come up with to hide them. Clarke’s suggestion to just paint over it was met with amused chuckling from Jasper and horrified grimacing from Monty, who then started to explain that the paint could never match the rest of the apartment so they’d have to repaint all of it and they just couldn’t afford that. But since one painting down there seemed to somehow stress Monty out to an incredible degree, the guys eventually settled on lining the whole wall with low paintings, one next to the other. Clarke has to admit that it almost looks artistic instead of awkward now and somehow actually fits their vibe. Either way, that will not happen to their apartment. Not over Clarke’s dead and cold body.

No, their party would be different. Fun and loose, but not out of control. They couldn’t afford a new paintjob either and they sure as hell wouldn’t let their friends destroy another window as they did at the Blakes’ cabin for Bellamy’s twenty-second birthday. That party was wild. It wasn’t the first time she had been that drunk, not by a long shot, but it had been the first time she had been that drunk with her newfound friends. And when they didn’t judge her for her antics and crazy laughter and didn’t grimace when they had to hold her hair and didn’t think any less of her for throwing herself at one of Bellamy’s friends and basically abusing him as a stripper pole – somehow that seems to be a steady theme for drunk Clarke – that’s when she knew these were friends for life.

And she gave it all back when Octavia and Raven got beyond shit faced at Murphy’s next smash down, one of the excessive parties he used to throw back then a lot for no apparent reason other than that he wanted to and vodka was twenty per cent off at the liquor store. She hasn’t thought about those in a while, Clarke realizes with a little hum under her breath, and wonders silently why he doesn’t throw them anymore. She guesses he’s just grown out of them. Or maybe he just doesn’t have the time anymore. Or maybe…maybe it’s about what she overheard him and Bellamy fight about that one time when she woke up from her resting place on the couch piled on top of Octavia to
go to the bathroom early in the morning after one of those same exact parties…

As the car starts slowing down and rolls onto a curb Clarke notices that they’re already in front of her apartment building. Truly taken aback that she missed the whole ride Clarke rights herself in the passenger seat and sucks in a quiet breath as if waking from a nap.

“Okay, so here we are.” Jeremiah says as he shuts off the engine. It’s a little uncomfortable all of a sudden, because it’s now rather quiet in the car and the air is filled with expectation.

“Right. Um, thanks again, this was actually really nice.” Clarke says honestly and Jeremiah blows a little air out of his nose.

“You sound so surprised.” He teases and Clarke can’t say that he’s wrong.

“I was a little to be honest.” She tells him frankly and this time it’s he who seems surprised at her honesty.

“It’s just that I kind of didn’t want to go on this date at first. I just, I have so much going on right now and dating just kind of didn’t seem relevant.” She explains as truthfully as she can without bringing up the confusing something that happened with her roommate two weeks ago, and Jeremiah looks thoughtful. “But this was a lot of fun after all and I’m glad I went.”

“Well, that’s good to hear.” He says simply and then laughs a little, adding, “I guess.”.

As his chuckling dies down the quiet returns to the car again with only the sound of distant traffic disturbing the silence. That is until Jeremiah leans over and the leather seat of his car makes a soft noise. He moves slowly and Clarke knows that it is to give her time in case she doesn’t want him to kiss her, but it’s still a little too fast, because, again, she feels torn. Does she want him to kiss her? She can’t tell, but she sticks with what she thought about before. Why the hell not give this a chance…

So she doesn’t lean away and she doesn’t stop him and when his lips meet hers she kisses him back. It’s small and chaste and short and nothing like her kiss with Raven was and Clarke is somehow thankful for that. He smells different, too. Good, but very strongly of his cologne even after all the time they spent at the restaurant and it’s almost a little too much. And his lips; they’re not nearly as soft as Raven’s were. But of course that’s not fair to compare. Raven’s got really nice lips.

When Jeremiah moves back, his eyes are still locked on her lips, but Clarke is glad when he doesn’t try to kiss her again. It’s not like it was a bad kiss. There was hardly a kiss to be judged at all, but it was also not something that left Clarke craving more. And for some reason, despite the fact that she’s been on a few dates with a few guys before and knows that there’s no such thing as that perfect and magical first kiss that leaves you breathless and makes your heart race, she still kind of always hopes for more. More than the awkwardness before, during and after, and more than the simple meeting of lips. She doesn’t know how or what exactly she wants from a first kiss. But more.

That’s just the romantic in her talking, though. She knows that. And it’s funny, because if anyone asked any person close to Clarke they’d say that there isn’t a romantic side to her at all. But here she is, like she was when she was twelve and imagining what it would be like to kiss a boy, and she still thinks it should be magical. She blames books and movies for giving everyone the impression that that’s a thing that happens. That when you finally kiss that cute, handsome guy it’ll make your leg kick up like in The Princess Diaries. But that’s not reality. And that’s just something she’ll have to accept eventually she guesses.

So yes, the kiss was fine, and when Jeremiah’s eyes finally lift from her lips to hers she smiles at him.
“Well…”

_Here we go with the awkwardness…_

“Thanks for bringing me home.” She states rather lamely, but Jeremiah doesn’t seem to mind how standard that line is. He just nods and says ‘Sure, no problem.’ And after a few more awkward and generic hand gestures and mumblings between the two, Clarke finally unbuckles and opens the passenger side door.

“Goodnight, Jeremiah.” Clarke says, standing in the open door and smirking slightly.

“Goodnight, Arthur.” Jeremiah counters instantly, winking at Clarke, and Clarke has to chuckle before she closes the door and the brown haired boy who’s name isn’t really Jackson starts the car and drives off into the night.

When Lexa gets home she’s still a little rattled from her encounter with Raven and Octavia in the store. Not that it was a particularly exciting event per se, but somehow seeing Raven pushed her buttons more than she would have expected. And to top that off she still can’t believe she agreed to come to their party tomorrow.

In the end Raven and especially Octavia’s seeming hopefulness for her to come wasn’t even what ultimately made her decision. It was the thought that shot through her head when Raven mentioned that Clarke would probably love seeing her again as well. The fact that that sentence alone made Lexa’s watch beep even quicker than before settled it.

She needed to do this.

Somehow she’s built Clarke up so much in her mind and memory that it’s gotten to a point where it’s just ridiculous. She knows people can get quite intrigued by other people and she even kind of knows the feeling of desperately wanting to know more about a person, but not after seeing them once and not even talking. Not like this. This is just her mixing up the feeling her elevated, post-fight adrenaline levels gave her with meeting the blonde haired girl with the incredibly blue eyes. Once she sees her again Lexa is sure she’ll see that, yes, the girl is pretty and probably even nice, but that’s it. No one is worth the aggravation her heart seems to be experiencing lately whenever the blonde is on her mind and meeting her again will make sure she can finally put this weird, misguided crush behind her and move on.

So she agreed to come, to the girls’ embarrassingly carefree and unnecessary cheers in the middle of the aisle, and now she’s starting to get a little nervous.

As she opens and closes the apartment door and switches on the light in the living room, Lexa thinks about the last house party she was at. It was at one of Lincoln’s friends’ place on campus and Lexa had never been at a college party as stereotypical as that one in all her life. Aside from the guests who were all extremely loud, extremely obviously dressed for specific reasons and extremely drunk, the entertainment mostly consisted of drinking games and the guys daring each other to do disgusting stuff like down half a bottle of gin with their own shirts wrapped around their heads for some reason. It was seriously the lowest Lexa thought she’d witnessed a group of supposedly academically ambitious people behave and the only thing she was glad about that evening was that Lincoln seemed as put off by the crowd as she was. She remembers he kept apologizing and telling her that
he’d only met the guy a couple of times in class and that he really seemed a lot different jotting down notes, sober and with his shirt over his torso where it belonged.

She doubts this party will be like that one – at least she sincerely hopes so – but still it makes her feel queasy to think of going there. She’s just not a party kind of girl.

A sigh escapes her lips as she lowers the pack of toilet paper against the wall next to the bathroom door to put away later and then jerks violently when Anya’s disembodied voice unexpectedly sounds from the dark kitchen.

“What’s that about?”

“Geez!” Lexa lowers her hand that shot up to press against her chest and frowns at the complaining wrist watch. If it starts beeping one more time tonight Lexa will throw it out of a window. She swears.

As she walks towards where Anya’s voice came from she takes it off and then carelessly slips it onto the counter when she enters the kitchen area.

There Anya sits at the table in front of her laptop in the dark and Lexa has to snort.

“What are you doing?”

She flips the switch and Anya groans in surprise, squinting her eyes against the light. Placing the bag with groceries onto the empty chair next to Anya, Lexa peers over her shoulder.

“More applications?” she asks, as she recognizes the typical outlay including a picture of a smiling guy in his estimated mid-twenties.

Anya only hums in response and then, after another second of skimming the ‘job related skills’ section, leans back in her chair and sighs much like Lexa just did. She locks her fingers and places them on her head, elbows sticking out to both sides. “It’s impossible. There are no decent bar tenders left on planet earth. Look at this!” she exclaims and scoots forward in her seat again to show Lexa the guy’s writing.

As her eyes fly over the text Lexa thinks she gets why Anya is getting a little desperate and pessimistic about the whole thing. A guy who would describe himself as ‘well-mannered and reliable’ as well as a ‘culinary cocktail enthusiast’ doesn’t really scream grungy Grounders Club. It really seems like the only people applying for the open bartender spot are either not at all into the club scene and completely unsuited to fend off drunk idiots and handle sticky liquor to loud music all night or just plain goof-offs not taking anything seriously at all like that one guy from last week who just emailed Anya a flyer of his band as an application. Which doesn’t even make any sense.

“Jesus.” Lexa shakes her head and furrows her eyebrows at the screen, before she straightens her back again and starts putting away the things she bought.

“Ugh, just kill me.” Anya whines and then sighs deeply as she pouts up at Lexa. “Did you at least get me my Red Vines?” she asks then in that voice Lexa can’t stand. It’s like the voice of this little child who’s helpless and whiney and just overall an exhausting human being. It’s all high-pitched and nasal and cutesy and Lexa hates it. She hates it because for some reason it makes it harder for her to stand her ground against Anya. Not impossible, but unnecessarily more challenging.

“You know those are pure sugar.” Lexa frowns, but when Anya just pouts even bigger she merely rolls her eyes and retrieves the pack of Red Vines from the bottom of the grocery bag and tosses them at the other woman.
“Thank youuu!” Anya sing-songs as she rips open the bag and when Lexa reminds her that they wanted to make dinner, Anya just replies that nobody’s stopping her in a muffled voice, a red gummy-string already dangling from her mouth and attention already back on her laptop.

With the second sigh of that evening Lexa starts cooking alone, silently pondering what she should do about the party, and glaring at the now finally silent pulse watch lying next to her on the counter.

She hasn’t felt this stressed out since before Anya and she moved into their new apartment together and she finally didn’t feel so unsettled and indecisive about her entire life anymore.

This party is going to suck…

“This party is going to rock!” Raven squeals excitedly and sort of hops up and down on her good leg, pulling Octavia who’s wrapped up in her arms awkwardly along.

“Is this it?” Clarke asks instead of reacting to Octavia’s gurgled giggles for help and looks around their apartment for a final sweep while she climbs back down the ladder. It seems they are done! Finally done with all the decorations!

“Yes!” Raven drags Clarke into what transforms into a group hug and the girl’s suddenly whispered cheers as if coming from a distant crowd make Clarke laugh. Raven is such a tool she can’t believe it.

“Alright, alright, let’s do a final check.” Clarke calls them back to focus and Raven stands at exaggerated attention while Octavia shifts her weight onto one foot, kicking out her hip and folding both of her hands over it. They turn and admire their work as Clarke lists what all they had planned to do.

“Banners?”

“Check.”

“Candles?”

“You mean mood lighting.” Raven smirks, but Clarke shoots her a look until she raises her hands and gives her the ‘check’.

“Cocktail bar?”

“Check.”

“Bats, and fake spider webs?”

“Check.” Octavia says with a giggle, no doubt remembering the ‘fun’ she and Raven had earlier with the spider web spray guns. Nobody has told her that there’s still a little silk webbing in her hair and Clarke bites back a grin when she can see the Cheeto sticking out from behind Octavia’s head that Raven stuck there earlier without the other girl noticing.

“Pumpkins?” she continues instead, returning her eyes to the list in her small ring notebook.

“Check, check and check.” Raven says as she points at each one of their creations in turn. Clarke
was really impressed with their work this year and smiles at the witch, the bat and the old-fashioned but very skillfully done creepy face shining from their already lit pumpkins that are placed in safe locations around the apartment, where nobody could accidentally knock them over and start a fire. Or a mess.

“Alright, nice. Umm...,” she checks her list again. “Alright, alcohol?”

At this Octavia walks over to the kitchen island, which now serves as their ‘cocktail bar’.

“We got three vodkas, two gins, a Jaegermeister and a case of beer, but there’s also a ton of stuff in the fridge already,” she points behind herself to the fridge, “and Lincoln said he’ll bring some more.” Octavia conveys as she checks behind the bar to Raven’s cheers.

“Mix drinks?” Clarke asks even though she saw them herself not half an hour ago. Doesn’t matter. She’s going down the list. That way nothing will be overlooked.

“Orange, Cherry, Coke and soda.” Octavia lists their assortment of non alcoholic drinks and Raven frowns, already opening her mouth, until Octavia hums, evidently spotting something under the bar table, and quickly adds, “and Cranberry and Mango.”

“Alright.” Clarke nods pleased, drawing another small check sign next to the item in her notebook.

“What else, Captain?” Raven turns to Clarke and Clarke shakes her head before looking up at her.

“Nothing, that’s it. Cups are behind the bar as well, I already checked those, Jasper and Monty are bringing ice and music, and Murphy is on food duty except for the snacks you guys bought which are already on plates and in bowls on the kitchen counter.” She points behind Octavia, who nods and gives them a thumbs up. Clarke smiles broadly, her stress levels starting to make way for excitement to course through her veins, and receives mirror images from her two best friends.

“Yessss!” Raven pumps her fist in the air, letting her head fall back and pressing her eyes closed in happiness.

“Time?” Clarke asks even though she’s already checking her own watch.

It’s a quarter past four. They’re just in time. Now they only need to get ready themselves and then greet their guests which should be arriving in dribs and drabs from half past seven on. She’s not entirely sure who all will come. Bellamy, Murphy, Monty, Jasper and Lincoln are a given, but she knows that Octavia invited some more people from uni just like Raven has, and Clarke herself extended the invitation to Jeremiah and Brenda as well as this one girl, Maya, who she met at the library the other week and who has been a great study buddy.

“Four?” Octavia inquires, stepping out from behind the bar.

“Quarter past.” Clarke nods and Raven immediately shoots her hand in the air.

“I’m first in the shower!” she exclaims and while Clarke doesn’t really care, Octavia moans and the two start a small argument over who should be allowed to go first. Octavia insists that she should go first since she’ll be faster and since her costume will be more work and Raven counters that she’ll be slower to put on her costume because of her leg and that it’s her going away party anyway and that if Octavia wants to shower so desperately she should just join her.

It’s said with a teasing wink and Clarke hardly pays the flirty statement any mind. Raven’s been quite playful lately, more so than usual it seems to Clarke, but really it’s neither here nor there. She winks a lot and wiggles her eyebrows more often and almost any sentence can apparently be
construed as sexual if you’re just creative enough, but all in all it’s still just Raven. Bubbly and mouthy and ever the charmer.

“Hey, Clarke?”

“Hm?” at the sound of Octavia’s voice Clarke swirls around on the spot. Octavia is now standing next to the couch and just looking up from her phone. Apparently Raven won the argument, because the other brunette is nowhere in sight and Clarke thinks she hears her hum in her room, probably getting ready to shower.

“Linc just texted. He said they’ll be a bit late, but he’s got the beer. I mean we don’t need it right away anyway right?”

“No, that’s fine. We got enough.” Clarke shakes her head and then turns around to put away the ladder. As she goes to fold it though, something rings odd about Octavia’s words.

“They?” she asks, frowning now. She doesn’t recall Octavia mentioning Lincoln bringing anybody.

“Hm?” Octavia is already looking at her phone again. This time perched onto the edge of their couch.

“You said they’ll be a bit late.” She repeats and suddenly something clicks and a flash of green streaks across Clarke’s mind.

“Oh! Yeah, he’s picking Lexa up on the way. But apparently she got some charity thing before and so they’ll be here at like-“

“Lexa? Lexa’s coming?” Clarke interrupts and suddenly the back of her neck begins to prickle. Since when? How does she even know about this party? Did Lincoln just invite her?

“Yeah, Octavia and I ran into her at the store yesterday.” Octavia tells her then and Clarke can’t believe they didn’t mention that. “Didn’t we tell you?”

“No?!” Clarke bites and Octavia raises her eyebrows, quite obviously a little taken aback by Clarke’s tone of voice.

To be quite honest, Clarke is a little surprised herself, but she just really didn’t expect this. Lexa is coming to their party?

“Um…sorry? I guess we forgot.” Octavia apologizes slowly, eyeing Clarke a little curious, before her phone vibrates in her hand again and her attention is drawn back to the small device. Without her roommate’s eyes on her, Clarke notices how tense she’s gotten for the first time. Her hands are still holding onto the aluminum step ladder and the material has warmed slightly under her touch. She clenches her jaw and boxes the top upwards so she can fold the ladder together. What the hell. They forgot? How could they forget they invited her? It was only yesterday for Christ’s sake!

Lexa is coming to their party! That changes everything! Now… well, now what? Now Lexa is coming to their party and that’s it. So what?

Nothing has really changed and still Clarke feels uneasy all of a sudden. She feels unprepared and like she should have done more planning for this additional person. It’s stupid, really, and makes no sense whatsoever, because it’s not like they’ll be short on space with one person more or less and they have more than enough food and drinks to last twice as many people probably. Lexa won’t even be noticeable in the bulk of the party and yet Clarke has a feeling she’ll somehow stand out.
Maybe it’s because she can’t imagine the stoic looking, stiff seeming, straight backed commander throwing back a beer and lounging relaxed on their couch, laughing with Octavia and Raven and just genuinely enjoying herself. She just can’t picture it. But that’s probably unfair and also a bit prejudiced. She can’t know what the woman is like in a setting like this from only having seen her once. That would be insane. And assuming she can is just silly and arrogant. So she doesn’t. She won’t even try to picture Lexa here. Smiling and drinking and chatting and flirting and when right in that moment Raven, only wearing her underwear, tip toes from her room into the bathroom muttering ‘cold, cold, cold, cold, cold’, Clarke accidentally bangs the ladder against one of their bar stools at the kitchen island. And then the arm chair. And then she almost gets it tangled in the banners they just put up, but Octavia is suddenly next to her and taking the silver piece of domestic equipment out of her hands. Her eyebrows are furrowed and her eyes wide and bemused as she shakes her head at Clarke’s feeble attempts to protest and Clarke just lets it go.

While Octavia stows the bulky thing back away behind the curtain at the end of the hall leading to all of their rooms and the bathroom, Clarke walks over to the kitchen and pours herself a glass of orange juice. She needs to calm down. The party will be great. Everything is set up and ready and all she needs to do now is wait her turn in the bathroom, get dressed in her costume, and then relax as the first guests arrive. Everything is under control.

It is.

“Shit!” Lexa mumbles under her breath as she checks her watch. It’s already half past six! Lincoln said he’d pick her up at eight and she still needs to go home, shower and get ready for the party.

Anya was the one who suggested Lexa ask Lincoln to take her there when Lexa told her about the invitation the previous night. She said it would help with the nerves, seeing right through Lexa’s sad attempt at a blasé attitude towards the whole thing, but thankfully left it at that.

Lexa doesn’t know what she would have done had Anya questioned her further about her feelings and thoughts on the matter. The matter of course being that the party meant seeing Clarke again. She thinks she would have probably blocked Anya’s questions anyway, so it was best that Anya didn’t even ask in the first place.

But then again, being in her head all day today hasn’t really helped either. Her thoughts just kept spinning weird webs of possibilities around and around her mind and if Mrs. Windsor and the Yard Sale hadn’t distracted her as much as they did she might have gone a little crazy and possibly even chickened out. As it is, however, the yard sale got quite busy all of a sudden and Lexa has barely had the time to let her mind wander to the blonde in the last few hours. So much so has she been preoccupied with questions from people interested in their things and little jobs of helping other sellers move the odd heavy object one way or another, that she even forgot the time. And now she is late.

“An!”

She looks over where Anya is manning the stand of one of Mrs. Windsor’s neighbors while she is away to feed her cats, but her roommate is ignoring her in favor of finishing up with a couple of teenagers, who seem to be buying an old wooden treasure box and a bunch of candle holders. Weird.

As soon as the kids turn to leave, Lexa walks over to Anya. No one’s eyeing her stand at the
“Hey,” she speaks lowly and Anya hums, but doesn’t look up from the old cash register she’s sorting the money into. “It’s already half past six! I totally forgot the time.”

Anya glances up at one of the grandfather clocks that are ticking on happily across the yard. “Isn’t Lincoln only coming over at eight?”

“Yeah!”

“So that’s plenty of time.” Anya points out calmly and goes back to sorting the money away. One of the metal thingies holding down the notes is a little stuck and she makes an annoyed face as she tries to pry it upwards long enough to shove the fiver in there on top of the others.

“I still have to eat a bite.”

“There’ll be food at the party.”

“And take a shower!”

“You’re quick.”

Lexa frowns at Anya’s profile. She was really hoping Anya wouldn’t be so difficult and make her beg this much, but she can see she has no choice. With a small sigh she closes her eyes. Voice even lower now she adds, “I still have to choose an outfit, too, Anya.”

The second Anya’s neutral expression turns into a smirk Lexa wants to take the words back. But Anya is already turning to her with a teasing look in her eyes and then they wander up and down Lexa’s body.

“Are you going to get dressed up? Put on make-up? Blow-dry your hair? Throw some glitter on?” the woman grins, voice teasing, and Lexa wants nothing more than to not be here having this conversation right now. But she is. And she needs a favour.

“Please, can you just drive me?” she murmurs almost too quietly to be heard, but Anya would have ignored it either way it seems.

“Wait, isn’t it a Halloween party?”

“Yes?”

“Like…with costumes?” Anya’s face turns even more gleeful than before and Lexa considers her odds if she started walking home right this second. “Oooh,” Anya sing-songs, now fully facing Lexa with her hip casually leaning against the table. “Whatcha gonna be? An angel? A pirate? A princess?” she snorts at the last words, not able to keep up the fake excited voice she had going there for a second.

Lexa only throws her a glare and Anya laughs.

“Come on, you gotta be something.” Anya argues and then leans forward and whispers in a conspiratorial voice, “What about a sexy nurse! I bet Blondie would totally dig that.”

“I am not dressing up, Anya!” Lexa exclaims exasperated, having had enough of Anya’s game. This is so unnecessary. She’s already late and this is wasting her time. “Can you drive me or not?”

Anya, still chuckling, turns back to the register and snaps it shut with one echoing thud and old-
fashioned dinging sound. “Alright, give me a minute.”

Finally!

“Thank you.” Lexa sighs and then quickly walks back to their stand to put the ‘Back soon. On Break.’ sign on it until Anya comes back.

Costume. Lexa scoffs internally. No way.

“Why aren’t you dressed up?” Lincoln challenges before Lexa can even really sit down and close the car door.

“Uh-“

“Didn’t they tell you it’s a Halloween Party?” he questions seriously and Lexa really wants to remain pokerfaced, but one of Lincoln’s fake scars is peeling off his cheek and he looks just so ridiculous.

When she starts snorting, Lincoln looks down at his torn up, bloody looking clothes and then back up to her. “What?”

“N-nothing.” Lexa barely gets out, but quickly manages to recompose herself. “Nothing, you look really good.”

“Good? Don’t you mean scary?” he corrects her as he changes gears and starts filing onto the road behind a red Minivan.

“Sure.” Lexa allows and buckles in.

“Seriously though, I thought you were going as knight?”

“What?” Lexa frowns at that, looking at Lincoln who’s concentrating on the road now, but quickly glances over.

“Yeah, Anya said-“

“Oh my god.” She rolls her eyes and turns her eyes to the street ahead.

Anya is impossible. Joking with her? Okay. But bringing other people into it? For crying out loud, Lexa would never dress as someone’s ‘Knight in shining armor’. No matter how big her crush might be.

“Well, I’m sure it won’t be a problem. Octavia did say that anybody without a costume has to down five shots before coming in, but I’m sure you can handle it.”

“What?!?” Lexa exclaims horrified, but Lincoln is already quite literally cracking up as his face paint crinkles when he grins broadly. Annoyed she throws her left arm out and punches his shoulder.

“Asshole.”

What is it with everybody teasing her today? Can’t they see she’s already nervous enough as it is? Then again, maybe it’s a good thing that her distress is possibly not too obvious after all. Or at least
not to Lincoln. Lexa is sure Anya knew perfectly well that this party is stressing Lexa out, but simply didn’t let that interfere with her taunting.

“So what are you anyway?” Lexa asks to defer the focus off of herself and onto Lincoln instead.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Lincoln gives back in lieu of an answer, almost seeming sniffed.

“Zombie?” Lexa guesses, reaching over and pressing the scar back onto her friend’s cheek. The self adhesive has obviously pretty much worn off already, however, because it peels back almost instantly. Lincoln frowns and pulls the strip off his face, before carefully laying it out onto the dash board over the radio.

“Yeah.” He almost grumbles, before getting back into his good mood and wiggling his eyebrows. “I’m a walker, baby!”

“Walker?” Lexa echoes as she absentmindedly starts playing with the radio button, not really caring for Ariana Grande’s pop tunes at the moment. Or ever.

“The Walking Dead. Seriously, Lexa.”

“Oh, right. Heard of that.” She says and then suddenly something strikes her and distracts her thoughts from the radio. “Hey, whose car is this anyway?”

With all the nerves going into this she totally forgot to wonder about the fact that Lincoln offered to pick her up when Anya gossiped that Lexa would be going to Octavia’s party. But now she remembers.

Lincoln doesn’t own a car.

“Echo’s.”

“Who?”

“Echo. She’s the new bar girl at the gym? Have you never seen her? I had a couple of shifts with her the last few weeks. She’s pretty cool and her and Izzy work well together I think.” He enlightens her and Lexa just hums. She didn’t know that. But like she already told Octavia, she and Lincoln have barely had any shifts together lately, so it seems she missed the new girl altogether. Her other personal trainer colleague Deb mentioned something about the new girl being a sweetie, but Lexa didn’t really pay much attention. Deb calls everyone a sweetie anyway. Nice of that Echo girl to lend a new coworker her car though. Very nice.

Once they stop in front of a brick-red building with a brown below ground floor paintjob and Lincoln opens the trunk to reveal three cases of beer she also knows why he needed to borrow a car in the first place.

“Can you grab that?” he indicates the case on the far right with his chin as he leans forward to pull the other two out of the car.

“Sure.” Lexa says shortly and is glad that she left her wrist watch at home, because all of a sudden her pulse speeds up again as she realizes that she’s about to see Clarke again.

Geez.

She rolls her eyes at herself when she’s shielded from Lincoln’s view as she leans into the trunk after him. What is wrong with her?
“Alright. You good?” he asks a little strained and Lexa nods. “Can you-”

Again she only nods and then slams the trunk shut for him.

“Alright, come on.” He lets out a groan fitting his costume and then leads her towards the front door of the building. It’s big and painted dark brown. Like the walls around the corner where the street goes a little lower than ground floor level and shows off the building’s basement windows. There are three steps leading up to it. It’s a nice entrance. A nice door. Not like the one in her and Anya’s apartment building, which is just a boring plain old door. This one is made of some fancy wood and has some sort of carvings or architectural flourishes on it that make it seem like it should belong to a building in France or Italy or something. Not to an otherwise unremarkable building in Portland, Oregon.

When Lincoln rings the doorbell, Lexa glances at the house’s bell system. It’s pretty dark already, but the porch light that flickered on when they climbed the steps makes it possible for her to make out some of the names. The space next to the button Lincoln presses reads ‘The Space Babes’ and she almost has to grin. Almost.

But then the door buzzes and a chipper, somewhat distorted voice, that Lexa immediately identifies as Raven’s, calls out to them.

“Come in, come up, come undone, my creepy peeps!”

And just like that Lexa forgets all about the curious name on the girls’ door bell again as she feels her heart hammer against the dip in her collarbones.

*Here we go.*

---

Clarke has thankfully been able to calm herself down after all. The long hot shower she took after Raven and Octavia had finished helped considerably and the fact that her ‘costume’ wasn’t very extravagant and only took about twenty minutes to put together, hair included, had been beneficial to her heart rate as well.

All in all, she was pretty much relaxed by the time the first guests –Monty and Jasper – arrived, and easily got swept away by the party mood once more of their friends came. But then the doorbell rang again about an hour and a half later and Octavia mentioned that that must be Lincoln and Lexa and just like that her cool is gone again.

She doesn’t know why she’s so nervous that the fighter is coming over. It’s not like she doesn’t like her or anything. She’s not even annoyed that Octavia and Raven invited her without telling her, but it’s strange. They don’t even really know her. And yes, she’s Lincoln’s friend, but still. It’s weird.

It’s weird and it’s making Clarke throw a sweeping glance around the apartment to check if everything is still in order. But she didn’t need to worry. Everything is still as it should be. The candles are still lit and upright. The pumpkins are still shining moving Halloween-themed shadows over the crowd in the dimmed down lighting and all the guests are still happy and on their best behavior. No embarrassing drunkards anywhere in sight.

*Thank god.*
Finally Clarke’s sweeping eyes land on the front door where Octavia is just joining Raven, who’s already leaning out of the opened door and probably hollering something down the hall to greet the newcomers. She’s pretty tipsy already.

Clarke considers going over there as well, but decides against it. Two welcomers are more than enough. She opts to get another drink instead. Yeah. She needs a refill.

As she makes her way behind their make-shift cocktail bar and enters the kitchen area the front door moves out of her sight and she swiftly downs the rest of her Vodka Orange before filling the cup up with some more.

Raven and Clarke prepared three mixed drinks in advance to make it easier on everybody. The classics. They have three bottles each of Vodka Orange, Mojito and of course Octavia’s favorite, Rum and Coke.

“Hey! There you are!” Jasper’s voice almost startles her and before she can look up from the counter an arm is already being swung around her shoulders. “Can you please tell this fine lady that I am the official ‘Master of Music’ at this cute little party you guys are throwing here instead of the Bubble Bash?”

Jasper and Monty very gracefully gave over their ‘Halloween party rights’ to Raven, Octavia and Clarke for this year, seeing as it was sort of also Raven’s ‘going away’ party as she put it. But Clarke has a feeling they’ll be hearing about it for a while anyway, since especially Jasper hasn’t stopped bringing up their kindness in what feels like every conversation this evening.

“Actually, Monty is on music, Jasper. You were on ice duty. Noticeably.” She dangles her very much ice-cube-less cup in front of him and then settles back against the kitchen counter.

Clarke doesn’t know the girl he is talking to – probably one of Raven and Jasper’s friends from uni – but at her words she snorts and Jasper shakes his shaggy head. “For the hundredth time, I didn’t think to buy an ice box! It would have melted on the way here!”

“Yeah, I think we all got that you didn’t think.” Clarke teases with a smirk as she lifts the cup to her lips and the girl, dressed as a pants wearing Xena – at least as far as Clarke can tell – grins and chuckles, before a hectic Raven practically pushes her out of the way.

“Move your tush, Jay! The Commander wants a drink.”

“Sorry,” the African American girl says and moves over next to Clarke where she leans against the corner of the kitchen counter. “Who’s the Commander?” she adds interested, but before Clarke can answer, Lexa suddenly appears on the other side of the bar and she forgets to.

She looks so different without the black make up framing her eyes and Clarke is glad to see that her wounds seem to have healed up as well. Her face is unblemished now. And really, really pretty.

Their eyes meet and Clarke thinks Lexa seems a little nervous, because quickly the other woman’s eyes dart away again, focusing on Raven instead.

“Where do you want this?” she asks and when Raven points for her to come behind the bar, she steps around the kitchen island. Clarke’s eyes immediately dart down to something and she sees that the fighter is carrying a case of beer in her left hand. Only her left hand. She shouldn’t be surprised probably, Lexa is a semi-professional fighter after all and Clarke has seen her strength up close, but she can’t help but be impressed nonetheless.

“You can just put it right here.” Raven directs and Lexa carefully places the case down at Clarke’s
roommate’s feet and pushes it further underneath the kitchen island when Raven knocks against it with her bad foot.

“Thanks!” Raven says cheerfully and Lexa merely reacts with a small smile. Clarke is even more convinced she’s right about the fighter’s nerves, when she sees Lexa’s hands ball into fists, before relaxing again a few times. But then Lexa catches her look and links them behind her back instead, straightening her spine.

Clarke feels a little sheepish for having been caught staring and looks to her roommate instead. Raven is filling the orange plastic cup in her hands with some of the white wine Bellamy brought over and Clarke almost wants to say something, because somehow it doesn’t seem right to have Lexa drink that out of something so… well, plastic. But then again it’s all they have. She can’t just start handing out real glasses. They don’t have nearly enough for everyone and even more importantly, they don’t want to risk them breaking. In any case, it would kind of be a shame to not use the cups, Clarke guesses. After all, it took Octavia ages to find orange and black party cups instead of the mainstream red ones, but finally she ordered some off the internet and they arrived just in time early this morning.

“Here you go, Commander. Not Cider, but Bell promised it was real expensive, so maybe you could just pour some beer in there and make one yourself.” Raven grins and hands the cup over to Lexa, who takes it and then quickly bobs her head forward when some of it spills over. She uses her tongue to catch the drops and Clarke averts her gaze again, feeling an uncomfortable tug in her stomach.

“You know that’s not how Cider is made, right?” the girl next to Clarke tells Raven with a snort just then and Clarke turns her attention on her instead. The topic isn’t really that interesting to her though and while Raven and Jasper seem to enjoy throwing in their own theories how Cider is actually made while that Jay girl just laughs and tries to get them to shut up long enough to tell them the actual facts, Clarke’s eyes wander back up to where Lexa is still standing not four feet away from her. She looks a little lost there now, with Raven no longer tending to her and Lincoln being nowhere in sight, and Clarke feels like she should say something. Anything.

So as not to disturb the conversation going on between the other three, she quietly steps around Jasper so they would switch places. Now she’s standing right next to Lexa and when the girl looks up, Clarke forgets what she wanted to say. Did she even have something yet?

“Um, hi! Lexa, right?” Clarke stretches out her right hand, internally smacking it against her forehead instead. Why did she say that? She knows her name is Lexa.

The fighter just stares at her for a second and Clarke wishes they had better lighting in the kitchen. She can barely make out the soft green color in Lexa’s eyes.

Just before it gets awkward enough for Clarke to just draw back her hand Lexa moves. She switches her drink from her right hand to her left and then takes Clarke’s hand. Again Clarke is surprised by the woman. She doesn’t know what she expected, but Lexa’s hand in hers feels incredibly soft and… almost dainty, and it really messes with Clarke’s mind for a second.

Full of contradictions.

They don’t really shake, just hold each other’s hands and squeeze gently, and then Clarke draws hers back again, not wanting the fighter to think she’s weird.

Lexa still hasn’t said anything and Clarke is really starting to get a little nervous now. Is Lexa uncomfortable talking to her? Maybe she doesn’t even want to be here and had just been too polite to
decline Octavia and Raven’s invitation. Or maybe she noticed Clarke watching her and now feels uneasy in her presence. Whatever it is that makes the Commander remain so silent, it’s stressing Clarke out.

“Um, so where’s Lincoln?” she asks in another attempt to start a conversation and to stop Lexa from looking at her like that. Because the girl still hasn’t averted her eyes and it’s quite unnerving.

“I think he wanted to put the other beer cases into the bathroom with Octavia if I’m not wrong. She said there’s not enough room in the kitchen for all of it.” Lexa answers and then clears her throat when the last word comes out a little scratchy. It’s the longest string of words Clarke has ever heard the woman speak and she notices again how much the soft voice doesn’t fit the ‘warrior’ she watched in the ring. But she’s not in the ring right now and actually the gentle, careful tone with which Lexa speaks her words fits her soft features just perfectly somehow. The brown hair that falls over Lexa’s left shoulder in elegant waves completes the picture and the woman looks like some sort of goddess of beauty to Clarke. For a second she wonders if that was what Lexa was going for – her Halloween costume – but then she realizes that that’s probably not the case and feels her cheeks heat up a little from embarrassment. What is she though? Glancing down at the brunette, Clarke can’t really identify anything to indicate Lexa is wearing a costume of any kind. Her outfit consists of a snug-fitting, light blue button up blouse with the top buttons undone and deep black dress pants that are a little wider around the feet, hiding the top of Lexa’s shiny, black leather shoes.

“So,” Clarke starts and looks back up at Lexa, who lifts her drink to her lips and looks at her with big eyes, “what exactly are you supposed to be?”

By now she can guess that Lexa didn’t actually dress up as anything, but she’s starting to think maybe she’ll just have a little fun with her. Some teasing might relax the quiet fighter. And Clarke as well.

Quickly swallowing the sip of whine she just took, Lexa seems to squirm a little at the question. Just like Clarke hoped.

“Um, I- I didn’t really have anything at home.” The fighter admits apologetically and Clarke fights back a smirk as she lifts her eyebrows, feigning being not amused.

“Didn’t Octavia and Raven tell you that costumes are mandatory?” she bores on mercilessly, but when Lexa’s eyes helplessly dart over to Raven and her brows furrow in worry, Clarke can’t hold up her charade any longer.

“I’m kidding, relax.” She laughs, briefly squeezing Lexa’s arm to reassure her, and the fighter’s tense shoulders ease up a little.

“Oh.” Lexa breathes out with a small, lopsided smile and Clarke almost feels bad for having messed with the cute Commander. She does seem a lot less intimidating to her now though and Clarke is glad to feel her own nerves calm back down to normal. She takes another mouthful of her Vodka mix and eyes Lexa over the rim of her cup.

“And you?” Lexa asks and then, very quickly, lets her eyes wander down Clarke’s outfit. “You’re a-“

“A princess.” Bellamy’s deep voice interrupts from the other side of the bar, where he’s grinning at Clarke and blindly reaching for a bottle opener over the island counter. Clarke frowns.

“I’m not a princess, for fuck’s sake!” she curses annoyed. A lot of people have made that mistake already, but she’s not. She’s-
“She’s the Lady of Light, okay? Show some respect, Bell!” Raven comes to her defense, stepping over to them and snatching the bottle opener from Bellamy’s hand, just when he had managed to grab it.

“Oh, come on!” he complains and tries to get it back, but Raven just giggles and holds it out of his reach. With a grunt he falls back onto his feet and goes to come around the kitchen island. When he appears next to Lexa he looks down at her. “Hi, I’m Bellamy.” He greets her with a twitch of a smile, before mumbling ‘sorry’ and squeezing himself past her and Clarke to get to Raven who is holding the opener behind her back by now and giggling again in anticipation.

“Lexa.” Lexa replies quietly and Bellamy looks over his shoulder, while trying to snatch Raven’s wrists to keep her still.

“Oh, the MMA fighter?” he asks with interest and Lexa confirms with a nod. “Congratulations on your win! O said you knocked the other girl out cold.”

“Not really.” Lexa frowns, but Clarke thinks she might as well have. That win was pretty impressive. Apparently Raven agrees.

“You practically did. Ginger had no chance.” She gets out between giggles, still wringing and bending her body to avoid Bellamy’s hands, and then lets out a little disappointed ‘aw’ when he finally manages to get a hold of her right wrist and twist the small silver kitchen tool out of her hand.

A little out of breath, Bellamy reaches over to the bar where he left his beer bottle and opens it with a satisfying hiss. His half-assed costume gets in the way however, when the fake vampire fangs he taped onto his lips – yes, onto, not underneath – get caught on the bottle’s mouth and one of them falls off.

“Ugh, crap.” He grumbles and goes to pick it up, bunching up the black, satin-like duvet cover he’s using as a cloak, as he bends down.

“You’re costume is so bad.” Raven comments unabashedly, and Bellamy shows her the finger.

“Some of us have jobs, you know? Not everybody can spend their days creating a robot costume.”

“Not a robot.” Raven wiggles her index finger at him importantly. “Bionic woman.”

“Space monkey.” He grins teasingly, as he straightens back up, and Raven punches him in the chest.

When Clarke looks over at Lexa again, the girl is already watching her. It takes her by surprise and her heart stutters for a second. Lexa seems just as caught off guard, however, and quickly averts her gaze. Clarke thinks she knows why. The girl must not want to come off as weird for having been caught watching Clarke.

Lexa didn’t have to worry, though. Somehow, Clarke doesn’t mind her staring.

This is not how she imagined this would go.

Lexa’s sitting on the couch in Octavia, Raven and Clarke’s living room, surrounded by chatty people in all different sorts of costumes, and waiting for Clarke to return with a refill on their drinks.
She’s been here a little over an hour now and she’s starting to feel the alcohol kicking in. And it’s not good.

It’s not good, because she’s nowhere near drunk yet, but right smack in the middle of that weird, horrifying state, where you’re starting to lose control over your words and actions a bit, but are still very much aware of how stupid you look.

Like just a second ago, when Clarke asked her what she thought of her apartment, Lexa couldn’t stop herself from mumbling that she had only seen the kitchen and the living room and that that is basically like asking her what she thought of a book after only having shown her the fancy cover. Clarke raised her eyebrows at first and then laughed and called her ‘feisty’ and Lexa just wanted to get swallowed by the couch cushions never to be seen again.

Before she could apologize though, Clarke had gotten up and taken Lexa’s drink out of her hand. She had downed the rest of it, her eyes still laughing at Lexa over the rim of the cup all the while, and then informed Lexa that she was getting them some more and to stay put.

So now here she sits, with nothing in her hands to distract them from falling into her nervous habit of rhythmically scratching over her own fingernails, and she feels very much betrayed by her own body. This isn’t how this party was supposed to go! She was supposed to get here, see Clarke again, and realize that she built her up way too much in her head; that Clarke isn’t actually all that great and that her stupid, little crush is just that. Stupid.

But now here she is, waiting for Clarke to return, and trying really, really hard not to interpret too much into the fact that Clarke hasn’t spent more than five minutes away from her since she arrived.

It’s probably just because she doesn’t really know anybody else here – except for Lincoln, but he’s always with Octavia – and Clarke is only being a good hostess by keeping her company. Lexa knows that that’s the most likely reason, but despite her sound rationality, her heart still beats faster than necessary when she spots the blonde coming towards her again with two drinks in her hands and a big smile on her face. And it’s stressing her the fuck out.

“Alright, come on!” Clarke orders, stopping just in front of Lexa and nodding her head backwards.

“What?” Lexa asks, confused when Clarke doesn’t sit back down next to her.

“I thought you wanted a tour of the apartment!” Clarke reminds Lexa with an amused smile. “Or are you suddenly content with just the cover?” she challenges without losing a second.

Less elegantly than she would have hoped for Lexa stands up from the couch and then silently takes her cup from Clarke who tells her to be careful because she made it quite full. Heeding the girl’s advice, Lexa takes a few hasty sips until the cup isn’t threatening to spill over anymore and hums in surprise. That is not wine.

“Oh yeah, I gave you an upgrade.” Clarke comments her reaction offhandedly and then nods again for Lexa to follow her.

“What?” Lexa asks, trying to name the taste in her mouth, as she walks behind Clarke through a small group of people huddled together next to the couch. She doesn’t recognize any of them.

“I thought you wanted a tour of the apartment!” Clarke reminds Lexa with an amused smile. “Or are you suddenly content with just the cover?” she challenges without losing a second.

Less elegantly than she would have hoped for Lexa stands up from the couch and then silently takes her cup from Clarke who tells her to be careful because she made it quite full. Heeding the girl’s advice, Lexa takes a few hasty sips until the cup isn’t threatening to spill over anymore and hums in surprise. That is not wine.

“Oh yeah, I gave you an upgrade.” Clarke comments her reaction offhandedly and then nods again for Lexa to follow her.

“What is it?” Lexa asks, trying to name the taste in her mouth, as she walks behind Clarke through a small group of people huddled together next to the couch. She doesn’t recognize any of them.

“Have you never had rum and coke before?” Clarke’s tone of voice seems scandalized and it’s a good thing Lexa glances up at the sound of it, because Clarke has stopped dead in the middle of her stride and Lexa has to jerk to a halt as well to avoid running into her.

“Um, I don’t taste much coke in there.” Lexa defends, taking another sip to make sure. Yep.
Definitely not much coke in there at all.

“Lightweight.” Clarke snorts and when a giggle follows, Lexa wonders what Clarke’s ‘upgrade’ is.

“Alright, so this,” Clarke takes two steps further down the hall and gestures to her right. “is the bathroom.” She informs Lexa and then takes a quick step back with a surprised little ‘whoops’ when the door she was about to grab suddenly opens and a girl in some sort of Indiana Jones costume walks out.

Lexa thinks Clarke might be a bit tipsy by now, because as she turns to walk further down the hall she does so quite energetically and stumbles just the tiniest bit. In a reflex Lexa goes to grab Clarke’s elbow, but pulls back at the last second. She can’t just go around touching people without asking. Even though, now that Lexa thinks about it, Clarke doesn’t seem to have much of a problem with body contact at all. There have been some arm squeezes and leg touches tonight that verify that. And completely messed with Lexa’s head in the process.

But still. Lexa doesn’t do that. She doesn’t just touch people. She doesn’t like it. Usually.

Either way, Clarke seems to have found her balance on her own and they venture forward, only a softly sparkling light chain shining a warm white light over them from either side of the hall’s ceiling.

“That is Raven’s room.” Clarke continues with her tour and Lexa wants to tell her it’s not necessary to actually show her the room itself, but Clarke has already opened the door and walked inside. Looking over her shoulder to see if Raven maybe spots them walking into her room without permission Lexa slowly follows Clarke, but stays on the threshold just in case.

“It’s nice.” She comments when Clarke looks at her expectantly. It’s not a lie either. It is a very nice room. About the same size as Lexa’s probably and decorated pretty cozy with a soft rug and a room hammock full of pillows. It’s a little messy though and Clarke almost trips over some piece of clothing on her way back out. She kicks it back into the room before closing the door and then turns to the opposite wall. The door there is already ajar and Lexa thinks she can hear people inside. They probably shouldn’t disturb them.

Clarke doesn’t seem bothered by that though and just barges in, flipping on the big light switch with the hand that’s not holding a drink. She’s kind of walking backwards and facing Lexa while she does it and therefore doesn’t even notice what she’s walking in on.

Lexa however does and quickly averts her gaze.

“This is Octavia’s ro-“

“Oh!” Clarke starts giggling again, obviously having spotted the couple sitting on the bed now as well. Lexa only got a quick glimpse, but the way Octavia was sitting on Lincoln’s lap definitely didn’t look like something she wanted to walk in on. Why wouldn’t they close the door?

“Sorry, I didn’t know you guys were in here.” Lexa hears Clarke get out between giggles and then a hand is grabbing her elbow and she is being dragged back up the hall towards the rest of the party. A little of Lexa’s drink spills over and onto her hand and wrist from the motion, but Clarke doesn’t give her a chance to wipe it off. She just pulls her further along.

Before they reach the living room however, Clarke makes a sudden right and then it’s way quieter from one second to the next.
Not in danger of seeing her friend make out with his girlfriend on a bed anymore, Lexa lifts her eyes from the ground and sees that she is in another bedroom. It’s dark and she can’t make out much except the silhouette of Clarke right in front of her, but she doesn’t really care.

With the noises of the party muffled by the closed door, all Lexa can really hear is her and Clarke’s breathing now and her heart starts racing again. Clarke is so close. She has stopped giggling, but Lexa can tell she’s still amused by the way her every few breaths come out in little chuckles. Until they don’t.

And then it’s really quiet for a moment.

Slowly Lexa’s eyes start to adjust to the darkness and Clarke’s form becomes a little clearer. She’s still standing right in front of her, not two feet away, and from what Lexa can tell she’s looking right at her.

“So?” Clarke asks, and even though there’s no reason to, Lexa understands why she’s whispering. It’s the only thing fitting for the dark and the quiet that have suddenly surrounded them.

She has to swallow and clear her throat a little, but finally gets out, “So what?”

“So what do you think of the apartment now?” Clarke clarifies as if that should have been obvious and Lexa doesn’t know what to say. It’s somehow such a strange thing to think about in this moment. Her mind really didn’t expect it.

“Um…”

“Oh, wait!” Clarke suddenly says in a normal volume and it startles Lexa a little. Not as much as the full force of the ceiling light that hits her a second later though, when Clarke leans forward and reaches past her to hit the switch.

Lexa grunts, struggling to force her eyes to adjust to yet another change in brightness so quickly, while Clarke seems completely unfazed.

“So?” the girl repeats, raising her eyebrows as she holds her arms out to her sides, presenting her room.

“It’s.” Lexa squints once more and then lets her eyes sweep over the room. There’s a big desk to her left against the wall, a comfortable looking arm chair in the corner just beyond it, a queen-sized bed in the middle of the wall opposite the door and some shelves and a closet to their right. But the most noticeable thing to Lexa is all the books. They’re everywhere. Piled up on the desk, stacked messily at different places on the floor and some are even scattered on the bed. “It’s messy.” The words come out, before she can stop herself and she immediately regrets them, when Clarke’s smile slips off her face and her expression turns affronted.

“Hey!”

“I mean! No! I mean, not messy! It’s just…you have so many books! There’s just a lot of books! Everywhere! And not enough space! For the books! Which are everywhere!” Lexa scrambles to amend, heart now positively hammering inside her chest.

Shit!

“There’s just…a lot of books.” She repeats again, a little more quietly now, not knowing what else to say. Finally Clarke’s hurt expression changes. In fact she’s snorting at her now and Lexa just feels lost.
“Wow.” Clarke smirks and tilts her head at Lexa. “You’re really easy, you know?”

“Easy?” Lexa echoes, still feeling her pulse drum in her ears.

“Yeah.” Clarke says and walks a few paces, before flopping down onto her bed. “I thought you were gonna pass out there for a second, Wordsmith!” she tells her and finally Lexa catches on.

Clarke isn’t mad. She’s teasing.

Again.

“Cruel.” Lexa grumbles under her breath. She didn’t intend for Clarke to actually hear her, but when the blonde starts laughing that raspy laugh again, she’s glad that she did.

The hands shaped as a little screwdriver and a wrench say it’s half past two when Clarke looks up at the clock hanging over the bed, but time isn’t really much of a concept to her anymore. All she knows is that this party is for sure the best party they’ve ever thrown and Lexa smells really good.

She noticed that last part a few minutes ago when she leaned into the brunette. She did so to clue her in to some background information as to why Octavia’s expression had temporarily turned sour when Raven mentioned Finn in conversation.

For some reason the party has kind of shifted and they’re all sitting in Raven’s room now. At least as far as Clarke can tell. There might still be some people out in the living room or somewhere else around the apartment, but whenever she tries to start counting who’s there with her and tries to remember who already left she gets confused. So she gave up on that and decided that everybody was here and whoever wasn’t in this room didn’t exist right now. That makes it much easier.

Monty, having taken off his fake mustache and musketeer jacket, is lying in Raven’s hammock. He’s hugging one of her pillows and his eyes are closed. His head is nestled in that Jay girl’s lap and he seems really content as she strokes through his hair. On the girl’s other side Jasper has wedged himself into the hammock as well. As per usual after a couple of beers he’s now wearing one of Raven’s dresses and the bottom hem of it dangles over the hammock’s edge as his long legs stretch all the way over to the bed where his feet rest on Bellamy’s back.

Bellamy and Murphy lay side by side on the bed, their heads close together, as Bellamy shows his friend some pictures on his phone. Probably some new building designs he drew, judging by his happy expression. Or maybe just pictures of his dog Raina.

Someone must have carried Clarke’s armchair into Raven’s room as well at some point and Raven is slouched down so low in it that Clarke wonders how she doesn’t slip off. Her feet are supported by Octavia though, who’s gently stroking up and down them while she, Lincoln and Raven now listen to something the Indiana Jones girl is telling them about how her costume isn’t at all Indiana Jones, but her own version of the character, because the original one was actually pretty sexist and racist. Clarke thinks to remember that her name is Toria.

The circle ends back with Lexa and herself. Earlier Clarke asked Bellamy to throw them the duvet from the bed and Lexa helped her lay it out in front of Raven’s closet for them to sit on. It’s much more comfortable than sitting on the floor and Clarke’s eyes are starting to feel kind of heavy.
“Are you tired?” Lexa asks her just then and instead of answering Clarke just nods and shimmies down until her head is resting on Lexa’s thighs. For a second Clarke feels the other girl’s muscles tense under her face, but then they slowly relax and Clarke shifts to make herself even more comfortable.

It doesn’t take long before hesitant fingers start running through her hair and Clarke smiles and closes her eyes. If she were a cat she’d start purring right now she thinks, but with all that hair falling into her face she’d probably be more of a lion anyway. A lion Clarke. Do lions even purr? She’ll have to look that up. When she lifts her heavy arm to pat her pockets for her phone she realizes that she’s still wearing the white dress that makes up her Galadriel costume and that her phone is probably still in the kitchen where she last had it to take some pictures. She hopes nobody spilled anything on it.

Giving up on the chase for her phone Clarke sighs. This is nice. Lexa’s legs are warm and comfortable and she likes just listening to her friends talking. The voices are familiar and soothing and Lexa’s fingers are less timid now as they stroke through Clarke’s hair. Clarke doesn’t even try to fight it when sleep comes to claim her.

Chapter End Notes

So as you can probably tell from the title this chapter was supposed to be out at Halloween :D

Only six weeks later I proudly present to you chapter 7!!

I hope you enjoyed it and leave me a comment below!

All the best,
Lea
“Ugh…”

Her head is pounding. It’s throbbing at the temples and on the top and just everywhere and something is really hard against her left side.

It takes Clarke a few more minutes of fighting unconsciousness and getting her bearings to figure out it’s the floor. She’s lying on the floor. And there’s something bulky pushing into her arm.

She groans again and heaves herself off of the bulky something until she’s lying on her back.

Better.

Her head is still throbbing, but her arm doesn’t feel like its circulation is being cut off from the rest of her blood stream anymore and now the floor doesn’t seem as hard as before. After feeling around with her stiff hands for a second she discovers that that is because she’s not actually lying on the floor anymore. Not just the floor anyway. There’s a duvet underneath her.

A duvet…

Lexa. Lexa and she put the duvet there. Lexa and she put the duvet there at the party. The Halloween party. They put the duvet there together to make it more comfortable. They put it there to make it more comfortable to sit down. To sit down together and talk more. And they sat down on the duvet and then…then she put her head in Lexa’s lap and…

With a jolt Clarke shoots into an upright position and from one second to the next she feels as wide awake as her eyes suddenly are.

“Lexa!” she yells out of reflex, voice raspy and throat scratching painfully, and then takes in a sharp breath of air. Dizziness and a horribly rude stabbing sensation behind her eyes make her stomach churn with unwelcome nausea and she groans again, even louder than before.

“Could you die a little quieter please?” a muffled voice grumbles from across the room.

It’s Raven’s and once Clarke opens her eyes again, squinting a little since the pain hasn’t really let up yet, she sees a lump of covers in Raven’s bed that has to be where her roommate is chiding her from. Actually, it’s her covers, Clarke notices then. Raven must have taken them from her room at some point.

Right... Cause hers are on the floor…

As she looks around she notices that she’s not the only one who’s fallen asleep in an unplanned spot. Right next to Raven’s bed the girl dressed as Xena is somehow asleep in the most painful looking position in Clarke’s arm chair. It’s quite impressive the way she’s curled up all neat and small, with her feet and head and one arm dangling over various sides of the red chair.

On the other side of the room, a pair of legs is sticking out of a pile of pillows covering whoever is sleeping in Raven’s hammock from Clarke’s view. Judging by how hairy those legs are though and the hem of a purple dress flowing over the side of the hammock, Clarke deduces it’s probably Jasper.
The familiar snoring makes her pretty confident in that assumption as well.

As she slowly gets up, cursing under her breath, she also spots Murphy’s messy head of hair next to the mountain of covers that is Raven. He’s lying with his back to Raven, hugging her favorite pillow to his body with his arm and legs and probably drooling on it, although Clarke doesn’t particularly feel the need to confirm that right now.

Shivering slightly, Clarke wraps her arms around herself. As awesome as she looks in the white Galadriel dress, it’s really not that warm and she looks around for something to tug around herself. She doesn’t have to look far. On the floor, to the side of the duvet she apparently slept on, lies a soft green and blue checkered blanket she recognizes as Octavia’s. She doesn’t remember getting that the night before, but gratefully picks it up and wraps it around herself all the same.

As her eyes sweep over her sleeping spot she notices something else. There’s a glass of water and some aspirin a safe distance away from it on the floor. It’s just sitting there and Clarke silently thanks whichever of her roommates was thoughtful enough to give her a head start on her hangover-cure. Carefully she kneels down in front of the glass and drains it in a few thirsty gulps. The cool liquid soothes her aching throat and she can feel it travelling down her body inside her chest. In her haste she didn’t leave any of the water to wash down the pill, so she gets up and makes her way to Raven’s bedroom door to go fill it up.

“Curtains…” Raven’s mumble reaches Clarke just as she grabs the door handle. She’d roll her eyes, but they’re still hurting, so she just sighs. It’s not like she won’t do a small favor for a friend, but the circumstances make it rather hard to carry out that sweetly worded request. Nevertheless, Clarke puts down the glass on the dresser right next to the door and lets the aspirin pill slip into her cleavage for safekeeping until she’ll finally get to the bathroom. Galadriel didn’t have pockets, you see…

Trying not to wake the girl in the chair, Clarke presses her way past her to the first window and draws the curtain closed with one hand. It almost seems loud in the quiet room and she holds her breath for a second, before realizing how ridiculous that is. It’s probably noon already anyway and she’s not required to keep these drunkards’ beauty sleep peaceful and undisturbed at any cost. Why should they get to escape the wrath of the alcohol any more than she could?

Climbing over her two friends on the bed, she ignores their moans of protest as she goes to close the other curtain.

“There.” She whispers, voice breaking on the word, as she pulls her body back over Raven. The girl is entirely covered by her comforter however and all Clarke gets from her is a content hum.

She takes it as ‘thank you’ and finally makes her way over to the door, grabbing the glass as she walks outside onto the hallway.

Closing the door behind her, Clarke takes a deep breath. For a minute she just stands there, in front of Raven’s bedroom, and tries to sort her thoughts.

The party was great. That much she knows. Everybody was having fun and drinking and talking and she thinks she even remembers people dancing at some point. What she remembers most, however, is Lexa.

Lexa’s smile and her beautiful brown hair. Her handsome outfit and her embarrassed laugh when Clarke told her she smelled nice. She remembers the way Lexa always seemed to already be looking at her, when Clarke’s eyes found her, and how nice Lexa’s fingers felt as they ran through her hair. She remembers showing Lexa her room and the way everything seemed to draw closer as they stood
in the dark. She remembers how Lexa grimaced when she turned on the lights and she remembers laughing when Lexa got flustered, thinking she had insulted Clarke. She remembers all of it. She even remembers the way her stomach swooped when Lexa’s cheeks reddened just that tiny bit, when she casually rested her hand on the fighter’s thigh in conversation. She remembers finding it so easy to talk to the girl she had only just met and she recalls telling her all about Raven and Octavia and their days back in high school.

Even about that time she got food poisoning and barfed all over Bellamy. Back then she’d thought she would never not feel embarrassed around the guy ever again - or Octavia’s family in general for that matter - but then a few weeks later Bellamy had gone and accidentally broken Abby’s favorite fruit bowl, goofing around with the soccer ball inside Clarke’s house with Octavia, and she’d felt better about the whole puke-on-boy thing right away. Bellamy had kept insisting it wasn’t the same thing, but Clarke had been back to treating him like the brother she’d never had in a heartbeat anyway. No embarrassment whatsoever. He’d kind of had the being-puked-on coming she’d even declared after thinking about it more, stating her case that he shouldn’t have made fun of her for having gotten food poisoning at a place called Frank’s Sushi Empire in the first place.

She really can’t believe she told Lexa about that. All of that. And in such detail! But… the fighter is a really great listener. She hung on Clarke’s every word and genuinely seemed interested in everything Clarke had to say. It felt so good talking to her and Clarke remembers having to catch herself from monologuing too much. Then again, Lexa didn’t really seem to mind. Clarke even thought she looked kind of uncomfortable, when Raven came over at one point and started asking her question after question about her training and the fighting and just Lexa’s life in general. Lexa kept looking down at her drink as Raven babbled on.

Clarke has to grin as she remembers having a hard time keeping both herself and Raven standing upright, when Raven put all of her slightly swaying weight on her with her arms wrapped around Clarke’s neck. Despite what her friend kept telling everyone at the party the night before, Clarke knows she must be getting really nervous about her surgery. If the amount of shots she drained to the cheers of Bellamy and Jasper were any indication anyway.

Even though Lexa hadn’t said much over the span of the night, Clarke still remembers long moments where she’d just watch Lexa’s lips move as the woman told her about first meeting Lincoln and how her roommate and friend Anya was a handful with no sense of boundaries at times. She remembers not being able to hold back a huge smile at the badly hidden fondness in Lexa’s voice when she spoke of the two.

It wasn’t hard to figure out that Lincoln and Anya are definitely two of the most important people in Lexa’s life, and Clarke somehow finds herself really grateful that Lexa would tell her about them at all. It just seems like that isn’t really something Lexa does a lot. Talk. Share her life with people like that. And even though she doesn’t even know if that’s true or not, Clarke feels sort of… special.

Heaving a sigh she doesn’t really know the reason for, Clarke pushes herself off the doorframe she apparently leaned against during her pondering. The floor feels cold and a little sticky against her bare feet, as she shuffles toward the bathroom to finally refill her glass.

Distracted by the challenge of getting the aspirin pill back out from her cleavage without dropping the blanket from around her shoulders, Clarke squeals and jumps when someone calls out “Whatcha doing there, Galadriel?” in a loud voice.

“Fuck!” she curses, half glaring at a laughing Octavia and half cracking up herself, as the shock subsides. “Asshole!” she shortles and Octavia, who’s just pulling her head back around the corner to the living room and out of sight, snorts.
“Sorry!” her bodiless voice sounds over, but the ongoing laughter kind of takes away from the earnestness of the apology.

As Clarke walks past the bathroom door and into the open area, deciding to fill her glass in the kitchen instead, Lincoln’s grin comes into sight and then another. Octavia, Lincoln and the girl dressed as Indiana Jones – or Indiana Jane, whatever – are all lounging about the living room area and are very obviously amused about something. Her appearance, Clarke presumes. Octavia and her friend are chilling on the couch while Lincoln is occupying the arm chair across from them, his feet propped up on Octavia’s lap.

“Sorry.” Octavia repeats, looking up at Clarke. “But you’re just too easy.” She laughs again and Clarke just playfully narrows her eyes at her as she makes her way to the kitchen. She can’t really say anything against that. Unfortunately it really doesn’t take much to startle her and make her jump; which seems to be a source of great entertainment for all of her friends, but her dear roommates especially of course.

Somewhere in the back of her mind it registers with Clarke that the apartment is a fucking mess as she steps over Bellamy’s black bed sheet cape, but thankfully it seems she can’t really bring herself to care right now. That’s at least one positive thing about a hangover she thinks and then finally pops the pill.

“So how’d you sleep?” Octavia asks her when she makes her way back over to them. Clarke plops down on the couch between Octavia and the other girl. They smile politely at each other and Clarke really wishes she could remember her name, but her mind draws a blank.

“Fine.” Clarke answers and then amends. “Pretty well, actually. Last time I woke up after sleeping on the floor definitely felt a lot worse.”

“Last time you didn’t have a make-shift duvet mattress and human pillow.” Octavia points out and Clarke feels her cheeks heat up.

“Human pillow…”

“Well…yeah. I guess not.” She agrees and is slightly taken aback by how flustered she suddenly feels. She’s not usually shy about cuddling up to someone in a drunken state. Then again, usually the object of her intoxicated snuggling is one of her close friends. Not a hot, silent, kind of guarded girl she barely knows. And usually she doesn’t wake up alone in those situations either. “When did Lexa leave anyway?” she asks, directing the question more at Lincoln. He shrugs with an apologetic shake of his head.

“Sorry, no idea. Must have been after Octavia and I went to sleep. I thought she was still here, actually.”

“Last time you didn’t have a make-shift duvet mattress and human pillow.” Octavia points out and Clarke feels her cheeks heat up. Human pillow…

“Sorry, no idea. Must have been after Octavia and I went to sleep. I thought she was still here, actually.”

“She’s not?” Octavia asks, also seeming surprised.

Clarke just shakes her head. She’s not sure why, but she feels disappointed. She would have liked getting to talk some more with Lexa. She just feels like the night was way too short. Especially since she apparently just passed out at some point, because she can’t really remember falling asleep. All she remembers is the feeling of Lexa’s fingers in her hair.

Another sigh from Clarke makes Octavia grin again. “Headache?”

“Mh, yeah a bit.” Clarke hums and then leans against Octavia’s right shoulder, spreading the blanket over herself and tugging it in between herself and Lincoln’s feet. Octavia’s shoulder moves a little as Octavia keeps walking her fingers up Lincoln’s shins and then gently smoothing the material of his light grey jogger pants back down again, but Clarke doesn’t mind the small movement. In fact it’s
almost soothing.

“Thanks, by the way.” She remembers, her eyelids growing heavy as her eyes follow the repetitive motion of Octavia’s hands.

“For what?” O’s voice sounds absentminded.

“The water and aspirin.”

“The what?”

“Didn’t you put those there? Next to where I was sleeping?”

“No.”

“Oh.”

Frowning, Clarke considers if it’s realistic that Raven would have been thoughtful enough to do that, but comes to the conclusion that that’s highly unlikely, since the girl was pretty smashed herself. A thought comes to her.

“What about the blanket?”

“Honey, I didn’t put anything anywhere except my body into bed.” Octavia says and the girl next to Clarke chuckles and sucks her lips into her mouth to stop herself from grinning.

“Oh what, Toria! Got something to add?” Octavia suddenly throws at her over Clarke’s head, but Clarke can tell this must be some sort of inside thing or something that’s come up before, because both girls start chuckling in a friendly banter kind of way and Lincoln pulls his feet off Octavia’s lap as he sits up straighter in his chair.

“We were talking!” he says emphatically and the girl called Toria starts laughing for real now.

“Suuure!” she says and Clarke can practically feel the sarcasm dripping from that one single word.

“We were!” Lincoln throws his arms in the air and then huffs out an exhausted breath as he throws himself back into the arm chair.

Addressing Clarke this time, Toria grins, “Octavia sure was putting something somewhere last night, but it wasn’t your painkillers or blanket.”

“Oh my god!” Octavia squeals laughing and Clarke has to duck forward when her roommate flings herself at the other girl. “Shut up! We were just talking for fuck’s sake!”

Toria shrieks as well as she quickly scrambles to the other end of the couch and out of Octavia’s reach and Clarke kind of hates them both and girls and their shrill voices in general in that moment.

“We were. Just. TALKING!” Octavia pronounces through gritted teeth, lamely prodding her almost out of range friend with one of the couch’s throw pillows.

“That’s not what you said earlier.”

“I was joking!”

“Mhm, sure you were.”
“Oh my god.”

Finally Octavia gives up on whacking Toria and Clarke is allowed to lean back against the couch’s backrest again.

Both Octavia and Toria are still grinning and grimacing at each other, but Clarke is pretty sure they’re done with their antics and she lets her mind return to the important bit of information that just became clear to her.

It was Lexa. Lexa was the one who got her the water and aspirin. And Lexa must have also been the one who covered her with a blanket so she wouldn’t get cold at night.

It was Lexa.

And Clarke just can’t believe how fucking sweet that is.

“Oh shit!” Lincoln suddenly sucks in a breath and Clarke startles. Again.

“What?” Octavia asks, as he quickly stands up from the arm chair.

“It’s already eleven! Adrianna should be here any-“

At that moment the doorbell rings and Lincoln curses again, grabbing his phone from the coffee table and frantically looking around for anything else of his.

“Relax!” Octavia snorts. “It’s Adri. Just go get your stuff and I’ll buzz her in. She won’t care if she has to wait a little.”

While Lincoln rushes out of the living room and Octavia gets up to let Lincoln’s friend in, Clarke’s thoughts are already back with Lexa. She just can’t stop picturing Lexa doing those sweet things for her. Where did she even get the Aspirin from? She must have had it with her or asked someone, because Clarke really can’t imagine Lexa to be the type to just snoop in people’s medicine cabinets without their permission. And the blanket? Clarke looks down at the blanket that’s now pooling over her lap. It’s Octavia’s blanket, she’s sure of that. But Octavia said she wasn’t the one to give it to Clarke and Clarke believes her. She has no reason to lie. That just begs the question how Lexa would have gotten to it though. If Octavia and Lincoln went to bed before Lexa left, how did the fighter get it?

“Hey, loser.”

“Hi.”

Clarke looks up as she hears Octavia greeting Lincoln’s friend Adrianna and directs a welcoming smile toward the dark haired girl that’s just stepping over the threshold of their apartment.

“Hey.” The girl swipes her hand through the air in one big, slightly awkward wave and Clarke and Toria echo back.

“Where’s the hunk?” she turns back to Octavia as the latter closes the door behind her and Octavia tells her that he’ll just be a minute. As Octavia predicted Lincoln’s friend didn’t seemed bothered to have to wait a bit and just nods. “Alright.”

“Do you want something to drink?” Octavia offers and the other girl nods again.

“Sure, what do you have?”
“Ummm…” Octavia hums as she skips over into the kitchen. “We got…beer, water, vodka or some-“ she picks up an open carton of orange juice to smell it, but quickly pulls her head back and grimaces. “Yeah, just those.” She grins apologetically at the dark haired girl over the counter who chuckles.

“Water’s fine, thanks.” She smirks and then walks over and slouches down in the arm chair Lincoln sat in before.

“Hey, I’m Adrianna.” She introduces herself to Clarke and Toria again with another smile.


“Ah.” Adrianna nods and then Toria introduces herself as well, telling Adrianna that she has a class with Lincoln and Octavia. At that Adrianna snorts and grins at Octavia, who’s just walking back into the girl’s line of sight. Octavia sets a glass of water onto the coffee table in front of Adrianna.

“Is that the class you guys met in?” Adrianna inquires, but doesn’t wait for an answer. “I totally love that you asked him out.”

“Thanks, but that’s another class actually.” Octavia grins back, sitting down next to Clarke again. “He isn’t the TA in that one.”

Adrianna laughs, “Right! Did he-“ at that moment Lincoln walks back into the living room and Adrianna holds out her fist for him to bump, while she grins up at him. “Hey, did you tell her I sang ‘hot for teacher’ all day after you told me she was the one to ask you out?” she turns back around to Octavia, Clarke and Toria. “Totally couldn’t get that song out of my head for the rest of the week.”

Octavia chuckles. “Sorry.”

“She’s not the one you should be apologizing to!” Lincoln objects, pointing his finger at Octavia from underneath his leather jacket that’s thrown over his arm. “I couldn’t get her to shut up! It was so annoying!”

“Got it bad, got it bad, got it bad, she’s hot for teacher…” Adrianna starts singing just then, but can’t stop herself from laughing when Lincoln yells out “NO!” and playfully pretends to smother her with his jacket, halfway rolling on top of her on the chair.

“Oh my god, get off! You weigh like two hundred pounds, dude!” she fake coughs and tries pushing Lincoln off of herself. Lincoln just chuckles and rolls off her lap, before he jumps back up into an upright position.

“Fine. But for that comment you’re getting the Carter twins today.”

“Nooo! No, I’ll be good, I promise!” Adrianna immediately wails, grabbing at Lincoln’s leather jacket as he wants to step back. “Please, I’ll do anything! Just don’t make me handle those two brats again! I haven’t slept in like four days!”

“Why?”

“I just can’t sleep on Matt’s couch! It’s hard and uncomfortable and just ugh! I seriously need to get myself a place, man. I can’t stay there much longer. Have I told you that he actually yells in his sleep? He yells, Lincoln! I’m going to kill him if I don’t get out of there soon! So seriously, don’t unleash me on the Carters in this state! It wouldn’t be safe for them. Let Lydia do it! Lydia needs some distraction anyway, since Berry is back in town.”
Being completely lost at this point, Clarke considers asking to be caught up, but ultimately just doesn’t feel all that interested right now. She’d rather figure out where Lexa got the aspirin from and why she took off without saying goodbye. Even if Clarke fell asleep on her…she still could have said goodbye. Right?

“Okay, we gotta go.” Lincoln chuckles, dragging Adrianna out of the arm chair by his jacket, which she’s still holding in a death grip, and the girl throws her head back and groans.

“Fiinneee.”

Maybe she felt uncomfortable? Maybe Clarke misread the signs and Lexa wasn’t actually comfortable with her just lying down on her lap like that? Sometimes when she’s drunk, Clarke can’t really read signs like that. But no, that can’t be it. Lexa stroked through her hair! Surely she wouldn’t have done that if she had been uncomfortable? Why would she have left then? Clarke is sure she must have asked her to stay at some point. She knows she herself always hates having to go home drunk and in the middle of the night, so she habitually offers people to stay over at parties. She, Raven and Octavia usually just see it as a kind of big sleep over with alcohol. Alone the fact that she woke up to four party guests still in her apartment— not even counting Lincoln – should attest to that. But maybe she forgot? Maybe she forgot to ask her to stay? Would she have if Clarke had asked her to?

Clarke doesn’t know. And it really bothers her. More than she would have expected it to. So Lexa left, so what? Is it because she didn’t say goodbye? Is that what’s bothering her?

It faintly registers with Clarke that someone is calling out a goodbye to her and she absentmindedly echoes it.

She just wants to know if Lexa left just because, or if there was another reason; a reason that had something to do with her having gotten uncomfortable. Somehow Clarke just really hates the thought that Lexa might have been uneasy around her.

“Should we get going, too?”

“Sure, I’ll just grab my stuff real quick.”

“Clarke, do you want to come?”

“Hm?” Clarke looks up at Octavia, who’s now standing next to the kitchen island somehow, and notices that her friend Toria isn’t sitting next to her anymore either. Instead, she thinks she hears a door open somewhere.

Octavia looks at her expectantly and Clarke quickly reruns the last words she heard. Does she want to come. Come where?

“Um…”

“We won’t be that long, I promise. Raven won’t even be up by then, so it’s not like I’m trying to avoid clean-up. You might as well come with us. Have some coffee, clear that hangover you’re nursing there.”

Coffee. Right!

“Yeah sure, why not.”

“Really?” Octavia seems honestly surprised and Clarke just nods. Coffee sounds good. And even
though she doesn’t feel that hung over, clearing her head definitely couldn’t hurt. “Let me just get out of these clothes though.” She stands up and looks down at the by now not entirely white dress covering her body.

Octavia laughs. “Yeah, that’s probably a good idea.”

“You’re not going to run off on me again though, are you?” Clarke smirks and quirks an eyebrow at Lexa. Suddenly Lexa feels very aware of the two people standing behind them, as Clarke pulls her towards her face by her button-up collar, sternly wagging a finger at her with her other hand.

“Um…I-“

Clarke laughs, releasing her grip on Lexa, and leans back against the bathroom door. In the same movement she opens it, a little uncoordinatedly, and basically stumbles inside. The small yelp and giggle she lets out as she catches herself from falling make Lexa’s heart jump and she automatically takes one step closer to her.

“You okay?” she asks, slightly worried about Clarke’s not completely focused eyes and dopey unwavering smile.

“Sure! Are you okay?”

Another smirk.

“Yes.” Lexa answers shortly and then quickly turns around, when Clarke just starts pulling up her dress. “Um! I’m just going to-“Lexa gestures toward the other side of the hall and hurriedly draws the bathroom door closed behind her. From inside she can hear Clarke giggling again and then the girl sing-songs ‘Wait for me!’ and Lexa feels her cheeks heat up even more than they already are.

She really didn’t expect this. For the past half hour Clarke has been very obviously getting to a point where one could call her drunk and well… Octavia didn’t exaggerate when she described Patty Griffin. Drunk Clarke is very… affectionate. When Clarke found her, after filling up their drinks yet again about twenty minutes earlier, she chided Lexa for vanishing on her even though Lexa had literally just walked about five feet to the left from where they had been standing before. Octavia’s brother, the boy she thinks is called Murphy, and the shaggy haired one almost tripped over her on their way to one of the girls’ rooms. She’d moved back just in time, before the hollering boys trampled through, and before she knew it Clarke was standing next to her again and narrowing her eyes at her playfully. She’d told her it wasn’t very nice to leave a girl like that and then laughed when Lexa tried to explain herself.

Since then Lexa has practically just been trying to keep herself in check, because what was she supposed to do when a beautiful, sexy girl swayed into her and told her that she had thought her costume was Aphrodite at first, only in a suit. How does one react to that? And that giggle… If they’re talking about Greek myths she’s pretty sure that that’s what a siren’s call would sound like. Because the way her stomach flips whenever she hears it is definitely not in a friendly way. It’s very much out of her control as well and she doesn’t know how she feels about that. It feels … like standing on a swing.
“Gramps, no! Ugh, for fuck’s sake. That’s not your toy, man, come on!”

Torn from her thoughts, Lexa almost walks into Anya who steps into her way without warning.

“Come on, give it here.” Anya tries to pry a red squeaky bone with yellow dots from Gramps’ mouth to Lexa’s right. The dog won’t have it though and just wags his tails cheerfully and jumps from one side to the other, lowering his body almost to the ground, playfully staring at Anya.

“Graaamps…” Anya warns, but Lexa can see her lips pulling tighter in an attempt to keep from smiling at the mischievous pet.

Suddenly another dog comes racing towards them. He’s smaller than Gramps and a lot more hectic and Lexa almost can’t follow him as he dashes around and under Gramps, playfully snapping at the toy that Lexa supposes belongs to him.

“See? He wants it back! Come on, now, be a good dog. Don’t make old Anya wrestle you for it.”

At that Lexa has to snort. “You know he’s older than you, right?”

“Is not!” Anya protests, standing back upright and stretching her back.

“In dog years he is!” Lexa argues, while Gramps and the smaller dog start play-fighting for the toy, growling and jumping over one another.

“Oh, shut up. Look at him, he’s a fucking child.” She gestures at the grey speckled dog who’s currently chasing the other dog around a tree with a lolling tongue. Apparently the little one managed to reclaim his toy, but Gramps doesn’t seem to mind and when the dog gets called away and runs off he keeps running around the tree a few times on his own.

“Idiot.” Anya shakes her head and crosses her arms over her chest.

Lexa grins. He totally is.

“Alright. Now spit it out.” Anya suddenly turns to Lexa and Lexa lifts her brows.

“Hm?”

“You haven’t said anything about last night yet, but you’re clearly reliving it in great detail, since you didn’t even react when I called your stupid morning crunches stupid.” Anya points out, walking on back down the path they just came up, Gramps overtaking them in stride. “You and Blondie did the dirty, didn’t you!”

“What?! No!”

“Oh, come on! You’re super distracted! Something happened at that party.”

“Nothing happened! We didn’t even kiss!”

“Aha!” Anya stops and points her finger at Lexa triumphantly, before laughing out once and throwing her head back, before walking on.

“Aha, what?” Lexa counters, frowning annoyed at the other woman who’s grinning obnoxiously.

“You said even.”

“What?”
“You said you didn’t even kiss. Meaning there was something that would have warranted a kiss to possibly be had.”

For a second Lexa just stares at Anya. What?

“That makes no sense, Anya.”

“Sure it does, kid. Your brain is just too wrapped up in Blondie and whatever didn’t happen to see it.” Anya smirks and Lexa scoffs.

“You’re being ridiculous.”

Laughing again, Anya looks down and links Gramps’ lead back onto the patiently waiting dog’s collar.

“What you say, Commander Smitten.”

“Do you have everything? Toothbrush? Dale? What about-”

“Oh my god, yes, mom!” Raven rolls her eyes as she pulls the trunk of the car down and it thunders shut. As she turns to Clarke, she sighs. “I’ve got everything. Brushes for teeth and hair on board. I even remembered underwear, can you imagine that. So you can unclench now, please!”

Clarke wants to retort that she isn’t clench-y, but before she can say anything she startles when Octavia honks the horn from the driver’s seat.

“Can you gals hurry this up? I kind of want to hit the road before late morning traffic hits.” She shouts through the open passenger’s door.

It’s Tuesday morning and Raven and Octavia are ready to drive up to Seattle as planned.

“I’m coming, I’m coming!”

“Alright, alright, fine!” Clarke throws one last look through the car’s windows as if she could check the contents of Raven’s bags like that to make sure she has everything she needed for her stay at the hospital. “Alright, so…”

Raven takes another breath and gently puts her hands on Clarke’s arms. “I’m good, Griffin. Really.”

“Alright.” Clarke repeats again and nods more to reassure herself than anything else. With all the organizing and the party and everything else going on she hasn’t really had time to worry about Raven’s operation. Until about five minutes ago that is, when they had gotten everything packed into their car and Raven and Octavia were good to go. Just then it hit Clarke that Raven was about to leave to have surgery again in two days. And now she’s worried.

“Alright.” Raven echoes and smiles at Clarke, before giving her a quick hug, when an exasperated sigh sounds from the car. “And anyway, if I forgot anything you can just bring it with you tomorrow.”
“Right.” Clarke nods again, more in the moment. “Of course, just text me.”

“We will, now let’s go!” Octavia practically yells and Raven chuckles when Clarke and she hear the other girl curse under her breath.

“Alright, I better go, before the missus has me sleeping on the visitor’s bed the next couple of days.” Raven winks at Clarke and then grins as she walks to the passenger side of the car and gets in.

“Drive carefully!” Clarke urges caution, stepping closer to Raven’s window. Both of her friends roll their eyes at the same time.

“Goodbye, Clarke.” Octavia replies pointedly, as she starts the car. Clarke gets the hint and takes a step back from the car in surrender. Raven’s right. They’ll be fine. She’ll see them tomorrow anyway and the surgery will be fine, too. There’s no need to worry.

Instead of echoing the goodbye she just waves and then her two brunettes drive off. Raven lowers the window on her side and waves what looks like a grey and yellow sports bra out of it. Clarke kind of wants to know where she got that from so quickly, but she gets the joke.

After watching some old movie together once, Raven pointed out to Clarke and Octavia that it was a shame that people didn’t wave handkerchiefs at departures anymore and then decided to bring back that tradition. For the aesthetics, she said. Ever since then she’s almost always waved something when one of them went somewhere. This is a first for waving a bra though. Clarke isn’t sure if it’s the best tradition to establish however, when some dude on the sidewalk practically smashes his elbow into his buddy’s ribs. It looks rather painful.

It’s not even two hours later, when Clarke gets a text from Octavia. Well, from Octavia’s phone anyway. The little video of Octavia driving and singing along to the radio that precedes the text, indicates to Clarke that Raven must actually be the one in possession of Octavia’s phone. Either way, the text lets her know that Lincoln will pick up some things he left at their apartment some time after his shift that day.

She’s about to text back that that’s no problem, when Clarke suddenly halts. After his shift.

He’s working at the gym today, Octavia said.

For a moment Clarke doesn’t move, her fingers hovering over her phone, as thoughts arise in her head.

Wouldn’t it be much easier for Lincoln if she just brought him his things? She only has three classes today anyway and there’s a huge break in between the last two. She could just swing by the gym then and drop whatever it is off. She wanted to check out where he works anyway. Where Lincoln works. She wanted to check that out.

She has to correct her words four times before she sends a hurried text back to Octavia and Raven, asking if they could just shoot her his number in case she isn’t home or something. For some reason she doesn’t feel like explaining that she’s planning on bringing him his things instead. She tells herself it’s because she’s not a big texter.
His side punches shoot towards her ears in fast intervals. One, two, three, four, five, six, break, punch to the gut, repeat. She’s shielding herself well enough, but she can’t seem to get effective punches of her own in and it’s getting more and more frustrating. So much so, that Lexa catches herself growling through her gritted teeth as one particular hard side swipe almost unbalances her.

Desperate to get the upper hand again she decides to go for one of her back-up moves. In one swift movement she drops to the floor and pivots her body. The motion is so powerful that she manages to swipe Lincoln off his feet with both of her legs and is almost standing upright again right as his body hits the mat with a loud thud and a groan.

“Goddammit, I thought I had you this time!” he grumbles as he gets up. Lexa can tell that he’s at least partly actually sore over the fact that she was able to knock him down and she gets it. He dominated most of the sparring session. But luckily for her he let down his guard in a way she was able to take advantage of. She knows him. She knows he rarely expects low attacks like that and is kind of slow on his feet when it comes to ground-level swipes. She can’t think of one instant where he would have been able to jump clear fast enough. He always gets unbalanced at the very least by attacks to his ankles or knees.

“Let’s work more footwork into your routine,” Lexa suggests as they touch gloves. To not falsely come off as arrogant she truthfully adds, “and I definitely need to work on my upper body strength and speedy block-attack combos.”

Lincoln hums in agreement as he lifts his water bottle to his lips and tilts his head back, squirting water into his mouth.

The gym is pretty crowded for noon on a Tuesday and Lexa makes a mental note to crank up the air conditioning for when she’ll pass the control panel the next time.

Together she and Lincoln exit the ring and grab their towels from the ropes, before walking toward the back of the room, where they left their things. Well mainly Lexa’s things. In the morning, when they went for their routine warm-up rounds around the park outside the gym, Lexa asked Lincoln why he was wearing his wrist watch instead of his chest heart rate monitor. He told her, slightly grumpily, that he had forgotten his sports bag at Octavia’s and that he hadn’t had time to pick it up yet.

When he went on to tell her that he’d pick it up from the girls’ place after work, she was almost embarrassed by how interested she suddenly was. She just can’t help herself. Clarke intrigues her like no girl has in a long while. That happens though, right? It’s not like that’s so weird.

Right?

Either way, it took quite the amount of restraint not to burst out with some lame excuse to come with. The simple fact that she really couldn’t come up with anything that would even remotely make sense helped however. There was just no good reason why Lincoln would need her to come along or why she’d want to. Aside from the actual reason obviously, but there was no way she was going to tell Lincoln about her crush.
As they pass the reception area, Clayton looks up from his book and calls out a ‘good morning’. He always says good morning; no matter what time of day it is. As usual Lincoln replies with the actual time and Lexa just smiles and nods, pushing open the glass door.

The bar area has such a different feel from the rest of the gym that it’s almost like stepping into another building altogether. Unlike the gym’s other rooms, this one’s floor, ceiling and walls aren’t covered in sound-muffling grey carpet. Bright colors dominate the area. Spring green walls match pastel colored furniture and light brown, oak hardwood flooring. Two comfortable sofas hug the corners to the left, each forming a sitting area with two to three chairs and a coffee table in the middle. They’re next to always occupied, being the most popular spots in the bar area, but another four strategically well placed tables make for enough space and it usually doesn’t get too crowded.

At first Lexa was mystified why Indra would go to all the effort of adding another area to her gym and then make it a bar lounge, but she soon saw the genius of it. Not only do the gym members, getting discounts on most of the drinks, frequent the bar; ever since the gym has started hosting swimming lessons for children in the pool downstairs, the lounge is usually crawling with parents waiting for their kids.

The employees of the gym have taken to hanging out in there as well and it’s become a sort of general break spot to meet up and grab a bite together between shifts.

“There you guys are!”

Deb is easy to spot. She's wearing her usual bright-red Coca-Cola drop armhole tank over her sports bra and it's almost like a warning sign across the room. She's already seated at the bar, when Lincoln and Lexa walk towards it. The three of them agreed to have a little lunch between colleagues together today and since the bar now serves a small selection of light snacks and a healthy ‘meal of the day’ as well, they decided to stay in and profit from their employee discounts.

“Hey! Are we late?” Lincoln questions and lifts his wrist to check his pulse watch, even though he just called out the time to Clayton, while Lexa reflexively glances at the big clock hanging over the counter.

“No, no, but I’ve been here a bit.” Deb laughs and scoots one seat to the left to leave room for Lexa and Lincoln. There is almost always more than enough room for everyone to sit on the tables, but the staff usually prefer sitting at the bar to keep whoever is working it that day company as they have their break.

Today it’s the new girl Echo who mans the bar and Lexa greets her as she sits down. She still hasn’t really had much time to get to know Echo yet, but from what she can tell she seems alright. After the first shift they shared with her, Lincoln said, with a cheeky smirk, that the scowl that seems to be Echo’s resting facial expression kind of reminds him of Lexa sometimes. She wasn’t offended. In her eyes, Echo just seemed observant in her quiet way, and she can’t say she doesn’t see their resemblance in that.

“What’s the meal of the day?” Lincoln asks Deb next to Lexa and Lexa turns to the girl as well.

When Lexa first met Deb – being introduced to her by Lincoln – Lexa could immediately tell she was a bubbly personality. The first five minutes of that encounter mainly consisted of Deb very enthusiastically telling Lexa everything and anything she could come up with that had more or less to do with working at Indra’s gym and how Deb could already tell that Lexa would fit in perfectly with them. It was sweet and the girl's gigantic grin made Lexa almost smile herself, but it was also a lot. Especially for Lexa, who, back then, wasn’t even sure if she would stay in the city, let alone the gym, for much more than a couple of weeks.
As it so happens, however, she did stay. And working with Deb and Lincoln turned out to be just as well a fit as the dark-haired personal trainer had predicted.

“Mac and cheese.” Deb deadpans, before bursting into laughter from her own joke.

“Shrimp and tomatoes with kale couscous.” Echo answers instead and Lexa sees Lincoln’s eyebrows shoot up much like her own.

“Wow. That sounds…fancy.” He admits astounded and Lexa, too, is impressed. She knew Indra had planned on hiring someone who’d be able to cook a bit to introduce the new daily meals, but she didn’t expect Echo to be some sort of gourmet chef. Shrimp and tomatoes with kale couscous definitely sounded gourmet to her.

“Yah, well.” Is all Echo says however, before adding, “Three then?”

Lincoln and Lexa merely nod, while Deb confirms with an animated ‘Yesss’ and Echo turns around and starts preparing their food.

“Ugh, I’m starving.” Deb informs them, swiveling on the bar stool until she’s facing the both of them. She leans her left arm onto the counter and rests her head in it, heaving a sigh. “Two of my clients made great progress today though!”

“Julio and…” Lincoln guesses and Deb confirms his first pitch by adding another name. Lexa vaguely recalls a pretty overweight teenage boy and a fifty-something year-old woman as Deb continues telling them of her clients’ successes. She throws in a question here and there on Deb’s choice of workout regimes and Lincoln joins their discussion with shared interest. Both Lincoln and Deb have been working as personal trainers longer than Lexa has and she always likes hearing about their methods and ideas. Especially Deb’s new routine plan for overweight, disabled teenagers with limited leg mobility has caught Lexa’s attention. Her colleague first presented the concept to Indra two months ago and immediately got the green light to go ahead and introduce it into her personal training program. Lexa has been interviewing Deb more and more on the details of this new workout design and has been toying with the idea to collaborate with her on an amendment to develop a new regime for war veterans who have lost most or all mobility in their limbs. Maybe it could even help them improve the current training programs for amputees.

Just like that their conversation flows easily as per usual and before they know it, Echo is already placing three plates in front of them, mumbling “Don’t burn your beaks”, before wandering off towards the other end of the bar again.

“Oh my god, that smells so good.” Deb raves and then she’s already digging in with appreciative moans. Lexa has to agree with Deb’s obvious approval. The food is really pretty damn good.

“It’s delicious, Echo.” She offers as the girl comes over again to leave them some napkins and Lincoln and Deb hum in agreement, their mouths too full to speak.

Echo thanks her and then gets out her phone from the back pocket of her jeans as it vibrates. She smirks at the text, before throwing the dishtowel she just picked up over her shoulder, leaning back against the counter opposite the bar.

As it seems like there won’t be any more conversation from that end, Lexa looks over at her other colleagues. Deb is grinning at Lincoln, who’s still engrossed with his food. When she notices Lexa looking, she mimics wiping something from her cheek and Lexa understands that Lincoln must have something on his face. Deb nods for Lexa to hand her her cell phone that’s lying closer to Lexa on the bar counter, since she changed seats earlier when Lexa and Lincoln arrived. Lexa tries to be as
inconspicuous as possible as she takes the phone and then quickly reaches it over to Deb behind Lincoln’s back. Even though Lincoln moves to see what’s going on, the mission is successful. Deb snaps a picture, or possibly multiple, and then lets out a triumphant ‘HA!’ that makes Echo jump. After mouthing sorry to Echo, who frowns at them and then vanishes in the small kitchen, Deb immediately looks down at her phone and starts cackling.

“What?” Lincoln asks, but doesn’t need an answer as he feels his own face. His hand freezes a second and then he throws it over in a fruitless attempt to snatch the phone from Deb’s hands. “Please don’t snap that.” He almost whines, lowering his hand to his knee in defeat.

“Oh, come on, Lincoln. It’s funny!” Deb argues, showing both him and Lexa the picture she took of him.

Lincoln groans, but Lexa doesn’t think it looks that bad. The angle and the way he’s sitting make his arm muscles look rather impressive and aside from the sauce on his cheek his somewhat surprised look could be called cute by some. Especially by Octavia, who Lexa guesses is the one Lincoln is worried about seeing the picture. Lexa also knows that Deb would never just put a picture of someone else on Snapchat without their permission. Apparently Lincoln doesn’t really mind that much though.

“Ugh, fine.” Lincoln sighs in that moment and Deb grins broadly, looking back down at her phone. “It’s cute anyway.” Deb comments as she does whatever one needs to do to send a picture on Snapchat.

Lexa doesn’t have Snapchat. In fact, until two months ago Lexa didn’t even have a smart phone. But then Anya convinced her that it would be a lot more convenient and Lexa caved. She doesn’t really use her phone much though. Mostly just for listening to music and chatting with Anya. Lincoln usually just texts her stuff like where to meet for their morning run or links to something on Instagram he posted or thinks she might like. Sometimes she gets a call from Indra or even Gustus, but that’s about it. Lincoln, Deb and Lexa have given out their phone numbers to their clients as well in case they need to cancel sessions or something like that, but fortunately that only happens very rarely. Lexa doesn’t like the idea of too many people having her number. The more people have it, the harder it is to control who gives it out, and that just doesn’t sit right with her. She likes knowing who has the means to contact her and anyway, all the people she wants to talk to know how to reach her.

Well, almost all…

“So what happened to your chest monitor, man?” Deb mumbles through a mouthful of food and Lexa almost lets her mind wander again, when Lincoln starts reiterating the story again, but then his next words catch her off guard.

“Ugh, I forgot my gym bag at Octavia’s the other day. It’s fine though, her roommate’s gonna bring it by actually.”

“What? Roommate? What roommate? Clarke? She’s bringing you your bag? Here? She’s bringing your bag here?” the onslaught of questions escapes Lexa before she can stop herself. Lincoln and Deb are both staring at her now and she quickly feels heat rise to her face. Crap.

“I mean…” she tries to think of a way to undo the embarrassment, but her mind is suddenly blank. Her heart on the other hand is pounding and she really hopes they can’t see it. She feels like she’s practically vibrating in her seat.
“Yes, here.” Lincoln answers very slowly, still seemingly trying to figure out what kind of word-vomiting demon has possessed her.

Lexa just nods. It’s all she can do.

Clarke is going to bring Lincoln his stuff. Here. To the gym.

“W-” she clears her throat when the word gets stuck and prays she can play it off by taking a bite of her food. She doesn’t really taste it. “When?” she finally mumbles as casually as possible, chewing on a dried tomato.

“I don’t know, she said she’d drop by after her class.” Lincoln looks down at his wrist watch, but before he can say anything more someone calls out his name.

“Lincoln!”

At the sound of that voice Lexa whips around in her chair and almost loses her balance. It’s Clarke.

“Oh, hey, Clarke! We were just talking about you!” Lincoln greets her, sliding off his chair. Clarke smiles at him.

“Only good things I hope.” Clarke says and then she looks at Lexa.

And Lexa chokes.

The horrible feeling of something lodging in her throat temporarily distracts Lexa from anything else and she starts coughing uncontrollably.

She hears Clarke call out “Oh my god!” and then Lincoln’s strong hand is patting her back quite forcefully. It’s not enough however and as tears spring up into Lexa’s eyes she thinks this is it. This is how she will die. At least if she gets her wish, because she certainly can not live on after having embarrassed herself this much in front of Clarke.

Somehow she’s off her seat now. Her body shakes with the violent coughs and her head feels like it might explode from the pressure. As if things couldn’t get any worse, Lexa feels Lincoln retract his hand and then two different arms reach around her from behind. Someone is pushing against her solar plexus with all their might.

The Heimlich maneuver works and whatever got stuck in her esophagus comes shooting out. Finally she can breathe again.

She sees spots dancing in front of her eyes. Her heart is pounding in her ears and against her chest as if it were fighting for her life. Lexa is dizzy. As she drags in painful mouthfuls of air between coughs, she suddenly hears a quiet “Are you okay?” next to her ear. From one second to the next all she feels are Clarke’s arms that are still loosely wrapped around her from behind and all she wants to do is first wrap them more tightly around herself and then die and vanish in the ground forever.

This cannot be happening…

“Lexa? Are you okay?” Deb inquires as well and for the first time Lexa looks up. Deb and Lincoln and what seems like just about anybody else in the gym’s bar are staring at her and really that dying thing… it’s welcome to happen any time now.

“I’m fine. I’m fine.” Lexa mumbles, hoping against hope that nobody notices her wiping away the tear or two that spilled over when she was choking. Oh god…
Where did it go?

With horror Lexa realizes that whatever had been lodged in her throat came spewing out about a few seconds ago. It’s kind of like watching a traffic accident the way her eyes try to avoid seeing what she’s looking for, while she’s searching the general area it must have landed in. To her relief she can’t find anything however and is left praying nobody actually saw it happen. Especially Clarke.

The blonde has withdrawn her arms from her by now and has stepped around Lexa to look at her as well.

Lexa sees worry in her eyes and quickly looks away. “Are you sure?” Clarke questions, her hand reaching out to touch Lexa’s shoulder in concern. Jerking back Lexa nods, her eyes dropping to the floor.

“Yeah. I’m fine.”

“Alright.”

There’s a silence and Lexa is painfully aware of the fact that the gym’s bar area is never usually this quiet. Another second goes by until Echo’s unimpressed voice finally breaks the spell.

“Here, drink this. And just for the record, it’s not my fault you can’t chew. Nobody else choked on my food.”

It’s a glass of water and Lexa is thankful for the excuse to turn away from Clarke and her colleagues. She notices her own hand shaking a bit as she reaches for the glass on the bar and then takes as long as possible to drink from it. She doesn’t want to face them again.

“That was hella impressive!” Deb suddenly exclaims and as she hears Clarke waving off the compliment, Lexa is glad to detect all the common noises returning to the scene. People are starting to chat in the background again, cutlery is being clinked against plates and when Echo pushes a button on the coffee machine the following loud rumbling almost feels like a security blanket around Lexa’s racing heart.

She takes another second and a deep breath before she is ready to face the others again, but when she turns around they seem to have moved on to questioning Clarke on her experiences visiting some hospital. Did she say her mother worked there? Deb and Lincoln seem engrossed in Clarke’s story, but the girl herself shoots Lexa a glance every now and then and seems to rush her own words.

She ends the retelling on a hasty ‘anyway, they only let the kids have vanilla milk after that’ and while Lincoln and Deb laugh she takes a step closer to Lexa again. Lexa tenses up.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Clarke asks again, quiet enough so only Lexa could really hear her. Lexa nods once.

“Yes. Thank you, Clarke.” She remembers to thank the girl this time. She can’t believe she forgot to do that until now.

Clarke looks like she wants to say something more, but thankfully she doesn’t. She does gently touch Lexa’s arm with her hand however, and for a moment Lexa feels like she’s not getting enough oxygen again when her head starts swimming.

“Maybe you should sit down.” Clarke suggests and Lexa wants to protest.

Before she can, however, both Deb and Lincoln have reclaimed their seats at the bar and Echo is
bringing another bar chair from the kitchen for Clarke. She places it to Lexa’s right and Lexa really wishes she hadn’t done that. Now she’ll be sitting right in between Lincoln and Clarke and smack in the middle of any conversation. Nowhere to hide. No time to regain some sense of control or dignity.

She’s readiness herself for some more questions that would remind everyone of the horror scene worthy of her nightmares that just took place, but then something unexpected happens. Clarke smirks at her. She smirks at her and her chest shakes a bit from suppressed laughter and instead of making everything worse, the opposite effect occurs. In an instant Lexa feels better and the fact that she just literally choked in front of her secret crush and then proceeded to have to be saved by said crush doesn’t seem so bad anymore when quiet, hoarse laughter escapes the blonde.

“You know you could have just asked for a hug.” Clarke teases then, her eyes twinkling in amusement. Lexa’s lips spread into an involuntary smile and her ears feel like they’ve just been lit on fire.

“She mumbles and Clarke laughs some more.

They finish their meal rather uneventfully after that - to Lexa’s great relief - although Lincoln has to eat the rest of Lexa’s food. Somehow she doesn’t feel like it anymore.

Lexa is surprised at how easy it is to talk to Clarke. She shouldn’t be, really. They had no trouble conversing at the party. Still, she would have expected it to be different in a setting like this, but it’s not.

“So,” Clarke clears her throat just then and Lexa notices that her eyes dart down to her hands for a second. “why didn’t you stick around after the party? People are always welcome to stay over, you know. Didn’t I mention that?”

When Clarke looks back up at her, Lexa can feel her stomach flip. It’s not just that Clarke’s eyes are really beautiful anymore. It’s the way she’s looking at her.

“Yeah, you did.” Lexa admits honestly. And after a beat or two adds, “A couple of times actually.”

If she’s completely truthful to herself, she’s kind of hoping to elicit a reaction with her bluntness. She’s just curious how Clarke will respond, since it doesn’t seem like the other girl can recall exactly all that happened that night. She just wants to know how much of whom she was interacting with at the party was Clarke and how much was just Party-Griffin. Somehow she hopes the two are not all that different after all.

“Oh.” Clarke nods. “Right, that’s good then.”

For a moment Lexa thinks Clarke looks disappointed about something, but then the expression changes and Lexa isn’t sure what she saw.

“So why didn’t you stay then? Lincoln did.” Clarke asks lightly, swirling the last sips of her drink in her glass.

“Um, I… I just prefer sleeping in my own bed.” Lexa shrugs, now looking down at her hands
herself. It’s the truth. She does much rather sleep in her own bed. Especially if the alternative is merely a duvet on a floor. Because that’s the only alternative that would have been possible. Not Clarke’s bed. Lexa’s been reminding herself of that all the time since she passed Clarke’s bedroom on her search for something to cover Clarke up with the night of the party. The girl had started shivering a bit after she fell asleep with her head in Lexa’s lap and Lexa went looking for a blanket or something else to keep her warm. She considered returning Clarke’s head to her lap after she had draped the blanket she had found on the couch in the living room over the sleeping girl’s body. But somehow it didn’t feel right. She felt restless and out of sorts and finally decided to just go home. Not before-

“I get that, I guess. I wished I had slept in my own bed the next morning, too.” Clarke chuckles and then suddenly she seems to decide something as she pauses and then tilts her head to the side, eyeing Lexa curiously.

Immediately Lexa tenses up. Somehow she’s very anxious what this look might be about.

“Did you by any chance get me that glass of water and the painkillers?”

For a second Lexa considers lying. She’s not sure why, but she feels very shy all of a sudden. Maybe shy isn’t the right word. Maybe she’s worried. Even though there’s no way Clarke could know that she thought about snooping through their medicine cabinet for a split second, before asking Raven for the pills ultimately, she feels caught.

She realizes Clarke is still waiting for an answer, but she still can’t make up her mind what to say. Finally she just dares a small, wordless smile.

She’s grateful when Clarke seem satisfied with it. In fact, the way Clarke looks at her in reciprocation makes her sure the smile was the right choice. All actions leading to that look must have been made by a genius.

Time flies and when Lincoln takes a deep breath and tells Lexa they better get going on the exhale, Lexa is almost confused for a second.

“Already?”

Lincoln snorts. “It’s almost three.”

“Really?”

“Oh my god! I have class!” Clarke exclaims in shock and jumps up from the stool next to Lexa. “Shit!”

Lexa quickly slides off her own seat as she watches Clarke wrestle back into the jacket she draped over the round seating surface earlier.

“Hey, thanks for bringing my stuff again, Clarke.” Lincoln thanks her again as he and Deb stand up as well. “You really didn’t have to.”

“No, it was honestly no problem. I wanted to know where the magic happens anyway.” Clarke waves him off nonchalantly. At her last words her eyes find Lexa and again Lexa thinks to detect a small smirk. “I mean, you know, the training. For the fights.” she amends, still looking at Lexa, who raises her eyebrows.

Clarke’s eyes seem to laugh as Lexa struggles how to react. What is she supposed to say to that? She just opens her mouth to reply, when Deb does so first.
“Maybe next time we can give you a tour.” Deb offers with a sweet smile and Clarke mimics it with a nod.

“Yeah, that’d be nice.” With a look down at her watch, she curses again. “Fuck! Okay, I really have to go!”

Before Lexa can really say anything, Clarke has already hugged her and is moving on to hug Lincoln and Deb as well.

“It was nice meeting you.” Deb says as Clarke lets go of her and picks up the backpack she leaned against the foot of the bar before she sat down with them.

“You, too!” Clarke replies and then she shoots another quick glance over at Lexa again. “And it was really nice seeing you again.”

Lexa wants to reply something of the kind, but all she does is nod. She’s never been a big talker, but usually it’s by choice.

Clarke only mirrors her and then, just like that, she’s gone.

“She’s cool!” Deb immediately bursts out, sliding back onto her chair.

Even though Lincoln and Lexa have to get back to work, Deb doesn’t have her next client for another hour and by the looks of it she’s decided to spend at least some more of that time at the bar. Maybe she’ll try out that new protein shake they just got in. Lexa thinks Deb might have mentioned something like that while Lexa was talking to Clarke.

“And did you see how quickly she reacted when Lexa was choking?” Deb continues conversationally and all of a sudden Lexa is reminded of just how embarrassing the encounter really was.

“Yeah, that was really impressive!” Lincoln agrees, bending down to pick up the bag Clarke brought over. “I didn’t think they learned that so early! She’s not even in med school yet.”

“She’s gonna be a great doctor.” Deb says matter-of-factly, as if she knew for sure.

Despite desperately wanting not to think of this at all anymore, Lexa has to agree. Clarke really did react perfectly. She hasn’t really had time to think about it, but now that she does she comes to the realization that Clarke basically saved her life today. Or at least possibly did.

“Yeah, hey, are you okay by the way?” Lincoln turns to Lexa again, placing a gentle hand on her shoulder.

“Yeah, I’m fine!” Lexa quickly shoots back. She’s fine. She is! Feeling her face heat up again, she thinks she has probably in all her life never had that happen as much as in this past week. She kind of resents that, but at the same time kind of doesn’t. It’s all very confusing.

“Alright. Well, we gotta go. Tell me how the shake is later.” Lincoln points at Deb and Deb nods affirmatively.

“Will do.”

“Oh, and could you ask André to get me some more of those awesome French sweets?” Lincoln remembers, but Deb frowns.
“Um, André moved out.”

“What?” Lincoln bobs his head back in surprise. This is news to Lexa as well. When did Deb’s roommate move out? She thought he’d be here another month before his internship ended and he’d move back to France.

“Yeah, didn’t I tell you? He moved out last weekend! He got the job he was hoping for back home and they’re allowing him to finish the rest of the internship at a subsidiary company near his hometown!” she beams, obviously very happy for her roommate. Well, ex-roommate apparently.

“That’s great!” Lincoln says and Lexa agrees as well.

“Yeah! He was so happy!” Deb tells them with a big smile on her face. But then she presses her lips together and lets out a sigh. “I’m sure going to miss him though.”

“He was a cool guy.” Lincoln nods understandingly, but then suddenly draws in a loud breath that startles both Lexa and Deb alike. “Hey! So, does that mean you’re looking for a roommate right now?”

“Yeah, I am.” Deb confirms slowly, a curious expression on her face as to where Lincoln is going with this.

“That’s great! Listen, I have this friend who works with me over at the Ark and she’s looking for a place! She’s awesome, I swear! Totally chill, super nice and funny, too! I bet you two would get along great!”

“Awesome!” Deb immediately straightens up in her seat, obviously excited at these news. “I wasn’t looking forward to casting a new roommate anyway! Do you think she’d have time to meet up sometime this week?”

“Sure!” Lincoln replies, seeming equally excited. He reaches inside his shorts pocket and gets out his phone. “Here, I’ll give you her number. She’ll be so psyched!”

“Yay!” Deb claps her hands and bounces on her bar stool.

“Should I text her your number, too, or should I just tell her to expect your call?” he asks once Deb has saved the number of his friend Adrianna in her phone.

“You can just tell her I’ll call her tonight after my shift? Do you think that’d be alright?”

“Definitely.” Lincoln nods and starts typing already.

There’s a few moments of silence as he composes the text, which are only interrupted by Deb’s continued vocal expressions of happiness and the general background noises of the bar.

“Alright, done!” Lincoln lifts his phone, before putting it back in his pocket. “I’ll let you know if she says tonight’s no good, but I’m sure she’ll be super excited about this!” he tells Deb, before giving her a quick hug. “Thanks, Deb.”

“Thank you!” Deb laughs, dangling her feet and grinning broadly.

Spotting her next client entering the gym through the bar’s open glass doors leading to the entrance area, Lexa reminds Lincoln that they have to go.

Together they leave to start the rest of their shift, Lincoln chattering happily about how well a fit he
thinks his friend Adrianna and Deb will be and Lexa pondering about the best way to tell Anya about what happened today without giving her ammunition for several years to come.

She can’t concentrate. Again.

It’s annoying Clarke so much that she groans out loud and earns some dirty looks from the people around her. Since her last class of the day got cancelled last minute due to illness or something – she barely skimmed the email she received from her professor – Clarke decided to spend the rest of the time until her train to Seattle would leave in the library.

Being her organized self she, of course, booked the train ticket in advance, which meant that she couldn’t just take an earlier one. That actually works out quite well for her though, since she always likes getting ahead in her classes, especially when she knows she’ll have some time to make up. It definitely makes her feel less guilty for having talked her way out of going to her classes the following days. Only the most heartless professor on earth would not have excused her from their class after reading the tale she spun for them.

It wasn’t exactly a lie, Clarke tells herself. Raven really was undergoing a potentially life changing operation and she truly is a sister to her. Professor Burkenstein doesn’t need to know that she meant that more in the philosophical sense than in a strictly traditional sense of blood relations.

Either way she’ll have to stay on top of the classes she’ll be missing one way or another and getting a head start on the material that’ll be discussed in her absence definitely doesn’t hurt. Or at least it wouldn’t hurt. If she could actually concentrate. But once again, as so often lately, her thoughts just drift off and it’s unusually hard for Clarke to pull herself together and focus.

In his world-famous novel ‘1984’ George Orwell paints a picture of a dystopian …

Painting. She hasn’t done that in a while. Actually aside from a three-piece charcoal work of her old childhood home she did while she was visiting her mother in Seattle over the summer two years ago, she hasn’t really touched her art supplies in forever. Lately her hands have been itching to draw again however. Images of swirling green eyes, muscled, sweaty arms with intriguing tattoos and a jaw-line that could cut you by the looks of it keep screaming to be immortalized on paper.

Slowly Clarke is beginning to question whether her fascination with the beautiful fighter is merely caused by Lexa’s mysterious demeanor or if more is at play here. She can’t deny that Lincoln’s friend has been on her mind more than any random new person in her life would be. She also can’t deny that she’s been flirting with her.

At the party it might simply have been the alcohol - Clarke knows she gets very flirtatious with a few drinks in her. But what about yesterday? The fact that she wanted to see Lexa again so soon alone was something to note, but then at the gym they talked and …well, Clarke teased her. It just came naturally to her. She found herself utterly enjoying the fact that she could make the personal trainer bashfully look down when she told her she could have just asked her for a hug and her body still remembers the way her stomach flipped and her heart started racing, when she hugged Lexa goodbye. Really, who wouldn't have had a reaction like that though. Clarke almost had a heart attack from just looking at Lexa. She was wearing black fitness tights that practically looked like a second
skin and a black sports bra was clearly showing underneath her open, grey hoodie sweater.

In any case, as brief and casual as that last contact was, it stuck with her, and now she can’t stop thinking about it. Lexa’s arms quickly wound around her, as Clarke hugged her, and it was even endearing to Clarke that Lexa must not have expected the contact. Somehow she can’t get enough of the shy, slightly awkward side the woman has shown her so far. It makes her feel confident and even a little giddy, when she gets the tough fighter to look away or stumble over her words. At the same she finds herself eager to get to know other sides of her as well. All sides of her. She wants to know all sides of Lexa.

If she didn’t know any better, she’d think she was crushing on Lexa. All the signs seemed to point to that. But she wasn’t gay. She’d never been into a girl, had never felt sexually attracted to a woman before – not more than any other girl would be anyway – and she definitely had never seen herself in a relationship with another woman either. She tries to remember how Raven described the way it felt to realize she was into girls. What did she say? It was like taking off glasses she never needed? Like ‘finally shedding the heteronormative scales from her eyes’ and seeing clearly for the first time?

This doesn’t feel like that. Clarke doesn’t feel different. No, that’s wrong. She does feel different. She feels distracted and all over the place. She feels eager to see Lexa and she feels excited but also content when she does. But she doesn’t feel different on a larger scale. She doesn’t feel like she’s changed or had some big revelation. She just feels… keyed up and unsettled. Really good, but unsettled. Is that a crush?

With a sigh she gives up on getting anywhere with the literature analysis they would have to do for her Satire class next week. Professor Burkenstein was nice enough to let her know the assignment the class would be given tomorrow beforehand so she could already get started and still hand it in in time, despite her ‘family emergency’. As it looks, however, Clarke will just have to take another run at it some other time.

Outside it’s getting colder day by day and Clarke pulls the big hood of her jacket over her head for warmth when she leaves the library.

It isn’t actually hers. At least it didn’t use to be.

It was her dad’s.

After her dad died, she took it. At first, it was just to smell him, keep him alive in her memory and feel like he was still there with her. Wrapping herself up in it almost felt like her dad was hugging her. Only emptier. But still, it held his essence in its folds and fibers and even when, after a while, her dad’s scent started to fade, Clarke couldn’t let go of the old jacket. It is a pale, worn shade of moss green, not very flattering and way too big for her, but Clarke doesn’t care. She’s worn it every winter since the day she first put it on. There are two places where she has had to repair it already, but she can’t imagine ever wearing another jacket again. It feels too much like part of her dad as that she could ever let it go. It’s why she likes winter now.

On the way to the train Clarke stops at one of her favorite places in Portland. ‘The Waffle Window’. Sometimes, when Clarke feels overwhelmed, sad, nostalgic, indecisive or basically any other emotion along those lines, she likes to come here and order after her heart’s content. Octavia would call it stress eating, but Clarke likes Raven’s description better. It’s soul food.

Right now there’s definitely cause to bury herself in Bananarumbas and when the Barista hands over the delicious smelling dessert, Clarke hums in anticipation.

As she wanders down the street, happily munching away on her waffle, Clarke tries to clear her
thoughts. She just wants some peace and quiet in her head for once. Can’t she just think of nothing for a change? Not Raven’s surgery, not how complicated things with her mother are and why she didn’t tell her about Callie being back, not how she’ll manage to hold the job she just got back once she gets accepted to do an internship at a hospital and definitely not the way she loves it when she gets Lexa’s lips to spread into a smile even when she doesn’t seem to want to.

Clarke inspects her surroundings in an effort to stop her mind from wandering and churning on and on.

To her right, on the other side of the road, there are wild, unruly looking bushes on top of an old stone wall and she can see trees behind them. A little further down the road she can just make out the entrance to the park under two lanterns. The sky is well on its way to turning from blue to black and Clarke can even spot some stars up there already. There’s a light breeze and with the hand that isn’t holding her waffle, Clarke zips her dad’s hooded jacket all the way up.

Turning her gaze to her left, Clarke’s eyes wander from house to house, trying to find something interesting about them, but all she accomplishes is to get annoyed as she wonders what Lexa’s apartment building might look like.

She’s relieved when Octavia calls just then and for the rest of her walk they just chat and Octavia promises to pick Clarke up from the train station once Clarke arrives in Seattle. They hang up when it’s time for Clarke to board and for the next few minutes Clarke is busy trying to find her seat. Finally she spots the right combination of numbers and letters and gratefully accepts a man’s offer to help her heave her heavy backpack up into the overhead compartment. She thanks the stranger and then sinks down onto the soft, blue cushion. Even though she booked the seat pretty late, she still managed to get a place at the window and as the train slowly falls into motion she sighs and turns her gaze to the world outside. Trees and houses seem to take up speed as they zoom in and out of her view. Tiredly she opens her jacket and crosses her arms under her breasts. As her arms press against her own solar plexus Clarke thinks back to the gym. She can’t believe she performed the Heimlich Maneuver on Lexa! What a weird day.

She must have fallen asleep, because when she wakes with a start it’s pitch-black outside the window and she discovers, surprised, that they’re already in Tukwila. After stretching her stiff muscles a bit, she stands up and tugs her backpack down from the luggage shelf above her head. It comes down harder than she anticipated in her still sleepy state and only very nearly misses hitting her in the face. She’s awake after that.

As promised Octavia is right there at the train station, waiting for her. The brunette is casually leaning against one of the black poles on the platform, her left foot propped up against it. She’s watching her as Clarke walks towards her, giving her a sympathetic smile. Once she reaches her, Clarke groans and rests her body against Octavia’s, her forehead pushing against the other girl’s shoulder.

Octavia chuckles against Clarke’s hair. “Tired?”

“Mhm.” Clarke pouts and then takes a big breath, before pulling herself together and pushing away from her friend.

“Come on, let’s get you home then.”

Since visiting hours are already over and Raven should be getting some rest anyway, they agreed that Clarke and Octavia would head straight home to the Griffin house from the train station. They’d come to the hospital first thing in the morning.
“Oh, by the way, your mom’s out of food, so I hope you’re not hungry.”

Clarke frowns. Her mother was never out of food. Especially when she knew Clarke and the girls were coming to visit. To be fair, this time Raven wouldn’t be there and Raven usually put a considerable dent in the food supply, but still.

“That’s weird.”

Octavia just shrugs as they cross the parking lot. “I don’t know, maybe she’s on a diet?”

Clarke grimaces. That doesn’t sound like her mother. After all, she’s the one Clarke gets the ‘stress eating’ from. Maybe she’s just been pulling a lot of extra shifts at the hospital and hasn’t had time to stock up on food. Clarke makes a mental note to investigate more on the subject nevertheless.

Fortunately, Clarke isn’t hungry anyway and after they get to the house they barely chat an hour in front of the fire place, before there’s more yawning than conversing and the two decide to hit the hay early. Tomorrow would be a long day.

Back in her old room, for the second time in a month, Clarke thinks of Lexa before she falls asleep on her yellow, square lion pillow.

Clarke wakes twice that night. Both times quickly fading images of cold, but terribly familiar green eyes and the distant ringing of Raven’s horrible screams haunt her, before she can fall back asleep.

Lexa can’t sleep.

It’s three in the morning and she just. Cant. Sleep.

Again!

It’s the second night in a row that her mind just won’t quiet down. That next to never happens. Dreading having to get up for training more and more with each passing minute, Lexa watches the alarm clock on her night stand with growing resentment. It’s seems to be mocking the fact that she can’t get any relief. She’s tired and grumpy and she wishes she could just get her mind to shut up about Clarke already. The blonde woman has been on her mind literally nonstop since she stopped by the gym on Tuesday. It’s unbelievable! Even during dinner that day she couldn’t shake her memories of that raspy laugh and Clarke’s smirks. Thankfully Anya was in a good mood and merely teased Lexa about it rather than getting annoyed at her or even hurt. She would have been rightfully so, too, since Lexa couldn’t focus on anything Anya was trying to tell her for the life of her.

Finally Lexa just came out with it and told Anya about Clarke’s visit to the gym. She told her about choking and how Clarke helped her, at which point Anya was laughing so hard that she got a bit of
coke up her nose and started coughing herself.

“Heimliched her way right into your heart, huh?”

Anya is still splattering, but doesn’t seem to care much. Lexa silently hands her a napkin from the sideboard behind her. She knew Anya would react like this. She knew she’d get made fun of for choking in front of Clarke and she knew Anya would laugh. She didn’t really expect Anya to choke, too, but Lexa guesses that’s just as well. At least this way she could maybe remind Anya that she wasn’t the only one choking that day, whenever she might bring it up to tease her in the future. She doubts Anya would be as embarrassed by that as she was however.

“Are you done?” Lexa deadpans, watching Anya slipping into another laughing fit once her coughing has subsided.

It takes Anya two more tries before she can pull herself together. “Oh my god, it hurts.” She holds her sides as if she had just run a marathon. “Thank you for that, Lex. I couldn’t have wished for anything more after today. Who cares that I had to fire the new bartender already, because Sarah was about ready to punch him for his constant sexist comments.” She lets out another round of chuckles and then takes a big breath and leans back in her chair.

Lexa raises her eyebrows.

Despite the teasing she’s still expecting some kind of serious comment from Anya. Somehow she really wants to hear her friend’s opinion on how embarrassed she should actually be about the whole thing and whether she thought that Clarke was flirting as well. Lexa kind of hates that she wants to talk about this at all. It feels like gossiping. Like some lame, high-school bullshit and she never cared for that.

Correctly interpreting Lexa’s expression, Anya seems to sort her thoughts before she starts talking.

“Well, I mean it doesn’t seem like anybody cared about the choking though, right?” Anya asks, her lips still twitching a little at the word ‘choking’, but otherwise commendably straight-faced.

Lexa shrugs, her arms wrapped tightly around her own chest. “I guess.” She thinks back for a second. “I mean, they mostly just cared if I was okay, but they didn’t make a huge thing out of it.” ‘Not like you.’ Lexa adds in thought, but holds her tongue. She really just wants to hear what Anya really thinks about the whole mishap and everything around it.

“Well, there you go.” Anya leans forward again and wipes up the rest of the spilled coke with her already somewhat soggy napkin.

For a moment Lexa remains silent. Then she frowns. “But…don’t you think she’ll think I’m really …” she doesn’t want to say lame. That sounds too childish. Too whiney. Too immature.

“…inept?”


Lexa rolls her eyes. “You know what I mean.” She glares at Anya. Why does she always have to mock Lexa’s vocabulary? She’s been doing that ever since she first laughed at Lexa for using the word ‘unencumbered’ correctly, after settling a debt of candy bars with another foster sibling of theirs. Anya had a laughing fit back then, too. She asked Lexa if she even knew that she was nine and which foster home had made her watch British Jeopardy.
“Alright, alright.” Anya relents. “Did Blondie seem like she thought you were too stupid to swallow? Did she make fun of you?”

“She teased me about it.” Lexa tells Anya, remembering with a small flip of her stomach how Clarke said she should have just asked for a hug.

“Mean teasing or flirty teasing?” Anya questions and Lexa clenches her jaw. She’s not sure. It definitely didn’t seem like Clarke was making fun of her, but maybe… maybe that was just wishful thinking. Maybe Clarke really did think Lexa was just this weird and awkward girl. Maybe..

“Hey. Earth to Lexa. Will you get out of your head?” Anya orders and as she speaks the words Lexa gets kicked in the shin. Hard.

“Ow! What the hell, Anya!” she jerks back, her chair scraping over the kitchen floor. “That hurt!” she complains, frowning as she rubs the spot Anya kicked her in.

“If you don’t want to get kicked, don’t get all up in your head! I can see the self-doubting bullshit all the way over here!”

“I’m not-“

“Don’t even.” Anya interrupts and Lexa falls silent.

After a minute of eyeing Lexa sternly, waiting for her to talk again, Anya lifts her head victoriously.

“Alright then.”

Huffing in slight frustration, Lexa returns her arms to cross over her chest.

“Now listen to me, Girl-Bambi.” Lexa grimaces at the old nickname. She’s always hated that. “Stop over-thinking this. Blondie likes you. She liked you all badass and sweaty in the ring and she liked you all awkward and Girl-Bambi-in-headlights at the party. I’m sure-”

“I wasn’t-“

“I’m sure she liked playing doctor, too.” Anya talks over her, holding up a finger to shut Lexa up. “So, stop going all Lexa and overanalyzing everything! It’s annoying!” Anya ends sternly, frowning at Lexa.

Lexa knows she doesn’t mean it. It’s just Anya. She can’t just end an uplifting speech on a complimenting note. That would be way too sappy. Lexa has to hide her grin.

“Got it?”

Lexa nods. “Got it.”

For a minute neither of them says anything and Anya gets back to her dinner. Lexa watches the other woman a moment longer.

“Thank you.”

“Yeah, whatever. Just making sure you get your head out of your ass so you might actually be able to hear anything I have to say, god forbid.” Anya grumbles, chomping on the last fork full of ‘spaghetti con funghi’.

This time Lexa can’t hide her grin.
Even though talking with Anya was better than expected, it did nothing to soothe Lexa’s thoughts; quite the opposite actually. Now more than ever does Lexa’s mind work overtime, thinking and re-thinking everything Clarke has said and done that might prove Anya’s assumption correct. Does Clarke like her?

Back at the gym the day before yesterday Lexa thought she saw Clarke smirk at her. Was that flirting? Except for the first time Lexa met Clarke, when the woman was rather quiet and didn’t really show much of herself at all, Clarke always seemed to be like that though. Talkative, playful and a little smug. Then again, Lexa only met Clarke at the party and then at the gym. Could she just have seen Clarke in especially good moods by coincidence?

Thoughts like that have been keeping Lexa up for two nights now and she’s tired of it. She’s tired of wondering about the blonde’s thoughts, tired of trying the impossible in wanting to figure them out and tired of being unsure. For the first time in a long time Lexa feels frustrated in a sense that makes her want to stomp her foot and whine out loud like a child.

Why can’t people just be easier to read? Or not people, Clarke, she should say. Lexa does alright reading other people. She’s exceptionally good at it, actually, and she knows it. Clarke though. Clarke makes her tie her own thoughts into knots trying to figure her out. It’s impossible. It’s frustrating and infuriating and anxiety evoking and stressful and ugh.

It’s also exciting though. And thrilling and challenging and interesting and the most rousing thing she’s experienced in a long time.

With a long sigh Lexa notices the time on her alarm clock that’s still ticking along relentlessly. 4:28 am.

She might as well get up.

Giving up on sleep altogether she rolls out of bed and tiredly pads across her dark room towards the door.

Maybe a cold shower will chase away some of the exhaustion. Or at least freeze any more thoughts on the subject right up and turn them into some nice thought-icicles, cold and silent. Either way would be fine with her.

“Alright girls, I have to take Raven down to the OR now.”

Raven’s smile slips. Just for the blink of an eye though, then she cranes her head back to look up at Abby, who’s come up behind her bed to roll her out of her room.

“Geez, Momma G! Don’t sound so excited about it!” she tries for sarcasm, but then she catches Octavia’s eyes and her heart rate picks up. Even though she tries to hide it, her friend is so very obviously anxious that Raven’s own mask starts to crumble.

What if something happens again? What if they mess up again?

She was glad that Octavia was getting coffee, when Dr. Kane explained the risks of the surgery to
her again the day before. It was just routine. By law the doctors had to cite all possible risks. Raven knew that, but still she didn’t feel any better about it.

What if she gets an infection? What if he knicks an artery? What if they leave something in there?

Suddenly she wishes she had never watched Grey’s Anatomy.

“Okay. Alright. We’ll be right here, okay?” Clarke’s voice makes Raven focus on her. Clarke and Octavia are following her as she’s being wheeled backwards out of the room.

Raven nods. She wants to say something funny and upbeat. Maybe a pun or a joke. She wants to tease Clarke for acting like a mom and Octavia for being quieter than Raven would have thought possible. But the words get stuck in her throat.

She’s scared.

Terrified actually.

She grabs the bed rail on both sides in hopes to hide the fact that her hands are shaking.

“Can you keep us updated?” she hears Clarke ask her mother as Abby turns Raven’s bed and starts down the corridor towards the big elevators. The other girls are out of sight and Raven is unnerved and relieved at the same time.

“I’ll make sure to send someone out.” Abby reassures Clarke behind her, her voice comforting and calm.

Raven doesn’t know about Clarke, but it’s not really working on her. She feels more unsettled by the second.

She doesn’t want this. She doesn’t want to have to undergo surgery again. She doesn’t want to have to go through the whole recovery process again. She doesn’t want to be here.

Clenching her jaw, Raven wishes she could run now more than ever. Or at least get a cigarette. They should make that a thing. Give the patients a cigarette before surgery. Or maybe a joint. Yeah, a joint would be great right about now.

Raven doesn’t usually smoke cigarettes. Not anymore anyway. Octavia made her quit when they graduated high school. In fact it was kind of a pact in their circle of friends. It’s not like any of them ever chain-smoked or anything. Especially not Raven and Octavia. Their soccer coach would have killed them. But they all agreed to quit for good.

It worked semi-well.

Clarke still does it every now and then, especially before big exams. Octavia, actually hating it, only ever smokes when she’s super drunk now and someone offers. Aside from Murphy, who usually only smokes pot, Bellamy is probably the one who smokes cigarettes the most, although he always says he’s quitting and it’s his ‘last cigarette, cross my heart’.

They didn’t know Jasper and Monty back when they made the pact, but as far as Raven knows, Jasper only smokes hookah anyway and Monty doesn’t really smoke at all.

Raven doesn’t smoke either. At least as far as her friends know. Octavia hates it when Raven smokes, so she hides it.
It’s not like it happens often. Every now and then she just needs a cigarette. Or a pack. Or two. But it happens rarely enough that she’s been successful in avoiding Clarke or Octavia finding out about it. She couldn’t stand Clarke’s ‘helpful’ statistics and Octavia’s searching eyes. ‘Everything okay?’ Octavia would ask and Raven would feel put under the microscope. Octavia has that affect on her. They’ve known each other for so long now that Octavia seems to be able to read her almost too easily sometimes. It’s like Raven can’t hide anything from her. Usually she wouldn’t mind; Raven isn’t a particularly secretive person at all, but still. Some things she’d just like to be able to keep to herself.

Right now, for example, she would really like to be able to pull off hiding how scared she really is.

But then again, when Octavia silently slips her hand into Raven’s, while Clarke continues pestering her mom to make sure they get word as soon as Raven’s surgery is done, she thinks maybe it’s not so bad Octavia knows her so well.

She looks up at her oldest friend and Octavia smiles.

When they reach the open elevator doors, Octavia squeezes her hand before letting it go and Raven feels just a little bit better.

Abby pulls her backwards into the silver, mirrored room, as Clarke promises again that they’ll be there when she wakes up. Octavia just stands there, hugging herself. Her eyes haven’t left Raven’s.

Before the doors close, Raven smiles.

“See you on the other side.”

“What’s taking so long?” Octavia paces back and forth in Raven’s room.

Clarke doesn’t respond. Since Octavia keeps asking that exact same question over and over, no matter what Clarke answers, Clarke has come to the conclusion that she probably doesn’t really want an answer. She wants the same thing Clarke wants, too; to have Raven back and to know that everything went well.

Octavia groans behind her and Clarke refocuses her gaze on the view outside the window. It’s a gray day. A persistent wind is whipping the trees back and forth in uneven waves, clouds cover almost all of the sky and Clarke can see an even darker front approaching from the other end of the city. It’s probably going to rain soon.

Far below her she can see people walking in and out of the hospital, crossing the parking lot, and vanishing into the general buzz of the city. On nicer days people might sit on the benches lining the main road to the hospital’s entrance, but today no one seems particularly interested in taking a break and sitting down for a while. Clarke can’t blame them, they’d probably freeze their butts off.

In the distance Clarke can see the ferries making their leisurely way across the water and even though she can’t hear anything through the thick window glass, she can almost imagine the boats blowing their rumbling horns.
A phone vibrates behind her, but Clarke doesn’t turn around until Octavia addresses her.

“Did you stop by the gym the other day?”

With a small jolt Clarke faces Octavia. The other girl is standing in the middle of the room, where Raven’s bed was before, and looks at Clarke expectantly with her phone in her hands.

“What?”

Clarke feels caught. It’s not like it’s a big deal that she brought Lincoln his stuff instead of having him pick it up, but she knows that it might appear just a little bit weird that she failed to mention it.

“Lincoln just texted to ask if we have any news on Raven yet and said to thank you again for bringing him his gym bag on Tuesday?” Octavia holds up her phone and quirks a brow.

“Oh, yeah.” Clarke shrugs, feeling awkward about her own gestures all of a sudden. “I thought I might as well, you know. I had some free time between classes.”

Judging by Octavia’s continuing look of curiosity, she doesn’t quite buy it, but just then the door opens and Abby steps into the room.

---

One, two, three, four, five, swing. Duck down. Come back up. Punch.

One, two, three, four, five, hook. Drop to the floor. Swipe. Come back up.

One, two, three, four, five, grab. Knee. Push.

One, two three, four, five, six, seven-

“Hey!”

Lexa throws another punch, before she can reign herself in. She catches the sand sack as it swings towards her and takes a step forward before slowly letting it go.

“Lincoln? What are you doing here?”

Lexa thought he didn’t have any clients today, but then she notices that he’s not wearing his workout clothes.

“I was just dropping something off for Deb. She lent me some of her rubber bands a while ago and she needs them back.” He explains and Lexa nods, wiping the sweat off her brow. It feels stickier than usual today.

She reaches for her towel, but Lincoln is closer and hands it to her.

“Thanks.”

When he just punches the bag absentmindedly, Lexa knows something is up.

“Everything okay?”
“Yeah,” Lincoln drawls, but then he frowns. “I’m just waiting to hear on Raven’s surgery.”

Oh, right. Lexa vaguely remembers Clarke telling her about Raven’s upcoming surgery at the party, but she completely forgot about it.

“Is she in surgery right now?” Lexa asks, picking up her water bottle and eyeing Lincoln. He seems really distracted by it, wearing a very unusual scowl on his face.

“Yeah.” He nods again and then throws another halfhearted punch at the black and red boxing bag.

Lexa wants to say something encouraging, but she wouldn’t know what. Saying Raven will be fine seems like an empty promise. She doesn’t even know what she’s having the surgery for, although she’s guessing it has something to do with her bum knee.

“Octavia and Clarke are there, but I’m not sure if they have service in the hospital. Octavia didn’t answer my last text.” Lincoln tells her and Lexa hums understandingly. She doesn’t like hospitals.

Relief doesn’t seem like a strong enough word.

When Abby leaves them, Clarke and Octavia fall into each other’s arms.

Everything went well.

Clarke feels something wet against her neck. Soothingly she strokes Octavia’s hair.

“She’s going to be fine. She’s okay.”

Octavia just nods.

They hug for a long time and then they decide to get something to drink before Raven is brought back up. Abby told them that they only had to close her now, but that Clarke and Octavia should expect to have to wait at least another half hour to see her, since she’ll be brought into the recovery room first to monitor her state as she comes out of the anesthesia.

Back in the room Clarke starts on a pad of Sudoku riddles Octavia bought at the hospital shop the day before, while Octavia texts Lincoln and Bellamy an update. She already called Raven’s grandparents on the way to the vending machines.

For now Clarke seems to be safe from further questions on the gym bag drop-off, but she makes a mental note to casually mention it herself as soon as possible. She wouldn’t want the others to think it’s a big deal or something.

There’s still some anxiousness in the air, but it’s not too long before Raven is being wheeled back into the room and immediately the mood lifts considerably. Raven’s dopey smile makes Octavia laugh and when Clarke asks how she feels, Raven mumbles, “Like I got run over by a marshmallow-
trumpet. S’awesome.”

Abby smirks and promises Raven she’ll check up on her in a bit, before gesturing for Clarke and Octavia to follow her outside the room for a report. Octavia tells Clarke to go on ahead without her and Clarke quietly promises her to fill her in later. Octavia is already looking at Raven again though and Clarke doubts she even heard her.

Once outside the room, her mom recounts the entire surgery to her and answers all of Clarke’s questions. There were no complications whatsoever and the operation went even better than expected. She estimates Raven will be good to go back home by the end of the weekend, as long as she promises to go see a colleague and friend of Doctor Kane’s, who happens to have his own practice in Portland, for after-care and check-ups.

Clarke promises she and Octavia will see to it that Raven abides this time and Abby nods satisfied.

“Thanks, mom.” Clarke says honestly. She gives her mother a grateful hug and feels her smile against her ear.

“No need to thank me.” Abby leans back and lets go of Clarke. “Markus will be up in a bit, when Raven is a little less…”

“Doped up?” Clarke offers, feeling a lot of tension slipping from her shoulders. Abby allows herself to smile at her daughter.

“I was going to say ‘out of it’, but yes, ‘doped up’ works, too.” She concedes.

They look at each other another moment and Clarke gets the feeling that her mother is about to say something more, when her pager goes off.

With a frown, Abby looks down at the little grey device and presses her lips together.

“I’m sorry, I have to go.” She says, pulling down her surgeon’s cap and looking at Clarke apologetically, but Clarke gets it. They’ll discuss things later. As always.

Something about that look Abby just gave her makes Clarke think that maybe this time they actually will though. Maybe her mom will even tell her about Callie.

“It’s fine, mom. We’ll talk later.”

Abby nods and then she’s off, calling out an order to one of the nurses to page another doctor as she passes the nurses’ station.

Clarke doesn’t watch her go. She turns around and rejoins Octavia, who is currently laughing tears at Raven’s very moving and apparently re-written rendition of Aladdin’s ‘I can show you the world’.

Why she’s singing ‘I can show you the butt’, Clarke doesn’t know, but can’t wait to find out.

Chapter End Notes

As per usual I’m so late posting this!
Still, I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter and that at least some of your clexa needs have been met ;)

Who do you guys think Echo was texting?
How embarrassed would you have been if your crush had had to save you from choking?
Let me know your opinion on things!!

Lots of love,
Lea
Hello, my beautiful readers!

Here’s the long-awaited two-chapter update! Thank you all so much for continuing to read and support this fic. It means the world to me!

Aaaand smooth!

Yes, it’s perfectly smooth. White planes as far as the eye can reach. Unless the eye wanders outside the space of her bed, of course. She did it! There’s not one unwanted crinkle in the entire span of her thin covers. Not from the waist down anyway. Only the soft curve of the lengthy mountain formed by her legs underneath the white material.

“Uh oh, earthquake!” Raven exclaims in a foreboding voice and starts wiggling her legs. The covers get thrown up and down and Raven grins.

“What are you doing?”

Raven’s head jerks around and she sees Octavia frowning at her from the doorway.

Clarke has gone to eat lunch with her mother in the hospital cafeteria. Raven wanted to come – anything to get out of this bed – but Octavia hinted they might want some time to themselves. Besides, technically Raven isn’t supposed to leave her bed. Such bullshit.

To appease her, Octavia went to get Raven some more magazines and a cup of coffee. Raven doesn’t know why. She told Octavia that she could just read magazines online on her phone, but Octavia insisted. ‘It’s just what people do, when their friends are in the hospital. So, shut up and let me buy you gossipy trash magazines!’

Of course Raven conceded. She knows to let it go when Octavia’s voice becomes whiney.

“Nothing.” Raven mumbles, tugging the covers over her legs again where they slipped off during the ‘earthquake’.

“You’re supposed to go easy on your leg, Raven.” Octavia chides as she makes her way over to the little square table that stands against the wall at the window. Her knee-high boots click loudly on the way there and her long, straight hair moves against her shoulders and back with every step. Raven can’t help to think how pretty Octavia looks, even when she hasn’t slept much. Despite what Octavia keeps telling her, Raven knows that she’s been worrying about her so much that she hasn’t been sleeping well. Octavia is a worrier, but unlike Clarke she doesn’t show it outwardly as much. She acts all carefree and unbothered, but then she can’t sleep. And when Octavia doesn’t sleep she gets testy.

“I can’t go much easier on it than not actually, you know, *walking* on it. I’ve barely even walked more than an hour since the surgery, O! I’m going insane!” Raven defends herself. She’s been so good! She’s taken all of Dr. Kane’s advice to heart and she hasn’t been out of this bed except for her check-ups, her ‘supervised’ walks around the small park behind the hospital and to go to the
bathroom. Octavia is being completely unfair.

“Flailing it around isn’t going easy on it!”

“I wasn’t!”

Octavia dumps the stack of magazines she bought onto the table next to the take-away cup with a thud and turns on the spot. Her arms fold over her chest and her right eyebrow wanders up and Raven knows she’s in trouble.

“Raven Armanda Reyes. Do not lie to me.”

Raven suppresses a snort with difficulty. “Gee, Lita, you look so young for sixty-eight!” she crosses her own arms over her chest as well, leaning back against the elevated top half of the hospital mattress.

“I may not be your grandma, but I can still tell when you’re lying.” Octavia argues and then points a finger at Raven’s legs. “You were wiggling it. And wiggling it is not taking care of it.” The last part of the sentence comes over whiney again and Raven half-expects Octavia to stomp her foot like a child.

Raven groans and presses the back of her head against the pillow. “But I’m dying of boredom in here!” she complains, pressing her eyes closed and hammering her fists onto the mattress on either side of her body for emphasis. Stir crazy. The term describes her mental and physical state perfectly right now. She feels like if she doesn’t get out of here soon she’ll crack and just run around in circles for the rest of her life, trying to get rid of all the pent up energy.

“Oh, don’t be so overdramatic.” Octavia rolls her eyes and relaxes her arms. “You’ve barely been here four days.”

“It’s five!” Raven corrects indignantly, pouting at Octavia. “This is the fifth day in this hellhole.”

Octavia sighs and picks up the brown paper cup from behind her and moves to sit down at the edge of the bed near Raven’s hip. The delicious smell of coffee reaches Raven and it makes her feel better instantly. Coffee can do that to a person. It just smells like home somehow.

“Mija, could you please help me in the kitchen?”

“Coming!” Raven calls out to her grandmother. She pushes herself off the couch, where she’s been sitting between Clarke and Octavia, and skips around her grandfather. Their living room isn’t too big and his bulky arm chair is always in the way somehow. As she passes behind him she hears him lower his voice to a conspiratorial whisper still loud enough for her to hear: “Lita has her trained better than Mrs. Collins’ dog. But only when we have company. When no one is here?” she glances back and sees him covering his ears, wiggling his head from side to side and singing ‘lalalala’ very off-key.

“Papi!” she snaps, but Octavia and Clarke are already laughing out loud with him. Her grandfather turns around, his tan face full of crinkles from a life-time of smiling, and she can’t fully suppress a grin of her own. Clicking her tongue in that chiding tone she always hears from her grandmother, she lightly slaps him on the shoulder. He takes her hand and kisses it shortly between hoarse laughing and then turns around to her friends again; no doubt to expose her some more.

Still grinning, she steps into the kitchen. Her grandmother is standing with her back to her, straining to reach their good china at the back of the upper compartment of the cupboard.
“Hey, here let me.” Raven steps next to her grandmother and lowers the dishes down for her. It was about two years ago when Raven outgrew her grandmother. She suspects it’s not just about the height she gained, but that Lita might also be starting to shrink a little, but Raven is way too smart to ever say that out loud.

“Gracias, mi dulce avecita.” Her grandmother sweetly pats her cheek and then the two of them load everything onto the bigger of the two meal trays they have. As always when they have guests, Nana Adélita made cookies and coffee. It used to be two pots, one for the kids with chocolate milk and one for the adults, but ever since Raven’s Quinceañera when she turned fifteen, there has only been one. ‘You’re a woman now.’ Her grandmother had said ominously. Raven hadn’t exactly known why that meant that she didn’t get to drink chocolate milk anymore when they had guests, but she loved being seen as an adult; even though the taste of coffee had taken some getting used to.

Now she loves coffee however. Thank god. Coffee is a big deal for her grandparents. Especially her abuelo. Way back when, he used to work on a coffee bean farm in Mexico. He’s been telling Raven stories about the hard labor, the harsh boss, his funny buddy Ernesto and the story of how he invented the Latte Macchiato for as long as she can remember. Ever since those days he’s been very particular about his coffee. They grind the beans themselves with the little wooden grinder that’s about the loudest thing Raven knows that doesn’t have a motor. She doesn’t even want to imagine what Papi Cecílio would say if she came out and said she didn’t like coffee. She’d probably be disowned.

Thankfully, her friends like coffee, too. Enough to drink a cup with her grandparents anyway.

Her grandparents always love it when Raven brings Octavia over. They’ve kind of adopted her as a second grandchild ever since Raven first brought her home from Kindergarten one day without warning; and even though Clarke has only been here two times, they already seem to have accepted her into their little family as well.

“Carefull, carefull.” Her grandmother cautions her, as Raven lifts the tray from the sideboard. Her hands hover around the tray, but Raven moves her elbows out to her sides to shoo her off.

“I got it, don’t worry.” Raven hushes her and walks on ahead, her grandmother behind her with their old, bronze coffee pot.

Her friends and her grandfather are still laughing when the two rejoin them in the living room and Raven smiles. She loves this. Her Papi lets out a happy ‘ayy’ as he spots them and her Nana bickers at him when he praises her and her baking skills to show her off in front of their guests. It’s just what they do. Papi always raves of Nana and Nana always acts like it annoys her.

Once her grandmother has set down the steaming pot of coffee onto the big coaster, Raven’s abuelo pulls her onto his lap. Adelita yelps and curses at him in Spanish, slapping his arms; without any real menace behind it though. Papi laughs even louder and it’s the sound of pure happiness.

Wistfully Raven remembers Finn pulling her onto his lap like that, but she quickly pushes the memories away. He’s not her boyfriend anymore. He done fucked up.

Octavia scooches away from Clarke on the couch to let Raven reclaim her previous spot between them and hums.

“It smells amazing, Lita.”

“It really does, mi amor.” Cecílio agrees, hugging his wife loosely from behind. Nana tries to uphold her stern expression, but an involuntary smile slips through. Giving in to it, she shakes her
head at him good-naturedly, and then pats his cheek like she patted Raven’s earlier, before moving over to the couch opposite Raven and the girls.

“Please, please, las galletas are getting cold.”

“Cookies.” Raven translates for her friends and her grandmother rolls her eyes.

“Yes, yes. The cookies. Please.” She hands two of the small plates over to Clarke and Octavia.

The first time she was over, Clarke marveled at the beautiful design. Intricate vines adorned with colorful flowers snake their way around the rims of the porcelain dishes; none looking like the other. It’s untraditional for a service like that not to match exactly, but Raven’s grandparents made those plates themselves on their honeymoon. Well, Nana did. Papi helped by staying out of her way, Adelíta likes to tease. ‘So, you’re an artist?’ Clarke had asked, obviously in awe of Raven’s grandmother. Adelíta had laughed and told Clarke that she was very sweet to say so. Raven thought she hadn’t seen her grandmother as flattered as that in a long while. Art has always been a passion of her grandmother’s. She’d just never call herself an artist and being recognized as one by someone else, it must have stroked her soul. No wonder Clarke always gets the first cookie from her now.

As if on cue, Adelíta places two big cookies onto Clarke’s plate with a warm smile. Clarke thanks her and then asks if she’s bought the new canvases yet.

While her grandmother hands out cookies to the rest of them, the two of them start a conversation about Nana’s most recent art projects and Papi asks Octavia and Raven for their cups to fill them with coffee.

They sit and talk for a while, Raven and Octavia recounting their soccer practice from last night in full detail to an avidly listening Cecílio, until all the plates and cups are empty and the girls excuse themselves to go hang out in Raven’s room for a bit.

On their way out they hear Raven’s grandparents playfully arguing over whose turn it is to rub the other one’s feet.

“I’m not sure I should even be giving you this. Seems like giving you caffeine right now is just about the stupidest thing I could do. You’re like a child hopped up on sugar.” Octavia furrows her eyebrows. Torn out of her memories, Raven just impatiently waves her hands and mouths ‘gimme, gimme’. Octavia shakes her head lightly at Raven’s antics, but hands the cup over anyway.

Raven hums, partly feeling content, partly still annoyed, and puts her lips on the cup, not even drinking yet. As the aroma wafts into her nose, she lets out a sigh. She feels like a child. She’s constantly being told what to do – or, even worse, what not to do – she isn’t allowed to play with her friends, everybody else thinks they know what’s best for her better than she does and she has to be in bed when she doesn’t want to be. It’s only natural that she’d act accordingly.

She wants to get out of here.

After the surgery Dr. Kane told her everything had gone exceptionally well and that she’d probably be free to go before the end of the weekend at the latest. Well, it is Saturday already and the prospect of staying another day makes her want to cry out in despair and throw a temper tantrum.
“So,” Abby starts, as they sit down opposite each other at one of the smaller tables near the back of the cafeteria. It’s quieter here, not as busy and loud, and Clarke is glad to get away from Raven’s room as well.

Raven’s been getting more and more grumpy and whiny the longer she’s been cooped up in here and while Clarke completely gets it, it’s annoying and a little exhausting if she’s being completely honest. Octavia has always been better with Raven when she gets into moods like that. It’s like she’s the Raven whisperer or something. Clarke used to envy Octavia a lot for that, but now she’s just happy to use it as an excuse to duck out for a bit. ‘You deal with her, she listens to you’. Octavia didn’t seem to mind, so Clarke doesn’t feel guilty.

“How is Raven holding up?” Abby asks, blowing on her lasagna. It smells delicious, but Clarke has had enough hospital food in her life to know that it won’t taste as strongly as scent might let on.

She shrugs. “Eh. As well as can be expected I guess. She’s anxious to get out of here. Do you know anything more on that?”

Her mother pulls her chair closer to the table and sits upright, over-extending her spine with a groan. She’s been in surgeries all morning and Clarke can tell it’s starting to take a toll on her.

“Marcus just wants to run one more test, but unfortunately it’s blood work and the lab is just incredibly busy right now. They’re completely backed up.”

“Can’t you get it pushed to the front or something? Ask Jaha to tell them to rush it?” Clarke asks, but she already knows the answer. It doesn’t work like that. No matter how high up someone is, unless it’s a life and death emergency, you wait like everybody else. It’s only fair, Clarke guesses. It wouldn’t be okay for some people to get privileges like that on something as important as their health. The system is already fucked up enough as it is; no need to make it worse on an intra-hospital level.

“Oh honey, I wish I could, but I’m afraid Raven will just have to hold out another day.” Abby grimaces sympathetically.

“Yeah” Clarke nods and pushes some lasagna onto her fork. It’s hotter than it looks and she almost burns her tongue. With a frown she sets it back down onto the plate and reaches for her water.

For a while neither of them talks as Abby chews her food, obviously enjoying the short break she has between appointments, and Clarke is lost in thoughts. She wants to ask her mother about Callie without letting it turn into an argument, but she knows that will be difficult. For some reason Abby seems particularly defensive about this topic and seeing as she’s not one to over-share to begin with, Clarke knows it’ll be hard getting some useful information from her.

“How’s your school work coming along?” Abby asks and Clarke shrugs again.

“It’s fine. Lots of work, but nothing unexpected.”

It’s a very generic answer, but Clarke doesn’t really want to get into her uni work right now. Before Abby can ask anything else, Clarke blurts out, “What’s the story with Callie?”

Immediately Abby freezes and Clarke clenches her jaw. She won’t let her mother get away so easily this time. There’s no one around to interrupt them and she knows for a fact that Abby’s next appointment isn’t for another twenty-five minutes at least.

Abby slowly lowers her fork and licks her lips.
“Clarke,” she begins and the tone of her voice alone tells Clarke that she’s about to try and avoid the question. Instantly she’s out of patience.

“No, mom. You promised we’d talk about it later. Well, now’s later and I want to talk about it. Why is Callie back? Why is she working in some restaurant and why didn’t you tell me? You’ve been in contact with her! Why didn’t you tell me?”

She’s trying hard to keep the tremor out of her voice, but it’s starting to shake from emotion, so Clarke locks her jaw again and presses her lips together. She will not get emotional right now. She needs her mother to take her seriously and not hold Clarke’s bubbling feelings against her. She doesn’t want to make a scene, she just wants answers. Even if she feels betrayed, she can’t afford to let those feelings take over right now.

With a lot of effort she manages to pull it together. She didn’t notice that her breathing had picked up, but now it’s lowering to long, even breaths.

Abby still hasn’t said anything. She hasn’t even looked at Clarke.

It doesn’t matter. Clarke can wait.

It takes her mother another couple of seconds, before she lifts her eyes from staring at her own plate.

“It’s a very long and complicated-”

“Give me the short version then.” Clarke snaps, not giving her mother the chance to make excuses. “Why didn’t you tell me she was back?”

Abby sighs and folds the already crinkled, mint green paper napkin next to her plate at the middle. She’s nervous. Clarke doesn’t care.

“I don’t want you to think that we wanted to keep anything from you,” she starts and Clarke has to stop herself from scoffing. That’s rich. Then why did she do exactly that? Despite her anger, Clarke remains quiet. It’s her mother’s time to talk.

“Look, back when Callie left, some things happened that are too complicated to explain right now, but fact is that she didn’t want to break contact with you.”

Clarke remains silent, her arms folded over her chest.

“Her deployment ended about a year ago and she decided to come back to Seattle this summer.” Abby tells Clarke and Clarke frowns. She already knew that more or less. Her mother still hasn’t explained why she neglected to tell her all of this sooner. When it doesn’t seem like Abby will go on, Clarke asks another question that’s been burning on her tongue, “Why is she working at Benny’s, mom? Why isn’t she at the hospital? Did something happen overseas?”

A pained expression flickers over Abby’s face. She seems to consider something, before she answers, “To be honest, I’m not completely sure. She hasn’t told me a lot about her time there. I think-” Abby shakes her head, her eyebrows furrowed. “I really can’t say, Clarke. I think it’s best if you ask her that yourself.”

Clarke forces herself not to shake her head, but she can’t help her chin from jutting out. This is so typical.

“Fine.” Clarke finally gives in. But one thing she won’t let her mother wiggle herself out of answering. “Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”
Abby’s eyes study Clarke for a moment and Clarke can almost see the gears churning. It feels like her mother is sizing her up; trying to gauge how much she should tell Clarke, unsure if Clarke could handle it; whatever it is. It makes Clarke so angry she can barely hold back from punching the table. She is not a child anymore. And she is sick and tired of her mother acting like she needs protecting and using it as an excuse to hide things from her.

Before Clarke’s resentment can explode, however, Abby extends her hand across the table. It doesn’t quite reach Clarke’s arms which are still locked over her chest, but it’s such an unexpected gesture that all of Clarke’s feelings that have been bubbling up inside get temporarily replaced by surprise.

“Clarke,” Abby sighs and Clarke thinks to hear pain in her voice. She eyes her mother more closely for the first time and notices some little things that had escaped her before. She seems really tired; more than just from the usual hospital craziness. There are bags under her eyes and her complexion seems paler than Clarke is used to seeing. Clarke wonders if it has anything to do with the way Dr. Kane and her mother seem to be suddenly awkward around each other. She hasn’t really paid too much attention to it, with everything going on with Raven, but now she tries to think back to her last visit a month ago. They both seemed more cheerful and definitely didn’t hover around each other as if not sure what to say.

She – or rather Raven – suspected back then that Clarke’s mother and this Kane guy were in some sort of relationship, or at least heading there; now she wonders if she misread before, or if something has changed since then.

Whether Abby’s tired appearance actually has something to do with the other doctor or not, Clarke feels her anger almost disappearing entirely. Almost.

“I’m sorry.”

Sorry.

Usually Clarke is almost allergic to that word by now; coming from her mom anyway. But this is not an ‘I’m sorry, I have to go’ kind of sorry. It’s not ‘Sorry, but I know I’m right, end of discussion’ or ‘Sorry, you feel that way, but I don’t think I did anything wrong’. Clarke is sure of that. It’s not an explanation either. Not even close. But it’s something.

It’s an apology. A real, simple, no bullshit apology for once.

What exactly she’s apologizing for Clarke doesn’t know. And she has a feeling she won’t be finding out right now either. Maybe it’s an ‘I’m sorry, I can’t tell you more; I promised Callie’ or ‘I’m sorry, I know you’re angry, but I don’t know anything more’. Maybe it’s even an ‘I’m sorry, I can see you’re disappointed and angry and you have every right to be. I wish I could tell you everything, but something is holding me back’.

Watching her mother’s eyes, Clarke tries to read her. Abby is struggling. If nothing else, Clarke can see that as clearly as the half eaten lasagnas in front of her. But why?

Why is it so hard for her mother to tell her things?

Clarke’s shoulders sag. She feels disconnected.

It’s a horrible feeling; a gut wrenching, throat closing, chest constricting feeling and Clarke has to avert her eyes. She doesn’t want her mother to see her expression. As closed off as Abby is, Clarke couldn’t stand showing her mother any more of herself right now; least of all tears.

She tries to remember if it’s always been this way. She knows they’ve had… ‘communication
problems’ to put it politely, since everything that happened when her dad died. But what about before that? Did her mom ever confide in her before that? Tell her things about herself, answer questions without hesitation?

She can’t remember.

It doesn’t matter, Clarke supposes. However it used to be, the woman sitting across from her now can’t talk to her own daughter.

Clarke wants to hate her. She wants her mom to be a monster; make it easy. You wouldn’t want a monster talking to you anyway, right? But her mom is her mom. And with all her flaws she’s also amazing. She’s a strong woman, she never gives up, she stands up for what she believes in and she loves Clarke. She does.

Clarke just wishes she’d trust her, too.

Not trusting her voice just yet, Clarke just nods.

Abby seems relieved. She mirrors Clarke’s nod and when Clarke is sure she won’t cry, she looks up and sees her mom smiling a sad smile at her.

It seems to say ‘I knew you’d understand’, but Clarke doesn’t trust her skill to read her mother anymore.

Really, the smile could probably mean anything. Maybe Abby’s just remembering a joke she read in the comic section of the newspaper this morning or looking forward to her next meal. Who the fuck could possibly know, right?

As Abby leans back, Clarke heaves a quick sigh. When will she learn not to expect any honesty from her mother anymore?

Her sadness starts turning into disappointment and anger again and Clarke really hopes it’ll just stay this way for a while now. For one, she’s tired of her emotions churning and changing faster than it takes Monty to write a line of code, and also, anger is a lot less painful than what she just felt.

Yeah, she’ll try sticking to this for now.

With a casual look down at her pager, Abby sighs as well.

In the spirit of fuelling anger instead of pain, Clarke lets herself scoff internally and growl some resentful curses in her mind, most of them involving coming up with creative suggestions where Abby could shove her pager.

When Abby stands, Clarke gets up as well.

“I’ll drop by Raven’s room in a little while and explain the tests to her, okay? Dr. Kane will come by to draw some more blood sometime before dinner.”

“Okay, I’ll tell her.”

“Alright.” Abby nods and Clarke can tell her mind is already gone.

It’s just as well; that way Clarke doesn’t have to pretend to be friendly as much. Her mother won’t notice her being short.

“See you later, honey.”
Clarke lets Abby hug her. For a brief second her mother’s familiar smell and the feeling of her arms around her make Clarke’s heart ache painfully and her eyes sting instantly, but she pushes the feeling away and just like that the moment is gone and so is her mother.

Giving herself a moment to just stand and breathe, Clarke wraps her arms tightly around herself.

She draws a couple of deep breaths in through her nose.

In…

Out.

In…

Out.

Okay.

She’s good.

Jaw clenched, she pulls out her phone.

Maybe her mother is incapable and unwilling to talk to her, but she’s not giving up on getting the answers she wants.

She needs to talk to Callie. Today.

Lincoln: Hey sorry I’m going to be a bit late! Go on in without me I’ll probably be another half hour at least :/

Lincoln: Oh and tell Anya to stop sending me pics of herself pouring drinks. I was just joking when I said she was out of practice and gone corporate since she got the manager gig. She’s clogging up my phone

Lexa smiles to herself and pushes her phone back into the open pocket on her black suit jacket.

It’s crazy, but just the fact that she’ll be hanging out with Lincoln, who happens to like taking pictures and sending them to his girlfriend, who is currently in Seattle with a certain blonde, made Lexa spend way too long on choosing her outfit for tonight. She’s glad Anya wasn’t home to see her frown at herself in the mirror and then change her clothes. Again. And again. And then another time, because no way was she wearing a short dress to a club. Especially this late in the year. She isn’t even sure where she got that from. She never wears dresses. They are quite impractical.

Finally she settled on her usual choice of outfit when going out; dress pants, a button down shirt and a suit jacket. She likes this look on herself. It’s simple, appropriate in practically any setting and gives her enough room to move without having to think about whether anything would show unplanned. Plus…Clarke seemed to really like it at the party. Lexa’s always been comfortable in this outfit, but she loves it just a bit more now.

Yep, it’s official. She’s gone insane.
Sighing internally at her own foolishness, Lexa turns to check the street for cars, before she crosses it. The big ‘The Grounders Club’ sign is shining a light onto the sidewalk on the other side. Well, actually only the *Grounders* part of it is lit, the other letters burned out a while ago and Anya decided to leave it like that. It’s kind of become the club’s inside joke and people from Portland always just call it *Grounders* now. When someone says they’re going to ‘The Grounders Club’, you know they’re from out of town.

As she gets closer, Lexa notices an altercation taking place in front of the entrance.

Even though it’s not too late – around half past 11 pm on a Saturday – some dude seems to have drunk way past his limit already. He’s big, muscled to the point it looks ridiculous, and for some reason not wearing anything from the waist up but a white wife beater. Several stains on it tell the story of an evening full of spilled drinks and Lexa just wishes he’d have spilled more; especially the last two or three drinks. His short, somewhat curly blonde hair is sticking from his head in unruly tufts and his face is currently turning an ugly shade of red as he spits on the ground before getting back to shouting at someone.

At first Lexa thought it was a child or maybe someone lying on the floor, but as she comes around the back of a parked car and steps onto the sidewalk, she sees it’s a small woman; standing at around five feet at the highest, Lexa estimates. The woman is dressed in all black – a suit similar to Lexa’s – and wearing a cap on backwards over her short dark hair, making her look like a very well dressed teenage skater boy. Something she said must have ticked the guy off immensely, judging by the way he’s getting in her face, but the woman seems utterly unimpressed. She merely stares at him, letting him shout and spit, her expression showing a perfectly stony pokerface. Her hands are calmly clasped in front of her belt and Lexa must admit she’s impressed by this small woman’s courage to stand up to this huge guy.

At the same time, however, worry starts to build up inside her and her body tenses. The guy seems to be on the verge of snapping. His entire body language screams fight and before she can decide if she should run to interfere, it’s already too late.

The wannabe bodybuilder attacks, white-knuckled fists balled and veins protruding prominently on his neck, but Lexa almost yelps in surprise when in the blink of an eye he lands on his back and his head bangs backwards against the pavement with a cringe-worthy crack.

The few people that have been watching the altercation, his friends maybe and some other club goers, can’t hide their shock either. Lexa hears gasps and surprised shouts and one guy even hollers ‘duuuude’, lifting one fist in front of his mouth and pointing at the groaning guy with the other hand, before erupting in high-pitched laughter.

The woman flipped him as easily as a pancake and Lexa is sure beyond a doubt now that she must have had some sort of training. Her technique was perfect, the throw beautifully executed and her demeanor calm and collected throughout.

Lexa is within ear-shot now and hears the well dressed skater woman slowly repeat something she must have said before, judging by the way she pronounces each word separately.

“Now get the hell away from my club.”

More hollering erupts from the surrounding crowd and then two guys step forward and help their disoriented seeming buddy to his feet. They wrap his beefy arms around their shoulders and very obviously have to carry most of his weight as they stagger off.

There are some cheers from the remaining crowd, but the woman throws them a look and points to a
sign next to the club’s entrance.

It’s one of those please quiet signs that displays a silhouette of a person’s head in profile, a finger pressed to their lips. Above it, in a suggested speech bubble, it reads in big red letters ‘SHHHHH’ only someone – Lexa knows it was Anya – added ‘..UT UP’ with red marker and even continued the message underneath on a green blackboard. The words may be written in slightly smaller writing and done by white chalk instead of red marker, but they read no less aggressively, ‘NO ONE CARES’.

The ‘Shut up, no one cares’ sign is just one of the few adjustments Anya has taken the liberty of making since she became manager of the club. So far it doesn’t seem to have caused any problems. Lexa is kind of afraid of the point when the first drunk person has the idea to add their own message though; she’s rather surprised that it hasn’t happened yet, actually.

Either way, as soon as the small woman in the cap points to the sign, the crowd hushes and most of them scurry past her, back into the club.

By now Lexa has caught on; the snapback woman in black must be the new bouncer. She remembers Anya saying something about having to find someone, because Jerry got a slipped disk. She complained about it at length, saying it came at a horrible time, since she was still short a bar tender and was already busy looking for one of those. Apparently finding a new bouncer took considerably less time, however.

“Hey!” the new bouncer snaps at her at that moment. Lexa tried passing by her and walking into the club, but finds her way blocked by a small hand. “ID.”

Lexa’s eyebrows rise. “Seriously?”

She hasn’t been carded at a club since she got back to Portland, even though she probably should have.

They eye each other. The woman looks her up and down. Not in a flirting kind of way, more in a sizing-her-up kind of way. Lexa does the same. Now that she’s up close she can see that the other woman’s jacket suit is almost all the way open. Underneath it she’s wearing a black shirt with a simple white logo: Sanvers is endgame.

Lexa doesn’t know what Sanvers is or what is meant by ‘endgame’. Somehow she doubts it describes a strategically thought-through end to a game or mission in this case.

When she reaches the woman’s face again, they stare at each other a moment longer until, suddenly, the bouncer’s face contorts into a big grin.

“I’m just kidding, I know who you are.”

She thrusts her hand out for Lexa to shake. Slightly surprised, Lexa does so. She must look pretty startled, because the other woman laughs. “You’re Lexa, right? Anya showed me a picture on my first day; told me to pull your leg a little when you came round. I’m Bossy, the new bouncer.”

“Oh.” Lexa doesn’t know what to say to that. It certainly sounds like Anya.

“Nice to meet you.” Bossy is still smiling and Lexa’s lips twitch into a brief smile as well. She nods.

“Nice to meet you as well.” She slips her hand out of Bossy’s. The woman has a strong grip. It makes Lexa think back to her fellow female soldiers at Fort Benning in Georgia.
“You handled that guy pretty well, by the way.” Lexa comments and Bossy straightens her spine and smirks.

“Sometimes these dimwits just need a little whoopin’. Hope he thinks twice about getting in a woman’s face next time. Or underestimating one.”

Lexa grins. “Agreed.”

They share a look of understanding and then Bossy’s earpiece crackles to life and Lexa can hear Anya’s distorted voice relaying something to the bouncer.

Bossy’s expression immediately changes and she’s serious again from one second to the next. Even though Anya can’t see, she gives a short nod and growls “Got it” into the small microphone sticking to her collar.

“Sorry, I got a douche to kick out.” Bossy explains. She doesn’t wait for Lexa’s answer however, before she rips the door open and charges inside.

Lexa can’t help but wish she could spar with Anya’s new bouncer at some point. She’d make an interesting opponent.

As she walks into the club – after two blonde girls in shoes with such high and slim heels, Lexa is slightly worried for their safety – Lexa greets Frank, who’s collecting the cover charge tonight. He just nods at her, mumbling something into his gruff beard, and then goes back to loudly banging coin rolls against the table and sorting them into the cash register.

Lexa likes Frank. He doesn’t talk much, is never late and you can always rely on him to tell it to you straight up; all traits Lexa appreciates. But she especially likes him since she found out he belongs to the B.A.A.C., the Bikers Against Animal Cruelty biker gang. You’d never think it from looking at him, but he has two Chihuahuas, three birds and a pet hamster at home; all rescued by him and his buddies. Once he showed Lexa a video on his phone of one of his pet birds tweeting happily as it cuddles into his beard with its eyes closed. She almost cooed.

Walking down the stairs, she sees Piper flirting with some guy as she hands him the ticket with his coat number. He seems to be slightly caught off guard, but not in a bad way. Piper can do that to a person. She’s very beautiful with that wicked smile and her long brown hair. There’s always a feather braided into a strand of it and you’d think it would look childish, but she pulls it off. As she sees Lexa, she calls a ‘Hey girl, looking good!’ out to her and winks at her. Lexa smiles and ducks her head. She never knows how to respond to her.

There’s another door. It looks like the one leading out to the street, heavy and with one of those bars that you press to open it, only that it’s a double door and it’s a dark green instead of black. Lexa can already hear the music thundering on the other side. Actually, it’s almost more like she can feel it than just hearing it, but then she pushes against the doors and a wall of music and noise hits her.

There’s laughing, hollering and chatter and glasses being clinked together and Lexa feels the beat of the bass vibrating in her chest.

Grounders has two main floors, although the second one is a bit smaller than the first and only has a DJ station, no bar. Usually both are open and people can freely go from one to the other. Unless there’s a private event in the smaller one, in which case it can be closed off.

When you walk in, the entire right wall is lined with round high tables and one single long leather bench extends from one corner to the other. There are also about two bar stools added to each table.
so it makes for quite enough space to sit down and rest for a bit, should you get tired from dancing. Aside from that there’s not much more opportunity to sit, except at the one booth to the left of the entrance, which can be converted into a small VIP area if needed, or at the bar. The bar is straight through the room, the first thing you see when you walk in, and it takes up most of the opposing wall. It’s lit up with bright lights and a long, dark mirror makes up the entire back. There’s liquor bottles hanging from above and they have those caps, where you only have to press a glass against a lever and it starts pouring alcohol. Since the bottles have different colors and there’s a LED light bar right behind it, the bar lights up in all the colors of the rainbow. That was another one of Anya’s ideas and it quickly became one of the things Grounders is most known for now. They called it the ‘Polychrome Light-Attraction’ in the papers when the club first put them in, but Anya just calls it the ‘Homo Halo’.

Standing under the shimmer of it now is Sarah, expertly pouring two drinks at a time from two silver cocktail shakers. Sarah, tall, dark haired and built like she could wrestle any guy to the ground in under ten seconds, is mostly known for her friendly smile and her killer Mojitos. She’s been working at the club almost as long as Anya has and the two work together like a well-oiled machine. Lexa has seen them throw heavy bottles of liquor to each other from opposite ends of the bar and catch them with no problem, barely even looking up. It’s pretty impressive and if they wanted to they could probably put on quite the show.

Lexa makes her way through the crowd until she’s right in front of Sarah. Thankfully, even though it’s as packed as every Saturday, there’s a free stool at the bar and Lexa slides onto it.

“Hey, Sarah.” She greets the bartender, having to raise her voice over the music to be heard.

Sarah looks up from the cocktails she’s preparing and immediately a big smile spreads over her face.

“Well, well, well! Look what the cat dragged in! Haven’t seen you in ages, where have you been?”

Lexa merely smiles, showing her teeth in a sort of apologetic way, and Sarah chuckles.

“Here, hold on.” Sarah says and then she whips the small bar towel from over her shoulder and starts wiping down the surface in front of Lexa.

Lexa thanks her, but Sarah just waves her off and then hands the two cocktails to a couple of girls to Lexa’s right. Once they have paid and wandered off, Sarah comes back over and leans onto the bar with her lower arms. “So, whatcha having then?”

“Uh, just a water, actually.” Lexa says and almost regrets it instantly. Sarah is about to start ranting – as she’s done several times before – that it’s a waste of her talents and frankly insulting and that she didn’t spend a small fortune on bartending school for her to ask her for a water, but thankfully Anya appears from behind the bar at that moment.

“Hey, Sarah, could you get those?” she calls over, before spotting Lexa. When she does, she snorts, “Wow, what business trip did you fly in for, ma’am?”

Despite having been ready to lecture Lexa a second ago, Sarah now comes to her defense as she takes the two heavy looking boxes from Anya’s arms. “Oh, lay off her, Anya.” Then, addressing Lexa, she adds, “You look hot, don’t listen to her.”

As Sarah sorts the drinks into the mini fridges under the bar with her back to Lexa and Anya, Lexa grins at Anya triumphantly, while Anya pulls faces. Without turning around, Sarah shakes her head and calls them children. She has to shout, since the music just changed and a very loud bass practically drowns out any other sound and Lexa is reminded why she doesn’t like clubs. At least not
sober. Maybe she shouldn’t have ordered a water after all.

Before she can think twice on it, however, Sarah is already placing a bottle of water in front of her. There’s a purple straw in it and Lexa lifts her eyebrow at Sarah.

“What? It’s what we always do!” Sarah defends, but as she turns around to take another order, Lexa hears her add, “When children visit the bar.”

Lexa decides not to react. Instead she leans forward and grabs a lemon slice from the little bowl behind the bar and pushes it into her bottle.

For the next fifteen minutes Lexa just sips on her water, watching Anya and Sarah serve the other club goers. The guy out front must have been an exception, because Lexa can’t spot another person nearly as drunk. Most people just seem to be having a pretty good time. She can see guys standing on the sides, watching girls dance or flirting with one another. Even though Grounders isn’t officially an LGBT club the scene has gradually moved in over the past few years. Part of it may be that Anya frequently hosts Rainbow nights, where she serves six shots for the price of three during happy hour and makes them rainbow colored. She keeps saying she needs more education to be a good manager, but in Lexa’s eyes Anya knows exactly what she’s doing. She’s a natural.

The longer Lexa sits there, the fuller the club gets. It’s almost too crowded now and getting slightly uncomfortable at the bar, with people pushing against it and each other and overall just generating a sardines-in-a-can kind of feeling. Lexa tries semi-successfully to avoid getting in contact with too many sweaty bodies, but drunk people really don’t care much who they lean on or rub up against and when a tall, smelly guy with a dripping forehead basically presses his entire front against Lexa’s back to get Anya’s attention, Lexa slips out from under his big arms and gestures to Anya that she’ll mingle a bit. Anya doesn’t even pay her any attention though. She’s way too busy showing off to two brunettes who are giggling at her mixing skills. Of course, Anya does all that with barely any expression on her face. Lexa has noticed that that only seems to intrigue girls more. It seems to be working now as well, because when Anya turns to add ice to their cocktails the girls throw each other looks that Lexa can only interpret to mean ‘daaaamn’.

Her almost empty glass water bottle in hand, Lexa sets out to look for a less crowded spot to wait for Lincoln. She’s disappointed when she sees no open spots at the line of tables Anya calls the ‘booth section’ even though they aren’t really booths. They’re all full and Lexa turns around and pushes her way through the dense mass of people to get to the dance floor instead. She’s not planning on dancing herself, but standing against the wall is better than being squished against the bar.

She finds some space next to a group of guys in very tight and colorful pants that offers sufficient breathing room and leans against the narrow board there. On most walls around the dance floors these custom made boards run at about chest height. They serve as a surface to put your drinks on while you dance, although a couple of signs warn against leaving your drink unattended. Ideally there should always be a friend watching your drinks, of course.

It’s a horrible reality that things like that even have to be put up on signs, but Lexa is proud that Anya has been very careful with people putting things in drinks. All her bar tenders, DJs and DJanes have been told to watch out for that sort of thing, she had new 360° cameras installed and the security staff have even undergone more specific training concerning drug abuse of any kind.

So far it only happened once though that Anya had to call the police on two guys, who Hazel, one of the regular DJanes, saw slipping pills into some girls’ drinks. Anya was so livid that she stomped onto the elevated DJ platform, grabbed the mike, and exposed the two guys with a savage speech that involved words that were as much a reason as the alcohol that it was good that the bouncers had checked IDs before letting anyone into the club that night. She only stopped ripping them a new one
when the police told her they really needed to bring them in now. The party mood was kind of stifled after that whole scene, but Anya said she didn’t care. Lexa had rarely seen her so upset and she is sure if Anya had been a couple of years younger and a little less responsible, she would have taken Lexa along to pay the guys a visit themselves. And Lexa is pretty sure she would have agreed to go.

The whole incident made it into two of the local newspapers and a bunch of blogs. Thankfully the girls were fine, since Hazel warned them, before they drank, and no such despicable thing has happened in *Grounders* since.

Lexa checks her phone for more messages, but there are none. Lincoln should be here soon. Maybe then there will be some available space at the front where they can sit down and chat. Assuming Lincoln doesn’t want to dance, but Lexa can’t imagine he would. Not unless he already had something to drink. As Lexa watches the crowd dance to the music, her mind sort of shuts off. She lets her eyes wander, but doesn’t really take any of it in. Not until they land on a woman in a short red dress.

She’s pretty, in that wide-eyed, girl-from-next-door kind of way. Her blonde hair flows and bounces around her shoulders as she dances with her friends and when she laughs she throws her hair back. She seems happy and she’s definitely cute, but what catches Lexa’s attention is the way she moves. It’s so casually sexy and carefree and Lexa is starkly reminded of another blonde and just how tempting moves like that can be when they’re directed towards you by someone you like.

Okay. Get it together, Lexa.

Lexa’s brows are drawn together as she stares at her own reflection in the mirror. Some of the water she just splashed onto her hot cheeks is trickling down and pooling at her chin before dripping down into the sink.

Clarke teasing her in her bedroom just now made Lexa’s face flush. She was so rattled when she thought she’d accidentally insulted Clarke. Her heart started racing even more than it did when they were standing quietly in the dark and Lexa wishes she could just make it calm down. She hoped going to the bathroom and cooling herself off with some cold water would do the trick, but she still feels pretty unsettled.

How does Clarke do this to her?

Lexa isn’t usually like this! She isn’t one to share about herself after just meeting someone and she certainly isn’t one to stumble over her own words, trying to apologize for something she didn’t even do on purpose and that really wasn’t that big of a deal. So what if she called Clarke’s room messy? It was! There were books everywhere to a point where you couldn’t look anywhere without spotting one and the few book-free places were covered with clothes. Calling it messy wasn’t even being rude, it was just being factual. And yet…

Why does she care so much what Clarke thinks of her?

With a sigh and a disbelieving shake of her head, Lexa grabs one of the towels next to the sink and dabs her face dry.

As she walks back out, she almost runs into a small, broadly grinning Xena.

“Oops, sorry.” The black girl apologizes and then ducks around Lexa, skipping into the bathroom. Before she can fully close the door, however, Lexa hears Raven shouting from the living room, “Get back here, Johnston!”
“Let me fucking pee, Reyes!” Xena thunders back and then shuts the door, giggling ‘Jesus’ in obvious amusement.

Momentarily having forgotten about her Clarke crisis, Lexa wonders what that was all about, but then she takes another step into the living room and suddenly she’s right back where she started.

There, she is.

Clarke.

And she’s dancing.

There are people around her, some are dancing as well, but to Lexa they’re only faceless bodies drifting in and out of her peripheral vision, while her eyes are solely focused on Clarke.

Drink in one hand, Clarke winds her body to the music.

‘..Spiderman’s control and Batman with his fists,

And clearly I don’t see myself up on that list.

But she said where d’you wanna go?

How much you wanna risk?

I’m not looking for somebody with some superhuman gifts,

Some Superhero, some fairytale bliss,

Just something I can turn to,

Somebody I can kiss,

I want something just like this

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

Oh, I want something just like this

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo
Oh, I want something just like this…'

As the beat sets in, Clarke raises both of her hands in the air above her head and lets her hips do the talking.

And Lexa is mesmerized.

She’s sure if there was still any of that water left on her face it would be coming off her in the form of steam right about now. Her ears are burning, but she can’t stop herself from staring.

She’s never seen anybody move like that. Or maybe she’s just never been so attracted to someone moving like that. Either way, it’s all she can do to remind herself to close her mouth.

Clarke moves so effortlessly. Every beat, every syllable, every pause; they’re all right there in her body. In the way she pushes her hips to the side, the way she dips her shoulders with her arms raised, the way her head swings as she’s facing the floor, her eyes closed and her hair dancing around her slightly reddened cheeks.

Lexa wants to watch her forever. She wants this moment to never pass.

But then Clarke looks up and their eyes meet.

And Lexa’s heart skips a beat.

“There you are!” Clarke’s smile is so bright it makes it hard for Lexa to swallow. The blonde bites her lip and wiggles with her eyebrows, turning her body to face Lexa and beckoning her with her index fingers.

As if to make up for the beat it just skipped, Lexa’s heart starts racing like crazy.

While a moment ago only Clarke seemed to exist, suddenly Lexa is painfully aware of all the other people around them.

There’s that Jasper guy Clarke introduced her to earlier, chatting with an Asian boy over at the makeshift bar behind Clarke. To the left, by the apartment door, Lincoln is listening intently as the curly haired Indiana Jones girl is telling him something. Lexa didn’t even hear him come out of Octavia’s room. It must have been when she was in the bathroom. To her right, in front of the couch, Raven is dancing with some guy Lexa hasn’t even seen before. Then suddenly she’s looking over and Lexa momentarily starts to panic, when Raven starts waving her to come over. She relaxes however, when she realizes that the gesture was actually meant for the Xena girl, not her. Black Xena, just in this moment, is wriggling around Lexa, who’s standing in the way again; smack in the middle where the living room meets the hallway that goes off to the rooms.

She didn’t even make it six feet from the bathroom before Clarke’s mere existence froze her in place. Great…

Raven’s wave distracted her long enough for Clarke to sneak up on her and Lexa almost jumps when the blonde’s voice sounds right in front of her.

“Come on, let’s dance!”
Clarke’s holding out her hands, hips still swaying to the music, and Lexa feels like the floor isn’t as solid as it was just a second ago. Or maybe it’s just her legs that are wobbly.

“Uh…”

The white dress is hugging tightly to Clarke’s figure and Lexa only notices that her lips are parted again when her mouth starts feeling really dry. With some difficulty she swallows and then licks her lips. So dry…

“Um, I… I don’t dance.”

Clarke laughs and Lexa’s body sings.

“Oh, come on, Lexa!”

She’s coming even closer now and Lexa holds her breath when Clarke’s hands reach out and lightly grab her hips, trying to make them swing with her.

Electricity courses through Lexa’s body and her eyes dart down to Clarke’s hands. They’re pale against the dark material of her trousers, but almost the same shade as her light blue button-up. How would they look compared to Lexa’s skin?

As if bitten by something, Lexa jerks and takes a step back.

Clarke freezes, hands awkwardly holding the air now, and Lexa feels like hiding behind the couch and melting into the ground, when Clarke raises her eyebrows at her in bemusement.

“Sorry,” Lexa mumbles, again hoping Clarke won’t find her rude. “I just… I don’t dance.”

In her mind she adds, ‘with beautiful girls I am crushing on and who may or may not be straight or somehow involved with their roommate.’

Thankfully, Clarke neither seems to find her rude, nor be able to read her mind. She merely eyes Lexa another second, then she just shrugs and laughs lightly, “Okay?”

Before either of them can add anything more, a deep voice calls Clarke’s name.

“Hey, Clarke! Raven! Get over here!”

To their right Raven turns toward the yelling, back over at the dining table. “Wh-oh my god, yes! I call Clarke as my partner! Clarke, come on!”

While Lexa has no idea what Raven is talking about, still baffled and riled up from everything that just happened, Clarke seems to have gotten over any awkwardness that may have been between them. She grabs Lexa’s wrist and excitedly pulls her after Raven, who’s making her way to the boys.

“Yes! We’ll crush you!” Clarke cackles in Octavia’s brother’s face. The black haired boy just scoffs and the guy next to him repeats what Clarke just said in a mocking voice.

“Oh, shut up and make the first throw, Murphy.” Raven orders.

With one look at the table, Lexa recognizes the game instantly. Beer Pong. She’s won a couple of those in her day. Anya and she together are an unbeatable team.

“Wanna play?” Clarke turns to Lexa, letting go of Lexa’s wrist as they reach the far side of the table, where Raven is drumming her fingers against the table, swaying from one foot to the other
and pulling faces at the guys.

“No way!”

“That’s unfair!”

The boys object immediately and it’s almost funny how in sync Raven and Clarke are as they roll their eyes and tell them to shut up.

“The Commander can play if she wants to! How dare you!” Raven insists as if the boys were stupid for not knowing that.

“No, it’s okay.” Lexa declines just as quickly though. She really doesn’t want to risk getting any drunker right now. And she really needs to step back and get it together for a second.

When Clarke continues looking at her, Lexa manages a smile. “Really, it’s fine. You go ahead and play. I’ll watch.”

Another shrug from the blonde, then she turns around with new vigor and shouts at Raven. “You ready to do this, Reyes?!”

“I’m ready to do this, Griffin.” Raven whips her head sassily and her ponytail follows.

“LET’S DO THIS!” both girls roar at the same, high fiving loudly and probably painfully.

“ALRIGHT!” Octavia’s brother bellows, just as hyped. “Murphy, my man, your shot. Make it a good one.”

The one called Murphy crouches down a little lower over the table and takes his aim.

The first shot is a hit. The boys shout triumphantly, while the girls groan overdramatically. Raven downs the orange cup, before blindly throwing it over her shoulder. Lexa internally winces as it hits the wall. Clean up will be murder. Lexa concentrates back on the game.

Raven shakes herself, then takes aim like Murphy did.

It goes back and forth like that for a while.

Raven and Murphy are pretty consistent good shots. Bellamy, seemingly randomly, impresses with either impossibly good or unbelievably crappy throws, and Clarke misses about eighty percent, but makes up for it with sheer enthusiasm and no shyness whatsoever to down the beer for Raven.

It’s pretty fun to watch, except for one thing.

Whenever the girls – well, Raven mostly – land the small ping pong ball in one of the boys’ cups, they squeal and jump into each other’s arms, and Lexa gets a sour feeling in the pit of her stomach. It makes her clench her jaw and cross her arms tightly over her chest and when Raven grabs Clarke’s face and plants a loud kiss on Clarke’s cheek – really close to Clarke’s mouth, Lexa might add – Lexa has to dig her own fingernails into her hand to stop herself from stomping over there and smacking Raven right across her stupid, grinning face.

Yep, she’s definitely gone full-scale crazy now.

Remembering the original plan of coming here and forgetting all about Clarke, Lexa has to let out a bitter snort.
Well, that plan backfired.

Big time.

“Hey!” Lincoln’s voice startles Lexa out of her memories.

“Lincoln!” she stares at him, trying to gather her thoughts. “You’re here!”

“I know, I know, I’m sorry. I really didn’t think it would take this long.” He apologizes, leaning close to her so they can hear each other over the music.

“It’s fine.” Lexa promises, coming back to reality. It seems the more often her mind wanders to Clarke, the harder it is to get out of those thoughts again. The feeling of the blonde’s presence still lingers with Lexa. “Did you see a free booth when you came in?”

“What?”

The music seems really loud now and Lexa is getting annoyed. By the music, by the sweaty people, by the loud, obnoxious laughing coming from one of the guys right next to her, but mostly by herself. She wants some quiet to think. Or rather to not think. Whatever.

“Come on, let’s look for somewhere to sit.” She tries again and thankfully this time Lincoln seems to have understood what she said.

They make their way back toward the front. Anya and Sarah are currently twirling shakers simultaneously to cheers from the crowd around the bar, their faces not showing any sign that they are in any way trying. Lexa really doesn’t get how Anya calls her a flirt with a straight face. Anya’s the biggest flirt out there sometimes.

Lincoln points out an unoccupied table near the corner of the room and Lexa nods. While he sits down she picks up the three empty glasses from the table and brings them over to the bar.

“Anya!” she calls for her roommate. She and Sarah smoothly switch places and Anya nods behind Lexa. “What’s he having? Beer?”

Lexa confirms and Anya reaches under the bar and pulls out a beer from one of the mini fridges there. “What about you? Sticking with water?”

There’s no judgment in her voice. Even though Sarah teased Lexa earlier, Lexa knows Sarah wouldn’t really judge anyone for not drinking either. That’s ridiculous. Both Anya and Sarah just really like preparing cocktails and they know Lexa drinks in general. Tonight however she doesn’t know if she wants to. Her mind is already going places she doesn’t want it to go with images of Clarke following her around wherever she goes and with Lincoln there she is kind of apprehensive. She doesn’t want to get drunk and start spilling to him about her crush or, even worse, ask him for Clarke’s number or something. Because that is definitely something she’s been struggling not to do. But there’s just no good, inconspicuous reason for her to want it. Plus, she wouldn’t even know what to do with it. Call her? Text her? The thought alone makes Lexa shudder, but nevertheless she wants Clarke’s number anyway.

Maybe she shouldn’t care if she spilled her feelings to Lincoln. So what if he knows? Would that be so bad? Anya knows and Anya has been tame compared to what Lexa expected from her. Only minor teasing, Lincoln isn’t the type to overstep anyway. Maybe she should just ask him.

“Hellooo! Earth to Lexa!” Anya waves a hand in front of Lexa’s face and Lexa frowns and bobs her head back.
“Stop.”

“Water?” Anya asks again, obviously impatient for Lexa to pick her poison – well, or not.

Screw it. “Just give me two beers.”

“Coming up.”

Anya pulls out another beer and pops the bottles open in one swift move. Before Lexa picks up the beers she quickly shrugs out of her jacket and hands it over to Anya. It’s getting way too hot for it. Anya takes it wordlessly and throws it under the bar into a wooden shelf between mini fridges. Lexa knows she’ll bring it to her office behind the bar where it will be safe from potential spillage when she gets a chance. She thanks Anya, who is already busy with her next customer, and moves back over to Lincoln.

He and Lexa don’t really pay for drinks here. Especially not since Anya became manager. They’d probably not have this privilege if they came here more often, but as it is Anya says she can afford to let them drink on her tab. Whenever girls find out that Lexa and Lincoln are friends with the hot boss behind the bar they always get immediately more interested in them. Sarah calls it the ‘bartender by proxy effect’. Lexa doesn’t exactly know what that means, but she gets that it has something to do with people being automatically more attracted to bartenders for some reason, and that being friends with them kind of makes that fascination rub off on you.

Tonight, however, nobody seems to notice she didn’t have to pay. Fortunately. She just wants to hang with Lincoln, not talk with new people. She’s never really in the mood for that, but right now she’s especially opposed to the idea of meaningless chit chat.

When she sinks onto the leather covered bench next to Lincoln and hands him his beer he thanks her. They clink their bottles and take the first swig in silence.

It’s quieter here. The bass still vibrates, but you can hold a conversation without having to shout too much.

They don’t really talk for a while though. Lexa likes that about her friendship with Lincoln. He’s always been really good with reading her mood like that. When she needs some quiet, he doesn’t question it, he just sits with her. It’s not just her either. He prefers quiet sometimes as well.

There are times when they spend whole work-out days like that; each of them doing their own thing in silence, side by side. It’s reassuring somehow and Lexa appreciates that dynamic.

She’s sure he could have spent the whole night tonight like that as well, but she turns to him and he looks up from his phone.

“How’s Raven?”

Lincoln updated her the other day, when Octavia finally texted him back, but she hasn’t heard about the girls in Seattle since. All she knows is that Octavia won’t be back until tomorrow.

“Oh, she’s good. Octavia was just telling me that she’s about ready to crawl up a wall, but it’s just the boredom. Raven isn’t really one for bed rest.” He chuckles.

No, Lexa wouldn’t expect her to be. Despite whatever feelings she might have towards the brunette in connection to Clarke, she feels really bad for her. From the first time she met Raven she could feel the girl’s vibrant energy. Being limited by the leg brace must be bad enough, but being told not to get out of bed? That must be like a nightmare to Raven. It would be for Lexa.
“When is she being released?” Lexa asks, watching Lincoln’s face as one of the moving ceiling lights flickers over it. He looks tired, but happy.

“Should be tomorrow. They’ll all drive back down together, Octavia said.”

Lexa’s heart thumps loudly. She nods.

“That’s good.”

“Yeah.” He smiles, and then lifts the bottle to his lips again.

Lexa looks down to her own bottle, debating whether to open the topic on Clarke. She wouldn’t even know what to say. Did he see them at the party? Did he notice anything? She and Clarke were basically joined at the hip on Halloween and only now does Lexa think that that might have seemed a little odd to Lincoln. She eyes him carefully, trying to remember if he mentioned anything to her that might suggest that he had noticed their attachment.

She can’t think of anything. Maybe he didn’t really notice. Or maybe Clarke is like that with all new people. Maybe she was like that with him at first, too.

That thought tastes sour in her mouth and Lexa looks back down. She isn’t even surprised when she sees that she’s peeled the label of the bottle almost all the way off. Ripping it off completely and smoothing over the torn edges, she puts the bottle on the table with a quiet sigh.

---

1 November

**Jeremiah (Brenda’s friend):** Hey, sorry we didn’t make it to your party. Hope it was fun anyway! Whatcha up to today?

3 November

**Jeremiah (Brenda’s friend):** Good morning J I’m hanging out near campus today, wanna meet for coffee?

6 November

**Jeremiah (Brenda’s friend):** Hey, Brenda just told me that you weren’t in class yesterday. Everything alright?

---

Clarke’s fingers hover over her phone. She feels bad that she hasn’t responded yet. It’s been almost a week, but she just always gets distracted. Plus, she doesn’t really know what to say. She didn’t even notice that Jeremiah hadn’t come to the party, but it’s not like she can text him that. That’d be mean. She didn’t see the text asking her to go out for coffee either, not until later that night, and she was already in Seattle by then. The last text she actually saw right when he sent it yesterday, but then
Raven told her it was her turn to play a card and she forgot all about it.

Now so much time has passed without her replying that it’s just awkward.

Sighing, Clarke slips the phone back into her pocket. She’ll think of something later. Now she needs to concentrate on something else.

As she rounds the corner and spots the ‘Benny’s’ restaurant sign up ahead, she checks her watch.

It’s almost 1am; the restaurant is about to close. When Clarke texted Callie earlier, asking if they could meet to talk, Callie told her she should come by the restaurant after her shift ends.

Passing the first window, Clarke sees that Benny’s is basically empty already. She only spots one elderly couple in the back, smiling at each other. Things like that always make her smile as well. She wants to be like that with her husband some day.

…or with her wife?

Clarke’s steps falter. She never considered that possibility. Obviously she played with the idea of dating a girl, when Raven came out, but it just didn’t seem to be for her. Now? Now she’s not so sure anymore.

She’s glad when she walks over the threshold of the restaurant and the warmth shakes her out of her thoughts. The atmosphere is quiet and calm. Aside from the old couple there are only a couple of people in the room. A waiter, who’s lazily wiping down the tables, another waiter, who’s counting the money in his large wallet, and Callie.

Callie is standing behind the bar, sorting glasses into the shelves, and Clarke just watches her for a moment. She didn’t expect to see Callie again this soon. She wasn’t sure if she’d ever see her again after they kind of lost contact. After basically growing up with her, not having her in her life anymore was hard. But so much other stuff was going on back then that Clarke’s world kind of forced her to just move on. Now here she is, though, and she is just as Clarke remembered her; even though she still seems out of place to Clarke. She shouldn’t be working at a restaurant. She should be at the hospital in her doctor’s coat.

Hoping to find out why that isn’t the case, Clarke approaches the dark haired woman.

“Hey, Callie.” She greets and Callie seems torn out of thoughts of her own for a second, but then she smiles broadly.

“Clarke! Hi, baby!” she stands on her tip toes and hugs Clarke, who just slipped onto one of the bar stools.

Callie has always called her some sort of nickname like that. It was never weird, not even when Clarke had friends over. Instead it always made her feel special and appreciated. Hearing it now makes Clarke realize how much she’s missed it.

“How are you? How’s your friend?” Callie asks, putting the last two glasses away, before closing the empty dishwasher.

“She’s good. The surgery went well, but she’s getting really antsy to go home.” Clarke tells her. She’s not surprised Callie knows about the surgery. Abby must have told her about it, because Callie wasn’t surprised when Clarke told her she was in Seattle earlier when she asked to meet up either.

“Naw, the poor thing.” Callie pouts in sympathy. “When’s she getting out?”
“We’re all going to drive back tomorrow.”

“Oh, okay.”

Clarke thinks she hears disappointment in Callie’s voice. It makes her feel warm somehow. Even though she never lets herself think that way, now she has to admit that she was kind of sad and maybe even a little angry that Callie hadn’t tried harder not to lose contact.

“Well, what did you want to talk about, Lilo?” Callie asks, covering Clarke’s hands with hers on the bar counter. Then she suddenly seems to remember something. “Oh, did you want something to drink? Water? Coke? A cocktail?” she wiggles her eyebrows at Clarke at the last suggestion and winks.

It makes Clarke smile. Just like when she was a kid and Callie would sneak her some sweets or toy she wanted, but wasn’t allowed, when Abby and Jake weren’t looking. It wasn’t a big deal. Not anything her parents would actually get mad about, but it always made Clarke feel like Callie was on her side no matter what. Callie and her dad were actually a lot alike in that way; making Clarke feel like she was their accomplice rather than a child.

“I’ll take some juice actually if you got any.” Clarke tells her. Her mom always called her a sweet tooth. That never really changed.


“Orange please.” Clarke interrupts Callie from listing every juice on the menu.

Callie nods and walks over to the other side of the bar, pulling out a heavy-looking silver, deep drawer. She takes out two small glass bottles of orange juice and then pushes the drawer shut again with a bump of her hip. It slows down at the last moment, before gently slipping shut. Callie grabs a couple of straws and a bottle opener and walks around the bar. She opens their drinks.

“There you go, sweetie.”

“Thanks.” Clarke mirrors Callie’s smile and watches her hop onto the stool next to her, her dark hair falling over her shoulder in a silky wave.

“Sure. Now,” Callie takes a deep breath, her shoulders rising and falling with it. She looks at Clarke imploringly and squeezes her knee lightly. “What did you want to talk to me about?”

Clarke had it all laid out in her head. She’s been planning this conversation since her talk – or lack thereof – with her mother at lunch, but now she can’t seem to find the right words. She needs to be careful, because she doesn’t want to let any resentment she has about her mother seep into this conversation. Callie isn’t the one who’s been keeping things from her. Not really. At least Clarke doesn’t feel like Callie is being as intentionally secretive as her mother is. She doesn’t feel like Callie owes her an explanation as much either. But she won’t get one from her mother, so here she is.

Might as well just go for it.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were back, Callie? You obviously talked with mom, why not me?”

She tried to keep the hurt from her voice, but she can hear a bit of it ringing through anyway.

So does Callie.

She looks pained and it’s so eerily similar to the look her mother wore earlier that Clarke is
momentarily distracted. More and more this feels like there’s something she’s missing. Something she should have known for a long time.

“Ah, Clarke,” Callie sighs, looking down at her hand on Clarke’s knee. Slowly she puts down her bottle on the counter and leans forward until both of her elbows are resting on her own knees, her hands taking one of Clarke’s between them. “it’s not because I didn’t want to talk to you or see you, sweetie. I’ve missed you so much and I never stopped thinking about you. Pinky swear.”

The old term stirs something in Clarke, but she isn’t in the mood to reminisce. Callie doesn’t make light of the situation by reaching out her pinky despite the words and Clarke is grateful for that. Already this feels a lot different from trying to talk with her mom about things. Hopeful, Clarke looks at Callie, waiting for more.

Callie presses her lips together and then looks down at Clarke’s hand in hers. She takes her time, but Clarke doesn’t mind. Callie won’t disappoint her. Callie isn’t Abby.

When Callie finally looks up again, she takes another deep breath. Then she shows a sad smile. “I’m a little messed up, Clarke. I thought I could handle it, but there were just some things—” she falters, her gaze dropping again.

Clarke watches her. She seems to strain for words and Clarke is starting to feel bad for making her think about whatever happened. She doesn’t want Callie to have to relive anything that upset her, just so Clarke gets some answers.

“It’s okay.” Clarke says and Callie meets her eyes again. “You don’t have to tell me about that, if you don’t want to, Callie. I just want to understand why you didn’t tell me you were back. Even after you and mom started talking again.”

Callie nods understandingly. “I wanted to. I thought about it, but it just didn’t seem right. I was- I am still all over the place. As you can see,” she gestures around herself at the restaurant at large and lets out a small, humorless laugh. “I- I have some stuff to figure out - for myself and everything going on in my head - and I didn’t want to drag you into that, when I’m not even sure where my life is going right now. Not after I dropped the ball with you as I did.” Callie looks at Clarke and Clarke sees how sorry she is. She wants to say something, but Callie is on a roll.

“I didn’t mean to lose contact like I did, Clarke. I’m not sure- I don’t think I can really explain what happened, so I won’t insult either of us by trying to justify myself. Life happened, as stupid and generic as that sounds, and I dropped the ball. Big time. I should have tried harder, Clarke. I should have found a way to keep in touch or – or at least I should have reached out sooner. But I didn’t. And then in the blink of an eye, years had passed and it felt like you and your mom were from another life. It didn’t seem real that I could just pick up the phone and call you guys. I didn’t even know for sure I still had the right number and –” she sighs again and squeezes Clarke’s hand. “And to be honest I was ashamed, too. You know how, when too much time passes, it just gets harder and harder to do that thing you were supposed to do all that time ago? That’s what happened and it’s still not a good excuse, but it’s not supposed to be an excuse. An explanation maybe. That’s all I really have right now.” She ends, somewhat abruptly, lifting Clarke’s hand with hers and letting it fall back onto Clarke’s lap as she shrugs her shoulders helplessly.

They’re quiet for a bit, Clarke mulling over everything Callie just told her and trying to figure out how she feels about it all.

The first feeling she identifies is happiness. Finally someone is talking to her. Finally she’s not getting stonewalled. Finally she’s getting somewhere.
Then a touch of sadness lays itself over the happy feeling like a thin layer of paint, coloring it just a bit darker. There’s so much Callie missed. So many years Clarke now wishes she could have shared with her favorite ‘aunt’ and so many things Clarke doesn’t know about Callie in return.

She feels nostalgic now, too. Seeing Callie just takes Clarke back to happier times. Times when her best friend was still alive, times when she still had a dad.

Her heart grows heavier with every breath and she feels her throat close up. Not wanting to give into the grief, she clenches her teeth together. Breathe through the pain until it’s merely a distant throb. Clarke has gotten good at that. She’s had to.

Finally there’s forgiveness. It’s not one feeling, but a complex mix of all those other feelings, only seen in a different light. It’s sadness and happiness and grief and even a little bit of anger and disappointment all mixed up into one big balloon of feelings and then forgiveness makes that balloon fill with something lighter than air until it floats away. Helium. Forgiveness is helium and Clarke lets herself be filled up with it, until the feelings-balloon is far away from her heart and throat and all those other nooks and crannies of her body that the feelings took silent refuge in. She lets herself be filled up, until all that’s left is a soft echo of all those feelings and she feels free to feel new things again; to make new memories.

All that happens in a few seconds and Clarke wouldn’t know how to put it into words if she tried. Instead she just stands up from her stool and wraps her arms around Callie in a tight hug.

Callie seems surprised, but is quick to reciprocate the embrace. If she’s still wondering why Clarke is hugging her, she’s not worrying about it enough to ask. They just stand there – well Clarke stands, Callie sits, which makes the whole thing a little awkward, but not really, because it’s them – and hold each other.

“Ughhh.”

Anyaflops down onto the leather bench next to Lincoln, bumping him to scooch out of the way a little, and sighs heavily.

Lexa, now sitting opposite Lincoln on one of the high bar stools, smirks. “There, there.” She says, as she watches Anya tiredly lift her bottle of water to her lips.

It’s almost 3am and there’s one of those weird, random lulls that allows Anya to take a break for a bit and let Sarah handle things on her own. Sarah is an absolute monster behind the bar. She never gets tired and everybody at *Grounders* has heard the story of how she managed the bar on her own on New Year’s once when there was a last-minute out-break of the flu among the other bar tenders including Anya. Nothing can break that woman, she’s the goddess of hard workers, and Lexa knows how much Anya appreciates and admires Sarah for everything she does for the club. Sarah is practically family.

“I hate my job.” Anya complains. Lincoln and Lexa exchange a look. She always says that when she’s tired, but they both know that Anya wouldn’t want to do anything else. This club is her baby.

Groaning, Anya briefly rests her head on her arms over the table, but then she pulls herself up and leans back against the wall. “So, what did I miss? Any crazy stories? Any heavy flirting?”
Lexa snorts and Lincoln shrugs and shakes his head.

“Not really,” he admits. “We’ve mostly just been chatting about the gym expansion.”

“Oh?” Anya raises her eyebrows. “They’ve actually started? For real this time?”

Indra has been planning on expanding the gym for years, but it never seemed the right time she said. Plus, apparently she had some things to consider. Lexa is pretty sure money wasn’t the issue, but she never asked what other factors might have delayed Indra’s plans. Either way she’s finally gone ahead with it and just today the first workers started expanding the first floor. At the moment there were only a couple of old storage rooms up there, but from what Lexa and Lincoln know the whole first floor is supposed to be remade to hold at least four more big training rooms. It’s all pretty exciting and Lexa even forgot about Clarke, while they talked about how they imagined everything to look once it was done and what awesome new equipment they might get.

“Yeah!” Lincoln exclaims, shifting to face Anya, and starts telling her about Guy the construction guy and how he promised he’d sneak them info on what Indra had him and his crew do up there.

While Lincoln recounts their day at the gym, Lexa’s mind returns to its favorite topic. Clarke. She hasn’t seen her since she came to the gym on Tuesday. It’s not even been a week, but somehow it feels like longer and Lexa is already starting to think of ways to see her again. She’s been trying to inconspicuously get more information out of Lincoln. Like when he’ll see Octavia again and if Clarke might be there and if there’s any good reason for Lexa to tag along. Of course she didn’t just ask all that – that would be so inappropriate – but it’s been really hard to get an answer she can work with. All she knows is that the girls will drive back from Seattle tomorrow and that Lincoln is thinking of maybe, possibly dropping by at their place around evening to see Octavia and check if they need any help. While that is obviously very sweet of him, it’s of no use at all to Lexa and she almost gave away her frustration earlier by slumping back against the chairs back rest, when he told her of his vague plans. Thankfully he didn’t seem to notice anything though.

Lexa is still at square one though, with no good excuse to see Clarke again, and really, she doesn’t even know what she’s doing. Even if she saw Clarke again, what could that possibly accomplish? For one, Lexa doesn’t feel confident enough around the blonde to just straight up ask her out. Everything Lincoln and Octavia have told her about Clarke have pointed towards her being straight, and the one thing that doesn’t – Clarke’s and Raven’s background kiss in Lincoln’s picture – isn’t really encouraging in this situation either. On the contrary, the possibility of anything going on between Clarke and her roommate only makes everything more complicated.

Before Lexa can lose any more time pondering her personal crisis, Anya demands her attention. She calls Lexa’s name and Lexa is glad she can tear herself back to the moment quickly enough this time to hear the question on the first try.

“Did you check my emails for any more useful applications?” Anya looks at her expectantly and Lexa shakes her head.

“No, sorry. Only two more came in today and trust me, you don’t want them.”

Anya whines like a little kid pretending it’s about to cry, but before she can throw her head back and curse the universe, Lincoln perks up next to her, drawing their attention.

“Hey! You need a new bar tender!” he exclaims and Lexa almost laughs out loud at Anya’s murderous look.

“No shit, Sherlock.” The club manager practically growls, but Lincoln isn’t fazed. Excitedly he looks
between Anya and Lexa.

“No, no! Octavia is looking for a job! Why don’t you hire her?”

“Huh,” Anya looks interested, tilting her head a little and jutting her chin forward like she sometimes does when she’s thinking. “Has she ever worked a bar before?”

Lincoln shrugs, “No idea, but I mean everybody has to start at some point right? And she’s super hard working and picks up new things like that,” he snaps the fingers of his right hand. “Like this one time I showed her a new technique to lift weights and she had it on the first try! And in class she always—”

“Alright, alright, no need to compose an ode to your girlfriend, Romeo!” Anya stops him from listing every single thing Octavia ever did well. Lincoln shuts up immediately, but watches Anya hopefully, not taking his eyes off her for even a second. Lexa thinks it’s really sweet how highly he clearly thinks of Octavia and how much he wants to help her. She suddenly feels almost emotional about what a good guy Lincoln is and hopes Octavia knows how lucky she is.

“Here,” Anya leans forward and retrieves her phone from the back pocket of her black leather pants. How a phone even fits in there is a mystery to Lexa. “Give me her number and I’ll have her come in for a test run. We’ll see if she can keep up then.”

Lexa swears if Lincoln were the type to squeal he would have done just that, but instead he only takes the phone from Anya and thanks her exuberantly, telling her she’ll see; Octavia will be awesome.

When he saves his girlfriend’s number into Anya’s smartphone Lexa notices that he knows the digits by heart. She wouldn’t know why, these days you don’t even have to press speed dial anymore, but it makes her think they probably talk on the phone a lot and she suddenly longs for something she’s never really had. When she was with Costia they never talked on the phone much. They didn’t need to, since they lived right next to each other, and somehow they didn’t communicate well over phone at all. Lexa supposes that was mainly her fault. She never really talked much back then, even less than now. With everything that had happened before she was brought to the new foster home and moved in next door to Costia and her parents, talking just hurt. Everything hurt. But talking hurt even more and helped no one. That’s kind of more of a problem over the phone than in person. In person Costia seemed to be able to read Lexa anyway; no words needed. Over the phone the silence was more deafening. So they never really talked on the phone and Lexa never thought she’d want that with someone. But imagining Lincoln and Octavia chatting for hours on end when they weren’t able to see each other made Lexa long to have that, too.

She imagines Clarke’s voice, quiet and hoarse from lack of sleep, and the longing intensifies until it’s almost painful. She’s never even heard Clarke’s voice like that, but suddenly it’s all she wants.

She must have looked wistful, because Anya kicks her shin under the table.

“Hey! No moping in my club! I’ll have Bossy throw you out on your ass.” She warns, but Lexa knows her well enough to hear the underlying message. ‘What’s up with you? Are you okay?’

“Sorry.” Lexa apologizes and straightens her back. “I think I’ll head home soon, actually. I’m really tired.”

It’s the truth. Her eyes have felt heavier over the last hour and a dull throbbing sensation has started expanding inside her head.
Anya raises her eyebrows, unconvinced, and Lincoln presses his lips together sympathetically. It represents their characters so well, that Lexa has to smile. When she doesn’t offer anything more, Anya shakes her head.

“Fine, at least wait for me. I’m just gonna grab our stuff.” She orders and then glides off the high bench. Slightly surprised that Anya will go home before the end of the night, Lexa suspects that Sarah told her to get her ass out of the club and into bed multiple times already. Sarah is one of the few people Anya kind of listens to sometimes. Possibly. If she runs out of stupid reasons to object and be stubborn about it. Still, most times Anya doesn’t come home till 6am and Lexa is really glad tonight is different. Anya needs a break. Vacation time, ideally, but that’s so ridiculous, Lexa doesn’t even consider suggesting it. Lexa tries imagining Anya at the beach, relaxing in the sun in a brightly colored bikini. It’s possibly the funniest thing she’s ever thought of.

When she starts laughing, Lincoln eyes her amusedly, but doesn’t ask.
All Up In The Club (Part II)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“How’re you doing, Clarke?” Roan asks as he comes up to the counter. Her old and now new boss smiles at her as she prepares a Cappuccino, the machine hissing loudly as it dispenses the milk foam into the take-away cup. He looks exactly the same as the last time Clarke saw him, although his hair might be even longer now.

When Clarke first came to work at the Pilot House in her first year at the University of Portland, she thought Roan was the strangest choice to manage a Coffee House. He was tan, had long hair with beads braided into it and always, without fail, wore flip flops. He looked more like a chill surfer dude who’d be at home at a beach in California with his pot smoking friends, playing the bongos in the sun, than a responsible manager of a campus coffee house. And yet, there he was, his deep, rumbling voice soothing as a tiger kitten’s purr – as Raven liked to put it – and his friendly demeanor the first thing you noticed when he walked into a room.

“It’s as if she never left.” Christie answers in her stead, coming back from the storage room, and Clarke smiles at her. The two of them used to work together when Clarke worked here before, and truly their dynamic hasn’t changed one bit. Sarcastic and always quick with a pun, Christie never fails to make Clarke laugh and when they’re on shift together it doesn’t really feel like work. Well, it still feels like work and they complain to each other a lot about anything and everything, but it’s a lot of fun, too. Clarke was glad to find out that her former colleague was still working at the Pilot House and it made the decision to come back to work here a lot easier. She even looked forward to it a bit and not just because she needs the money.

“That’s good to hear. I’m glad you came back.” He nods at Clarke.

“It’s good to be back.” She replies in kind and they share a smile, before Roan slaps his hands onto the counter surface and takes a big breath.

“Alright, I’m off. I gotta talk to a guy about a goat!” he wiggles his eyebrows excited and then shoots them his usual lazy, two-fingered salute. After he’s gone Christie and Clarke share a look. Clarke has to smirk. He’s such a character, that man. Knowing him, the ‘goat’ he was talking about is probably just the ice-maker Christie told Clarke he wanted to get for the coffee house, but with Roan you never knew for sure.

“So how’s everything going with the girls?” Christie asks as Clarke places the Cappuccino and two espressos onto the trey. “You still living with Raven and Octavia?”

“Yeah!” Clarke nods and bends down to pick up the dishtowel that just slipped from her shoulder. “Nothing has really changed to be honest. Still living with the girls, still being killed by my pre-med competition, still freaking out about the future, you know, the usual.” She shrugs, but smiles.

Christie chuckles and nods her head. “Yeah, same here. It’s like the last year never happened. Oh! I got a flying squirrel though.”

Clarke freezes on the spot and then bobs her head back. “You got a what now?” she asks, thinking she must have misheard.

“Yeah!” Christie says in lieu of answering the question. “He’s so cute, Clarke, seriously! His name is
“Doug.”

“Doug the flying squirrel.” Clarke repeats in a deadpan voice.

“Yes. Doug Mortimer Haraldson the First.” Christie nods importantly and then she scoops up the trey and walks off with it, leaving Clarke standing behind the counter; a little baffled, but overall just very amused.

It’s almost half past 9 pm when Clarke arrives home at the apartment. She’s happy, but exhausted, and kind of hopes that either Raven or Octavia cooked and that she may get a quiet night to relax. The latter hope quickly goes out the window however, when she hears loud shouts coming from inside, before she even unlocks the apartment door.

“That is not how you do it, oh my god!”

“Get your hands the fuck off my shaker! Raven! Ra-ven!”

“Just let me- Ou, hey! I was just going to show you how to do it the right way!”

“Well, I wanna figure it out myself! So sit down and shut up!”

“No need to get violent, jeez!” Raven huffs and Clarke sees her rubbing her right hand with her left as she closes the door behind herself.

Octavia is standing in their kitchen behind the counter peninsula and Clarke internally groans as her first hope vanishes in a puff of metaphorical smoke as well. It doesn’t look like anybody has cooked in that kitchen today and by the looks of it nobody will for a while either. It’s a complete and utter mess. Bottles of alcohol and juice are scattered on every surface, and sprawled out between them are different colored slices of various fruits. Their mixer looks like it went to hell and back and Clarke is kind of afraid to see the floor. She’s sure Octavia must have spilled something, judging by the way her shirt looks.

Sitting across from Octavia are Raven and her friend Jay, who seems to be the only one noticing Clarke’s arrival and nods and waves at her, before going back to watching Raven trying to pour some more juice into Octavia’s shaker without getting caught. She almost manages, too, since Octavia is distracted looking down at what Clarke guesses are instructions on her phone, but then Raven’s bar stool creaks and Octavia’s head shoots up.

“Cut it out!” she immediately snaps and pulls the silver shaker out of Raven’s reach, which results in even more of a mess as Raven spills the juice onto the counter instead.

“Raven! Oh my g-“ Octavia jumps back just in time to avoid soaking her shirt in even more colorful liquids.

“Now, look what you’ve done!” Raven clicks her tongue.

“What I’ve done? Are you fucki-“

“Hey, hey, hey!” Clarke shouts over both of them and three heads snap up to look at her. “What the
hell are you guys doing? Is that my good towel?"

She just spotted her favorite towel hanging wet and dripping over the handle of their oven and she doesn’t know if she wants to laugh or cry or ground them both. Sometimes she feels like she’s a single mother of two in this household.

As if on cue Raven and Octavia immediately start accusing each other and Clarke pinches the bridge of her nose as she drops her keys in the bowl next to the door and lets her backpack slip off her shoulders. Even if she tried she couldn’t filter what her roommates are saying right now, it’s all just noise. Loud, annoying noise.

By the time she put her dad’s winter jacket onto their clothes tree the two have started arguing among each other again instead of trying to hang each other out to dry in front of Clarke and Clarke is ready to ignore them and just quickly grab a snack and flee to her room, but then she spots Raven sipping on her cocktail and stops in her tracks.

“Hey, you’re not supposed to be drinking yet, Raven!” she frowns and speed walks over to the peninsula herself. She can’t believe her roommates. She gets that Octavia wants to practice for her trial run at Grounders on Saturday, but Dr. Kane explicitly said no alcohol for at least two weeks and it’s barely been five days.

“They’re virgins.” Octavia clears up just then and Clarke swallows the next line of reprimand she was prepared to lecture them with.

Raven snorts. “They’re wrong.”

Octavia glares at her, but Raven only closes her lips around her red straw and avoids her eyes.

Both Raven and Octavia have been bickering more than usual since the three of them got back from Seattle the other day and Clarke has about had it up to here. She can’t deal with her two friends being at each other’s throats over every little thing all the time anymore. Yes, Raven is still in pain and yes, Octavia has been home with her the most, having to deal with her moods, but Clarke is all out of fucks to give. She just wants some peace and quiet.

Clarke notices Jay smiling happily, sipping on her own drink, and is sure that her cocktails at least are in no way virgins.

With a sigh Clarke steps over someone’s purse and crosses the kitchen. As she expected the floor is a sticky mess, but she can’t be bothered to be any more annoyed than she already is. She just wants to eat; she’s starving.

“Do we have any food?” she asks over her shoulder as she opens the fridge. The coolness feels nice against her face and she can’t wait to get out of her day clothes and put on something more comfortable in her room that isn’t rain forest temperature. Raven always overheats.

“Don’t know.” Raven mumbles.

“There’s some left-over Thai I think.” Jay offers, but Octavia hums in disagreement.

“We gave that to you, Jay, remember? Like two hours ago?”

Jay starts giggling. “Oh, right. Forgot. Sorry.”

“Nevermind, I got it.” Clarke grumbles, not even sure if the others would hear. Suddenly in a bad mood, she pulls out a half eaten jar of cheese dip. She still has some Tortilla Chips in her room, she
thinks. That’ll have to do.

She wants to remind Raven and Octavia to clean up when they’re done, but doesn’t want to start another discussion. Instead she just skips past the three girls without another word and vanishes into her room, picking up her backpack on the way.

As she closes the door behind her, Clarke lets her shoulders slump. Tiredness is seeping into her body like milk into one of the coffees she prepared all afternoon and her bed seems to call to her. She can’t believe it’s only Tuesday.

On the way to her beckoning mattress she trips over a pile of books and instantly the image of a certain brunette pops into her mind. ‘You have so many books! There’s just a lot of books!’... ‘It’s messy.’

Chuckling softly at the memory, Clarke sinks into her pillows. Lexa was so flustered, trying to back paddle and not offend Clarke. It was really cute. *Lexa* is really cute. And hot. Clarke doesn’t need Raven to tell her that, although Raven apparently can’t stop herself from frequently bringing up the fighter’s attractiveness. Something tugs in Clarke’s stomach and she puts down the cheese dip she just opened. She doesn’t really feel like it anymore.

Now that her mind has found its way back to memories of Lexa Clarke’s thoughts seem to have taken on a life of their own. They lead her to image after image of Lexa; swerving to avoid a punch from a red headed fighter in the octagon, twitching when that Anya girl touched the cloth to her bust-open face, appearing in Clarke’s kitchen, carrying a case of beer with only one hand, standing in front of Clarke in her room, close enough to touch, with darkness all around them.

She feels her heartbeat pick up as she thinks back to how Lexa swallowed when Clarke asked her to dance at the Halloween party. When she reached out for Lexa, she saw the other woman’s throat bob and just like then, the skin of the back of her neck starts tingling at the memory.

Suddenly restless, Clarke sits up. She huffs out a heavy breath and presses the palms of her hands against her eyes.

*Study.* She needs to study.

Even though her body screams at her to let it rest, Clarke heaves herself off the bed and crosses the small distance to her desk.

The rest of the evening goes by fast.

Raven and Octavia knock on her door once and offer her a virgin Piña Colada – “*It’s seriously her best work. I totally approve! I mean, of course I helped, but-*” “*Shut up, Raven.*” – but other than that the apartment is quiet and Clarke is left alone.

She can’t even hear Raven’s loud music when the girl goes to shower and Clarke almost feels bad for having been so annoyed by her friends earlier. She promises herself to lighten up a bit more. Even when Raven and Octavia are bickering like there’s no tomorrow.

When Clarke finally goes to bed she falls asleep faster than she has in a while. She only wakes once, but the echoing images of superhuman-sized cocktail umbrellas singing the Folgers Coffee Jingle to her in Alvin and the Chipmunks voices lulls her right back to sleep.
“No, no, Eric that’s not what I said. What the hell would I need six hundred packs of straws for!?”

Anya stops dead and lets out a frustrated growl, spanning the width of her forehead with the fingers of her left hand, while she presses the phone against her neck with her other. Then she takes a deep breath and brings it back up to her ear. “Listen, no, hon, it’s fine. Just get me Aisha on the phone? Please.”

Turning around to Lexa who’s been strolling behind her since Eric, Anya’s ‘straw guy’, finally called her back just when they entered the park, Anya shakes her head. ‘I’m surrounded by idiots.’ She mouths, before someone on the other end apparently speaks and she’s back to business.

Looking down to jokingly share a look with Gramps, Lexa is happily surprised to see him already staring back at her, tongue lolling and eyes twinkling, and she has to laugh.

At the sound, Gramps’ tail wagging increases and his tongue licks over his mouth excitedly.

Still smiling, she reaches down and scratches behind the dog’s right ear, making it wiggle back and forth a little. Gramps closes his eyes contentedly until something draws his attention and he looks to his right, ears pricked. Lexa follows his line of sight and sees a small girl chasing her dog, squealing in delight. The girl can’t be much older than four years and it happens more than once that one of the large dog’s sharp turns causes her to stumble and fall, but she gets right back up again.

The second Lexa spots her, she stops dead in her tracks.

A sudden cold feeling is spreading through her body and she quickly looks away, heart pounding.

When she tries to swallow, her throat is painfully constricted. Her chest feels way too tight. Her eyes are stinging. No. Don’t think about it. Don’t.

She presses her lips together to regain some composure, but now she can feel them trembling and it only makes her feel even more horribly shaky and out of control. Clenching her jaw, she tries her best to push everything away. All the feelings, all the guilt, all the memories, all the pain.

She doesn’t even notice that she’s been hugging her arms around herself until Anya turns around. She seems ready to rant again like before, but when she sees Lexa, her entire expression changes immediately. Her eyebrows knit together and the hand that still had her phone raised to about shoulder level, slowly sinks down.

“What’s wrong?” The words aren’t spoken soothingly or in a worried, cooing voice. They’re serious and sharp and designed to get the needed information as quickly as possible to form a plan; to gather intel for damage control. People would think that was something Lexa would do. Something she learned in the army. But way before Lexa ever joined the military, Anya was already diffusing situations and winning wars. Some people would say Anya let the foster system turn her cold and harsh, but those people don’t know Anya very well. The words don’t sound harsh to Lexa at all; the way Anya frowns isn’t grim. It’s determined.

Whatever happened, Anya will know what to do. Whoever hurt Lexa, Anya will destroy them. Whatever broke, Anya will fix it. She always did; always does. But Anya can’t fix this. Nobody can.

So Lexa does her damnedest to swallow it all down. Down past her closed up throat into her frozen insides. Deep, deep down where nobody will ever find it again. Not even she.
“Nothing.” The word sounds a little hollow, even to her, but not broken – at least not as broken as she feels – and Lexa is relieved. “I’m just cold.”

She wraps her arms a little tighter around herself and pulls up her shoulders until her face is almost hidden up to her nose in her light scarf. It smells warm and familiar and Lexa takes just the tiniest bit of comfort in that. Her chest hurts a little less. Her heart pounds a little softer. But her throat still hurts as if someone punched it from the inside and in the back of her mind, way in the back, she’s screaming.

She knows Anya isn’t convinced. Lexa didn’t expect her to be. But she lets it go.

Anya only lets Lexa know she isn’t really fooled by letting a small but gruff hum resonate behind closed lips.

Then Lexa’s ‘big sister’ wordlessly walks up to her and nonchalantly pulls the big hood of Lexa’s fall jacket up and over her head until the world around her goes black and all sounds become slightly muffled versions of themselves.

“There. All fixed.”

They were clearing away the dirty dishes into the dishwasher when Raven suggested they should surprise Octavia at her trial run shift at Grounders the next night.

Clarke’s first instinct had been to interrupt Raven with an enthusiastic ‘yes’ before she could even finish the sentence, but she held herself back. She isn’t sure why; Raven would most certainly love that. But somehow Clarke doesn’t want her excitement to be quite so obvious. Maybe that’s because she doesn’t really want to have to explain that a big part of why she is so on board with the idea is because she knows Octavia’s potential boss, the manager of Grounders, is Anya; the mysterious blonde Asian woman who was at Lexa’s fight in Tacoma and who, according to Lincoln, is the fighter’s roommate and somewhat of a best friend. And best friends visit each other at work…right?

She can’t explain it, but even the mere chance that Lexa might show up at Grounders makes Clarke want to go there. Lexa intrigues her. It’s as simple as that and yet it’s also kind of complicated. There’s a million questions linked to that ‘simple’ fact, but Clarke doesn’t really want to get into them. All she knows is that she wants to see Lexa again and find out more about her. And so she will.

“Yeah okay, I’ll tag along.” She shrugs as if she would have been just as happy staying home studying or watching Netflix.

Raven’s reaction is just as expected. “Cool! Alright, she’s heading over there at 7 or something, but I think they’re doing like all sorts of explanations and like getting to know the bar area and stuff, so I was thinking we’d hop over there around let’s say 11? Midnight? Something like that. Or do you think there’ll be too much going on by then? Or too little? Have you been to Grounders before? I think I went once, but I’m not sure. God, we need to go out more, I don’t even know the club scene anymore! Do you think it’ll be full? I mean, it’s a Saturday so I guess for Anya’s sake I’d hope so. And I mean it’s no fun when the club is empty, so I guess for our sake we should hope for a big crowd, too. I just hope there’s not too many people. I don’t want some drunky to fall on my leg.”
Raven’s rambling is almost hard to keep up with, but Clarke is kind of used to her friend’s fast pace. Even if she seems to be gaining speed lately.

“I think 11 is fine. If it’s not busy yet maybe that’ll give O some time to hang out.” Clarke points out, getting a dishwasher tab out from under the sink. As she puts it into the little square compartment Raven smacks her lips and nods, before closing the machine.

“Yeah, you’re right, that’s true.”

“I’m a genius like that.” Clarke jokes. Raven smiles happily at her and then boisterously pulls Clarke’s face towards herself. She plants a loud kiss on Clarke’s cheek and then pats her head.

“Yes you are. My little highbrow.”

Clarke raises an eyebrow. She’s not sure she likes that nickname. But she’s been called worse, she guesses.

While Raven starts sorting their leftovers into Tupperware containers, Clarke turns on the Radio. Hailee Seinfeld’s ‘Most Girls’ is playing and immediately both of them start singing along, grinning at each other.

“Most girls are smart and strong and beautiful,”

“Most girls work hard, go far, we are unstoppable. Ugh, I love this song.” Raven exclaims, dancing from one corner of the kitchen to the other. She’s still favoring her right leg from time to time, like right now as she’s pushing past Clarke to get to the fridge, but Dr. Kane said that was to be expected and frankly Clarke is just glad that Raven is taking care of it as well as she is. Plus, she seems to be really happy with the result of the surgery, so Clarke has taken to being cautiously optimistic as well.

“Oh, did you text Jeremiah back yet by the way?” Raven suddenly asks, taking Clarke by surprise again.

“Oh, um,”

The other day she told Raven and Octavia about feeling kind of bad for not responding to his texts for so long when they asked what was going on with that one guy she’d had a date with. She’d already told them about the semi awkward kiss at the end of their night. Octavia had shrugged it off as normal for a first date kiss, but Raven had nodded knowingly and just said ‘men’. Clarke wasn’t entirely sure what Raven had meant by that, but she gathered that it was alluding to girls, in general, being better kissers. Either way, they were no help at finding a way to text him back after having let so much time pass then and Clarke doubts Raven will be of any more use to her now. Still, she confesses,

“Actually, no. Not yet.”

“Clarke!” Raven chides, whipping around, standing in front of the open refrigerator. Clarke sees the Tupperware boxes carelessly pressed into hardly big enough spaces and has to bite her tongue to not say anything.

Instead she grimaces sheepishly. “I know, I know. I just don’t really know what to say.” She defends herself kind of half-assed.

“He’s being so sweet though!” Raven argues.

See? Not helpful at all.
“I know! I just-“

Just what? Clarke doesn’t even know herself why texting him back has proven more of an act than one might have thought. She’s just been really busy, as generic as that sounds. But with everything going on with Raven and Callie, she sort of simply hasn’t been in the right mindset to think about a guy. She’s pretty sure Raven will not accept the ‘I was busy’ excuse though.

“I’m just not sure I like him like that.”

As she says the words, she knows they’re true. It hadn’t really occurred to her that that might be why she hasn’t felt the urge to text him. Because who wouldn’t like a guy who thought you were great and made you laugh and who, on top of everything, was cute, too? But Clarke knows this must be it. She just isn’t excited enough about him. That’s why she keeps forgetting he texted at all. And why she keeps stalling having to come up with a reply. She just doesn’t like him like that.

_Huh._

“Are you sure? He sounded so chill though, the way you described him.” Raven cocks her head and eyes Clarke with an almost regretful expression. Clarke doesn’t know why, it’s not like _Raven’s_ the one being shot down.

“Yeah, I know. I don’t know, I’m just not… feeling it.” She shrugs to show that she doesn’t know why either.

Raven hums, still looking thoughtful. “Well, it’s a damn shame. Because Jackson or Jeremiah, the boy’s fine.” She pulls down the corners of her mouth, expressing just how impressed she is by the guy’s hotness apparently, and Clarke snorts.

“Have at it, Raven. He’s all yours.”

Raven pretends to be intrigued by the offer, but Clarke can tell she’s just playing. Not that it would be a problem. They overcame Finn cheating on Raven with Clarke, so Raven going after a guy Clarke thought she might be interested in, but actually isn’t? No, that wouldn’t be a problem whatsoever. In fact, Clarke herself thought how Raven and Jeremiah would get along great she remembers. Maybe she _should_ introduce them after all. Even if Raven’s interest seems to be merely meant as a joke.

They finish cleaning the kitchen together and then they make themselves comfortable on the couch with Clarke’s books and notes and two hot chocolates as a little bed time treat. Octavia said she’d be spending the night at Lincoln’s so there’s no one to force Raven to watch her favorite shows with her, meaning Raven was free to quiz Clarke on her test material.

Clarke usually tries to avoid having to ask Raven to do that, since the girl always gets so invested in Clarke’s studies that she ends up asking a lot more questions than necessary. It’s sweet and a good way to find out how much you actually know, but when you’re already struggling to cover everything that’ll be on the test, there usually isn’t much time to get sidetracked. Octavia is more a straight-to-the-point kind of gal when she’s helping Clarke prepare for exams. But Octavia isn’t here and Clarke is grateful that Raven said she’d do it. She just needs to get some structure to all the knowledge she’s been cramming into her brain over the past few weeks. Getting asked questions and having to explain things out loud generally helps her sort out the chaos in her mind.

“Alright, let’s do this. What’s a stethoscope, how does it work and, most importantly… how the fuck do you spell that motherfucker?”
With a weak laugh and a sigh Clarke reaches for the first stack of notes on the table. Wordlessly she hands Raven the list of old questions she found on the course’s facebook page and a large pile of cue cards she wrote together.

“Let’s just start from the top and make our way to the bottom, alright? I numbered the cue cards.”

“Sure, I can be a switch for you.” Raven smirks. When Clarke just ignores her, Raven mumbles ‘tough crowd’, before starting with the first question.

Lexa just sat down with a protein shake and her book, when her phone starts ringing in her bedroom. Quickly she jumps up and skips around the coffee table in a haste. She gets there just in time and is relieved when a man’s familiar voice answers her greeting.

“Hello?”

“I see you’ve lost all manners since I’m not there to teach them to you anymore.”

“Gustus!” Lexa’s lips spread into a wide smile. She’s been trying to reach him for weeks. Hearing his voice now, she realizes she’s missed it more than she noticed.

“That’s Sergeant Major Gustus to you. And who is this? Since you haven’t identified yourself I may just have called the wrong number. I better hang up and redial.”

“Oh my god, they finally promoted you?”

Lexa has been saying Gustus should be promoted from his rank of First Sergeant to Sergeant Major for forever. Well, she obviously didn’t actually say it to anybody in the military, but she’s told Anya as well as Gustus himself, that she thinks he deserves a promotion more than once. She’s so happy to hear that their bosses finally got their heads out of their asses and did right by him.

“I’m so happy for you!” she tells Gustus.

Gustus isn’t actually his first name, but by the time he told her his first name – Elliot – she was so used to addressing the man with Gustus that she never even thought about attempting to change it. As far as she knows, everybody, even his close friends like Indra, call him Gustus anyway. It’s one of those cases where the family name somehow became the nickname somewhere along the road. It’s actually not that uncommon among military folks.

“Who is happy for me?”

Lexa rolls her eyes. “This is Sergeant Lexa Woods, who am I speaking to?” she corrects herself, using a falsely sweet voice as she repeats the initial greeting, this time hopefully the way Gustus wants to hear it. When there’s only silence on the other end, she quickly adds, “please! Who am I speaking to, please?”

Lexa can practically hear Gustus’ warm smile through the phone when he names his name and rank again, letting her know she passed his test. Making her way back into the living room Lexa smiles as well. He always does this. It’s almost like a little game they play. He pretends to be shocked by
Lexa’s lack of manners or seemingly lax training ethics and Lexa digs out the correct responses from her memories of her four year long military life. It usually doesn’t take her long to get it right. The army teachings have a way of staying just underneath the surface of your skin at all times once they’re engrained in you.

Whether she really gets it right or not, Gustus usually finds a way to criticize her anyway, however. But she knows he doesn’t actually mean anything by it. The reprimands are his way of showing love, she knows, and they make her feel…cared for somehow. He’s a lot like Anya in that respect, Lexa guesses. Maybe that’s why she and Gustus bonded so well from her very first week at Basic Combat Training.

She really doesn’t know what is worse, the fact that she’s being punished – again – for something super benign; her right shoelace became undone. Someone please explain to her how that is her fault? Or that now she’s being watched by the Senior Drill Sergeant, who’s obviously had a bad day.

“You call that running in place, Private? You think when you run away from the enemy in that pace you’ll have them laugh themselves to death? Is that your plan? Is that what you joined the army for? Will you take advanced classes in Stand-up comedy to complement that plan of action? Want me to buy you a clown nose? Nice red one?”

It takes all Lexa has not to roll her eyes and snap something back at the tall, broad-shouldered man. Instead she keeps staring straight ahead, at nothing, and picks up the pace, all the while thinking how incredibly stupid this is.

“That’s more like it! Now you almost look like you aren’t half-asleep.”

‘Why don’t you go fuck yourself, Drill Sergeant Gustus.’ Lexa thinks grimly, the swear words tasting bitter in her mouth even though she doesn’t say them.

Everything aches. Her thighs feel like they’re on fire. Her abs feel like…well, like she has them, which she wasn’t so sure about before coming here, and her arms and shoulders are still killing her from the shark attack on their first day where they had to hold up their duffle bags over their heads; Lexa even longer than the others.

Even her head aches from lack of sleep and Lexa thinks she might cry from exhaustion before this day is over.

But she won’t. She doesn’t cry; especially in front of people. And there’s really no way to escape them here. Anywhere.

As she stomps her feet into the ground, for whatever fucking reason, she thinks of Anya and the look on her face when she told her she was going to join the army. She had never seen Anya like that before. Angry, yes, shocked, yes, sad, yes, but never…beaten.

She can’t get that look out of her head and the more she tries to, the more it seems to cling to her; and the more she wants to ignore the meaning behind it, the more she fears it may be true.

Maybe this is the end of something. Maybe she really won’t come back. Maybe that look will be the last memory she will ever have of Anya. And maybe, just maybe, Lexa deserves all the heartache the thought of that causes her. If there’s even still enough left of her heart to ache. Maybe it’s just a black hole now, that’s pulsing to the rhythm of the ghost of what was once the beating organ that kept her alive. Maybe that’s what’s really hurting and maybe it doesn’t even matter. Not after everything.
Maybe the word ‘maybe’, the uncertainty and the darkness ahead, are the only things Lexa still deserves. Because she sure as fuck doesn’t feel like she knows anything about anything anymore.

The only things she’s sure about are that she chose this and that she won’t quit.

That…and that Anya deserved better, but she can’t really let herself go there just yet.

“Hey! You’re not at Sleep Train! This isn’t where you lay down and dream a little dream! Wake UP!”

Lexa clenches her jaw so tightly that she thinks she might actually break a tooth, but she manages to swallow down the retort that’s bubbling up from her chest. It originates in her burning lungs and leaves a searing trail in her throat that feels like she should be able to hear it sizzling like acid.

“What, are you in pain? Is that what this is?” the Senior Drill Sergeant gestures roughly at her, all of her, as if to say ‘Really? This is what they bring me?’.

It makes her feel like the scum of the earth. And despite everything she feels inside that would agree with him, the bubbling still intensifies in defiance.

The bubbling intensifies and Lexa thinks she might just burst open from the pressure that’s building up inside of her. It spreads out like a vicious cancer, like a wild fire racing itself to burn down a forest, until it reaches every last part of her. Every toe and every finger and every godforsaken hair on her head, all tied up in that tight fucking bun.

“You’re not special. You’re pain isn’t special.” The Senior Drill Sergeant continues to hammer on and every new insult feels like a punch to Lexa’s gut. Lexa can feel her control slipping away as if she were trying to hold on to the smoke the fire leaves behind and she’s about to explode when something catches her attention.

“You’re a soldier now, Private Woods, one of many. You know what that means?”

Something in the way the question rolls off the Sergeant’s lips makes everything in Lexa halt.

Lexa doesn’t answer, but when he paces past her, she chances a quick glance at the six feet five tall tower of a man. His face isn’t as rough as his voice would have you think, but you can see he’s seen some things by the way he seems to look farther out than just across the green and brown plains in front of him as he walks.

Lexa could kick herself when she startles as the Senior Drill Sergeant suddenly turns around. Even though she snaps her eyes back forward immediately, she’s sure he saw her looking.

She waits for the yelling to start once more, but her superior’s tone surprises her again.

“Well, do you?” he asks, and his voice is softer than she ever thought possible for any Sergeant anywhere. She almost forgot what the question was, but then she remembers.

“Being one of many, Private Woods,” Sergeant Gustus goes on in a low voice, now standing so close to Lexa that she can feel his warm breath on the side of her face. “means that all that anger and all that sadness and all that pain… doesn’t have to be carried alone.”

Lexa can barely breathe as her throat constricts so painfully, that all her other soreness is forgotten as if she had never felt it.

Her eyes sting as her heart breaks, but Lexa holds back the tears.
Because Lexa doesn’t cry.

Not anymore.

“Better. So, guess who came ‘round the base the other day.” Gustus’ voice snaps Lexa’s thoughts back to the present and she readjusts the phone against her ear as she sinks back onto the couch.

Before she can venture a guess however, Gustus already answers his own question.

“Staff Sergeant Wilson, will you believe it?” a soft laugh indicates that Gustus had been more than surprised by the visitor.

“Really? I thought she was still overseas!” Lexa shares his surprise. She’d have thought her former Battle Buddy would at least call her if she got back into the country.

After all they spent nearly all of Lexa’s four years in the military side by side.

“Why are you walking, Private? Are you lazy? You think you’re on holiday? This is the goddamn army you’re at! This ain’t Disneyland! You ain’t here to go on a ride and shake hands with Mickey Mouse! Get your ass out of my goddamn barrack! Run, run, run, run! Go, go, go! Goddammit-”

The rest of the Drill Sergeant’s yelling is swallowed as Lexa and her platoon mates run out of the barracks and into the cold morning air. It’s 4:43 am and it’s freezing, but Lexa doesn’t mind. She can handle the cold. She can handle the yelling. She can even handle Charlie.

Charlie Wilson is a 20 year-old girl from Miami, Florida. She’s about three inches smaller than Lexa and possibly three times as smart as her, but the most fascinating thing about her has to be how she can manage to talk Lexa’s ear off at the very short and few ‘breaks’ they get and still avoid getting smoked. Lexa’s had to do push-ups, sit-ups, run in place and hold her duffle bag over her head for half an hour and this is only day 3. If Lexa ever finds out how Charlie avoids getting picked on by the Drill Sergeants even though she’s not exactly quiet, she’ll be one happy soldier, that’s for sure. The way it’s looking right now, however, Lexa will be lucky if her entire platoon doesn’t hate her by the end of the week. Because most of the time when she gets smoked, they all get smoked.

Welcome to the army, bitches. Hooah!

However tough the Drill Sergeants are on her though, punishing her for every little thing from speaking when not spoken to, over ‘showing attitude’, to something literally as small as having a single hair out of place, Lexa is determined not to quit. Quitting is not an option.

Nobody ever said Basic Training would be a walk in the park, nobody ever said she would love it here, nobody ever promised her long, quiet nights or comfortable beds or nice, relaxing lunch breaks. And if there’s something Lexa is used to, it’s having to share her space with a bunch of people she doesn’t really know or particularly like and being yelled at by adults for no valid reason. This is nothing new for her. This is just another Wednesday.

Charlie however is something Lexa didn’t expect. She’d never heard of ‘Battle Buddies’ before, so when she was assigned one on day 1 of Basic Combat Training, or ‘Boot Camp’, she was not thrilled. Someone to look out for you? Someone to train with? Someone to talk to? Share your thoughts and feelings with? Have by your side all day, every day, until you graduate? No! This is not what she signed up for. She signed up for the army, not baby daycare!

She doesn’t want someone by her side 24/7. She wants to be left alone. Train alone. Eat alone. Sleep alone.
Well, as alone as one can do all that when they’re sharing a dorm with about twenty to thirty other recruits and the doors are always open.

At least they aren’t really allowed to talk in the barracks. Apparently they haven’t ‘earned’ that right yet. If Lexa weren’t so happy not having to talk, she’d have a word to say about that stupid rule. Sometimes she thinks no one under the sun has ever actually read the definition of ‘rights’ before. Who comes up with the idea that being allowed to talk should have to be earned? And why ‘rights’ can be taken away as a disciplinary measure or some stupid lesson to be learned will never make sense to Lexa. In her book that defies the very definition of a right. They’re thinking about privileges. Not rights. But fine, if they want to treat talking like a privilege, falsely call it a ‘right’ and then make them earn it? Whatever. Lexa couldn’t care less about that particular restriction.

She’s just glad she’s out of reception. That was the longest fucking week of her life.

When they get to the Combat Grounds their instructors are already waiting for them. It’s time for morning drills and Lexa doubts they will be any easier than they’ve been the last two days. She’s not the fittest, mainly because she hasn’t really worked out ever in her life and unfortunately took up Anya’s nasty smoking habit over the past year, but she doubts anyone short of a pro athlete could walk away from these drills without being incredibly sore the next morning. As drills will be a daily occurrence from now on however, Lexa hopes her muscles will get used to them eventually and stop feeling like they’re being ripped apart with every movement.

Either way, for now she’ll just have to suck it up, so she gets into position and shouts along the repetitive ‘yes, corporal’ with her fellow soldiers-in-training as they’re being whipped into shape.

Of course, Charlie is right by her side, and when they’re being shouted at to pair up for the next exercise Lexa sighs and turns to face her.

There is a hint of an encouraging smile on Charlie’s face as Lexa’s body blocks her from their Sergeant’s view and Lexa rolls her eyes internally.

Great. A babysitter and a soccer mom in one.

Just how she imagined her life in the army.

“Hooah!”

“She asked about you. Wanted to know what you were up to these days. I told her you were spending your days drinking beer and watching rugby. I think she was really excited for a second.” Gustus tells Lexa just then. He chuckles at his own shenanigans and the casual conversational tone with which he talks gives Lexa the irrational urge to giggle. “Why she likes that pseudo sport, I’ll never understand. It’s just a-“

“A watered-down version of American Football.” Lexa finishes his sentence, grinning to herself.

“Well, it is!” Gustus argues, laughter still in his voice. “I mean at least when she was watching Women’s Soccer she had a good team to cheer on! But rugby? Tell me one good American team. Actually, name one American rugby team, period.”

Lexa merely laughs in lieu of an answer and Gustus takes it as endorsement apparently. “Exactly.”

They end up talking for almost an hour and when Lexa hangs up she holds a piece of paper in her hands. It appears Charlie’s phone got trashed in an incident Gustus said he’d rather have Charlie tell Lexa herself and she lost all of her contacts. When she asked about Lexa however, she had Gustus give her Lexa’s number and made him promise he would pass along hers as well.
Lexa carefully copies the digits from the paper into her phone and replaces them with Charlie’s old number.

She smiles as she draws up a new text message.

When Anya first let Octavia know that her practice shift would be on a Saturday she thought the woman was crazy. Who would have someone bartend for the first time on the busiest day of the week? But Anya’s argument was kind of compelling.

“If you can’t handle busy, I have no use for you. Busy is exactly why we need you.”

Touchè. Octavia had thought then. But she’d still been nervous all week, frantically trying to learn everything about cocktails and other useful bartender skill, and turning their kitchen into a war zone in the process. She had seen Clarke’s looks, but thankfully her roommate had held back from tearing her head off. At least so far.

Despite her nerves she’d been excited to get to the club as well and now that she’s finally here, she’s one-hundred percent in her element.

It’s crazy busy and there’s an impossible amount of things she needs to remember all at once, but just like when Bellamy first taught her how to drive she just tunes out everything around her and tries to let her body take over.

Octavia has always been the physical type. She likes pushing her body, likes feeling her muscles work and for as long as she can remember her muscle memory has been of greater service to her than her mind ever was. Even in school she’d write things she’d need to remember out with her body. Repeating them to herself as she danced through her room or linking certain answers to certain skateboard tricks as she hung out with Raven at the park.

At first her mom always got angry when she was listening to music or milling about outside, seemingly instead of studying, but after a few fights and ‘inexplicable’ good grades she accepted Octavia’s explanation and let her do her thing.

Now she just needs to apply her unusual technique to this. Bartending. How lucky that it’s a rather physical job when you think about it; or don’t think about it, more precisely.

Thankfully, Anya is too busy to watch over her shoulder all the time and the other bartender on shift – Octavia thinks she’s called Sarah – doesn’t seem overly watchful either. Rather she’s nice and uncomplicated and Octavia thinks that if this works out they might actually work together quite well.

The pulse of the music adds to her excitement and she just can’t stop grinning.
“Hold on, hold on!” Raven calls as Clarke wants to cross the street to where the neon Club sign lights up the street. Clarke turns around and sees Raven struggling to tug one of the decorative zippers on her pants leg out from under her new brace.

“How, let me.” Clarke says and lowers onto one knee in front of Raven.

“Oh my god, Clarke, I had no idea!” Raven exclaims in a choked up voice, clutching her hands in front of her mouth. “Yes! Yes, a thousand times yes!”

“Shut up.” Clarke snorts, not able to keep from laughing. She scoots a little to the left to make way for a man with a stroller who eyes them curiously before his toddler demands his attention, pulling on his jacket sleeve on the other side.

She prods the zipper out from under the brace’s cushioned aluminum straps.

“Anywhere else?” she asks Raven, already checking the other straps by running a finger between them and Raven’s leg.

“No, that’s good.” Raven replies and Clarke stands back up.

“Why did you even go for the zipper pants? Wasn’t that kind of predictable that stuff would poke you under the brace?” Clarke enquires as Raven loops her arm through Clarke’s and they cross the street together.

It’s almost midnight and the streets are already dark, but the unmistakable buzz of weekend clubbing hangs in the air. People are walking up and down the streets in small to medium groups, talking to each other in various states of drunkenness and displaying the typical moods that come along with it. Clarke spots a very giggly girl hanging on to a tall, bulky guy who’s ears are so red they almost rival the traffic lights he’s standing under. Behind them three other girls are huddled around their friend, consoling her over whatever made her cry and take her shoes off and further down the street Clarke can hear some other guy bellowing out a song so out of key that there is no chance of recognizing it and she silently wonders if it’s later than she thought or if people get drunk sooner than they used to.

“Because they’re the shit and they make my ass look good.” Raven answers as if Clarke should have known that and Clarke just hums. Fair enough.

As they get closer to the club the heavy black door opens and two guys and a girl walk out, laughing and shrugging into their jackets as one of them lights a cigarette. Or tries to. They pause two steps in front of the door so the one guy can cup his hands around his lighter and when Clarke goes to push past him he looks up and for a second she freezes.

That face. Those eyes, that mouth, the way his forehead crinkles as he draws up his eyebrows at her staring. He looks so much like Wells that her heart stutters painfully.

“Clarke?” Raven’s voice comes from behind her and Clarke shakes herself internally. She manages to tear her eyes away from his face and quickly pushes towards the door, but she still feels like she just saw a ghost. She barely registers Raven apologizing to the guy and thanking him for stepping out of the way, before the door opens and a gentle hand pushes her to go inside.

There’s a guy sitting on a three-legged high stool. He has an impressive beard. He asks her for something. The entry fee. Clarke struggles with her purse. Raven puts a hand on her wrist. Clarke lowers it and Raven pays for both of them.

Clarke gets a stamp on her right wrist.
Raven’s hand returns to Clarke’s back and ushers her a few steps further.

“Clarke?”

The word is louder in the quiet after the door has closed behind them and Clarke takes a deep breath. This time she physically shakes her head to get rid of the image.

“Sorry, sorry. I just…that guy…” she swallowed hard and then looks up at Raven who’s eyeing her with a mix of curiosity and concern, her hand still lingering on the small of Clarke’s back over her leather jacket. “That guy looked exactly like Wells.”

“Oh.”

Raven knows all about Wells. All about how he was Clarke’s best friend from the time they were babies. All about how they used to be inseparable. All about how he could always make her laugh even when she was angry at him or her parents, just by pretending to fall off his chair or choke on his drink, spitting everything out and all over himself. All about how he taught her how to play chess and all about how she hasn’t played it since he died.

Raven knows. And when Clarke swallows again, she wordlessly steps forward and pulls Clarke into a tight hug. It lasts just long enough for Clarke to feel the shock leave her system, but not long enough for her to feel constricted and get caught up in the pain. It lasts the perfect amount of time and when Raven leans back Clarke smiles at her gratefully.

“Well, come on. I’ll buy ya a drink, pretty lady. We’ll drink one in his honor.” Raven presses her lips together and bumps her shoulder against Clarke’s, before starting down the stairs.

“We?” Clarke arches her brow, but has to smirk when Raven throws back her head, ponytail whipping along, and groans loudly.

“You! You’ll drink one in his honor and I’ll have a fucking virgin, okay? You happy now? Jeez, mom.” The last part is mumbled just loud enough for Clarke to hear as she follows Raven down the stairs and her grin spreads.

By now they can faintly hear the music coming from the inside the club behind a double door at the end of a short hallway. At the bottom of the stairs a pretty girl with a feather in her hair is working coat check and Raven immediately perks up at the sight of her. Clarke rolls her eyes up and shakes her head good-naturedly as Raven’s last steps towards the coatroom turn into a leisurely saunter.

“Hi there.” Raven leans her elbows onto the counter that separates the coatroom from the rest of the hallway. Clarke can’t see her face, but she just knows Raven is wearing one of her cocky smirks or maybe she went for the sweet smile with the big soulful eyes. Either way it seems to be working, because the girl, straightening up from rummaging around under the counter, chuckles pleasantly and gives Raven a dazzling smile.

She really is very pretty, Clarke thinks, silently checking the woman out while Raven starts up a conversation. The coat-girl’s tan skin looks warm and soft and fits very well with her brown, wavy hair. Several braids have been plaited into it and some have small feathers hanging from them as well. Somehow that makes the girl look playful, but sophisticated at the same time and Clarke is secretly impressed. She’s just trying to decide what color the girl’s eyes are when she overhears Raven say her name and it draws her attention. Raven is telling the girl – Piper – how Clarke and she are friends of the new bartender and when the girl says, ‘Oh, Octavia?’ and glances at Clarke, Clarke smiles and nods, feeling slightly caught.
They give Piper their jackets and when Raven finally seems to decide she’s done flirting – not before promising Piper that she’ll bring her a drink later though – they continue on their way into the club. They feel the beat of the music more than they hear it and with every step closer to the double doors, Clarke and Raven get more and more excited. For very different reasons though, Clarke thinks, biting her lip when her stomach flips at the thought that Lexa may be just beyond those doors.

\[bzzzz \ bzzzz\]

Lexa looks up from her book as her phone vibrates on the table. She’s a little startled at how dark it is around her and looks at the watch on her wrist.

12:08 am.

Wow. She’s been lost in her book for over four hours now. She hasn’t even moved once and she can feel it. Her back is stiff and her neck hurts from having to hold her head up for so long and Lexa lets out a soft groan as she rubs it with her left hand. Her right wrist hurts as well and she rolls it a few times before reaching for the phone.

It’s a message from Anya. Before she even opens it the little camera emoji in her inbox tells her it’s a picture and Lexa frowns. Isn’t Anya supposed to be working the bar tonight? Saturdays are always busy, so Lexa can’t see her just chilling around, taking pictures.

Curious now, she opens the message and almost drops her phone.

Leaning forward, she quickly clicks on the picture to bring it to full screen.

*Clarke.*

The picture shows Clarke and Raven, standing at the bar that Lexa immediately recognizes as the one in Grounders. Raven seems to be saying something, face lit up with obvious joy and excitement, and Clarke is smiling to herself as she looks down at her purse that’s wedged between her and the bar.

*She’s so beautiful.*

Even though the picture isn’t the best quality, Lexa is in awe. Clarke’s blonde hair falls over her shoulder in a graceful wave and the bar’s famous lights tinge the whole scene a soft rainbow color. It makes it seem almost magical.

The smile on Clarke’s face is small, but Lexa finds it incredibly mesmerizing still. It makes her want to know what Clarke is smiling about. Was it something Raven said to her? Was it something she thought of? Or was there no particular reason behind it at all?

What little she can see of Clarke’s body makes her swallow. The black top she’s wearing seems to be skin tight and is so low-cut that there is little left to the imagination. Two thin straps trail over the curve of her breasts, running down into the space between Clarke’s breasts, where they meet.

Lexa thinks she may never tire of looking at this picture, but when she finally taps it again to shrink it
back to its original size, she notices that Anya has added something underneath.

*Guess who just came in. Get your ass over here.*

L.exa doesn’t have to be told twice.

By the time Lexa arrives at the club her nerves are raw. She’s been rhythmically scratching over her fingernails the whole bike ride over, but it hasn’t helped calm her down one bit. Instead she feels even *more* jittery now if that’s at all possible.

She hardly notices Bossy greeting her on her way in and finds it incredibly difficult to stand still as Frank presses the club’s stamp of the night against her left wrist.

As she descends the stairs towards the cloakroom Lexa tries to calm herself down. She takes a couple of deep breaths and forces her mind to manage her expectations.

Clarke is here with her friend. Why would she even want to spend time with Lexa? Maybe she already left. Maybe she is bar hopping and this was just a quick pit stop and Lexa came here for nothing like a damn fool. Maybe Clarke is already dancing with some guy or Raven and wants to be left alone. Her stomach drops at that thought, but she quickly pushes on. What if Clarke hasn’t thought about her again at all and just smiles at her politely and then ignores her for the rest of the night? That thought isn’t any less depressing, but the next isn’t any better.

What if she asks her what she’s doing here?

In a moment of panic Lexa’s steps falter and she almost trips the last of the way down the stairs. She only just catches herself, but now her heart is *really* racing.

“Hey!”

Piper smiles widely at her, but when Lexa comes closer she frowns.

“Are you okay?”

“Huh? Uh, yeah.” Lexa nods twice and then looks down, not sure why she can’t hold eye contact with Piper all of a sudden.

“You sure?” Piper asks a little hesitantly, but Lexa is already a few steps ahead. She nods again with a quick glance over her shoulder, before aiming her eyes straight ahead again.

*Get it together!*

For some reason it’s Gustus’ voice reprimanding her in her head and Lexa quickly closes her eyes to refocus. She can do this.

*No expectations. No expectation. No expectations.*
The second the bar is in her line of sight, Lexa looks for the spot Clarke was standing in in the picture Anya sent her.

It’s now occupied by a large brunette with legs for days and straightened hair down to her ass.

*She just moved to another spot. She just moved. That’s all.*

As is typical for a Saturday night, the club is extremely crowded. On her slow way to the bar Lexa tries her best to inconspicuously look around for Clarke. No luck.

Instead she spots Sarah twirling a shaker over the back of her hand. When she sees her, she gives Lexa a nod in recognition and smiles at her.

Too nervous to smile back, Lexa ducks behind a sturdy guy in a neon wife-beater shirt as she presses on.

When the bar comes into view again Lexa sees Anya handing a bottle of alcohol to Clarke’s roommate Octavia. Even though she knew Octavia was trying out for the bartender job, actually seeing Clarke’s friend in this setting makes Lexa excited.

When she finally reaches the bar counter she circles over to the left and slips behind it.

Octavia is so busy with whatever cocktail she’s making that she doesn’t look up or make any indication that she noticed Lexa’s presence. Anya, however, starts smirking the second Lexa appears next to her.

“Shut up.” Lexa grumbles and Anya’s smirk only grows, now accompanied by a raised eyebrow.

“She’s on the dance floor.” Anya answers a question Lexa never asked. Lexa only nods, turning away from Anya.

She pretends it’s because she needs to look for the key to the office, but really she just can’t stand the knowing way Anya looks at her, amusement evident on her face. It’s not helping Lexa’s nerves at all.

She mumbles a quick thanks, before she grabs the key off its hook and vanishes through the door leading to the staff and storage area.

As the door closes behind her the club noise cuts out almost completely and suddenly the loudest thing in her ears is her own heartbeat.

She walks past the staff bathroom to Anya’s office. It’s cool and stuffy back here and Lexa can feel a drop of sweat trickling down from her hairline. She delicately wipes it away, before rubbing the same hand against her black high waist skinny trousers.

She was so glad when she saw them in her closet. She thought Anya might have borrowed them at first, when they weren’t where she thought she remembered putting them after her last laundry day, but there they were. They’re maybe her favorites. Although she’s never really worn them to impress someone in particular, Lexa knows the way they hug her legs is desirable in a situation like the one she has unexpectedly found herself in tonight.
And what situation exactly is that?

Clenching her jaw she shushes her mind internally.

As she steps into Anya’s office she briefly debates whether she should even take off her formfitting suit jacket. It’s actually meant to be worn inside, open and buttonless, but Lexa decides it’s simply too hot in the club to leave it on.

She carefully folds it over Anya’s desk chair, making sure her money purse won’t slip out from the inner pocket and fall to the floor, and then turns on the spot and exits the office as quickly as she came in.

On her way back towards where the music is beckoning, she passes the bathroom again and stops in her tracks. On a whim she quickly dashes in and eyes herself in the mirror.

Her hair is open, parted in the middle, and flowing freely down past her shoulders. She even put mascara on; more than she has in forever – not counting her MMA ‘commander’ paint – and tried for a sort of smokey look with a little smudging underneath the eyes as well. She frowns, unsure, but there’s nothing she can do about it now.

Her look trails lower to where her dark green, silky button-up is stuffed into the top of her trousers just at her navel. She tries to get out the wrinkles, but she can’t quite get rid of all of them. When she tugs on the one, another appears.

With a final deep breath, she looks her reflection in the eyes one last time and then turns away from the mirror.

T minus zero.

Clarke is just on her way back to the bar when she almost runs into someone, seemingly appearing out of nowhere.

“Oh, sorry!” Clarke exclaims happily, before a giggle dies in her throat when she sees who it is.

“Lexa!”

Lexa looks about as shocked as Clarke feels. And that’s pretty damn shocked. Where did she come from? Clarke knows she wasn’t in the club when she and Raven got there. She knows because she looked, really well, and because she was disappointed when she couldn’t see her anywhere.

“What are you doing here?” Clarke asks reflexively and Lexa’s face falls even more. The brunette looks positively uncomfortable now. Oh shit, that was probably rude. After all, it’s her friend’s club!

“I mean, where did you come from?” she tries to amend. That doesn’t sound any better, Clarke!

“Just now I mean, because I almost ran into you. Because I didn’t see you!”

Lexa’s expression still looks a little shaken, but Clarke is relieved when she finally talks.

“Um, o-office.” Lexa stutters, vaguely gesturing to the door behind her. Clarke thinks it’s the cutest
“Oh!” she nods and then smiles. She can’t not. Because she thought she wouldn’t get to see Lexa after all and now here she is! And she’s really, really pretty. No, pretty is the wrong word. Lexa looks hot.

Really, really hot.

Involuntarily, Clarke’s eyes trace over Lexa’s body. Her entire outfit screams confidence and sex-appeal and Clarke feels a pleasant twinge low in her stomach. It passes in the blink of an eye, but a light fluttering sensation lingers behind and it’s thrilling in a way that Clarke likes. A lot.

When she looks back up, she sees Lexa staring at her as well and suddenly she feels ten times hotter. In every sense of the word. Because Lexa’s lips are slightly parted and her expression looks awestruck and Clarke is really, really glad Lexa came after all.

“Hey, I was just getting drinks, are you going to the bar?” Clarke asks and she has to shout a little as the song that’s playing surges in a booming crescendo.

After another second, Lexa nods and Clarke takes that as her cue. Smiling happily again, she grabs one of Lexa’s wrists and tugs her along after herself as she pushes her way to the bar. Lexa’s skin feels soft and smooth against her palm and for a second Clarke worries that her hand might be sweaty. But the thought doesn’t stay. She’s too excited. When she spots an open space at the bar she quickly pulls Lexa with her.

For the second time that evening they almost collide, but Lexa catches herself. Clarke wouldn’t have minded.

“Hey, Lexa! There you are!” the girl that introduced herself as Sarah earlier calls out when she sees Lexa and then adds something, but it’s not loud enough and Clarke doesn’t really listen. She’s already trying to get Octavia’s attention, who’s at the other end of the bar.

“O! Octavia!” she calls out and then turns to Lexa without even making sure that Octavia heard her. “That’s my friend Octavia! She’s a bartender here now!” she explains to Lexa, who’s standing right next to her.

Clarke let go of Lexa’s wrist when they got to the bar, but she really wants to touch her again. Maybe not though. That would be kind of weird. They barely know each other! The thought almost makes Clarke laugh out loud, because it really feels like she and Lexa have known each other for way longer than they have.

Then again, Clarke practically saved Lexa’s life when she choked at the gym. She touched her then, too. So maybe it would be okay.

Clarke’s eyes drop to Lexa’s middle. That’s where her hands were when she did the Heimlich maneuver on Lexa. She tries to recall the feel of Lexa’s body against her hands, but she can’t. She wants to wind her arms around her again so she can properly pay attention this time. So she can remember.

She notices that Lexa is talking to her.

“What?”

“She said we already met.” Octavia’s voice comes out of nowhere. Not really. It comes from across the bar and Clarke beams.
“Octavia!”

Octavia laughs and Clarke laughs with her.

“Clarke!” Octavia echoes back at her and Clarke can tell she’s kind of making fun of her, but it’s all good. Octavia is here and Lexa is here and this night is awesome.

The bartender called Sarah, who’s still standing across from them, addresses Lexa again. “So are you drinking tonight?”

Before Lexa can even respond someone answers for her.

“Of course she is! It’s on me!”

Raven appears on Clarke’s other side and Clarke smiles broadly at her.

“Raven!”

“Okay, not this again.” Octavia interrupts, laughing and clapping her open hand onto the counter to get Clarke’s attention. “Are you gonna order or what? I ain’t got all night, honeys!” she draws the last sentence the way Raven often does and Clarke wants to laugh again. She just feels so light now. Light and happy. But then she pulls herself together and concentrates. What did she want to get again?

“Yeah, what will it be, Commander?” Raven inquires, throwing an arm around Clarke’s shoulder and leaning in closer, but Lexa shakes her head. Clarke thinks she looks a little uncomfortable, maybe even annoyed, when she says, “No, really you don’t have to. It’s fine.”

“Oh,” Raven makes a gesture with the hand that’s slung over Clarke’s body, as if physically swatting the refusal away. “I insist.” She says and Clarke agrees.

“Yeah, she insists! She’s been insisting all night.” Clarke giggles and then lets out a small squeal when Raven unexpectedly tries to shut her up by pressing her hand over Clarke’s mouth.

“Don’t listen to Party-Griffin. Party-Griffin is perfectly capable of getting herself drunk. Party-Griffin did this to herself and she knows it.” Raven tells Lexa and Clarke can see her grinning in her peripheral vision as she struggles against Raven’s hand. Raven lets her go though, but Clarke only giggles again.

“Guys!” Octavia snaps them back to the task at hand and Clarke twists her body to the bar to stand at attention. Just as quickly she twists it back to face Lexa though.

“You should really let her get you something. It’s for Wells.” She explains and apparently that’s all the convincing Lexa needs.

“Alright.” Lexa nods once, eyes staying on Clarke. Clarke likes the way Lexa looks at her. It’s quiet and loud at once and it makes her feel clearer, like someone cleaned up all her edges and redrew her with a sharper pencil.

Raven hollers and when she retracts her arm from Clarke’s shoulder, Clarke sees Lexa watching the movement. It makes her insides tingle for some reason.

“Make sure it’s a really difficult one.” Raven tells Lexa in a conspiratorial voice, winking at her before glancing at Octavia, and Clarke’s cheeks are starting to hurt from grinning so much.
Raven orders another drink, saying she’ll bring it to the ‘goddess in the coatroom’, and Clarke thinks she sees Lexa’s brows rise up in surprise. Maybe she didn’t expect Raven to be into girls.

When Lexa is up, she orders a beer and Raven groans and tells her she’s no fun, but Clarke thinks Lexa is totally fun.

Especially when she secretly shoots Clarke a mischievous smirk when Raven isn’t looking.

Clarke is tipsy. It’s obvious and cute and apparently Clarke’s not dating Raven after all either and Lexa really doesn’t know what to do about it. She doesn’t know what to think. The way Clarke is not shy to get close to Lexa, touch her arm or hand or just simply smile that brilliant smile at her, makes Lexa entirely incapable of really doing much thinking at all.

Clarke’s outfit isn’t helping either, because the revealing top turned out to be a form-fitting mini-dress and the way it hugs Clarke’s figure makes Lexa glad the club isn’t well lit enough to discern the hue of red her face probably adopted the minute she laid eyes on her.

While Clarke seems to enjoy her slight drunkenness, apparently feeling carefree and happy as can be, Lexa was painfully aware of her awkwardness at first. But somehow Clarke’s presence put Lexa at ease almost instantly. Something about her just makes Lexa feel like there isn’t anything she could say or do that would put Clarke off and it’s an incredibly freeing experience.

Maybe the beer Sarah put into her hands helped with that a little, but not counting the ever-present nervousness when she’s around the beautiful blonde, she felt that way at the gym as well. Clarke just feels so… familiar.

Of course familiar doesn’t negate exciting and when Clarke touches her arm just then, Lexa feels like she could generate enough electricity for a small village.

“Come on, let’s dance!” Clarke shouts over the noisy crowd at the bar and Lexa’s stomach drops.

“I told you I don’t dance.” She shakes her head, repeating her statement from the Halloween party.

She’s not one to dance at a club. She’s just not. There’s people everywhere shouting and jumping, bumping into you and watching you, and Lexa really can’t stand it.

It’s not like she’s never danced before, but she’s never really gotten what all the fuzz is about. Everyone always says it’s so freeing and exhilarating and a great way to let loose, but Lexa has always felt unnatural on the dance floor for some reason.

“Oh, come on!” Clarke whines, grabbing Lexa’s lower arm with both of hers now. Lexa wants to protest again, but when Clarke’s lower lip juts out, the words die in her throat.

“Not fair.” Lexa mutters, feeling a little breathless at the sight of Clarke pouting at her; fluttering eyelashes and all.

“What?”

Lexa just shakes her head again.

Clarke pouts for one more second, but when Raven comes up behind her, she seems to give up.
“Alright,” she shrugs, sighing dramatically. “I guess I’ll have to ask Raven.”

“Ask me what?”

Lexa tenses. Raven and Clarke may not be together, but still…they kissed.

“Ask you if you’ll dance with me.” She tells Raven, eyes lingering on Lexa as she says it, before turning them onto her friend.

“Um, yeah!” Raven scoffs, conveying that that’s an unnecessary question to ask, and Lexa feels herself clenching her jaw.

“Good.” Clarke chirps and the way she smirks at Lexa while she says it, makes Lexa swallow tightly.

“Are you coming, Commander?” Raven asks and Lexa really wishes she would stop calling her that. She doesn’t feel very in command at all right now.

“Yes.” Clarke answers for her and then, with a slight raise of her brow, adds, “The Commander is gonna watch.”

The dance floor is packed and dark and it should be hard to keep track of one person, but it’s not.

Lexa’s eyes never once leave Clarke and even if they did, Lexa thinks it wouldn’t be hard to find Clarke again at all. She’d just know where she is. She’d just feel it without even looking, because Clarke feels like a magnet to her tonight and even if Lexa tried to sever the connection, she probably couldn’t.

Lexa doesn’t try.

She’s standing in the same spot as she did a week ago, leaning against the wall with her drink in her hand. Only this time it’s really Clarke she’s watching on the dance floor.

And she’s beautiful.

Just like on Halloween Lexa is fascinated by the way Clarke moves to the music. She’s soft and smooth as she dances to the melodies, but then sharp and powerful on certain beats and Lexa can’t really wrap her mind around it. Clarke seems to feel the music with every fiber of her body and she’s not held back by shyness or self-consciousness which, Lexa muses, is what makes it so awe-inspiring.

It’s joyful and it’s honest and it’s soulful and Lexa thinks she could watch Clarke forever.

She doesn’t even mind Raven dancing with her.

Well… maybe just a little.

The two have obviously danced together a lot, because they move together like they can read each other’s minds. They seem so comfortable and natural as they wind in and out of each other’s
personal spaces and even press their bodies so close at times that it borders on grinding and Lexa – aside from being slightly jealous; only slightly – is simply fascinated by it. She could never feel like that. Move like that. Let go like that.

Trust like that.

Somewhere in the back of her mind she wonders, maybe just a little sarcastically, why that is, but then Raven grabs Clarke’s hand, twirls her around to shared laughter, and suddenly Lexa is staring into blue eyes. Even across the dark dance floor they’re mesmerizing.

She doesn’t know why she isn’t embarrassed that Clarke caught her watching so intensely.

Maybe it’s because Clarke doesn’t seem to mind, now smirking as she moves her hips to the music and slowly traces her hands up her own body. Maybe it’s because Lexa probably isn’t even the only one watching.

Or maybe it’s because, really, there’s no point in denying it anymore.

There is something between them.


And they both know it.

And finally Lexa gives in and when Clarke looks at her again, playfully beckoning her to come over, Lexa pushes off the wall.

 Clarke can’t believe Lexa is actually coming over!

She watches as Lexa puts her beer onto the board next to her and Raven’s drinks and then starts towards her.

The fighter’s eyes never leave her and just like that Clarke’s lips curl up into a genuine smile.

She just can’t help.

When Lexa catches her smile, the girl’s lips twitch as well and it makes Clarke’s stomach twinge in the most exhilarating way.

She wants to say something sassy and teasing once Lexa is within earshot, but when she sees her expression, she forgets all about it. Lexa is looking at her in a way that causes her smile to falter and her heart to stutter. Lexa is looking at her as if she wanted to ask her a million questions too delicate to form into words. She is looking at her as if she already knew the answers to all of them and as if she couldn’t wait for Clarke to know them, too. She’s looking at her as if she wanted to tell her things that have never been spoken aloud and as if she wanted to stay in silence with Clarke forever, chasing away any ghosts by simple touch; by just being together. Lexa is looking at Clarke as if they were as ancient and timeless as time itself and Clarke aches with a bittersweet yearning she’s never felt before. It’s too big for her body, too big for her soul, and she feels utterly, beautifully powerless against it.
She feels powerless against Lexa in that moment and it’s so exquisitely all-consuming, she thinks she may never want to feel anything else ever again.

It should be scary, but it doesn’t scare Clarke at all, and when Lexa finally stands before her, close enough to see the club’s colorful, flashing lights reflected in her big green eyes, everything feels just so, so right.

Clarke is so caught up in herself and in Lexa and in things she can’t put into words that she almost jumps when Raven’s voice comes from right behind her.

“Heeeey! Commander in the house!” she whoops and Lexa’s eyes flicker away from Clarke’s for a moment, making Clarke feel like she was just brought out of a hypnotic trance by some magician clapping his hands. She swallows and only now notices that sometime between Lexa pushing off that wall and coming to stand in front of her, she apparently stopped dancing.

“So you gonna dance with us after all?” Raven asks and Lexa makes them wait another blink of the eye, before nodding in lieu of an answer. A small smile playing around her lips.

Ugh! Why does she always do that? And why does it have such an effect on Clarke?

Raven doesn’t seem fazed at all and just whoops again, throwing her hands in the air before she continues dancing, eyes closed and a happy smile on her face.

Clarke turns back to look at Lexa.

What now?

They just look at each other for another second, before Lexa leans in and Clarke tries to remember how to breathe properly.

“So, are you going to show me how to dance, Clarke?”

The question is innocent enough and yet Clarke feels like she’s on fire and something in the way Lexa’s eyes twinkle when she leans back again gives Clarke the impression Lexa knows exactly what she’s doing.

It’s so delightfully playful and so delightfully thrilling and Clarke can’t help but laugh.

And when the music changes from one song to the next, they start dancing.

Raven left only a few minutes after Lexa joined them. She told them she’d watch their drinks now that Lexa is here, but Clarke saw her favoring her healthy leg as she made her way off the dance floor.

Clarke asked if she was sure, but Raven only waved her off without turning around; and just like that Lexa and Clarke were alone amidst the throbbing crowd.

Lexa is a little stiff, almost seeming nervous, and Clarke thinks it’s the cutest thing.
The strong, tough mixed martial arts fighter seems awkward, yes almost clumsy, in her movements and when Lexa looks down with a slight frown of concentration on her face, Clarke presses her lips together to hide her grin.

“It’s not standard you know?” she teases and Lexa looks up at her.

“What?”

“We’re not trying to waltz here, Lexa.” Clarke laughs, when Lexa’s eyes reflexively dart to her own feet again, before returning to Clarke. “There are no wrong steps.”

Lexa doesn’t seem convinced and Clarke just chuckles again and then takes the helpless Commander’s hips between her hands. She didn’t know why she knew Lexa wouldn’t shy away from her again, but the other girl only tenses for a second. Well, only tenses more for a second. She’s pretty tense over all, but really, that’s not Clarke’s fault.

“Relax.” Clarke murmurs reassuringly, taking another step towards Lexa, and sees the brunette’s shoulders lift and lower as Lexa takes a deep breath.

“Good. Now move your body with me. Like this.”

She starts winding, moving her shoulders from one side to the other to the beat, her body becoming more fluent as she gets into the song’s rhythm. Soon her limbs feel more part of the music than of herself and she feels that exciting feeling of freedom and weightlessness cursing through her body.

Happiness bubbles up inside her and she smiles brightly as she watches Lexa watch her hands and then her body and Clarke feels just so alive.

Slowly Lexa slips into the beat as well, coming more and more out of her reserve and when Clarke takes her hands she returns her smile brightly, matching Clarke’s movements.

They dance three songs together like this, holding hands and grinning at each other, and when Lexa moves her hips particularly sexily to Dua Lipa’s *Hotter Than Hell*, Clarke cheers. She drops her jaw and then wiggles her eyebrows at Lexa and when Lexa laughs in response, a real, joyful, teeth-showing laugh, Clarke’s entire body hums.

She never thought dancing could feel even better, but this is the happiest and giddiest she’s felt in forever and she never wants to stop dancing with Lexa.

She’s already out of breath when the next song’s first chords fill up the club, but suddenly she’s breathless in a very different way.

*You know just what to say, things that scare me*

*I should just walk away, but I can’t move my feet*

Lexa’s eyes are locked onto hers. They speak the words Clarke feels in her chest. That sound all around them now.

*The more that I know you, the more I want to*
Something inside me’s changed, I was so much younger yesterday

They move towards each other at the same time; it feels magnetic, inevitable.

I didn’t know that I was starving till I tasted you

Don’t need no butterflies, when you give me the whole damn zoo

They’re so close now that Clarke feels Lexa everywhere. Their chests, their hips, their thighs press together and when they move, they move as one. Clarke’s arms wind around Lexa’s shoulders while Lexa’s hands trace from Clarke’s sides to her back, leaving goose bumps in their wake, and they never break eye-contact once; not for a second.

By the way, by the way, you do things to my body

I didn’t know that I was starving till I tasted you

Lexa swallows, her eyes drop to Clarke’s lips, and Clarke feels tingles everywhere.

By the way, by the way, you do things to my body

I didn’t know that I was starving till I tasted you

Their foreheads touch. They’re sweaty. Clarke feels Lexa’s breath on her lips. It’s as shallow as hers. Her heart races and races and races and then it doesn’t, because soft lips press against her own and everything else just stops.

The kiss is timid and gentle and needy and breathless and Clarke’s entire body is so wound-up and she can’t stand the ache of it anymore and she wants more, more, more; always more.

Her fingers scratch up Lexa’s neck and wind themselves into her hair and the sound that escapes Lexa makes Clarke’s knees weak. She presses her body closer to Lexa, closer, closer, closer; always closer.

Their mouths open and Lexa’s shaky breath mingles with Clarke’s and it’s all she can do not to moan, but any noise she would have made gets swallowed up when Lexa’s lips embrace her lower one, a quiet desperation to it that tastes almost as sweet as Lexa.

Lexa, Lexa, Lexa; always Lexa.
Omg, finally!
You guys have no idea how excrutiating it was to wait for aaages for this kiss!! oh wait,
I guess you do ;P

I hope you enjoyed this chapter and forgive me all my slow-burning and teasing now!
It's getting good, yaaallll!! *eeep*

Leave me a comment and tell me what you thought!

Love, love, love; always love
Lea

PS.: song in kiss scene: Hailee Steinfeld, Grey - Starving (ft. Zedd) (chill nation)
(yes, I'm on a Hailee Steinfeld trip)
Her stomach is flipping and her heart is racing and she wishes it would stop and she wishes it would go on forever. She feels heady and weightless, breathless and shaky, on fire and out of control… and Clarke. She feels Clarke everywhere.

Clarke’s breath on her lips and cheeks, almost soothingly cold against her hot skin; Clarke’s soft chest pressing against Lexa’s, a heartbeat, so faint it might just be in Lexa’s imagination, racing and racing as if to beat Lexa’s to an invisible finish line and making Lexa dizzy with hopeful elation; Clarke’s fingers, running through Lexa’s hair, making a trail of goose bumps erupt on the back of her neck.

The tingly feeling races down Lexa’s spine and she shudders involuntarily. Just as involuntarily her body moves to close what little distances remain between them. Clarke didn’t leave many when she pushed herself against Lexa, but still Lexa wants her closer. Needs her closer. Just a little closer. Just a little more.

And then Clarke pulls back with a small gasp that makes Lexa feel breathless, too, and suddenly Lexa is staring into blue.

They’re so close, so close, and when a passing ray of light illuminates Clarke’s eyes, Lexa can see everything. Every little speck of white, glistening in its uniqueness, every last groove of cyan carved in oceans of azure, every beautiful memory she ever made and every heartbreaking pain she ever felt. Lexa can see her self reflected in Clarke’s eyes and she feels like she’s drowning in all that she is, in all that she was and in all that she wants to be; with Clarke.

Then the light moves on. It swings away and darkness settles over Clarke’s eyes again, but they devour her just the same. The pull doesn’t ease, the drowning never stops, the beautiful ache never lessens and Lexa feels scared. So, so scared.

But then the eyes close, soft lips press against Lexa’s again and warm hands run slowly, gently over her shoulders and back until they lock behind her at the nape of her neck. Lock her in, keep her safe, ground her.

And Lexa isn’t scared anymore.

Lexa isn’t scared anymore at all. Lexa is just kissing Clarke. And Clarke is kissing her back.

“A little higher.”

Lexa blinks, almost dazed, and then blinks again to catch the drop of sweat and stop it from rolling down into her eye.

“A little higher.” Lincoln pants again and nods at the punching mitts Lexa is holding up kind of half-heartedly. Sweat is dripping from his forehead as well; his gloves are glistening with it and his low cut sport tank shows dark stains down his chest and sides. The familiar sight brings her back to the
She readjusts her stance, mirroring Lincoln’s lightly bouncing one, and pulls her focus back to their training session. She’s glad Indra isn’t watching today. She really doesn’t want her coach to see this unfocused side of her. Again. This isn’t her. It’s just not. This is an unfocused, distracted mess of a fighter and it’s not her. She’s better than this. She’s a goddamn Sergeant of the US army and the goddamn Commander in the goddamn octagon for god’s fucking sake.

Focus!

When Lincoln next jabs at her padded hand, Lexa squares her shoulders, sets her jaw and pushes against the punch. Concentration written all over Lincoln’s face, he nods seemingly subconsciously at the now improved target Lexa is providing and it almost makes Lexa angry. This is who she is. This concentration on Lincoln’s face, it’s hers. The focused eyes, the ready stance, the sharp, almost whistling rushes of air he pushes out with every punch, they’re hers. They are her.

“She growls out of the blue, ripping off the pads from her hands without waiting for Lincoln’s reaction. She only catches a quick glimpse of his somewhat perplexed expression as she turns to get her grappling gloves from the corner of the ring.

“Um, alright.” Lincoln merely responds and Lexa can practically feel him raise his eyebrows and shrug his shoulders as he does so.

“Alright.” She echoes, but it’s only to herself.

After the small gloves are fastened around her hands, she takes a deep breath, before she turns around where Lincoln is already ready for her, having exchanged his boxing gloves for his grappling gloves as well. He’s bouncing lightly from one foot to the other again and wiggling his eyebrows at her as he mouths ‘You’re going down’ with a barely contained smirk playing around his lips.

Alright. Lexa thinks, reinvigorated now and smirking as well. This she can do.

Figure out what the hell to do about Clarke and how to calm herself down long enough to make a solid plan? Nope. Kick Lincoln’s ass in the ring? Yes, sir!

Wordlessly she beckons with both of her hands and Lincoln attacks without another warning, letting out an almost comical war cry.

He jabs, she parries; she swipes, he swerves.

Their fight is intense, equal, challenging and exactly what Lexa needed to get her head screwed back on the right way around. When they finally decide to call it a tie, half happily, half begrudgingly, Lexa and Lincoln touch gloves and then make their way out of the ring to make way for other gym members. Her body is riled up and tired at the same time and Lexa takes refuge in the familiar feeling. Before she can even finish undoing the wrappings around her fists however, another feeling starts seething in again.

Restlessness.

The jittery feeling she hasn’t been able to shake since she and Clarke kissed in the club two nights
ago spreads through her the way icy crystals spread over a soap bubble in subzero degree weather. It feels just as magical, just as painfully beautiful and just as transfixing as if all her shards and pieces were freezing and turning into sparkling ornaments as well, leaving her with shaky breathing and goose bumps all over.

Out of the corner of her eye Lexa sees Lincoln rummaging in his bag next to her and suddenly her heartbeat is in her ears. She’s been wanting to ask Lincoln for Clarke’s number for days now, but she just can’t get her stupid mouth to work. Her brain won’t even form the words, let alone let her actually speak them out loud and she’s never been this frustrated with her quietness.

Like all her previous attempts, this one remains futile as well. Her mouth opens to ask the question, but before she can, Lincoln turns around and smiles at her.

“That was a good one! I almost had you there for a second!” he grins, seemingly very proud of himself. He looks down at his wrist watch. “Wanna grab a smoothie before shift?”

Swallowing down the words that keep getting stuck in her throat once again, Lexa just nods and Lincoln mirrors her.

“Cool, I’ll catch you outside, alright?”

Lexa nods again, but he’s already making his way towards the locker rooms, pulling his phone from his duffle bag and smiling down at it.

For a second Lexa just glares at the taunting device; the device that holds the one piece of information Lexa so desperately wishes for, but then Lincoln’s retreating back blocks it from her view and she huffs out a frustrated breath of air, turning to stuff her own things into her bag with more force than necessary.

_Goddammit, Lexa!_

_Lexa sighs as she absently peels away at the bottle’s label. What is she doing? Here she is, alone at the bar, trying desperately not to watch Clarke too obviously as she dances with that friend of hers that showed up a little while ago and interrupted their dancing. Murphy, was it?_

_She hates Murphy. Murphy is an idiot. And what a stupid name as well…Murphy._

_Holding back a grumpy growl she takes a swig from her beer instead, throwing her head back as she does so and swiveling on the bar stool, turning her back on the dance floor and on Clarke._

_She can still feel Clarke’s lips on hers and at the same time the feeling is way too faint for her liking. Almost as if she just had a very vivid dream._

_But it wasn’t a dream. It was real. Clarke was real, the way she kept looking at Lexa was real and finally getting her own body and mind to cooperate and go out there to dance with Clarke; that was real. And their kiss… their kiss was real, too._

_Everything was so real and so surreal at the same time, but Lexa didn’t mind. She didn’t mind because she was with Clarke, kissing her, dancing with her and making her laugh and giggle and gasp, and nothing else mattered. And then that Murphy guy showed up. He just appeared out of nowhere, smiling and nodding hello at Lexa, before turning Clarke, who hadn’t seen him yet, around by her shoulder to greet her. Clarke beamed and let go of Lexa’s hands that she’d been holding as they danced, so she could hug him. And from one second to the next Lexa felt horribly awkward again. Awkward and out of place._
That Murphy guy started dancing with them and chatting with Clarke and Lexa thinks she must have looked like a fool, standing there, swaying uncomfortably and not knowing what to say. Clarke kept glancing at her and Lexa tried her best to understand what the looks meant, but she just couldn’t tell. Was Clarke trying to apologize for her friend interrupting their dancing? Or was she maybe trying to flirt with Lexa? What if it was pity? Or bemusement? Lexa must have looked fairly bemusing. Bemusing and pathetic and finally she decided to flee to the bar instead. Not flee…go. Go to the bar instead.

So, here she is, alone at the bar, trying desperately not to watch Clarke too obviously.

“Hey! Commander, what’s up? All danced out?”

Lexion’s eyes snap away from the dance floor again – she didn’t even notice her attention had returned to it – and when she whips her head around to her other side, she sees Raven smile widely at her. Then the brunette taps the baldheaded guy occupying the bar stool next to Lexa’s on the shoulder.

“Hey, big guy! Do you mind?” she points down at her knee brace, lifting her leg just enough so he can see it.

Mumbling something along the lines of ‘oh, sure, sorry’ he slides off the stool, making way for Raven. He and his friend shuffle off and Raven grins mischievously at Lexa as she hops onto the round stool, swiveling to face Lexa.

“Works every time.” She winks and Lexa hums and nods, half-heartedly trying a small smile in return. It seems to be enough for Raven.

“So, what’s up? Did Clarke tire you out, already?” Raven laughs and Lexa chokes and coughs. Raven’s laughter increases and Lexa can feel her ears burning. Avoiding Raven’s eyes, she takes another sip of beer. Fortunately Raven seems to only be joking though. Lexa hopes. Raven seems the type to tease any- and everybody and that’s what Lexa is choosing to believe this is, too.

“You’ll really have to work on your stamina, Commander!” Raven goes on chiding her playfully. She points her water bottle at Lexa and narrows an eye. “How will you win your next fight when a little bit of dancing is enough to have you surrender, hm?”

Not knowing how to respond, Lexa merely presses her lips together and shrugs her shoulders.

Raven laughs again and Lexa feels very self-conscious about how hard it is not to glance behind herself. Fighting the urge, she’s thankful for the added distraction when Clarke’s other roommate Octavia walks over to them on the other side of the bar.

“Raven! I got it!” she yells over the counter and the music excitedly, beaming broadly, her dark-haired bun a little disheveled from hours of serving drinks to people in varying states of intoxication.

“Well, of course you got it!” Raven yells back, but squeals anyway and then reaches out her hand for a high five. Octavia complies instantly and Lexa thinks it’s sweet how excited they both seem. She’s also glad the hunt for a new bartender is apparently finally over now; for Anya’s sake and for her own. Anya’s been getting a little… testy.

“Congratulations, Octavia.” Lexa smiles and inclines her head towards the girl.

“Thank you!” Octavia replies, before pointing at Lexa’s bottle. “Can I get you another one? Anya says it’s last call.”
“Already?” Raven asks and Lexa frowns in confusion as well. It couldn’t be that late yet, could it? She swears she hasn’t been here more than…

Three hours?! She’s been here almost three hours!

Wow. Looking around herself, she notices for the first time how empty the club has gotten compared to when she arrived. The dance floor is still quite crowded, but getting there would be a lot easier now than it would have been just a little while ago. The bar area is mostly free of people and only two of the tables against the right wall have groups of people sitting around them; one of those groups seemingly egging their friend on to do some dare or another. Lexa doesn’t wait to find out what it is.

She looks back up and sees Anya who is just joining Octavia behind the bar. She’s taking off her leather jacket and throwing it carelessly under the counter and Lexa is sure, if she were standing next to her right now, Anya would be smelling of cigarettes.

“So, how about it, Commander? Last round? It’s on me.” Raven raises her eyebrows inquisitorially and Lexa hesitates. She hasn’t had enough to drink to be drunk and she wouldn’t want to be, but the nice buzzed feeling that helped her approach Clarke on the dance floor in the first place has faded by now and she’s starting to feel a little out of sorts. Her mind is beginning to conjure up the most unwelcome thoughts and ideas about Clarke and what she might be feeling about what happened between them and Lexa just wants them to shut up. Maybe another drink wouldn’t be too bad.

“Alright, thank you, Raven.” Lexa nods in agreement and Raven seems positively surprised she took her up on her offer.

“Alright!” she exclaims and obnoxiously slams her hand onto the bar to get Octavia’s attention who’s currently focusing on something Anya is showing her on the register machine. “Can I get some service here?” she hollers jokingly and then leans over to Lexa.

“I am so sorry, Ms. Commander, ma’am! Geez, it’s like it’s her first day or something.” She rolls her eyes and then slaps the bar counter again several times. It’s loud and Lexa wishes she wouldn’t, but it has the desired effect.

Both Octavia and Anya look over; Anya raising an eyebrow unimpressed, while Octavia apologizes to her for Raven’s behavior and then quickly steps closer to her friend, hissing “Cut it out, oh my god! What do you want?”

Seemingly not at all sheepish, Raven smiles sweetly at Octavia before reaching back for a strain of her own hair. Coyly twirling it between her fingers over her shoulder, she looks up at her friend, batting her eyelashes, and goes on to order in a sickeningly sweet voice with a horrible southern accent.

“I’m sorry, darlin’, I meant no offense. I merely desired your attention. See, my friend here needs another drink and I just couldn’t say no to that face, now could I!” she gestures at Lexa who feels put in the spotlight. The two of them eye her for a second, Raven unable to hide her grin behind her innocent mask and Octavia apparently trying to decide if she wants to play along with Raven’s antics or not. Visibly deciding against it, she just rolls her eyes, however and shakes her head, throwing Lexa a look that clearly says ‘I’m so sorry, don’t listen to anything this one says’.

“What can I get you, Lexa?” she asks with an exasperated, but obviously not actually annoyed sigh. Despite her reactions, Lexa is pretty sure Octavia doesn’t feel put off by her friend’s behavior at all and something about the way Raven genuinely smiles as she watches Octavia take Lexa’s order, makes Lexa ache. It’s a good ache though, but one that she couldn’t explain if she had a clear mind.
and a psychology dictionary, let alone now that she’s somewhat tipsy and very much confused by her own feelings in general and how they got to be so hard to read all of a sudden.

Trying to figure Clarke out might not be the biggest challenge after all.

A loud squeal makes Lexa jump and lose track of her thoughts.

“Boo!”

Raven’s high-pitched yell turns into a laugh when she realizes the guy grabbing her sides from behind is her friend Murphy, who’s now winding his arms around her instead. He seems pretty drunk, Lexa thinks, as his chin wobbles from side to side on Raven’s shoulder when he rests his head there, eyes closed.

Was he this drunk when he found her and Clarke on the dance floor earlier?

Clarke.

There she is, emerging from behind him, and Lexa feels as if she’d been shocked by electricity. Not painfully shocked like from an electric fence or lightning; just lightly, but abruptly shocked like when Anya used to steal Missy Pearman’s super soft blanket. Anya always said she did it for the purpose of being able to shock Lexa in the morning when her skin was charged by the weird fabric rubbing on her hair all night, but Lexa knows Anya well enough to know that she just liked how soft and cuddly it was. After all, she bought one just like it when she got her first apartment and to this day she has yet to shock Lexa with it.

The fact that Clarke was already staring at her when Lexa’s eyes found her made her feel like that. Shocked.

But then Clarke smiles at her, almost shyly, and this warm feeling floods all over Lexa, like instead of being shocked by it, she was being wrapped up in Missy Pearman’s super soft blanket.

“There you go.” Octavia interrupts Lexa’s thoughts as she places another bottle of beer in front of her.

It takes her a second, before she can mumble a thank you back, but Octavia is already pointing at Murphy.

“He’s not getting anything but water.”

Murphy grunts in protest, but doesn’t even bother opening his eyes, so Octavia doesn’t seem to see the need to argue her point.

“What about you, Clarke? Last call.” She turns to Clarke instead and Lexa just catches Clarke’s eyes leaving her to focus on Octavia.

“Um, I think I’m good, too, actually. Thanks, O.”

“Alright.” Octavia claps her hands just when Anya calls her over from further down the bar. “I’m just about done. Get him in walking shape, please.” She lets her friends know, glancing at that Murphy guy again, and then fishes a pen and a little notebook out of one of the pockets of the black apron she’s wearing, before going to probably close her shift with Anya and get some things sorted out.

“Alright, buddy boy, time to wake up.” Raven awkwardly reaches up to lightly smack Murphy’s
cheek over her shoulder, wiggling it a bit to get him to straighten up and hold his head up himself.

With another groan the boy slowly rights himself and opens his eyes. He looks really tired and Lexa briefly wonders if he’ll be able to get home on his own or if the girls will have to support him all the way there.

“There you go! Good man.” Clarke praises, well-hidden laughter in her voice, as she pats his shoulder.

In the bar’s light Clarke’s hair seems to be glowing and Lexa’s mind wanders back to the way Clarke’s fingers ran through her own hair. It was gentle but sure and Lexa wishes they were back in that moment. That moment where it was just the two of them and nothing else seemed to matter. It was like they were all alone on that crowded dance floor and now, here at the almost empty bar, there are suddenly way too many people.

Clarke’s eyes find her again and Lexa’s immediate instinct is to look away, but she doesn’t. She doesn’t want to.

Octavia is discussing something with Anya as they come back to this end of the bar, Raven is hushing Murphy who is mumbling something unintelligible to her and Clarke is almost close enough to touch.

Lexa’s eyes drop to Clarke’s hand at her side. Clarke’s fingers are tapping some sort of rhythm against her own thigh and Lexa’s hand twitches around her glass bottle. She imagines herself reaching out, taking Clarke’s hand and intertwining their fingers. She imagines pulling Clarke towards her until she’s standing right in front of her. She imagines Clarke lifting her other hand and running it up Lexa’s right thigh as she presses closer between Lexa’s legs. Lexa imagines herself playing with Clarke’s fingers with one hand while the other brushes that beautiful blonde hair out of Clarke’s eyes.

Her beautiful blue eyes.

Her beautiful blue eyes that are staring at Lexa right now. From a few feet away.

This time Lexa really does look away. In haste she drops her gaze, her heart racing in her chest. Did Clarke see? Could she tell what was on Lexa’s mind? Her ears feel like they’re on fire and Lexa doesn’t know what to do. She can’t look up! She can’t look up and see Clarke frown at her or look offended or-

“Oh, I’m ready.” Octavia’s voice is closer than expected and Lexa jerks in surprise as she comes up from behind her. This time she’s on the their side of the bar, coming to stand between Lexa and Clarke to complete their little semi-circle. “To drop.” She adds, holding her hand in front of her mouth to cover a yawn.

Raven nods understandingly and carefully hops off the bar stool. “Yeah, I’m beat, too. Come on, Smurphy, let’s get you in a bed.” Encouragingly rubbing his chest, Raven makes to duck under his arm to support him.

“Whoa, whoa, I got it, I got it!” Octavia bursts out, stepping in and taking Murphy’s arm from around Raven’s shoulder and placing it around her own instead. “You just take it easy.”

Lexa sees something flicker across Raven’s eyes, but then it’s gone and the girl just shrugs her shoulders. “Alright, let’s get going. Mama wants a nice, sweet night time candy and maybe a hot shower.”
“It’s almost 4am.” Octavia points out, but Lexa isn’t really listening anymore when Raven responds.

Her focus is on Clarke again, who seems almost reluctant to go. The mere thought that she might be the reason for Clarke’s hesitation makes Lexa feel as excited and self-assured as she did the first time Indra looked at her with obvious approval after a training session.

Clarke meets her eyes again and if Lexa were a braver woman she’d ask her to stay. But she’s not and Clarke probably wouldn’t anyway. Or couldn’t.

“Clarke, a little help?” Octavia’s voice sounds strained.

“M’up. M’good.” Murphy mumbles, his eyes drooping and his body-tension less than desirable as apparent by Octavia’s slight staggering. That guy goes from drunk to passed-out awfully fast, Lexa thinks. Reflexively she slides off her stool to help, but Clarke is faster. She steps under Murphy’s other arm, balancing him out, and Octavia manages to straighten up a bit.

“Love you guys.” Murphy mumbles and all three girls grin.

“We know, John, we know.” Clarke assures, smirking up at him, before looking back at Lexa. Her eyes sparkle with amusement and Lexa can’t help but smile at her. She just has to.

“We love you, too.” Raven pats his back and Octavia hums in agreement.

“Love you, too.” Murphy echoes again, tilting his head first onto Clarke’s and then Octavia’s as he sloppily presses a kiss onto each of them. Clarke and Raven burst out into laughter, while Octavia snorts and grimaces.

At the sound of Clarke’s laugh Lexa’s heart jumps high enough to touch the roof and when her smile broadens it’s beautifully out of her control.

“Alright,” Clarke is still giggling. “Let’s get you home, alright?” she nods encouragingly and Murphy nods along.

“Okay, well, it was nice to see you again, Lexa.” Octavia surprises Lexa by addressing her. “Tell Anya thanks again. I really appreciate this. I’ve been looking for a job a while now.”

“Sure.” Lexa nods and feels a little awkward as Octavia gives her half a hug, with Murphy still leaning against her. “I will.”

“You’ll see her everywhere now.” Raven says as she steps over to take her turn at goodbyes. “She’s like stalking you. First the gym, then the bar; I’d watch out if I were you!” she widens her eyes, before dropping the act. Lexa just sees her teeth-showing smile before Raven’s arms are around her. Over her shoulder she sees Clarke watching her.

By the time it’s Clarke’s turn to hug her, Lexa’s stomach is in knots. She swallows dryly as Clarke lifts Murphy’s arm off her shoulder and walks over to her. It seems like it’s in fast-forward and Lexa just wants this moment, this night, to slow down.

How are they already leaving?! How is this night already over? It just started and Lexa feels like it’s unfinished! This isn’t enough! There’s so much more that she wanted to say, so much more she wanted to do!

Like kiss Clarke again! And tell her how amazing she looks in her dress. Tell her how beautiful her
eyes are and how comfortable she made Lexa feel on the dance floor. She wants to tell her that’s never happened before and that it feels like they’ve known each other forever; that she wants to know Clarke forever. Lexa wants to take Clarke’s hands and trace her fingers, she wants to run her hands up her arms and over her shoulders. She wants to cup Clarke’s face and stroke her thumbs over Clarke’s cheek bones. She wants to kiss her again, goddammit; kiss her and feel her kiss her back. She wants so much, feels so much, and it’s all so frustrating, because she’s taught herself not to yearn a long time ago. But tonight…tonight she’s yearning.

Clarke’s eyes are bluer than blue and so, so close and then she’s hugging her. Clarke’s hugging her and all Lexa wants to do is turn her head and burrow it against Clarke’s warm neck, so she can breathe her in. Blonde hair nestles against Lexa’s cheek and nose as Clarke squeezes her closer and Lexa is almost dizzy with the sweet scent. She can feel her heart galloping against Clarke’s chest and there is no way Clarke can’t feel it, too, but in this moment Lexa doesn’t care.

“Goodnight, Commander.” Clarke murmurs against Lexa’s ear and if Clarke felt Lexa’s heartbeat before, she must have most certainly felt Lexa shudder now.

“Goodnight, Clarke.” Lexa replies, but while Clarke’s whisper was soft, Lexa’s is rough and raspy. Embarrassed, Lexa clears her throat. It’s almost worth it, though, when she feels Clarke’s chest move and a small huff of air hit her neck as Clarke lets out a breath of a laugh.

Then Clarke pulls back and Lexa feels oddly cold without her arms around her.

They share a last smile and then the three girls escort their friend towards the exit. Lexa watches them leave until she can’t see them anymore.

Clarke doesn’t turn around.

After the blonde is out of her sight, another moment passes, before Lexa turns around as well and steps towards the bar again. She closes her hands around her bottle, leaning against the counter with her front, but doesn’t drink. Instead she just stares at it, trying to find a way out of her stupor. What should she do now? Clarke has left and with a groan Lexa realizes she didn’t even get Clarke’s number. Great.

She doesn’t know whether she wants to empty her beer in one swig, throw it against the wall or turn and run after Clarke.

None of those options seem particularly good to her, though, so she decides to do nothing. She needs to clear her head anyway. She doesn’t want to act rash and mess this up; whatever this is. She needs to just go home and get some rest. Tomorrow will be a new day.

She searches the bar for Anya, but can’t see her anywhere. Maybe she went outside for another smoke, Lexa thinks. All she knows is that she wants to get out of here. Suddenly she can’t wait to leave the club. Despite its diminished size, the crowd is starting to drain her energy and now that her heart isn’t pounding anymore, her head seems to have decided to take up that task. Some fresh air will do her good.

“Sarah.” She calls out when the tall bartender walks past her.

“Hey, you’re still here.” Sarah replies, throwing a dishtowel over her shoulder.

“Actually, I’m gonna head home. Can you let Anya know I’ll get home on my own?”

Clicking her tongue, Sarah looks at her disapprovingly, “You’re not driving your bike home in the middle of the night, Lexa. You’ve been drinking and it’s way too far to your place.”
“I’ll be fine.” Lexa promises. When Sarah continues frowning at her, she adds, “I’ll push it, okay? No cycling, I promise.”

“It’ll take you forever.” Sarah argues. “I’m sure Anya will be right out. I already said I’ll close up and we already did last call anyway. Won’t be long now, really.”

Hesitantly Lexa weighs her options. Leaving now would mean a chance to clear her head and sort her thoughts. The way home would sober her up for good, but Sarah’s right, it would take at least an hour by foot.

“Alright, I’ll check if I can find her out back and see when she’ll be done, but if I can’t find her I’m walking.” Lexa compromises finally. Sarah smiles victoriously and snaps the towel down from her shoulder.

“Deal.” She says contentedly, whipping it in Lexa’s direction, before going about her business, cleaning the bar.

Lexa, after having jerked it back out of reflex, shakes her head at Sarah. Then she carefully lowers the still mostly full bottle of beer into the bar’s sink over the counter, before making her way towards the door that leads to the office area and the back entrance. Right as she’s about to reach for the handle however, someone grabs her wrist from behind with such force that she’s spun around. A pair of shining blue eyes pierces through her and then someone is kissing her so passionately that Lexa stumbles back.

“C-clarke”, is all Lexa can stammer, before her back hits something solid behind her. Clarke doesn’t answer her. She only kisses Lexa harder, lips pressing against lips, body pushing against body, and Lexa can’t breathe. She can’t breathe and she can’t speak and she can’t think. All she can do is kiss Clarke back. So she does.

It’s fierce and raw and desperate and when Clarke huskily moans against her lips, Lexa trembles. Her hands fly up to Clarke’s shoulders from where they’ve been pressed against the hard surface behind her in surprise. She grabs them, grabs Clarke, and holds on.

Clarke’s tongue presses against Lexa’s lower lip and Lexa can hear her own blood rushing in her ears as her heart works overtime. It’s exhilarating and disorienting and when Clarke’s hand grabs at the back of Lexa’s neck, fingernails scratching her skin, a soft sound escapes Lexa’s lips. Clarke takes the opportunity to deepen their kiss and Lexa is glad the wall is holding her up, because she can’t feel her legs anymore. Clarke tastes like alcohol and sweetness and something just uniquely Clarke and Lexa gets so dizzy from it all; so wonderfully dizzy.

When their mouths part for a second Lexa moves to reclaim Clarke’s lips immediately. Her nose is just gently nudging against Clarke’s, however, when a loud thumping noise behind the wall that is actually the door startles them both and Clarke jumps back. She’s breathless and staring at Lexa with big eyes that look about as shocked as Lexa feels, and before Lexa can do anything at all, she rasps, “I have to go.” and turns around and leaves.

Lexa wants to stop her! Grab her wrist and pull her back! But Clarke is too fast. Before Lexa can even comprehend what just happened, she has vanished behind a group of girls near the entrance of the room. And just like that she’s gone again.

Lexa is still standing frozen to the spot, when the door behind her suddenly opens and she trips backwards.

“Whoa, hey!” Anya yelps as Lexa stumbles against her and then there’s another loud crash
followed by Anya’s cursing. “Fuck! What the fuck are you doing? Ah, shit!”

Utterly overwhelmed and confused Lexa looks down and sees two carton boxes on the floor in front of Anya’s feet. Anya is frantically opening them and then sighs in relief.

“Thank god!” she breathes, before glaring at Lexa. “What the hell was that? What’s wrong with you?”

“I-uh…I-“

“Ugh, whatever. Are you gonna help me or not?” she harshly cuts into Lexa’s stammering.

“Huh?”

“Oh my god, you’re useless.” Anya grumbles and when she bends down Lexa finally catches up.

“Oh! Oh, sorry, yeah! Yeah, I got it!” she exclaims and hastily scrambles to pick up the other box, while Anya is heaving the first one into her arms.

Still dazed, Lexa follows Anya behind the bar, setting the box down next to the other one on the silver metal surface of the back wall’s countertop.

When she realizes that she just missed asking Clarke for her number again, however, she wishes she would have just dropped the case on her head instead.

“Hey, are you coming?” Lincoln’s voice sounds from across the room.

Lexa looks up and sees him standing in the doorway, holding it open for her.

“Yeah, sorry, coming.” She calls over and grabs her gym bag.

The second figure shows clearly that the control group didn’t show any signs-

The second figure shows a significant effect for the control group, but not the-

As the second figure indicates, compared to the experimental group, the control group-

“Ugh!”

Angrily Clarke deletes the sentence for what feels like the hundredth time. She needs to finish this! She still has to hand in three papers by the end of the week and she’s only gotten started on two of them; this one and her English essay. She’ll never make it!

As she reaches for her snack, a half-eaten snickers bar, a door falls shut somewhere and suddenly she’s back at the club.

The heavy door falls shut behind her and cold air whips against Clarke’s face. It doesn’t help with her racing heart.

“Finally! We’re freezing our butts off here!” Raven exclaims, standing a little hunched over as she hugs herself and sways from foot to foot.
“Did you get it?” Octavia enquires.

“Huh?” faint mist rises up from between Clarke’s lips and a shudder runs through her. It really is cold; although she’s not so sure that’s the only reason for her shivering.

“Your phone, did you find it?” Octavia clarifies and Clarke remembers.

“Oh! Yeah, yeah I got it.” She pulls the phone out from her purse where it was the entire time.

She feels a little bad for lying, but she just couldn’t leave it like that. She needed to say a proper goodbye to Lexa. At least that’s what she is telling herself had been the plan when she told her friends she’d be right back, before speed-walking back into the club to find ‘her phone’.

As she lets her phone slide back into her purse, Clarke hopes her friends bought it. Seeing Raven raise an eyebrow at her, however, Clarke suddenly isn’t so sure.

Whether she believes her or not, Raven doesn’t push any further and instead links her arm with Clarke’s and tugs her along. The cold night air must have sobered Murphy up a little since he seems to be walking fine on his own now and Clarke is glad. She got a little worried there for a second, because getting him home in that state would have been somewhat of a challenge.

“Are we driving you home?” Clarke calls to Murphy, who’s walking ahead with Octavia. In lieu of an answer he turns around with a pleading, tooth-showing grimace on his face.

Clarke snorts and Murphy mouths ‘thank you’, before folding his hands as if to pray and inclining his head in a gesture of gratitude.

As they walk on, Raven skips ahead to Murphy’s other side and starts questioning him about his cat and whether he still hates the purple rubber mouse she bought him. Clarke already knows it’ll be a struggle to convince Raven not to go up with Murphy to see if the grumpy old cat is up for a visitor at almost five in the morning.

While Murphy explains carefully, not for the first time, that Lieutenant Dan really doesn’t like any toys from anybody, Clarke trails behind the others a bit to get a second to collect herself. Her body is still humming from kissing Lexa and her lips burn at the memory. She doesn’t know what came over her to just go up and jump Lexa like that. All she knows is that that kiss on the dance floor ignited something inside her. Something that’s been building ever since the Halloween party, and something that Lexa obviously felt as well. The way she kissed her back, the way she made her feel…

Clarke has to swallow and close her eyes for a second. She wishes she were still at the club, still kissing Lexa against that wall; still feeling all those tingles coursing through her body at Lexa’s touch, making her feel like there was nothing she couldn’t do.

She wants to feel that feeling of freedom and excited giddiness again she had when Lexa danced with her. She wants to look into those eyes and see them laugh while Lexa’s lips barely smile. She wants to feel like she’s incredibly desirable like she did when she saw Lexa watching her dance and she wants to hug Lexa again so she can feel her heart racing.

That was maybe the most amazing thing Clarke experienced all evening, she thinks. The way she could literally feel every beat of Lexa’s galloping heart against her own chest. She doesn’t think she’s ever felt so… humbled.

There she was, this amazing, beautiful, badass, mysterious, stoic and guarded woman and yet somehow for some reason she let Clarke close to her. Close enough to let her body give away how vulnerable, how nervous she felt around her. Clarke doesn’t even need Lexa to say anything. People
A buzzing sound makes Clarke take in a surprised breath. Quickly she reaches for her phone underneath one of the books in front of her, before people start tutting at her. She is in the library after all.

It’s a text from Octavia letting her know that she’s just in the area and asking if she wants a ride home.

For a moment Clarke considers it, but then she grimly decides she needs to get this done.

Concentrate, come on!

She can’t believe it. She’s free! Well, for now, but still! She handed in all the pressing papers and she can breathe again! College won’t be this stressful until end of semester exams, Clarke thinks hopefully.

This week was especially hard. Working nonstop either at the pilot house or in the library on her papers meant that Clarke practically didn’t see anyone all week. She was up and out of the house before Raven or Octavia even really got up and by the time she got home she was so beat that she barely registered anything before falling into bed. She even changed her shower routine from evenings to mornings to get more study time in at the end of the day when she usually peaks and be more alert in the beginning of her days.

Even though it was very exhausting, Clarke feels really good about this week. She got everything done in time and after initial problems focusing, somehow she managed to push every other thought away and concentrate on what needed to be done for the remaining days.

As she opens the door to the apartment, happy to finally be home at a decent hour instead of close to midnight, she hears laughter. Raven, Octavia and Lincoln are chilling on the couch in the living room. Raven is sitting on the far right with her feet resting on the couch’s right wing, Octavia next to her, her own legs folded underneath her and leaning slightly forward while Lincoln lazily strokes her back, launching in a semi-horizontal position to Octavia’s left, his legs stretched out onto the floor. In front of them on the coffee table sits Octavia’s laptop which they’re all watching avidly.

When she comes in, they briefly glance up, but right then something hilarious must be happening on screen, because all three of them fall into a fit of laughter. Octavia is doubled over, Lincoln is practically wheezing, his whole body shaking from his laughs, and Raven is yelling, “I told you I couldn’t hold it any longer, I told you!”

Curious as to what has them in stitches like this Clarke carelessly drops her backpack next to the book shelf and walks over to the living room area. She doesn’t have to wait long to figure it out. A squeaky voice announces Bellamy is such a buttface and Clarke immediately recognizes it as belonging to kid Octavia. She didn’t know Octavia back then, or any of her friends here, but she’s seen enough home videos like this to feel like she did. Mrs. Blake must have dug up another recording and sent it to Octavia like she does sometimes and Clarke is eager to watch.

“Start it over! I missed everything!” she demands, pulling off her jacket and throwing it in the rough direction of her backpack.
“Nooo!” Raven complains, hiding her face behind her hands, but by her laugh Clarke can tell she doesn’t really mind. After all, Clarke has seen Raven act like a child enough times, so really it’s nothing new. How bad could it be.

Octavia complies and restarts the video from the beginning.

“Oh my god, your poor mom.” Clarke laughs after the last clip ends, the soft cushions almost heavenly comfortable against her back after sitting in a hard library chair for the better part of her week.

“Why?” Raven asks indignantly.

“Hey, Bellamy was just as bad!” Octavia defends as well and Clarke isn’t sure she quite believes that. Raven on the other hand nods vigorously.

“Yeah, we never dug up the flower bed because we thought we’d find treasure there.” She scoffs.

“To be fair, we did bury our time capsule there though.” Octavia admits and Clarke can just picture the two of them. They probably dressed in dark colors, hushed each other to be quiet and waited for nightfall to go on their little adventure in the Blakes’ garden.

“Yeah, but that was after Bellamy had already destroyed it.”

“Yeah, two years after!” Octavia laughs. “We still killed all of mom’s precious Begonias all over again! She’s still pissed about that by the way and she grounded us both, remember? Well, me and then you decided to join me in protest. I think she found it too endearing to throw her out.” She adds the last part in explanation to Lincoln and Clarke who listen to the story with amusement.

“Yeah, but Bellamy did it first. Plus, we had a way better reason! Who would hide a pirate treasure in a flower bed?”

“Isn’t a time capsule kind of like a treasure, too, though?” Lincoln throws in and Clarke has to agree.

“Not when it’s filled with our junk, trust me.” Raven counters, shaking her head with a snort.

“Hey! Speak for yourself! I put some awesome things in there!” Octavia protests fervently, looking up from her laptop as she puts on some music.

“Oh, please! I bet you don’t even remember what you put in it!” Raven challenges, cocking an eyebrow. Octavia is adamant however.

“Sure I do! My tamagochi Frederick for one!”

“Oh my god, Freddy!” Raven laughs out loud, before her eyes gleam with excitement. “Do you think-”

“No.” Octavia deadpans, not even letting Raven finish. “There is no way he isn’t dead, we’re not digging it up to check.”

“But-“
“Raven, no!”

“But that’s what time capsules are for!” Raven argues loudly and Clarke can practically see her shrink and turn into six year-old Raven, stomping her foot and furrowing her brows. “To dig them up again later and look at all the stupid stuff you used to love!”

“Yeah, like when we’re seventy! Not ten years after we put it in the ground!”

“Fine.” Raven huffs and throws herself back against the couch cushions, arms crossed over her chest. Clarke has to smirk and catches Lincoln biting his lip in a futile attempt to hide his own grin. Raven’s pouting doesn’t last too long, though.

When Octavia asks if anybody is hungry Raven’s hand shoots into the air. Clarke and Lincoln nod as well, humming affirmatively.

“I could order us something?” Lincoln suggests. “You don’t really have much in the fridge.” He adds, when Clarke starts saying something.

“Oh, okay.” She concedes. Ordering in doesn’t sound too bad anyway actually and now that she has a job again she can afford it more easily, too.

Octavia must be thinking along the same lines.

“Yes! Ugh, I’ve missed indulging in the comfort of getting food delivered to me.” She sighs with a dreamy expression on her face and Raven rolls her eyes.

“Like I didn’t cook for you just yesterday. You didn’t even have to lift a finger.”

“That’s different.” Octavia insists, getting up from the couch.

“How?” Raven asks almost offended, looking after Octavia as she makes her way to the kitchen. “I even set the table and everything! You literally just had to sit down! That’s like less movement than you’d have had to make if you’d ordered something and had to get it from the door!”

“That’s a good point.” Clarke agrees, fully aware her comment might fuel the bickering between her two friends. Smirking, she gets up and follows Octavia. She hasn’t felt this relaxed in weeks; maybe even since the semester started.

“Well, yeah, but ordering in just feels different.” Octavia tries to explain, raising her voice and getting four glasses out of the cupboard next to the fridge. “Linc? Coke?”

“Yeah, coke sounds good, thanks!” Lincoln’s voice sounds over Raven’s.

“Feels different how? You said you liked my risotto!”

“I did!” Octavia now almost shouts over her shoulder as she opens the fridge and gets out a bottle of coke and a bottle of rum. Ever since Octavia started ‘training’ for the bartender job, they’ve had more alcohol at home than usual. Tonight Clarke isn’t complaining. A cocktail might be really nice, actually.

“But you’d like an ordered one better.” Raven sounds like she’s pouting again.

“Oh my god,” Octavia groans under her breath, before abandoning the only half-full glasses in front of her and turning around. Both hands firmly planted on the kitchen island, she shoots Raven a look. “Your risotto was awesome, okay? We just hardly ever order in and I thought it would be nice. It
doesn’t taste better, I just like not having to cook or clean, okay?”

As Octavia resumes pouring the drinks Clarke thinks she hears Raven mumble ‘It’s not like you were a big help with clean-up yesterday either’ under her breath.

If Octavia hears her, she chooses to ignore the comment. At a questioning raise of the eyebrows from Octavia, Clarke nods for her to spike Clarke’s coke with rum like she did with her own. Then they carry the four drinks out into the living room area. Octavia places one of the virgin cocktails in front of Raven and sits down between her and Lincoln again. Clarke sets the second alcohol free drink in front of Lincoln and then walks over to sit down next to Raven.

She’s still frowning and Clarke kisses her cheek wordlessly. Raven’s face relaxes, her pout now more playful than upset and when Clarke kisses her again, this time purposely blowing her cheeks up before she does so, more blowing a raspberry than actually kissing, Raven wrinkles her nose and giggles.

“Stop, ew!” she protests and demonstratively wipes over her own cheek with her hand. “Gross.”

Clarke just grins and wiggles her eyebrows at Raven, before taking her glass from the table and taking a sip. Octavia made the mix a little strong and at the slightly burning taste of alcohol Clarke grimaces.

Raven furrows her eyebrows, “Hey, you got alcohol in there?” she asks confused, before taking her own glass. With narrowed eyes she first sniffs it, then takes a sip. Clarke and Octavia exchange a sheepish look and Raven hums scandalized, before she can even swallow.

“Oh my god, you bitches!” she exclaims and Lincoln draws his lips inside his mouth, his eyes big. “You gave me a virgin, what the hell!”

“Dr. Kane said-“

“We’re just looking out fo-“

“Oh uh!” Raven holds up her hand and Clarke and Octavia fall silent. “I can’t believe you’d go behind my back to try and make me be healthy. How dare you.” She rebukes them; not altogether angry, but definitely a little annoyed. Clarke can’t really blame her. She feels a little bad now, but Raven can be so frustratingly careless and argumentative when it comes to her own well-being that she and Octavia sometimes take the easy way out. If Octavia even agrees with Clarke that is. The fact that she does on this should really say something, Clarke defends in her mind. If even Raven’s partner in crime thinks she needs to slow down, a little white lie of omission surely can’t be that bad, right?

All the internal arguing doesn’t really help with Clarke’s conscience though, so she opts for the other way out. Ass-kissing.

“We’re sorry, Raven, we just didn’t want to corrupt you. You’ve been doing so great with the whole taking it easy thing and we didn’t want to make it harder for you.” She tries. It’s not even a lie, actually. Raven really has been listening to Dr. Kane’s orders exceptionally well compared to her usual half-hearted compliance and Clarke recognizes that. But she still worries Raven will throw caution to the wind and go rock climbing any day now. She guesses that’s not really fair to Raven, though.

When Raven just continues shaking her head at them, Clarke sighs.

“Sorry.” She says again, really meaning it this time. Raven looks from her to Octavia.
Their other roommate hesitates, but then seems to decide she needs to say something.

“I’m sorry, too, Rae. I just- I just want you to be okay. I hated seeing you in a damn hospital again and I just really need you to stay out of one for a long time. Maybe forever. Okay? Just… no more hospitals. That’s all.” She shrugs, and Clarke thinks she looks a little helpless and a little lost. Remembering how panicked Octavia was when Raven went under again, Clarke hopes Raven isn’t really mad at them.

If she was, Octavia’s words seem to have changed Raven’s mind. Her scowl melts away and she looks at Octavia with such softness that Clarke almost feels like she’s intruding.

“Ohay.” Raven almost whispers, her eyes still glued to Octavia, who’s looking down at her drink. “No more hospitals.” She promises with a faint smile. Octavia nods before she looks up, almost like she needed to collect herself first.

“Good.” She finally smiles back and Clarke feels something unsaid dissipate like their breath vapor dissipated into the cold air in front of the club the other night. It makes her feel strangely lonely and her mind wanders to Lexa.

Instantly she’s much more aware of her heartbeat steadily thumping inside her. It isn’t fast to begin with, but the memory of Lexa’s heart racing against her chest makes it speed up within the blink of an eye. Clarke takes another sip of her drink and tries to swallow down her sudden jitteriness.

“Sneaky.” Raven shakes her head at them again, but this time she laughs. “I can’t believe you got me to forget I’m mad at you for making me drink a virgin on my own. But fine, you guys have your party, but you only get to play the ‘We’re just worried about you’ card once!” she warns, pointing a finger at Clarke, Octavia and Lincoln in turn.

Lincoln lifts his hands in an innocent gesture, “Hey, I’m with you. Pure coke, here!” he holds up his glass.

“Yeah, why is that by the way? You’re not drinking?” Clarke asks Lincoln, but it’s Octavia who answers.

“Nuh, he can’t. Lexa’s been riding him super hard. Running every morning, sparring every day, the poor guy is exhausted, can’t you see?” she pouts at Lincoln, practically cooing the last words while a small smirk plays around her lips.

Raven snorts, but at the mention of Lexa’s name, Clarke’s heart stutters. Irrationally, she wonders if the others can hear it. It just feels like everybody can tell that her mind immediately snapped back to their kisses and she feels her cheeks heat up.

“Naw,” Raven teases, “is the big scary Commander being mean to you?”

Lincoln can’t hold back the laugh. “Don’t even joke! She’s been relentless this week! I’d like to see you try to keep up with her!”

“Don’t you always train together?” Raven questions.

“Yeah, but I don’t know. She’s especially… motivated this week, I guess.” He shrugs and Octavia pats his thigh, chuckling lightly, before putting on another song. Clarke hadn’t even notice the music had stopped.

“Motivated?” she echoes, her throat feeling a little dry. She’s very aware of Raven’s eyes on her. She swears she can see her smirking out of the corner of her eye.
“Yeah, I mean she’s got me meeting her at five every morning and we usually don’t get out of the
gym until like eleven at night or something. It’s crazy. She never trains this hard. Not even before a
fight. My…everything is killing me” he breathes out a laugh, massaging his right arm.

“Huh,” Raven sounds way too knowing for Clarke’s liking as she looks at her for longer than
necessary. “I wonder what that’s about.”

Heart now positively hammering and face burning, Clarke can’t stop a nervous laugh from escaping
her. “Yeah, weird.”

“Mhm,” Raven hums and this time Clarke is absolutely sure she saw her grinning, before she
addresses Lincoln. “So why don’t you just tell her to train by herself? It’s not like you’re her personal
trainer, right?”

“No, I’m not really, but it’s fine. I like working out with her and actually her perseverance and
dedication are kind of helping me. I’ve been wanting to kick it up a notch anyway.” He explains,
leaning back.

“Plus, how long can she really go on like this.” Octavia adds and Clarke can tell she wouldn’t mind
having her boyfriend back to herself.

“Oh, I don’t know. Clarke, what do you think?” Raven suddenly prods and Clarke feels terribly in
the spotlight. Did Raven see them making out or something? She can’t see another reason for her to
act so… interrogative. Clarke knows she didn’t see her kiss Lexa when she went back down to ‘get
her phone’, but she guesses they weren’t really discreet in the middle of the dance floor. Anybody
could have seen them. Not that Clarke would mind. She isn’t embarrassed about it or ashamed of
Lexa, but she isn’t sure what to think and even less what to say about it. How could she answer
questions about what happened if she isn’t sure herself?

She’s been pushing these questions down all week, but now they come flooding back like drops of
ink running along invisible lines of water, expanding and branching off, until a pre-drawn picture
appears seemingly out of nowhere; like magic. Only her picture doesn’t come out quite clear and all
she’s left with is a dark, blotchy mess of questions.

Three in particular seem really important to Clarke.

Did they just make out because they were drunk?

Clarke isn’t so sure. She’s made out with her fair share of people because alcohol lowered her
inhibitions and it just seemed like fun at the time, but this was different. It felt more… inevitable. She
didn’t kiss Lexa on the dance floor because she wanted to kiss someone and Lexa just happened to
be there. And she sure as hell didn’t go back into the club, making up an excuse to do so and leaving
her friends in the cold, because she was just drunk and horny. If nothing else, she’s sure of that. She
kissed Lexa, because she wanted to; has wanted to since before she ever touched a drink that night.
She kissed Lexa, because she felt drawn to her, felt a connection with her. She kissed Lexa, because
she needed to.

But what does that mean?

Is she gay? Or maybe bisexual like Raven? Maybe so. It feels strange to think of herself in new
defining terms, but Clarke can’t deny her attraction to Lexa any longer. It isn’t platonic; it isn’t simple
admiration, either, and saying she just finds her interesting really doesn’t explain why kissing her
made her entire body ache in the best possible way.
Bisexual. She hasn’t even said it out loud yet and still the word feels strange on her tongue. Not bad, just unfamiliar. Maybe talking to Raven of all people about this might not be the worst idea. But not now. Not in front of Lincoln.

And not when the third question is still burning into her like it is.

What about Lexa?

What did Lexa think about all of this? Did she regret what happened? Did she even think twice about it? Clarke knows Lexa liked kissing her. She knows, because she felt it; in the way Lexa moved, the way she breathed, the way she kissed her back and the way her heart was racing. She’ll never forget that feeling. They weren’t even kissing in that moment and still Lexa’s heartbeat galloped against Clarke’s chest. Clarke doesn’t want to believe that that was just because Lexa was nervous or drunk or turned on, although two of those at least she wouldn’t mind. She doesn’t know why, but she doesn’t want to be just another conquest for Lexa; just another girl in a club that she liked kissing. Because Clarke has no doubt in her mind now that she wasn’t the first girl Lexa kissed. But what if that’s all it was for Lexa? What if that’s all she was to her? Just one of many. And what if not?

While the thought of it having been nothing more than a casual make-out session for Lexa makes Clarke’s insides turn cold, at the same time she doesn’t know if she wants it to mean something different; something more. She just doesn’t know.

“I’m sure she’ll slow down soon. She probably just had a fight with Anya or something.” Lincoln says just then and Clarke jolts out of her thoughts. When Raven and Octavia’s eyes move away from her to look at Lincoln instead, she realizes that he just saved her from having to answer Raven’s question and looking weird not responding in time. Whether he did it on purpose or not, Clarke is grateful for the distraction.

“Do they fight a lot?” Octavia asks, but Raven cuts in.

“Hold up,”

Clarke freezes.

“weren’t we gonna order?”

“Oh, yeah!” Octavia agrees and Clarke quietly lets out the breath she was holding. “What should we get? Sushi? Burgers? Pizza?”

While they decide where to order from, Clarke makes a mental note to talk to Raven about all of this. And soon.

A tear rolls down Lexa’s cheek and she angrily tries to blink back the next one that’s already threatening to spill over.

It hurts.

It really hurts, actually.
Another few tears roll down, chasing the first, and she can’t stand the burning any longer.

With a groan, Lexa turns her head to the side and takes a step back from the cutting board.

“Ugh, fuck.” She cusses under her breath, making Anya look up at her from the stove.

“Wuss.” She snorts, before taking the cutting board from the counter and pushing the onion slices Lexa cut into the pan with the purple cutting knife she was using earlier. It sizzles loudly and Lexa grimaces as she presses the outsides of her wrists against her closed eyes. She hates cutting onions.

Anya grabs her elbow and pulls her over to the stove without asking, switching their places. “Here, you stir, I’ll cut the rest of them.”

Still blinking painfully, Lexa takes the wooden cooking spoon and starts moving the onion slices around in the pan. As the smell wafts up into her nose, her eyes burn even more.

“Oh my god, that’s worse.” She moans, barely seeing anything as her narrowed eyes fill with tears again immediately.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake!” Anya exclaims. “You are such a crybaby! And you call yourself the Commander.” she accuses, huffing out an unbelieving laugh.

Lexa furrows her eyebrows, blindly keeping on stirring.

“You call me that.” She murmurs indignantly. After all, *Lexa* wasn’t the one who was all too eager to pick up the name the MMA community started calling her after her first win in the octagon.

“What was that?” Anya asks, and Lexa is pretty sure the sizzling onions weren’t *that* loud.

“I think the water is boiling, hand me the pasta.” She says instead of repeating herself and Anya reaches the pack of penne pasta over with a satisfied expression on her face that drives Lexa up the wall.

“That’s what I thought.”

It takes a lot of restraint not to mockingly echo what Anya said, but Lexa sticks to scowling instead as she pours the pasta into the pot. It’s not like she has a lot of choice, anyway. Her facial muscles are contracting all on their own, trying to combat the pain.

Stupid onions.

Stupid Anya.

Stupid everything.

A little while later they’re sitting across from each other at the dinner table.

Lexa burned the roof of her mouth on the first bite and now she’s just moodily pushing pasta around on her plate, drawing wiggly lines in the vegetable sauce they made.

Stupid pasta.
She catches Anya watching her and stares back. When Anya doesn’t say or do anything, Lexa grumbles, “What?”

“What’s up with you this week?” Anya asks bluntly, abandoning her cutlery on her almost empty plate to cross her arms over her chest. Leaning back in her chair, she tilts her head to the side, contemplating Lexa.

“Nothing.” Lexa evades, looking back down to the her own plate. A big letter C stares back up at her from the sauce and she quickly completes it to a circle with the piece of pasta on her fork.

“You’ve been antsy and cranky all week.” Anya insists and Lexa’s jaw tenses. She hates the word ‘cranky’. It’s for children. It sounds condescending somehow.

Not saying anything, she decides to take a bite of her food instead. It’s cold.

After another moment of silent scrutiny, Anya prods on.

“Did something happen with you and Blondie at the club?”

Lexa is so surprised that she almost chokes on the next piece of pasta. She manages to swallow it painfully and clears her throat, feeling like someone just shoved a couple of ice cubes down the back of her hoodie. Is her heart beating louder than just a second ago?

“What?” Lexa asks, stunned and more than a little overwhelmed at so suddenly being put on the spot.

“You’ve been acting weird ever since Octavia left with Blondie and her other friends that night. Did something happen? Did she kiss that hype girl again?”

“What?” Lexa just repeats stupidly. Hype girl? Does Anya mean Raven? Lexa didn’t even know Anya noticed Clarke and Raven’s little make out session, too. It hadn’t really been at the centre of Lincoln’s picture from that one night in Seattle not too long ago, but apparently Lexa wasn’t the only one looking closely enough to spot the two girls on the dance floor behind Octavia.

“She didn’t shoot you down or something, right? Cause I really don’t want any drama and I’m not firing Octavia. I mean, I’d totally fire someone for you, you know out of sisterly solidarity and all, but not her. It took me forever to find someone and she’s got just the right mix of polite sweetneess and confident sass. She’s perfect for handling our customers. Plus, she knows most of the cocktails by heart already. I only saw her cheating off her phone like twice on trial night.”

Lexa just blinks. What?

“I- no,” Lexa starts, feeling like she’s sat in an oral exam she didn’t study for. She slowly shakes her head. “she- she didn’t-she…”

“She what?” Anya asks, reaching for her glass. “Come on, spit it out already.”

Lexa’s heart is definitely louder than usual. Fidgeting in her chair, Lexa draws in a deep breath as discreetly as possible. When she looks back up, Anya is still calmly watching her over the rim of her glass. Her eyebrows jerk up as if to say ‘Well?’ and Lexa just can’t hold it in any longer.

“We…we kissed.” She finally admits and the way Anya’s eyebrows shoot towards her hairline even higher is almost comical.

“You…wow, okay!” she nods at Lexa with an impressed expression on her face. “That’s kind of…
unexpected to be honest.” She frowns with a laugh. “I didn’t really think you had the balls, or did she make the first move?”

“I… I’m not sure. Both? I don’t know, it just kind of happened.” Lexa answers, feeling both relieved and uncomfortable talking about this.

“Well, good for you.” Anya shrugs and raises her glass in a half-assed toast. Lexa feels a little mocked by it, but she ignores it. She kind of really wants to talk to Anya about this now actually. After all, Anya was there when she first ever kissed a girl, too.

“Oh my god, that was painful to watch.” Anya laughs as Lexa opens the passenger side of Anya’s truck.

Lexa would tell her to fuck off, but she’s still too much of a nervous wreck and really that was a horrible goodbye. It was awkward and silent and uncomfortable and Lexa wishes she could have just turned invisible and run away halfway through it.

“She wanted you to kiss her, you know that, right?”

“What?” Lexa hisses. No. No way! Costia did not want her to kiss her. That’s ridiculous.

Anya just laughs again as she starts the engine. “Oh my god, the poor girl.”

“Shut up!” Lexa snaps in a harsh growl as she angrily pulls the seatbelt across her chest. Just shut up!

Anya has no right! She has no right to tell her she’s not good enough; no right to make her feel even worse than she already does. She has no right to pretend like she cares. She made it painfully clear that she doesn’t give a shit about Lexa. If she did, she wouldn’t have gotten emancipated and just left her. It was supposed to be their home, it was supposed to be them against the rest and Anya just left; she left her all alone.

With nothing but a bunch of whiney assholes and an old hag who was glad to be rid of Anya and who wouldn’t stop drilling into Lexa what a horrible girl Anya was and what a horrible girl she had made Lexa as well. What a horrible bitch Lexa was. What a horrible, ungrateful, hateful little brat.

Anya left and Lexa was left with no one. No one that liked her anyway. No one that would speak as much as one single kind word to her. Not that Lexa needed it. She didn’t need anyone.

That’s what she told the social worker when she came to investigate the old hag’s claim that Lexa was unbearable. A nightmare. A ‘threat to herself and others’. Not someone she wanted to have around her other children. Lexa had never snorted so hard in her life. Like Mrs. Maynard even cared about the others! She treated all of them alike; like they were leeches. They were nothing but inconvenient means to make some money without actually doing anything to her. But fine, Lexa would go. She didn’t want to stay there anyway.

Lexa told the social worker that. She told her she would just live on her own. Like Anya was doing. She could do it, she could!

But the small, round-faced woman wouldn’t listen. She just shoved Lexa’s two backpacks in the trunk of her car and snapped at Lexa to get in. And just like that she was back at the shelter.

If only she had stayed there. Or if only she had run away. If only Anya had actually cared like she’s now pretending to, and agreed to let Lexa live with her. If only Lexa had gone anywhere, anywhere, but her next ‘home’. It would have never happened. It would have never happened and she would be
But she did go there. And when everything went to shit, when Lexa came home that night, when it happened... Anya wasn’t there. She wasn’t there and Lexa was all alone, trapped in a nightmare she still can’t wake up from.

Once again she was taken away. This time she can hardly remember how it happened. Police were there. Blue and red lights everywhere. That’s all she remembers. That and that Anya wasn’t there. She wasn’t there to help her. She wasn’t there to stop it. She wasn’t there. She just wasn’t there. She was gone. She was gone and Lexa isn’t sure who she’s even thinking about anymore. Anya, herself or...

Enough. It was done. The past and there was nothing she could do about it anymore. She was here now. Another new home, another new family, another new life. And this time a new Lexa, too. One that was done. She was just done. Done with hoping, done with trying, done with fighting; just done.

And then she met Costia.

And Costia was anything but done. She was right there; right there on the porch when Lexa opened the door, right there in Lexa’s face with her beautiful, wild black hair and her warm brown eyes and her stupid soft smile as she welcomed Lexa to the neighborhood; Costia was right there in front of her and before Lexa even knew what was happening, Costia was right there in Lexa’s head as well. In her head and in her...

No.

“You should tell her that you like her.” Anya says just then, but Lexa doesn’t look at her. She keeps staring out of the window, watching the trees race past them. She locks her arms tighter across her chest. It feels painfully constricted – it always does now – but against Lexa’s hopes the pressure doesn’t help.

“I don’t.”

“Riiight.” Anya drawls and Lexa’s hands ball into fists. Her nails dig into her skin. “And I’m not driving a truck right now.”

Lexa doesn’t say anything. She can’t. She just clenches her jaw, her ears ringing and rushing with blood. She’s angry. Always so angry now and Anya needs to shut up.

“You’re not fooling anyone with your broody thing. I bet she sees right through that.” Anya goes on and Lexa grits her teeth tighter. Shut up, shut up, shut up!

“Fine, be like that. I’m just saying that goodbye was awkward as hell and you know it.”

Shut! UP!

It’s silent for a few moments and Lexa takes some breaths. She keeps watching the trees zoom in and out of her line of sight. She tries to name them, but finds she has no idea about trees. Before she can try anything else to center herself, Anya starts again and Lexa presses her eyes closed.

“Come on, Lex, she seems like a cool chick. I don’t know why you’re acting like a damn child. Just admit you like her. I’m not even saying you gotta own up to being smitten even though you clearly are, ju-“

“SHUT UP!” Lexa explodes suddenly and when her fist connects to the hard dashboard in front of
her, she sees Anya flinch out of the corner of her eye. It’s oddly satisfying, but also horribly terrifying at the same time and Lexa’s heart is racing so painfully that she wants to clutch her chest and push and claw and shred and tear until she can rip it right out.

‘One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.’

‘One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight nine, ten.’

‘One, two three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.’

It’s quiet in the car now. Quiet except for the screams that echo throughout Lexa’s body and shake her to her core; like they do every goddamn day now.

Lexa’s hand is throbbing and she takes refuge in the pain. Her mind crawls up in those knuckles and cowers there, hiding from the demons that rule every other sensation in her body. Clos- ing her eyes again, Lexa tries to calm her breathing as she listens to her thundering heart and starts counting its beats.

She’s at 147 before it stops feeling like every pulse pushes liquid fire through her veins.

Another 86 beats and her lungs don’t hurt with every breath anymore.

31 more and she can slowly peel her fingernails from her palms. The faint pain across her skin pulsates in time with the one from her knuckles and it feels soothing.

At the 287th beat Lexa’s body is calm. Nothing is left. No hate, no pain, no flashes. Nothing but the ever-present, now muffled screams in the back of her mind and the throbbing knot in her throat.

They go for dinner like they do every Friday, to the same restaurant they visit every Friday, and Lexa lets Anya tell her about her life like every Friday. They eat and drink and sit across from each other and when Anya pulls two small packs of skittles from her bra even though she has pockets, Lexa even smiles. It feels odd and scary, but when Anya smiles back it also feels familiar.

Lexa wants to tell Anya she’s sorry for punching her car, but she doesn’t.

And she wants to hug her, let everything spill over and let Anya comfort her, but she can’t.

Lexa wants to beg Anya to take her away, but she knows what she really wants is for Anya to take her back in time and Anya can’t, so Lexa stays silent.

Lexa also wants to yell at Anya and tell her what a fucking piece of shit she is for leaving her, but all Lexa can do is eat and drink and sit with Anya and pretend like she hates her and pretend like she doesn’t, when all she really wants is to be with Anya like they used to be.

Lexa wants so many things it tears her apart, but most of all Lexa wants to want nothing anymore.

But she can’t. She can’t stop it, she can’t, so she eats and drinks and sits and listens and doesn’t say a word.

When they get back to her new home, it’s already dark, but Lexa catches herself scanning the neighbor’s porch for a dark figure sitting there anyway. And like always, she really is. Costia is right there.

This time Lexa doesn’t mind when Anya speaks. She almost welcomes it.
“She’s waiting for you.”

“Yeah.”

She swallows dryly.

“It’s nice to have someone waiting for you.”

No. No!

“Yeah.”

A hand softly touches her shoulder and Lexa twitches, but doesn’t push it away.

“You got this.” Anya whispers simply, but Lexa hears so much more.

‘You got this, Lexa. Don’t let your fear take everything away. Don’t let what happened rule you. You’re stronger than that. Just go and let her guide you back to yourself. You got this, I know you do.’

Lexa doesn’t know if Anya would really ever say those things or even think them, but she can’t stop wanting things so she might as well let herself want this to be true as well; want Anya saying those things to be true and want Anya to be right about them, too.

Being done was supposed to end her fight, but it didn’t.

Costia made her want things again, despite wanting so desperately to not want things anymore, and Lexa just can’t fight her anymore. She can’t fight wanting anymore. She can’t fight her urge to keep fighting anymore. She can’t.

‘You got this.’

Nodding slowly, Lexa presses her lips together.

“Yeah.”

She gets out without another word and she doesn’t hear Anya’s truck drive away until Costia is already in her arms.

That night Costia kisses Lexa until she can’t hear the screams anymore.

And wanting something doesn’t seem so bad, when someone is there to give it to you.

“So, how was it?” Anya grins at Lexa from across the table.

“Hm?”

Anya rolls her eyes. “The kiss! How was kissing Blondie? Stop dreaming about it and tell me, or do I need to get some cold water?”

Clarke.

Suddenly flashes of blonde hair and blue eyes and soft lips assault Lexa’s brain and it feels like someone just jumpstarted her entire body. Everything’s whirring and steaming and pulsing and Lexa wouldn’t be surprised to hear she is vibrating in her chair.
“I-it was…it was…”

Clarke’s lips press against hers and Lexa hears Clarke breathe heavily through her nose. The quick gushes of air feel cool against her heated cheek.

“It was good.” Lexa’s throat bobs, when she swallows dryly.

Clarke’s breasts are pushing against her and Lexa feels goose bumps race down her spine as Clarke’s fingers run through her hair, tangling themselves up in it as she grabs it.

Lexa nods, “Yeah, it was…it was great.”

Clarke pushes her against the door and Lexa can hear a tiny, high-pitched moan as she’s being kissed so hard it almost hurts. A tingling sensation rushes through her and settles between her legs and her knees are suddenly so weak that she can feel her thighs trembling.

She clears her throat and crosses her legs and Anya lets out the loudest laugh Lexa has heard from her in weeks.

Chapter End Notes

So, once again, the chapter became too long and I decided to make it into two parts.

I hope you still comment on this one as well as the next one, even though I'm uploading both of them on the same day again. It would really mean a lot!

Thanks for reading and enjoy!

All the best,
Lea
Hi, me again!

Just a quick reminder that I would really, really appreciate it if you could comment on both chapters, not just this one!

If you already commented on the last then my bad! If not, please consider doing that real quick, it would really make me very happy :)

Okay, that's it! Thank you and enjoy!

“Damn, I gotta go.”

“No, already?” Octavia instantly pouts, lifting her head from Lincoln’s shoulder as she looks up at him, and Lincoln’s facial expression turns from surprised to regretful.

“Yeah, I’m sorry. I promised Lexa.” He looks as apologetic as he sounds.

Raven grins, “She’s totally hogging your man, O.” she says, glancing up at the two of them from the piece of paper she’s been trying to fold into a swan or ostrich or something. Clarke forgets.

Octavia challenged Raven’s statement that she used to be the best at Origami in arts and crafts class when they were in elementary school. Of course, Raven couldn’t let that stand.

“When are you meeting her?” Octavia asks as Lincoln sits up a little straighter on the couch and pulls his arm back from around Octavia with a small groan. The two have been lounging so comfortably together that Clarke thinks if she didn’t know any better they could have been together for 6 years instead of merely 6 weeks. “Not five again?”

“Yeah.” He grimaces and Clarke understands the reaction.

“That’s disgusting.” Raven comments, this time remaining fully concentrated on her work.

“Yeah, that’s… I’m not sure I could do that.” Clarke presses her lips together in sympathy and Lincoln shrugs.

“No pain, no gain.” He cites somewhat half-heartedly. “Just need to push through the first half hour. After that it’s fine, really.”

“You’re crazy. You and Lexa, you’re both crazy.” Octavia shakes her head with a frown and snakes her arms around Lincoln’s middle, pulling him closer again.

It seems second-nature when he winds his own arm around hers and squeezes her to himself, giving her a gentle kiss on top of her head.
Octavia closes her eyes, lips still pouting slightly as she leans her head against his chest, and Clarke feels a distant aching inside. She wants that, too. Someone to hold her like that and care for her like Lincoln and Octavia obviously care for each other.

They just hold each other like that for another few seconds, before Lincoln takes in a deep breath and tries to look at Octavia’s face. “I really gotta go, O.” he murmurs against her temple.

Octavia gives a protesting grunt, but then sighs and slowly untangles herself from him.

“Fine.” She grumbles. “But only because I’ll get to wake up to sweaty work-out pics. Deal?” she cocks an eyebrow and Lincoln rolls his eyes, but not without smiling softly.

“Fine. Deal.” He widens his eyes and wiggles his head at the last word and Octavia grins broadly.

“You guys are gross.” Raven throws in her two cents and then a crumbled up piece of paper at their heads. Apparently she’s giving up on her quest to master the art of Origami this late on a Friday night.

Octavia sticks her tongue out and Raven mirrors her.

Alright.” Octavia finally says with another sigh and pats Lincoln’s chest. They heave themselves up from the couch and Octavia overextends her back with a groan.

Clarke suddenly feels antsy. She could just ask Lincoln for Lexa’s number right now. That’s a thing that she could do. Easy as anything. Nothing to it, really. Nothing at all.

Frozen to the spot by indecision, she watches as Octavia forbids Lincoln to clean the table and carry the glasses and empty food containers into the kitchen, insisting that she’ll do it later, but when they eventually move towards the door, Clarke jumps up.

They glance at her as she follows them to the door, but don’t comment on it.

“You still coming over tomorrow though?” Lincoln asks Octavia once they’ve reached it, who nods.

“Yeah, I was thinking around noon? We could grab lunch, too, maybe?” she suggests, handing him his leather jacket.

Coming over? To his or the gym?

“Sure, don’t forget your sportswear, though.” Lincoln reminds Octavia just then, solving the mystery.

“I have been to a gym before, you know.” Octavia tilts her head at him, with a challenging look.

He just grins and shrugs teasingly, as he bends down and quickly slips into his shoes. She rolls her eyes at him and then stands on her tiptoes as soon as he’s righted himself again and kisses him.

It’s sweet and chaste, but they’re both smiling against each others’ lips and, just for a second, Clarke wishes Lexa would kiss her like that.

“Lincoln!” it suddenly bursts out of her and the two break their kiss to look at her.

“Uh…” their eyes feel way too heavy on her and she awkwardly folds her hands in front of herself. “Um, get home safe.” She gets out and as soon as the words leave her mouth she wants to smack herself for not saying what she really wanted to say. Or ask rather.
“Oh,” Lincoln retorts, a slightly confused look on his face. “Yeah, thanks. I will.” he smiles at Clarke and then pulls her in a one armed hug, which Clarke returns, gaze to the floor.

_Goddammit, Clarke!_

Still regarding her with a slightly confused and curious expression, Octavia goes to hug Lincoln as well and Clarke, suddenly feeling very silly standing at the door with them, turns on the spot and walks back over to the living room area, where Raven is leaning back on her elbows on the floor, her feet stretched out in front of her.

She’s obviously been watching the whole scene, because she, too, eyes Clarke with raised eyebrows.

Wordlessly, Clarke sinks back onto the couch at the far end and puts her drink to her lips. She needs to make the next one stronger.

When Octavia rejoins them, she flops down next to Clarke and then immediately bursts out laughing.

It startles Clarke and both she and Raven look at Octavia as if they were worried for her sanity. Octavia only points to the table in explanation and Clarke gets it. Two crumpled-looking balls of paper stand on top of a stack of Clarke’s books, posed as if they were proud lions overlooking their animal kingdom, only with no resemblance to any definable animal or even creature at all.

“What! They’re awesome!” Raven immediately defends, when she catches up as well. Octavia’s laughter grows impossibly louder to a point where it comes out more like raspy coughs than anything else, but Raven shouts over the noise. “Hey, shut up! Have some respect in front of the king and queen of the jungle!”

A tear is now running down Octavia’s cheek and just watching her makes Clarke laugh out loud as well. Not even Raven can resist the contagion and a few involuntary giggles slip out with her next sentence.

“You’re such a dickhead! He can hear you!” she grabs the bigger of the two balls of paper and pretends that it’s running at Octavia and attacking her. “Cower before the king! I’ll feed you to my son for breakfast!” she growls in a deep voice and Octavia is practically whimpering as she tries to calm herself down enough to talk.

“Wh-haha, wha-what is that even supposed to be!” she barely gets out.

Raven’s jaw drops and she turns the ball of paper towards herself, playing as if they were sharing a scandalized look. Then she turns it back to ‘face’ Octavia and glares at her as best as she can.

“It’s Mufasa, bitch.”

This time Clarke loses it as well and for a while the two of them, and eventually even Raven, just laugh and laugh until they cry. Clarke isn’t sure exactly what’s so funny, but it feels so good to just let loose like that and when their laughter slowly dies down, she’s almost a little disappointed.

As soon as it’s quiet again, the same nagging thought from before is knocking on her conscious mind again and Clarke makes a snap decision.

“Hey, if you want I can drop you off at the gym tomorrow.” She addresses Octavia, casually tapping a rhythm onto her belly with her thumbs and purposefully watching her own hands rather than look at Octavia or Raven. She skidded down a bit during their shared fit of laughter and is now lying almost horizontally on the couch. Well, her back is. Her legs are spread apart and bent at the knee in front of her, her feet properly planted on the floor. She must look like a baller, manspreading like the
More for something to do than out of actual necessity, Clarke pushes herself further up on the couch again, until she can lean back against the cushions.

“Uh, sure? Yeah, okay.” Octavia says a little slowly, but when Clarke finally looks at her she’s just shrugging her shoulders, before getting up.

“Another round?” she asks and Clarke gladly hands her her empty glass, relieved that she apparently wasn’t as obvious as she feared she would be.

“Lace it, baby!” Raven requests in a funny voice and Octavia frowns down at her.

While the two start an argument over whether Raven should really have a proper drink or not, Clarke picks up ‘Mufasa’ and the other paper ball.

As she gallops them towards each other in slow motion on her lap she can’t help but think back to Lexa and the way it felt pushing her against that wall. She’d never felt so powerful and yet so powerless at the same time before. And she loved it.

The lion-balls collide on the stage that is her thighs and Clarke smiles.

All in all, Lexa guesses it could have been worse. Sure, Anya didn’t stop laughing about Lexa’s stammering recollection of her kiss with Clarke for what felt like minutes, but in the end she pulled herself together and tried to actually give some serious advice.

Whether it was helpful or not, Lexa can’t quite tell. Basically it was just Anya telling her to stop over-thinking things and being such a wuss and really, Lexa already told herself that about a million times this week alone.

But still, just talking about what happened and the way Clarke keeps catching her off guard felt really good. It made it feel more real somehow and also a little less scary. Although the thought of asking Lincoln for Clarke’s number still slightly mortifies Lexa. She just doesn’t want him to ask what for. What is she going to say? ‘Because I want to ask your girlfriend’s roommate who may or may not be straight and have just fooled around with me to experiment out on a date, because I’m crushing on her and can’t stop thinking about her?’

Yeah, no. That can’t happen. She needs an excuse.

It’s not like Lincoln would judge her, but what if Clarke has a boyfriend or is just testing the waters with girls? Lexa is already weary enough about the possibility of getting shot down by Clarke, she really doesn’t want Lincoln or Clarke’s roommates to have a front row seat to her painful humiliation.

No, if she’s going to find out whether or not there’s anything there, it’s going to be when it’s only Clarke and her and nobody else.

With a sigh she turns to her side. The lit-up numbers of the alarm clock on her night stand read almost midnight and Lexa groans internally. When she asked Lincoln to meet her for a morning run, she didn’t expect to have such trouble falling asleep.
For a few moments she considers turning the lights on again and trying to read until she falls asleep, but she doubts she could concentrate well enough to actually take in what the book is saying at all. Turning onto her back instead, Lexa contemplates the past few days.

Working out has always been an escape for her. Whatever she may be feeling or going through, whether it be good or bad, when she’s working out, she’s in a different world. When she’s working out, there’s only her, her body and sometimes maybe a training partner or an opposing boxer. But that’s it. It’s a much simpler world and all she needs to do is fight. Fight to be stronger, fight to be faster, fight to be smarter. Fight to meet or even exceed Indra’s expectations, fight to go beyond her own limits and fight to become a better person than she was yesterday.

This week, no matter how much she worked out, it just never seemed to be enough. She remained infuriatingly easily distracted and the frustration of feeling so hopelessly enamored by this beautiful woman and yet having no clue what to do about it just grew with every passing day.

Useless!

Pressing her eyes closed, Lexa shakes her head on the pillow. She notices her balled fists and extends her fingers to relax them.

What is she doing to me?

Trying to figure out what exactly it is about Clarke that captures Lexa so much is pointless. It’s everything and yet nothing Lexa can name, because whenever she tries to formulate an answer to that question in her mind, she falls short. Yes, Clarke has amazing eyes and a beautiful body, yes, the way she is so fun, but yet so serious is intriguingly mysterious, yes, whenever Lexa sees her interact with her friends she feels so much effortless and unconditional love between them even though she doesn’t know them at all, and yes, how Clarke looked at Lexa and how she kissed her made Lexa’s head spin – still makes Lexa’s head spin as a matter of fact – but none of that is enough. None of that is enough to explain how all Lexa can think about is Clarke’s smell and the rasp of her laugh, none of that explains why whenever Clarke is near her Lexa feels her own body literally trembling with excitement, none of that explains why even now, when she’s supposed to be fast asleep, images of Clarke keep her wide awake and make her ache in the best ways.

It’s not only memories of their encounters that run through her mind, either; Lexa sees all sorts of scenarios play out in front of her inner eye and they’re so vivid that Lexa almost reaches out to touch someone who isn’t actually there. Her hand jerks, but there is nobody there to reach out to and as the movement reminds Lexa of her surroundings, Clarke’s image almost fades. She presses her eyes closed harder.

Clarke is standing in front of her. They’re in the club, but the crowd around them is faceless. Alone in a mass of swaying bodies they dance to a song Lexa doesn’t recognize. They’re in perfect harmony. Clarke is smiling at her and for some reason Lexa is taller than her, so Clarke is looking up. Her eyelashes are dark and beautifully curved and they make it that much harder to not tip over and sink head first into swirling blue.

Lessa feels the world around her slowly start spinning as she gets drawn in.

She should be getting nauseous by the motion, but she doesn’t. It’s just an illusion and it only adds to the feeling of floating on clouds; the kind of clouds you always imagined as a kid, that are soft and yet solid enough to carry you as you soar across the skies.

As Lexa looks down on Clarke, Clarke’s smile widens and then a small smirk starts playing around
the corners of her lips.

It’s mischievous and cute and unbelievably sexy and Lexa’s stomach starts flipping like crazy.

They’re both floating now, suspended in mid-air, and everything else around them suddenly becomes very blurry. Lexa isn’t sure where she is anymore, but despite her nature and her training, she doesn’t care at all. She doesn’t feel the need to find markers to orientate herself and she doesn’t feel uncomfortable in the unknown. All she feels is a fluttering elation and Clarke’s hands in hers.

They’re warm and steady and Lexa squeezes them to stop herself from shaking. It doesn’t really work, but when Clarke lets out a small laugh, Lexa doesn’t feel overwhelmed or embarrassed. All she feels is safe and loved.

Lexa’s breathing is deeper now and her limbs feel heavy, but tingly.

Clarke reaches out and strokes a lock of hair behind Lexa’s ear. The way she looks at her, with infinite softness in her eyes, makes Lexa’s heart twist painfully in her chest and suddenly she feels choked up. She wants to hug Clarke, burrow against her, but her arms are like lead and she can’t move.

It doesn’t matter though, because as if she had read Lexa’s mind, Clarke gently pulls her against her chest. It’s warm and comforting and Lexa doesn’t only hear Clarke’s heartbeat, she feels it all around her. It’s like the cushiony clouds that are surrounding them now, making it feel like they’re floating inside a giant teddy bear or levitating in heaven if heaven consisted of the softest cotton in the world, are pulsing in time with it and Lexa has never felt so content.

She presses her forehead against Clarke’s neck and as her nose gently nudges Clarke’s collarbone, Lexa can smell her scent. It’s warm and comforting and familiar and exciting all at once and Lexa’s breath stutters on the exhale.

Her own fingers ghost over her stomach and Lexa shudders against them.

Just like that she suddenly feels dizzy and the steady vibrations in the atmosphere speed up as Clarke’s heartbeat quickens. Lexa feels Clarke’s back beneath her hands and it’s rising and falling with every breath Clarke takes. One after the other. They’re faster now as well, and shallow, and Lexa feels them against her neck. Goose bumps erupt right where the gushes of air tickle her skin and tingles race through her body. She feels hot now and her own heartbeat is galloping and as she slowly moves her head, she drags her nose up Clarke’s neck to her cheek.

Her lips are barely touching Clarke’s soft skin at her jaw and suddenly everything is too gentle.

As if, once again, reading her mind, Clarke’s fingers tighten around Lexa’s arms; they grab her and hold her there, and this time when Clarke pushes against her, Lexa is ready.

Out of nowhere a wall appears and when Clarke throws Lexa against it, Lexa moans.

A shaking whimper escapes her lips into the quiet night.

Clarke’s lips are barely touching hers and the two of them hover like that for a moment, each taking in the other’s breath as their hands blindly wander. Lexa closes her eyes.

Her fingers touch hot wetness and Lexa draws in a sharp breath.

Finally Lexa can’t hold back any longer and she kisses Clarke with everything she has. It’s hard and untamed and desperate and when their lips part for just a split second, Lexa’s lips are shaking
badly. Clarke kisses them again and the shaking moves to the rest of Lexa’s body and she pulls Clarke as close as she can, wanting nothing more than to be pressed against that wall just a little harder and to be kissed just a little rougher and when Clarke does exactly that, Lexa moans again; just a little louder.

‘Fuck’ is whispered in between stuttering breaths and as her fingers pick up their pace, Lexa’s abs and legs start twitching.

A knee pushes between her thighs and when Clarke bites Lexa’s neck, Lexa choppily drops onto it as her Legs give out and she slides an inch down the wall.

‘I got you.’ Clarke’s voice is deep and raspy and pure sex and Lexa’s head dips back against the hard surface. Clarke’s hands are on her hips and as they direct the way Lexa grinds against Clarke’s thigh, Clarke starts sucking underneath her ear. Everything is shaking and all Lexa can hear is her own heartbeat thundering inside her chest and her own high-pitched whimpers.

Her back arches as the wonderfully painful knot below her abs gets tighter and tighter inside her and Lexa’s breathing comes out in irregular, shaky huffs as the back of her head presses against the mattress.

‘Clarke..’ Lexa’s voice is strained, but Clarke is right there; she’s right there and when she kisses Lexa again, Lexa’s entire body erupts.

...

By the time the shaking has finally subsided to light trembles, Lexa doesn’t even notice it anymore. Before her body stills completely, she’s already fast asleep.

—

“She is so hot!” Raven wails, throwing her head back and swaying her body against Octavia, who is giggling uncontrollably next to her.

They’re watching videos on Youtube and as Raven bows her head and arms before the girl in the clip that’s currently playing, Clarke nods vigorously. She really is! And funny, too!

Having long ago given up on trying to convince Raven to stay sober, Clarke and Octavia joined their roommate as she decided to sit down on the floor in front of the couch instead of on it about an hour ago.

“I swear to god, if I ever meet her I will die. She’s so hot and so cool and so awesome and, oh my god, imagine if I actually did meet her though! I mean, it could totally happen, I could just be walking down the street, minding my own business, you know, and ‘BAM’, there she is. Perfect hair flowing in the wind and I’d be like ‘hey, girl, how you doin’?’ and she’d be like ‘I’m fine Mama, how ‘bout you!’ and then I’d be like ‘Not as fine as you, boo!’ and she’d go ‘Daaaamn, get that ish outta here’ and then she’d wave me over, cause I’m on the other side of the road and then I’d go over there, but I’d be so focused on her that I’d not even see the car and I’d be like, run over, and she’d
scream and I’d scream and the driver would scream and then I’d wake up in the hospital and she’d be there and before I could even say anything she’d be like ‘oh my god, I was so worried, I thought I’d never see you again, I thought I’d lost you when I had just found you!’ and then she’d cry and then I’d go ‘shhh, baby, it’s okay, I’m here now’ and she’d cry and cry and then we’d get married and have lots of hot sex for the rest of our lives.”

Octavia explodes in a loud wave of laughter and slumps backwards against the foot of the couch, while Clarke’s slightly drunk brain is still trying to catch up with the waterfall of words that just came out of Raven’s mouth. Raven always talks fast, but Clarke feels like it’s gotten worse lately. A lot worse.

Or maybe it’s just her current state of intoxication making it hard to follow her friend’s ramblings, either way, Clarke has to frown as she tries to concentrate.

“That’s not even what she sounds like.” She argues, because while Raven’s different voices and accents throughout that whole bit were very entertaining, she didn’t recognize the Youtuber in them at all.

“It totally is!” Raven protests, reaching across in front of Octavia and shoving Clarke lightly.

Clarke sways back a little.

“Not even in the slightest! The only thing that sounded like her was ‘ish’!”

“Exactly!” Raven exclaims, throwing both her hands up in the air like Clarke just proved her point and Clarke just snorts.

“I love you, but you’re an idiot.”

“Hey, I’m her idiot! Keep it in your pants, Griffin!” Raven waves a sassy finger in front of Clarke’s nose and Clarke quickly tries to bite it. Raven snaps it back just in time and drops her jaw, with a scandalized look.

“Ya nasty!” Raven quotes her favorite name twin like she used to do a lot in high school and Octavia is back to giggling again, when suddenly a phone starts ringing.

It’s Octavia’s and once she checks the caller ID she seems to sober up real quick.

“Oh, shit! Guys, shut up, it’s Anya.” She shushes and urgently waves her hand to silence them.

Clarke grins as she pretends to try to bite Octavia’s hand as well and while it earns her a glare and a click of the tongue from Octavia, Raven has to laugh.

“Oh my god…” Octavia mutters as she pushes up and steps over Clarke, but Clarke just slaps her butt and grins a little more.

This right here is what she misses most about studying a lot, she thinks. Just hanging out with the girls and having a fun time and not having to worry about when she’d have to get up in the morning. This, and finally having time to let certain thoughts intrude again without a bad conscience.

As Clarke hears Octavia greet Anya on the phone, her mind wanders to Lexa at once. The club, the dancing, the kiss. It all shoots through her mind in the blink of an eye and that’s all it takes for her to feel a burst of excited energy course through her body.

It’s as if she’s been drinking shots of espresso instead of rum and coke and Clarke relishes the
When she turns back around from watching Octavia walk down the hall to her room with one hand covering her ear and the other one holding the phone up to the other, Clarke startles a little, when Raven is suddenly right beside her. She yelps at the unexpected closeness, but Raven seems unfazed as she places both of her hands on the couch behind Clarke to either side of her head.

“Um, hi?” Clarke raises her eyebrows in bemusement and has to giggle somewhat nervously. Raven’s nose is almost touching hers and for some reason it only amplifies the excitement she feels.

“So, tell me, Griffin,” Raven tilts her head and eyes Clarke piercingly, “what exactly did happen with you and little Miss Commander last weekend?”

“W-what?” Clarke stammers, grin slipping away.

“Oh, don’t even try it!” Raven pushes away from Clarke, settling back next to her at a more socially acceptable distance, and gives her a knowing look. Mind reeling and heart thumping, Clarke watches Raven as she reaches for her drink and takes a sip, all the while not losing eye contact for even a second.

“I-uh…” she’s honestly lost for words. This question came so out of nowhere and Clarke is trying to catch up to Raven yet another time that evening.

“I know something went down, you could cut the sexual tension with a knife when y’all hugged goodnight.” Raven waves her drink around with a rotation of the wrist and a little bit almost spills over.

Slowly Clarke’s dumbfoundedness ceases and she’s left with a mix of emotions. Does she want to talk about this? Does she know what to say? How much does Raven really know?

She hesitates for a second, but since she already decided earlier that she needed to talk to Raven about these new feelings she’s having anyway, Clarke thinks she might as well do it now that the opportunity is basically being thrust at her.

“Well, actually…” Clarke starts and, now that she’s about to finally talk about it, her nerves are quickly showing. She takes her own glass into her lap and fumbles with it restlessly, watching her fingers scratch over the smooth surface.

“Well, actually?” Raven prods impatiently.

“Well, actually, we kinda…” Clarke bites her lip and then looks up at Raven, who’s staring at her intently. Clarke takes a deep breath and holds it in for a second, before continuing, “we kinda made out. Like… really made out.” She emphasizes, bobbing her head to the last two words, to make sure Raven gets that this was more than just a kiss between friends.

From the looks of it, Raven didn’t need the clarification, however.

“I knew it!” she shouts excitedly and then wags the index finger of her free hand at Clarke with a delighted expression on her face. “Oh my god, I fucking knew it, Clarke Griffin, you little minx!”

Clarke rolls her eyes, but can’t suppress a small grin of her own. As she said the words her careful nervousness reached its peak, but now that it’s out, it’s all turning into excited jitters once again. And it feels really good. Really, really good.

“Was it when you guys were dancing?” Raven asks eagerly, crossing her legs underneath her and
facing Clarke.

Clarke nods. “Yeah,”

Then she looks down, a sheepish smirk on her face.

“And then again later, after we said goodbye already.”

“After-” Raven echoes confused, but seems to get it almost instantly. “Oh my god, you did not! You fake ass bitch! You forgot your phone on purpose, didn’t you!” she exclaims loudly, her unbridled excitement boosting Clarke’s as well.

“Actually, I didn’t. It was in my purse the whole time.” Clarke confesses, to her roommate’s obvious delight.

“Oh my god, you’re such a-” Raven starts, but cuts herself off and just lets out a laugh as she shakes her head at Clarke, grinning toothily.

Clarke just shrugs her shoulders and presses her lips together. “What can I say.” She says, really not sure what else there is to say, but Raven has something in mind.

“Oh, Octavia is gonna love this!” she rolls her eyes up with relish, but Clarke immediately objects.

“No! No, we can’t tell her!” she insists and Raven’s face falls at once.

“What do you mean, we can’t tell her?” she frowns, visibly confused. “Of course, we have to tell her!”

“No!” Clarke shakes her head adamantly, almost ready to plead. “No, she can’t know!”

“Why the hell not?!” Raven seems to quite literally deflate as her shoulders sag and her elatedness turns to almost angry bewilderment.

“Because!” Clarke hushes agitated, now very aware that the woman they were talking about could rejoin them at any moment, “She’s going to be at the gym tomorrow and I don’t want her watching me, when I’m, you know, talking to Lexa!” she explains, adding ‘and very possibly making a fool out of myself’ in her mind.

“Oh my god!” Raven groans, throwing her head back as she rolls her eyes exaggeratingly hard. “Come on!"

“Please!” Clarke is almost desperate now. Telling Raven felt better than expected, but talking about it and having an audience while you’re actually trying to do something about it are two very different things. At least in Clarke’s book. “Please, Raven. Promise you won’t tell her!”

After looking at Raven imploringly for another moment, Raven finally gives in, if extremely reluctantly.

“Ugh, fine.” She grumbles, but is hasty to add, “but I want to be there when you tell her. That’s my condition.” She insists, raising her brows at Clarke.

“Done.” Clarke agrees immediately, relieved to have Raven’s word she’d keep quiet for now.

Raven even makes her shake on it, demanding it in a serious tone, but the second their hands touch she’s all smiles and twinkling eyes again.
“So, how was it?” she whispers in a conspiratorial, but giddy voice.

Clarke can’t help but grin again, “It was amazing. She’s…” she shakes her head, “she’s just really amazing, you know? And she’s got the most amazing lips, like…” Clarke struggles to find the words, “they’re just so soft! And she’s so soft! And so sweet, oh my god, but then she turns around and gives you this wicked grin and it’s like…damn! You know? And, fuck, Raven she’s such a great kisser, it’s ridiculous. Like I was basically ready and willing right there on the dance floor, holy shit. And you know what’s the craziest part about it? She doesn’t even seem to know how hot she is! She was, like, being all awkward and cute when we started dancing and I’m just over here, like, are you even real?”

“Naaaw,” Raven coos at Clarke’s rambling and claps her hands together, before pressing them against her mouth.

“Clarrke’s gooot a giiirl cruuush!” she sing-songs then and Clarke pushes her arm.

“Shut up.” Clarke laughs, but she doesn’t deny it. There’s really no point. If ever she had a crush in her life, it’s right now; on this hot, mysterious, cute, badass, intriguing, beautiful woman and the more she lets herself think about it, the more she just lets go of all her reservations and nagging questions and just lets herself experience everything and share it with Raven… the more the thought of Lexa fills her up with nothing but excitement and giddiness and happiness and when Raven swings her arms around her in an enthusiastic hug, Clarke returns it full force, her cheeks starting to hurt from smiling.

“Please? I’ll be good, I promise!” Raven begs in a lowered voice, but Clarke keeps shaking her head.

They’re in the kitchen, getting everyone another - this time lighter - round of drinks, while Octavia waits for them in the living room, probably sending Lincoln some drunk selfies.

“You won’t even notice I’m there, I swear!” Raven tries again, but Clarke puts down the glasses she just picked up and takes Raven’s head in both of her hands.

“Listen carefully. You will under no circumstances show up at the gym tomorrow, if I even as much as smell you, you’re dead, you hear me?” she squishes Raven’s cheeks for effect, before letting go and reaching for her and Octavia’s drinks again.

“But what about moral support!” Raven argues and Clarke just throws her a look.

“Ray-ven!” she hisses and Raven starts pouting as Clarke moves past her.

“But-“

“No!” Clarke half snaps, half laughs, turning around to Raven again. “Dammit, Reyes!”

“Fine.” Raven grumbles, crossing her arms over her chest. “But I want a play-by-play afterwards! With Clexa sock-puppets and everything!”

“With what?” Clarke frowns, thinking she either misheard or Raven misspoke or is otherwise just a little weird as usual.
“Clexa sock-puppets” Raven repeats as if Clarke should know what that means. “As in Clarke and Lexa?” she breaks it down in a kindergarten teacher voice. A very impatient one, that is.

Clarke still thinks Raven is losing it a little, but plays along, just wanting to wrap it up and get back out there, before Octavia starts getting suspicious.

“Uh huh, sure, whatever you want. I'll dance it out if it gets you off my back.” She jokes sarcastically and Raven seems satisfied by that answer.

“Atta girl.” She praises, patting Clarke on the head, before taking her own glass from the counter and leading them back out to their other roommate.

Shaking her head slightly, Clarke follows her, her mind already racing in attempts to come up with a battle plan for the next day.

Tomorrow can’t come soon enough.

Just when she loses her nerve and turns her back on him again, Lincoln calls out to her.

“Hey, Lexa! Hold up!”

On her way to the only unoccupied punching bag, Lexa freezes until he catches up with her.

“Yeah?” she asks, looking up as casually as possible from watching herself wrap up her hands.

She’s been going back and forth on approaching him so often today that she thinks she might just get whiplash from the constant whirling around.

“Do you have a sec?” he asks when he comes to stand in front of her. His black ‘Trainer’ shirt is sweat stained and his forehead is glistening as well from working with the speed bag for the past half hour.

“Sure.” She nods once and he gestured for her to follow him back to the station he was working at.

“So, I was thinking we could incorporate this new technique I’ve been trying out into your routine. It’s kind of similar to the one Erin showed us when she was here, but it’s more like,” he hits the speed bag once with his right hand, letting it rebound onto the board’s side that’s closest to his face and then repeats the punch only this time adding an uppercut as the bag swings towards him.

“See? It’s great for timing practice and you really have to be super focused to get it right, especially if you do a whole set like this.” He explains, wiping his wrist across his forehead as he looks at Lexa expectantly.

She nods distractedly, her thoughts split between what he’s saying and the question nagging at the back of her mind that’s, by now, practically shouting at her to finally ask it already.

“Yeah, yeah, sounds good.” She agrees pre-occupied and Lincoln nods enthusiastically and smiles, seeming happy and also a little proud of himself.

“Alright, cool!”
Even though Indra is her trainer, Lincoln has been taking over some of her responsibilities lately and Lexa thinks it’s really sweet how dedicated he is and how excited he gets when he thinks of a new way to improve Lexa’s routines.

“Yeah, hey, can I ask you something?” she blurts out suddenly and she thinks she might just faint from how fast her heart is beating now.

*Get it together!*

“Sure, want me to show it to you again?” Lincoln asks and Lexa swallows as she shakes her head.

“Uh, no, no, it’s not about that.”

The texture of her wrappings feels soothing under her fingertips and she concentrates on it.

“Oh, okay.” Lincoln lowers his arm again, that was getting ready to repeat the sequence.

“Um, I was just wondering,” she starts slowly, desperately trying to remember the phrase she prepared for this exact moment. The one she’s been repeating in her head all week. Where the hell did it go?! “uh, if…if you had-” she has to clear her throat when her voice gives out for a second and she tries with all her might to ignore the eyebrow that’s wandering up Lincoln’s forehead. Is she sweating? She feels like she’s sweating, but she swears she wasn’t a minute ago. “the, um, the num—Clarke’s number. For…um, for me.”

*That’s it? That was horrible! Add something! Add something!!*

“I mean, because I-I think I forgot something at theirs on Halloween and I was thinking, maybe…I mean, I thought she could, you know, bring it to me. I mean here. She could maybe bring it here-to the, um, th-the gym.”

If there were a way to slap herself back in time or out of existence, Lexa would do that right now and never talk to anybody ever again. Her chest is heaving, because for some damn reason her body apparently thinks she just ran a marathon, hyped up on energy drinks, with a horde of scary zombies chasing her and she hopes against hope that Lincoln doesn’t notice.

“Uh, sure. Do you want me to call and ask Octavia to bring it by? She’s coming over in a bi-” he starts asking and Lexa wants to break out in tears.

“No!"

No! No, she doesn’t want that!

He looks surprised at her outburst and Lexa clears her throat again, regaining a normal volume.

“No, just…the number is good, Clarke already knows what it looks like. And it’s not that- it’s not urgent.” She pulls out of her ass and prays to whatever, if any, entity there is that Lincoln doesn’t ask her what she forgot, because she thinks if she needs to think of another lie right now her brain might just short-circuit for good.

“Okay, yeah, hold on, I’ll get my phone.” He simply says just then, however, and again Lexa feels like crying, only this time in relief.

The ‘thank you’ gets stuck in her throat and she just nods again, but he doesn’t even notice as he turns around and starts digging through his gym bag to their left.
Lexa takes the short time she has to recompose herself and tries to breathe as calmly as possible to get her heart rate back to normal. She’s beyond glad she left her pulse watch in her locker today.

By the time he reads the number out to her, her hands have stopped shaking enough to quickly put it into her own phone, which she hastily stuffs back into her baggy shorts pocket, when Indra approaches them not a second later.

As she follows Indra to the other boxing room for a spontaneous supervised workout, she is very aware of the phone’s weight against her leg.

On the way to the gym Clarke’s nervousness increased steadily and even though she would never admit it to her, only Raven’s constant texting kept it from getting unbearable. The messages ranged from casually presented ideas of what to say to excited keyboard smashes and Clarke thinks that pretty much covers her internal process perfectly.

Octavia, still thinking Clarke offered to come with to ‘take the car back and do some grocery shopping while Octavia was training with Lincoln’, didn’t seem to notice Clarke’s jitters at all on the other hand. All the way from their apartment to Holladay Park she chatted away happily, asking Clarke to skip over songs on her connected phone every now and then and loudly singing along to some of her favorite ones.

When they finally arrived, Clarke followed Octavia through the entrance. The last time she was there she spotted Lincoln and Lexa right away through the glass doors of the cafeteria to the left, so she never actually went into the training area. This time however, after greeting the person at the front desk by name, Octavia leads Clarke to the right and into a long hallway. Several doors lead off to changing rooms to their left and Clarke only gets a quick glance at what must be one of the training rooms when another door opens to her right, before Octavia pulls on her elbow.

“In here” she tells Clarke and pushes the very first door to their left open, guiding her into the women’s locker room.

“I’ll just be a second, okay?”

“Sure.” Clarke nods. After handing Octavia her thick jacket to put into the locker along with her stuff for now, Clarke looks around the smallish room without really taking anything in. Luckily it’s a lock with a number combo, she just thinks, so she’ll be able to get her jacket out when she leaves without O having to come along. She already told Octavia she’d be coming inside with her, when they got in the car, under the pretense that she wanted to say hi to Lincoln. It’s not like that’s a lie; she really does want to greet him, too. He’s just not the main person she’s looking to find.

Her phone dings and Clarke looks down. To no surprise it’s Raven.

**Raven:** And??!!

**Clarke:** We only just got here! Chill your tits!

“Okay, I’m good to go.” Octavia says just then and Clarke quickly slips the phone into the big front pocket of her hoodie sweat shirt.

They walk out through a second door that’s located across from the one they entered through and
step into another hallway. This one has some natural lighting coming in from the far right end of it, where a broad glass door leads outside, and there are pictures of boxers and MMA fighters hanging on the walls.

Clarke follows Octavia into another room across from the changing room and is instantly impressed with the size and the atmosphere it holds.

Right in front of her, against the far wall, stands a big, square boxing ring platform and two men are currently circling each other in it, sizing each other up from behind their gloved fists. A grunt directs her attention to the left where three large boxing bags hang evenly spaced from the ceiling. All of them are occupied by people punching them in varying degrees of speed and force and Clarke’s heart stutters for a second when she sees a girl with long brown hair going hard against the one closest to her. As soon as the girl’s profile shows for a second, however, Clarke realizes it’s not Lexa and chides herself internally for letting something this silly almost freak her out.

“There he is!” O lightly slaps Clarke’s shoulder with the back of her hand to get her attention, as she already starts walking to the right. Following her line of sight, Clarke spots Lincoln at the same time as he seems to, as well. His face lights up, when he recognizes them in the mirror, and he turns around, carefully lowering the two weights he was holding onto the floor at his feet.

“Hi!” he greets them and then advices Octavia against hugging him, because he’s all sweaty, but she only scoffs and flings her arms around his torso anyway.

“I thought getting me sweaty was the whole reason for this.” She points out, vaguely gesturing around them, and Lincoln laughs.

“True, true.” He nods and then gives Octavia a little peck on the mouth.

Clarke watches the interaction with an impatient smile, but the second their lips part, she cuts in before she loses her nerve.

“Hey, so is Lexa around, too? I thought I’d say hi now that I’m already here.”

That sounded quite genuine and, aside from being relieved, Clarke is almost a little proud of herself, too.

“Oh, yeah! Man, if I had known you were coming, I could have told her she could just ask you to bring the stuff today!”

“Huh? What stuff?” Clarke is now utterly confused and Octavia looks lost as well.

“Yeah, apparently she forgot something at your apartment? She said you’d know what it is.” Lincoln shrugs at Clarke, clearly not entirely sure what Lexa had been referring to either.

“Yeah, apparently she forgot something at your apartment? She said you’d know what it is.” Lincoln shrugs at Clarke, clearly not entirely sure what Lexa had been referring to either.

“Huh.” Clarke hums thoughtfully. They didn’t find anything that wasn’t theirs during the clean-up. Could it be that someone else took it with them by mistake? Or – and this was the option Clarke was secretly hoping for – was this just an excuse Lexa came up with to talk to Clarke again? After all, she could have said something on Saturday when they saw each other, or told Lincoln to ask Octavia about it at any given time, but she didn’t.
“Just ask her about it, she didn’t really tell me what it is.” Lincoln goes on and Clarke nods. He points to the door closest to them. “If you go out there and to the left she’s in the room two doors down.”

“Okay, thanks.” Clarke thanks him and then tells Octavia she’ll see her later, giving her a brief hug goodbye, before walking where Lincoln directed her to.

Out in the hallway, after the heavy red door falls shut behind her and leaves her with much quieter surroundings, Clarke stops and takes a deep, now very audible breath.

Alright, here we go!

Her steps echo as she walks down the hallway and it almost feels like a drum roll to her. When she gets to the second door, like Lincoln said, she forces herself not to pause again and instead pushes right through the left of the double doors.

As soon as she’s inside however, she stops dead in her tracks.

The very first thing she sees as she enters the room is Lexa.

And, oh my god, nothing could have prepared Clarke for that sight.

Straight in front of her at the other side of the room, Lexa is suspended in mid-air about three feet above the ground, the muscles in her arms protruding almost ridiculously as she hangs from a horizontal bar that’s hooked into strange looking boards on either side. The broad boards reach all the way from the floor to the ceiling and as Clarke watches, Lexa’s entire body tenses as she pulls herself up by the bar and then quickly lifts it about a foot higher where it falls into place again with a loud clank, hooking into the next rung on the ladder-like construct.

Lexa’s only wearing a training bra and black baggy shorts and Clarke can’t help but stare at her body. She’s toned and sweaty and Clarke almost forgot about her tattoos, but there they are, snaking around Lexa’s arm and the side of her torso and Clarke just wants to trace her fingers along them so badly. She swallows, but barely notices how dry her mouth has become, because just then Lexa prepares to go higher again.

The fighter’s abs tense and stand out and her biceps bulge and Clarke’s ears start ringing from the sound of her own blood rushing through her body as her heart rate is skyrocketing.

Just when the bar leaves the hooks again, Lexa’s eyes suddenly land on Clarke and there’s a split-second when Clarke can see shock flash across Lexa’s face, before the expression changes ever so slightly to a different kind of panic…

… and Lexa falls.

“OH MY GOD!” Clarke shouts out, her entire body, until just then frozen to the spot, now jerking to life as she starts towards Lexa, who lands hard on the floor, only just managing to avoid being hit over the head by the bar she’s still holding on to.

Clarke only stops herself from running to Lexa’s side, because a woman’s voice calls Clarke’s attention to her presence. She recognizes the black, short haired woman from Lexa’s fight in Tacoma and quickly understands that she must have interrupted a training session. Why didn’t Lincoln warn her about that?

“Are you alright?” the woman asks and Clarke wonders how she could possibly be so calm after having watched Lexa fall like that. Heart still galloping, Clarke stays back and watches as Lexa
nods, eyes flitting to Clarke for just a second, before returning to her coach.

“Good. Get up.” The woman commands and Clarke feels a surge of anger flare up inside her chest. Doesn’t this woman care that Lexa might be hurt? That drop looked really painful and from that high up anything could have happened. Clarke still feels the urge to hurry to Lexa’s side and make sure she’s okay, but she resists it. Lexa probably wouldn’t appreciate her embarrassing her in front of her coach like that and anyway, it might just not be appropriate behavior considering they didn’t actually know each other as well as it always feels like to Clarke whenever they’re around each other.

The coach takes a few purposeful strides towards Lexa and is by her side as soon as Lexa is upright again. Clarke watches them exchange a few words, but can’t make out what they’re saying. She only sees Lexa nod at the end and then the other woman suddenly turns around and comes straight towards Clarke.

For a crazy second, Clarke believes Lexa told her who she is and now the coach is on her way to throw Clarke out or scold her for interrupting them and making Lexa fall, but when the woman just walks right past her without doing much more than quickly glance at her, Clarke feels silly for even thinking that.

As soon as the woman is out of earshot, Clarke finally rushes over to Lexa’s side, who’s now standing under the ladder construct, for some reason having linked her hands behind her back as she watches Clarke approach with a somewhat apprehensive expression on her face.

“Hey!” Clarke greets, eyes quickly scanning Lexa’s body for any injuries now that she’s closer to her.

“Are you okay?” she asks, feeling guilty for obviously having disturbed Lexa’s concentration enough to cause her to misplace her grip. She notices Lexa tensing and relaxing her right arm; the one she fell on.

“How’s your arm?”

“Hurts.” Lexa answers simply and Clarke only nods.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to…startle you.” She says, not sure how else to put it. Only now does she notice that her hand is hovering over Lexa’s waist and she slowly pulls it back. “Sorry.” She repeats a little quieter.

Lexa just looks at her and Clarke feels like she’s being studied and read like a book and it makes her squirm a little.

“It’s alright, Clarke.” Lexa finally says and her voice is so soft that Clarke melts a little inside.

With the slightest twitch of her eyebrows, Lexa frowns gently and adds, “What are you doing here?”

Shit.

“Uh…” Clarke stammers out, suddenly having forgotten what she and Raven so carefully composed this morning in Clarke’s room while Octavia was still asleep, after Raven came in and crawled into bed with her.

Crap, crap, crap!

“Did you come with Octavia?” Lexa asks and Clarke jumps at the chance to an excuse.
“Yes!” she blurts out and Lexa raises her eyebrows, seeming slightly startled. “Yes,” Clarke repeats a little quieter and calmer this time. “Yeah, I drove her. I mean, technically she drove, but I’ll take the car back, so…” Clarke forces herself to stop waving her arms around like a gesticulating idiot. “So, that’s why I’m here.” She ends lamely.

Lexa considers her another moment that feels like ten, before a small smile starts forming around her mouth and Clarke feels herself mirroring her at once, without even meaning to.

They just smile at each other for a second longer as if they were sharing an unspoken secret only they knew, and then the movement of a glistening drop of sweat draws Clarke’s attention. It’s running down the side of Lexa’s face and Clarke is very starkly reminded of just how hot Lexa actually looks, standing in front of her with sweat dripping down her body and her chest heaving up and down from the remnants of the effort of the insanely impressive exercise Clarke just got to witness.

Suddenly it feels a lot hotter in the room and when Clarke catches the glimpse of a smirk on Lexa’s lips, she has to grin as well.

“Shut up.” She murmurs, trying very unsuccesssfully to glare at Lexa, but Lexa’s smirk merely broadens into a cocky grin and Clarke can’t help but laugh. The giddiness is back and it’s making her insides feel all fluttery and twitchy and just really, really good. Yes, really, really good.

There’s no trace of the previous, slightly uncomfortable jitters anymore and when Clarke raises an eyebrow and asks Lexa if she always gets off that thing like that, it’s Lexa’s time to blush and all of a sudden Clarke isn’t sure why she was ever nervous at all.

When Clarke gets home almost two hours later, she already has two texts from Lexa and before she even gets out of the car, she hears her phone ding as a third one comes in. She quickly opens them.

Her smile lasts not only all the way up to their apartment, where Raven is already impatiently waiting for her, but for a long time after as well.

**Lexa:** Hi, this is Lexa.

**Lexa:** By the way, if Lincoln asks you about something I allegedly forgot at yours, don’t mind it. It was a misunderstanding.

**Lexa:** Actually, it wasn’t, I just couldn’t come up with a better excuse to ask him for your number…

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading and I hope you enjoyed this chapter ;)
Tell me what you think and feel free to visit my tumblr (clexa-portland-boxing- au.tumblr.com)!

Lots of love,
Lea
“You know, one of these days you’re going to walk into something. And I’m going to laugh. Really hard.”

“Huh?” Lexa looks up from her phone and realizes that she’s almost standing in the kitchen. Slightly confused she turns around and sees Anya watching her from across the room.

“What?” Lexa asks, but then her phone buzzes again with another message from Clarke and her eyes flutter downwards.

**Clarke:** Wait so you’ve never been to a planetarium?? We should totally go some time! I haven’t been in ages either and last time I went was with O and Bellamy and Bell fell asleep and snored. It was super embarrassing haha.

Imagining Clarke rolling her eyes, Lexa has to grin at that little anecdote. At the same time, however, her heart jumps. Clarke wants to go to a planetarium with her? Together? Just the two of them? Would that be like a date? Or maybe-

Suddenly someone smacks the back of her head and Lexa’s attention snaps to Anya who just passed by behind her.

“Hey!” Lexa complains. Even though it wasn’t actually painful, she reflexively lifts a hand and rubs the spot where Anya hit her.

“Stop sexting Blondie, I need your help here.” Anya just retorts, lifting one thing after the other on the kitchen counter and peering behind them.

“I wasn’t- we’re not- we’re just texting. Normal texting.” Lexa feels the need to clarify, despite being pretty sure Anya is just teasing her.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, can you please help me, or not?” Anya gives back impatiently, as she opens the fridge and scans it with her eyes.

“What are you doing?” Lexa asks finally, locking her phone and putting it in her back pocket. She’ll answer Clarke later, when she has more time to think about how to respond.

“I can’t find my keys and I’m already late to meet Mrs. Windsor.”

Lexa snorts. “And you think you left them inside our refrigerator?” she teases, raising an eyebrow and grinning at her foster sister. Anya groans and throws up her hands, loudly bringing them down against her own thighs in frustration.

“Well, I checked everywhere else, for God’s sake! It’s like they’ve vanished! I swear if I didn’t know any better I’d think we’re still living with that kleptomaniac brat Michael Calbender.” She curses with a scowl on her face, her ponytail whipping from one side to the other at her vigorous movements as she pushes the fridge door shut with unnecessary force.
Lexa hums knowingly, remembering the young boy with the greasy blonde hair and the million freckles as quite the annoyance as well. Then she puts down her gym bag and joins Anya in her search for her keys.

By the time they find them on the sink in the bathroom, Lexa’s phone has buzzed two more times against her butt and her fingers are itching to get it out of her pocket and read them.

Did Clarke say something else? Something more about the planetarium maybe? Did she clarify that she really did mean to ask Lexa out on a date with that last text?

Not a second after Anya has closed the door behind herself, throwing Lexa a hurried and muffled ‘bye’ with her purse between her teeth as she struggles with her jacket, Lexa does exactly that. She doesn’t want to admit how disappointed she is, when she sees the texts are ‘just’ from Lincoln.

“Are you done with that?” Clarke asks Octavia and when she nods, Clarke takes the now empty coffee cup and puts it in the dishwasher with the rest, noticing how empty it is. It’s almost the end of her shift and the dishwasher isn’t even half full yet. It’s been an unusually quiet couple of hours at the Pilot house for a Tuesday and Clarke was grateful when Octavia showed up about half an hour ago.

Octavia had offered to pick both Clarke and Raven up from their college campus at the University of Portland when they were done for the day, even though she goes to Portland State, which is the opposite direction from their apartment. Her second and third classes had spontaneously been cancelled, however, which meant she had been left with enough time to even go shopping for clothes and fit in a quick early dinner with Lincoln, before driving up to get them.

When Octavia recounted her visit to the gym, Clarke looked for an opening to turn the topic to Lexa and thus create an opportunity for herself to tell Octavia about their…whatever it was, but when one finally came around she found herself chickening out. The timing just didn’t seem right, somehow.

Rather she let Octavia lead the conversation away from the gym and Lincoln and Lexa altogether and was eager to discuss Octavia’s birthday plans with her instead.

Those are proving to be no less of a reminder of the fighter, however, Clarke finds, when her mind immediately wanders to Lexa again at the mention of beer. Briefly the memory of Lexa, carrying a case of said alcoholic beverage, flashes through Clarke’s mind and she has to fight a smile.

“We should get a keg, like last year.” Octavia muses out loud and Clarke hums in agreement, forcing herself to pay attention again.

“You’ve got to stop me from funneling this time though. Beating Jasper’s best time was fun and all, but it was so not worth it.” Clarke grimaces, the ghost of the aftereffects of her own experience with funneling still tasting bitter in her mouth.

Octavia smirks at Clarke as she opens the notebook in front of her. The page she turns to is titled ‘Birthday Party’.
“Hey, you’re making a real list? Look at you!” Clarke says with a grin of her own. “I’m such a good influence on you guys.”

Octavia shoots her a look, but the lingering smile on her face tells Clarke she doesn’t necessarily disagree.

“Alright, so ‘keg’.” Octavia begins the list in lieu of a retort, writing the word as she says it. Then she looks up at Clarke, her dark hair falling over her shoulder and onto her notes. “What else?”

Clarke snorts, bending down to lower her own empty glass into the dishwasher as well. “So, I’m not that much of a good influence then. More like the loser doing your homework for you.”

“Eh, yeah, but…” Octavia shrugs, “I’ll invite you to the cool party I’m throwing this weekend! My parents aren’t home. It’ll be like totally sick.” She promises in a Valley Girl accent Clarke can’t help but laugh at.

“Wow…” she slowly bobs her head forward and back twice, before shaking it, “It’s like travelling back in time.”

“Hey!” Octavia objects, dropping the act and leaning forward to shove Clarke’s arm.

Clarke laughs again, taking a step back to counter Octavia’s push. She’s only kidding, of course. While maybe having been one of the annoyingly energetic and popular girls, Octavia was never a mean girl in high school; at least not in the last two years, when Clarke knew her. Both Octavia and Raven were mostly just focused on their sports teams, especially soccer, and Clarke doesn’t recall ever having seen either of her friends act like they’re better than any of their classmates.

That’s what Clarke liked about them from the start. They didn’t care about clothes or cars or a kid’s background. They didn’t care that Clarke didn’t know the newest hot gossip or listened to that band everyone liked now. They didn’t even let her reticence scare them off and stop them from trying to get to know her better and become friends. Especially Raven seemed to really want them all to become friends. Which was particularly unexpected seeing as pretty much the first thing she found out about Clarke was that she had slept with her boyfriend.

She can’t believe she’s really here. She can’t believe her mom actually did this; just decided to move them to Portland. Just like that.

She can’t believe she’d so completely ignore Clarke’s reasoning and pleading and begging and just deny her any say in this…oh- oh, no wait, yes, yes, she can. She can absolutely believe it, because that’s what Abby does. Her mother is seemingly only happy when she can ruin Clarke’s life in some way and strip her of any control over it whatsoever.

Angrily Clarke takes another drag of her cigarette, as she looks out at the waterfront. She’s been trying to really capture the essence of the scene in front of her for hours, days really, but however hard she tries, no matter how many times she draws and redraws the lines in the art notebook on her lap, she just can’t translate what she’s feeling onto the paper. She can’t make the broken and weather-worn wooden poles that are sticking out of the water in front of her make her feel the same way in her drawing as they do in real life.

What seem like the remnants of the pillars of a pier that was long ago torn down for some reason, or maybe ripped apart by a hurricane, gripped Clarke from the very first moment she spotted them on one of her endless wanderings through the city her mother made their new home a few weeks ago. They seemed to call out to her, pull her in, and whenever she looks at them, she feels her pain reflected and magnified a thousand fold.
Looking at these poles, these ghosts of their former selves, destroyed by whatever it may have been, ripped apart and left there to slowly drown right where they were hammered into the ground, sentenced to live out their days unable to move, unable to leave… nothing has ever felt more real to Clarke. Nothing feels real anymore, except this.

So she’s been coming here for the past four nights trying to commit the feeling to paper. Trying to capture the damn essence so she could maybe finally get some sleep. But she can’t. Because she’s haunted. As ghostly as these poles seem, just tall dark figures looming in these even darker nights, breaking apart the glistening reflection of the moon’s light in the slowly moving black water, as ghostly as they seem, they’re nothing compared to the ghosts of Wells and her dad and all the memories she shared with them. All the happy days that make up her nightmares now. That make her fight to stay up at night now. That make her wish she could never sleep and make her wish she could just finally fall asleep and never wake up now…that they’re gone.

She can’t believe they’re gone. She can’t believe that just when she thought she could live without Wells in her life, just when she thought she might actually survive this somehow, her dad died. She can’t believe he’s gone, she can’t believe he’s gone and that she’ll never see him again. She can’t believe her mom made her leave the house she grew up in; made her leave the house she grew up in with him. She can’t believe she’s here. She can’t believe she’s here when he’s not. When they’re not.

“Hey, that looks pretty good.”

Startled, Clarke whirls around to see a dark figure tower over her, much like the poles tower over the tiny Clarke on her paper.

The figure seems to have appeared out of nowhere and Clarke’s heart is racing so fast she thinks she might pass out.

Then the figure moves even closer and she realizes it’s a boy.

For a painfully hopeful second, Clarke irrationally thinks it’s Wells, but just as fast as that notion strikes through her, it’s gone again.

And she feels as empty and hollow as before, pain echoing endlessly inside her.

“All that supposed to be you? You know you got your proportions just a tad bit off there, right?” the boy jokes and now that the immediate shock is dissipating, Clarke’s anger reclaims its spot inside her chest.

“Thanks.” She snarls sarcastically, turning her back on him again and wishing he would just leave. Apparently the boy doesn’t quite catch the vibe.

Instead of leaving he sits down beside her on the beach and Clarke barely holds back from yelling at him to leave her the fuck alone. She doesn’t want to give him the satisfaction of having drawn a reaction of any sort from her though and even more importantly, she also doesn’t want to shout here.

Somehow it seems like all of this - the broken pier, the quiet lapping of the waves, the soft sand under her feet - all of this realness might just disappear if she moves too much or talks too loudly and she can’t risk it. She can’t risk losing this, too. She just can’t.

“So, do you come her often?” he asks and out of the corner of her eye Clarke can see he’s wearing an easy sort of smile on his face. She frowns. This is a joke, right? This has got to be the universe’s version of a joke. A really, really cruel joke. All she wants is her best friend and dad back or at least
to be left the hell alone and what does she get? An annoying wannabe joker who apparently has never heard of the concept of respecting someone’s privacy? Great. Thanks for nothing, universe.

Grinding her teeth, Clarke takes a deep breath. Maybe if she ignores him, he’ll just get bored and leave.

Clarke takes another drag of her cigarette and looks back down on her paper, trying to concentrate.

The boy is quiet for a while, but his presence makes it impossible to even get close to the essence she’s been trying to capture and it annoys her more and more with every passing moment.

Just when she is about ready to give up on trying to ignore him away and give the shouting a try after all, the boy speaks again.

“Are you always this talkative?”

“Are you always this annoying?” Clarke snaps back immediately, finally not able to hold her frustration in any longer and glaring at him full force.

It’s the first time she’s really looked at him and she’s surprised at what she sees. Somehow she imagined the intruder to be big and broad-shouldered and wearing a pair of those tacky surfer shorts with the matching fuckboy haircut that screams ‘my dad is rich, so I can do what I want and get away with it’ to complete the look. But the boy in front of her is about her height, with an average stature and long baggy trousers and he’s clearly never heard of any haircut at all. His dark hair is almost as long as Clarke’s and it messily falls onto his shoulders in a soft wave.

At her small outburst he puts his hands up in front of him and leans slightly away from her. The smirk on his lips never wavers, however.

“Whoa, there Frida Kahlo, easy!”

“What?” she asks sharply, confused now and utterly disbelieving. Is this clown trying to insult her eyebrows all of a sudden? What is happening right now?!

“Isn’t she like some famous artist or something?” he shrugs, his hands still at the height of his chest, but slowly lowering.

“Oh my god.” Clarke growls, pressing her eyes closed.

Hair Boy just laughs, “Hey, I’m sorry, I don’t know a lot about art, okay?”

He settles back into the position he was sitting in before he leaned away from Clarke, his legs parallel to Clarke’s and his lower arms resting on his knees.

“That’s pretty good though.” He indicates her notebook and Clarke is tempted to slap it shut and smack him over the head with it. But she doesn’t.

Yet.

Again he’s quiet for a while and this time Clarke forces herself to keep drawing. She just won’t let him bother her anymore.

She almost managed to get back into it, too, when the boy speaks up for a third time and Clarke knows she won’t get any more drawing done until he’s gone. Somewhere in the back of her head she thinks it’s just as well. It’s not turning out how she wants it to anyway. It never does anymore.
“I was just out.” He starts and Clarke audibly sighs, but he ignores her. “Me and the guys were at this party. It was pretty cool, but then the cops showed up and that just kind of killed the mood for me somehow. I’m funny that way.”

Clarke almost has to snort, but she rolls her eyes instead. She will not give this guy anything.

“It’s not like I’m against cops or anything. They can be fun, don’t get me wrong. Just the other day I played hide and seek with a couple of our city’s finest.”

“Yeah right.”

“No, really! They’re quite the playful rascals. Kind of sore losers though.” He shrugs and this time Clarke can’t hold back the short laugh.

“You’re so full of it.” She says with a scoff, fighting to regain her steely mask. She doesn’t want to make this guy think she thinks he’s funny. She doesn’t want to feed his ego. His smirk is already annoying enough. And way too permanent. What, is this guy like on happy pills or something? Jeez.

“Maybe,” Hair Boy directs his smile onto her and Clarke hates that she kind of thinks it makes him look charming in a way, “or maybe I’m just an outlaw and I came here looking to hide from the pigs, before escaping to Mexico.” He whispers in a conspiratorial voice, wagging his eyebrows.

“Mhm,” Clarke nods, playing along now. “Yeah, you may be an outlaw, but you sure ain’t no genius, huh? Cause if you were you’d know that Canada is like a billion times closer than Mexico from here.”

Even in the dark Clarke can see the boy’s eyes gleaming as she buys into his little game of pretend. Leaning in closer to her, he whispers, “Or maybe that’s exactly how the police would think and going the longer route is actually the safer bet.” He winks.

As Clarke scrambles for a good comeback, he leans back onto his elbows, a victorious and cocky expression on his face.

Damn it!

“Yeah, well, maybe I’ll just rat you out and save them the trouble of chasing after you at all.” She finally brings out rather late and she isn’t surprised at how unimpressed he seems by that.

“Ah, well, I guess I had a nice run there for a while, didn’t I. Had to happen at some point.” He sighs and then suddenly he moves and grabs Clarke’s right wrist with both of his hands, a desperate expression on his face. “You’ll wait for me though, won’t you? Promise you’ll write me every day! Promise me, Frida!”

Pulling her arm out of his grip, Clarke can’t help but laugh again.

“Fuck off!”

He laughs as well and lets go, resting back on his elbows again and looking out over the water.

She shakes her head at him and then, too, turns to face the dark waves once more.

Another few moments pass and Clarke doesn’t even notice that she totally forgot to be angry at him, before Hair Boy suddenly moves. He heaves himself upright out of the blue and when he pats down his pants, shaking the sand from them, she almost wants to ask him where he’s going.
She only just stops herself. Why would she care where he’s going? If anything she should be glad he’s about to finally leave her alone again. She should be.

“Well,” he takes a short breath in and then holds it for a second, before letting it out with a small huff, “this was fun. We should do it again sometime.”

“Yeah, let me just jot that right down in my calendar.” She drawls sarcastically. “Meet strange outlaw boy at beach at night. Don’t tell police. Bring picnic basket for a midnight snack and Canadian bread to leave false trail.” She reads off her imaginary check list in a funny, deep voice. “There. That good?” she smiles falsely, but also not falsely at all, standing up as well.

“Perfect!” He beams toothily and Clarke can’t suppress a grin of her own. She rolls her eyes though. Just to make sure he doesn’t mistake it for actual enjoyment of his lame skit.

“I knew you were special, Frida.” He adds in a dramatic voice just then and despite what she thought at first, Clarke thinks the universe might not be joking after all.

And maybe, just maybe, he isn’t either.

--

It’s two weeks later when he invites her to a party.

They’ve curiously run into each other at that same beach three more times since that first night and even though she’s not quite sure what she’s even doing, Clarke agrees to go.

Hair Boy’s name is Finn and Finn isn’t actually an outlaw. He’s in high school like Clarke and despite the fact that there’s almost no second when he isn’t joking or goofing around, he seems kind of sad somehow as well. Just like her.

He doesn’t talk about it and neither does she. They just hang out and banter back and forth and Clarke finds that the ghostly poles aren’t the only things seeming real to her anymore.

They go to that party and Clarke likes how Finn makes it a point to give her the feeling like they didn’t just sneak Clarke out of her mother’s house, but bust her out from prison, when really they both know Clarke’s mom isn’t even home.

It’s more fun this way, though, Finn said. So, when he threw pebbles up to her window, she actually climbed down the side of the house, when she could have just walked out the front door, and it felt so satisfying that Clarke kind of wished her mom would have been home and had caught her just so she could start drama and make Abby’s life miserable for a change.

She wasn’t though, so pretending had to be good enough. And pretend they did. In fact, pretending is all they do and they both know it. But they don’t care. Sometimes pretending is better than facing facts and sometimes, when you’re really good at it, like they are, one could almost forget they’re pretending at all.

The party is loud and rowdy and out of control and Clarke revels in the chaos of it all. When Finn hands her a drink, she drinks, and when he hands her a cigarette, she smokes, and when he leads her up to one of the rooms upstairs, she locks the door behind them and pushes him onto the bed.

There’s laughter and music and loud but muffled voices all around them and Clarke has to laugh, because none of it is real at all; none of it is real except for the ghosts inside her head and the ghosts inside her heart and Finn.
Finn isn’t laughing, but he is smiling. He’s always smiling. And when Clarke smiles back they pretend it means something. And when they lie in each other’s arms a little while later, they pretend they’re asleep.

And when they finally get up and leave, making their way past passed out kids and empty beer cans, past dark houses and flickering street lamps, all the way back to Clarke’s new home that isn’t so new anymore, but feels like it always will be, when they finally say goodbye that night... they pretend they don’t know they’re pretending.

--

Finn gets weird after that.

They speak less and less for the rest of the summer.

And just before school starts back up he doesn’t show up at the beach anymore at all.

--

The first day of her Junior Year of high school sucks, just like she thought it would.

Her mother drives her there and they get into a fight again and Clarke hates that she even feels bad for provoking it on purpose. She slams the door of the car shut and doesn’t look back.

The day doesn’t get better from there.

The people are all too happy and all too preppy and Clarke just wants them all to shut up and leave her alone and not stare at her as she gets paraded in front of every single damn class as the new kid even though it’s the beginning of the year. Apparently this stupid-ass high school doesn’t get new faces very often. Just great.

The only thing that makes the day bearable is that dark haired girl she meets in her biology class.

Clarke thinks her name is Octavia.

--

Octavia and her sit together in every biology class. Octavia is nice and talkative and really a little too happy for Clarke’s mood, but it’s almost infectious at times so it kind of works.

They get along so well that Clarke even tells her about Hair Boy and how he totally drew back after they slept together. Clarke tries to play it off like she doesn’t even care, but Octavia hugs her anyway.

It’s kind of nice to have a friend.

--

The next week Octavia invites Clarke to eat with her and her friends. They’re on the way there, when Octavia points their table out to her and Clarke freezes.

Only two people are sitting there. A girl with brown hair tied up in a tight pony tail and...Hair Boy.

And by the way the girl with the pony tail is sitting on his lap and kissing him, Clarke thinks it’s safe to say that Finn failed to mention one crucial detail when they hung out.
He has a girlfriend.

And that girlfriend is Octavia’s best friend.

Clarke only just sees Finn’s eyes fall on her, before she turns and walks away.

--

Finn finds her later that day. She’s never seen him this rattled and she hates how much she’s shaking when he begs her to not say anything and pretend. Again.

She also hates how much seeing him like that with another girl shocked her and she hates how cruel the universe is, after all, for throwing her together with the one guy that is going to ruin the one real friendship she’s made here.

She doesn’t promise to keep on pretending.

Instead she tells him he has to tell his girlfriend.

Again, she turns and leaves and somewhere in the back of her mind she notices the second time is already easier than the first and wonders if walking away from people might just be best in the long haul. She’s obviously already getting good at it.

--

The next day Octavia is waiting for her in front of the classroom. She asks her what made her leave the day before.

When Clarke asks if her friend and her boyfriend are okay instead of answering, she looks at her like she’s gone crazy, but slowly answers that they are fine.

Clarke makes a decision right then and there and tells Octavia that the guy she told her about was Finn.

When she asks her what she should do, Clarke isn’t surprised when Octavia snarls that she’s already done enough, but it hurts anyway.

Clarke turns around and leaves.

This time is the easiest.

At least she pretends it is.

--

She follows Raven all the way home from school that day. Thankfully it’s walking distance, so Raven doesn’t drive there.

When she knocks on the door and Raven answers, the girl doesn’t seem to recognize her at first.

As soon as Clarke says her name, however, the expression on the girl’s face darkens dangerously. She looks so angry, that Clarke is surprised not to get punched right in the face.

Instead Raven hears her out.

The moments after she’s done talking are the third longest in Clarke’s life.
Finally Raven speaks.

Clarke almost can’t believe her own ears when she hears the words.

She expected Raven to say a lot of things. What she didn’t expect her to say was ‘Thank you’.

--

Clarke doesn’t go to school the next day.

When your mom is a doctor you have ways of staying home ‘sick’.

Like easy access to a doctor’s note and the ability to fake the needed signature.

--

The day after that Octavia is waiting for her again, when she gets to class. This time Raven is with her.

Clarke’s heart hurts from beating so fast.

When Raven asks if she wants to sit with them at lunch, Clarke knows she can’t pretend anymore.

Octavia and Raven can, though.

They pretend they don’t notice as Clarke wipes away the few tears that spill over and they pretend they don’t see Finn watching them from a few tables to the left.

As they sit down, Clarke makes a silent promise.

Whatever may come, she’ll never pretend with Octavia and Raven.

And if they’ll let her stay, she’ll never turn around and leave again.

Something tells her that despite what she’s been pretending, nothing will be easier than that.

To this day Clarke still can’t believe how lucky she got to have found the two most understanding, least judging and perfectly stubborn girls in the world just when she needed them the most.

“What’s that supposed to mean? I never made you do my homework, you offered!” Octavia defends herself and Clarke is already nodding along when she adds, “Don’t rewrite history, Griffin!”

“Don’t you mean herstory?” Clarke teases Octavia’s tendency to get herself riled up and rant about feminism and sexism at every opportunity.

“Oh, shut up.” Octavia grimaces at Clarke, and Clarke has to laugh again.

While they brainstorm things they’ll need for the party and discuss who to invite, Clarke starts clearing and cleaning the tables around the Pilot House.

Perfectly content.
Clarke: So what did you do today?

Clarke: I mean I know you’re at the gym but what exercises?

Lexa: I did my usual routine with Lincoln in the morning and then some individual boxing and strength exercises in the afternoon.

Clarke: Did you do that thing with the bar again?

Lexa: The Salmon Ladder? Yes, I did.

Clarke: Lol salmon ladder? That’s a weird name. So did you fall off again?

Lexa: Well, since I wasn’t distracted this time, I didn’t, actually.

Clarke: Mhm suuure. How DO you get off that thing anyway? When you’re not being distracted that is ;)

Lexa: You kind of just have to do it backwards again. Either all the way down or until you’re low enough to drop. Oftentimes the floor beneath it is padded or the coach will push a mattress under you to soften the fall should you slip.

Lexa: But I think I prefer the way I did it when you were there.

Clarke: Oh, yeah? How come?

Lexa: Well, for one, it’s faster.

Clarke: hahaha. You idiot.

Lexa: And also it makes pretty girls look all worried about you and want to check if you’re okay.

Clarke: Omg smooth lmao. So you fall for a lot of girls then?

Lexa: No! Actually, the phrasing was misleading, I apologize. I meant to reference our meeting the other day. The plural was just to generalize the statement. It was supposed to be witty. Anya always tells me to stop being so serious.

Lexa: I do not fall for a lot of girls. Actually, I’ve never fallen off the Salmon Ladder before the other day. I usually have better concentration than that.

Clarke snorts. Lexa is such a dork; a very cute, very awkward dork. And Clarke absolutely adores this side of Lexa and feels rather special to get to know it for some reason.

“What is it? Who’s got you all smiley like that?” Octavia’s voice cuts through Clarke’s thoughts and she looks up from her phone.

The Pilot House is empty now except for one girl that’s furiously typing along on her laptop, probably trying to avoid missing a deadline on a paper, and two guys lounging in one of the more comfortable booths, having what seems to be a rather unenthusiastic discussion about the notes in their hands.
Past them, outside the window, it’s already dark.

“No one.” Clarke says reflexively, but then chides herself internally. Why is she keeping the fact that she’s texting with Lexa a secret? That’s silly. There’s absolutely no reason to.

Well, except the fact that she still hasn’t told Octavia about her and Lexa’s little make-out session at the club and her revelation that she might not be as straight as originally assumed.

Clarke sighs. “Just Lexa.” She adds, because she’s kind of starting to feel a bit guilty now; towards Octavia and towards Lexa.

Even though she doesn’t even know what she and Lexa are doing and even though she doubts Lexa would ever make her feel guilty about something like this, Clarke still feels like keeping her relationship, or whatever this is, with Lexa a secret is wrong somehow. It’s as if she were ashamed of her and Lexa deserves better than that.

Plus, just because they’re texting doesn’t mean that Clarke has to tell Octavia about everything right away. It’s not like O will deduct they made out just from that.

Clarke hopes.

And she seems to be in luck.

“Ah.” Octavia just comments, before a huge yawn forces her mouth wide open and her eyes shut.

It’s the third one in just a few minutes and Clarke presses her lips together in a sympathetic expression, when Octavia groans and buries her face in her arms on the counter top.

She mumbles something that sounds like ‘Oh my god, I’m so tired’ into the sleeves of her sweater and Clarke thinks she made that rather obvious.

“Why are you so tired?” she asks and Octavia lazily turns her head on her arms, but only far enough to free her mouth, before she answers.

“Raven kept me up all night again. She was just going on and on and on about all this random crap and I couldn’t get her to shut up or just let me leave and go to bed. I swear it’s like she doesn’t need any sleep lately!” she frowns and shakes her head in bewilderment.

“I know, right?” Clarke agrees. Raven’s recent nocturnal energy wasn’t news to her either. “I had to tell her like three times to turn it down this week. Who plays loud Jazz music at 3 am?”

“Annoying ass roommates, that’s who.” Octavia grumbles, before yet another yawn makes her eyes water. Clarke doesn’t understand a word of what Octavia says during it.

“Huh?”

“I said, it’s easy to stay up all night, when you skip first class.” Octavia repeats what she apparently tried to say. “But unlike her, I actually attended my 8 am lecture this morning.” She adds.

“She skipped?” Clarke asks, surprised. Sure, during high school it happened every now and then that Raven didn’t see the point of one class or another, but Clarke doesn’t think she’s ever known her to skip one of her uni courses. Raven loves most of her lectures and seminars and even the ones she doesn’t enjoy as much, she usually goes to, unless she’s actually sick.

“That’s not like her.” She muses aloud, but Octavia seems more hung up on the annoying part of it
than the curious one. Grumpy expression still in place she merely shrugs her shoulders lazily and then lifts her chin from her wrist to look at her watch.

“Ugh, where is she anyway? We said 8 give or take five minutes, not an hour! It’s almost 9!” Octavia frowns and Clarke checks her watch as well out of reflex.

“I’m gonna text her and see where she is,” Clarke says and closes the conversation with Lexa. But not before having to smile again at the last message the fighter sent. Dork!

When Raven doesn’t even seem to have received the message about five minutes later and their call doesn’t ring through either, they start to get worried.

Why would Raven not tell them if she was running late? And why would she not have her phone with her?

“Should we just go home and see if she’s there? Maybe she forgot I was picking you guys up?” Octavia suggests, no hint of the previous annoyance in her voice anymore.

Clarke can’t imagine Raven would forget something like that. They just agreed on it yesterday; it’s not like that could have slipped her mind overnight, right? But she can’t think of a better plan either, so she agrees.

Quickly she gathers her things and tells Roan, who’s hanging out in the kitchen, taking care of some business on his super old laptop, that she’s going now. She’s merely met with an ‘I thought you’d already left to be honest’ though and a minute later Octavia and Clarke are stepping out into the cold, dark November evening.

The drive back home is silent, except for the tapping of Octavia’s nervous hands on the steering wheel.

When Clarke and Octavia arrive at the apartment they can hear loud music coming from inside, before they even open the door. They throw each other a confused look as Octavia turns the key.

The sight they’re met with is slightly disturbing. But at least they’ve found Raven.

She’s sitting in the middle of the living room on the floor, surrounded by what seems to be just about every electrical and mechanical device, piece and junk their home had to offer. Her back is to the apartment door and she seems totally immersed in whatever project she’s cooked up.

It’s not too shocking that Raven is tinkering with something, but this seems a little extreme. Usually she at least calls when she’s late because she forgot the time while fixing something or other. This time, however, Raven seems yet to have to notice that the two people she completely stood up are even in the room.

“Raven!” Octavia says in that moment, practically having to yell over the loud music. As the door bangs shut behind them, Raven whips around. Her facial expression is a mix between complete surprise and great glee and Clarke thinks she looks a little crazy. Like a kid at Christmas hopped up on sugar, who’s just been told they’ll go to Disneyland instead of school for the next three weeks.
“Hi!” Raven beams and out of the corner of her eye Clarke can see Octavia wearing an expression that portrays just what she’s thinking as well.

_Seriously?

Octavia stomps over to the kitchen island where Raven put the iPod station and shuts off the music.

“What the hell, Raven?”

“What are you doing?” Clarke chimes in as well, dropping her backpack. Her eyes wander over their apartment again, this time taking everything in more closely.

There are screws and wires and tools and what looks like multiple hard drives. Barely a free space remains on the floor and Octavia and Clarke have to direct their feet carefully as they walk over to Raven so as not to step on something. In short, the place is a mess.

“I can’t tell you yet.” Raven smirks and her eyes sparkle with excitement.

Octavia frowns. “What _is_ all this?” she gestures around them, but Raven has already returned her attention to the object of her main focus.

Clarke and Octavia share a look. Not having known Raven as long as Octavia has, Clarke was hoping to see an eye roll or a shoulder shrug from the other girl, indicating that this is so typical, but instead she sees the same concern on Octavia’s face that she feels herself. And a little anger, too.

When Octavia raises her eyebrows, Clarke just shakes her head. She doesn’t know what to say. Normally she’d call Raven out for making them wait, but she seems so engrossed in her project, Clarke isn’t even sure she’d head her.

Octavia seems to think otherwise. With an exasperated huff, she crosses her arms over her chest. “Where the hell have you been?” she asks, frowning at the back of Raven’s head. As Clarke suspected the other girl doesn’t respond right away. Or at all, in fact. Not until she gets yelled at again.

“Raven!” Octavia snaps, walking around their roommate to be able to look her in the face. “Where were you? We waited for over an hour!”

“What?” Raven mumbles and then she suddenly whips around, searching the floor for something. A second later she seems to spot it.

“Ah!” she exclaims and scrambles a little to her right on her knees, before picking up a coil of pliable wire.

“Oh my fucking god, would you stop?!”

When Octavia rips the coil out of Raven’s hand it seems to be the first time Raven really notices how pissed off she is. With a confused, but sheepish look she looks up at her.

“What?”

“We were supposed to meet at the Pilot House?” Octavia spells it out for her and finally something seems to click.

“Oh my god! Oh, shit!” Raven’s hands fly to her forehead. “Oh, man, I totally forgot! Is it that late already?” she looks at her wrist, but there’s no watch. She never wears one.
Clarke frowns. She’s seriously scattered today. Maybe she does need some sleep after all.

“Oh my god…” Octavia shakes her head, scoffing as she turns away. Clarke thinks she might just turn away and give Raven the silent treatment for a bit, but instead she whirls back almost immediately. Never a good sign.

“You forgot? We waited for you! You can’t at least text? I was worried, you asshole!”

“I’m sorry, I was just- I’m really close to a break-through here, O! It’ll be amazing, you’ll see! Oh my god, you have no idea, guys!”

Out of the blue Raven starts laughing, clapping her hands on her thighs as she sits back on her feet. “It’ll blow your minds. It’ll blow everyone’s minds! You’ll see, it’ll change things! It’ll- it’ll just- you’ll see! Man, if you knew! And it’s so simple! I mean, it’s not, because I’ve been working at this for days and it’s super complicated stuff, but no, considering the impact this will have, it’s unprecedented! If I could just- if I could just calibrate this last little…” as she suddenly trails off, she scoots back over to the weird-looking device. It’s about as big as a motorcycle helmet and seems to be a random assortment of all the things surrounding them. Clarke really isn’t sure what it’s supposed to be, she can’t even venture a good guess.

“You’re unbelievable.” Octavia shakes her head again, before just dropping the coil between her and Raven. This time she really does walk away and as she passes Clarke she growls that she’s going to take a shower now.

Clarke stands there a minute longer, watching Raven tie up different cords that stick out of her creation, adding pliable wire here and there. When she finally moves, Raven rounds on her.

“Clarke! Clarke, come here. Come here.” She waves her over, voice dropping to an excited whisper.

What now?

Careful not to crush any of Raven’s… mess under her shoes, she walks over to her.

“What?” she asks and then lets out al little shriek when Raven pulls her down by her wrist. Almost tipping forward, Clarke balances on her feet, crouched down to Raven’s level.

“Have you told her yet? You haven’t, right? You said I’d be there! That was the deal. I mean I so want to see her face! But have you? It’s okay if you did. Because, I mean, at least she knows! Wait, does she?”

Once again Raven’s words fly out in rapid tempo and Clarke has to focus to keep up.

“I- I haven’t told her.” She answers, trying to ignore the slight billow of smoke that’s now emanating from the device. Raven’s eyes are fixated on her, however.

“Why not? Do you think she’ll be mad? Oh, but it’ll probably be worse if you wait longer. On the other hand she might just love it. You could work out together or something. Do couples yoga or training or –“

“Yeah.” Clarke interrupts Raven. It’s way too late for one of Raven’s high energy rants right now and Clarke suddenly feels like she’s exhausted, even though most of her day was pretty laid back. Worrying about your roommate only to come home to her being in full-on nerd-mode apparently does that to a person.

“I’ll tell her. Soon.” She promises and Raven squeals.
“Yay!” she beams at Clarke for another second, before her eyes focus on something to Clarke’s left. “Hey, hand me that!” she points to a blue screwdriver and Clarke doesn’t even ask.

She just turns around and pulls the tool out from under one of Raven’s text books, but by the time she’s facing Raven again, Raven already seems to have moved on. Silently wondering if she should just leave Raven be or force her to get some sleep, she sets the screw driver down in between them.

She’s just about to get up, when Raven’s eyes snap to her again.

“So, is she coming?”

“What?”

“Lexa! On Saturday?”

“Saturday? W-“

“To O’s party!”

“Oh!” Clarke slides back down onto the floor. “I- I haven’t asked her.” She tells Raven, who’s eyes widen.

“What? You haven’t?”

“I- should I?” Clarke furrows her eyebrows. She’s been thinking about inviting Lexa, but something is holding her back.

Maybe it’s because the moment never seemed right to ask. They were always talking about one thing or another and the topic of the party quickly slipped away each time Clarke thought about it.

Maybe it’s because despite all their text conversations and all the times they make Clarke smile and all the little… moments they’ve been having, Clarke still isn’t sure what they mean or if they’re even real or if she’s just making them up.

Or maybe it’s because how much she actually wants Lexa there is really kind of scary.

“Wh- of course! Clarke, of course you have to invite her! Why wouldn’t you! She was here for Halloween and that was before you guys even were a thing, right?” Raven argues and Clarke sees her point.

“Yeah, yeah, I guess you’re right.” She murmurs. She pulls her phone out from the back pocket of her jeans and looks down at it. Yeah, she should invite Lexa. She should just do it.

It’s exhilarating and a little nerve-wrecking how much Clarke suddenly notices her own heartbeat thumping on inside her chest at the thought that instead of texting she could even call Lexa.

While Clarke contemplates that exciting possibility, Raven is already back to her ‘mind-blowing’ project.

They both seem to be very wrapped up in their respective puzzles – Raven tinkering and mumbling things Clarke doesn’t understand under her breath and Clarke trying to decide if she should call instead of text and what to say in either scenario – because when Octavia suddenly appears in front of them, seemingly showered and ready for bed, they both jump as if snapped out of a trance.

“I’m going to sleep.” She tells Clarke, not giving Raven as much as a glance on her way to get a bottle of water out of the fridge.
Raven and Clarke tell her goodnight at the same time and then Clarke finally gets up from the floor. Her legs are sore and her back cracks and when she looks at her dad’s watch she’s surprised to see it’s only a little past ten.

That’s not too late for a call, is it?

Lexa just about sprints to the side of the ring, when her phone suddenly rings and Indra shoots her a murderous stare.

“Sorry! Sorry!” She apologizes as she shuts it off, but not before having another small heart attack when she sees that it’s Clarke calling.

Clarke has never called her before! Why would she call her? They’ve only been texting so far. Did something happen?

For a brief moment she considers asking Indra for a short break or otherwise coming up with an excuse to slip out and call Clarke back, but then she decides it’s probably not an emergency. Because why would Clarke call her if it were? She surely has enough friends, who she actually knows longer than a couple of weeks, who she’s more likely to turn to than Lexa.

Still a little rattled nonetheless Lexa returns to her position opposite Lincoln, who’s wordlessly asking who it was. She doesn’t answer, but understands his curiosity. It’s unusual for her to carry her phone around with her this much. And she next to never gets calls or even has the sound on.

Not wanting to draw any more attention to the incident, however, Lexa ignores him and lifts her gloved hands in front of her face instead, determined to get back into the zone.

A few hours earlier, Indra told Lexa that she signed her up for another fight in January. It was rather exciting to Lexa, when Indra told her they specifically requested her, even though this fight wasn’t even related to her win in Tacoma.

She’s resolute to better herself as much as she can for this fight. She wants to shatter her limits and learn how to control her own movements and breathing even better. She can do it, she knows she can. And the prospect of getting to follow the precise and goal-oriented training plan Indra, Lincoln and she will create for her makes her excited.

While her focus is trained on Lincoln and the feeling of the vibrations of the rings floor underneath her bare feet, somewhere in the back of Lexa’s mind an imaginary phone call is taking place.

And when her adrenaline spikes and she attacks Lincoln with fierce control and unwavering strength, she knows it’s Clarke’s voice that spurs her on.

She isn’t self conscious about it. She lets it fuel her fighting spirit.

The rush is elating and Lincoln never has a chance.
After their sparring match is over, Indra waves Lexa to the side.

Breathing heavily and wiping her bandaged wrist over her forehead, Lexa walks over to the taller woman. Lexa has stopped trying to read Indra’s expressions for the most part, but this time she thinks she can see pride in the way her coach’s eyes rest on her until she reaches her. It makes Lexa want to smile.

“That was good.” Indra starts and Lexa feels reaffirmed in her assumption. Trying to breathe as quietly as possible so as to not miss any of Indra’s insight and pointers, Lexa listens carefully.

“The level of concentration I saw just now is exactly what I expect from you in any and every fight. Your leg work is swift as always, but I would limit my back bounces after your attacks. You give him too much time and room to retaliate. Lincoln is strong and he doesn’t need much of either to maximize his punch impact.”

Lexa nods, mentally taking note of everything Indra is saying and replaying the moments in the ring she’s referring to before her inner eye.

“I’d rather see you step to the side than backwards. Make him have to follow your choice of direction. Control your opponent and your surroundings. If you’ve seen him favor his right fist, step to the left and force him to either use his weaker side or adjust his stance. It’ll give you an advantage.”

“Understood.” Lexa nods again, closing her eyes and taking a tiny step to the left, while ducking a hypothetical left hook. “Yeah, got it.”

“Good. Also, I want to see you work on your back and core these coming weeks. You’re flexible, but there is room for improvement on your upper body dodges; especially on the Y axis.” Indra indicates the length of Lexa’s upper body from the top of her head to her lower abs with her hand as if to either bless her or split her in half.

“I will.” Lexa promises. “I think Lincoln has some ideas for exercises pertaining that range of movement.”

“Good. Incorporate them in your routines and update me on the effectiveness in three days.”

“Yes, coach.” Lexa nods once. Indra mirrors her and then they link their lower arms as they do. And with that their briefing is closed.

As Indra exits the room, after nodding to Lincoln as well, Lexa quickly retrieves her phone from next to her bottle.

Apart from the missed call from before, she also has two new text messages from Clarke.

When she opens them, after quickly ripping the fingerless gloves from her sweaty hands, she’s very aware of how hyped up her body still is. Her hands are shaking slightly and both her breathing and heart rate are elevated and it just adds to the excitement conversing with Clarke always brings about anyway.

Clarke: So I’m assuming you’re working out or something and that’s why you cut my call off. Oops! Sorry! (Hope your scary coach doesn’t know it’s me who’s interrupting again! Don’t tell her!!!) I
just wanted to ask if you want to come to Octavia’s birthday party maybe? It’s on Saturday and it’s at our apartment again. It’ll be fun! We’ll drink, we’ll dance and who knows maybe I’ll even make out with you again if you play your cards right ;) Really it’ll be a blast. And maybe this time I’ll even get you to beer pong with me? Let me know :) 

Clarke: Oh, also Octavia totally wants you to come, too. Just so you know and don’t feel awkward about it. It’s not like you’d be crashing or something. You’re officially invited by both of us. So that’s double the unsaid obligation right there and you really can’t say no if you think about it.

Lexa’s abs twitch when she lets out a silent laugh. She just can’t get over how direct Clarke can be. Lexa knows if she tried to invite Clarke to something she’d never be able to be as smooth and straightforward, but Clarke makes it look easy. Like it’s no big deal that she just basically invited Lexa over and said they might kiss. How does she do that? Lexa’s ears feel warm just from reading that and she has to shake her head. Clarke is something else for sure.

“Everything alright?” Lincoln asks and Lexa almost startles. He’s coming up behind her and Lexa quickly locks her screen. “Is that the caller from before?”

“Um, yeah.” Lexa nods once, shoving her phone in her shorts pocket.

“Ah, okay.” Lincoln nods. He doesn’t say anything more, but Lexa can tell he’s dying to know who it is. She decides there’s really no harm in telling him Clarke invited her to Octavia’s party. After all, they’d both be going and Lexa might need a ride, too.

“It was Clarke actually.” She says and she’s surprised at how normal it feels to say that. As if Clarke called her at the gym all the time and Lexa always told Lincoln about it. As if Clarke and she together were a normal thing. As if it had always been this way.

It feels really good and Lexa feels warm inside in a very soft sort of way. She smiles. “She invited me to Octavia’s party.”

At that Lincoln suddenly slaps his hand against his forehead and Lexa frowns in confusion.

“Oh, shit! Oh man! Octavia told me to invite you like a couple of days ago already! Damn, I totally forgot, I’m so sorry!” he apologizes, his face screwed up in a regretful expression.

Lexa almost has to laugh again. She just suddenly feels so light.

“It’s okay, Lincoln!” she reassures her friend. And she really means it, too. If she’s totally honest, she’s actually happy he forgot to tell her. She loved getting invited by Clarke.

Suddenly something else occurs to her and her smile falters.

“Are you sure?” Lincoln asks, but she has more pressing matters to address.

“Yeah, I’m sure. Hey, so what are you getting Octavia?”

She just realized she’ll have to get Octavia a present for her birthday, too, and she really doesn’t know Octavia well enough to know what she would like.

“Oh!” Within the blink of an eye Lincoln seems to forget all about feeling bad and excitement takes over his face instead. “Okay, so I was thinking I’d plan a whole day for us! At first I’d obviously pick her up for breakfast and I know that there’s this bagel place she really loves, so I was thinking that might be a good spot. After that we’d walk over to the gym where she always goes climbing and just spend a couple of hours there. She’s so amazing, you know, she showed me this video of her
climbing and it’s so impressive! It looks so easy when she does it and she’s so fast, too! Anyway, after that we’d grab a bite to eat at the coffee shop where we had our first date and after that I know a great place where they let you rent horses and go horseback riding through the woods before it gets dark. She’s been saying how much she misses being on a horse, so I thought that might be cool, you know? So, yeah, what do you think?”

Lexa isn’t one to coo, but she almost feels the urge to now. That is one of the sweetest things she’s ever heard. Lincoln really has that whole boyfriend thing down. While she’s totally fine with not actually being one to coo, Lexa kind of wishes she were one to find it easier to ask others for advice on her romantic endeavors all of a sudden.

“I think she’ll absolutely love it.” Lexa answers honestly and Lincoln beams at her, nodding slightly.

“Good. Good.”

Watching Lincoln smile as he stuffs his water bottle into his duffle bag, Lexa totally forgets that she meant to ask him what she should get for Octavia.

When she remembers a little later, on her way home, she thinks maybe someone else could help her with that as well.

Clarke is already in bed, when she finally gets a reply from Lexa.

Ever since she sent those texts, inviting Lexa to come on Saturday, she’s been a bit impatient. It’s not that she’s nervous about what she implied – she’s pretty sure if she had said it in person, she would have gotten Lexa to blush – no, quite the opposite. She’s excited to read Lexa’s reply. She imagines it to be awkward and cute or painfully correct and completely avoiding the subject or maybe even slightly flirting and funny. Either way she’s been dying to read what Lexa would say, so when her phone finally dings and the alert announcing a new text from Lexa flashes on the screen, Clarke almost drops her phone.

Quickly she quits out of the game she’s been playing to pass the time and opens the message.

**Lexa: Are you still awake?**

Slightly disappointed not to get to read an actual reaction to her text – yet – Clarke hurries to reply.

**Clarke: Yes :)**

Biting her lip, Clarke watches the little speech bubble announcing that Lexa is typing. Finally it stops. A moment later another text appears and Clarke’s heart skips a beat.

**Lexa: Do you mind if I call you?**

Her lips spread into a wide grin and she sits up a little straighter against the headboard. Instead of answering, she calls Lexa herself.

It takes Lexa two rings to pick up and Clarke imagines her eyes widening. It’s highly entertaining
and her grin turns into a delighted giggle.

Finally Lexa answers.

“Clarke! Hello!”

“Hey, Lexa.” Clarke stifles another giggle. “What’s up?”

“I’m calling you, because I was wondering, if you could help me with something.” Lexa says and Clarke hears cars passing by in the background.

“Where are you?” Clarke asks, because it’s almost eleven at night and even though she probably doesn’t have to worry about Lexa the MMA fighting army chick the thought of her walking home alone at night still makes her frown.

“I’m just on my way home from the gym.” Lexa answers and Clarke hums, unsure if she should mention being worried. She decides it wouldn’t really be appropriate, so she dives back into the actual reason for the call. Or more precisely, finding out what exactly that is.

“So, what do you need my help with?”

“Since you know Octavia better than me, I thought you could maybe give me some advice on what to get her for her birthday.”

Clarke, who’s been smiling at the new experience of hearing the subtle differences between Lexa’s actual voice and her voice through the phone, raises her eyebrows.

“Oh! Naw, that’s so sweet.” She grins, because, well, it is, and also because she’s still feeling giddy talking to Lexa and her face kind of does what it wants. And apparently it wants to express happiness through smiling and grinning. Lots and lots of happiness. “So, you’re coming?”

“Yes, I am. Thank you very much for the invitation, Clarke.” Lexa’s voice is almost swallowed by another passing car and Clarke presses the phone closer to her ear.

“Cool, I’m glad.” Clarke smiles and then stills her other hand, when she notices it’s been tracing the patterns of her duvet covers. “Couldn’t say no to the double obligation, hm?”

When Lexa speaks next Clarke thinks she hears a smile in her voice. It makes her wish she could see it.

“I really couldn’t; even if I wanted to.”

They talk for a little while longer and by the end Clarke somehow ended up on her round chair next to the bed and tapping her feet against the wall. Slightly surprised, she sits up straighter and swivels around so she isn’t facing the corner anymore.

“Okay, well, I’m glad you’re home.” Clarke tells Lexa, choosing to ignore her apparently restless feet by shoving them underneath herself.

“You really didn’t have to stay on until I was, Clarke.” Lexa says and the softness in her voice when she says Clarke’s name makes Clarke’s heart flutter inside her chest. Now that there’s no more traffic or air distorting their call, Lexa’s voice is a lot clearer, too. Clarke can almost pretend she’s actually here.

“I know, but I wanted to.” Clarke shrugs, even though Lexa can’t even see her. “Plus, it was
impossible to shut you up.” She adds jokingly.

While Lexa certainly talked more than Clarke expected her to, Clarke was still responsible for most of the conversation. She doesn’t mind, but she also isn’t surprised to have found that she really enjoys listening to Lexa describe her favorite training exercises and tell her more about living with Anya.

At the Halloween party Lexa already told her a little bit about the other woman, but there’s still so much Clarke doesn’t know and she can’t wait to find out more about Lexa’s relationship with her. She’s also especially hoping to find out more about what Lexa’s childhood was like. After tonight, she’s pretty confident that Lexa really might confide in her someday, too.

“Well, thank you for your advice. I really appreciate it.”

“No problem. She’ll love whatever you give her though. Especially when she’s already drunk. Hard fact.”

“Good to know.”

Again a smile is palpable through Lexa’s tone and Clarke really wishes she could see it this time. Swallowing a sigh she leans back against the pillows in her red armchair.

For a few moments neither of them speaks. The silence isn’t uncomfortable, however. On the contrary, Clarke thinks she could just sit here with Lexa on the phone forever and she wouldn’t get bored or feel awkward at all, even if they didn’t say a single word the whole time.

It’s Lexa who talks first and Clarke almost startles at how close she sounds. She must have moved her mouth closer to the device or something, because her next words, even though more softly spoken than Clarke has ever heard, are crystal clear and coursing through Clarke with every syllable.

“I really enjoyed our talk tonight.”
Clarke smiles.

“Me, too.”

After a short pause, Lexa adds, “Actually, I really enjoy all of our talks.”
Clarke’s smile broadens and she feels goose bumps erupt on the back of her neck.

“Me, too.” She admits again in a lower voice.

The third pause of the evening feels heavy with something unsaid and Clarke’s chest constricts in a fluttery way.

“Goodnight, Clarke.” Lexa almost whispers and Clarke has to close her eyes.

“Goodnight, Lexa.” Her own voice sounds rough, but she barely notices. All she knows is that she can’t wait to see Lexa again on Saturday. And hopefully a lot of times after that.

They hang up and Clarke remains in the chair for a few moments longer, before she gets up with a sigh. She snuggles back under the covers and is just shutting off her lamp when a yawn forces her lips apart. It’s big and makes her eyes water and suddenly she notices how tired she actually is.

Wiggling a little against her mattress to get comfortable, Clarke feels incredibly happy and content.
As she drifts off to sleep, Clarke just barely notices the loud music coming from Raven’s room.

Clarke opens the drawer Octavia pointed at. No napkins.

“Nope, not in here either. Maybe you’re out?”

“Ugh, really?” Octavia puts down the plastic cups and comes over to Clarke’s side. “But mom said she put them in there.” She reaches into the drawer herself and lifts the placemats like Clarke did just a second ago. Unsurprisingly the napkins they’ve been looking for haven’t magically appeared out of nowhere in that time.

“Damn!” Octavia curses and looks around her childhood kitchen.

While Raven got assigned the task to go to the store and load up on party food and drinks and what else they might need, Octavia and Clarke took the bus to Octavia’s mom’s house to pick up some cups and napkins and to meet Bellamy who offered to bring them a keg in his car and help them carry it up to their apartment.

“I can just text Raven to pick some napkins up after all.” Clarke suggests, pulling out her phone.

Frowning and still looking through various drawers and cabinet shelves, Octavia agrees half-heartedly. “Yeah, I guess.”

Clarke sits down on the bench at the kitchen table and starts typing. Raven should already be at the store. Clarke just hopes she has her phone with her.

“I just thought I saw some the other day when we were cleaning out the shed.” Octavia mumbles, apparently still not quite convinced she won’t figure out where her mom might have put them. After a few more minutes of opening and closing seemingly random cupboard doors, Octavia finally stuffs the paper plates and cups she found inside the bag she brought and sits down next to Clarke.

“Whatever.” She sighs and Clarke looks up from her phone.

Raven immediately texted back confirming that she got it. Unlike her, Lexa hasn’t texted Clarke back in almost three hours and even though Clarke knows she’s probably just busy at the gym like usual, she can’t stop checking her phone.

Octavia pulls what’s left of the sandwich they bought on the way over out of her backpack and starts eating it with relish, leaning back in the wooden chair. Clarke already finished hers and while Octavia is chewing with round cheeks, her mind suddenly goes into overdrive. She glances down to the phone in her hands again, where her conversation with Lexa is still open.

Clarke’s been wanting to fill Octavia in about everything that’s happened with Lexa, but somehow it never seems to be the right time. Or is that just an excuse? Clarke thinks that maybe the reason why she’s been so hesitant to tell Octavia despite Raven already being in the know is that Octavia somehow seems closer to the whole situation. She’s always hanging out at the gym these days and with Lincoln being friends with Lexa, too, it just feels like telling Octavia will make everything too…real.
Real in a sense that there really is something more than a crush going on and real in a sense that Clarke and Lexa’s lives will be intertwined whether anything develops or not. It would make everything too real and real things can break. Real things can end and real things can hurt you and Clarke doesn’t want that for Lexa and her. Clarke doesn’t want it to end.

Clarke sighs internally.

But she does want things to be real. So much.

She wants these moments Lexa and she have been sharing to be real and she wants the times she catches Lexa off guard and Lexa stumbles over her own words to be real. She wants their laughs to be real and she wants the heavy silences that speak so loudly when they should be hanging up the phone but don’t to be real. She wants it all to be real and most of all she wants Lexa.

And she wants everyone to know how amazing she is.

Octavia snorts and then a phone is being held in front of Clarke’s face.

“Look, Lincoln’s sweated himself a bra.” She grins.

The picture on Octavia’s phone shows Lincoln and indeed he’s extremely sweaty. His face is glistening and he’s letting his tongue loll out of his mouth, a sympathy-inducing look in his eyes.

His light teal colored training shirt is sweat stained and as she looks closer, Clarke gets what Octavia means. The dark patterns the sweat has made on Lincoln’s shirt almost perfectly imitate the form of a bra. Admittedly a very broad and deformed one, but a bra nonetheless.

Clarke snorts as well.

“Suits him.” She comments and Octavia nods amusedly.

“That’s what I said, too. Told him he’s surely the prettiest girl in the gym.”

Clarke silently disagrees, but doesn’t say out loud who she thinks actually is the prettiest girl. Anywhere.

Instead she takes the opportunity to direct the conversation where she has decided she needs it to go.

“He’s training with Lexa again, right?”

“Yeah” Octavia nods, still grinning at her phone as she types something. “They’ll be done in time for the party though. He promised.”

“Good.” Clarke nods, somewhat distractedly. Suddenly she’s unsure if today is the best day to tell Octavia. She doesn’t want her to make any stupid innuendos to Lexa when she’s drunk later at the party. Then again, with Raven already knowing there’s a very slim chance Clarke will be able to stop that from happening anyway. Actually, Raven is a bigger threat in that sense than Octavia now that she thinks about it. O has just a tiny bit more self-control usually. Although with alcohol in the mix there’s really no guarantee.

Great. Now she’s psyching herself out. Maybe she shouldn’t have invited Lexa at all!

No…

No, she really wants her there.
She’ll just have to hope and pray that both Octavia and Raven can keep it together and not do anything that will make Lexa uncomfortable; hope and pray and threaten them.

“Do you see her a lot?” Clarke starts, trying to figure out how to naturally lead the conversation to the topic of Lexa and her.

“Hm?”

“Lexa.”

“Oh, yeah every now and then. She’s usually off with a client or training when I’m there.” Octavia tells Clarke and puts down her phone.

Clarke nods again. She almost wishes O were still concentrated on her phone and not her. Barely aware of it, she traces the circumference of her father’s watch with her right index finger.

“I saw her train when I came with you to the gym,” Clarke goes on.

“She’s amazing, right? The other day she was sparring with Lincoln and I seriously couldn’t keep my eyes off her even with him there.” Octavia laughs. “She owned his ass.” She grins and then quickly adds, “Don’t tell him I told you that, though.”

Clarke smiles and promises she won’t, while silently wishing she could have been there to see the sparring, too. Maybe after Octavia is caught up she’ll get her to tell her when Lincoln and Lexa will do it next and come watch.

When the conversation threatens to die, Clarke internally pulls herself together. Now or never, she thinks.

“Hey, so, I’ve actually been meaning to tell you something.” She blurts out and Octavia raises her eyebrows.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Clarke lightly bites the inside of her cheek. “Yeah, okay, so Lexa and I, we’ve been kind of getting really close, right?”

“Right?” Octavia echoes slowly, face displaying careful suspicion.

“Right, yeah.”

Come on, like a band aid.

“Like, we’ve been texting and talking on the phone and I really like her.”

“Okay?” Octavia says in the same slow voice and tone as before.

Clarke wishes she could just project her thoughts into Octavia’s head. She doesn’t know why she’s so nervous about this. She likes a girl, so what? Octavia doesn’t care. Nobody cares. Raven literally had sex with a girl in their apartment on multiple occasions and not just in her bedroom either. Both Clarke and Octavia have had the misfortune of walking in on something they weren’t expecting at least once each, not even to mention the things they’ve overheard.

So, really, this should be beyond easy. Why is this so goddamn nerve-wrecking? It makes no damn sense.
“Clarke?”

“We made out at the club.” She finally just spills and for a moment it’s dead silent in the warm kitchen. Until...

“Wait, for real? Wait, you…Oh my g- OH MY GOD!” Octavia almost jumps out of her chair, she leans forward so fast.

“Oh my god, what?” another voice suddenly comes from the doorway. It’s Bellamy’s.

Stuffing something into his jacket pocket, he comes strolling into the room and before anyone can say anything else, his dog Raina races past him. Tongue lolling happily and tail wagging excitedly she runs back and forth between the two girls. Her panting is super loud and Clarke doesn’t know how she didn’t hear her coming.

“Oh my god, what?” Bellamy echoes in his deep voice and Octavia turns to Clarke with an expression that makes it look like she’s ready to burst. Clarke knows she’s silently asking her for permission to tell her brother.

Ah, what the hell, might as well tell everyone.

Clarke sighs and nods as she pats Raina’s neck.

“Clarke’s banging a girl!” Octavia shouts out excitedly.

“Octavia!”

“What?!”

Bellamy looks about as shocked and confused as if someone just told him he’s not wearing any pants.

“I’m not banging her, oh my god!” Clarke protests, while Raina licks her hand and wiggles her chin onto Clarke’s thigh.

“We’re just…you know…I don’t know. She’s just…ugh, she’s just so…you know…Lexa!” Clarke scrambles, unable to explain exactly how Lexa makes her feel.

“Oh my gooood.” O squeals. “You’re so cute.”

“Wh- Lexa who? Wait, Lexa the fighter chick? The one from Halloween?” Bellamy asks, voice still sounding beyond perplexed.

“Yeah,” Clarke confirms, before Octavia cuts in.

“Oh god, okay so you made out at the club? At my trial night? When? How was it? Wait, are you guys like a couple now? Why didn-”

“Oh!” Clarke throws into Octavia’s ramble.

“Sorry! Sorry! You go!” Octavia presses her lips together, putting both of her hands out towards Clarke, while Bellamy slowly seems to unfreeze in the doorway.

He leans against the light brown wooden sideboard across the kitchen from Clarke and crosses his arms over his chest, watching Clarke intently.
Clarke takes a breath. Somehow she’s really glad Raina is there to give her something to do with her hands. It’s taking some of the tension out of the situation for her. Especially with Bellamy’s intense stare and Octavia’s crazy energy both directed at her.

“Okay, well, it’s really not that big of a deal. We just, you know, made out a little when we were dancing.” Clarke tries to make it sound more casual than it felt. Those two need to chill, she’s already nervous enough and patting a dog only helps so much.

“Okay, and?” Octavia prods, face still showing utter delight at the prospect of further details. She just knows Clarke way too well as to buy that that was really all there was to it.

Seeing that O is almost bouncing in her chair with excitement, Clarke rolls her eyes up, but can’t help but laugh, somewhat nervously. “And…then we kissed again when I went in for my phone.” She admits and Octavia squeals again.

“Oh my god.”

“Wait, so she’s gay?” Bellamy frowns and Octavia whirls around to him.

“Well, obviously! I doubt she confused Clarke Double D here with a dude.” She scoffs, rolling her eyes at her brother, whose frown only deepens.

“What?”

“Yes. Yes, she’s gay.” Clarke sighs, addressing Bellamy, before she halts. “At least, I think she is. We haven’t really talked about it, but there’s been…”

“Yes?” Octavia encourages her to go on.

“Vibes…I guess. I don’t know.” Clarke shrugs, not really knowing how to explain why she’s pretty sure Lexa is gay. With all the questions that have been plaguing her, that was never one of them for some reason.

“Vibes? What the hell does that even mean?” Bellamy echoes, but both Clarke and Octavia ignore him.

“So, you haven’t talked about the kiss at all?” Octavia inquires instead and Clarke shake her head, looking down at Raina as she scratches behind the dog’s ears. Raina’s chin is still resting on Clarke’s thigh, but the black Belgian Shepherd has closed her eyes now and seems thoroughly relaxed.

“Do you want to? Do you like her?” Octavia asks on and Clarke doesn’t know what to say. Does she like Lexa? Yes, that’s easy to answer. But does she know how much and does she want to talk about the kiss with her? Those are a little tougher.

“I don’t know. I mean, I do like her. A lot.” She emphasizes and Octavia pouts adoringly at her, but wisely doesn’t interrupt Clarke with another squeal. “But I don’t know if she’s someone that talks about stuff like that. She’s pretty...awkward with things like that.” Clarke says and a broad grin settles on her lips.

“Awkward?” Octavia echoes with a disbelieving tone of voice. “Lexa? Get out!” she laughs, before tilting her head and furrowing her eyebrows. “Although, on the other hand...yeah, I can actually totally see that.”

Clarke laughs as well. “Yeah, it’s really cute, too. The other day I teased her about something and she got all flustered.”
Octavia shakes her head. “Wild.”

Clarke nods, feeling the same happy and free feeling spread through her that she felt after first telling Raven. “Yeah”

“Wait, hold on, so are you like a lesbian now?” Bellamy holds up a hand, still frowning in confusion and Clarke wonders if those cautionary tales could actually be true and Bellamy wore his perplexed grimace for so long that now his face will just stay like that forever.

“No, I still like men.” Clarke explains, having come to that conclusion the other night when she looked up various actors she used to fancy when she was younger and getting stuck on some of their pictures. Yes, she’s definitely still into men. But also… “But I also like…Lexa.”

“Mhm, mhm.” Bellamy nods and Octavia shoots him a disapproving look to which he reacts by mouthing ‘what!’ at her.

Shaking her head, Octavia turns back around to Clarke.

“It doesn’t matter, Clarke. You can like whoever you want and you don’t have to have it all figured out yet.” She extends her hands over the table, palms facing up. Clarke smiles gratefully and puts her own hands in them. When Octavia squeezes, Clarke feels her eyes tearing up a bit from one second to the next and Bellamy coos.

“Naw, of course you don’t have to have it all figured out yet.” He says and pushes off the sideboard. Smiling gently, he quickly walks over to Clarke and lays a hand over her shoulder, shaking it lightly. “You just make sure she’s good enough for you. Or he, or whoever.” He squeeze Clarke’s shoulder as well and then bends down and kisses the top of her head.

Breathing out a laugh she leans her head against his stomach and smiles. “I will.”

“I mean it!” he looks down at her. “It may be controversial, but I’ll kick anyone’s ass, who hurts you. Woman or no!” he swears in a solemn tone and both Clarke and Octavia burst out laughing at once.

“Hey!” he holds his hands out to his sides, while Raina opens her eyes at the commotion and her tail starts wagging like crazy again. “What’s so funny?”

Neither of the girls can answer him right away, however, as their laughter prevents them from speaking.

“What’s so funny?” Bellamy repeats with an offended expression, looking between Octavia and Clarke. “I totally would!”

“Oh, honey, you couldn’t beat Lexa in a thumb war.” Clarke finally gets out between laughs and Octavia immediately chimes in as well.

“She would knock you out, before you even got close to her! Flat on your ass! Bam!” Octavia mimics punching someone and then collapses back against her chair, letting laughter take over again.

“Hey! I could hold my own against her!” Bellamy defends and just the image of him trying to get anywhere near Lexa, makes Clarke howl with renewed laughter as well.

“I could! What the hell!” he shouts over them, but when they only keep on laughing and Octavia even wipes a tear from her eye he just throws his arms up in the air and grumbles something under his breath, turning away from them and walking back towards the sideboard.
“Ohmygod, ohmygod,” Octavia finally wheezes, slowly getting herself under control again. She’s holding her stomach and Raina, excited by all the noise and laughter, bores her snout underneath her hands, sniffing wildly. Her tail hits the foot of the bench with loud bangs and Clarke reaches out her hand to pat the dog’s flank as she calms down as well.

“That was so good.” Octavia sighs and Bellamy scoffs and grinds his jaw. Not wanting another Blake fall-out, Clarke decides it’s time to change the subject.

“Alright, I think we should get going. We still need to set up and Raven probably needs some help getting all the groceries and party supplies inside.” She points out, already standing up from the bench, careful not to tread on any paws.

“Yeah, you’re right.” Octavia agrees, but even then another round of giggles escapes her.

“Bell, do you have the keg?” Clarke asks, determined to pour oil on troubled waters, before they can even get really bad in the first place.

“Yeah,” the boy mumbles, still looking a little dark. But then Raina pads over to him, eyeing him expectantly, waiting to see what they’ll be doing next, and his face softens. “Yeah, of course I got it.”

“Awesome!” Octavia claps her hands as she scoots back her chair, the excitement for the party seemingly having pushed everything else to the back of her mind for now.

The three of them follow Raina out to Bellamy’s car. While Octavia claims her seat in the back between Raina and the strapped in keg, excitedly patting both, Clarke sits up front with Bellamy. On the ride back to theirs he shoots her a few looks, but doesn’t ask anything more. Instead he puts on the radio and thus ensues the endless debate between the two siblings over what stations are and aren’t cool. While the two Blakes bicker, Bellamy slapping Octavia’s hand away more than once as she tries to reach the knob and turn it, and yelling at her to sit back and put a seatbelt on for the love of God, Clarke leans her head back against the head rest and looks out of the window.

Her hands are in her lap and between them is her phone.

Lexa still hasn’t replied.

When Octavia, Clarke and Bellamy get back to the apartment, Raven is already fully immersed in party preparations.

And by the looks of it she bought the entire store.

There are about twenty different paper garlands and fairy light chains, countless balloons and party hats and Clarke even spots at least three different kinds of plastic cups next to more napkins than she can count.

“Wh- Raven what the hell is all this stuff?” Clarke asks, feeling as shocked as Octavia looks. Octavia is staring at the mess around them with wide eyes as she holds the door open for Bellamy. Alone the older Blake doesn’t seem to notice anything amiss and merely groans as he heaves the keg through the door after a fashion.

“Oh, hi!” Raven looks over her shoulder from across the room, where she’s obviously trying to get one of the fairy light chains to stop rolling off the top of the shelf. As she turns around it slips over the edge and falls to the floor, but Raven doesn’t seem to care anymore.
Instead, the brown-haired girl picks up a couple of thick candles and places them on the window sill closest to her.

“Hey, where do you want this?” Bellamy’s strained question temporarily distracts Clarke from the scene in front of her.

“Oh, shit.”

“God, here, come on.”

Octavia and Clarke both lead him to the kitchen island and help him push the heavy keg onto it. Arching his back with a painful grimace on his face, Bellamy groans again and then scoots onto one of the bar stools. Only then does he seem to fully take in the state of their apartment for the first time.

“Holy shit, what happened here?” he exclaims, looking around at all the bags of chips and snacks that are covering most of the floor. “How many people are coming to his party? I thought it wasn’t going to be that big!”

“It’s not! I only invited like fifteen people!” Octavia tells him and her expression is utterly overwhelmed. “Raven, why did you get all this stuff? It’s way too much!”

“No! No, no, no! We need all this!” Raven insists, indicating all that she bought with both of her arms extended. “Yeah, ‘cause see, these are to make everything sparkle and shine,” Raven explains, taking a tangled bundle of fairy lights into her hand, while picking up what looks like a brand new portable stereo box into the other, “and we need music, of course! And snacks and drinks and candles and they had these awesome books on cocktails and bar tending and party games at the store, so I got some of those, too!”

“Oh my god!”

“Why? We can google that stuff!”

“What the hell, Raven!”

The three of them protest in shock as Raven lists things Clarke hadn’t even noticed yet.

“We can’t afford all this stuff!” Octavia argues, seemingly getting really worked up judging by the way her voice has taken up a certain shrillness and urgency. “Raven, I just got out of the red, what are you doing?”

“No, it’s fine! I got it! It’s my birthday present to you or something!” Raven beams, speed walking over to them and picking up a bottle of something from the floor near the couch on the way. When she gets closer Clarke can see it’s an oversized champagne bottle, one like they have in a display or in a special place high up on a shelf in bars because people only ever order it on special occasions.

“Look!” Raven practically squeaks, holding the bottle up to Octavia, and wearing an almost scarily excited expression. “Look, how big it is!”

For once Octavia seems lost for words and Clarke can’t think of an appropriate response either. All either of them can manage is to continue staring at Raven as if she had gone insane. What is going on?

“Am I missing something? Did you win the lottery or something? Is someone getting married?” Bellamy tries to make sense of Raven’s shopping spree, but Raven only laughs at him as if he made a very funny joke. Then she sees the keg.
“Oh my god! That is so awesome! Wow! What beer is in it? How do you do that plop thing again? Can I try it? Oh my god, can I funnel with my feet up? Can you hold me up? Not now, of course, later I mean. Oh my god, we could do a contest!! I bet I could beat you, Bell!!”

While Raven inspects the keg from all sides, Clarke and Octavia exchange a look. Something’s up for sure. Even for Raven this is excessive. Clarke throws Octavia a questioning look. Did something happen? Should they talk to her about it? Octavia’s worried looks makes way for an annoyed one however. She shakes her head and rolls her eyes up, muttering “I can’t deal with this today.” under her breath.

Then she thanks Bellamy, interrupting him from explaining to Raven how to tap the keg, and tells Clarke that she’ll go for a quick shower. After all it’s almost 4 pm already and the first guests arrive at 8.

Lexa’s never minded not having a mirror in her room, but when Anya makes the third comment of the evening about how whipped she is for Clarke as she examines yet another outfit in their mirror in the bathroom, she really wishes she did.

It’s not her fault everything she owns makes her look bleak and boring. Clarke always looks so amazing without even trying. How does she do that?

“You know, if you stare just a little harder you might actually turn that button up into a little black dress. Like a gay Jesus, but with outfits instead of wine. Oh! Or a gay fairy godmother!” Anya starts laughing as she passes Lexa on her way to the kitchen.

Lexa merely shows her the finger, but Anya is already around the corner and doesn’t even see it. What a shame.

After another look at her own reflection, Lexa comes to the inevitable conclusion that everything she owns is garbage. Groaning, she walks out of the bathroom and turns off the lights behind her.

“Naw, come on. What’s wrong? Not ready for the ball, Pumpkin-Princess?” Anya grins, leaning against the dinner table.

“I have nothing to wear.” Lexa deadpans, not wanting to give Anya the satisfaction or encouragement by reacting to her teasing.

“What’s wrong with what you’re wearing right now?” Anya drops the antics and gestures at Lexa.

Lexa looks down at herself. The upper button of her button up is undone and the hem of it is crumbled as she pulled it out of her black dress pants as she frustratingly decided against this outfit.

“It’s boring!” she exclaims, throwing her hands up helplessly. “I always look the same! Why don’t I have anything more…” she doesn’t know what word should conclude that sentence. She has never really been unhappy with her wardrobe. In the army that was a non-issue anyway, but even before or since it’s never been something Lexa worried over.

“…sexy?” Anya suggests and Lexa shrugs.
Yeah, maybe sexy is what she’s looking for. Then again just the thought of wearing a low cut skintight dress makes her grimace. It’s just not her. She thinks. She really doesn’t even know anymore.

“Ugh, I don’t know.” She almost whines now and when she throws her head back, Anya seems to finally take her frustration seriously.

“Okay, you need to calm down, Lex.” She says as she walks over to Lexa. You look fine! Seriously! I’m sure Blondie digs the stud look anyway. Plus, I highly doubt she’ll even notice what you’re wearing once you start making out.”

“Anya!” Lexa whines, ears burning. “I’m being serious!”

“So am I!” Anya defends, but before Lexa can protest again, she just rolls her eyes up and grabs Lexa by the wrist. “Alright, alright, come on, I’ll help you.”

Instead of back to Lexa’s room, Anya directs Lexa into her own and tells her to sit down on the bed while she picks her an outfit that will ‘make Blondie so thirsty not even one of your stupid electrolyte-drinks will be able to save her’.

In the end Lexa managed to successfully veto three variations of a very leather-heavy outfit and convince Anya that she’s not the type for miniskirts or a cleavage that almost reaches the navel either. Lexa almost wanted to give up and go with the good old button up after all, when Anya pulled something black out of her closet.

At first sight Lexa thought it was a floor-length dress, but Anya squashed her protest before Lexa could even verbalize it by showing her the separating pants legs.

Looking at herself in the mirror now Lexa can’t quite get herself to feel comfortable in the long sleeved, skinny legged jumpsuit, but Anya seems sold.

“Stop fidgeting! You look fucking hot.” She comments, slapping Lexa’s hands away from her hips with both of hers. Lexa stops pulling on the material and, at Anya’s gestured insistence, turns around trying to eye her own reflection over her shoulder.

The back is the real eye-catcher of the one-piece. Held together by a hand-sized circle at the center of her upper back, a cascade of black skeins hang in crescents on either side, loosely bridging over the span of her back to her sides, forming what almost looks like wings.

“Are you sure?” Lexa furrows her brows. It looks very revealing to her. Not that she’s self-conscious about her body, but it is only a house party after all and she wouldn’t want to draw eyes due to being utterly overdressed.

“Lexa.” Anya turns Lexa back around and puts her hands on Lexa’s upper arms, making her look her in the eyes. “You look banging, honestly. Clarke will absolutely love it, stop over-thinking.”

Nodding slightly, more to convince herself than anything else, Lexa glances at her reflection again. Right. Just stop over-thinking.

That can’t be that hard, right?

Unfortunately, as she can’t keep from fidgeting with the outfit for the whole ride to Clarke’s, Lexa finds that it actually is really hard. Really, really hard.

And as well-meant as they might be, Anya’s parting words of ‘You got this, just stop being such a
chickenshit!’ don’t really help either.

Before Lexa rings the door bell she texts Clarke that she’s here.

She’s not sure why. She just knows that Clarke triple texted her earlier, when she didn’t reply for a while because she was training, and just a few moments ago she sent another text that reads:

Clarke: Where are you?? You’re missing all the fun! Raven just tied with Jasper at head over heels funneling and now they’re starting a whole contest series! I need you to save me! Or join my team, either way is fine by me. Just get here already!

Having Clarke so unabashedly show her she wants her there and is getting impatient about it makes Lexa want to grin and fist pump, but most of all it makes her want to finally see Clarke again and experience her excitement firsthand. It makes her want to save Clarke or join her team or whatever she wants and it makes her want to be the reason Clarke laughs and smiles and does that cute blinking thing she does on the rare occasions that Lexa catches her off guard for a change.

It just makes her want to be with Clarke.

And Clarke to be the one who answers the door, just so she can have those few extra seconds to look at her and be alone with her, before the hubbub of the party sucks them both in.

To Lexa’s surprise Clarke answers right away.

Clarke: Finally!! Be right down! Don’t move!

Not having expected Clarke to come all the way down to pick her up, instead of merely buzzing her in and opening the apartment door for her upstairs, Lexa suddenly feels all fidgety again. Fidgety, but excited.

Lexa can’t be sure if Clarke just offered to get her from all the way downstairs to get some fresh air, but a little voice inside her still ecstatically insists that it is because she wants those extra seconds, too.

Before Lexa can spend anymore thoughts on the subject, however, the door in front of her is flung inwards and there is Clarke, breathing heavily and beaming brightly and looking indescribably stunning.

Her red-tinted cheeks are covered in some sort of faint body glitter and her hair looks incredibly soft as it cascades down to her shoulders in small, gentle curls. Like on Halloween, Clarke is wearing a white dress again, but this one may be even more breathtaking than the last. At least to Lexa it sure feels like the air has become thicker all of a sudden, as her eyes wander down the other woman’s body. The knee-length dress hugs Clarke’s middle perfectly, while billowing out from the waist down, giving it a certain Marilyn Monroe kind of look. The 50s Pin-Up icon’s got nothing on Clarke’s upper body, however, and Lexa quickly lifts her gaze so as to avoid staring at the so enticing cleavage. To her defense, it’s hard not to look when the neck line is cut that low and a fine strand of white even frames Clarke’s beautiful breasts as if they were a work of art.

When Lexa’s eyes meet Clarke’s instead she sees her awe mirrored back at her and just like that her
heart is racing again.

“Hi!” Clarke’s voice cracks at the greeting, but her bright smile is back and warming Lexa’s cold face with its radiance in no time. Since Anya dropped her off right at the door, she didn’t bring a jacket.

“H-hey.” Lexa replies and when Clarke pulls her into a hug, tingles start dancing around in her belly.

“You look really hot.” Clarke compliments easily as she leans back again and Lexa feels her cheeks heat up considerably.

“You!” is all Lexa manages to gulp in response, before she can pull herself together and form an actual sentence. “I mean, you look really hot, too. Beautiful, I mean. Really beautiful.”

Clarke laughs and takes her hand to pull her inside. Even though she’s still a little awestruck, Lexa keenly notices how much she loves the feeling of Clarke’s hand in hers as she stumbles in after her.

“So, why didn’t you just ring the door bell? Did you forget what apartment it was?” Clarke asks her, slowing them down as the heavy front door falls shut with an echo, until they’re barely at walking speed as they make their way down the dimly lit hallway.

“No.” Lexa replies simply and loves how Clarke seems to blush as well for a second.

“Oh.” Clarke’s grin is huge.

When they get to the elevator Clarke presses the button and then turns around and leans against the wall.

“Good.” She says a little quieter and as they look into each other’s eyes Lexa feels an almost palpable pull. Just like a magnet she gravitates towards Clarke until they’re really, really close.

Lexa can feel Clarke’s breath on her lips. It makes her own pick up.

When the elevator dings loudly, both of them twitch and then laugh a little.

They step inside and while Clarke pushes another button, Lexa can’t help but smile.

They’re still holding hands.

“It’s totally not a thing!” Lincoln insists with half a laugh.

“Oh my god, are you kidding me? Yes, it is!” the Asian boy with the silky black version of the original Justin Bieber haircut counters heatedly. He introduced himself as Monty earlier, or rather Clarke introduced him to her, before he could get the hand outstretched, apologizing for her lack of manners.

“No way, there is no such thing as the official code of honor for game hackers! That’s a load of BS!” Lincoln shakes his head, letting his opinion seep into his tone of voice as he puts sarcastic air quotes around the topic of their heated discussion.
Clarke and Lexa have been listening to Monty and Lincoln fight over this for at least fight minutes and Lexa can’t even really remember how they got onto the topic. Something about how there’s a new MMA fighter game out and how Monty said he could beat Lincoln’s brand new high score within minutes by hacking it, but he won’t, because of the honor code.

Okay, so maybe Lexa does remember, but she doesn’t really know why it requires such a degree of intensity to a point where she’s not sure if it’s still a discussion or really turning into a fight. Either way, she doesn’t really mind, however. Because every now and then Clarke chimes in, easily matching the guys’ enthusiasm even though she seems to have limited knowledge on the subject at best, and Lexa thinks she’s the most interesting, most beautiful thing in existence. Clarke’s facial expressions are so entertaining and adorable and just fascinating for some reason Lexa can’t quite put her finger on. It’s like she’s never seen a human interaction before, because every twitch of the eyebrow, every smirk and slight roll of the eye Clarke displays as she listens to the boys’ argument captivates Lexa so entirely that she hasn’t touched her drink in ages and for all she cares they could be talking in Chinese, all she wants to do is watch Clarke talk and react forever.

Clarke’s face isn’t the only thing Lexa is enamored with, however; Clarke’s laugh, Lexa knows for certain now, is definitely one of her absolute favorite sounds in the world. Most of the time it’s somewhere in between a laugh and a giggle and without fail it’ll always be big enough to show all of her perfect teeth. Lexa loves that laugh, but every now and then something is really funny and that’s when Lexa has to grin along so much that it hurts every time. Because then Clarke’s laugh is loud and bursting out of her like nothing could possibly hold it back. You can’t just hear it, or see the joy on her face; no, when Clarke laughs like that her entire body laughs with her. She’ll jerk either forward or backward with her upper body and sometimes even her head. In those cases Clarke’s eyes are usually forced closed by how big her grin is and those are the laughs that Lexa regrets not being able to see the most when they’re on the phone with each other. Picturing them in her head will just never do them justice and Lexa’s heart always aches in a beautiful, staggering way, wishing she could be there in person. She never thought she could miss something as simple as seeing someone’s laugh as much as she’s discovered she does with Clarke’s.

But now she’s here and she gets to see it firsthand and she thinks she’s never experienced anything so sexy and comforting at the same time.

“What’s up, ma Wieners and Vajayjays?” a happy voice says just then and Lexa watches as a tall, lanky boy throws his arms over Monty and Lincoln’s shoulders. Lexa recognizes the young looking guy as Monty’s roommate Jasper. The one, who, after a lot of arguing not dissimilar to the Code of Honor discussion, finally conceded the title of Beer Princess to Raven about an hour after Lexa showed up. Lexa was grateful and regretful at the same that she didn’t get a chance to see the topsy-turvy funneling, but after Beer Pong, Flunky Ball and Two Truths and A Lie just between the two of them, Lexa thinks she got the gist of how the first task of the contest must have looked like; a lot of cheering from the crowd and even more terrible and obviously not thought-through trash talk from the very hyper contestants.

“Jasper! Alright, you’re a gamer, you tell us who’s right.” Monty turns to Jasper as the boy pulls back his arms.

“No, no, no! He’s your roommate, that’s totally not an unbiased third opinion!” Lincoln protests immediately, in response to which Clarke smacks his arm with the back of her hand.

“Hey! What am I, a plant?” she flares up and Lexa can’t help but smile.

“What, a woman’s opinion doesn’t count? Am I not good enough to have an opinion?” Clarke stacks on and when both Lincoln and Monty’s faces fall slightly and a look of apologetic sheepishness
settles on them, Lexa’s smile widens to a grin. She knows Clarke well enough by now that she sees the little signs that tell her that, while she definitely means what she says, she added a little extra spice to it just to freak the boys out and to teach them a lesson. And Lexa absolutely loves it.

Most of all, however, she loves how Clarke lets her in on it by quickly winking at her, when the guys share a caught and slightly helpless look.

Even though Lexa has been quiet for most of the evening, Clarke has made her feel part of everything so far. By introducing her to every new person that talked to them and by simply standing close to her. But more than that, she’s also made her feel special. Like they shared something that no one else understood or even saw and being around Clarke feels like they’ve known each other for forever and a lifetime, if it weren’t for the excited tingles of new things stirring on the horizon.

The connection between them feels so real and so strong and ever since they stepped out of the elevator and their hands detached from one another, Lexa has noticed her entire self somehow still gravitating towards Clarke without fail. And Clarke has been gravitating, too.

During every conversation, every silence and every moment of loud cheering or excited shouting that has happened at this party so far, Lexa and Clarke have always found themselves sharing looks and brushing elbows and when Clarke handed Lexa her second drink, Lexa’s fingers lingered over Clarke’s and Clarke didn’t pull them away. She would have gotten lost in Clarke’s eyes right then and there, if it hadn’t been for Raven starting a loud chant of ‘CAKE, CAKE, CAKE, CAKE, CAKE’ at that very moment, snapping them both out of it.

Lexa realizes she hasn’t been paying attention to the conversation at hand at all anymore, but she’s quick to find back into it. Just in time as well, because not a second later Jasper suddenly turns his eyes on her.

“Hey, are you always this quiet?” he asks rather directly, although his demeanor and tone don’t convey any offense.

When all heads turn to look at her as well, Lexa feels Clarke’s eyes on her most of all.

Calmly regarding the shaggy haired boy for a second longer, Lexa lifts her chin just the slightest bit.

“No.” she finally replies evenly and for a second everybody stays quiet.

Then the best thing happens.

Clarke bursts out into laughter; loud, body jerking, head tilting, eye squinting laughter and Lexa is flying so high, she feels like she could touch the stars. It only takes the three boys another second before they, too, start laughing at Lexa’s answer, but Lexa wouldn’t have cared if they had scowled.

She made Clarke laugh and that’s all that matters to her.

Their lighthearted circle gets suddenly interrupted, when they hear somewhat aggrivated voices quickly approaching on the right. Before they need to turn their heads the scene is already upon them in the form of Murphy and Bellamy, who seem to be in the middle of some sort of argument.

Murphy seems intoxicated again and by the looks of it that fact is precisely what the fight is about.

“I’m just trying to look out for you, man!” Bellamy growls, slightly pulling at Murphy’s arm as his friend seemingly tries to get rid of him and duck away into the crowd. “Hey!”

“Back off, Bellamy! I said I’m fine!” Murphy almost yells and now other heads are turning as well.
“Okay, that’s enough, let’s go.” Bellamy’s voice is almost too low to make out, but he harshly grabs Murphy and turns him back around, before shoving him towards the girls’ bedrooms with rough pushes to his back. Struggling, but obviously a little too slow and disoriented to be very effective, Murphy doesn’t succeed in shrugging Bellamy off and pushing him away.

As they pass into the warmly lit hallway – Clarke told Lexa earlier that Raven was the one who insisted on hanging up fairy lights along every ceiling-to-wall corner in their entire apartment – Lexa suddenly feels Clarke’s hand on her lower arm.

“Hey, I’ll be right back, okay?” she says in a low voice, her eyebrows furrow as her face displays her worry.

Lexa wants to ask if she should come with her, but knows that it’s not her place, so she just nods.

“Yes, of course. Go take care of your people.”

“Thanks.” Clarke nods a little hurried and adds “I’ll just be a minute, I promise.” with a light squeeze of Lexa’s arm, before she lets it go and speed-walks after the two boys and into her own room.

Lexa watches her go with an uneasy feeling in her stomach. It’s not that she thinks Clarke can’t handle herself, it’s just that Clarke’s sudden absence leaves her feeling restless and a little out of place all of a sudden.

Almost like that time Lester Higgins from down the block stole Mister Pingu and she couldn’t sleep until Anya snuck over there in the middle of the night, broke into the kid’s bedroom and got it back for her.

When Clarke slips into her room, quickly closing the door behind herself, Bellamy is right in the process of shoving Murphy onto her mattress so hard that he almost bounces all the way back upright again.

“Stay here!” the older Blake sibling growls, his voice no longer hushed now that there’s no risk of them disturbing the other party guests anymore.

“Get your fucking hands off me!” Murphy almost shrieks. He seems dangerously angry and Clarke quickly steps in.

Quite literally.

Pressing her body between the two glaring friends, she pushes them apart with a hand on either of their chests.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, stop it guys! What the hell!” she glares at them herself. What is going on? The two of them hardly ever fight; in fact she doesn’t think she’s ever seen them at each other’s throats like this. From stories she knows that back in high school they must have been a lot like this; hating on each other and acting like brainless assholes, before they dropped their idiotic antagonizing and actually got to know each other on their senior trip. They’ve been best friends ever since though and Clarke can count the times she’s seen them honestly mad at each other on one hand.

“You’re telling me to stop it?!” Murphy bursts out, grimacing at Clarke with a scandalized expression, “Tell him!”

“I’m telling the both of you!” Clarke shouts over both of the boys’ voices as Bellamy start chiming in his defense as well.
“You both need to calm the hell down! That’s Octavia’s birthday party out there and you guys are acting like you’re in tenth grade again!” she reprimands them sharply, but they both seem to be too riled up to see reason or care about anything other than whatever it is that’s happening between them right now.

“Yeah, that’s exactly it though, isn’t it? Huh, Murphy? Wanna tell Princess here what fucking bullshit you’re pulling right now, or shall I?” Bellamy spews and before Clarke can stop him, Murphy is already pushing her aside to get to him.

Apparently too angry for words, he flings himself at the taller boy and Bellamy can only just turn to his side to receive Murphy’s sloppy punch.

“HEY! HEY! HEY! STOP IT! STOP IT!” Clarke shouts, heart beating a mile a minute, as she tries to hold Murphy back with all her might. Her shoulder and cheek are pressing against his chest and with an added shove from Bellamy, Murphy stumbles back and almost falls onto the bed as his knees hit the mattress. He catches himself at the last moment however and instead takes a few steps back until he’s standing about two feet from Clarke amidst a pile of clothes Clarke carelessly cast aside and onto the floor after veto after veto from Raven earlier that night.

Chests heaving, both boys stare daggers at each other, but thankfully finally shut up.

After catching her own breath another second longer, Clarke gets over some of the shock of what just happened and suddenly she’s all anger. How dare they behave like this at Octavia’s party? What kind of Neanderthal shit is this?

“What the hell is wrong with you?”

Unlike before, this time her voice is quiet. A mix of adrenaline, rage and alcohol make it shake however and she feels her lips quivering as well as she tries to contain some of the fury she suddenly feels.

“This is your sister’s birthday party,” she points a shaking finger at Bellamy, before rounding on Murphy, “your friend’s! And you have the audacity to start shit like this? Are you really so royally narcissistic that you don’t give two craps about that? Are you really that selfish?”

She’s almost shouting now, but strains to bring her voice down again. If nothing else, the boys are wise enough not to interrupt.

“You are twenty-fucking-five years old and you can’t handle whatever stupid argument you’re having like adults? You gotta go all cavemen on each other? Really? Really?!”

Grinding his teeth, Bellamy exhales sharply through his nose and shakes his head. “Clarke,” he starts, his voice calmer now, but just like Clarke’s did just a second ago, dripping with anger. “you don’t know what you’re talking about, just…” he presses his lips together, closing his fist in mid-air as if to strangle an invisible ghost in front of him. “Just stay out of this.”

“I’ll stay out of it when you behave like fucking adults, not five year-olds.” She counters, anger still chasing adrenaline through her veins.

“You both stay out of it!” Murphy snaps, before darting for the door.

“HEY, WE’RE NOT DONE!” Bellamy shouts, but Murphy only gets as far as the door, which swings open before he even gets a chance to turn the knob, almost hitting him in the face.

Standing in the doorway is Lexa, and Clarke’s heart immediately twists painfully at her worried and
surprised expression.

She doesn’t want Lexa involved in this mess! Especially when the boys apparently can’t reign in their tempers at the moment.

“Lexa!” she exclaims and Lexa’s eyes find her instantly. There’s a question in them, but before Clarke can say or even do anything more than stare, Bellamy is already pushing past her. As soon as he goes to grab Murphy’s elbow again, Clarke sees it all going to hell like Raven Simone.

_Fists flying._

_Voices shouting._

_Lexa yelling out in pain and falling to the floor._

“STOP!” she shouts desperately, diving forward and throwing herself between the boys again as best as she can from her angle to avoid the brawl she’s sure is about to happen.

Something hits her hard in the chest and she yelps out in pain and stumbles back.

“Clarke!” Lexa’s voice sounds panicked and before Clarke can even lift her eyes, she feels a soft hand gently cup her left hip. Then it’s gone and Clarke watches as Lexa whirls around to face the boys. The two of them must have noticed what happened, because for once they’re not in each other’s faces. Instead their faces show worried expressions as their eyes shift from Clarke to Lexa.

Lexa is standing protectively in front of her, right arm still outstretched to make a barrier between the guys and Clarke and Clarke can’t name the emotion she’s feeling. She can’t see Lexa’s face, but when Lexa speaks her voice is a shaking snarl.

“Get. Out.”

Glancing once again between her and Lexa, the boys both hesitate, but something in Lexa’s expression must finally convince them.

“Come on.” Bellamy says quietly. This time he doesn’t reach out, though, and Murphy follows him without argument. The door falls softly shut behind them, cancelling out most of the party noises, and finally Lexa and Clarke are left alone.

When Lexa doesn’t move right away, however, Clarke carefully touches the woman’s rigid shoulder. Her muscle jumps underneath Clarke’s fingers and then, at last, Lexa turns around.

No punch or elbow in the world could have knocked the wind out of her more than the look on Lexa’s face and at the sight of Lexa’s shining eyes and grim expression Clarke feels something inside her break.

“Are you okay?” Lexa asks and her voice is infinitesimally soft and gentle and it’s so contradictory to what Clarke just saw in her eyes that she forgets to answer.

“I’m sorry.”

It’s barely a whisper and just then Clarke sees the mask fall away. Lexa’s eyes are still shining, but this time with worry and sadness and her brows are drawn together in the most exquisitely tender expression of concern.

“Sorry for what?” Clarke whispers back, only her voice cracks halfway through and she has to
swallow.

“I didn’t mean to intrude. I know you said you’d be right back, but I heard shouts and I just- I just got really-”

Before Lexa can finish the sentence Clarke shuts her up with a kiss.

And it’s deep and it’s painful and then it’s tender and a little trembling and Clarke thinks the ache in her chest might not come from the blow at all.

And what a beautiful ache it is.

It’s half an hour later and Lexa and Clarke still haven’t returned to the party. Instead they took their shoes off and are now sitting criss-cross applesauce across from each other on Clarke’s bed.

Lexa’s feet are tugged in under herself and hidden away by the dark material of her jumpsuit, her long brown hair is all falling down over her right shoulder, while the hair on the left side of her head is intricately interwoven into three perfect braids, her eyes haven’t stopped smiling at Clarke since their lips parted and Clarke thinks she’s never in her life seen anything as beautiful as Lexa right in this moment.

“Well, I think your animal should be a raccoon.” Clarke insists stubbornly and when Lexa shakes her head, rolls her eyes up and takes in a deep breath through her nose, Clarke can’t help but laugh.

“It doesn’t make any sense, Clarke. I’m neither that small, nor that dismissive about hygienic sources of my food. I’d never eat out of a dumpster.” Lexa repeats her objection, but the smile never leaves her lips. When she looks down, it even widens.

Sometime during their conversation about nothing and everything their hands found each other in the space between their crossed legs. Clarke’s heart felt as if it had been treated to an electric shock and her pulse has been faster ever since, sending waves of tingles through her body and up her back and down her hands, where Lexa is softly playing with her fingers.

For a minute or so they seem to have gotten lost in thought, watching their fingers draw circles around each other and lightly trace up and down the others’ sides, because when they finally look up at each other again Clarke sees the same realization on Lexa’s face that they totally forgot what they had been talking about.

A soundless laugh escapes them both at the same time and Lexa even averts her gaze downwards. They’re quiet for a while and as Clarke studies Lexa’s still downcast profile she sees the expression on Lexa’s face slowly change and morph into something else.

And when Lexa finally looks back up at her again, another shock courses through Clarke’s body like lightning.

The look in Lexa’s eyes speaks of desire and need and strenuously held-together control and Clarke’s breath hitches as her eyes fall on Lexa’s lips.
They’re slightly parted and out of the corner of her eye Clarke can see Lexa’s chest heaving up and down just as quickly as her own breath now escapes her lips.

They lean forward at the same time, their fingers no longer gently playful, but now fiercely intertwined, and when their foreheads touch Clarke has to close her eyes.

Lexa’s breath falls onto her lips and it’s shaking. It makes Clarke want to kiss Lexa senseless and press their bodies together as tightly as she possibly can, but she doesn’t. She’s frozen by an onslaught of feelings and tingles and goose bumps, all originating from the places of her body that are connected with Lexa, and as they wash over her in wave after wave it’s almost like she can hear them. They sound like hundreds of thousands of pieces of broken glass rippling down a steep waterfall or like millions of wind chimes jingling inside and all around her and making her shudder.

And she wants to stay in this moment forever.

But she can’t, because she can’t stop herself. The pull is too strong and then she’s kissing Lexa again and suddenly their hands aren’t intertwined anymore. They’re in each other’s hair and on each other’s arms and necks and sides and Clarke’s heart is trying to hammer its way through her chest to meet Lexa’s.

Clarke’s moan comes out as a broken whine against Lexa’s lips when the other girl scoots her body back for a second, but before the sudden cold air can settle between them, Lexa’s pressed against her again and when she pushes her back, Clarke lets herself fall.

Her head lands only halfway on a pillow and Clarke wouldn’t have cared, but when Lexa quickly yanks it away from underneath her, that is even better. Now her entire body is being pressed against the firm mattress by Lexa’s weight and Clarke’s hips buck up involuntarily when Lexa leaves a trail of sucking kisses down her jaw to her neck.

Just when another breathy moan forces its way past Clarke’s lips and she tilts her head back to give Lexa better access, Lexa suddenly pulls back.

A disappointed whine follows and Clarke realizes it’s her own when she opens up her eyes. Lexa is hovering above her, eyes wide and wild and hair cascading down one side, casting half a shadow over Lexa’s beautiful face.

“What’s wrong?” Clarke breathes, because that’s all she can manage. Her ears and something else are pulsing with her own heartbeat and her lips and everywhere that Lexa kissed feels like it is on fire.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry.” Lexa hushes out on two heavy breaths, before she inhales deeply and then sits back on her feet, leaving Clarke slightly panicked, a bit confused and very, very frustrated.

Quickly pushing herself into a sitting position as well, Clarke tries to understand.

“What just happened?”

“I don’t know.” Lexa shakes her head as if she couldn’t quite make sense of it herself. “I’m sorry, I just- I couldn’t help myself.”

“What?” Clarke wipes a strand of hair out of her eyes as she frowns at Lexa.

“I didn’t mean to do that. I’m sorry. I didn’t- I-”

Lexa looks so guilty and worried and finally Clarke catches on.
“Hey! No! Hey, you don’t have to apologize for anything. You didn’t do anything wrong!” she reaches out and gently cups Lexa’s cheek, hopping a little closer to the other woman on the bed. Her left leg is still outstretched next to Lexa’s now very rigid body, but Clarke draws her other leg close to herself to minimize the distance between them.

“Hey, listen,” she shakes her head at the ongoing worry on Lexa’s face. The brunette’s eyebrows are furrowed deeply together and her lips are quivering a little. Whether from adrenaline or emotion, Clarke doesn’t know, but it pains her to see Lexa this way.

“You didn’t do anything wrong.” She repeats a little quieter, staring intently into Lexa’s eyes. “We just made out, it happens. I mean it’s happened to us before, right?”

Lexa remains quiet and for a horrible second Clarke wonders if she didn’t get this all wrong and Lexa has never even thought about being with a woman before.

Quickly brushing that thought aside, however, Clarke focuses all her attention on the girl in front of her.

Softly stroking her thumb over Lexa’s cheek, Clarke tries for a small smile.

“Can you talk me through what happened just now? Cause I honestly have no idea.”

Another few seconds pass, before Lexa speaks and when she does, her voice is barely a whisper and Clarke doesn’t understand a word.

“What?”

Lexa clears her throat. “I shouldn’t have pushed you onto the mattress like that without asking if it was okay with you. I’m sorry.”

For a moment Clarke fights against a relieved laugh. Then she considers her next words. Finally she smiles.

“Thank you.”

Lexa frowns.

Clarke’s smile grows bigger.

“Thank you for…being so mindful and so careful and so caring. You didn’t need to be, but it means the world to me that you are.”

Finally the worried expression loosens and makes way for a timid smile.

The longer they look into each other’s eyes, the bigger the smile gets and when Lexa’s mirrors hers again, Clarke slowly ventures forward once more.

She pauses for a second, just before their lips touch, and when Lexa closes the gap, Clarke feels like a weight she didn’t realize had appeared is falling from her chest.

Their kiss is gentle and tame, but it lasts a long, long time.

And by the time they part at last, their hands are woven together once again.

And Clarke couldn’t be happier.
It’s three hours past midnight or nine hours before noon or twenty-one hours before the next midnight, when Raven sees Clarke exiting her room. She’s holding Lexa’s hand, but when they step back out of the hallway, they let go.

They look happy and Raven’s heart jumps and jumps and jumps and she thinks if she could jump as high as her heart is jumping right now she wouldn’t have needed a ladder to hang up all the fairy lights. The fairy lights are beautiful. Shiny and sparkly and soft and warm but also hard because the actual light bulbs are hard and the wire connecting them is, too, but the light is warm and Raven has to giggle, because how weird is it that light can be warm and not just because of the sun or fire, but because of its color. Blue light isn’t warm and bright white light isn’t as warm as orange light for example. Oranges. She bought a lot of lemons for the drinks and for decoration because they have a funny shape and it’s always good to have something funny in one’s home. But she should buy oranges! Oranges are warm, at least they would be if they were light, and there can also never be enough warmth in one’s home. Unless you live in an igloo, because that might melt. But they don’t live in an igloo and so oranges go on her list.

Patting herself down, she realizes that she doesn’t have her phone. There wouldn’t be anywhere to put it. Her belly tee and miniskirt don’t really allow for pockets.

Nevermind, she’ll remember it. She doesn’t need to make lists, it’s fine. Lists would only slow her down.

She sees Clarke and Lexa join a conversation between Octavia and Echo, the girl from Lincoln’s gym that Octavia kept saying is really cool. How ironic that Octavia keeps saying that, Raven thinks, when all she can think is that Echo is actually really hot.

Giggling at her own joke, Raven makes her way over to the group. Out of the corner of her eye she sees the bright flickering of the candles she just finished lighting everywhere. It’s almost like they’re winking at her.

She winks back.

She’s got this.

Sauntering up to Echo, Raven feels all eyes in the room on her.

What a glorious feeling.

Chapter End Notes

Hello, my darlings!

First and foremost I wanted to thank you all for commenting and leaving kudos and reading the story and checking out the blog. You all are awesome and I notice every one of those things and they make me very happy!
I got a lot of great and positive feedback on the last few chapters, so I hope you're happy about this one as well :) 

Let me know in the comments and/or on the blog!

Have a lovely day or night!
The snow outside her window is falling quickly. Snowflake after snowflake racing towards the ground as if they were in competition with each other.

Clarke smiles. She loves the snow. She loves the softness, she loves the way it makes everything more invisible and more visible at the same time. She loves the way it paints the world. In shapes and lines and black and white. Trees, houses, cars, windows, street lamps, they’re all outlined, and there are all these different kinds of prints on the ground. Footprints, pawprints or even the occasional clawprints a hopping crow left, before it took flight again.

And all that just from the falling snow.

Just falling, falling, falling…

**Clarke:** Hey you!! ☺ So, I need some stuff from downtown and was wondering if you want to come with me maybe? It’s your day off right?

**Clarke:** Oh wait… were you training with Lincoln today? I forget. I mean knowing you crazy people you probably will. Who trains every day? I have no proof, but I’m almost certain that can’t be healthy. You should look into that…

**Clarke:** well uh… anyway, yeah let me know haha ☺

**Lexa:** Good morning, Clarke. Yes, it is my day off from work, since I don’t have any clients booked for today. And yes, you were correct! I am actually working out with Lincoln right now, but only for another two hours give or take maybe fifteen minutes. If that isn’t too late for you, I’d love to accompany you.

**Clarke:** HA! Called it ^^ You’re so predictable

**Clarke:** And sure, that’s fine. I was thinking I’d head down there around..2? 3?

**Lexa:** I am not predictable. Working out requires routine! It’s supposed to be consistent! Also, I have no plans for the afternoon, so I don’t mind which time.

**Clarke:** You can’t see it but I’m sticking my tongue out at you. And also how is routine and consistency not predictable? You contradict yourself commander. But I guess if you insist you’re not predictable I must just know you really well. Although I wouldn’t mind getting to know you even better ;)}
Lexa: Mockery isn’t the product of a strong mind, Clarke.

Lexa: Also, I’m sticking my tongue out back at you.

Clarke: Hahahahahah you’re an idiot.

Clarke: Okay, so pick you up at 2?

Lexa: 2 pm is perfect, yes. I’ll send you the address when Lincoln and I are done, okay?

Clarke: Sounds good :) See you later then

Lexa: Yes, I will see you later.

Lexa: ☺

“Oh my god, chil yu au!”

Lexa looks up from her plate. Anya is frowning at her from across the table, but slowly a grin forms on her face.

“Can you stop?” Anya almost laughs, more or less repeating in English what she just said in their made up language from when they were younger.

It’s only when Anya seems to persistently stare at the table in front of Lexa that Lexa understands. With some effort she forces her bouncing leg to still.

“Sorry.” She mumbles absentmindedly, leading her fork back to the last piece of potato she has been pushing around her plate without even really noticing. As she stabs it, Anya snorts.

“You’re such a dweeb. You’re not seriously this nervous about going shopping with her, are you?”

Lexa frowns as she looks up from her watch, leg slightly starting to bounce again. It’s already half past 1!

“I’m not nervous.” She lies. She wishes she could have come up with a better retort, but her mind is preoccupied.

Clarke is coming. Here! To her apartment!

When Clarke suggested it, so casually and seemingly without a second thought as Clarke always seems to be, Lexa’s fingers paused over the phone and she had to collect herself before she could answer. Her first instinct had been to make a counterproposal; to say she could just meet her somewhere or pick her up instead, but then she halted. Why did she feel the need to do that? To keep Clarke away? Why does the thought of Clarke coming to her apartment make her this nervous?

She isn’t sure. All she knows is that she needs to get over it.

She wants Clarke here. She wants to open up more to her and she really, really wants to find out just
what exactly Clarke meant when she said she wanted to get to know her better.

That winky smiley at the end of that sentence made Lexa’s cheeks burn; still makes Lexa’s cheeks burn, when she thinks too much about it.

Which she totally doesn’t…

“Allright.” Anya snorts sarcastically and then stands up from the table. “My leg always tries to stomp through the floor as well when I’m not nervous.”

Rolling her eyes at Anya’s back, Lexa stands up as well. She follows her sister over to the kitchen counter and puts her plate into the sink. Their dishwasher is broken. Again.

Checking her watch again without really noticing the time, she picks up the dish towel as Anya turns on the water.

“It’s just…” Lexa starts, but then stops. She doesn’t even really know what she wants to say. There really isn’t anything to say, but somehow she just feels so restless and the words just slipped out. “I don’t know.” She sighs finally, when she really can’t figure out how to continue.

Anya hums, as she rinses out Lexa’s glass. Barely a moment passes, before Lexa adds, “It feels weird.” That’s about as close as she’ll get to capturing the feeling into words, she guesses and takes the dripping glass from Anya’s hands. A few small white bubbles still cover it. Anya never rinses them thoroughly enough. Probably because she’s so used to having to do it in super speed at the club with that fancy glass washing thing in the sink. Lexa doesn’t mind right now. She just wipes over the bubbles as Anya speaks.

“What feels weird?”

Lexa’s shoulders shrug. Without looking up from the glass, she replies, “I don’t know. Just that she’s coming here.”

“I think you mean exciting.” Anya corrects and then elbows Lexa lightly to make her look up and take the next rinsed glass.

Lexa hums. Yes, she is excited. She’s excited and nervous and annoyed and worried and embarrassed about all of the emotions she’s having over something so simple as someone picking her up from her and Anya’s apartment.

“She’s the first person you actually gave your address to.” Anya points out just then and for a second Lexa halts in her motion.

Huh… Anya is right!

Continuing the drying, Lexa tries to decide if it is weird that she has never invited a girl back to their place before. She never thought so. Actually, she never thought much about it at all, but now she realizes that it might, in fact, be unusual.

The other question that presents itself, of course, is, why is Clarke different? Sure, Lexa still hesitated, but in the end it was easy texting Clarke where to pick her up.

A few seconds pass, before Lexa notices the wet plate that’s being held out to her. Anya doesn’t rush her this time, however. Instead she seems to have been watching her. Self-conscious, Lexa takes the plate, avoiding Anya’s probing eyes.
As she lets the by now damp towel glide over the hard, smooth surface of the plate she’s too aware of Anya’s attention; she can practically feel the next words coming, before they actually do.

*You really like her, huh? She sure is special to you, isn’t she? I haven’t seen you like this in forever.*

…But they never do. They never come and Lexa frowns and looks up when Anya just turns towards the sink again and picks up the next plate.

She wants to ask why Anya didn’t say what Lexa felt her wanting to say, but she stops herself. Does she want Anya to ask those questions?

Sucking her lower lip between her teeth, she decides she doesn’t. So she lets it go.

They finish the dishes together and then Lexa goes to get ready.

Anya seems back to normal as she shouts after her as she crosses the living room.

“Hos op, Strisnacha!”

_Hurry, Little Raccoon!_

Lexa rolls her eyes at the old nickname, but slows down so as not to give Anya more to comment. As soon as her bedroom door is closed behind her, however, she speedwalks over to her closet and yanks open the doors.

Alright…here we go.

Her entire body bounces as she waits for the goddamn traffic light to change.

For once she isn’t even late, but still Clarke can’t seem to slow her pace. As the light finally switches from red to green, she hurries over to the other side and then continues rushing past house after house as she navigates through unfamiliar streets and alleys on her way to the address Lexa gave her.

Clarke is excited. She could barely eat lunch, her mind already out the door, and when it was finally time to leave she was already halfway down the block. She’s never been a big shopper. Perusing clothes stores has always been more Octavia’s sort of thing, but today is different. Today she’s going to the art supply store, today she’s buying something she’s actually interested in and today Lexa will come with her.

A smile stretches across Clarke’s face, as she can feel her heart in her throat and see her breath puff out in rapid succession before her. She knows it’s because she’s moving so fast, but she also acknowledges that it fits just perfectly with the way Lexa makes her feel; giddy and a little breathless.

Having told Raven and Octavia made it all so much more real somehow and in the back of her mind, Clarke wonders if she is going on a date.

Is this a date? Is this how two girls date? Just…go get art supplies together? No formal asking out, no boy-does-the-first-step dance, just…hanging out?
She frowns. The more she learns about herself and her feelings – especially her feelings for Lexa, the more confusing things seem to become.

How do lesbians know when they’re dating? How did Raven know?

Before she can think back over Raven’s stories and dates with girls, she feels her phone vibrate in the palm of her left hand. She’s been holding it in her pocket since she’s sporadically had to check if she’s still on the right path to Lexa’s on Google Maps.

Speak of the devil…

Raven’s name shines up to her from the screen of her phone as she draws it out of her coat.

It’s a voice message, however, and after three failed attempts to understand anything the girl is babbling on about against the wind and passing traffic, Clarke gives up and pushes her phone back into her pocket, her fingers already stiff from the cold.

It’s a couple of minutes later when she finally gets to the place. Her face feels a little rough and as she wipes over her slightly runny nose, it feels really cold against the back of her hand.

The past few days there’s been quite the temperature drop in the city, going along with the early sunset. But while Clarke usually feels this seasonal change pretty strongly, experiencing a considerable decrease in energy and overall excitement to leave her warm room, this time around it doesn’t seem to affect her as much. On the contrary, she’s been feeling invigorated, excitable and like she can do anything. Anything at all.

Even…draw.

She remembers exactly the last time she felt this inspired to draw and the circumstances were quite different. But finally, finally, her muse seems to have returned. Hence the drawing supply run.

It’s been years since she’s really been able to get lost in her art and the first time it happened again wasn’t even conscious. Actually she should have been studying at the time, but when the muse strikes…

A knock on the door startles Clarke and before she can even comprehend what she’s been doodling, her door gets swung open and Raven is standing in her room.

 Reflexively, Clarke closes her notebook as she looks up at her roommate, who’s grinning from ear to ear.

“Guess who just got some new toys.” Raven declares in a giddy sing-song voice and before Clarke can even react, Raven has already crossed the room and snatched up her wrist to drag her with her.

And sure enough as they enter Raven’s room Clarke’s eyes are immediately drawn to not one, but two brand new tinkering kits lying open and partially unpacked on Raven’s bed. It’s not what Clarke expected to see, but it’s not nearly as shocking as the fact that the kits were even what managed to capture Clarke’s attention as immediately as they did, because on second glance Clarke can’t believe she was able to discern any one thing in this chaos at all. Raven isn’t the most neat of the three of them, but Clarke is pretty sure that she has never seen her room this messy by a long shot.

The floor isn’t just barely visible, it has downright turned into an impassable minefield of clothes, empty plastic bottles, candy wrappers, papers, books, what looks like oil dirtied rags, seemingly random pieces of scrap metal and the likes and …glitter? Yes, a faint dusting of glitter seems to have been strewn across everything and Clarke isn’t sure if she should rather hope for it to have been an
accident or if that’s possibly worse than Raven having consciously decided to give the entirety of her possessions a teenage makeover.

Either way it takes Clarke aback and when Raven asks her what she thinks she forgets for a second what she’s referring to.

“Uuuuh...I think you’ll probably never get it out of your carpet.”

“Huh?” Raven’s brows furrow just as Clarke realizes what she was talking about.

“Oh! No, uh the glitt- nevermind.” she cuts herself off. Raven only eyes her in mild confusion for another moment, before she snaps back to her newest possessions. Sitting down on the mattress with a light bounce, she cheeses at the different tools, taking them out one by one and running her hands over them excitedly.

Clarke isn’t really sure what to say. Tools aren’t really her thing, but they seem to make Raven happy, so she tries to muster some genuine happiness for her, too.

“They, uh... look great. Got any specific plans for them?” she asks, picking up a silver tool as well. It’s a wrench, even Clarke knows that much, and it feels cold and heavy in her hand.

“Mh, more or less. I got some ideas.” Raven answers with a hum, seemingly already in thoughts about what those might be.

Clarke hums as well and then nods. She stands there awkwardly for another second, taking a deep breath and holding it in for a second before releasing it with a “Well...I...have fun?”

“Thanks!” Raven grins at her and takes the wrench back from Clarke’s hand, adding “I will” with a wink.

After another second of just standing there, nodding awkwardly, Clarke turns around and heads for the door. Just when she gets there Raven pipes up again.

“Oh,hey, by the way! What were our dinner plans? I was thinking Chinese? I’m craving dumplings like fuck. For like the entire day. I couldn’t figure out what it was I craving at first, but then I saw some on Instagram and was like, oh my god, that’s it!”

“Sure, I’m up for Chinese. Do you know if O will be here for dinner?”

Raven shakes her head and pouts her lower lip out. “Nope, don’t know. I’ll text her.”

“Cool.” Clarke says as she opens the door further, but Raven has already gotten out her phone and has started typing.

Back in her own room, Clarke’s thoughts still circle around Raven’s mess. As Lexa has pointed out before, Clarke isn’t that unfamiliar with her own share of clutter, but she can’t imagine living in that room without going crazy.

No, she likes being able to walk over to her desk without having to be careful not to trip on her things and break her neck, thank you very much.

But, to each their own, she guesses.

Sitting back down, Clarke needs a second to reorient herself. What had she been doing again? Ah, yes. Studying.
Or at least… she should have been…

But as she opens her notebook to the last page she had been on, she doesn’t see notes on transmitters and neurons as there should have been.

Instead a face is staring at her. Stoic and quiet, just like Lexa was in real life as well, when Clarke met her that day in Tacoma.

For a moment, Clarke is surprised as she inspects the page further. The portrait-like pen drawing, while the biggest, isn’t the only drawing of Lexa she apparently did. Surrounding it, there are three more sketches.

Lexa in profile, her brow furrowed and her eyes looking to the ground as if in deep thought.

Lexa from behind, in the process of pulling her own body upwards on the fish ladder thing, muscles on display even more than they had been in real life as Clarke has drawn her bare backed.

Lexa’s eyes, big and beautiful and protruding from a mess of black war paint.

Clarke leans back in her chair.

Wow. She hasn’t drawn this much in forever! Especially not without even trying.

A smile creeps onto her face and a giddy feeling wells up in her chest. Excitedly she leans back forward and continues drawing.

Studying can wait.

“Oh, wait let me help you with that!” Clarke exclaims, when she sees an older lady struggling with the front door to the apartment complex Lexa directed her to. Quickly she rushes forward and holds open the heavy door, while the small, hunchbacked woman scurries over the threshold and out into the cold.

“Oh, oh thank you, thank you.” the old lady thanks Clarke with a somewhat shaky voice, nodding up at her with a wrinkled smile.

“Of course.” Clarke smiles back, still holding the door, before stepping into the building and letting it close behind herself.

The entrance area isn’t much warmer than the outside, but at least Clarke can’t see her breath anymore. If she did, it would still be coming out in quick puffs, she’s sure.

Not remembering what apartment number it was, Clarke gets out her phone. There’s another message from Raven. Clarke considers listening to it now that she’s in a more quiet environment, but then decides against it. She’s got enough on her mind as is.

Instead she draws up her conversation with Lexa.

12.

Apartment 12, okay.

Not knowing which floor that will be on, Clarke decides to take the stairs. She follows the ascending numbers up; one floor, two floors, three floors, until she gets to the forth. Right in front of her is apartment number 11. And there to the right…
“Twelve. Okay.” Clarke huffs out. Her heart is racing from the stairs and the excitement and she takes a moment to collect herself. No need for Lexa to see her all out of breath like that.

When the lights suddenly click off over the staircase, Clarke realizes she’s been standing unmoving in front of Lexa’s apartment door longer than she thought.

Slightly self-conscious about that fact, she takes a deep breath and closing the distance between herself and the door.

Too aware of her heart thumping loudly in her chest, Clarke knocks on the door.

---

When Lexa hears a knock on the door, her heart stutters.

“Fuck!”

Why is Clarke here already? And why didn’t she hear her ring the doorbell?

She’s not ready!

Panicked, she peeks out from the bathroom and spots Anya sitting calm as anything at the table.

“Anya!” she hisses in a whisper. Anya looks up at her with an unimpressed expression.

Stressed out beyond belief, Lexa jerks her head toward the apartment door.

Anya rolls her eyes, but follows Lexa’s silent plea and gets up, after - to Lexa’s agony - unhurriedly pressing another couple of keys on her laptop.

“Fyucha…” Anya snorts as she passes Lexa, shaking her head as if she pitied her.

“I’m not a baby!” Lexa snarls back, still whispering, but Anya only sticks her tongue out at her and Lexa quickly retreats into the bathroom, closing the door.

Her heart is racing like crazy as she hears Anya open the door.

Holy hell, Clarke is here.

---

“Uh, hi!” Clarke exclaims, slightly taken aback, when instead of familiar green eyes, a pair of brown ones meet hers once the door is opened.

Clarke almost forgot that Lexa had a roommate. And that that roommate is Anya.

Before she can stop herself, Clarke reaches out a hand.
It’s awkward and it’s maybe a little weird, since Anya and she have already met, but somehow Clarke feels like she’s meeting someone’s parent.

Someone’s really judging and a little unnerving parent, Clarke thinks as Anya merely keeps on staring at her and makes no effort whatsoever to shake her hand.

After an uncomfortable moment, Clarke slowly lowers her hand. “Alright then” she mumbles, feeling a little self-consciously, as she catches herself treading from one foot to the other.

Thankfully, just then she can hear someone else behind Anya and a second later Lexa appears over Anya’s shoulder.

“Lexa!” Clarke almost calls out too loudly, relieved to see her and get away from Anya and the weird analyzing vibe that’s been going on.

“Clarke.” Lexa gives her a small smile and for a moment Clarke forgets about Anya’s searching eyes and grins back at her.

Lexa steps closer and Anya gets out of the way to let her to the door, but remains standing right next to them, arms crossed over her chest.

They smile at each other for a second longer and Clarke wants to say how cute Lexa looks with her pretty long hair and her wooly red hat and her grey winter blazer, but Anya is unnerving her again.

“Ready to go?” she asks instead and Lexa nods, checking her pockets, before noticing her keys hanging from a hook next to the door. When she makes to step around Anya to get them, Lexa quickly locks eyes with Anya. It only lasts a second however and Clarke can’t really read either of them.

Still, Lexa seems to communicate something to her with just that look. Anya only cocks an eyebrow and then steps back enough for Lexa to reach the keys on the hook. As she does Clarke swears she can hear her say: ‘Wochas planripa, dison laik sich’. It makes absolutely no sense, but Lexa murmurs “Oh, my god,” and shoots Anya a glare. Then she ushers Clarke out of the door, shutting it after them, before Anya can say anything else.

“What was that?” Clarke asks.

“Nothing.” Lexa mumbles, blushing.

They walk next to each other.

Lexa is too nervous to talk and Clarke seems to be the other way around; talking like a waterfall. Lexa smiles. She doesn’t know who’s doing it, but somehow their bodies are leaning into each other in a way that they’re constantly in contact as they walk. Their shoulders lean against one another, the backs of their hands brush against the other and Lexa has trouble following what Clarke is saying because the whirlwind going on inside her is making it hard to concentrate.

Only when Clarke steers her inside a shop and the warmth hits her in the face, does Lexa get startled
aware a bit more. It’s also the loss of contact with Clarke, as she puts just the tiniest bit of distance between them, after letting go of Lexa’s wrist by which she had directed the girl inside.

“Okay, so I think it should be somewhere…back there? I think?” Clarke gestures to a row of shelves a little further into the shop and shoots Lexa a glance. Lexa just nods and for some reason it makes Clarke stop and smile quite broadly, before leading the way to where she indicated.

They drift through the shop, Clarke searching for the utensils and Lexa just browsing aimlessly, watching Clarke mutter to herself every now and then. She likes the way Clarke’s forehead crinkles between her eyebrows as she reads the labels of different paints and papers and how her head always slightly tilts to one side. She also likes the way Clarke walks from one thing to the next. It’s a slow sort of stroll but at the same time it has this slightly bouncy quality to it, as if her own body was impatient for her to carry it to the next thing. Lexa thinks Clarke looks beautiful with her blonde curls, sticking out from her white beanie, and her slightly red tinged cheeks. Clarke’s eyes are shining as she looks around for her art supplies and Lexa wishes she could watch Clarke paint someday. She imagines she looks awe-inspiring when she’s so focused on something she’s so passionate about.

Suddenly Clarke turns around and Lexa snaps back towards the shelf she’s standing in front of so as not to seem like she’s been staring. She feels Clarke coming towards her more than she hears her. Then she’s standing right behind her.

When Clarke speaks her voice is low and amused and very very close.

“Body paints, hm? Got something planned, I should know about?”

Lexa blushes, flashes of naked skin suddenly penetrating her mind. Before she can make a fool of herself by stuttering something that would very probably have come out in an embarrassing jumble of unintelligible nonsense, Clarke laughs.

It’s that raspy, quiet kind of laugh and Lexa feels goose bumps erupting on her neck and racing down her spine.

And when Clarke briefly and very gently lays a hand on Lexa’s hip, squeezing it as she leans against Lexa in a loose hug of sorts, Lexa’s breath involuntarily stutters to a halt. It’s only a second, only a second, before Clarke’s hand disappears and her warmth slowly retracts, but it’s enough.

It’s enough and helplessly Lexa realizes what deep down she already knew. That Anya is right.

This one is trouble…

Or rather, Lexa is in it.

Big time.
she felt the urge to reach out and intertwine their fingers. But she doesn’t know if she should. She
doesn’t know what anything means or what they are. All she knows is that Lexa makes her smile. A
lot.

As she looks over at the stoic profile as Lexa walks beside her, she is reminded of the half finished
drawings and doodles in her notebook again.

She hasn’t drawn in forever so when she caught herself mindlessly doodling long hair and big,
soulfull eyes instead of studying the very first week after seeing Lexa fight, she was more than
surprised.

Choosing not to ponder on it and enjoy the unexpected inspiration instead, she just kept drawing.
Lexa’s eyes, Lexa’s stance in the ring, Lexa’s tattoos, Lexa’s profile. Just Lexa, Lexa, Lexa until she
ran out of paper.

So here she is, just having bought more utensils to feed her creative addiction, with none other than
the muse herself.

Clarke thinks this is what sky-diving must feel like.

Just falling from the sky, falling, falling, falling.

Falling from the sky and being terrified and elated at the same time.

Falling from the sky and feeling your stomach drop over and over and over again.

Falling from the sky and marveling at the beauty all around her and having hardly any time to gather
her thoughts about it, before another beautiful sight catches her eye.

Falling from the sky, falling, falling, falling until she’s soaring instead. Caught by the chute, safer,
but still in exhilaration.

She loves falling, she does, but she can’t help but wonder if she’ll be caught.

She can’t help but wonder if Lexa will be the one to catch her, or if she’ll just continue falling…

And what then?

Clarke’s question vanishes from her mind, when a soft hand lightly bumps against hers. And then
again. And then, slowly, almost timidly, gentle fingertips brush their way down the inside of her
hand, leaving a tingling trail down, where slender fingers tangle themselves in-between hers.

Heart thumping, Clarke looks down at their hands. Lexa’s hand looks strange in hers. Strange,
because it looks like it was always supposed to be there and yet it’s such an unfamiliar sight.

She looks up and sees Lexa nervously watch her. Clarke’s stomach drops. It’s thrilling.

*Falling, falling, falling…*

Lexa squeezes her hand lightly and Clarke’s lips stretch into a wide smile.

...caught.
They wander down the street, hand in hand, and Clarke couldn’t be happier. Everything is just right. Swirling pockets of wind are creating tiny dancing hurricanes of snowflakes here and there, her dad’s jacket keeps out the cold and makes her feel warm and protected and Lexa’s hand in hers feels more comforting and exciting and right than anything ever has.

As december has crept up on them, it’s getting darker outside already as well and when Clarke catches Lexa gently smiling at the fairy lights of a christmas market they’re passing by, her heart swells.

“We should go sometime.” Clarke says and Lexa looks at her, caught off guard.

“Hm?” she hums, and Clarke has to smirk as a strand of her hair blows in front of her eyes and Lexa’s eyebrows pull together as if annoyed with it.

Before she can stop herself, she lets go of Lexa’s hand and reaches up to tug it out of Lexa’s face, gently pushing it under her wooly hat.

She thinks she notices Lexa hold her breath for a second and her smirk grows bigger.

She loves this. She loves seeing Lexa react like this to something she’s done or said. It’s exciting and thrilling and amazing to know that she has the power to make her flustered that way.

“To the Christmas market.” Clarke clarifies, nodding her head in the direction of it and Lexa’s face lights up in understanding.

“Oh!”

“Well...do you want to?” Clarke chuckles when Lexa doesn’t say anything more.

“Yeah!” Lexa exclaims and Clarke smiles at her eagerness. Casually, she takes Lexa’s hand again. Lexa blushes some more. “Yeah, that would be nice.” she adds a little quieter.

Clarke considers teasing her a bit, but after a second of watching Lexa avoid her eyes and look anywhere but at her, she decides against it.

“I used to love christmas.” she shares instead, taking in a deep breath as they slowly walk on, their hands swaying slightly between them to the rhythm of their steps.

Lexa doesn’t say anything, but the way she looks at her makes Clarke go on. Lexa is good with that; conveying things without words. Another thing Clarke loves.

“It used to be a big thing. You know, the whole family was there; mum, dad, Callie, Wells, Thelonious, Sheila. It was like a week-long affair.” Clarke laughs, thinking back. “The house was total chaos and mum was freaking out on the regular, but somehow it was always fine in the end. Dad was good like that, making it all fine in the end. And Wells and I, we could busy ourselves with things for hours on end. Playing hide and seek, playing chess, playing pranks,” she snorts again, remembering one particularly creative year, where they decided to hide all sorts of things all around the house and leave trails of riddles for their parents to solve to get their stuff back.

“It was the best.” Clarke adds, feeling her lips tremble a little at the corners.
Clearing her throat to get rid of the building pressure there, she goes on, “What about you? Do you like Christmas?”

Lexa’s eyebrows raise a little as she looks down at their feet. Their steps fall soft on a white path of previously made shoeprints.

“Uh, well… I guess, yeah.” she answers slowly and Clarke cocks her head.

“You guess?”

Lexa shrugs her shoulders. She seems reluctant to say more, but Clarke is happy she does. She wants to learn more about the mysterious fighter.

“It’s just… it’s always just been me and Anya. Well, since I was a kid anyway. And…” she pauses for a second and pulls her lips into her mouth as if considering, again, whether she should go on or not. She does, “and it’s been good, you know. Don’t get me wrong, I lo- I… Anya is my family, but…” finally, she trails of for good.

Clarke hums, having nodded along to Lexa’s words. She doesn’t know much about Lexa, but from what little she’s told her, she spent a lot of her childhood in foster homes. Clarke imagines such family centered holidays like Christmas would not be necessarily a happy occasion for someone who didn’t really have one growing up.

Except for Anya as it seems. Clarke is really, really glad Lexa had Anya.

“She seems very… big sisterly.” Clarke says softly and Lexa chuckles and looks at her, her eyes shining with an emotion Clarke can’t quite figure out.

“She does enjoy making me feel like a child, that’s for sure.” Lexa admits with a small smirk and Clarke laughs. She would love to know what Lexa was really like as a child. She can’t really picture it.

“How does she do that?” she asks, directing Lexa into a slightly less busy alley way. They haven’t really talked about where they were going, now that Clarke has gotten what she needed. Both of them seem to just enjoy each other’s company and Clarke doesn’t want to say goodbye yet, so they wander aimlessly through the streets.

“Well, she calls me it constantly, for one.” Lexa tells her and Clarke almost startles.

“A child?”

“A child, a baby, she even called me embryo the other day.” Lexa says and Clarke has to laugh out loud.

“That one I haven’t heard yet.” she admits, still chuckling.

They walk in silence for a bit after that and Clarke relishes in the moment. It has stopped snowing and street lamps are flickering on around them as darkness has fallen almost completely now. Christmas decorations are twinkling at them from houses left and right and Clarke’s heart feels so full. Her nose and cheeks are cold and she can see her breath in front of her, but Lexa’s hand is warm in hers and she can’t remember being this happy.

“So, what about now?” Lexa’s voice suddenly breaks the silence and Clarke almost startles.
She looks at Lexa and for a moment she forgets how to breathe. Lexa is watching her with so much caring emotion in her eyes, it’s almost palpable in the air. Clarke doesn’t think she’s ever seen anything as beautiful and captivating as Lexa. She can’t describe it, but looking at Lexa now she almost seems more real to her than reality itself, or maybe...maybe reality seems less real when Lexa is around. Either way, it’s a little disorienting and a little trippy and yet Clarke isn’t worried or afraid. She just wants to sink into it more.

“Do you still like Christmas now?” Lexa asks and Clarke notices that they have stopped walking. She doesn’t know who stopped the other, but suddenly they’re just standing there, in the middle of this small, archway like alley. It’s deserted except for a mother with a stroller at the end, but then she vanishes around the corner and they’re completely alone.

Clarke can feel heart heartbeat in her chest and in the hand that’s still holding Lexa’s. Lexa...she’s so close.

“Clarke?” Lexa steps in front of her so that they’re facing each other now.

The light of the fairy lights that have been strung up from right to left across the entire alley above them bathes Lexa in warm white light and it’s making everything just that much more surreal. Like a dream.

“Clarke?” Lexa echoes, her voice low and quiet and laced with some concern at Clarke’s ongoing silence.

“I…” Clarke clears her throat as the word barely manages it out of her throat. “I…”

But she can’t remember the question. Was it even a question? What had they been talking about? She doesn’t know. All she knows is that Lexa is beautiful and that her heart is racing and that she can’t stand it anymore.

She lets go of Lexa’s hand and reaches up to her instead. Pulling her in by the neck, she kisses her. Hard.

Feeling like she can finally breathe again, she pulls in a big breath through her nose against Lexa’s cheek that turns into a sigh when Lexa kisses her back. Their lips meld into each other and Clarke feels dizzy as she sways against Lexa so hard, that she thinks she may have fallen over backwards if Lexa hadn’t grabbed her back with both of her hands. But she did and Clarke pulls her closer as well, deepening the kiss.

Floating in space, suspended in the air, they stay like that. Kissing, kissing, kissing until kissing turns into breathing and then they’re just holding each other and Clarke can’t stop smiling against Lexa’s cheek.

Someone passes by behind them, but Clarke doesn’t care. She keeps holding onto Lexa until her limbs are starting to feel stiff.

Begrudgingly she starts slowly loosening her arms. Lexa follows suit. As they let go of each other the cold seems to rush in like it does when you get out of bed in the morning in winter. It makes Clarke shiver and she has to laugh. She doesn’t even know why, she just has to.

Lexa chuckles as well, big puffs of white air billowing out in front of her.

Neither of them seems to really know what to say. And what is there more to say? It’s all been said better than words could ever have and Clarke thinks she understands Lexa a little better now.
Sometimes words just fall short, but that doesn’t mean that you’re not communicating.

Clarke makes a silent promise in that moment to always try to hear what’s being said without words. She feels like there’s a whole other world out there she has barely noticed until now, but she hopes Lexa will teach her how to go there.

Like Peter Pan, Lexa seems to know how to fly and Clarke wants to learn how to fly, too.

She reaches out and takes Lexa’s hand again. It’s cold, like hers, but Clarke knows warmth will come. Warmth will always come when they’re together.

Clarke suggests they should go to her apartment and Lexa agrees. She doesn’t care where they go, she just wants to stay with Clarke. Clarke who is more brazen than Lexa could ever wish to be. Clarke who makes her want to share more of herself than she’s ever wanted to share with anybody before. Clarke who makes taking her hand easier than breathing. Clarke who kisses her in the middle of the street and makes her forget about anything and everything around them. Clarke.

They walk and walk and walk and they talk and talk and talk.

It’s so easy to talk to Clarke, Lexa almost can’t remember what she usually finds hard about it. It’s so easy to talk to Clarke, but it’s also easy to listen.

Clarke tells her about her ideas for christmas presents for Raven and Octavia and how she’s been invited to both Octavia’s mum’s house and Raven’s grandparents’ house for christmas and Lexa feels a warmth spread in her chest, knowing that Clarke is so loved. Clarke tells her that she learned how to bake christmas cookies from Raven’s grandma and that they have a sort of competition each year now, where they compare their results. Clarke tells her that it always ends the same way, with Raven’s granddad declaring himself the winner for getting to eat two amazing batches of cookies and not having had to do anything at all.

Clarke also tells her about how she misses her dad and how things have been difficult with her mum and Lexa notices her hesitate every now and then. When she finally asks her about it, Clarke admits she doesn’t know if any of this is making Lexa sad.

Lexa’s stomach feels like she’s missed a step. In the blink of an eye she experiences a small whirlwind of emotions; sadness, pain, happiness ,nostalgia, love. But most of all, incredulity and shock. She hadn’t really thought about anything, but Clarke, when she listened to Clarke’s stories. But now memories and feelings come rushing in. Memories of false hope, broken promises and bitter disappointment. Memories of pain, confusion and desperation, but also memories of laughter, acceptance and a finding a new home. In Anya.


She tightens her grip around Clarke’s hand and Clarke tightens hers, too.

“I have Anya, you know? She is my big sister, my family. And she made christmas not scary anymore.”

Clarke doesn’t say anything. She just listens and Lexa talks and by the time they reach Clarke’s apartment Clarke knows all about her and Anya’s christmas tradition. She knows they hike the
wildwood trail up until they have a great view over the city. She knows they stray from the path and find their own little place in the woods. She knows they make camp there, get a fire going if they can, and just spend the night there, talking and drinking and being with each other.

Lexa has never told anyone about this tradition. It was just for Her and Anya. But for some reason she wanted Clarke to know. For some reason letting Clarke in outweighs the fear and protectiveness. Letting Clarke in seems important, more important than making sure no one can take this from her. Whatever this is. She just knows Clarke isn’t a danger to it. Clarke won’t destroy it. Clarke is safe.

Clarke is safe and secure and as warm as the apartment Lexa follows her into. Clarke.

They’re barely inside, before Raven storms out of her room, greeting them both with hugs. Lexa looks about as taken aback as Clarke feels, but is either too polite or too slow to stop Raven from flinging her arms around her.

It’s over about as quickly as it started, however, and Clarke can barely ask where Octavia is, before Raven vanishes back into her room, shouting “Where do you think!” through the already closed door.

“Lincoln?” Lexa guesses and Clarke nods and hums as they both hang their jackets on the clothes tree next to the door.

Once they’ve discarded the rest of their winter attire, Clarke putting Lexa’s shoes on the heater so they’ll dry until she leaves, Clarke walks over to the kitchen and makes them some tea.

She offers Lexa to go sit down on the couch, but she follows her and sits on one of the bar stools instead, watching her.

They don’t talk while Clarke prepares the tea and it’s a comfortable silence that feels oddly familiar. Only when they sit down on the couch together is it broken.

“It’s weird to see your apartment so empty.” Lexa says and Clarke has to laugh.

“Yeah, well, can’t have a party every day, Lexa.” she teases and as predicted, Lexa takes it too seriously.

“Oh, no! I quite like it.” she explains, making Clarke smirk.

“I know.” She takes a sip from her tea and then leans back against the couch cushions, draping her legs over Lexa’s lap. “Me, too.”

Lexa blushes.

Clarke smiles.
Can you get drunk on tea?

Lexa wouldn’t have thought so, but here she is, feeling tipsy and dizzy and all her walls crumbling down.

Clarke hasn’t moved her legs from her lap the entire time they’ve been talking and Lexa is feeling really warm. Actually, she’s starting to feel a little hot, but when Clarke reaches for her hand she lets her take it.

She’s worried it may be a bit clammy, but if it is, Clarke doesn’t let it show. She starts playing with Lexa’s fingers, watching them as she tells Lexa about the time Octavia, Raven, Bellamy, their friend Murphy and her went hiking and it started raining and something about a mudslide and something about something else. Lexa doesn’t know. Lexa is busy. Lexa is busy watching Clarke’s face and the way she moves her head as she’s talking and the way Clarke’s fingers are tracing the outline of Lexa’s hand. It tingles and makes even more warmth spread in all directions. It spreads up her arm and through her body and soon all Lexa feels is the way her insides feel like they have been covered in sherbet.

Her other hand has been resting on Clarke’s legs, but she hasn’t dared move a muscle. With Clarke being so brazen however, she thinks it may be okay to do the same.

With a racing heart, Lexa gives herself a little silent pep talk and while Clarke keeps playing with the fingers of her right hand, Lexa slowly scratches the ones on her left over Clarke’s knee. It feels jerky against Clarke’s pants and Lexa would have doubted she even feels much of it at all, but the second Lexa starts, Clarke pauses in her tracks. She continues not a moment later without comment, but there’s a slight smile on Clarke’s lips as she keeps on talking and Lexa’s heart calms down a bit. But just a bit.

Until a door slams open and Raven storms into the living room.

Clarke practically jumps up, drawing her legs off Lexa’s lap and letting go of her hand as if it had burned her. As warm as she felt not a second ago, suddenly Lexa feels cold and where her heart raced from happy excitement, now it gallops painfully.

“Hey, have you seen my notebook?” Raven calls over her shoulder as she speed-walks into the kitchen.

“Huh? Uh, no, I- no, I don’t think so.” Clarke calls back. She seems flustered and out of sorts and as Lexa watches her start shifting books and papers back and forth on the coffee table, she starts feeling a little sick.

“Ugh, where the fuck is it?” Raven curses, vanishing behind the kitchen bar for a second as she ducks down, before reappearing like a meerkat and joining them in the living room with a sour expression on her face. She looks about as happy as Lexa feels in that moment.

“What do you need it for?” Clarke asks. Lexa remains quiet.

“I need to check something.” Raven answers. Lexa crosses her arms.

“Have you checked on the table?” Clarke suggests. Lexa wishes she could leave.
Raven rushes over to the table and starts looking. Clarke stays as far from Lexa as she can on the couch. Lexa digs her fingernails into her palms.

“Fuck!” Raven exclaims in frustration and throws a stack of magazines back onto the table. Clarke flinches. Lexa feels nauseous.

Then Raven is gone again, vanished back into her room in a huff, and Clarke and Lexa are alone.

For the first time that day the tension between them is uncomfortable. They sit with two feet of space between them on the couch, but it feels like they’re two worlds apart.

Clarke tries to remember what she had been telling Lexa. Lexa doesn’t really care. It’s painful to watch Clarke clumsily attempt to get back into conversation, but it’s more painful how her hands are so far away, Lexa couldn’t even reach them if she wanted to.

Lexa notices Clarke shooting her glances, but she doesn’t know what they mean. Are they questioning? Are they apologetic? All Lexa knows that they’re too much.

It’s too much.

“I have to go.” Lexa interrupts, suddenly, her chest way too tight. It feels like she can barely breathe and like a heavy stone appeared out of nowhere, ripped right through her heart and plummeted towards her stomach. It ripped through that, too, and fell all the way to the ground beneath Lexa’s feet, tearing it up like paper and leaving Lexa falling. Falling, falling, falling….

The words come painfully through her closed up throat and she feels tears brimming underneath the surface.

Clarke seems surprised and even disappointed, but Lexa doesn’t let it console her.

“Oh, uh...okay.” Clarke hesitates. Lexa doesn’t meet her eyes.

Lexa stands up. Clarke needs a second to catch up and does the same. She takes a breath as if to say something, but then she doesn’t.

Lexa walks to the door.

“Thank you for the tea.” she says as she picks up the winter blazer from the clothes tree.

“Oh, yeah, sure. No problem.” Clarke mumbles and then turns around. “Oh! Here.”

Lexa looks up at her for the first time since Raven barged in. Clarke seems rattled as she holds out Lexa’s shoes to her. For a moment Lexa hesitates, a regretful heaviness settling on her heart. She wants to tell Clarke she’s sorry; wants to tell her it’s okay; wants to take her in her arms.

But then she grimly remembers that Clarke would probably not want that. Not judging by the way she just shied away from Lexa as if she were contagious.

Clarke holds out Lexa’s hat to her. Lexa hates the way her eyebrows pull together in that way. That way that makes Lexa feel so torn inside; that makes her heart want to stay while wanting nothing more than to run at the same time.

Lexa commands her hand to take her hat, but it’s not listening to her. It’s frozen in place at her side. Everything is frozen, everything is cold, and Lexa cannot move.

And then Clarke does it again.
She just leans forward, taking Lexa by surprise, and kisses her.

This kiss is different. It’s more timid and more desperate and more meaningful all at once. It’s hard and sudden and passionate. And it’s soft and sweet and fearful and Lexa is utterly destroyed by it.

Her stiffness melts away like night frost withers before the morning sun and all that’s left is dew.

Lexa can’t help but lean against Clarke and Clarke feels so steady and stable and present that Lexa forgets for a second. And it’s bliss.

When they pull apart they stay with their foreheads touching. It’s close and intimate and when Clarke talks it’s in a whisper.

“I’m sorry.”

Lexa’s throat constricts painfully and ‘it’s okay’ remains trapped inside. Doubt still rages within her and all she can do is nod. It’s soft though and she takes refuge in the moment despite the voices in her head, telling her not to trust it.

But Lexa understands. She does.

Nevertheless it hurts.

“I’m sorry.” Clarke says again. And it’s scratchy and quiet and pained and as their foreheads part and Lexa looks into Clarke’s eyes, she has no doubt she really means it.

It takes some more of the tightness in Lexa’s chest away and she manages a smile.

Clarke is holding on to both of her hands between them for a little longer, before she slowly lets them go.

“I’ll see you soon?” Clarke asks, with a hopefulness in her voice that makes Lexa’s heart beat louder against her will.

Lexa nods again. She doesn’t trust herself to speak.

“Okay,” Clarke almost murmurs to herself and bows her head, before eyeing Lexa again.

“Text me when you get home, okay?”

Lexa nods a third time and then, finally, she turns around and walks away.

As she opens the door downstairs and pushes outside, the snow is falling all around her.

Falling, falling, falling...

Clarke feels horrible. Lexa completely closed off after she pulled back when Raven came busting in. She doesn’t even know why she did that. Raven knows about them! She wouldn’t have cared!

Why did she do that?

The hurt on Lexa’s face was painful to see and it was even more painful to know she was the one to
cause it.

What if Lexa doesn’t want to see her anymore?

What if she fucked it up already?

She should have explained! She should have told her that it wasn’t her, it was….something inside of Clarke. Something...she doesn’t know how to explain. A stupid reflex, a stupid fear and she wishes she could take it back, she wishes she could have a do-over. She’d keep their hands intertwined. They fit so perfectly.

But would she? Could she suppress a reflex even if she was aware of it?

“What?” Raven jerks her head back, looking at Clarke like she was crazy. Which is a little ironic, since Raven is the one looking a bit unhinged. Her hair is a mess, strands falling out of a lopsided bun, she’s wearing the same clothes she has worn the past few days and at a closer look Clarke thinks she looks a little thinner, too.

“No way, it’s not even dark outs-” her voice trails off when her eyes find the window. It’s been dark since before Lexa and Clarke came home.

Slightly worried, Clarke gets up from the table.

“Raven...are you okay?”

Raven’s still staring out of the window, a distant look on her face.

“Huh? Yeah, yeah, of course! I just...guess I lost track of time. Man, I’m hungry!” she seems to snap out of her bewilderment with no issue, leaving Clarke alone with the feeling that something isn’t quite right.

Watching Raven go into the kitchen and rummage for something to eat, chatting away about how she hasn’t eaten all day, having been too busy with her project, Clarke takes another closer look at her roommate.

Her movements are hurried and scattered and Clarke is surprised when she watches Raven open and close the same cupboard three times without taking anything from it.

“Raven,”

“I thought you said there was Chinese left? Did you guys eat it?”

“Raven,”
"Or at least some bread or something? Pasta? Rice? A vegetable?"

"Raven, can you-"

"Oh! I think I still got a sandwich somewhere in my backpack, actually!"

"RAVEN!"

"What?" Raven startles backwards when Clarke grabs her wrist on her way past. She looks at her with a dazed expression that Clarke doesn’t recognize.

"Have you- when’s the last time you’ve slept?” she asks, letting go of Raven’s wrist when she’s sure she won’t dart off again.

"Oh, I don’t know, like..yesterday or something? Why? Are you saying I don’t look good? Now, that’s just rude, Clarke, that’s not how you sweet-talk a girl. At all! I hope you don’t talk to Lexa that way, because that’s not the way to get a girl into bed, hon. Quite on the contr-"

"Raven.” Clarke interrupts Raven again, not playing along with her friend’s sudden flirtatious demeanor. Raven’s expression goes from a coy smirk, to an eyeroll in a second.

"Oh, come on, you’re so prude. Were you always this prude?” she tuts and then smirks again. “I’m just playing, Clarke.” Raven winks and then pinches Clarke’s ass, before walking away.

Clarke just stares after her.

After a minute longer she shakes herself out of her stupor. She needs to have a talk with Octavia about Raven. Something feels off about her. She needs to get some more sleep.

But so does Clarke. She feels like she can barely stand.

Slowly, she carries herself through her evening routine, all the while trying to keep up with her racing thoughts and checking her phone what feels like every second.

What should she do? Lexa hasn’t texted anything more than that she got home safely. To be fair, Clarke’s reply of ‘I’m glad’ didn’t really give her much reason to send another text, but what was Clarke supposed to do?

She wants to text Lexa that she had a great time. That she can’t wait to see her again. That she’s sorry she acted so weirdly when Raven came in, but that it doesn’t mean anything. Clarke wants to text Lexa all that, but more than that she just wants to call her, hear her voice, and make sure Lexa knows nothing has changed.

But Clarke can’t. She can’t call her, obviously, but she can’t text her any of those things either. What if Lexa doesn’t answer? What if she replies back shortly or says she doesn’t feel that same? Not anymore?

Just the thought of that makes Clarke feel panicky. No. No, she can’t risk that. She can’t text her. She just can’t.

So, she crawls under the blanket and tries to sleep.

It takes her longer than it has in a while and when she finally slips away her phone remains grasped loosely in her hand.

That night Clarke dreams she is falling.
Falling, falling, falling…

Ba-bling

Clarke: Do you ever serve there as well? Or just help out behind the scenes?

Lexa: I only tended bar twice. I don’t really enjoy it.

Lexa pushes her phone back into her blazer pocket, but not a second after she has picked up the next crate, her phone dings again, just as Anya joins her back at the white truck.

“Oh, my god. That thing has been going off all day! What the hell are you guys texting each other? A novel? The bible? The Gettysburg Address?” she scoffs, taking the crate from Lexa’s arms and indicating her to take the next with a jerk of her head.

Lexa does so and carries it inside the club after her.

“So?” Anya’s voice sounds a little strained.

Lexa frowns, as she elbows the door open to follow Anya behind the bar.

“I don’t know, we’re just texting. Nothing specific.” Lexa answers honestly. While Clarke has practically been texting her none-stop all day, none of the messages had any real content. They don’t feel the same either, they feel...distant. Clarke feels distant. Or maybe it’s Lexa who’s the distant one, but she doesn’t know how to fix that. She just feels off. And horrible. And wrong.

She feels like she’s falling through space. And falling and falling and falling still.

“Hey!”

Lexa gets elbowed in her sides and buckles a little by reflex.

“What’s up? Spill.” Anya demands briskly and Lexa can tell by her serious expression, her raised eyebrows and the way her hands are stemmed firmly against her waist, that Anya wouldn’t let her get away with much less than the whole story.

So she tells it to her. She tells her about going to the shop and Clarke being flirty. She tells her that they walked around holding hands and that everything seemed fine until Raven came in and Clarke practically jumped up to get away from her.

Her voice turns pressed at that part as her throat closes up again and when Lexa swallows it’s hard and painful.

Anya hums, considers Lexa for a moment longer and then shrugs, “So what?”

Lexa doesn’t understand.

“So- what do you mean ‘so what’?”
Anya shrugs again, shaking her head at Lexa. “So what?”

“I-” Lexa doesn’t even know how to respond to that. “Don’t you think it’s obvious that she’s…”

Lexa wants to say embarrassed, but she can’t bring herself to say it, “unsure?”

For the third time, Anya shrugs, “So what?”

Lexa’s patience with those words are quickly wearing thin.

“Anya-”

“No, Lexa...seriously, so what if she’s unsure? So are you! Jesus, you could barely admit you liked her at all like a week ago. Hell, you’re like the queen of commitment issues! It’s time to get off that high horse of yours and face facts.”

“Face-”

“Facts, yes. You’re both idiots. Fact. You’re both stubborn. Fact. You’re both clearly into each other and too chicken to do anything about it. Fact. And you’re both driving me fucking nuts!” she pushes past Lexa, smacking her shoulder as she does so.

“Now, come on, I gotta get this shit unloaded. Frank needs the truck back by 6.”

Lexa shouldn’t still be able to be surprised by Anya’s bluntness, but here she is, slightly shell-shocked, mouth agape, and needing a second to collect herself before she can rush after Anya.

She has to admit that Anya made some excellent points there. But…

“But,”

Anya looks back over at her as she pulls another crate closer to the edge of the truck.

“But what?”

Lexa can’t bring herself to say it.

What if Clarke doesn’t like her like that? What if Clarke is just trying things out? What if they start something and suddenly Clarke realizes she can’t do this after all? What if....

“She really means a lot to you, huh?” Anya muses, pausing a moment to frown at Lexa.

Lexa nods. “Yeah.”

“Well, then make sure she doesn’t have even more reason to be unsure! Make sure she knows you understand and that you’re still there anyway. That’s what you’d want right? Just give her some time and don’t be an idiot.”

“I don’t want to be pushy though.” Lexa argues, worry in her voice. Despite Clarke’s previous brazen advances, she now feels like any movement on her part would chase her away.

Anya leans in closer until she’s sure she has Lexa’s full attention.

“Then don’t be.” she drops her wisdom in a low voice, before turning away abruptly and heaving the next crate out of the truck.

“Get that last one and close the door after.” she calls over her shoulder and then vanishes inside
without another word.

“Okay…”

Okay...okay!

It sounds so simple when Anya says it, and suddenly it feels simple again, as well. She can do this! Clarke likes her, she knows she does. And everything else doesn’t matter. They’ll figure it out.

Ignoring the crate next to her, Lexa pulls out her phone.

**Lexa:** *Would you like to go to that Christmas market with me tomorrow? I’d really love to invite you there, my treat.*

Lexa has barely pressed send, before Clarke’s reply pops up. It makes Lexa smile, a giddy energy taking hold of her heart again.

**Clarke:** *I’d love to! Yes!*

Suddenly she doesn’t feel like she’s falling anymore. Falling has turned into flying, but maybe they’re not even two different things at all.

Maybe, Lexa thinks, the smile still on her face, maybe flying is just falling with a happy end.

Chapter End Notes

Yooooo!

It’s been a minute!
Or a year...

But, I finally made it and finished this chapter!
I hope some of you are still around. Thanks so much for sticking with me for this long. I hope you enjoyed this new update and leave me a little review.

All the best and merry Chrimmis <3

Happy holidays, everybody!
Unexpected Sleepovers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Kittyyyy!”

“Ra-Raven don’t- don’t scare her! Oh, for Christ’s sake.” Murphy sighs, knowing a lost cause when he sees one, as Raven is already totally enraptured with his newest roommate.

The tiny, mostly white kitten seems only startled for a moment, however, when Raven kneels down in front of her and makes little kissy noises to draw her out from where she darted behind the couch when Clarke, Octavia and Raven entered the apartment not a minute ago. Soon enough she boldly stalks forward, still a little unsteady on her fluffy feet, and inspects the newcomer with interest to Raven’s delight.

“Oh, my god, she’s the cutest thing I’ve ever seen!” she almost whines, looking back at Clarke and Octavia with an overwhelmed pout, before returning her attention to the small feline that is now pawing at the zipper of her maroon sweater.

While Raven continues to speak of the kitten’s cuteness to the kitten itself in a baby voice, Murphy gives Octavia and Clarke a big hug, before taking their jackets.

“Hey, hi, sorry, how are you?” he asks and invites them further inside. They follow him into the kitchen, where he drapes their jackets over a chair in the corner, before providing them each with a drink. They’re served in fancy flute sort of glasses that - upon closer inspection - even have Christmas or at least Winter themed embellishments in form of little white golden snowflakes on them.

“Wow, fancy!” Octavia comments, raising her eyebrows, obviously impressed, and Murphy can’t hide a slightly proud smile.

“Yeah, I thought why not go all out for once. Get a little Christmas spirit going or whatever.”

“Wait, you bought these?” Clarke asks, assuming that they must have been pretty expensive.

“Yeah, but I got lucky.” Murphy turns around, picking his own glass up and clinking it against each of theirs in turn, “found them at this flea market I went to the other day.”

“Cool.” Clarke and Octavia say in unison and then each take a sip. The Prosecco is fittingly as delicious as the beautiful flutes make it look and Clarke sighs happily as the prickly drink makes its way down her throat.

They talk for a while, Clarke and Octavia remembering at the same time to thank Murphy for hosting this christmas dinner again, making it the third event of what Clarke hopes will be a long tradition coming, and eventually move to settle down in the living room, where Raven is still playing with Murphy’s new kitten Cleo.

As per usual Lieutenant Dan on the other hand is nowhere to be seen, showing once again that he is not particularly fond of people aside from Murphy.

By the time Jasper, Monty and to Clarke’s surprise her study buddy Maya show up, dinner is almost ready and Clarke’s a little tipsy.
“Hey! What are you doing here!” Clarke greets Maya as soon as she spots the girl, jumping up from the couch. Her dark-haired friend hugs her back and then explains that she recently started a teacher position at Murphy’s school and he was nice enough to invite her here. She only found out he was friends with Clarke two days ago and thought it was the coolest coincidence.

“Yeah, and we just met her downstairs, like, what are the odds!” Jasper pipes up just then and before Clarke can respond, she is being suffocated against his chest as he hugs her cheerfully.

“Apparently you’re not the only fashionably late one.” Murphy teases, coming over from the kitchen and handing Jasper and Maya a couple of flutes as well. “Energy?” he asks Monty, who doesn’t usually drink and instead gets hyped on energy drinks at parties or in life in general.

“Maybe later, thanks.” he waves him off however, before hugging O and Clarke in turn. As he goes to lean away, Clarke keeps her arm around his waist and smiles at him. He smiles back and squeezes her once again, before they all wander over to where Raven has already pulled Maya onto the couch, asking her a bunch of questions that Clarke isn’t sure count as small talk anymore. It’s more like an interrogation and Maya looks a little overwhelmed. Before Clarke can intercept however, her phone buzzes in her back pocket and before she even gets it out, she’s already smiling.

Lexa and she have been texting so much over the past few days that Clarke has hardly spent five minutes away from her phone for fear of missing a message. Even Octavia and Raven have been noticing her newest addiction and have teased her about it more than once. But Clarke doesn’t mind. On the contrary, the teasing and light-hearted jokes make it easier for her to relax about the whole thing. And she desperately wants to.

Because she still flashes back to the hurt look on Lexa’s face and the horrible drop in her stomach when Lexa just up and left after Clarke had shied away from her when Raven had barged in. They haven’t talked about it. They just…went on as if nothing happened. At first Clarke had been nervous when Lexa picked her up to go to the Christmas Market, but in her presence all awkwardness vanished almost in an instant and she didn’t spend another second thinking about it. Not until she got home and not until she realized how much she wished Lexa would have stayed longer. Or maybe even the night.

She wishes Lexa were with her all the time now. It’s a little disconcerting and very unfamiliar and at the same time Clarke feels strangely at home with that longing in her heart. It’s like she’s always missed Lexa, even before she met her.

She misses her right now and she’s a little annoyed with herself that she didn’t invite her here. But she didn’t want to hurt her again and she doesn’t trust herself enough yet not to be awkward and reflectively pull away like she did or do something similarly stupid. She knows she’ll get there. She just wants to make damn sure that Lexa won’t get hurt again in the process.

And yet it’s hard not to reply to Lexa’s text asking how the dinner is with ‘it would be better if you were here, please come’. Instead she just types a generic answer saying it’s nice and then asks what Lexa is up to tonight.

With a sigh she pushes her phone back into her pocket.

Octavia is leaning against her, Lincoln sitting on the floor with his back against Octavia’s legs and Clarke wishes she could play with Lexa’s hair the way O does with Lincoln’s. Well, with Lincoln’s head. There’s not that much hair on it.
She also wishes she could flirt with Lexa the way Jasper does with Maya and see her face light up with delight as much as Raven’s does when Cleo lets out those little kitten meows.

She wishes she could be deep in conversation with Lexa like Monty and Murphy are and if only she were here, she’d tell her how pretty her eyes are and how good she smells and that she really means it and it’s not just ‘cause she’s drunk.

She imagines Lexa smirking and blushing a little and shyly averting her gaze and Clarke’s stomach does a little backflip just at the thought of it. And then it does another when she remembers how Lexa reacted when Clarke complained that her hands were freezing at the Christmas Market.

The air around them is cold and biting and filled with talking voices. Lexa marvelled at the fairy lights just like she did when they went past them the other day and Clarke’s lips spread into a big smile.

That smile has pretty much persisted the entire evening and even now, as she’s slowly getting to a point where the cold is creeping through her clothes and making the tip of her nose and fingers feel frozen solid, Clarke still doesn’t feel like going home. Not unless Lexa comes with her, but after last time she’s hesitant about that. And Lexa probably is, too.

When a shiver runs through her, Lexa’s eyes return to her from the little wooden animals being sold at one of the little booths.

“Are you cold?” she asks, a little puff of white air billowing out in front of her lips.

“A little, yeah.” Clarke admits, trying to downplay it, but another shiver makes Lexa’s brows furrow anyway.

“Do you want to go home?” Lexa asks as Clarke feared.

“No!” she immediately shakes her head. “No, no, it’s fine. It’s just my hands. Really, I’m fine.”

Lexa hums, still frowning. “Let me see.” she demands, holding out her hands for Clarke’s.

When Clarke just looks at her for a second, she gently takes Clarke’s hands without asking again.

“Your hands, let me see.” Lexa repeats, this time a little quieter, and Clarke thinks she may just melt despite the freezing cold.

The look in Lexa’s eyes is so soft and so concentrated as she inspects Clarke’s cold, red hands for a second and then she does something so unexpected, Clarke can’t stop herself from letting out a little surprised sound.

She takes Clarke’s hands and, one after the other, carefully guides them along her own arms and underneath her sleeves until Clarke’s hands are safely wrapped around Lexa’s lower arms. It makes it so they’re standing even closer together and Clarke’s heart starts hammering uncontrollably from the sweetness of the gesture.

“Better?” Lexa asks earnestly, seemingly unaware of how adorable she’s being, and Clarke can’t do much more than nod and hum.

Her fingers wrap a little harder around Lexa’s soft, warm skin and Clarke can feel Lexa shiver.

“Sorry.” Clarke hums, not wanting to make Lexa cold, but also not wanting to pull her hands back one bit. Ever.
It’s Lexa’s turn to merely hum, as she suddenly stares at Clarke in a way that makes Clarke warm all over without another touch.

She doesn’t know how long they stand there; slightly to the side of all the hustle between two booths at this busy Christmas Market, just holding each other close. Clarke can’t stop looking at Lexa and Lexa can’t seem to meet her eyes. It’s intimate and adorable and awkward and Clarke feels so incredibly giddy, she thinks she might just burst.

Her hands are long warmed up when she finally slips them out of Lexa’s sleeves. It’s like she’s lifting a spell off the both of them and there’s a moment of clearing throats and shuffling feet, before they somehow manage to maneuver themselves back out among the slowly thinning crowd of people.

“What’s that smile about?”

Clarke’s body hops upward on the couch a little when Raven plops down next to her. Her hair is gathered in a somewhat messy bun and her smile is so bright it fits the glittering top she’s wearing.

Somewhere in the back of her mind, Clarke notices that she’s never seen that shirt before. Then Raven’s arm is around Clarke and her lips are really close to Clarke’s ear.

“Is it Lexa? It is, isn’t it. You’re all glowy and smiley lately. It’s nice. She’s nice. She’s nice to you, isn’t she? Cause if not, well I mean I can’t really do much, she’s a fighter, like, an amazing one, but I totally will write her a strongly worded letter, or-”

Clarke just clasps her hand over Raven’s mouth. It’s the only way to shut her up sometimes. At least temporarily.

Raven giggles and then makes to bite Clarke’s palm, pulling Clarke against her by the neck in a semi headlock at the same time.

It jerks Clarke away from Octavia, who makes her indignation at suddenly losing her pillow known by grunting a whiney ‘hey!’, but Clarke is busy trying to wrestle herself free from Raven’s arm, while keeping her hand clasped over her mouth, which is increasingly difficult as Raven wiggles as well.

They tussle for a second, before they break out in giggles and come to rest against each other with their legs intertwined and Clarke’s head on Raven’s shoulder. Breathing a little heavily, Clarke frowns as she considers their position.

“Hey, your leg is better, hm?” she twitches her own leg muscles underneath Raven’s bum leg.

Raven hums. It feels funny with Clarke’s ear so close to her chest.

“Yeah, it has barely bothered me at all since we got back.” she tells Clarke and Clarke is really happy for her. Really, really happy.

“That’s great. Really, Ray.” she smiles, tilting her head back against the couch to look up at Raven, whose head is a little above hers.

Raven smiles back. “Yeah.”

They sit like that for a bit and Clarke enjoys the closeness and the way Raven traces her fingers with her own. Raven smells good, too, and Clarke thinks to herself that maybe now she could ask her how dating a girl works, but then Raven gets restless again and wiggles out of their entanglement, before Clarke can even form a sentence.
Sometimes she wishes she had Raven’s energy, but when the dark haired girl starts dancing randomly and tries to pull Maya up from her seat next to Jasper - to his obvious dismay - to dance with her, while already chattering on about something in double speed again, Clarke remembers with a small jolt in her stomach, that she really wanted to talk to Octavia about that actually. About Raven’s energy and about how it makes her a little worried, because it seems excessive even for her.

She doesn’t like it, but the thought that Raven may be taking something more than her prescribed pain meds - which she should only be taking when needed, anyway - has crossed her mind once or twice in the last few days. She just seems so… hyped and fast and even though Raven has always had more energy than most, the fact that she hasn’t been sleeping much according to her own words, makes Clarke a little worried.

When she looks over to her other roommate, however, Octavia seems busy texting with someone. And she doesn’t seem particularly happy about it, either, judging by her frown.

“What’s up?” Clarke asks, leaning over until her chin comes to rest on top of Octavia’s shoulder.

“Ugh, nothing. Bell’s being annoying.” she mumbles, with a frustrated eye roll.

“What’d he do?” Clarke asks, although she thinks she knows.

Bellamy texted the group earlier in the week that he couldn’t make the christmas dinner because he had to work late, but pretty much everybody knows that it’s really still about that fight Murphy and him had at Octavia’s birthday party. They still haven't made up.

“He’s still lying to me.” Octavia goes on in that moment and Clarke hums understandingly. “I don’t get how they can be such fucking children about this. God!” Octavia adds, before forcefully shoving her phone into the gap between the seat cushions next to her thigh. It’s a thing she does when she’s really annoyed with someone and doesn’t want to even see the phone anymore. Which has lead to some very amusing moments in the past, where someone would randomly produce a phone seemingly out of nowhere after accidentally sitting down on it on their couch, causing bewildered looks on guests’ faces and amused, but unsurprised ones, on Raven’s or Clarke’s. They just know Octavia too well.

“They’re idiots.” Clarke comments lazily, feeling the effects of the alcohol slowly making her eyelids grow heavier. The dimmed lights and cozy warmth in Murphy’s apartment aren’t helping her drowsiness either.

“Yeah.” Octavia grumbles, crossing her arms over her chest.

With another hum, Clarke leans her head fully on Octavia’s shoulder. It’s starting to feel as heavy as her eyelids. Heaving a sigh that turns into a yawn, she absently watches Lieutenant Dan carefully sneak through Murphy’s bedroom door that’s been left ajar. Staying as close to the wall as possible, the rough looking tom cat stalks around the corner toward the kitchen. He almost makes it, too, but just before he reaches the counter, Raven notices him. Her exclamation of excitement however, spoils any chance she might have had at snatching him up, before he can escape. As it is, Lieutenant Dan dashes around the corner and out of sight quicker than Raven can get off the coffee table she just started dancing on.

“Damn” Clarke hears her pout, but her disappointment doesn’t last a second, before her mind is busy with other things again.
“Whoo! Yes, Griffin! Get it, babe!” Raven hollers, as Clarke joins her on the makeshift dance floor they created by pushing most of Murphy’s living room furniture towards the walls.

About half an hour ago, Clarke’s drunken tiredness made way for a much needed surge of energy after she had finished the last drink Murphy had gotten her. She likes this sort of weightless feeling that comes with it. And she barely notices that her body isn’t as weightless as her mind, quickly forgetting every stumble or near fall on her way towards Raven.

Raven laughs happily, grasping her hands the second Clarke is close enough, and twirls her once, twice, three times, before catching Clarke as she wobbles against her.

Clarke hugs her, cause hugging is the best. And also more stable. And Raven likes hugs, too.

Usually she does, at least, but now she seems impatient. She pushes Clarke back a bit, and Clarke wants to whine a complaint, but then she sees Raven holding out her cup to her and takes a sip instead. She thinks she tastes….alcohol. That’s about all she can differentiate. Probably gin or something. Yeah, gin sounds about right.

“Thanks” Clarke tells Raven and Raven just smiles, starting to spin her again. Clarke is too slow to stop her from the first twirl, but manages to avoid getting turned around another time, holding onto Raven’s hip with her left hand.

“No, no, no, wait, wait” Clarke protests, taking a step back from her. She needs Raven to listen for a minute, because she needs to ask her something. Has been needing to ask her something for a long while. She needs to ask her for help. Raven needs to help her with Lexa, because Clarke doesn’t know what she’s doing! But she really, really doesn’t want to fuck it up and Raven knows more than she does and she needs to tell her how to do this. She needs to tell her how to like woo Lexa and stuff and how to make her feel more comfortable. And she needs to tell Clarke how to feel more comfortable, too, because things are so confusing sometimes and she needs to not be confused anymore. She doesn’t want to be confused anymore. She just wants Lexa.

“Yes, yes, yes, what, what” Raven laughs, but lets go of Clarke’s wrist.

“You need to help me.” Clarke tells her, stepping in closer again. She is a little too aware of Lincoln sitting on the couch only a couple of feet behind her and she doesn’t necessarily want him to overhear what she’s about to ask Raven.

“Hm?” Raven hums, seemingly not having heard Clarke’s plea.

“Come here,” Clarke says, tugging Raven this time. She pulls her all the way back to the kitchen area, where Murphy, O and Jasper are just emerging from with fresh drinks for themselves and some more.

Octavia eyes them suspiciously as Clarke pulls Raven past her and Clarke feels her cheeks heat up a bit. She knows what this might look like, but it doesn’t matter right now. She needs Raven’s advice. Now.

“What, what, what?” Raven still giggles, as Clarke lets go of her hand and turns to face her. The smirk on Raven’s face makes Clarke’s face redden even more, but Clarke ignores it.

“You need to- I- Can you help me?” she tries to figure out how to word this.

“With?” Raven raises both eyebrows, cocking her head a little to the side, curious.

“Lexa!” Clarke frowns. What else?!
“Oh, uh…” Raven looks almost surprised, but her expression changes in an instant to excited again.

“Yeah, of course! What do you need help with? Are you guys like…”

“Oh, god, no! I mean, I don’t know, yeah. I mean-” Clarke cuts herself off, when she realises she doesn’t even know what she thinks the end to Raven’s question might have been anymore.

*Are you guys like dating? Are you guys like gonna sleep together? Are you guys like really super bad at flirting and staying chill and not feeling awkward and not making Lexa feel bad, like, oh my god, Clarke, get it together!*

“Well?” Raven asks, voice adopting a conspiratorial tone.

“I…” Clarke’s heart is racing, “I just need some advice on…”

“On?”

“On how to do this! Any of this! I don’t know what I’m doing, like, you know me. I’m not shy or anything and I’m not- it’s not like I don’t want this. Her. Like as a… you know. But I- I just I keep getting this weird feeling, like this...sort of shock feeling, where I kinda just...I don’t know, just, I keep messing up and I want to stop messing up, because Lexa shouldn’t feel like that, you know? I felt so bad when she looked at me like that and I don’t want her to look at me like that anymore, I just want her to look at me like she did at the Christmas Market. But I don’t know how to do that. Or how not to do that. I don’t know how to make it so she doesn’t… I don’t know... go away? I don’t know…”

Clarke trails off helplessly. She just doesn’t know. This is hard. It’s so much harder than she thought it would be and then it’s not hard when she’s with Lexa and then it’s suddenly super hard and Clarke is just so, so confused.

Raven, whose grin had slowly slipped away to show a more serious expression during Clarke’s rant, stays quiet for a moment longer, before she looks at Clarke in such a soft and adoring way, it almost makes Clarke feel like hiding.

A gentle smile grows on Raven’s face.

“You’re kinda falling for her, huh?” she asks, and Clarke hasn’t heard her this serious in quite a while. It’s nice.

She nods, worrying her lower lip between her teeth. It tingles a little. Because their a little numb. Her lips. And her fingers. Tingle, tingle, tingle.

“I think so.” Clarke admits, and while her heartbeat immediately picks up, she also feels relieved at finally talking to Raven about this.

Raven hums and nods as she steps around Clarke, taking a new plastic cup from the pile Murphy brought out after the first of his beautiful flutes broke. Raven and Jasper still blame each other.

“Coke and Rum?” Raven asks and Clarke just shrugs. Whatever.

“Sure.”

Raven takes way too long to pour her drink and Clarke feels like a child, waiting for her mom’s answer if she gets to go to that party she wants to go to.
Finally, Raven turns back around to her and hands her the cup, while leaning back against the counter top.

“So,” Raven starts and Clarke takes a big gulp of the drink, trying to drown the nerves that suddenly flared up.

“You and Lexa are getting serious? Like, dating serious?” Raven asks and then takes a sip of her own drink, eyeing Clarke over the rim.

Clarke wants to say yes, but truth is, she doesn’t know. They haven’t talked about it. About what they are or what to call it when they hang out. Clarke thinks they were dates. But this is really something she doesn’t want to get wrong. She doesn't just want to assume. Being wrong, while never fun, would really, really, really suck in this instant.

“I don’t know.” she answers honestly.

“I see.” Raven hums again, and then hops onto the counter. Clarke jerks out of reflex, but Raven’s leg really seems to be a lot better. She doesn’t even seem to feel anything at all and just goes on, “well, how’s it been? What have you guys been doing on your… outings.” she can’t stop herself from grinning at her own joke and Clarke rolls her eyes.

“I don’t know. Just...hang out, go shopping, go for coffee, just...normal things.”

“Did one of you pay for the other?” Raven asks and Clarke has to think about it.

“I mean, sometimes. Other times I pay my stuff and she pays hers.” she says, frowning, because this doesn’t clear anything up at all.

“Okay…” Raven looks thoughtful, slightly swinging her legs, “did youuuuu... hold hands?”

A smile creeps onto Clarke’s face against her will.

Raven snorts, “I’ll take that as a yes.” she holds up a hand before Clarke can even confirm.

“That’s good. That’s a good sign. What about kissing? Have you guys kissed more? Since the club I mean?”

Clarke nods, her lips tingling still. Or again. She isn’t sure.

“Yeah.” is all she can say.

She wishes she could kiss Lexa all the time.

“Another check there.” Raven comments, doing a check sign in the air with the hand that’s holding her drink, before putting it to her lips.

Clarke takes a sip as well. The alcohol feels nice as it goes down her throat. Sharp and light on the coke, for sure.

“But you haven’t talk about it?” Raven asks, seemingly knowing the answer.

Clarke shakes her head. No. That’s the problem.

“Okay, well, to me it still sounds date-y to be honest.” Raven shrugs and Clarke feels so happy to hear her say it out loud that she needs to stop herself from going over to wrap Raven in her arms.
“Yeah?” she asks hopefully.

“Yeah, sure! I mean, girls can be touchy and stuff, but I don’t think this qualifies as just gals being pals.” she giggles. Clarke isn’t sure about what, but she doesn’t care. This is so good to hear.

“And besides, Lexa doesn’t seem the type to be like that with just anybody, you know?”

Clarke nods along, her hopes being confirmed. “Yeah, yeah that’s what I thought, too.”

“But?” Raven asks, knowing Clarke well enough to know there’s still more she’s worrying about.

“But…” Clarke shakes her head and frowns at her drink. It’s almost empty again. When did that happen? “I just feel so... “

“In over your head?” Raven helps and Clarke thinks it fits pretty well.

“Yeah, I guess. I just, I don’t want to hurt her and I also don’t want to assume something, when it’s actually totally wrong and then get hurt myself, you know? I just don’t know how to make this less...”

“Confusing?”

Clarke sighs, “Scary.”

Raven cooes and slides off the counter. Clicking her tongue, she pulls Clarke into a hug.

“You’re so adorable!” she exclaims quietly and Clarke pushes away her feeling of embarrassment and just lets herself sink into Raven’s arms, groaning slightly.

“This is haaaard.” she whines and Raven’s body shakes slightly as she laughs. Clarke huffs out a small laugh herself.

“I know, right? Girls are the worst!” Raven grins, pulling back from the hug.

Clarke nods fervently. “Horrible! So confusing! And soft! And pretty!”

This time Raven laughs even louder. “Oh my god, you’re so gay!” she comments happily, squeezing Clarke’s shoulders almost proudly and giving her a huge, toothy grin.

“Ugh,” Clarke lets her head fall back, letting out a few dramatic fake sobs, before righting herself again with a deep sigh.

Raven is still chuckling, smirking at her with amusement in her eyes.

“Well...” Clarke empties her drink in one last gulp, “thanks for this...talk.” she says, the last word skipping on a small hiccup.

“Anytime, Griffin,” Raven throws one arm around her, steering her back to the others, “anytime.”

As they sit down on the couch that’s been put back where it once stood - more or less - Clarke’s thoughts are racing. While Raven immediately joins into a conversation to their left with Monty and Octavia, Clarke can’t stop thinking about Lexa.

And about what she just figured out.

She wants to be dating Lexa. She wants it to be official. And she wants it all right now.
Passing on the blunt that Jasper offers her, the strong smell of it wafting around her suddenly, musky, but nice, she takes out her phone.

A small voice in the back of her head tells her that maybe, just maybe, she’s too drunk to make good decisions right now, but she’s already dialing Lexa’s number.

---

Even with her jacket the night air is almost too cold to still be sitting out on their balcony, but before Lexa can get up, Anya comes back out. Lexa hums gratefully when Anya hands her a blanket as she closes the door behind her with their beers in the other hand.

“Thanks, I was just gonna get one.” Lexa murmurs, quickly wrapping the soft quilt around herself, pushing it in under her feet and butt.

Anya sits down next to her, hands her one of the bottles, and then wraps herself up in a blanket as well.

They sit there for a while, just enjoying the quiet and Lexa looks up to the stars. It’s a pretty clear night tonight, and Lexa feels very content as she traces the constellations she knows with her eyes.

Cassiopeia, The Big Dipper and Orion.

Cassiopeia is maybe her favorite of those three. It looks like a wonky ‘W’ and Lexa remembers exactly when Costia taught her what it was called and how nervous Lexa felt when Costia leaned in close and said that now it reminded her of Lexa, because it’s the first letter to her last name and it could also stand for ‘warrior’. Lexa asked her why that made her think of her. She hadn’t told her about Anya and her game of playing ‘warriors’ when they were younger. Costia just shrugged and told her it just seemed like she was always battling with something inside.

It was the first time Lexa felt naked with her. And even though it made her feel terrified, she didn’t hate it. She didn’t hate it at all.

Now as she looks up at the big ‘W’ she feels a tinge of regret in the pit of her stomach, but she pushes it away. It doesn’t belong anymore. Not in this time.

‘The past is the past.’ she tells herself as Anya always used to.

She doesn’t want to feel bad anymore. That part of her life is over.

Heaving a small sigh, she lifts the bottle to her lips. The beer isn’t her favorite, but it’s fine for a cold night on their balcony, and Lexa swirls the liquid in her mouth before swallowing it.

“I’m really happy with Octavia.” Anya suddenly speaks up. Her voice carries over softly on the quiet night air and Lexa revels in the familiarity. It’s comforting.

“Yeah?” she asks, cuddling a little lower in the chair as she looks over at Anya.

“Yeah, she’s pretty badass. The other night one of the customers was getting a little annoying with a girl at the bar and she confronted him, before I could even step in. No hesitation.” Anya shakes her head with an impressed expression.

Lexa smiles and looks back up at the stars. “What did she say?”

“Just asked him if she could get him some water, cause he was looking real thirsty.” Anya laughs
and Lexa chuckles as well.

“Nice.”

“Yeah, she didn’t even let him rebuttal, either, just actually handed him a glass of water and stared at him until he left.”

Lexa smiles at that image, almost wishing she could have seen that.

“Sounds like she’s on top of everything.” Lexa comments.

“Definitely. Glad Lincoln found her.”

Lexa has to laugh. “Yes, I’m sure he is very happy he found a girl that fits in well with your staff. It’s what everybody looks for in a girlfriend.”

“Well, in that case, I’ll ask blondie to try out next week and we’ll see.” Anya jokes, but something in her tone makes Lexa frown. When Anya adds a little sarcastic sounding snort after, Lexa really feels rubbed the wrong way.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

Nothing.

"Do you not like Clarke or something?"

Instead of an answer, Anya stares at her for a second, before sitting up a little straighter in her chair, her gaze returning to the sky. “So she’s your girlfriend then?”

What?

“I-n-no, that’s not-” Lexa stammers, suddenly feeling warmer than she did just a second ago. “That’s not what I’m saying.”

“Kinda is.” Anya retorts, monotonously.

Lexa’s heart drops a little. Not just at the unexpected spotlight on her not quite clear and very much confusing status with Clarke, but also at Anya’s cold demeanor.

Wait, does she actually not like her?

“You didn’t answer my question.” Lexa insists, her beer forgotten in her hands.

Anya doesn’t say anything.

Lexa waits a little, thinking an answer might come, but when none does, she puts down her bottle on the little wooden table between them and crosses her arms over her chest defensively. A small ball of anger starts forming deep in her stomach.

“Why don’t you like her? You don’t even know her!”

“I never said I didn’t like her.” Anya defends, but it seems like a red herring. There’s something she isn’t saying and Lexa is more impatient than usual.

“What then?” she snaps, not understanding what Anya’s problem is. Clarke is great! She’s sweet and nice and smart and there’s literally no reason for Anya not to like her.
Anya stays quiet.

Lexa feels the ball grow.

“Anya!” she burrows on, and finally Anya’s head snaps over to look at her again.

From her eyes an intense look shines through the dark, but Lexa isn’t sure what it means. Whatever it is, Anya seems to think better of it.

“You’re right.” she concedes, voice not quite matching the words. “I don’t know her.”

Lexa waits for more. More words, more looks, just more.

But all she gets is more silence as Anya leans back in her chair.

Lexa feels like she’s frozen in hers as she continues staring at Anya for another minute, before admitting defeat. Jaw clenched, she can tell she won’t get more out of Anya tonight. But now she’s pissed.

What is her goddamn problem all of a sudden? Wasn’t Anya the one that told her to go for it? To not be stupid and make sure Clarke knows she likes her?

This makes no sense.

Again, they sit in silence, but unlike before, Lexa doesn’t feel content and the stars above blur before her eyes as angry tears brim at their surface.

Just when she wants to get up to go back inside, no longer feeling comfortable sitting next to Anya in this tense silence, her phone vibrates in her pocket.

Quickly she draws it out, trying to make her small snuffle as inaudible as possible, before answering it. She sees it’s Clarke just before she accepts the call and clears her voice so as not to make it obvious that she’s upset.

She doesn’t want to have to explain. Especially not with Anya right there.

“Hello?” she answers the phone. For a second she considers walking inside still, not wanting to speak to Clarke while Anya is listening after what just transpired, but then she decides against it.

Whatever Anya’s problem is, it’s got nothing to do with her. And it’s got nothing to do with Clarke.

“Oh, hi, hey! So, I was just talking about you and uh, I mean I don’t know what you’re up to right now, but- oh fuck! Oh, shit, I didn’t realize how late it is! Oh my god, I’m sorry, I didn’t realize how late it is, I didn’t mean to wake you or anything. Did I wake you? I’m sorry, I’m stupid. I-I...sorry.” Clarke’s voice comes through slightly distorted as she rambles quickly.

Lexa has to grin. Clarke is clearly a little intoxicated, but Lexa’s heart jumps at the thought that Clarke has been talking about her. It’s a not quite comfortable feeling. It makes her nervous to imagine what might have been said, but it also makes her happy that Clarke talks about her at all. And that she’s calling her now. At almost 1am. Rambling like a cute idiot.

“It’s alright, Clarke, I don’t mind.” she says softly, hoping Clarke will still hear her over the music and voices Lexa can hear in the background on the other end.

“Oh, okay, good. Good.”
Lexa can almost see Clarke nod her head. She wishes she could actually see it.

“Is everything alright?” she asks, now wondering why Clarke is in fact calling her this late.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah! No, everything’s great. I’m just- I’m at Murphy’s christmas thing and like it’s great, but I don’t know I was just talking with Raven and I just thought maybe you would- maybe we-”

Clarke’s voice suddenly breaks off and if it weren’t for the continued background noises, Lexa would think the call dropped.

“Clarke?” she asks, curious why she suddenly stopped talking.

Another beat of silence and then, “uh…I, uh...nothing. I was just talking about you and I guess I called or something, sorry.”

Lexa frowns. She’s sure that’s not where Clarke was going, but there’s also not enough for her to go on to guess where that might have been.

She doesn’t know what to say to that so it’s silent for a bit. It’s the third silence of the night and where the first was comfortable and the second was tense and angry, this one just seems heavy. Not good or bad, just...heavy with something unsaid and Lexa more than anything wishes she were there right now, so she could attempt to read Clarke’s expression and body language and figure out what’s going on. Her thoughts are battling inside her head, hope against fear, and Lexa feels a little frozen.

Finally Clarke speaks again, and Lexa exhales some of her tension, when Clarke seems back to normal. Tone light and words clear, she asks, “Anyway, uh, how are you? What are you up to? Sorry again, for calling you this late.” she chuckles.

Lexa smiles again. “I’m good. I’m just sitting on the balcony at home.” she tells Clarke, noticing Anya lift her bottle to her lips. She kind of wishes Anya would leave, so she could be alone with Clarke, but won’t give her the satisfaction of getting up and walking inside herself. Anya doesn’t get to make her feel weird about this. She doesn’t. So, Lexa will just ignore her.

“Oh, that sounds nice! Can you see the stars?” Clarke asks and Lexa looks up at them. There’s a big cloud covering most of them now, but she doesn’t care. She’s too busy loving how Clarke is just as excited about the stars as she is. They discovered that a couple of weeks ago and Clarke said she’d take her to the planetarium some time. Lexa can’t wait to look at the stars with Clarke.

“Yeah. I mean not anymore, but yes, I was looking at them earlier.”

“Cool. That’s...cool.” Clarke says and Lexa has to suppress a giggle. Clarke sounds so adorable and a little more rattled than usual. It’s nice not to be the rambling one for once.

“So, how’s the party?” Lexa asks, but before Clarke gets a chance to answer, a voice seems to shout over her. Lexa is pretty sure it’s Raven’s.


“No, n- Raven! Come on, I- ugh…” Clarke sighs deeply into the phone and then her voice suddenly seems to come from farther away as she continues protesting and another voice comes through the phone.

“Helloooo? Who dis be?”
It’s neither Raven’s nor Octavia’s, however, and Lexa wonders for a second who she’s on the phone with now, before Raven’s voice shouts in the background again. “*Jasper, fuck off, you’re cramping Griff’s style, man!*”

“You’re all cramping my style!” Lexa hears Clarke’s indignant voice, but she sounds even farther away.

Lexa has to chuckle.

There’s some loud rustling and suddenly there’s heavy breathing on the other end. “Sorry, ‘bout that, Commander, Clarke will be with you in just a second!” Raven’s voice declares as if she were a secretary, sounding like she had to fight for the phone. Then she sing-songs ‘*Clahaarke, it’s for youhuu!*’

“You, no kidding!” Clarke’s voice travels from far away to being at the phone again. “For fuck’s sake!” she grumbles and then there’s more rustling and giggling and swearing until, finally, Clarke seems to have escaped her friends as the background noises gradually fade away. Lexa can merely make out some more laughter and lots of kissing noises and then Clarke’s forceful whisper.

“I hate you all!” sounds through the line and Lexa actually has to giggle.

She can’t believe this moment is really happening, and she can’t believe how much she’s enjoying it.

There’s a moment of silence and then Lexa hears a door slam shut and some more heavy breathing, before a big sigh of relief suggests that Clarke is finally alone.

“I am so sorry about that.” Clarke apologises and Lexa grins, imagining her flustered face.

“My idiot friends are fucking idiots. I’m really sorry, they’re gone now. I promise.”

Humming happily, Lexa tries to calm her a bit. Even though she’s having fun, it seems Clarke isn’t so much. “It’s really okay, Clarke. I didn’t mind your friends. It seems everybody is having a good time.”

“Yeah, yeah, I guess. Did I mention they’re idiots?” Clarke repeats, but this time there’s a light chuckle underlying the words and Lexa is glad to hear Clarke relax a bit.

“You did.” Lexa confirms, leaning back in her chair. A light breeze whips some stray strands of hair into her face and her heart flutters as if it were touched by it as well.

“Good. Cause they are.” Clarke mumbles.

Lexa hums.

They talk a bit longer and Lexa can’t stop smiling the entire time. Clarke is calling her in the middle of the night while at a fun party with her friends and she doesn’t seem to want stop talking. Whenever there’s a longer pause and Lexa thinks Clarke will surely say she has to go now, Clarke comes up with another question or story or random thought and Lexa’s heart grows each time until it feels like it’s filling her entire chest.

It’s only when Raven’s voice once again comes shouting from the background and informs Clarke that they’re actually leaving, that Clarke finally - to Lexa’s immense joy seemingly very begrudgingly - tells her she has to hang up.

They say goodnight and Clarke makes Lexa promise to talk again tomorrow and then they say
goodnight again, before Clarke finally ends the call, Octavia’s impatient voice telling her to hurry up in the background.

Lexa’s smiles stays even after she puts her phone back into her jacket pocket and it takes her a few moments to really notice her surroundings again. That’s when she realizes that she’s suddenly alone on the balcony and the apartment behind her is dark and quiet.

She doesn’t know when Anya went inside or even how long she’s been talking to Clarke. All she knows is that where she felt angry and uncomfortable before, now she feels elated and happy and so, so excited for tomorrow and all the days to come. All the days with Clarke.

“Where to next?” Octavia asks and Clarke points towards the Lush store across the street.

“I need to get my mom something and I have no idea to be honest. But soaps?” she shrugs.

“Soaps.” Octavia shrugs as well and nods, as they make their way over to the entrance. Even before they reach it the smell hits them and Clarke and Octavia both hum happily. Raven always thinks it’s too much, but Octavia and Clarke love it. Good thing, Raven didn’t come with them today, since she apparently already has all her christmas gifts for this year. Four days before Christmas Eve!

Clarke is only a little impressed. Only a little.

“So, how’s it going at Grounders?” Clarke asks, as Octavia and she peruse the store for something nice for Abby. Octavia tells her about Anya and Sara and some girl she hung out with the other night after getting rid of a gross creeper for her and about all the different cocktails she knows by heart now. She also tells her that Raven has been visiting most nights she’s been working and it prompts Clarke to finally initiate that conversation she’s been wanting to have.

While agreeing with Clarke that Raven’s behavior has been a little stranger than usual, Octavia surprisingly shrugs off Clarke’s concern. And if Clarke didn’t know Octavia as well as she does, she would probably even believe her. As it is, however, Clarke picks up on the slight changes in Octavia’s voice and the way she seems overly interested in a yellow and orange bath bomb and knows that it’s just a front. Octavia doesn’t want to deal with the possibility of something being wrong with Raven again and Clarke can’t really say she blames her.

She’s a little frustrated that Octavia doesn’t seem to be willing to engage in any conversation about it at all, though, but finally gives in to her relentless changes of topic.

“So, what’s up with you and Lexa?” Octavia asks as they are done at the register. They both found some nice little gifts for their moms and Bellamy, whose dog Raina loves bath bombs for some weird reason.

“Oh, you know, just...hanging out.” Clarke says lamely, hiding a smile as she puts her purse away into her handbag.

“Mhmmm, sure Janice.” Octavia replies, unconvinced, and Clarke’s smile widens and she has to snort,

"Janice?"

Octavia frowns, not catching on.
"It's 'sure, Jan'." Clarke laughs, but Octavia just rolls her eyes.

"Don't change the subject!"

*Oh, look who's talking...*

“Come on, I know you’ve been talking to Raven about it! I wanna know what’s going on, too!” Octavia pleads and grabs Clarke's arms with both of her hands.

There’s almost a whine to Octavia’s voice and Clarke sighs and looks at her, “Fine! Yes, yes things are going well. I think. I like hanging out with her. I like her. And I think it’s, you know, mutual. I think. I don’t know, we haven’t really talked about it and it’s all a little...new. Which is also why I’ve been talking to Raven about it.” she explains as they zip up their jackets again, bracing against the cold. “It’s not like I wanted to make you feel left out or anything. Really, O.”

“No, no, no, that’s fine!” Octavia immediately waves off Clarke’s apology, apparently not wanting to interrupt Clarke, when she's finally giving her the deats. She links her arm through Clarke's as they walk on, “I’m just so curious! I just wanna know what’s going on, you know!”

“Yeah, okay.” Clarke nods, trying to collect her thoughts. “I mean, like I said, we haven’t talked about it. Lexa and I. I don’t really know what we are or whatever. We’re just...I think we’re figuring it out?” she shrugs and frowns, helplessly. It sounds so stupid to say things like that. She wonders if Lexa even thinks about it at all. Somehow she can’t imagine Lexa having talks like this with Lincoln or Anya and she isn’t sure if that should worry her. Is she reading way too much into everything? Is she overthinking? Is she going too fast? Are they just casually dating? Are they dating at all? Does Clarke want more than that?

Yes. Yes she thinks she does. More than what they are now anyway. Or at least...not less. And casual dating sounds so... temporary. And she doesn’t want anything to do with Lexa to be temporary. That much she knows.

“But you like her?” Octavia asks and that’s for once an easy question, so Clarke nods.

“Yeah, I do.”

Octavia nods, too. “Cool.” she smiles and Clarke smiles back.

“Cool.”

They talk about Lexa a little more and then about Lincoln. That is until Lincoln joins them a little later and they go for coffee. It’s nice to just sit and chat and warm their cold hands on their cups. People around them are busy, and stressed, but there’s an air of that Christmas spirit around them, that Clarke always feels this time of year and has loved since she was a child.

It’s comforting and warm and loving and Clarke feels like every twinkling star constructed of fairy lights and every sprayed on snowflake decoration on a window is like a gentle hug.

She just loves Christmas. She just loves Christmas so much.

“I’m excited!” Clarke says with a fittingly giddy expression on her face, as they stand in line.

The planetarium is a lot bigger than Lexa expected. It’s like a mix of a big museum and cinema and it
makes her nervous. She expected something more...intimate.

She doesn’t know much about planetariums, but from what she thought she understood it was supposed to be a smaller cinema where you lie down in and look up at the stars with some loud voice explaining the constellations. And for whatever reason ever since Clarke said she’d take her here, she imagined there to be a lot less people. A lot less. Ideally just the two of them and some disembodied voice guiding them through the night.

But it isn’t even night and the line they’re standing in is quite long.

“Are you excited?” Clarke asks her just then and Lexa looks away from the people in front of them and back to the woman standing next to her. Clarke looks beautiful. Her face, a little red - first from the cold and now seemingly from the excitement - radiates such joy and lively curiosity and it makes Lexa feel small in the best way. It makes her feel small enough to be hidden from the outside world within someone else’s glow. Within Clarke’s glow.

“I hope you don’t get nauseous or something.” Clarke’s brows furrow and Lexa notices once again how much she loves Clarke’s facial expressions.

“Nauseous?” she echoes, slightly distracted still.

“Yeah, Bell got really nauseous the last time we were here. I mean, to be fair it was a while ago, but still. He was not having fun.” Clarke recollects with a badly hidden smile that suggests that Bellamy’s predicament, while not amusing to him, probably served as entertainment for others.

“Why would he get nauseous?” Lexa asks, now curious how that would come about.

“I don’t know.” Clarke shrugs as they shuffle along in the line. “I think it’s got something to do with lying and looking up and things moving above you and maybe his bad eyesight?”

Clarke suddenly narrows her eyes at Lexa and Lexa pulls her head back a little. “What?”

“You don’t wear glasses, do you?” she asks and Lexa feels herself blush.

Clarke’s mouth opens with a delighted gasp. “You do?!”

“Not usually.” Lexa admits begrudgingly. She isn’t quite sure why she feels defensive about it.

“But you do? Oh my god, that’s so hot!” Clarke grins and now Lexa is sure there’s no way Clarke isn’t noticing her flushed cheeks. She wishes she could hide behind her hands. But she won’t.

“Are you wearing contact lenses right now?” Clarke asks, and suddenly her hand is on Lexa’s arm and her face is really, really close as she leans in.

Lexa freezes immediately, holding her breath.

Clarke’s eyes are so blue, it’s like Lexa is already staring up into the sky.

“I don’t see any…” Clarke mumbles and Lexa can feel a soft warm puff of air blow against her lips and cheek. She suppresses a shiver as best as she can.

“I-I’m not wearing any.” Lexa whispers breathlessly, the hairs on her neck standing up, when Clarke looks down to her lips as she speaks.

Clarke merely hums, making another puff of air brush against Lexa’s face, and then lingers another second, before finally leaning back.
Lexa draws in a slightly shaky breath as Clarke just stands there, smiling at her. Are Clarke’s cheeks redder than before, too?

Then Clarke suddenly looks behind them and then to the front, exclaims a surprised ‘sorry!’, and then guides Lexa a few steps forward in the line that apparently moved on when they weren’t paying attention. Clarke’s hand barely touches against the small of Lexa’s back and through the layers of clothing she can more imagine it than feel it, but it’s enough to jolt her back to the moment.

It’s like the bustle of surrounding voices suddenly rush into her ears and she feels a little disoriented. Without meaning to she steps a little closer to Clarke until their arms and shoulders are slightly touching. Clarke looks at her with a sweet expression and without another word simply links their arms together.

Lexa smiles and looks down at her and Clarke’s jackets she’s been carrying draped over her left arm since they got their tickets.

As they move on to the front of the line Clarke leans against Lexa’s side. “Do you have a picture of you with glasses?” she asks quietly, without looking at Lexa. Her profile shows a slight smirk.

Lexa bites her lip; Clarke’s words from before - calling her hot - still ringing in her ears.

When Lexa fails to answer immediately, Clarke looks up at her. Something about Lexa’s expression seems to amuse her, because a light chuckle emanates her lips, before she shows the usher their tickets.

Wordlessly, Lexa follows Clarke into the planetarium’s show room.

It’s dark, only lit by dim exit lights, and the ceiling, high above them, is curved like the inside of a big dome. Something feels almost...magical about it. Magical not like a colorful fairy rainbow world. More like a dark, mystical forest that may or may not hold secrets older than magic itself.

Lexa is slightly in awe, and the show hasn’t even started yet.

Like the other guests are feeling it, too, the chatting voices die down to hushed whispers as everybody takes their seats. They’re upright, but Lexa can see a handle on the side and watches some already settled viewers pull them and slide down with their seats into a declined position.

“Hey, over there” Clarke whispers to Lexa and then proceeds to pull her a little further down the flat, carpeted steps and then into a row to their left. Among the normal seats there seems to be one of a few special doubles. Their fabric cover is red instead of dark blue and there is no cup holder or arm rest between them. It's clearly meant for couples. Lexa's heart flutters.

They sit down and Lexa timidly mimics Clarke’s smile. Even in the dark Lexa can make out Clarke’s features well enough and her eyes seem to sparkle with pleasant anticipation. Lexa’s nervousness increases and she shifts a few time in her seat, trying to get comfortable, before Clarke lays a calming hand on her knee.

At least it was probably supposed to be calming and yet the effect is more exciting to Lexa than anything else. Still, she settles down as best as she can and drapes their jackets on the seat to her right that has so far remained empty.

Now seeing the size of the show room, Lexa realizes that there aren’t actually as many people in here than there could have been. The room isn’t even filled to its third and Lexa is glad they seem to have picked a less busy day than they could have to come here. She surmises not many people find the time this close to Christmas.
“You good?” Clarke asks, voice still lowered as the atmosphere in here seems to demand.

Lexa nods once. She still feels tense and she knows her stiffness must show, but it’s all she can do not to bounce her leg. In that sense Clarke’s hand does its intended effect, Lexa guesses, as it still rests on her left knee. A light squeeze gets Lexa’s attention and Lexa looks up.

Clarke is smiling at her softly and Lexa wishes they were alone. She wishes she could lean over and kiss her or nestle into her neck. She wishes she could cuddle up with Clarke under a blanket and forget other people even exist. She wishes so many things.

“Lean back” Clarke inclines her head to the back of Lexa’s seat and Lexa follows suit, watching intently as Clarke slowly leans forward and then reaches over her. She pulls the lever to Lexa’s right and with a small jolt Lexa’s seat starts slowly gliding back and downwards, Clarke still hovering above her.

Lexa is too aware of the breath leaving and coming into her chest; too aware of her hands that are clasped around the edges of her seat beside her thighs; too aware of Clarke’s face hovering above hers, that damn smirk on her lips.

Lexa swallows dryly and just when she thinks Clarke may lean just a little closer and kiss her, Clarke draws back.

Frozen in place, Lexa just stares up to the domed ceiling above. From the side she hears a clank and then sees Clarke’s seat glide down in her peripheral vision to match her seat’s position next to her.

“Comfy?” Clarke’s voice carries over quietly. Heart still thumping in her chest, Lexa just hums a confirmation.

Before she can feel even more awkward about the ongoing silence, the admittance door gets shut and the room gets even darker. Most of the whispering voices die down completely and Lexa gets momentarily distracted from her self-consciousness as the ceiling above her lights up.

A huge starry sky appears and a deep voice starts narrating a welcome message to the visitors of the planetarium.

She’s so enraptured by the slowly moving stars and constellations all around her, even craning her neck back a little to see how far back the projected night sky stretches, that she startles when something touches her left hand.

As she whips her head to look at it, she sees Clarke gently glide her hand into hers, prying Lexa’s fingers apart slightly to interlock them with hers.

A smile stretches over Lexa’s lips, before she can stop herself. When she looks over at Clarke’s face, she’s smiling, too. A little less cockily than before, maybe, and a little more bashful instead and Lexa loves everything about this moment.

As they both relax back against the seat they maintain eye contact.

It’s a long while, before Lexa looks back up at the projected sky, Clarke’s hand still firmly in hers.

As they filter out of the planetarium, Lexa is surprised to find the outside sky as dark as the fake one they just left behind.
Clarke shivers next to her and burrows into her scarf. Her breath billows out in a dense white cloud in the cold winter air.

“So where to now?” she asks, her voice a little shaky as she pushes her hands deep into her pockets and draws up her shoulders.

Lexa thinks for a second. She, too, doesn’t want to part ways just yet.

“Would you want to have a hot drink with me?” she asks, already trying to think of where to best go for a good cup of coffee or tea.

“Yeah! I’d love that.” Clarke smiles and then gestures with her hidden hands - awkwardly pushing out her pockets - towards the road ahead. “Lead the way.”

“Uh,” Lexa hasn’t quite come up with a good place yet, but she guesses the city centre will be a good place to start. Maybe they’ll even stumble across an appropriate little shop on the way. “okay, let’s head this way.”

She starts down the road and Clarke follows suit, once again wordlessly hooking her arm through Lexa’s.

Lexa could get used to that. She really could.

They stroll along for a while, talking about the show they just saw and discussing their favourite parts. The streets aren’t too busy and Lexa enjoys the quiet, comfortable atmosphere. Christmas decorations on people’s windows light their way and when they stop at a traffic light, Lexa builds up enough courage to unlink her arm from Clarke’s and take her hand instead. Clarke doesn’t say anything, but lets it happen, and when Lexa intertwines their fingers, she gently squeezes her hand.

It feels so good, Lexa doesn’t even care about the cold. Although she does fear, Clarke’s hand will freeze. Knowing it won’t do much good, but trying anyway, she starts rubbing her thumb over what she can reach of Clarke’s hand.

As Lexa had hoped they find a little comfortable looking coffee shop on their way downtown and decide to duck in as it starts to gently snow.

It’s one of the best evenings Lexa has had in a long while as they sit and talk and even order some food. She lets Clarke steal from her plate, enjoying the gesture of familiarity and playfulness, and smiles at her as she tells her about Wells and playing hide and seek in the hospital their parents worked at.

Lexa can see the slight pain behind every funny story Clarke tells of him and her heart breaks a little for the girl that lost her best friend so cruelly and unfairly and way too soon. Clarke doesn’t seem to want to linger on the sadness of it though, so Lexa doesn’t inquire deeper than what Clarke offers willingly.

She marvels at her strength though of choosing to allow so much space for the happy memories between the pain and at the tenderness with which she speaks of her childhood friend. It makes her adore Clarke even more and before she can stop herself she has reached out to take Clarke’s hand on top of the table.

It’s a bold, unexpected move and for a second, when she realizes what she’s done, Lexa freezes and questions whether Clarke would be comfortable with this.

Clarke freezes as well, but just for the blink of an eye, before she simply continues her story, holding
Lexa’s hand firmly next to the flickering candle on the wooden surface.

Lexa feels a little bad that she doesn’t quite catch the next few sentences Clarke speaks, but the excitement spreading through her chest is too distracting as she tries to take in the gravity of this moment.

This gesture, so small objectively, feels grand to Lexa and she almost chokes up at the simple intimacy and sign of pride it displays. Clarke doesn’t mind others - strangers - seeing them holding hands. She doesn’t mind them possibly thinking that they are more than just friends. She doesn’t mind and what’s more, she seems to be really happy Lexa took that step. More than once Lexa catches her smile sheepishly at their conjoined hands as they keep talking and every time it makes Lexa’s heart do a little backflip.

Lexa wishes the night would last forever, but all too soon, Clarke shows signs of wanting to leave. She shifts in her chair, looking for a member of the wait staff, and starts saying something twice, before then thinking better of it, it seems. Her third attempt begins with an elongated “Sooo…”

Lexa pouts internally. That’s never a good sign. A long ‘so’ always brings trouble. A probing question, a gentle rejection, an awkward goodbye. She had hoped Clarke would want to drag their time together out even longer, like she does, but she understands. Clarke probably needs to get home, it is getting quite late, and maybe she has early plans tomorrow.

“Do you have to go?” Lexa asks, before she can stop herself. She despises the disappointed tone in her voice and quickly tries to amend, “I mean, it’s late. I guess we should- I mean, I can- I’ll walk you home. I-if you want th- if that’s okay with you, of course.”

God damn it, Lexa…

Clarke’s expression, which showed curiosity or maybe even slight surprise at Lexa’s interruption, changes into an adoring look when Lexa just barely stops her own rambling.

Lexa can feel her cheeks and ears heating up already as she nervously kneads her palms in her lap. They’re getting a little clammy and she wills herself to calm down.

“Well,” Clarke starts, and Lexa finds it hard to keep eye contact, “I was actually thinking,” and now Lexa thinks Clarke seems a little nervous as well, as she raises her eyebrows and draws in a quick breath, “uh, do you maybe…” yes, Clarke is definitely nervous and Lexa almost forgets her own tension as she cocks her head curiously, “do you want to come back to mine?”

“Oh…”

That was not at all what Lexa was expecting. And she isn’t quite sure how to interpret what Clarke just asked her, or if there is even anything to interpret at all.

“Just if you want.” Clarke adds quickly and Lexa wants to shout ‘yes!’, but she keeps it together. Taking another second to collect herself and reel in her expectations, Lexa smiles, “I’d love to.”

Clarke looks almost surprised, but positively so. “Oh! Okay, cool, great! Uh, I’ll just- I guess we should pay,” she laughs a little nervously, turning around to look for a waiter again, and Lexa has to grin and suppress a giggle. She feels more giddy than she has in a long, long while.

No matter what Clarke’s invitation would entail, at the very least it means their evening together won’t end just yet.
And Lexa couldn’t ask for more.

Octavia’s roommate is here again. She’s here a lot lately. Mostly when Octavia is working, but Anya has seen her on other nights as well. Dancing, laughing, drinking.

She radiates this boundless, joyful energy and not few people seem to enjoy basking in its excitable glow. Some seem to be almost contagiously affected by it and join her on the dance floor, obviously invigorated; others give her bemused or even irritated looks, but Raven doesn’t seem to mind or even notice.

Anya isn’t sure what to make of it. Usually when people party as often and as extensively as Raven has seemingly taken to doing, they burn out sooner or later, but Raven’s energy seems limitless. Although, Anya thinks she looks a little worn out, even if she doesn’t act like it at all.

Her hair has certainly seen less preparation for the last few outings than it did in the beginning and underneath Raven’s mascaraed eyes Anya thinks she sees dark rings that speak of sleep deprivation.

Seeing as Raven is Octavia’s roommate, Anya has been keeping an eye on her, suspecting she may be taking more than just a fun share of stimulants, but to the best of her capabilities, she’s never seen her consume anything other than the drinks she orders. Of course, Anya doesn’t watch Raven all the time, why should she. For Octavia’s sake however, she hopes she hasn’t missed anything. Drugs can be tricky and the fall from a bad high can be long and - worst case - irreversible. Anya doesn’t care to see another person she knows suffer because of those damn things, and even though Raven isn’t her friend, Octavia has grown on her and she knows Lincoln would be devastated as well, if his girlfriend’s friend went down that rabbit hole.

So, Anya will keep a watchful eye as best as she can. Just in case.

As she sees Raven make her way towards her through the crowd just then, she subtly averts her gaze down to the beer she’s been pouring for another customer.

She sets it down in front of him, accepts the money, and then turns back to Raven, who has made it to the bar, slipped on to an unoccupied stool, and is smiling brightly at her.

“Hey! How’s it going? Strong night?”

“Can’t complain”, Anya replies, rinsing out a couple of glasses Sara just brought back from her rounds around the club.

“Sure seems like it’s a strong night every night from where I’m standing.” Raven comments and then chuckles, “well, sitting.”

Anya gives her a cursory twitch of the lips and then looks up at her, after putting the empty tray on the tray pile. “Whatcha having?” she asks, eyeing Raven inconspicuously now that she can get a closer look.

Raven hums contemplatively with a slight furrow of her brow, before leaning her head on her hand and adopting a sly smile. Anya doesn’t react when Raven starts flirting with her eyes and asks in a suggestive voice, “Well, what do you recommend, boss? I trust your expert judgement to know what could help me with my...thirst.”

Raven’s a flirt, Anya knows. She’s watched her flirt with girls and guys and even been on the
receiving end of a bad pick-up line or two from Raven herself. They seem to come easy from the
girl’s lips and she doesn’t seem to care much whether they fall on nutritious earth or deaf ears. No
rejection Anya has witnessed - of which there aren’t many anyway, to be fair - seems to have
unsettled Raven in the slightest and Anya wonders if she really doesn’t care or if it’s just a very
convincing act.

She almost wants to test it, but she doesn’t want to be mean. Something makes her feel
almost...protective of the energetic brunette. Anya thinks it’s probably because she reminds her of an
overexcited puppy. She’s a dog person. That’s it.

Still, she doesn’t play along either. Instead, she merely turns around and gestures to her upper shelf.

“Well, those are the most expensive. Any preferences?” she glances back at Raven, who hasn’t yet
been deterred from her little game.

Still wearing a coy smile, she answers, “oh, I’m not hard to please. Unless you’re really clumsy, but
somehow I doubt that.”

Heaving an internal sigh, Anya cocks an eyebrow. Leaning over onto the counter in front of Raven,
she meets Raven’s flirting gaze unfazed. “On second thought, I can really recommend what we have
on tab. How about I’ll pour you some of that? On the house.”

It’s just the tiniest bit satisfying, Anya has to admit, when Raven’s cocky expression falters for just a
second. She may have put a little husk behind her words and she has no regrets when she sees Raven
swallow quickly and her eyes flash with lust momentarily, before she recomposes her self-assured
demeanor.

“How could I say no to that.” she replies and Anya gives her a small wink, before pushing off the
counter to prepare the drink.

“Good girl” escapes her, before she can hold it back and Anya scolds herself a bit for toying with
Raven, when she sees Raven reactively shift in her seat out of the corner of her eye. It’s just so
entertaining, though, and she doesn’t get to flirt that often lately, so it’s hard to not give in and have
some fun. Especially when someone as attractive as Raven is making it so easy for her to make her
squirm. It’s really not her fault.

As she puts the glass under the nozzle of the tab, Raven starts chattering again. Anya only pays half
attention to what she’s saying, more attuned to the speed in which the words spew out of Raven’s
mouth. Something tugs at the back of Anya’s mind uncomfortably and she frowns at the slightly
unnerving feeling spreading through her stomach and up her spine.

Pushing it away, she walks back over to Raven and sets the glass down in front of her without
another word. “Here, bottoms up.”

Without another word she turns back around to tend to other customers, ignoring Raven’s indignant
protest, shouted after her from behind,

“Hey, this is water!”

It’s about an hour later, when Anya sees Raven again.

After she had handed her the water, she got tied up with customers back to back and when she next
shot a glance to where Raven had been sitting, the bar stool was empty and the brunette was nowhere to be seen.

Despite Anya’s little trick, Raven must have gotten her fingers on some more alcohol anyway it seems, because this time around she looks a lot more inebriated than before. And apparently tonight that comes with a tad bit of aggression.

“Get off me!” she pushes away from a guy about a head taller than her, that seems to be ushering her off the dance floor. His hands are clasped around Raven’s arms and even though it looks like that is mostly to protect himself from Raven’s attempts to push him away or land a fist in his face, Anya rushes around the bar counter, shouting with an authoritative voice,

“Hey! What the fuck do you think you’re doing? Get your fucking hands off her!”

The guy immediately lifts his hands in the air in a gesture of innocence, but quickly has to grab at Raven’s wrists once more, when she promptly tries to punch him again.

“Hey, I just got her away from there. She was going at this guy and I’m just trying to get her out of here.” he defends, voice a little strained as he struggles against Raven’s strength.

“Yeah, I don’t care. Don’t touch her.” Anya bites, pushing him backwards by his chest, while stretching out her other arm to hold Raven back. To his defense, Raven seems to really be stuck on wanting to pummel him, or that other guy, or some one, as she isn’t letting up against Anya either.

Seemingly relieved that Raven isn’t his problem anymore, tall dude just mumbles ‘whatever’ and vanishes back into the crowd on the dance floor.

Turning around, Anya has to struggle against Raven for a second, before she manages to grab her wrists solid enough to push her back by pressing her own arms against her upper body.

Ignoring her ongoing slurred insults directed at seemingly random people around them, Anya forces her all the way back to the bar, where she gives a quick shout and look to Sara, who nods understandingly, quickly assessing the situation. Growling, partly from the strain it takes to fight against Raven, who still isn’t letting up, and partly from annoyance at having to handle yet another out-of-control drunk, Anya pushes Raven unceremoniously through the door leading to the storage and her office.

“Get off! Gett off me!” Raven rages, seemingly blindly hitting at anything in front of her now, and as soon as the heavy door falls soundly shut behind them Anya has had it. With all her might she pushes Raven away from her. It’s hard enough a shove to make her stumble backwards and fall on her ass. Anya doesn’t feel bad one bit. Raven needs to be taken down a notch. She needs to snap the fuck out of it.

“ENOUGH!” Anya bellows and it’s loud and forceful enough that it seems to shock Raven out of whatever alcohol induced state of rampage she’s been in.

Breathing heavily, Raven wobbles in her place on the ground, leaning on her elbows and looking up at Anya with unfocused eyes. Anya’s anger evaporates just a little, when she sees streaks of mascara blackened tears run down Raven’s cheeks between wild, unruly strands of hair. Raven really looks like she’s been having a rough time. Wether just tonight or for some time now, Anya doesn’t know. But she thinks she can guess.

“Aw, fuck.” she sighs, rolling her eyes as she crosses her arms over her chest. Looking down at the highly intoxicated, crying form of the previously so chipper and joyous woman pains her more than
she wants to admit.

“What.” Raven snaps, but the accompanying sniffling takes any intended hostility right out of it. She just sounds pathetic and eight years old. And reminds Anya a bit of a certain other stubborn and feisty brunette.

“What the fuck, Raven.” Anya shakes her head, but Raven just glowers and wipes the back of her hand under her running nose. Slowly Raven gets up. Anya doesn’t reach out a hand, assuming it would be slapped away anyway, but steps a little closer in case she needs to catch Raven. She doesn’t seem particularly steady on her feet.

“Jus’ leave me ‘lone.” Raven slurs, bracing herself against the wall to right herself, but Anya doesn’t move.

“Yeah, that ship has sailed, sweetheart. No peace for brawlers here.”

Her words seem to ignite Raven’s fire again.

“He started it! He was grabbing my ass an’ being a pig and his fucking hat was a sore in my sight!” she bristles defensively, volume raising in an instant.

Amused at Raven’s jumble of idioms and general defiant demeanor, Anya chuckles, feeling her anger dissipate quickly as if to contradict Raven’s on purpose.

“A sore in your sight. Mhm.” she cocks an eyebrow, relaxing her stance a little as Raven leans back against the wall, seemingly realizing she needs a little help with the whole standing upright thing.

“Thorn..whatever.” Raven grumbles, eyelids drooping a little as the adrenaline starts to wear off.

Anya has seen the different stages of drunkenness often enough in her life that she would call herself an expert in gauging how long someone has, before they either puke or pass out. And she can tell Raven is pretty close to either, so she decides to postpone the teasing for a later point in time.

Instead, she gently ushers Raven into the bathroom behind them, ignoring her weak protests.

For the next half hour she stays with Raven, making sure everything that needs to come out does and doesn’t miss its mark either. As puking drunks go, Raven isn’t the worst of the worst. After the first objection to Anya’s guidance fell on deaf ears, she let herself be taken care of quite unproblematically. In fact, her anger seems to have faded completely and instead been replaced by regretful self doubt. Anya kind of hates seeing Raven this way, moaning barely audible apologies between painful sounding dry heaves. As much as the earlier lively Raven made her danger senses tingle, she’d still prefer her to this. This is a much scarier, much realer display of uncontrolled emotions. Or at least a much darker one, Anya feels unequipped to fix.

At least the energetic, flirtatious Raven was out in the world, standing upright and not Anya’s problem. This... this is different. While before she was watching Raven mostly to make sure there’s nothing to worry about for Lincoln’s or Octavia’s sake, now she’s invested in the girl’s well-being directly. And that makes her a lot more uncomfortable. She doesn’t want to care for another broken person. Been there, done that, never again.

And yet... when Raven whimpers tiredly, laying her head onto the arm that’s clutching the toilet bowl, Anya’s hand automatically reaches out and gently strokes Raven’s stray hairs behind her ear. Raven’s eyes flutter open for a second and then she looks at Anya. She looks at Anya with a look that’s sad and exhausted and apologetic and grateful and Anya clicks her tongue softly in sympathy.
“Oh, honey…” she sighs, pressing her lips together in compassion. Raven looks at her for another moment, before another dry heave forces her drained body into that undignified position of hovering, bent over, over the bowl again. As Raven retches involuntarily, Anya strokes gentle circles on her back, mumbling ‘there there’ as if that would help.

It’s late. Really late. And Lexa is getting nervous. Clarke hasn’t asked her to leave or shown the slightest indication that she’s about to do so. So what does that mean? Does she expect Lexa to leave on her own? Is she just too polite to ask her to go? Or…

Clarke yawns and Lexa looks down at her, her left arm tingling uncomfortably.

For the past twenty minutes Lexa hasn’t moved a muscle. Not since Clarke moved over on the couch and cuddled close against her side, resting her head on Lexa’s shoulder and hugging her arm. At first the tingling originated from Lexa’s fingers as Clarke started playing with them, tracing them, wiggling them and stroking them to her hearts will - and Lexa’s heart’s funeral. It was a pleasant tingling at first, more than pleasant in fact, but then it slowly crept up her arm as it started falling asleep and now it’s more pins and needles than tinges if Lexa’s quite honest with herself. But Lexa still won’t move.

If she moves, Clarke will move, and she’d rather have a thousand pins and needles piercing her skin than make Clarke stop cuddling against her.

“You’re not watching.” Clarke’s quiet voice teases and Lexa’s eyes snap back to the screen as if caught doing something wrong.

Heart thumping, Lexa wonders how Clarke could possibly know that. But then again, usually Lexa’s perception is good enough to feel these things as well. Things like if someone is staring at her or not. And Lexa has definitely been staring.

A hum from Clarke makes Lexa’s eyes return to the blonde. All she can see is the top of her head, really, but she can feel Clarke smiling against her shoulder. Then Clarke slowly lowers her head a tiny bit, so it’s resting just under Lexa’s collarbone, and Lexa freezes again.

“You’re heart is racing.” Clarke all but whispers and the hoarsely spoken words ironically make Lexa’s heart race even more.

She doesn’t know what to respond or if she even could, so she stays quiet. Well, as quiet as is possible, with her heart betraying her like that.

Another second passes - or maybe an eternity - and then Clarke slowly moves. She raises her head from Lexa’s chest until they’re face to face. Lexa even forgets to avert her eyes, that’s how enthralling Clarke’s blue gaze is in that moment.

It sucks her in and pins her in place and Lexa heart thumps and thumps and thumps.

Deepening the kiss, Clarke hums against Lexa and it’s all Lexa can do not to shiver and moan.
It feels like all her senses have been sharpened; sharpened and trained on Clarke and Clarke alone. The scent of Clarke’s skin makes Lexa feel light-headed, the taste of her tongue takes her breath away; the feel of Clarke’s fingers, in her hair, scratching down, makes goosebumps erupt at the back of her neck and race down Lexa’s spine.

Clarke untangles herself from the blanket they shared and pushes it off Lexa as well. And before the cool air can settle between them, Clarke straddles her and closes the space.

Being pushed back against the cushions of the couch, Lexa holds on to Clarke’s sides; her hands trembling just slightly, as they dig into Clarke’s hips.

Clarke responds to her touch by slowly grinding forward and this time Lexa can’t stop the soft moan from escaping her lips.

Lexa feels dizzy and utterly overwhelmed as a myriad of feelings rush through her body. Over and over and over in delicious, wonderful waves.

Clarke’s breath is warm against Lexa’s mouth as Clarke draws back just a second; and her breathing as labored as Lexa’s. Lexa instinctively follows Clarke’s lips, not wanting the kiss to ever stop. She didn’t have to worry, however, because Clarke reclaims her lips as fast as she can, and this time there’s more force behind it.

Wandering hands make Lexa shiver and at a tug from Clarke at the front of her shirt, she leans forward enough for Clarke to pull it out of her pants and push her hands underneath it. They’re warm and a little clammy and Lexa arches against them without thought. Her own hands are stopped in their tracks up Clarke’s back, as she forgets to move, too distracted by Clarke’s touch to do anything else but feel.

Clarke’s hands glide over her stomach to the sides of Lexa’s waist as Clarke hums against Lexa’s lips. And Lexa is so overwhelmed by the feeling, she whimpers and slips down a ways against the cushion.

The slight change in position makes Clarke now tower over Lexa and their lips slip apart as Clarke pushes her hips down onto Lexa’s. Clarke’s back arches as she does so and Lexa’s hands finally remember to push Clarke closer as she leans in to kiss the exposed skin of her neck.

Clarke’s moan makes Lexa feel wetness pool between her legs and her hips jerk upwards of their own accord.

“Fuck,” Clarke whispers and Lexa feels a whine form in her own throat. She needs Clarke closer, closer, closer, she needs Clarke as close as she can get.

Now positively shaking, Lexa has no option but to let herself be pushed back against the couch cushions, before Clarke’s hungry eyes make her forget her own name.

‘Clarke’ she tries to say, something scratching at the back of her mind, but the word finds no voice. And then Clarke’s kissing her again and Lexa loses her flimsy train of thought and all she wants to do is rip off Clarke’s clothes.

Her skin feels like it’s burning, Clarke’s fingers are digging, and Lexa’s hands shake as she claws at the hem of Clarke’s sweater. Torn between two urges, Lexa stops Clarke’s hands from leaving her skin when they try to help Lexa lift Clarke’s sweater up. The need to be touched by Clarke outweighing the need to touch.

Clarke hums again, almost protestingly, but when Lexa nips at her lower lip, it turns into another
moan instead.

Fueled by the sound, Lexa finally pushes underneath the soft fabric and revels in the way Clarke shivers against her as she scratches her fingernails up her sides.

The sudden sound of a door opening makes them jump apart almost violently and not a moment later Octavia comes into view. Her eyes are cast downward onto the screen of her phone and she startles and jumps as well, when she notices their presence.

Heart positively galloping inside her chest, Lexa knows her face must be displaying an expression of utter shock, but in the second Octavia looks down once more, tabbing the screen of her phone and pulling out the earphones she’d been wearing, Clarke draws the rest of her leg off Lexa’s lap and Lexa recomposes herself as much as she can.

The darkness in the living room is her only hope that Octavia didn’t just see them almost have sex on the couch.

For once she seems to be in luck, as Octavia presses her hand against her chest and breathes, “Geez, guys, you almost gave me a heart attack! I didn’t even know anybody was home!”

“Oh, yeah, sorry.” Clarke clears her throat and Lexa can feel the hairs at the back of her neck stand up as the words come out raspier than expected.

“Geez,” Octavia just repeats, shaking her head and letting out a calming breath, before she just continues on her way to the kitchen.

Neither Lexa nor Clarke move as they stare at the screen - at least Lexa not registering a single thing that’s happening in the still running movie - for the whole time they hear Octavia rummaging behind the kitchen island. Only when she has vanished back into her room with a ‘night night’, do they dare to move again.

The shock still cursing through her body, Lexa joins in as Clarke chuckles breathily. Murmuring ‘oh my god’ Clarke lets herself fall back against the rumpled couch cushions.

Slowly calming her heart and breath as best she can, Lexa leans backward as well, and for a minute they just laugh quietly, letting out their tense nerves.

“Fuck…” Clarke breathes, once they’ve settled down somewhat, and then turns her head against the pillow to look at Lexa. Another laugh escapes her and Lexa’s heart flutters at the sound; at the back of her mind now suddenly noticing how loud the movie is playing in the quiet room.

“Man, that was…” Clarke sucks in a breath and holds it, before letting it go loudly and Lexa knows exactly what she means.

‘Close’, ‘hot’, ‘unexpected’ are all words that would fit, but they don’t need to say them, they both feel them, Lexa can tell.

“Yeah…” she agrees and Clarke chuckles again. A second longer they’re both quiet, the light from the movie flickering over their faces, before Clarke reaches out and intertwines her fingers with Lexa’s.

Lexa watches as Clarke smiles at their hands and amazingly the movie’s loud noises get drowned out by Lexa’s own heartbeat pulsing in her ears.

She swallows dryly and licks her lips and she thinks if she were to move even an inch right now,
she’d feel very, very uncomfortably just how turned on she still is.

It seems like forever, before Clarke looks up at her again and Lexa doesn’t even try to pretend like she hasn’t been watching her this entire time.

She needs Clarke to take charge now, to tell her what comes next, because she has no idea and it’s stressing her out to no end. What just happened? And what does it mean? And how do they go on?

Do they act like nothing happened? Go back to watching the movie? Or should Lexa pretend to be tired and go to leave?

Before Lexa can drive herself too crazy, Clarke leans forward and closes the laptop; stands up, offers Lexa her hand, and says, “Come on, let’s go to bed.”

Dumbfounded, Lexa just nods, feeling what she feared she would as she moves to get up, and then lets Clarke lead her to her room by their linked hands.

By the time Anya has managed to open her apartment door, Raven has slunk down considerably against the wall again, and Anya quickly grabs her waist and heaves her upright again.

“Alright, here we go. In you go, come on. Almost there.”

It wasn’t her plan to bring Raven home with her, but when she told her she was calling Octavia to pick her up from the club, Raven protested so fervently, that Anya decided it was just easier not to argue and drive her back to hers instead.

She’s not sure anymore if that estimation holds up, however, as she has to half carry the girl over the threshold. As expected the puking took the rest out of Raven and for the past half hour she’s been slipping in and out of sleep. Barely any tension left in her body, Raven’s heavier than she looks, but Anya manages to maneuver her further into the apartment. Halfway on the way to the couch, Anya decides she’d rather not leave Raven unsupervised during the night, so she steers her into her bedroom to their right instead.

Raven mumbles something Anya doesn’t understand and she just tells her ‘yeah, yeah’ as she - as gently as possible - lowers her onto the bed.

Raven immediately sinks back into the mattress, groaning a little, and Anya grunts as well as she arches and stretches her aching back.

“You’re a piece of work, girl.” she grumbles, very aware that there’s next to no chance Raven could even register her words at this time.

After pulling off Raven’s boots, she sits down next to the still form of the girl, and takes off her own as well. Her feet hurt, like they always do after work, and she kneads them for a moment, before getting up again.

Putting both pairs next to the door she notices Lexa’s are still missing and frowns surprised. She looks at her watch, barely making out the hands in the still black room, seeing just enough to be able to tell it’s past 2 am.

Has Lexa not come home yet?
Locking the apartment door, she turns on the light and after a second of getting used to the brightness she eyes the hooks on their clothes tree. Her coat is missing, too.

Curiously, Anya pulls out her phone from her back pocket to see if Lexa has texted her.

No new messages, no calls, no nothing.

Torn between worry and annoyance, Anya composes a short text to Lexa, asking if she was okay. She’s not used to not knowing where Lexa is, although she thinks she has a pretty good idea.

She had a date with Clarke tonight, that much information Anya is still privy to, and she gathers it must have gone pretty fucking well. Just the tiniest bit bitter at the fact that Lexa didn’t even think to let her know she was staying the night at Clarke’s so she wouldn’t worry, Anya picks up hers and Raven’s purses she dropped when she was helping the girl inside.

Unlike Lexa, she doesn’t want anybody to worry, so she’ll text Octavia that Raven is safe and staying at a friend’s.

Using Raven’s finger - without any resistance from the by now passed out girl - to unlock Raven’s phone she writes out the message, deciding that it’s better to pretend to be Raven and let her choose how much of what has happened tonight she wants to disclose to her friends later than to let Octavia know she got so drunk she needed to be taken care of by texting her as herself.

A little later, after finishing her nightly routine, Anya returns to her bedroom to find Raven hasn’t moved an inch. Slightly worried, but too used to this to let any real concern take hold of her mind, Anya places a glass of water, an empty bucket and a couple of painkillers as well as a towel next to Raven on the nightstand and the floor.

Relieved to finally be able to slip into bed, she sighs heavily. This night was certainly something, she thinks, as she lets herself sink back into her soft pillow.

She checks once more that Raven is lying safe on her side in the recovery position she put her in earlier, before she drapes the blanket over the both of them and closes her burning eyes. Her ears are ringing from the club’s loud music, but she hardly notices as she quickly slips off to sleep.

It feels like a second later when loud retching sounds jerk her awake and with a terrible realization she jumps out of bed and blindly races around the bed. She gets there just in time to avoid Raven puking on the bed, but not soon enough to make sure all of the bile lands safely in the bucket and with a loud groan she watches as some of it trickles onto Raven’s shirt.

“Come on!” she curses in frustration, not trying to control her volume one bit. “Are you kidding me?”

For a second she considers just letting Raven sleep like that, just out of spite, just to maybe let her learn her lesson, but then she pushes that thought aside and gets up to get a new shirt and some wet wipes.

Five exhausting minutes later, Anya crawls back into her bed, cursing under her breath.

This is why she doesn’t like people, she thinks grimly, as she pulls the blanket back over her shoulder. Thankfully she’s worn out enough to fall back asleep within a few seconds, her anger dissipating as her consciousness fades away.
Clarke’s room looks so unfamiliar, even after Lexa’s eyes have adjusted to the dark, and as they lie next to each other under the covers, Lexa tries to remember when she last slept in someone else’s bed.

Before she can recall, Clarke’s voice draws her attention. It’s hushed to a mere whisper, but Lexa hears her crystal clear.

“You sure you don’t need some socks, too?” she asks into the dark and Lexa shakes her head against the pillow. It smells like Clarke.

“No, thank you. I’m good with this.” she looks down at the shirt and sweatpants Clarke lent her. They smell like her, too.

Clarke hums softly and scoots a little closer towards Lexa under the warm covers, and Lexa is very aware of her elevated breathing and how loud it must surely sound in the quiet of the night.

Clarke is close enough now that their knees are touching and Lexa automatically shifts her legs a little, so their feet are touching as well.

Clarke links them together, one over the other, and then moves her arm and takes Lexa’s hand.

They lie there for a short while without speaking a word, the only sounds Lexa hears being their breathing, Lexa’s beating heart and the slight rustling of the blanket as they gently move their feet.

Lexa doesn’t know if she’s ever played footsie with anybody before, but she knows if she had it couldn’t have been as exciting as playing footsie with Clarke.

Clarke links them together, one over the other, and then moves her arm and takes Lexa’s hand.

It makes her feel young and excited and like she’s the most inexperienced person in the whole world.

Clarke seems so confident, Lexa wonders if she’s been with a girl before. She sure doesn’t seem to be freaked out by the intimacy they suddenly share.

Lexa is a little jealous, because she’s anxious as hell, and she wishes she were just a little less so, at least enough to hide the shiver that courses through her body as Clarke ghosts two fingertips up the length of Lexa’s arm.

She also wishes she could swallow like a normal person and not loud enough for Clarke - or the entire fucking neighborhood - to hear, but when Clarke hums happily at the sound, she thinks maybe it’s okay. Clarke being a little cocky isn’t the worst thing that could happen, Lexa decides, even if it means Lexa feels vulnerable and exposed.

She crosses her eyes, concentrating on the feeling of Clarke’s fingers against her skin and only opens them again, when Clarke speaks once more.

“This feels like a sleepover, doesn’t it?” she whispers and there’s a giddy excitement coating her voice.

“It is.” Lexa frowns, confused.

“No, that’s not what I m- I mean, yeah, it is, but I meant like...you know it’s like that excited, adventure kind of feeling you got? Like when you were having a sleepover as a kid and you’d be in bed, just talking for hours in the dark and trying really hard to be quiet enough so your parents won’t hear you? And when your mom does come to check on you, you pretend like you’re sleeping? And when she walks out again, you’re convinced you’re the shit and just so awesome, ‘cause you totally fooled her into thinking you were asleep, when really she probably totally knew you were faking it? But you thought you were so clever and you just giggle and everything’s funny and exciting?”
Clarke giggles as if to make her point, but Lexa remains quiet.

Thoughtful, she shakes her head against the pillow. No, she doesn’t. She doesn’t really know what that’s like. She’s never really had a sleepover, at least not like the one Clarke just described. The closest thing to it was when she sneaked into Costia’s room sometimes, but that was different. Lexa barely remembers anything from that time and everything was clouded by feelings that were many things, but definitely not as light and fun and carefree as Clarke’s sleepover memories seemed to be.

Realizing she still hasn’t said anything, Lexa clears her throat.

“I don’t think I’ve had a sleepover like that.” she tells Clarke simply, trying to convey with the tone of her voice that it’s okay, though. She doesn’t want this to be a big thing or have to talk about it more. The past is in the past and she really, really wants to stay in the moment right now more than ever.

Clarke seems to understand without Lexa having to say anything more and Lexa is grateful and relieved.

Clarke merely hums again, understanding and sympathy in her voice, but she doesn’t ask Lexa to go into more detail. All she does is stroke Lexa’s fingers some more and then say, “I’m glad I’m your first then.”

It’s said in a soft but slightly teasing voice and it definitely has an immediate effect on Lexa, as goosebumps race up her arm instantly.

Taking a deep breath through her nose, Lexa hums, too, before asking, “What else do people do on sleepovers?”

The question is innocent enough, but Lexa knows enough about sleepovers from books and movies, that she thinks she may just be able to tease Clarke back a bit for once.

“Hm, well do you want to hear the movie version or the real life version?”

“Both.”

“Okay, let’s see,” Clarke draws in a breath and looks up at the ceiling as she thinks. Lexa watches her with a small smile on her face and a big swarm of butterflies in her stomach. “in movies there’s pillow fights and painting nails and braiding hair. Then of course there’s lots of talking about boys aaaaand some making out.”

Lexa’s smile grows. Clarke eyes her, smiles as well, then goes on.

“In real life,” she pronounces, lying back onto her back and draping Lexa’s hand over her stomach as she drums little rhythms onto its back with her fingertips, “which was mostly with Wells, we usually ate tons of junk food, watched at least two movies and fought over the gameboy. We talked about school or our annoying parents or whatever and we definitely, definitely, didn’t make out! Ew.” Clarke shudders and then laughs lightly.

Lexa has to grin.

Turning her head to look at Lexa again, Clarke asks, “So, which version do you like better?”

Pretending to have to think for a moment, Lexa purses her lips, then answers, “The real version. Definitely.”
“Oh, really?” Clarke inquires, turning back onto her side, shifting even closer to Lexa in the process. Their legs are tangled entirely now and Lexa is very aware of the fact that she could just roll onto Clarke with one swift movement and her thigh would be pressing between Clarke’s legs and it’s really, really hard not to do exactly that.

Ripping her mind back to their conversation, Lexa nods, her throat feeling a little dry again. “Yeah...well, except for maybe one thing.”

“Mhm?”

Clarke is close enough that Lexa thinks she can feel a soft puff of air touch her skin as Clarke breathes.

“Yeah, one thing I’d add from the movie version.”

Even if Lexa weren’t staring at Clarke’s lips already, she could feel them spread into a grin as they’re now sharing the same pillow.

“Painting nails?” Clarke whispers and then their foreheads are touching.

Lexa feels her own breath hit Clarke’s face. She’s so close.

“Mh mh” Lexa hums, shaking her head just the tiniest bit against Clarke’s soft skin.

“Talking about boys!” Clarke suggests, going along with her game, before laughing when Lexa grimaces.

“Alright, alright,” she chuckles, making little puffs of air tingle against Lexa’s lips. Lexa bites them to make it stop.

“Always knew you were a pillow kind of fighter.” Clarke jokes on, but her voice sounds more serious than just a second ago.

Despite her nerves, Lexa has to roll her eyes.

“Yes, I would add the pillow fights, Clarke.” she replies sarcastically and Clarke grins again, although softer than before.

“Knew it.”

They’re quiet for a second and in the silence Lexa can practically hear the tension rise between them.

Clarke is so close, they’re foreheads are still touching, and when Clarke moves Lexa freezes against her will. Clarke nudges Lexa’s nose and Lexa’s breathing picks up in anticipation, but just when Lexa thinks Clarke will kiss her, she pulls away instead.

_Damn it, why does she always do that?_

Lexa almost can’t hold back a disappointed whine, but before she can protest, Clarke goes on, her voice sounding happily teasing again,

“So, how do you rate this sleepover then? Good? Bad? Mediocre?”

 Barely able to form a coherent thought at this point, Lexa swallows.

“Good.” she breathes out, almost inaudibly, and in the dark she can see Clarke’s expression change.
It goes from smirking to … almost adoring and Lexa feels her cheeks heat up at having exposed herself even more with her reactive honesty.

“Just good?” Clarke asks then, voice softer than Lexa has ever heard it. “Not great?”

Before Lexa can answer, Clarke frowns, some of the playfulness returning to her face, “What, is there something missing? Want me to smack you with a pillow or something? I can get some nailpoli-“

The rest of the sentence gets swallowed by Lexa’s lips as she presses them firmly against Clarke’s.

And then again, and again, and again.

Until all that can be heard is their heavy breathing and the noise of urgent kisses and quiet moaning against soft skin.

When Raven wakes up, her head is not her friend. In fact, it seems to be very much dead set on murdering her and making sure she never wakes up again.

“Oh my god.” she groans, her throat feeling like she entered a sandpaper swallowing contest the night before. And won.

And what is that god awful taste?

“Well, well, she lives.” a voice comes out of nowhere and Raven all but falls from her bed.

“WHAT THE FUCK!” she exclaims, heart hammering as she shoots upright. Whatever shock she just experienced gets momentarily taken out of commission, however, as a pounding, blinding pain shoots up into her head, right behind her eyes.

“Aaaah!” she groans, pressing her palm against her eye socket as hard as possible. Fuck, fuck, fuck, that hurts.

“Fuck!” she curses weakly, feeling like she may start crying any second from the pain.

Not a moment later the nausea hits her like a bolt of lightning and a heaving sound escapes her throat.

“Right! Bucket to the right!” the voice directs, now sounding a little distressed, and Raven blindly turns her body to the side. She dry heaves once, twice, three times, but nothing comes out of her painfully constricting stomach. If it had, however, it would have actually landed in a bucket that’s been placed next to her bed.

No…

Not her bed. Someone else’s bed. Someone else’s bed she doesn’t recognise.

Bewildered and utterly confused, Raven turns back around, now that she’s sure there won’t be a gross mishap, and carefully blinks open her eyes against the bright light coming from a window behind a figure.

It takes her a second to recognize the figure and she wouldn’t in a million years have guessed who it is.
“Anya?” her voice scratches painfully.

“Did you spill again?” Anya asks in lieu of confirmation.

“What?” Spill?

Oh my god, did she puke on herself? In front of Octavia’s hot boss? Please, please, no…

Slightly panicked, Raven looks down onto her shirt to check it for stains she prays she won’t find. No… Not her shirt.

“What the f- did you take my clothes off?!” Raven asks incredulously. This is too bizarre. This has got to be a dream. Or some weird alternate reality. This can not be happening.

But this is definitely not her shirt. Not any shirt she’s ever seen and with a horrified gasp she realizes she might have taken her clothes off herself. In front of Octavia’s hot boss. What the fuck, what the fuck, what the-

“Well, someone had to!” Anya’s defensive voice interrupts Raven’s thoughts from spinning further into sheer panic and self loathing. “You sure as hell weren’t and I wasn’t gonna leave you in your puke all night. This may be shocking to you, but some people don’t enjoy someone else’s chuck-up all over their beds.”

“Uh-”

“Yeah, you’re welcome.”

And with that Anya swivels around in her desk chair, showing Raven her back, tapping away on her laptop as if none of this had happened.

Okay, okay, okay… breathe. Raven closes her eyes and takes a few deep breaths, gratefully registering somewhere in the back of her mind that she must have thrown up enough last night not to be impossibly nauseous anymore this morning.

At least one thing that isn’t the most horrible outcome that could possibly have happened.

As she slowly gathers her bearing she looks around the room. It’s a little smaller than hers, but definitely less messy. A little darker, too, she notices, now that her eyes have adjusted to the lighting, and a little less colorful than Raven’s, although that isn’t hard.

A small, old tube TV is set in front of the bed on two CD shelves that look less sturdy than one would hope for something that essentially functions as a TV stand. It’s on and Raven is surprised to vaguely recognise the show that’s playing.

“Is that…is that that Dungeons and Dragons show?” she asks bewildered beyond believe at this point. This is so far away from anything she could have expected, she still isn’t a hundred percent sure she isn’t still asleep and dreaming the weirdest fucking dream imaginable.

With a squeaking sound, Anya abruptly swivels in her chair again, her eyes narrowed at Raven. “You will never speak of this.” she points a threatening finger at Raven, but somewhere in her voice, Raven thinks she detects a hint of teasing playfulness.

Finally losing it, she can’t help but snort. This is ridiculous. It’s real, she finally relents. But utterly
“Hey!” Anya snaps, this time Raven is sure she sees the ghost of a smirk playing around the other woman’s lips.

She lifts her hands submissively, hiding her smirk as best she can.

“Thought so.” Anya hums, staring at her a second longer, before jerking her head towards the night stand and then swiveling back around without another word.

As Raven follows her line of sight, she discovers a glass of water, two pain killers and a cup of some dark liquid on the little stand beside her. As she picks up the cup the smell of coffee wafts up to her nose and she moans happily. And it’s still warm.

“Oh my god, I love you.” she sighs quietly, cradling the coffee between both of her hands.

“Yeah, you better.” Anya’s grumbling voice comes from behind her.

Raven doesn’t see the point in telling her that she was talking to the coffee.

And after all, in this moment, realizing what all Anya must have done for her last night, Raven isn’t even quite sure she doesn’t love Anya a little bit, too.

Holy shit, what a morning.

As Clarke wakes, the first thing she notices is the absence of Lexa’s arm around her middle. She doesn’t have to look far for her though. Turning around and blinking against the brightness of the day, Clarke is greeted with Lexa’s eyes, already looking at her.

Inescapably, a smile appears on Clarke’s face.

“Hi” Clarke mumbles, voice croaky from sleep.

Lexa’s smile widens. “Hi.”

It’s almost too soft to hear and Clarke’s heart jumps happily, a giddy squeal bubbling up in her chest. She lets it out as she stretches backwards, tired muscles cracking in her arms and back.

Once she feels she’s rid of the worst of the morning stiffness in her body, she turns back to face Lexa; wiggling closer than before and nestling her head against Lexa’s shoulder.

Lexa immediately positions herself so Clarke can cuddle into her and Clarke sighs contentedly as she closes her eyes again.

If she was ever this happy, she doesn’t remember. All she knows is that if she could, she’d stay in this moment forever. Lexa’s skin is soft and smells so wonderfully of her and sleep and Clarke loves the way Lexa’s body melds against hers and their limbs intertwine as if they’ve been lying together like this for years.

It’s a new kind of intimacy between them; deep and trusting and raw and Clarke wishes she could draw this moment and the feeling within it, that she can’t put into words. She makes a mental note to try to capture it on paper later, but knows already it will fall short of the real thing. How could anything compare?
With a low hum and a sigh, she blindly winds her hands to slip under Lexa’s shirt. Her skin is warm, almost hot, and Clarke draws lazy patterns around Lexa’s navel. She loves Lexa’s stomach. She loved it last night, when it was taut and her abs were showing from the strain of their passion. And she loves it now, relaxed and soft and twitching just the tiniest bit when Clarke teases closer to the top of Lexa’s sweatpants.

Feeling Lexa’s reaction to her simple touch ignites a small spark in Clarke and she has to restrain from letting her hand wander lower. She wanted to last night, but Lexa seemed hesitant and tense in a way that made Clarke not cross that invisible line. She has a hunch that it’s because Lexa wants Clarke to be sure, but Clarke can’t imagine regretting going further with Lexa. She can’t imagine regretting doing anything with Lexa and she wonders if she should bring it up. But how would she do that? ‘Why didn’t you touch me or let me touch you?’ just sounds so...needy. Which isn’t inaccurate, but Clarke doesn’t need to announce it either. She should just relax and enjoy the moment. They have all the time in the world. She hopes.

A loud growl from Lexa’s stomach scatters Clarke’s thoughts and she has to grin against Lexa’s shoulder, her own hair tickling her nose as it falls over her face.

She wiggles her nose and then pulls her hand away from Lexa’s stomach to scratch it and with a small kiss to Lexa’s collarbone slowly pushes herself up. Her hands dig into the mattress to both sides of Lexa’s shoulder, as she hovers above her and looks down at her with one eye squinted closed. She still isn’t quite used to the brightness and Lexa’s bright smile tells her she looks funny, but she doesn’t care one bit.

All she cares about is Lexa’s expression and how she regards Clarke so adoringly and how that makes Clarke’s stomach flip and flip and flip again.

“Good morning” Clarke smiles and Lexa echoes her again and then Clarke leans down and gives Lexa a tender kiss. It’s as natural as breathing to her and at the same time it sparks giddy excitement within her. She can’t believe she can just do that; just lean down and kiss Lexa and Lexa lets her as if it were the most normal thing in the world.

As she presses her mouth against Lexa’s Clarke revels in the softness of Lexa’s lips and the gentle pressure with which Lexa responds. She lingers there, just lips touching lips, and when she pulls back she hears Lexa draw in a deep breath through her nose and watches as Lexa’s eyes stay closed a second longer, before fluttering open again. Her pupils are big and magnetic and there is such a sweet vulnerability in the slight furrow of her brows, Clarke aches with care and something else. Lexa almost looks sad or overwhelmed and Clarke searches in her eyes for a second, seeking for something...she isn’t sure what.

She isn’t sure what she finds, either, but then Lexa’s stomach growls again and the moment is gone as Clarke has to laugh and Lexa grimaces and turns her head away, burrowing into the pillow and hiding her profile with her hands.

It’s beyond adorable and makes Clarke laugh even more and it’s such a carefree, light-hearted feeling, Clarke wouldn’t be surprised if she just starting floating up into the air.

“Let’s see if we can find some breakfast, hm?” Clarke smirks, sitting back over on her side of the bed. Her side of the bed… how strange that sounds.

Lexa just groans, still hiding behind her hands, and Clarke snorts and grins wickedly. As quietly as possible she quickly grabs a small cushion from the floor next to the bed where it must have fallen during the night. Without warning she whacks Lexa over her still protected head. She doesn’t put much strength behind it, but Lexa still yelps loudly in surprise.
Clarke cackles delightedly and goes to hit Lexa again, but this time Lexa is ready. The pillow is grabbed steadfast in her strong hands and before Clarke can react, Lexa has snatched it out of Clarke’s grasp.

“No! Fuck!” Clarke giggles and ducks down for cover. Now she’s the one bracing her arms over her head for an attack, but the expected hit never comes. Instead prodding fingers suddenly poke her ribs and Clarke squeals and squirms to escape the tickles. “NO! NO!”

Now grinning more wickedly than Clarke has ever seen, Lexa towers over her, showing no mercy.

“NO! N-AH!” Clarke tries to control her reflexive kicking enough not to hit Lexa by accident, and thereby wiggles so much that she falls backwards off the bed.

“Oh shit!” Lexa gasps, but Clarke has already lost herself in uncontrollable giggles and when Lexa peeks over the edge of the bed and sees Clarke shaking from laughter, her shocked expression turns into a carefully amused one.

“Are you okay?” Lexa asks still, lightly chuckling as she speaks.

“Yeah,” Clarke giggles, sitting up on the floor. “Yeah, I’m fine.” She’d be a little embarrassed, if she didn't feel so goddamn happy.

Lexa reaches out a hand and Clarke lets her pull her upright and as the light from her window hits Lexa’s face, Clarke thinks nothing has ever shone as bright as Lexa’s sparkling eyes do in that very moment.

Suddenly sobered by awe, her giggling quickly dies down to a hum. Lexa, seemingly feeling the change of atmosphere, stops grinning as well. And when Clarke leans down to give her another kiss, Lexa sucks in a surprised breath. She melts against Clarke’s lips, however, and Clarke feels lightheaded with how full her heart is and how powerful she feels to have someone as strong as Lexa turn so soft at her touch.

“Come on” Clarke murmurs against Lexa’s lips and then she gently pulls Lexa off the bed. She leads her out to the kitchen to make some breakfast.

Breakfast with Lexa. What a great start to the day.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so... once again a chapter is seeming to become waaaayy too long, so I'm cutting it and making it into two chapters (which are still ridiculously long). I hope despite the belatedness, you guys bare with me and don't mind a little christmas spirit, too much. Or maybe at least a good sleepover ;)

Hope to read your thoughts on this one in the comments!

Thanks for all your support and don't forget to check out my tumblr if you have any more questions or want some moodboards or the likes :) (clexa-portland-boxing-au)

Love is love,
Lea
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!